

Angus Mackay Diaries Volume XIV (1996 – 1997)

ANGUS MACKAY DIARY NO. 139

February 5 1996 -
March 21 1996.

Monday February 5 1996 (cont).

Hazel sent me an interview with S. in the Telegraph. Not bad, and it helps me as all interviews do, to find out a bit more about his plans than he tells me...

A cheque from Felix for the first time for a couple of months, only £48 but very welcome. And another little unexpected treat, £50 off my £71 electricity bill 'a one-off National Grid discount...?'

Tuesday February 6 1996

A sprinkling of snow, but pretty bad elsewhere. Wrote to the tax-people at last. I hope I can forget it for a bit.

I'm amused to see that 'fashion's girl of the moment' is a model called Stella Tennant. Turned up wearing a nose and a navel ring, which she has since abandoned, carried her possessions in a carrier bag, and had a lot of what they now call 'attitude.' The amusement comes from the discovery that she is Debo Devonshire's granddaughter. As lady Redesdale said, long ago, 'Whenever I see 'peer's daughter' in a headline, I know it's one of your girls.'

Rang Mary L. I think it was a little stroke. She doesn't sound it, but she says she is a bit confused. "How does it declare itself?" 'Well, I suddenly can't spell very well.' Like B. Pym, M refuses to go to the doctor, unlike B.P, who was cured by anti high blood-pressure pills. Not that I blame her.

Oh those travel programmes, all those beautiful places ruined or about to be ruined by this pathetic and terrible restlessness. And autism – another name for mental illness and what seems to me to be raging egotism.

The programme about Covent Garden made me glad that I have never suffered the horror of being filmed in the dressing-room or the wings during a performance. Having to perform in the wings is the very negation of acting.

Bad night, I am awake now at five o'clock, no discernible reason.

Wednesday February 7 1996

Stayed in bed till lunch, dozing on and off, and rather dreading having to entertain even Sh. I was buoyed up by not having to clean much. I hoovered the dining-room for Curry's delivery men... and not such a heavy shop as usual, as I had the pots., the vegs, and the soup. Bought two trout, farmed, of course, but they are now one of the cheaper fish at £1.74 each. Also two Bramley apples, by far the best for cooking. So the dinner was that good mushroom soup, the trout with little beans and sugar-snap peas, fried pots, and apples meringue, cheese, of course. She had two helpings of my despised over-cooked vegetables, and two of the apple meringue. I do love to see that.

She is decidedly more tranquil, more humdrum, and rather disappointing me for my installment of Mills and Boon, with no lover at the moment. I was thankful to find that she could talk of K ordinarily, even getting reminiscent about him, and when I said he'd asked me to show her something, and it turned out to be a news-cutting about Bert and Ernie being snatched from the display case in Frankfurt, valued at £80,000 – 'At least they're still together.' She shrieked as though, at once, her child had been abducted and as if she was seeing the funniest film of her life. She asked for two copies.

But she did have two developments to interest me. The girl who had the big room at the flat is leaving and they had to audition her successor. From her account, it was exactly like the beginning of Shallow Grave. Even more so, if possible, as by the time the last few applicants turned up, they were rather pissed and teasing. Poor applicants. Alex has a new love, and tried Sh's patience by laughing and playing music with her, too loudly...

I was secretly amused, when she talked of her work, to find her using a couple of the phrases K used, when we talked of her and her future career last week. That's an advance.

Still awake at two, after a midnight feast of cold chicken, cheese and the last two spoonfuls of apple meringue...

Thursday February 8 1996

What curious difficulty I have had this year in remembering to put 96.

Just getting back to normal after Justin. It's nice to have the new fridge to myself from the start, and not to suffer his unthinking selfishness in emptying the top shelf for his stuff. He certainly knows how to spoil himself.

In the p.m. to see new German film, clumsily translated as 'The Most Desired Man.' I was curious to see the most successful German comedy ever – even perhaps film... in Germany. There had been some very snide comments about 'German comedy' being an oxymoronic idea. Now I am far from feeling that German comic talent is the supplest, all the same I felt it must have some merit. Well, it has, a bit. I have certainly seen worse, and it has a lighter touch than I expected. It's a pity they chose

a perfect blond for the man – he looked like one of those perfect models with impossibly smooth skin and no prick. Quite a few people there, I was just getting up to go out, as the credits rolled, when the three principal men suddenly appeared, sitting down and singing a twee little song about love. Now that was leaden German.

My left arm is painful, just before the bicep, between it and the shoulder. It feels like a strain, from carrying heavy weights. The launderette? the shopping? They have to go on.

Friday February 9 1996

Dream about lights being out and row with K. Then I woke up, and turned on the light on my right-hand bed table, and found it dead. Then woke up further to realise that my only lamp is on the left hand side. My first waking seemed perfectly rational. Well, they say toasted cheese... because I had another snack in the small hours. It's better than not sleeping.

This p.m. went to Eric Rohmer's new film 'Rendezvous in Paris.' (That's how it's spelt in the papers, and I'm ashamed to say I can't remember how it was spelt in the film.) The credits were rather 'fifties, coloured capitals a bit skew wiff, and first shot was of a man in a beret and with a concertina, and a gravel voiced girl singing a chanson in a narrow old Paris street. All in inverted commas, and yet not, like all our generation. Three short stories, all of young love, all unobtrusively crafted to seem uncrafted. Most of the critics, being in their thirties or forties, were rather dismissive. Ah, that's what they were like, but they don't see it yet. E.R. is seventy, and sees a lot. It went in a flash.

When I got there I was rather upset by seeing a portly silvered-haired man, as it might be me, push his way into the foyer rather impetuously, - the floor is, I suppose, vinyl, thick, black, ridged, and highly polished – and measured his length. A member of staff, and his wife, picked him up, and he limped bravely to the box office, bought the tickets, and tottered into the film. I just hope he could still limp when he got up after the film. To the Safeway's nearby after.

The subtitles were rather crudely translated again. I'm sure that no director has any influence over such subtitles. For instance, the district Palais Royal was translated as Royal Palace, which is just about as sensible as translating Royal Oak as Le Chêne Royal, so that no French viewer would know it was a district.

When I got back and was taking my shoes off for my bath, I realised the radio was bending to a crisis, a large black bomb on the Isle Of Dogs, by South Quays Station, breaking the eighteenth month IRA ceasefire. Sinn Fein said they knew nothing of it, did not condemn it and attributed it to the British Government's selfishness. Whatever the issues or opinions, it is a strange way to go about seeking peace by letting off a large bomb instead of making concessions to get around a table of discussion. Wearisome. I'd found a reduced steak at Safeway – sirloin, but a bit tough.

Saturday February 19 1996

Rang Justin in case he was thinking of coming to pick up stuff and disturb my weekend by being three hours later than he said. I asked him if he'd read and enjoyed the Simon Grey book on the Fry business. His answer is a good example of the silly little triviality that unfortunately is a sizable part of his character. 'It was so full of hate, I couldn't read more than a few pages, and I've always had a soft spot for Stephen Fry.' And he wants to be a critic!

R rang at last, and again had nothing to say, except that he can't come next weekend. 'Because of the car' a cupboard door fell off of its own accord, and he hopes he can screw it back on again. Well, he is a stage carpenter... He saw Seven and thought it awful. I didn't like it, but you couldn't say the doing of it was awful.

Later K rang from Dublin. He's gone for just the night, or Friday, as well, I'm not clear, with a Channel 4 friend. I think there was a professional reason, but perhaps not. I was so touched that he rang in case I rang him and found him away and someone called Henry whom I don't know, is working in the studio, 'You having an affair with the new refrigerator?' I hope he gets back safely. Guinness and disco.

Sunday February 11 1996

A programme about Mayhew is described in the actual pages of the Radio Times as 'Mid-eighteenth century' now that is decadence. I just hope it's a misprint and not a mistake. But I haven't much hope.

On the Antiques Roadshow, a French automaton of a young dandy with Dundreary whiskers was brought by a girl, whose great grandfather was manager of a department in Bainbridge's in Newcastle before the First World War. The automaton, which smokes a cigar, stood in the tobacco dept. My mother, twenty-seven in 1914, often spoke of Bainbridge's and I daresay the tobacco dept. had the attraction of forbidden fruit. Almost certainly she would recognise it, an odd thought.

A programme about a hospice, which made my blood run cold. Perhaps when my faculties have decayed to dying point, I won't mind the relentless cheerfulness. My life is largely television programmes already.

Oh, I hope K is safely back. But I have put a piece of paper on the floor saying 'DO NOT RING K', so I haven't, but I hope he's safe.

Monday February 12 1996

In Hammersmith station today, I saw that the litter-bins were being unscrewed from their stands. This is the first physical result I've seen of the bomb on Friday. It's sad to think of those wretched IRA men, who, never mind wicked, must be so dim-witted and stupid. All that violence and all those deaths have achieved nothing.

Oh, last week's transsexual progr. had a female to male subject, revealing not only his chest but his cock, perfectly acceptable, quite large, but does it work?

Yes, he is safe as I learnt in one choked-off sentence...

Tuesday February 13 1996

Out in the p.m. to see new film Katya Ismailova at the MGM Piccadilly and pay the electric bill at the lower Regent St. Post Office. Neither venture was a success. The P.O. had gone, and was an anonymous space. It is shocking to someone of my age to see a Post Office closed, because, in my formative years, Post Offices were fixed points, impossible to imagine closing. I had some time before the film, and it was rawly windily cold, so I was glad to walk up to the big P.O. off Regents St. (It is a relief to think how painful such a walk would have been eighteen months ago.) As I passed Austin Reed, a female window dresser putting a suit and shoes on a male wax-dummy, (again impossible to imagine forty years ago) lifted the trouser-leg above the shoe to adjust the turn-up, to reveal that the entirely kinetospically naturalistic model, had no foot between trouser and shoe. As I passed at that exact moment, it was like a shot from the invisible man. I glanced in the Pen Shop, to see that Yard-O-Led silver pencils, such as D and I gave each other over thirty or forty years ago, are now £165. Surely that's more by absolute standards. The P.O. was almost empty, tho' the tube and all about was rather full, so perhaps it was right to close the other P.O. This one is crammed at business times, but I am surprised there is no tourist P.O. in sight of Picc. Circus. There was still a bit of time before the film, so popped into Dillon's. Among the sale books was Everything You Want To Know About Saints. St. Dunstan is the patron saint of blacksmiths, metal-workers and jewellers. Must tell Sh. St. Kevin. There is a cave in County Wicklow, with a depression inside called Kevin's Bed. Nearby is a cliff over which he is reputed to have thrown a woman so that he could avoid temptation. Well, I've never thought you were a saint...

So to Katya Ismailova. I never liked the Piccadilly cinema, because it still attracts the dirty mac brigades, partly by situation and association, but also because its management has never decisively cut off that audience. Both films, tho' taken more or less seriously elsewhere, still attract the wrong audience. Four or five figures crashed out after the first ten minutes of no nudes and subtitles. I crashed out after half an hour because I was bored. Still, it was lovely to hear Russian spoken again.

Wednesday February 14 1996

What a Valentine day present for S – a two-page article on what is wrong with the RSC and Adrian Noble, hung on the peg of Les Enfants, 'Some other prods. as well – but Les Enfants was, it seems, the last straw. The caption under the picture of Rupert G. was 'The RSC demonstrates how to turn the best French film ever made into the biggest turkey in the company's history. Why did nobody stop Simon Callow?' (I would be interested to look back through the paper files and see whether David Benedict, a few months ago, wrote of the exciting idea of...

He also asked why the management had not intervened at some point to get half an hour cut, or get the Stygian lighting changed. Fairly disastrous. Wrote to S. Mind you, such things are soon forgotten. But I am afraid Adrian Noble will not be too pleased with S. I have to say I've never liked the whole idea, left strictly to myself. The film is too good to be fruitfully turned into anything else. Making a musical out of a great novel or play is a similar misjudgment.

Took the article to show Hazel. The club has been redecorated, but sensitively, so that it looks smart and fresh but exactly the same. Even more to the point, there is now a proper chef, and the food is now average restaurant standard instead of passé prep-school. I could have had any of the starters, but chose Timbale of Crab, a good cylinder of crab, with paper-thin slices of cucumber or avocado, making a Neapolitan-ice effect. Then pheasant - have it while it's going, vegs. on the plate were cubes of parsnips and sauté potatoes, looking exactly the same, a mistake as you kept getting a taste shock. Then bread and butter pudding with vanilla sauce, good except that the sauce wasn't very vanilla, neither tasting nor smelling of vanilla.

I'd known Hilary Pym would be there, and she was at the next table with an aged friend whose name I didn't catch. I kissed Hilary, and we exchanged ages – she was eighty last month. Barbara would be eighty-four. The best die first.

I said to Hazel that there were eight pages, in that tiny print, of Valentine messages in the D. Mail, not to mention every other newspaper and magazine. 'Can you imagine anyone one knows of any age, either putting one in or reading one? And presumably would have to strain his/her eyes through three or four five-columned pages of the things to find your own Pootikins. Who reads them? Don't let anyone think I am against pet names, 'squirrels and bears' in private.

As I was walking away down Stanhope Gate, I saw a rough looking dispatch rider, his crash helmet slung on the handlebars, his leather top-boots propped on the pillion seat, running his bitten-nailed fingers down a Valentine list, probably in The Sun, though whether this particular Snuggle Bum was looking for his bird's message or his own, I shall never know.

Talking of travel horror, Skegness has – was it 32,000 caravans? Certainly a huge aerial view of enough caravans to make your walk to the beach a mile with nothing but close rows of caravans to walk through.

On that film programme, Moviewatch, where, as well as previews and film news, four students vote on films, I was amused that they crushed the Eric Rohmer film to powder beneath the wheels of their naiveté. Mainly of course, they did not recognise themselves, but of course, very characteristically. The art that conceals art has no flavor or existence for them – 'Almost nothing there', 'amateurish', 'making it up as they went along.' After all, this is how all these little darlings live their lives. I wonder what they'd say if an actor for forty years thought it well acted. Well they wouldn't be remotely interested.

Rather tired the rest of the day. A delicious bit of belly of pork has lasted three days.

Thursday February 15 1996

Still chilly. Oh, the Scott Report. Interviewed by Jeremy Paxman, W. Waldegrae repeated the judgment on him, 'I did not deliberately, mislead parliament' and 'Had no duplicitous intensions,' no less than seven times in two minutes. That alone would justify his resignation. I shouted at the screen in irritation. Shot in a programme about it funnier than any satire, showed John Major saying, 'One of the charges at the time, of course, was that in some way – because I had been Chancellor, because I had been Foreign Secretary, because I had been Prime Minister, - that therefore I must have known what was going on.'

Roy has had his war-time police film Whitehall 1212, accepted by the BBC. Well, the first hurdle, at any rate. It's going to be expensive, and the BBC seems to be turning everything down just now, so that's good news.

Oh, Hazel said again how marvelous P. O'Toole's notorious Macbeth, 'and Brain Blessed as Banquo.' Well, I don't know what to make of that. Was it just going against the notices?

Friday February 16 1996

Rather warmer. 48° and quite a lot of sun. Faint feeling that spring might one day come. Wonderful to think we're halfway thro' Feb.

Even for nowadays, I was surprised by an advert on LBC radio. A drug alert kit for worried parents. 'Wipe over school bags or bedside tables, and send them in for analysis.' Complete confidentiality, no police involvement. Perhaps I need a drug alert kit.

Saturday February 17 1996

Now the taxman is coming to the door to ask me for tax it doesn't know I owe yet. I suppose one day there will be an end to my troubles. I was out. There was nothing to do but distract myself from it all till Monday.

But darling K rang and I could tell him and that helped tremendously. He told me of all his various jobs. The Boots commercial is on, another for Iceland, which at first I took to be for Iceland, - very small royalties, but happily it's for the frozen food firm.... Ch. 4 film...etc etc. I can't follow some of what he says, because I don't understand the milieu. He said he's going to Portugal to see her on Friday, and spend his b'day there, distracting himself, no doubt, from being thirty-five.

'Do you want me to feed the cat?' 'Well, Henry may be here.' 'Who is Henry?' 'He's a young musician at Music House, who I'm encouraging.'

Imagine someone's lending him a complete studio for nothing years ago. To spread his wings.

Cheered by our talk, I rang Justin, hoping an ordinary call with no mention of the stuff he's left in the book-room, 'as long as you like', would remind him to take it away. However, he had a decisive diversion for me, he has been in and out of hospital with water on the brain. Well, that's what he called it. Let's see. Last weekend he had a violent headache, which he called a migraine. 'Which I never have' and took so much paracetamol that he had to go to the doctor with possible liver damage. Back at home, the pain got so bad by Tues or Wed. he got up at six in the morning and knocked up the doctor. (I think I believe that the pain must have been bad to get him up before twelve and go to a doctor, - neither of which I've known him to do before.) Then he went to hospital again, - was it this time in an ambulance? - and lay on the consultant's floor for six hours because there wasn't a bed. 'Then there was a brain scan, and x-rays, and they said there was a large space in my head that should be empty, and was half full of fluid. They could clear it up this time, but next time it would need an operation.' They sent him away with a course of antibiotics and codeine instead of paracetamol. I asked if he'd told his mother and he said she'd just say how much worse she's been. There you are, you see. I think it's sinusitis, not water on the brain as he was bright as a button. Did mention his stuff, but Darren's car is now out of order. Oh, machines.

Now backbencher is leaving the Tory Party, reducing their majority from 4 to 2,- so said the news, is said backbencher very large? A commentator said 'To lose one... looks like carelessness.' How amusing for Oscar to be quoted without acknowledgement or defensiveness in such a comment. Like all genuine wit, it was prophetic, even in a small phrase.

Later.

I am sad that my first night letter and my letter on Wed. about the nasty Indep. article, to S, have had no acknowledgement or reply. We always answered first night messages within a week, with a letter - John G always by return - nowadays people don't. But there is a further dimension, not just of politeness. He is supposed to be one of my closest friends - he once said I was the closest - and I mind badly not knowing how he's feeling about this bad failure. I think nobody could be less of a vulture than me. I feel for this failure, and might be able to say one word of comfort.

Sunday February 18 1996

So Evelyn Laye is dead at last, aged 95. The word 'great' has been bandied about, not really deserved. She was very beautiful, a sort of perfection of fair hair and very large blue eyes, and very attractive, too. Other gifts were not so lavish. Her acting was always marked with its musical comedy origins. She tended towards only two expressions, vivacious prettiness, or eyebrow slanting downwards over retriever eyes for renunciation. Her voice was only serviceable, - 'With Miss Laye, singing is a strenuous business' - and very uncertain in intonation. However, against all that, I believe she worked hard all her life to improve such gifts as she had, like Vivien. In Wedding in Paris, at 54, she produced a genuine effect of gleeful glamour, and in The Amorous Prawn, she gave a capable light comedy perf. As it was a capable light comedy, she was a success in it. I believe she was a bit of a bitch.

On the Antiques Roadshow a George Morland painting, 1820, turned up, not in all that good condition usual rustic subject, valued at £2000, perhaps £4-5000, if in better condition. I was surprised at the low value, in view of the now much increased value of similar Victorian genre pictures. A Wheatstone 'mouth organ', a little metal box with ivory knobs or keys on either side, turned up, and cost some thousand. Remember Shaw mentioning him. Right as usual. They were based in Alnwick Castle, and there was a really moving exposition of a picture by Dobson, I think of three cavaliers in 1645, with Cromwell on the doorstep. The tension in the picture was palpable, in their eyes and hands. Dobson himself, the central figure as well as painter, died the following year at 35.

A programme about the millennium – again. The usual prophecies of the end of the world, from exclusively semieducated prophets, intoning or chanting, whispering or moaning, ill-digested gobbets of re-written Old Testament. Oh, and there's a new messiah. He's been living in England for some time – the speaker knew him. He would reveal himself, I didn't catch when, 2000, I daresay, on television. More people, you see. Whatever other capacities he may have, he obviously has an eye to economics. His first appearance will be on U.S. TV, then Japan, then here. I can hardly wait to be saved.

What do people see in Jack Nicholson? He is so one-dimensional with one expression, a bumptious sneer, and one inflection, an aggressive sneer. Meryl Street is overrated, I think, just brilliant surface technique with nothing inside. So when they're in the same picture...

Later. Now a bus has been blown up in Wellington St., just like The Secret Agent. A part of the West End I know as well as this road. K and I once parted in anger at the foot of W.St. Even rows are chancy now...

Monday February 19 1996

Rang the tax-man – they're always Indian, or Chinese, - this one's Ahweng. Did my trembling-voiced old pensioner. Seeing him next week. At any rate the big sum is only being reviewed. So that anxiety is removed. Hideous cold wind today again.

Oh, me and machines. A woman told how she bought her dream-car, only 36,000 miles, she had it checked by a mechanic friend, and other tests, and then discovered that it was more like 100,000 miles, and there has been an endless list of expensive repairs. What a good thing I've never had or wanted a car. It would be sure to be a mass of breakdowns. I'll stick with books. They don't go wrong.

If you're immune to Sharron Stone's sexual allure, she is totally without interest at the moment. She may become an actress when she loses her looks.

Justin rang at 8.30 to say could he come round to pick up some things about 11.30 after a movie. I was rather dreading him arriving at 12.30 until I remembered he'd have to get the last tube. He arrived and left in a blizzard. He was down in the room for getting on for twenty minutes, - on the suspense – and only went off with a mild

little carrier bag. I think he mainly wanted his mac, as this is no weather for just a jacket.

When I waved him he went off down the road. The snow was already about two inches thick, and with that carious light as if the moon were out.

Wouldn't it be worrying if anything happened on the 22nd?

Tuesday February 20 1996

Well, talk of omens. I was sitting here, quite innocently reading the paper, when there was an almighty crash. The largish engraving of Garrick between Comedy and Tragedy over my desk, fell down, taking D's photo with it, and snapping a branch of the money tree off. (I hope that bit doesn't come true.) Happily nothing was harmed or broken, but I must say....

Another huge tanker is on the rocks pouring oil, sixty thousand tons of it, on the beautiful S. Wales coast, site of many national reserves and beauties. Those bloody cars again. And why do tankers land on the rocks so often?

Rang Janet. She says the film is Trainspotting and she isn't staying, as she hates the sound of it. Oh and talking of cars, it seems 4 per cent of drivers don't pay their road tax, and it's good that they're going to be clamped and/or towed away. But what really struck me was that the 4 percent deprives the Government of £163 million in tax. No wonder they support the bloody cars. Oh and Janet described the R III film to me, and Ian McK sounds as false and unreal as usual, and the whole bloody thing fairly absurd. She waited eagerly for 'A horse! A Horse' as he was in a tank at the time. I wonder whether they'll ever realise that 'modern' dress productions may illuminate one of two moments but really cause far more problems than they solve.

Very cold wind coming through every crack and more snow.

Wednesday February 21 1996

Asked Mary L about bronchitis, and why cold air should make a difference, as with most people, she couldn't follow that I was asking what actually happens in the lung. She just kept saying, rather snappily, that they didn't know... that it was a weak spot some people had... and quite refused to speculate as to what actually happens.

There is an unpleasant feature in the E. Standard entitled 'Bluffer's guide to' – usually some inalienable masterpiece. This week, of course, it's Sense and Sensibility. If that is not a sign of declining civilization, I don't know what is.

'The Sleeping Beauty' fifty years later, at C. G. and, unbelievably, Ninette de V. there at 97. I wonder what she said. I wonder what she thought.

Thursday February 22 1996

The poor parents of the IRA boy who blew himself up, they think, by mistake, knew nothing of his involvement with the IRA. I cannot imagine a worse, a more dreadful, double blow. They have lost their son's life and his reputation. Their dignified statement said that they wanted no para-military involvement in their son's funeral.

As far the awful oil-tanker mess, I can't understand why huge pumps are not brought in to Hoover the oil off the surface at once. Wouldn't that be possible, weather permitting, of course?

Saw a bit of the Britpop Awards. Oasis are the usual defensive Northerners, poor things. On Top of the Pops tonight, they announced 'Top of the Pops with the best band in the world. It's not Blur.' Just like 'Yorkshire has the best cricket-team...' Alas, they seem to have John Lennon's aggressiveness without his wit. Have I said lately, and enough, how set in granite is convention of three or four young men, flourishing phallic guitars and howling in more or less harmony? Has there been another 'fashion' going on unchanged for over forty years in this century? No.

I was convulsed by the film of that funny little creature, Bjork, arriving at Bangkok airport. A woman journalist came up with a microphone and said 'Welcome to Bangkok' to be felled by a succession of violent punches. It needed three men to rescue her. Well, if you will make these inflammatory remarks to sensitive people, you mustn't be surprised...

K rang with arrangements. He didn't even bother to say sorry we couldn't lunch – I don't want him to do anything extra when he's so tired. Sharron had said she'll share feeding Boo. K's bought a new piece of equipment for £5,500 and it's being delivered this week so I can see to that too. It's worth it all when he says 'Thank you' so seriously. How easily he could take my help for granted, considering everything he does for me. There is never a shade of that. I record it only because it is so rare. Only crumpled rose leaf, those bloody planes. I hate him flying, and never feel comfortable till he's back.

Friday February 23 1996

K rang at half past ten, I suppose from the airport. I asked where he was staying, and he said 'The Britannia in Lisbon, but only till Monday.' And I haven't got the number.' 'Well, if your house burns down, it'll be worth ringing Directory Enquiries.' I asked whether her university was Lisbon. 'No, Evora.' He asked about me and Sh., and I was able to reassure him we'd arranged her to do Sat, Sun and Wed., when I go out with John Nick, and me to do Mon and Tues, Thurs, and Fri. He's catching an 8pm plane back on Friday. Although I was delighted he rang, I couldn't quite see why. Except that I sensed a certain need, I thought, for reassurance. I wonder if he feels this is a meeting which will be an advance or retreat in their affair. Oh, I hate him flying.

The Marquess of Blandford was found slumped over the wheel of his car by Oxford police. Taken to the police-station, he asked what part of London he was in. Straight out of Evelyn Waugh.

Saturday February 24 1996

Milder. Clematis leaves coming out, and the wild roses. What a slut I am. Went to the Halifax with a few clothes and my new coat over my pyjamas, and back into my dressing-gown when I came back. Did a bit of housework at least, and even more at last, emptied all but one of the saucepans and casseroles in the garden filled with rotting remains of various dishes. Surprisingly unsmelly, the gravy is still brown and viscous under the thick green mold.

A horse in a race at Kempton Park called Mistinguett. I wonder who thought of it, or if someone just saw the name somewhere, without knowing who she was. Came in second. A mare.

Occasionally I feel like Martial, or, is it Juvenal, wanting to see my times, and over the gin and tonic turn out a few frames of frightful programmes. It's nearly always the same effect, of being trapped in Butlin's Holiday Camp in the north, or a pub on the outskirts of Essex, with no idea how to enjoy themselves except to laugh at anything. I suppose that persuades them they're having 'a good time.' So many popular entertainers have an air so forced, so desperate, that I cannot bear to look at them for more than a minute, if that. I had not seen the special programmes devoted to the announcement of the lottery winner. I wonder what poor silly Daddy would think if he saw such a programme on the BBC! Gambling... and he had fought for no Sunday cinemas in Bournemouth, in the '30s. Of course, he was running a rival show.

Of S. not getting in touch over Enfants, I have to remember that I have no position in the theatre, that I am a failure, completely isolated, another of his failures, perhaps, that he should have chosen me for his friend (and secy of his Co!) so why should he come and recycle his failures here? Perhaps later on he will need a little love. Did I say that K told me he'd heard S faxed in his cuts to be pinned up on the board? Bad, if so, unless he explained that he was directing in Venezuela, which, for all I know, he may be.

An English spiritualist on an American show, wary-faced woman with all the usual chat and tricks. African tribe looking stomach of goat for omens. Also usual.

Sunday February 25 1996

The original image of the Love to Madonna, from the 13th century, was destroyed in an electrical fire in 1921. I suppose miraculous powers can get middle-aged like all of us, and can't be expected to 'keep up' after all, if you start out in O.A.D. how can you be expected to cope with electricity? Mind you, it's a wonder they didn't greet the fire as another miracle.

Oh, talking about omens, I didn't say that one of the lustres fell spontaneously off the chandelier. What'll be the third thing, as one of D's dressers said, after the loss of her handbag and her husband? How long are you allowed to wait for the third thing, before the trio loses its significance? Anyway, as Lalla's death is bound to come after these two signs, I shall claim it as an enduring proof of psychic happenings, however long it is.

One reason for thinking acting etc gets worse as you get older, is you are old and experienced. Instead of excitingly showing you the way, as in the past, the leading actors are young enough to be your children, and now grandchildren. This conclusion is, however, modified in my generation, by actual degeneration of certain aspects of the work, e.g much more at once – cynical and simpler audiences, who have been debased by too much bad TV, performers miked in stage musicals etc etc. All these are unsusceptible opinion.

Monday February 26 1996

K's thirty-fifth b'day.

Aren't women odd? John Thaw is a capable actor in a rather humdrum way. But he is obviously attractive to most women, or he would never have reached the position he has. He seems the absolute opposite of sexiness to me.

Tuesday February 27 1996

Two letters from S, and, of course, I should not have doubted him. It wasn't Venezuela, but a coast to coast tour of seven cities – promoting the Orson Wells, immediately after the first night. Which explains what K told me. He actually said it felt as if he was running away. He has felt the full force of failure, and for the first time, says he would like to do nothing, but has to do two operas, and a film of Charles Dickens readings. It - the failure, - won't do him any harm. The only point where I part company with him, is his description of the first night as triumphant. It may have been, of course, but he is not someone I can trust to judge it so. I was at the Total Eclipse first night at H'smith, which he described in one of the autobiog. books as 'exciting' or words to that effect. It was the contrary, one of the flattest first nights I've ever been to. The house a third to half full, with no tension whatever. It is one of his few failings that he hasn't the sense of the big audience, no doubt a result of only working in subsidised and fringe theatres in his formative years. For instance, Roy left at the interval of Enfants partly out of boredom, but mainly because they wouldn't be able to get his last tube home. Now obviously that must not be the primary reason for shortening a piece, but it must be taken into account. Especially with an adaptation which is an hour longer than its original.

But it is an excellent letter, and I cannot imagine anyone being unable to love the person who wrote it. And it ends 'Love as ever, no, more than ever.'

Letters written ten days apart but arrived together. Must tell him in case it's that secretary.

Dear John N. rang, eleven o'clock tomorrow. Lovely, everything left loose. Rang Janet and fixed the film and she said supper after. I am blessed with my friends.

Wednesday February 28 1996

A slightly more interesting and slightly more traditional dream. It happened, as so often, after I'd woken at fiveish, read, dozed off and – dream. It was back to childhood, and I was in bed with mummy in the middle room at Randolph Road. She suddenly got up and said 'It's daddy with Sally', and went out to let someone, them, I presume, in at the front door. She implied that Sally had been found ill. I could not get out of bed, - I was myself as I am now, and my eight? year old self. Sound of someone being violently sick. Then I seemed to wake up, and saw someone sanding at the foot of the bed, went hot and cold and prickly and shut my eyes.

I wonder if little bits of this are true subconscious memories. I did sleep in my mother's room sometimes – and very glad I was, as it was the only bedroom with any heat, a gas-fire – and perhaps she did rush out to be sick. She enjoyed a lot of bad health. Then daddy and Sally – Lalla?

The 'ghost' is another level of dream, and was the full-length mirror at the end of my bed.

John N. picked me up in a smart little black car. I asked him if we could drop off my laundry in F. Palace Rd, a great help, and perhaps pick it up, afterwards. He carried one of the bags across the road, saying 'I want to know how you live.'

Then on to Kingston, and on to H. Court. It loomed on our right after half an hour of ribbon development and Tudour semis. I had forgotten how it was an affair of so many chimneys and so like John's of course, when I came last time – when was it? Well, it was with the family, so it was probably during the war – I hadn't seen John's, but the likeness is startling, the feel identical. We went through the rising bar the car-park, £1.60, and walked between beds where roses were being pruned by six or seven gardeners, to the Tillyard Restaurant, also billed as the Garden Café and something else, but it was just the one glass-doored building with an outside area. One step inside, and the smell of hot coffee urns, and the sight of a lot of 'Lalla's friends' eating toad in the hole and ice-cream, - and no license – showed that it's not for us. 'We'll find an Italian in Hampton.' Even darling John has that curious motorist's disease of just going on driving. If you are not a driver, it is tiresome to be whisked further and further on. However, it certainly had a happy ending as we finished up in Teddington High St. opposite three Italian restaurants. We chose The Italian Café, partly because it looked good outside, mostly white picked out in green, rather Dufy-like, and partly because it had its own brasserie one side, and its own delicatessen the other. This last was the deciding factor, as a printed menu can be genuinely supported by easily available fresh food in a quite different way from the poor little made-up dishes waiting to be micro-waved that such a menu generally threatens. It was early - twelve-twenty - and we were the first customers. A tall young waiter – a real one, in the proper black w'coat, and the white apron beneath – came to greet us, and that, and the plain creamy-beige overall décor, made a restful background, - tiles, of course.

We both chose split fried sardines, with sambuca and mint, and then both a risotto, with asparagus, truffle, pecorino. The menu du jour was then handed to us, a little late but it was early. We didn't change our minds, and did not regret it. The sardines were juicy with very faint sweetness somewhere, a little dressed endive. The risotto was memorably good, but I had to leave a little as I was full. A bottle as J. remembered he wasn't working. We got delightfully up to date, not so delightfully with the depressing continuing story of Joyce. It would be of only clinical interest of a tiresome neurotic, if it were not that keen humour, perception, and intelligence. That we used to enjoy and love. The more John tells me of her condition now, the more I feel that D and I were lucky enough to have her friendship at the most stable time of her life. She has three 'psycho' therapists (sic) now, and has 'a transference on one of them'. i.e. has an ugly crush on him.

I noticed a faint undercurrent of – what? not discontent, or complaint, perhaps a little unease, or just reality – when he spoke of Simon, his Simon, I mean. At one point he said that S had a real tummy, he'd lost his waist. At another, he remarked on one of the workers of H.C., a rather louche-looking young man, and said 'Simon is always looking around like that.' J. is 49 in April.

He drove back to H.C., J explaining that this was Simon's company car – he's now with Cooper Lybrand whatever that may be, and he's a management consultant, whatever that may be. I don't enquire further, as I'm sure such work would disgust me, and I would be obliged to disapprove. Venal, but I love John. But more interesting, J hasn't got a car of his own now, and they're discussing giving up S's as well. We drove back through Bushy Park. I thought of Mrs. Jordan, driving up that long wide drive, that, leafless and asphalted, looks rather council-dominated. Did she drive back to Bushy every night? Surely not. It would be two hours or so to Drury Lane then, surely. I seem to remember from the Tomalin that she has a house in Covent Garden, but all through Bushy? I ought to remember. How wearisome if she didn't.

I was rather shocked that the entrance charge was £7.40. We have exactly the same views on monuments and galleries. We tramped firmly round, very occasionally stopping to look at a picture or a view or a piece of furniture. The guide has times for each bit, 'Kings Williams Apartment's' 45mins and so on. When we went in to see the kitchens, got up with plaster joints and rolls, and very stuffed deer, looking as much as anything like Selfridges's Christmas windows, we were passing through with a condescending sneer, when we realised that here at the first one, ten or eleven people were standing in a trance of delighted observation. But it wasn't observation, it was entrancing sound. They all had the Walkmans with the recorded guides telling what everything was. Oh dear.

I loved walking through the inter-connecting rooms. John didn't seem to catch the vistas through the rooms, with every door on the same side, and no apparent privacy. I suppose he hadn't caught the tremendous discipline and ritual of distant days, when everyone knew what room they should, and even more important, shouldn't be in. Some wonderful pictures, the Tintoretto, a Titian of a young man in black with a white collar-bib. The VIII garden being reconstructed is fascinating, not beautiful, but interesting.

He drove me to H'smith, so that I could shop. I let him off picking up my laundry, as, by that time, he probably would only get out of the Fulham Pal. Rd. jams in time to be stuck in central London. But it was a wrench, just as my arms have been wrenched.

Forgot to say that when he arrived, he brought me a bottle of red wine, and a large bot. of export gin. (Tanqueray Gordon – is that where Pinero...)

K's delivery firm rang at ten thirty this morning, and said it was an a.m. delivery. I said I couldn't be there before 9.30. He said he would tell the delivery people. Rather stiff and tired tonight. Oh, and he said the Akia 300 sound sampler wouldn't be available till the next delivery for Akai...

Thursday February 29 1996

To K's by 9.30 with some effort, and sat and waited. And waited. And waited. At 1.30 I tried some chips and only egg I could find, and at 2.30 I left. I thought five hours was enough. Sat down firmly to do nothing. Ought to have picked up my laundry, but hadn't the strength. In the p.m. to film, 'Get Shorty' with Janet and dear Frances. The film was quite witty and quick, immoral but then most work is floating in nothingness now. I only just enjoyed it, as I had great struggle to keep awake after a tiring week. And when I say 'struggle', I mean my eyelids kept coming down like camera shutters, my head swam, I ached to go to sleep, but, kept bringing my brain back to consciousness in case I snored. It was like a communist torture, but I must emphasise that I enjoyed the film between nods. After to dins at La Perla. I think I sang for my supper successfully and not too oppressively. Frances is such a good audience, and I notice in myself these days, when I have very little conversation with anyone, that when I do I have not the same judgment as before.

They both has pasta dishes, Janet some mushroom and something spaghetti, Frances a risotto. Janet was going to have a glass of wine, but didn't, and Frances never does. Both had mineral water. But dear Janet ordered the half-bottle and let me drink it all. Frances doesn't have a pudding or coffee. Janet had a chocolate thing and a cappuccino with it. Ugh. I had a vanilla ice and an espresso. I don't know why she keeps taking me out like this. It is sweet.

Friday March 1996

The dish we had on Wed. with 'sambuca' was a mystery to us both. So I looked it up. In the Latin Dictionary, a 'triangular stringed instrument, a harp.' The Oxford Dictionary is a little more forthcoming. 'A triangular stringed instrument, having a shrill tone.' 2. 'A military engine for storming walls.' It's a wonder we walked away unscathed.

Went over to K's for last feed of Boo before he comes back, to find a card from the delivery services, 'You were not in...' really. He turned it into a p.m. delivery without telling me. One of those odd times when Boo is nowhere in sight in the

garden, let alone in the house, when usually he is leaping up at the door when I'm opening it. He arrived shortly before I left, after the food had been down about twenty mins. Was it fortuitous? Had he smelt it? Why was he at the front door the other times?

I left some milk bread and eggs for K. I don't know how busy he'll be on Sunday, or how late he'll be tonight. I just want him to have an easy lunch tomorrow. When I got back, K rang from Lisbon airport, asked about the equipment, and was not pleased, tho' characteristically didn't take it out on me. 'That's not your problem.'

At 11.15 he rang again to say he was back safe, but obviously hadn't been in the sitting-room and seen my note. (How generations change! The sitting-room is the first room I'd go in, but the kitchen is his.) He stayed in Evora, after Monday and says it's the most beautiful place he's ever seen, 'More than Cambridge?' 'Yes' firmly. It seems every street is cobbled, of course it's rather like Prague. If your country is a bit poor, hideous business-men won't put up hideous office-blocks. He was so warm and murmuring about the eggs and bread.

Oh, I left my Complete Angler on the tube. I don't care at all, it's in print.

Saturday March 2 1996

Much milder. Sitting down all day.

Sunday March 3 1996

K rang to say dins tomorrow. Heavenly.

So Les Enfants is finished. What an expensive mistake. Did I say that Roy had to leave at the interval, or he'd have missed his last tube. I'm glad he didn't suggest we saw it, as I wouldn't want to hurt his feelings. Not that I could have sat there for that long.

Monday March 4 1996

Tuesday March 5 1996

Apart from the usual euphoria, I was really quite drunk last night. He has a delicious single malt, and I always forget how much more potent it is.

He was looking a bit tired, not battered, his face is too soft for that. He'd decided on salmon, and rather outraged by the price of salmon steaks compared to a whole salmon, - £3... each to £9.40 the lot - bought the whole salmon. 'I'm rather behind'... 'I've forgotten lemon.' 'Oh, I don't believe it, there's no ice.' The usual cries went up, dinner was at 8.15, with celeriac soup, one of my favorites, the salmon perfectly poached, broccoli with cheese sauce, sauté potatoes.

He showed me the computer which should have arrived when I waited in. It looks quite ordinary. Just a monitor and attachments. But he did manage to explain to me that it is a big advance on what he's had, in that he can put an advert-video into it, and bypass using the video recorder, to set the music to them. Specially as commercials are so short – 30 secs usually. He is doing well, - £35000 last year.

I told him about R losing his job. He agreed about R's reticence. I had told him that R had not told me he'd lost his job, for a fortnight. He told me that he had not rung R partly because he was doing so well in comparison. Well, it is a problem, especially between people of the same-age who were once equal.

Over the main course we finally got on to Portugal and Arlette. He brought back a few postcards of Evora, and it is a most beautiful place. A view of the town shows no hideous building, well, they're poorer... the hotel there sounds special, with wonderful services, most individual, a huge room half as high again as his sitting-room, and only £50 a night. He told Arlette the same standard of hotel in London would be £200 a night. Just as I expected, the idyll is beginning to exhibit – I think the right judgment would be, the first crinkling of the edge of the rose-leaf. She did absolutely nothing about his b'day, and didn't seem to register his, admittedly only slight surprise. They went to a disco, and she danced away with an old friend for obviously longer than he liked... 'I think I'm in love' with a faint interrogatory tilt of his head to me.

Suddenly she rang up, and I had a little chat too, and K rang back, but got cut off. It's quite impossible to tell as yet what she's really like. Suddenly talking to her like that, I was more aware of perhaps facile warmth, but she is young and Mediterranean, and I need to know more. More worrying on her account, was his suggestion, to me only I hope, that she could transfer to a British university. That would be very irresponsible on the basis of what is still, a short-lived 'holiday' romance. Amusing that it's in reverse.

Heavenly evening, illuminated by two moments, one slight, one more profound. When he was discussing this date, he thought he might come here, to see the new fridge he gave me. 'It's just a fridge.' 'Yes, but it's yours.'

Later, when we discussed money, he told me I must come to him for help, with bills, and so on. 'Just do it.'

Wednesday March 6 1996

John Wells and John Fortune dressed as politicians. 'Now, Mr. Murchison, I understand you are assisting the Chancellor in the preparation of the next budget.'

'Yes,'

'Are you an economist?'

'No. I've been seconded for Eurodisney.'

'Oh...er, I can't quite see the connection between fantasy theme park and the next budget.'

'Can't you?'

Children under five admitted to Mensa, by IQ tests. Curious that Mensa and IQ tests do not appeal to intelligent people...

It is exhausting me, preparing for Hazel. I've had to clear up and tidy up and altogether pretend I live quite differently. Now this is not because I care what she thinks. It's because I can't bear to embarrass small minded people. I'd do the same for Lalla.... I've had to do a couple of things every day for a week, as I can no longer put everything straight in a 'blitz'. At least I've cleared all the scripts etc. back into the book room.

Thursday March 7 1996

So that funny little shrimp, Cameron MacKintosh, is Sir Cameron. Another stage in the faintly absurd progress of a man whose 'talent' is for sensing what intolerably stale entertainment the charabanc public is going to want next. Mind you, I'm sure he's a good 'organiser' and 'administrator' and 'businessman' and... I wonder how he'll cope when he loses touch with his public. If you aim at your mother's taste, it's not a very happy choice.

Went to the Lost Property Office at Baker St. to ask about Walton. To my great irritation, it closes at two. Still, slight encouragement by finding that it takes some days for a lost object to come through, so I might have been a bit early anyway.

Friday March 8 1996

Not so cold and wet. Not much sign of spring except the crocuses in the Margravine Cemetery, though it's more of a park these days. The large patch under a big tree are sensitively planted enough to look natural, and there is a distinct leaven of that lilac almost luminous crocus which is the earliest note round here of real flowers.

Two deaths which I feel in a mild way. Simon Cadell died at 45. He had a triple heart by-pass a few years ago, when it was discovered that he had lymph-node leukemia, - they gave him some months to live. He lived two more years. Well, who knows what most doctors with their clumsy blunt-ended 'psychology' know of the truth? He smoked 80 strong Cigs a days, and always looked tense. Well, his mother was, perhaps still is, tense.

Gerald Savory has died in his eighties. He had a light touch as a TV producer in every direction, and there's no one left with same touch. I still think 'George and Margaret', which he wrote at 27 and ran for over 700 perfs. the archetypal drawing room comedy. We met him once at a party. He endeared himself to me by being a fan of D's, and to both of us by his wit and humour.

K rang. He's coming! Thank God. Oh, dear, the clearing and cleaning I've done every day for the last fortnight to make the place even moderately acceptable to Hazel. She'll just have to accept the damp and the falling tiles...

I see Trevor Nunn has been made Director of the National. None of the papers I saw, not even the Standard gave it more than a smallish para. on the inside page, let alone let it make the front page.

Saturday March 9 1996

Hazel arrived at about 12.30. She was wearing a good medium brown swagger coat, with some buttons in some unusual and interesting (sic) positions – the shoulder-blades, for instance. Her skirt was much the same milky brown, narrowly pleated, good country shirt, and a sandy coloured cardigan. Her hair is dyed dusty blonde, with a rather frizzy rather ‘country’ perm. Her flat shoes at the end of her legs a good deal heavier than rest of her suggests, completes the picture. We chatted for a bit, and she was sweet about the drawing room and my ‘things’. A call down below and the back door slamming. Enter to her K, his pony tail streaming, a thick designer stubble, rather chic completely opaque shades, a dark-blue white-edged sleeveless jacket, over a loose full sleeved dark blue shirt, black leather trousers, and big black boots. She got firmly kissed by the designer stubble, I brought up some wine, which Hazel refused. But she did bring a couple of bots. of red and white, and a smart-looking green porcelain jar of Stilton. (I was dashed later on to find that the lie-on lid, once released from the sellotape, fell off if you passed it quickly, and that, on the base, there was ‘Sell by Feb 17, 1996’. The cheese is a little sour and there may possibly be a bit more china than cheese). He brought a bottle of white, and a baguette, and some peanuts. I’d left a message about them on the machine, thinking he’d left. ‘It woke me up. I crashed at four, but I made up my mind to come.’

He looked quite fresh.

Hazel got up to meet him, saying, ‘I’m so pleased to meet you at last. I was beginning to think Angus had invented you.’ He charmed her straight away, as he does most people. Over the omelette-making he produced a music mag called Mix, and got her studio details in the new novel, settled. Lunch was a great success, I think. I made a tomato and bacon omelette for her, mushroom and b for us, a pepper chicory lettuce salad, and bananas in rum, which K didn’t have. I read them S’s letter over the coffee, which Hazel didn’t have. I could tell she was strongly affected by him because of the way she raged at how quickly time goes by. When she’d gone, I came back into the drawing room, and he’d cosied himself down into the sofa. He’d been on the red sofa. He re-hung the lustre and put the bulb back into the chandelier. He said consideringly, ‘She’s from that other part of your life that I don’t see enough of.’ We went to the tube, and onto opposite platforms. He gave me a hug, and stood shivering from across the track.

I loved today. When we are together with some else, his love and concern for me are obvious. In his wonderfully subtle and sensitive way, he faces the visitor completely with me. I relish the letting himself in, the call, the pushing aside the books to sit down, reaching out for the familiar ashtray, his obvious complete knowledge of and freedom in the house. ‘I’ll make the coffee.’ The affectionate teasing. And this is no longer an impressionable boy of 20. This is a successful man of 35.

Later. The Serbs are still burning everything as they leave. A typical example was a small cycle-factory blazing, 'One of the few small businesses in the area.' Could stupid useless bitterness be better exemplified? Perhaps in Northern Ireland.

Sunday March 10 1996

I watched a Gospel meeting in S'Hampton for a minute or two, in much the same way that I watch a rigger match for a similar time, so that I can hug myself with relief and pleasure that I shall never have to take part in either again. The meeting showed the usual row of inadequate, unattractive, unintelligent people, swaying themselves, so that for a while they can forget their inadequacy, their unattractiveness and their lack of intelligence.

Darling Sharron rang. Not much to say, except that she and George are seriously looking at last for a flat together. I think there's been a bit of friction at the present flat. It must be awful to have to take refuge in nothing but that tiny room. Had it a comfortable chair or only the bed? I forget. Certainly we never sat in it when we went to lunch, nor could we have done.

Hazel rang rather late after her Crime Writers Association meeting. 'He's so kind, of course I knew he was brilliant and I could see it, but he's so intelligent, perceptive, and so attractive. He's so sweet to you, and you are so touching together. He is like a son, but so much kinder than most sons.'

Do you know, I think she was really surprised at our closeness. But then I never get over people's low standards of love and friendship.

Later.

On the Antiques Roadshow, a Mickey Mouse watch from 1935-7, was valued at between £300-£400. It was exactly like the one that dropped out of my breast pocket down the corner of a groyne at Bournemouth in 1937. Because it had fallen into a corner, I thought I could plunge down and find it. But I never did. It followed my green monkey into oblivion.

Monday March 11 1996

Worked myself up to visit the taxman – and found he'd taken a half-day off... I was going to wear my very old mac, but I thought it dishonest.

I left a message after on his machine after R rang to say he would come and stay on Friday, and would he be free. No response. R was his usual self. 'So have you met your neighbours?' 'Oh, yes.' ... but nothing more.

Told Mary L of the sale of SD rights, because of it going in at the Vaudeville (!), that tour with Kit and the Widow (!) Heavens, imagine the gruesome assemblage of Slades at the first night. I wonder if Cameron Mac has put up the money. I supposed

Kit and the Widow will be starred, like Sheila Steafel and Elizabeth Seal in the last hopeless revival. Unless they have rewritten it, and given them more songs, there's no chance of them 'starring.' Poor little show. Perhaps it'll be a cult success, like Young England.'

I told him he'd left his dark glasses behind, by the way, and I'd bring them tomorrow.

Tuesday March 12 1996

He rang at half past one to say could I bring him a sandwich! 'Ham, tomato, but no cucumber. Chicken, or something from that café near you.' I said I'd got to go to Hammersmith anyway, so why not Pret A Manger. 'Oh, terrific!'

So I went to the Halifax to put in the £118 cheque from Felix, and then bought a chicken, crispy bacon and tomato sandwich, at £2.30, quite a lot of chicken. Unlike me, he didn't gobble it up straight away, and it wasn't quite finished when I left almost an hour later. He made us a cappuccino on his espresso-cap. machine, and we rang Robin and re-arranged his visit. K has a lot of small jobs to be done, R needs the money, and is not too proud to accept it, thank goodness. He asked me to post a little packet to Nigel in Australia, for his b'day. He gave me three fifty-pence, and three thirty-eight pence stamps.

The chap he was expecting, to work with, a sound engineer called Nick Berry, arrived. Looks a little like Jasper Carrot, thin sharp face, mid-thirties. He is quicker-witted than most musicians I've met, if you can call him a musician. He looked at Nigel's parcel and said 'A year's supply of condoms, I suppose.' 'Oh, you've met Nigel.' As we went on talking, and he told me he'd just taken his 'old mother' – some years younger than me – out to lunch at The Fire Station at Waterloo. Last time I noticed it, it was a fire-station. Sounds all right. It turns out his mother lives in – Bournemouth, Wellington Rd, sheltered apte. She has a mother 94, and a daughter, who was abused by the father for years, and now displays identical symptoms to Joyce. It's odd, it is a disease with the same results. 'So we burnt him and buried him and I danced on his grave.'

Rang taxman this a.m. He had to go to his grandmother's funeral.

Wednesday March 13 1996

Terrible news today. A man walked into a primary school in Dunblane, near Stirling and opened fire on a class of five year olds. He killed sixteen of them, and their teacher, and seriously wounded all the others except one little boy. It's thought he then shot himself. Unbearably moving to watch parents running to the school to find out... I had to turn it off. I couldn't see it. The worst happening since Aberfan. All day it has kept coming back to me and making me cry. Those poor parents and such young children, now with no future.

I also think of the wretched creature who did it. What depths of selfishness and wickedness he must have fallen into, probably over many years of brooding over his

wrongs, for his soul to have withered into the rotten little kernel that must have been all that remained to be blown apart by his own bullet.

Nevertheless, I ate the plate of bacon and eggs while watching the later news.

Took Nigel's parcel to the Post Office. The man weighed it, and said 'Is there a letter inside?' 'I've no idea.' 'If there's letter, it'll be £6.60. If not it'll be £2.38.' How ludicrous. I went out, stuck the stamps on that he'd given me, and posted it.

I see the Dunblane horror has further likeness to Aberfan. The Queen is going there next week. As far as I'm aware this will be the first disaster she has personally visited since Aberfan.

Thursday March 14 1996

Kate Adie, the BBC vulture, has flown down onto the corpses.

The murderer turns out to be such a perfect casting as to be almost unlikely... a little plump, seemingly perfectly bald, with little gold-rimmed specs; sacked from the Boy Scouts in 1974; runs sports clubs where small boys do gym and play football. 'No shirts, please.' A loner; an enthusiastic member of a gun-club, though one gun-club recently turned him down. There is already a call for the gun-laws to be drastically tightened and not before time. There are 1½ million licensed guns and perhaps 3 to 5 million unlicensed illegal-guns. Of course nobody should be allowed to keep guns at home, and I hope that civilization will advance one day to the point where there will be no guns anywhere else either. Future ages will look with amazement at men interested in guns and shooting. In just the same way will such 'hobbies' as motorracing and motor-bikes be looked at with amused condescension for grown men being interested in such childish pursuits and yet with repulsion as well for their dangerous ugliness.

A gun-club person, quite confident that he was saying something of complete general acceptance, after the suggestion that guns, be much restricted, 'Besides it's exciting. Like driving a fast car, people like it.'

Precisely.

Remembered that K had said he was lunching with S. and Snoo about Around The World. Oh dear another dud, I'm pretty sure. I rang and said I'd got the script to save him a fruitless search. 'When do you want it by?' 'In the cab on the way to lunch?'

Another revealing remark by a politician, 'The government should look more fully at the possession of fire arms by mentally disturbed people.'

Er.. yes.

Rang Roy and had a chat. I was much amused to find that the latest sign of Roy's distance from the 'roots' that used to loom large, is a country weekend with that ex of his, Lucy?, who married Sir somebody something. They have a sizable country-house

in somewhereshire, big enough to be let out for events and conferences. They decided to give a dinner-party in their own dining-room, for about fifteen people. Comically they asked R to bring some cheese down, because of course they couldn't get any in the depths of the country. Wonderful, wines, and Roy is quite careful about his wine these days – like Len Rossiter, and he was sitting next to – the Duchess of Somerset.

Looking up something else in the OED, I saw that 'ham' was defined as 'an inexperienced or ineffective actor.' Oh dear even the OED gets theatre wrong. I wonder what inaccurate chump gave them that definition. Ham actors are all too effective and seldom inexperienced, just badly over the top and tasteless. Olivier could ham sometimes. John G. never.

Friday March 15 1996

Met taxman at last. Usual narrow blinkered way of looking at just his little bit so as to make him incomprehensible to me a lot of the time. 'I'm a collector. The inspector who deals with your case is in Australia.' So nothing for a fortnight. Good.

Went to Halifax and Safeway's in Ken. High St., so that I came out of the tube at an usual time for me, six-ish, and met Crispin R on his way to An Inspector Calls at the Garrick? Bother. Not that I don't like him, but I can't afford, in every sense, anyone else in my life now. And he is a bit of a clinger. Bother.

Still awful news. The journalists are behaving badly. German TV teams banging on the door of some wretched woman who lives opposite the murderer.

Mary L said she would say one thing to the Queen, and the politicians if she lived in Dunblame, 'Fuck off!' Poor darling, wrong as usual. The public attention, within reason, will give many people comfort thro' recognition.

Saturday March 17 1996

Warmer. Three miniature daffodils out in the front garden. Janet gave me some finished bulbs from the office, they'd sat on the shelf and dried out just the right way. She the thought they were dead. They would be for further pot life, but popped in the garden during a wet cold winter...

Went out to get some wine with a garment or two over my pyjamas. Like B. Pym, I see how one can become really eccentric...

My days are rather empty by most people standards, I suppose, but, when I have no immediate money worries, I am actually more tranquilly happy than before, but he is vital.

Sunday March 18 1996

Milder again, and a tiny belief is growing that spring might actually come.

Monday March 19 1996

I am thankful to say that all the major TV companies have decided not to go to any funerals at Dunblane. Despite Mary L's despire, the Queen's visit yesterday has marked the end of the first stage of the tragedy. That is the point of a Head of State. I do see that the death of a child, especially a small child, is especially, piercingly, painful, if only because these parents will go through a whole lifetime of saying Now he/she would be eighteen, be married, grandchildren, and so on. The pain will just go on and on.

On This Morning, they had a vote on whether we should ban 'hand-guns' altogether. They had nearly fifty thousand calls, and the result was 92% for and 8% against. A specious advocate for the 'gun-lobby' – people who unhealthily like guns, and their capacity for sudden killing, if only of a target – quite upset the seasoned interviewers.

There is a rifle range, 'gun-room' – whatever, in the basement of the House of Commons, which was voted for instead of a crèche.

Had another silly talk to Mary L. She is devoted to Africa and its people mainly because of the climate, and her seasons in Nairobi, and her general prejudice. I unwisely said I thought a black girl in the corps de ballet of swan lake or Giselle was aesthetically undesirable, she said sharply, 'Twenty years ago, but not now.' She doesn't listen. It is wrong aesthetically because the corps is dressed all in white, and a black skin disturbs the values of the picture. Indeed the headdress is very unflattering to a black dancer. What is needed is a black version of Swan Lake with the black and white reversed, Odile in white and so on. One black swan is a source of comedy, like the one black sperm in Woody Allen's film. Oh dear, she has little balance or common sense. Poor D. no wonder she left her for me. (Not sexually, by the way...) She would be shocked to know that she is the one who is colour prejudiced.

I had rung K to say I was bringing the script of Around The World in Eighty Days back. Bought some cups and saucers for K, almost the same pattern – (They don't make the other one any more, tho' it was only last year) and an extra saucer for the one he broke. Nobody but he and I will notice that it's different. He's asked me to get some cheap wine glasses. So I went to that funny tacky 'gift shop', cheap-line store' or possibly a front for money-launderers or drug-dealers. Three glasses for £2.49. So I got six.

Up there he was in the middle of a session, but was v. sweet. I gave him the cups, and saucers, and he asked how much the glasses were, and came back with a twenty pound note, and that expression on his face of a little boy who's not quite sure he's doing the right thing. I accepted it gratefully, even though it meant he'd given himself his own present.

Tuesday March 19 1996

That wretched creature Hamilton has been cremated somewhere away from Dunblane. A grave might - would have attracted all sorts of unpleasantness. It said 'Only immediate family attended.' In some ways, just as frightful an occasion as the funeral of the children. I am sure his relations are as inadequate and half-human, in some ways, as he must have been. They are partly responsible for what he became, and the rest is his own fault. And how terrible that is.

I rang Sharron at the shop to say we were still on for tonight. We were. I said I'd got a guinea-fowl, as he'd wanted chicken and I had that bit of money from K. Not that I told her that. I thought mushrooms and anchovies, and bananas and rum after. But it was a very little effort meal, and I'd done nothing much towards it except to put the mushrooms in the dressing, when Sharron rang at about ten to seven. I was just about to nerve myself, for the 'final effort'; she was already at home, and said she had had no money, and had put her card in two machines, and it had been rejected both times. So she just hadn't been able to get a ticket to get here. She seemed quite composed, but I felt there might be something else going on, such as no money. But perhaps not.

At my age, it's always liberating to be let off, getting and serving dinner. There was quite a carnival air. I gobbled the guinea-fowl. And later a good deal of the rest of it. Wonderful. So delicious.

Wednesday March 20 1996

Nastily cold again, and I did not go out all day.

R. rang, rather oddly, to return my call on Monday, tho' we are meeting tomorrow. K had told me he's only coming for two days, instead of the inside a week, for the jobs K wanted done. Once again he's going back for Saturday night. I think he's got a new girl he's not telling us about in his cautious way. So I'm going over tomorrow night not Friday. Just as well as I had a card from S. saying he was recording in S. Bush, and would come round for 'A glass of sherry.' The trouble with S. is that his 'regime at noon' changes so often that it might actually be sherry he wants. The card was a picture by Lord Leighton of two of the usual languorous classical ladies, being played to on the flute by a broad-shouldered muscular young man in a loincloth, with his back to the artist. 'And they tell me he wasn't gay. Look at that back.' As Katrina upstairs is a fan of S's, I expect she read it. What will the neighbours think?

A strange surprise was a tax rebate, of course it's just taken off the debt but still... from 1990-1, £308 too much was paid, and that was under John Davis.

Thursday March 21 1996

Friday March 22 1996

Another heavenly evening, except for K. being rather tired, and snapping my head off twice, rather underserved, I thought - not that I care these days, - and John Warnaby

arriving later on, happily about ten minutes before I always go. It's no use, - I cannot like him, he makes me uneasy. There is not only the disapproval of his working in the City anyway, let alone combining it with acting, - impossible to our generation to dilute oneself, as it were – but also his perfectly obvious complete lack of interest in anything I say or do or am. I could just see him almost saying, 'Oh, well, let's just wait till this boring old man's gone.' I don't think he's ever addressed a remark to me.

However, that's the only crumpled rose-leaf, and only the last ten mins. When I got there, there was R. Oh, it was lovely to see him again, looking so well, with his hair curling all over his head, as it should, not shorn close, - his head is too small for his face for that. I looked at the ashes in the grate and said, 'Hasn't he lit the fire to welcome me?' – so R turned to, and lit it. With characteristic thoroughness, tearing a news paper into strips, and the strips into little nuts, saying the Guardian was the best. Went to hang my coat up in the hall, R having said K has someone, I assumed in the studio, K called from the kitchen. 'This is Angus,' he said, to a rather strange figure at the kitchen table. A long face, a big beaky nose, beakier from the gaunt white cheeks, topped by a sort of tam o'shanter, and the rest of the beanpole hung around with – was there a bit of tartan somewhere? – equivocal garments that seemed to combine trousers and skirts. So I was not surprised when K. said 'This is Wendy.' Later it turned out W. is an interior designer, tho' down on his luck, and is going to paint the house while K goes to Portugal for a fortnight this time. (Oh, yes that was another reason for my heart to sink...) He left before the g&t, and K brought in the drinks and sat beside me on the sofa. R said 'I don't think I can face both of you on the same sofa.' Well, we did laugh a lot as usual, or they laughed at me. I can't remember any of the things I said that made them laugh so much, except me describing the Harry Ramsey chips as 'the best multiple chips.' Not very funny, rather obvious, they screamed. Over dinner, Covent Garden spicy Italian soup, shoulder of lamb, knuckle-end, and some delicious fresh veg. – pots, carrots, leeks – that R had brought from Cambridge. He also brought me a dozen fresh eggs, which he knows I love to have. Or perhaps K told him, as he never forgets (I fried one today, Friday, and was surprised at how the white foamed.)

Over dinner he embarked on the rather depressing story of last night's dinner with Snoo and S (Did I say that I had tried the script again, and found it once more feeble beyond description?) At one point Snoo mentioned something else he'd written, and S said enthusiastically, 'I'd love to read that.' 'I sent it to you thirteen months ago.' K was made rather impatient, and I was very pleased with him to hear that he said 'Is this to be a big musical or a small to medium musical?' A vital question, which seemed to leave them both floundering. I just cannot imagine either of them coping with a big original musical, and all its concomitant difficulties – not least the audience, which neither of them would, or could, come to terms with. I fear the dinner was probably S's way of buying Snoo off after this long delay. He would be shocked to hear that he does such things, but of course he does such things, - an intellectual gloss makes no difference. R remarked that he'd written to S three or four times about the musical he sent him, 'I've given up now.' Roy hasn't heard either, and that must be repeated many times over. Now I am well aware that S is well-known, very busy and must have a lot of unsolicited scripts, and we all know how few scripts are worth opening. Snoo? But there is such a thing as wearing out your good

will. And I think K was rather contemptuous. He has heard S's wonderful expansive inspiring talk too often.

Then R told us of his village life in Wilburton. His house is opposite the pub where the landlord and landlady introduced him to some of the regulars. One of these is Alan, a plumber?, one of his next door neighbour's, whom R described rather oddly, as the first real working-class he's know at all well. Odd. One end of the terrace is occupied by a woman of 50, back from Lanzarote with her two teenage children, after her husband left her. She gave a barbecue, and caused great offence by not asking the whole terrace. His own next-door neighbors were a lesbian couple who moved out without warning almost.

ANGUS MACKAY DIARY NO. 140

March 21 1996 (cont.) -
May 4 1996.

Thursday March 21 1996
Friday March 22 1996 (cont.)

and certainly without saying goodbye. He signed on last Monday, and has completed the first Act of a new play about cannibalism called Love Me Tender. K, told me R is coming to stay part of the time he's away, to do various jobs, and when he told R Wendy might be staying too, R said 'Oh I don't want to stay here with Wendy', with heartfelt panic that made us scream again.

Of the John W. arrival, I've written, but not of the look on K's face when kissed me goodbye.

Today I was expecting S's flying visit at six o'clock. At five his secretary rang to say he was 'running late' and couldn't come. Not much of surprise.

Saturday March 23 1996

Tried to read Daddy's limited edition of Baron Munchausen again. The scholarly introduction celebrated the universality of 'The Love of makebelieve, of uproarious laughter unhindered by any scruples of truth.' No, I need truth to laugh. I read a couple of chapters and found it laboured, and really a one joke affair. I'll sell it, I think. No wonder Terry Gilliam made a film of it. No wonder I walked out.

Instead of a boxing-match, there was a half-hour film devoted to the memory of Red Rum's character and achievements (sic). If only D had been a horse...

Sunday March 24 1996

I hope we're over any real cold weather. It is more like spring though the beech leaves are still all in place outside my bedroom window, so perhaps there are more frosts to come.

What silly irrational discussions people constantly have about drugs! Just as they would now if alcohol were suddenly invented. The important point is that we know little about many drugs, and must go carefully. Whereas we have drunk alcohol for thousands of years, and know how to manage it, expect for those who overdose, who would overdose on anything. No sign from Justin re the 'phone bill.

Monday March 25 1996

Yes, it's sad to have to say that Justin has not rung, as he promised, about the £40 odd he has owed me for over three weeks, and the bill must be paid by tomorrow. So I was obliged to ring K to ask him to pay that and the water rate. He was so good, tho' saying he was getting a bit low. Still, there is a good deal to come in, and Jeff? Warne? a firm of some kind, has offered to take over Noiseworks. I made a little negative noise, 'No, not for good, just for six months. I made a point of that, they'd no doubt bring us a great mass of work, but I've heard one or two bad things about Jeff Warne, so I'll put off deciding till after Portugal, when I may know more.' He went on to chat – lovely- because this week is 'absurdly full, and I don't think I'll be able to see you. I'm going for a fortnight because it's her vacation, and then she's got her exams and I've got to get my head down three or four months, so it'll be only odd weekends, if that -'. Got to get his head down? He was up till six or something on Wed night, and probably since. They're going to the Algarve, where they met. Probably not too expensive, as constant fucking is cheap.

Oh, on crime programme, a broad faced woman, about my age, with one of these large silk scarves casually thrown round her black clad shoulders. Mary Tuck, obviously the same one. How could the woman she is now, rather magisterial, (probably literally) a qualified, I suppose, criminologist, marry that figure of fun, Robin Tuck? She must have been desperate. On the other hand, why was he a friend mine? I must have been desperate. They came to dinner and so on, and D liked her....

A memorable letter in the Independent on the Dunblane horror, 'If you want a hand gun, you are not fit to have one.' If I had money, I would put that on every hoarding in the country, and a leaflet in every letter-box.

Gloomy little programme with an acting class given by Pru Scales, during which she apologised for the word 'effective'. Of course no such classes, or rehearsals, should be shown to the public.

Oh, and I forgot to say that when I said that it would be better if he brought the blaze-end of a shoulder, he said, 'Oh but you've always said a joint on the bone.' And the darling saw more bone in the knuckle half. Last week he said 'Why didn't you remind me of Mothers Day?' 'Well, I used to, but not for five or six years.'

Tuesday March 26 1996

No, we're not over the cold weather yet, there is going to be a couple of degrees of frost tonight. I meant to go out, but it was or looked, so cold and wet, it was pleasanter to stay on the sofa.

I see there is less and less money for swimming-lessons at schools, and they may have to give them up, altogether. How divine I'd have thought that when I was fifteen. I never learnt to swim, and suffered so much from the cold, and most of all, from having my breath taken quite away by the cold so that I could only choke. I must be different from most people.

I recorded the shortened version of the Oscars; there are usually only one or two moments that I would want to watch and many stretches of rancid sentimentality have to be fast forwarded. For example, I, by mistake, caught a moment of Christopher Reeve in his wheelchair, getting a standing ovation for having been paralyzed in a riding accident. Disgusting. So odd for Jane Austen's name to be bandied about there. I think I know what she'd have thought, the Sense and S. costumes were modeled as if they were modern, with swaying hips, and catwalk walk. What might strike her first about this, and indeed the overwhelming proportion on modern life, is the complete lack of dignity.

Wednesday March 27 1996

I am looking forward to some chuckles over the next few weeks. 'Salad Days' is being put on at the Vaudeville for its 40th Anniversary. Chuckle no.1. It's actually the 42nd. Chuckle No. 2. It's being directed by Ned Sherrin, whom forty years ago, was just the sort of camp wit who was most savage about it. Chuckle No. 3. Kit and the Widow are 'starring' in it. Just as in the last revival in '77, when D and I were asked to leave the auditions, ! They made the mistake of 'starring' Sheila Steafel and Elizabeth Seal above the title. SD is a rep. show with everyone playing five or so parts except the boy and girl. The poor public will be rather puzzled as to why the star names are not the stars. The advertisements – well, I'm glad there are some – show a girl in an approximation to a fifties evening dress, and a boy in a shirt and trousers and slip-over in a complicated pattern straight out a '30s college picture. She's wearing long white gloves to emphasise the difference. Thus quickly do the facts of fashion get forgotten. Of course it may all too likely be an ignorant and inadequate designer. It is billed as 'Julian Slade's magical musical' what a good time he must be having! I wonder if any of the family have actually said that he ought to have had all the credit and the money all the time.

Oh dear, it's such a vulgar little occasion and such a poor little show. I keep thinking of all the sentimental vulgarities poor Julian must be going in for now he's completely unchecked. And I look up at D's big photo and have a giggle.

I shall be fascinated to see if I get an invite...

Thank goodness the whole thing is such an obscure little event. If it were not, I suppose I might be asked to 'say' something. Nothing could be further from my taste, except in the most indirect way, for a biography, or S's interview. But I am constantly surprised by the lack of thoroughness in pursuing sources. For instance I spent nine months in a small cast play with Vivien Leigh and L.O. I talked to them every night, or listened or observed. I must have written quite a bit in here about it all forty-three years ago.

Nothing striking about the beef counters in Safeway's as yet – certainly no cheaper. Perhaps when they replace present stocks.

I left two 'phone calls unanswered today. I must sum up this odd week when it's over.

Thursday March 28 1996

I see the Globe is opening with *The Two Gents*. This seems to me a very good choice. Opening new theatres is notoriously difficult, so a light play, not so often done, will not rouse heavy expectations, and may surprise, and not so likely disappoint. So far has ignorance advanced that one announcement tried to imply that the audience was being shortchanged with an inferior 'almost unknown' play. Unfortunately the delicate speaking necessary really to bring to life this early version of *RandJ Hamlet et al* is not readily available these days. Imagine a present-day actor speaking *Who is Silvia*, without either barbarism or affectation. Yes, I know it's a song.

I should have said before that I had a big picture card filled with a letter from Sharron after our talk the other night. It seems I inadvertently upset her by asking her 'And are you still on your own?' 'Bluntly', as she put it. We have of late talked quite lightly of her obviously short-term relationships in reaction to the break with K, but it was obtuse of me not to realise that, to her, they had not been obviously short-term, or necessarily in reaction. So my short-hand is, or suddenly seems, heartless. She talks of her 'new' friendship with K, and on the 'phone said she didn't want to hear about K. I have told her about the Portugal fortnight, thinking she would want to know where he was. Another mistake. The 'new' friendship is plainly a sham, and she is far from over him. I wrote to her, and hope to recover myself.

In the paper it helpfully said that Safeway's in Hammermith had halved its beef prices. Even that would not bring the cuts I like within my grasp. Apparently, in Banbury, where there is very big central cattle market, it was empty for the first time for seventy years. The general strike, I presume, rather than a celebration of my birth.

I was watching the Young Musicians competitions, and one of the judges said, of interpretation, 'It's like an actor who wouldn't use the same voice for 'The Archers' as for 'Sooty.' Er – no.

I was going to the film, which was *Copycat* with Sigourney Weaver and Holly Hunter. I went out as usual at twenty to seven – and waited for nearly twenty five minutes. No Piccadilly line. At twenty past seven got on a District line train. I would be late, a flustering walk from Charing X, but at West Kensington the train stopped, and stopped... now I could have tried for a Picc. train, or a bus, or got to the Twentieth Fox place somehow and waited for Janet to eat. I just couldn't, so I lied and said I'd been on the District Line train for nearly an hour. Later on I rang K's, with a noisy obligato of the takeaway arriving, and told him the same thing.

It's interesting that I have cancelled three engagements this week, no, four. I cancelled Sharron, more or less truly because I hadn't enough money. I cancelled dear Paul because I just wanted to sit down. And I cancelled dear Tim on Friday, for the same reason. To these last I gave the same lie, that I had to be at K's for the decorators, the equipment, and so on, and I had to be there. Interesting. I don't mind the social lies. Despite K's strict disapproval, I'm sure. It's that I more or less always want now to be alone. I walked away down Baron's Court Road with that lightening

of the heart that I almost always get now when I don't have to do something social. Age? I suppose I never want not to see him, and very few others. It was lovely sitting here eating cold belly of pork.

Friday March 29 1996

A pleasant surprise that Talent-Residuals agreement I signed with Felix saying 'There is money to be collected!' – I suppose it's a new sort of agency like PRS for all these new channels – has produced a cheque for £199 for two episodes of the Edward VII, I did twenty years ago. Such a relief. Told K, and said I should give it to him. 'Don't be silly.'

Did some shopping with a lighter heart, and the knowledge that I could pay the gas-bill. Went to Earl's Court to see if I could find Francis King's new novel, Ash on an Old Man's Sleeve. There was a poster outside Oddbins, all properly written saying 'Until further notice we shall not be stocking any wines or beers made from British beef. We are sorry for any inconvenience to our customers, but we feel we should take a moral stance on this issue.'

This time at Safeway, the minced beef had mostly been replaced with whole hams. But was still at the same sort of price as far as I could see. Lamb and Pork will never be so cheap again! In Earl C Rd. I was greeted by John Quentin whom I hadn't seen for years. He has a waspish delivery but is actually perfectly pleasant. I don't know what I looked like to him, a collapsed pouchy bag no doubt. He looks like a bleached skull. Oh, age. Not that I mind what I look like but I think perhaps he does. Holding yourself carefully together is a mistake, I think.

I must say I do think Billy Connally was very very funny some years ago. 'All these Scottish singers singing shortbread tins.'

Saturday March 30 1996

On the seat I usually rest my poor aching carrier bags on, on H'Smith station, I found a little pile of 'papers' turned out of a girls handbag. There were supermarket receipts cards, present tags, credit card duplicates, and an air letter. It wasn't clear to me whether she'd turned them out as rubbish, or just lost them. There were a couple of photos of children in a fold of paper, and so on. Impossible to send back, as, although I could find out she was Gaylene Uren – good heavens! – possibly originally from Tasmania, where Gaylene might indeed have sprung new-minted – there is no one address to cling to, the possible candidates including Kenya, London, Huddersfield, Spain, Thailand, and Peru. So I threw them in the bin.

The air-letter has a quotable bit, it is from a girl called Susan Holdsworth at the time in Chile to Gaylene and her, I suppose, boy-friend, in Kenya. The writing is an unformed school girl of ten, with spelling and especially punctuation to match. (Goodness knows what actual ten year olds write like now.) She has been supporting herself in Chile by teaching English and learning Spanish from her boy-friend, Jorge, whom she is now bringing back to England to meet her family in Yorkshire. Of

course she moans about the English climate. Afterwards, 'If we're still getting on well, I'll come back to S. America although I'm a bit bored of teaching English mainly because I'm never sure if my students are going to cancel or not, so I'm not sure of the money! So really I'm not sure what I'm going to do! The story of my life really!! Not being doing very much cos being saving my money for the trip'...

Apart from illiteracies, the whole letter is vapid to a degree, and quite confirms what I oversee or overhear in the tube or on the streets or from some of my friends, that travel narrows and dilutes the mind. Oh, those back-packs, knocking one off one's feet.

K rang at ten past three, off in an hour or so. Told me to ring Wendy every two days, 'Give three rings and put 'phone down, ring again and he'll answer.' And my spymaster number is... I think he thinks W needs keeping an eye on. 'Are you sitting down? I've got a mobile 'phone.' 'Oh, I thought you had one already. You're always talking in the bathroom.' 'No, this is one that works from Portugal. The next news is that it isn't working at all. I'll ring you when it is.'

And now he's gone for a fortnight.

At eleven, Justin rang and made everything more or less all right. The foolish boy should have told me he hadn't money to pay. He told his mother about the prostitution, and she only said 'Aren't you a bit old for that, dear?' He's going back to it to make some money. Prostitutes, transvestites, I am going down market.

Sunday March 31 1996

Got over to K's at half-past four, - and was rather miffed to find 'Wendy' already there so needn't have bothered to come and feed the cat. However, I was quite glad I did go, to give him a bit of jump.

He didn't seem to have done much, and was lying on the sofa, in a pair of rather pretty drop-earrings, watching TV. I didn't go upstairs, so I'll give him the benefit of the doubt. He said he'd fed Boo, and I suppose he had, but the dish had obviously not been washed and was empty. As Boo never eats the whole dish at once, he can't have given him a dishful. Well, it won't do Boo any harm to have a little less.

I also brought away some spring greens, carrots, a hunk of cheese, and an opened two-thirds full bottle of Muscadet, in the 'fridge door with no cork in it.

Oh dear, how spectacularly untidy young men are now, even transvestites.

It was the coldest March 'Since records began in 1909'. 1909? I thought records went back to more like 1709. I must look up Gilbert White.

Monday April 1 1996

It is quite impossible to bring off those tiresome April fool hoaxes in newspapers nowadays. Nothing could be sillier than reality. As usual, I'd meant to go to Selfr., to the candle-shop in Oxford St., to a film in Tott. Crt. Road, but only managed to go and get my pension, and do a bit of shopping without even crossing the road. You get two years of pension at once at Bank Holidays, as the P.O. is shut next Monday. Very unlike officials to let you.

Tuesday April 2 1996

A ghastly prog. about a new horror on the face of American evangelists, already horrific enough – on evangelist of fourteen, with all the tricks. Ugh ugh.

Yet again I set out to do more than I actually did. I meant to go to Selfr. for some ink, to Halifax in Oxf. St. for some money, to the candle shop for some tapers. To the stationers for some of those books, and to a film at Tott, Court Rd. In the end all I did was go up to New Row, buy the last four Vols of this without 'Denbigh' in gold letters on the cover. (Poor Denbigh, I daresay they're losing confidence, and will vanish before too long.) And then to the pen shop in Regent Street and buy two bottles of this ink. On my way back from the Pen Shop, to give it its probable capitals, I walked down a little passage into Vine St. I don't think I'd ever walked down it before, and I thought it was the position of Albert Campion's flat in M. Allingham.

About midday I rang 'Wendy', but had not got as far as the signal of three rings, when he answered, saying he'd found out how to do it, without disturbing K's messages. He demonstrated a brisk assertiveness that he had shown before. I needn't ring again till he would ring on Saturday morning, after which he was going to France, to stay with a friend in Perigord. 'I think I'll get through except for the pelmet and Kevin said I can do that when he's here.' Why haven't I got a friend who asks me to stay in France, so that I can refuse?

I have never fathomed quite why vocal characteristics are exaggerated by the telephone, my father sounding more Irish, if anything. 'Wendy' betrayed his O.K. middle-class accent. He may even be – whisper it – a public schoolboy gone native. Though K doesn't sound more Liverpool, I don't think.

I saw a little something with 'Stock' and 'Aitken'. It seems 'Waterman' was the businessmen. 'He was the headmaster, and we were the pupils.' The strikingly ordinary men presented, might have been garage attendants or shelf packers, obviously without extraordinary talents of any kind, except an extra dose of platitude. Like Andrew Lloyd Webber and Cameron Macintosh, they are their audience, and will happily die with them.

Rang Mr. Awcheng at the appointed fortnight – he wasn't there...

Later R. rang 11.0. Not coming Tuesday. Natasha is coming to stay, and his mother over Easter. So I will be feeding Boo all next week... people are so changeable nowadays.

Wednesday April 3 1996

Re-reading 'Clayhanger' with the usual pleasure – a great novel to me. Someone says 'So long' and is answered by 'So long.' The book was published in 1910, and he's writing of 1880ish. Looked it up, and found that its isn't American, 1st usage 1834 (colloq.)

Justin came round to pay what he could of the telephone bill. This time it consisted of bottles of Scotch and gin and tonic. Now I rather like being forced to spend money on drink and it's Easter and I need stocks over the long weekend. All the same, I shall be obliged to tell him that, in the real world, people don't do such things. He doesn't seem to have earned anything from renting himself. I fear poor Justin will have to vanish from our lives. He only took away a carrier-bagful of his stuff, he doesn't do anything. Poor soul. The vapid nature of his personality will one day blow him away.

I watched University Challenge for a moment, and am always struck by the fact the less physically attractive team usually wins, of course.

Thursday April 4 1996

A strange start to the day. I was looking out between the bedroom curtains to enjoy the people upstairs going away for Easter, always treat. I suddenly saw someone in a hat, coming in at the area gate. It was Sharron, and only ten-thirty. She twirled the bell, not using her key. It was therefore quite by chance that I was up and compos and able to let her in. She was in tears, with big shadows under her eyes, and obviously tired and very strung up. It turned out that the move, put off twice, took place yesterday, and when they arrived at the flat, in Crouch End, the path had great bags of cement and planks all over it, a hazard for the removal men, and, inside, there were six workmen still laying the floor, and putting in the kitchen units. And the back room is damp, and they've called in the Environmental Health officer, who said... So they left the stuff there, 'So I hope it's all right with the house open', and went to Gorge's boy-friend's house in West Hampstead, where he lets out most of it. Happily there was an empty room for her, but 'George and the b.f. had a bit of a quarrel, and I couldn't let it out then, and I rang two friends and they weren't in, so I came to you.' She was on the sofa by now, having given me four bunches of beautiful daffodil buds, a bunch of iris buds, and shown me a bag with a new loaf, a packet of PG tips, a carton of semi skimmed milk (nasty stuff) and a pot of apricot jam. I was upset that she'd spent all that money – all was new – partly to save me money and partly because she wouldn't be sure I had any of it. And of course I hadn't.

I found out that she'd had nothing to eat today. Let alone during the 'traumas' of yesterday, and I made her a cup of tea, and she had a couple of cups and a cigarette or two, and gradually we talked of other things. I made her a bit of toast – it was such a

delicious little lightly baked cub loaf, that it didn't toast well, the crumb being too moist to toast before the crust burnt – and she had that, and some jam. And a bit later again, she said she was feeling better. Well, she was sitting down and leaning back. She left about one, meaning to go back to the flat after five or so, and I have no confidence that the place will be ready. The landlord sounds a pig.

In the p.m. to Ealing to make the insurance payment at the Alliance, and after to that remainder bookshop, and found the two vols. of Antonia White's diaries, £2.95 each, paper-back, of course. I have always felt an interest in her, since she turned down D's book of short stories. When she was publisher's reader for somebody or other. I must say, as the photographs advance, she does seem to get crosser and crosser. The bits I've read so far really make one wonder whether everyone slept with everyone in the '30s literary world. I get impatient with them for being such spoiled children.

Got myself ready to go to the film. It was one of my days for feeling a bit full, but that wasn't altogether why I suddenly decided not to go on to dinner afterwards. It was partly because of Sharron's visit and virtue had gone out of me. It was partly because I rather dreaded straining to hear Janet Browne's uninteresting conversation, and then the taxi ride, full of dinner...

The film was 'Stolen Hearts' with Sandra Bullock, a good real girl, and Dennis Leary, who is a stand-up comic, and wrote the script. I thought it a bit rambling, and thoroughly immoral, but passed the time. The Janets were completely dismissive, Janet B probably partly because of the frequent fucks but Janet M rather surprised me. It didn't seem good enough to be so rude about it. So I was more than ever pleased not to be going to dinner. And Janet B. had nervously dismissed my sympathy and asked three times that I would not tell anyone she was not happy with her agent, a subject I had discussed with Janet M, so... She is a bore.

So back here I tucked in to sausages and eggs and fried pots, alone and quiet.

Friday April 5 1996

Turned on 'Quo Vadis'. Like a time-machine, now, TV spins you back to – 1951, a dim reminiscence in P. Ustinov's evening. And there was a perfect (sic) reproduction of 'The Last Supper' – frozen – and then comes to life. Jesus as a commercial.

Sometimes, when seeing a survey of something, in this case the Olympic Games, I see how much better, in many ways, if television had never been invented. There was the news report of the eleven Israeli athletes being assassinated at the Munich Olympic Games. I noticed the headlines, but otherwise it made little impact on either of us. Thank goodness. The mounting hysteria of the twentieth century is certainly partly due to the constant reiteration of depressing events to the mass audience, by increasingly realistic means. I think we were meant to see only such events as came within our own sight. Of course, you can't go back.

K rang on his phone, to say Stan was going to be there over the w/e so I needn't start till Monday. It's 70° there and he'd has a swim – in the sea, 'But Arlette isn't out of her jeans and shirt, it's still winter to her.' So sweet, but I long for him to be back.

Arlette so sweet, when I asked about her exams, she said she's brought her books with her, - she was going to do an hour's work a day...

I play Deanna Durbin singing When You're Away and feel worse and better.

Saturday April 6 1996

Went to get some more money from the Halifax, that nice fat cheque, and it wasn't cleared. £10 only. Bother.

Greer Garson has died aged 91 in Dallas of all places. A much inflated reputation for a sharp pretty woman. We were once at one of Stanley Hall's New Year's Eve parties in the '60s. We were rather well off, or doing well, at the time, and had hired a chauffeured car for the whole evening so that we could get away the moment we wanted to, New Years Eve being impossible for taxis. We realised that Isobel Jenne, then in her 70s or 80s, had no-one to take her home. Once in the car, D tried to tell I.J. without gush, what her distinguished high comedy had meant to her as a young actress in the thirties. I.J. said, 'Oh, I thought nobody knew who I was nowadays.' D said 'I remember seeing you in a play in Coronation year, called Ladies and Gentleman, I think. And you made your first entrance painting your nails. And on your first speech you got three laughs. 'I've painted this one red, this one white, this one blue, this one red, this one white, - I've got one nail left over.' Laugh. 'What shall I put on it? Mickey Mouse?' Laugh. 'Or Hitler's thing?' In 1937 you could still, just, get a laugh out of a swastika. I.J. said, 'Oh yes, I liked the play, but it didn't go.' We were running along the embankment, with Isobel Jeans sitting on the left-hand of the back seat, looking out at the river. D said 'Oh, and wasn't it the last play Greer Garson did before she left for Hollywood?' Isobel Jeans turned her head to the left, patting back her hair, while giving a silvery little laugh, and said, 'Ah, Greer Garson', consigning her to the Thames.

Caught only the curtain-calls of the ridiculous Les Miserables concert, filling the Albert Hall. Twenty, perhaps more, leading men, from all over the world, singing the same song altogether, surrounded by flags of all nations. Well, one of the few things that can be said for Cameron Mackintosh, is that, unlike Andrew Lloyd-Webber, he doesn't take curtain calls.

Jim Rosenthal play set in Cambridge, was a rather crude affair, but Cambridge looked beautiful. Still.

Sunday April 7 1996.

D has been dead for nineteen years.

To lunch with Janet. Took her a box of Bristol Cream truffle chocolates that I couldn't afford, and the first camellia of the white bush. Saw Tiger being let out. I had forgotten how beautifully marked he is, as much like a wild cat as anything, down to the lemur like alternating rings round his tail. Lunch was a baked potato with lots of little dishes, as before, coleslaw, spring onions, beetroot, yoghurt and chives, sea-

food in a pink sauce and so on. Most of them I passed. Oh, and carrot and coriander soup to start with, that she'd made. But the wine... One of her clients was leaving London, and gave Janet 'a boxful of bottles', and on the cupboard in the sitting room were three or four unopened bottles of liqueurs, Grand Marnier, Drambuie, and so on. 'I've two bottles of white wine in the 'fridge - you choose.' Both were white burgundy, - I chose the Louis Lutour Meursault, no less. So that made the meal.

~~Afterwards she talked of Janet Brewer, who now comes to stay one night a week, almost every week. And really thinks the same of her as I do. Though she doesn't like to admit it - Janet B is pushing away the death of her daughter. They went to the daughter's flat in Clapham, Dinmore Rd. down Balham Hill. It hasn't been touched, paper where she left it etc. Why not rent it? Sell it? She does nothing. It seems she has been estranged from her son for two years. It's not a Christian Scientist who does a Christian Scientist think when a daughter dies of an inoperable brain tumour? Glad I didn't go to dinner on Thurs. Andrew and Willy something were there as well - I wouldn't have heard a word. I wonder who paid.~~

Monday April 8 1996

Another stage dream. Goodness, how unpopular I am in my dreams.

Janet gave me the usual wodge of London Review of Books. Started to read an article by John Bayley, on the Rattigan Biography. Isn't he Iris M's husband? He's written good sense in the past, but, as so often, the theatre seems to bring out foolishness. The first two sentences made my jaw drop. 'The point of modern theatre is not to hold the mirror up to nature', but to shock, surprise and excite. (Shakespeare was a playwright from the accident of his time: his true talents are only marginally theatrical.)'

I like the throwaway bracket.

Rang Mary L to read it to her, and just remembered in time that it was her b'day. I had sent her a card! She went to a pub in St. John's Wood, and had a beer and a sandwich. She used to live there, and that's what she likes. She has a curious sentimental attachment to pubs, and what she imagines their 'life' to be. She only observes it, never joins in it.

I saw and heard a remarkable boy violinist, aged twelve or thirteen, Tony Sabberton, if that's how you spell it. Remarkable tone, intonation and agility. 'Do you want to play in the Albert Hall?' 'I want to play everywhere.' Studious looking, glasses, toothy.

K rang at 9.0, walking back to the flat he's taken, with a chicken casserole he's made in the oven. Told him of Sharron's trouble but not that she doesn't want to hear about him. Told him also of talk with Marjorie and he said she had 'a little stroke' a fortnight or so ago and couldn't speak for a bit. I suppose she rang me to get a bit of a lift. She didn't mention it. We laughed over domestic arrangements 'Wendy's' had a friend around, and a jolly evening with Stan and Stan's girl-friend's child. Well, I don't care, there's someone there.' True, but he may find some mess...

Tuesday April 9 1996

Rang the tax-office, and Mr. Ahweng is out the whole week... Got Miss Morris who is 'my' Inspector. Much more promising. Again, I was going out and felt it was 'nicer' not to. Was much amused to find myself feeling guilty for not going to the pictures. I laughed aloud. As I often do when I'm alone, and as like as not, looking at the photo of D.

K rang at 8.20. Had I had call for me (him) from foreign woman saying there's an emergency? No. Hope there isn't an emergency, such as that Wendy's sold contents of studio. But then no one knows his mobile number.

Wednesday April 10 1996

Did manage to shave and dress, and get to new film, 'Small Faces', at Tottenham Court Road. I enjoyed it up to a point, - there is obviously a lot of talent in the MacKinnon brothers, and the performances were mostly fresh, if a little raw. I imagine everyone must be very young, as, the film is 'conscientiously gloomy'. I enjoyed it however, despite missing bits of dialogue here and there, partly because of the accent - many of the characters had hardly a consonant to their name. Much accompanying noise, music, background and so on, which does not suit my poor old ears. I was amused that, as it was shot in Glasgow, there was never a dry pavement to be seen.

I see that 'Nelly and M Arnaud' is coming on at The Gate. I also see that Time Out has slavishly copied my opinion of it from some months ago, 'An exquisitely witty, beautifully moving film.'

A programme on 'Flatmates' had a lot of interviews, all from real life. I was struck by the incapacity of modern young people to be able to judge quickly what the candidates were like, the combination of fear of being 'judgmental' - what a word - making up your mind, in fact - and the fragmenting of society, where there are so many fewer clear signs of eccentricity, bigotry, or plain nuttiness. Forty years ago, not shaving... etc etc

Re-reading A.B.'s A Great Man, with much enjoyment. Mentioned the plot to Mary L, who said acidly, 'Well, that's been the plot of some thousands of novels - one of the earliest ones.' What must people think.

Thursday April 11 1996

Stage dream - John G. irritably scraping a bit of food off a front tooth. I can imagine him, in some moods, actually doing that.

Antonia White - 'I am tired of discussing the minutiae of my friend's psychology and troubles.' Yes, but not her own.

On the arts programme, Good Stuff presented by Emma Forbes, the other arm-chair was occupied throughout by Ned Sherrin. No doubt every other show mentioned in

the prog. would like to have a permanent representative on it, but he is a clever publicist. Clever enough not to allow an excerpt from S.D, to appear, looking ridiculous. He said just the right things to do the best for the poor little piece and conceal its almost total unsuitability for anyone under 50. I did have another chuckle tho' when he said, 'It did wonderful business at Guildford and Richmond, and this week at Malvern.' Er- yes.

Friday April 12 1996

Watched an interview with Muriel Spark that I recorded some weeks ago, and forgot to watch. Most entertaining. I'd forgotten her delicate Edinburgh accent that so perfectly matches her witty words. How could she bear M. Smith in the Brodie Film? No mention of any actor, of course.

Saturday April 13 1996

Hazel rang today instead of tomorrow because she's going to a christening. Is to have an x-ray next week for pain where diaphragm joins stomach. Don't like the sound of that as she's had it for a year. The Dr. was, to me, worryingly vague, as if he knew what it was.

R rang at last. Very sweet, - his mother has been a pain about him being out of work. I'm still a bit miffed with him for not doing the work for K while K was away. He doesn't seem to realise that he can't do the skirting boards, for instance, while K is in the studio beneath him.

2.25 a.m. He's back. Is he back? Safe. And Sharron's daffodils are dying.

Sunday April 14 1996

K rang about 3 safely back, thank God.

Wendy had cleared up pretty well, put clean sheets on the bed and so on, and got the milk 'and after all I didn't leave it all that tidy.' But I was really shocked as I could tell he was, when he told me that Stan L, far from two days, and asking his girl-friend and girl-friend's baby round for dinner, 'all three had stayed for five and half days, and he didn't leave a bottle of wine or even a note.' I am surprised at Stan L - I thought he was a decent little chap, but this is mean. To make people like K, and me think how much gas and heat and wear and tear there's been, is mean.

He said he's got to get his head down to master the new computer, and clear up, 'but I'll see you one day this week. I asked how it had gone. He said he had an English tan - a red nose. He said he was rested, but when I asked how it had all gone, there was a distinct reservation in his reply compared to the other times 'Great', 'Terrific' etc. Well, they were together for a fortnight perhaps more alone than before, 'living together' in a small flat. And it's just the moment for some change. And there's always some change, forward or back. It's always an amazement that people still

except there not to be. I don't mean him. Oh, and he knew about Sharron's new depression. We must talk so that I can help her.

Monday April 15 1996

Read the paper, dozed and woke at ten to one, I must stop this, - but I now see the snare of old age, that you don't do enough at the right times to sleep at the right times.

Justin finally rang, and we had a determinedly jolly talk. He says he'll try to arrange to get the stuff taken away, and that 'There is a tiny bit still to pay on the 'phone bill' - more like £20, quite unmistakable on the itemised bill, but I won't press it. When I've got rid of his stuff, a little coldness will be deployed to emphasise my disapproval of his behavior.

I think I have never known the trees so backward. Only today, or rather last night, have the old leaves fallen off the beech tree outside my bedroom window. The twigs near the window have little green shoots, but the trees everywhere at a distance, are still bare skeletons. I wish I made more nature notes so that I could decide how late the trees are. The evergreen clematis in the back garden is cascading pink blossom all round, but I haven't opened the green-house door. The camellia I took Janet was the first, and though there are twenty or so buds, the last, ten days later. Well, plants know their own business best.

Tuesday April 16 1996

Warm for the first time. West to the shops without my pullover, let alone my coat. Mid sixties, I think, unlike me.

To the tax office and this time got a jolly common plump fortyish spinster, Miss Morris - we dealt well together. I felt a certain amount of euphoria, and bought the new A. Powell journals. They are the sort of thing I read in a great gallop, intravenously, and then read again to get the rest of the juices out.

I see Gordon Pask has died. I haven't thought of him for - getting on for fifty years. He turned up in Julian's room at Cambridge - J already well-known for musicals in an amateur way - with his colour organ, the colours being expressed by the music. He was a small dusty bow-tied nutcase, even then with up-for-the-last-six-nights eyes, and with all the air of being, to our eyes who knew nothing of such things, 'under the influence of drugs.' To my amazement, there he was, with a large two-column obituary in the independent. The photo looking exactly the same, really, - the colour organ was mentioned! And a further series of goodness knows what, in the computer technology shading into robotics etc etc. The apotheosis of the polytechnic student - he wore bow-ties as an exciting eccentricity to the end, a wife and children. Good heavens, I have wasted my life.

What larger and larger stretches of life have no humour to irrigate them. Oh, the scientists who need irrigation...

Wednesday April 17 1996

Sent an Ellen Terry card to J. Slade for first night of SD tomorrow. 'Good luck to you, the company, and the audience. Love A.' Hope he won't notice.

An article by Kit Hesketh-Harvey in the Indep. suggests that they are attempting to push it into period. Good, the only possible way to approach it. My faint curiosity as to what 'Kit and The Widow' might be playing, is partly solved by a photo of Kit? dressed as Biggles for the awful saucer scene, which was nearly cut forty years ago, and, I presume, the Widow is playing Troppo, the dumb boy who collects the money for the piano. He is, of course, made up as a clown, white face, black vertical line, thro' eyes, etc. most interesting. The facts about the part are, in the unlikely event of anyone being interested, that it was dumb because D couldn't stand the sentimental sound of Bob Harris' camp little Cockney voice. He would have liked to have a clown make-up, and his costume paid lip service to Giuletta Masina in La Strada, and would have been identical if not stopped by D. As it was, he wore very baggy nothing trousers, the waists up to his chest, a pair of braces over a blue and white stripped T Shirt underneath. Tho' it wasn't called that then. In just the same way, trying as much realism as possible, D stood out for the word 'magic' never being used about the piano. Most people including the present adverts, use the word, which just shows the difference between D and the loose majority.

Thursday April 18 1996

Dream a.m. Charles Laughton hid my army uniform, gave it back in a restaurant with some pills to take. And I didn't know where the theatre was, and he and everyone else jeered. Previously that nice boy, Richard Huw, had kept two special seats at the back, with treats on them, for the play I was afterwards in. Another dream that was so irritating, I had to wake myself up. I cannot understand what C. Laughton is doing there, as I have never had any particular interest in him except S's book.

Perhaps it was prophetic, because S's secretary rang up to say 'Dinner on Saturday at eight at Mon Pleshure.' She told me what he was doing but I won't record it till I've seen him – his plans change so quickly. She told me of five ventures – there may be five more by Saturday.

And Roy rang, sweeping away my worries by saying, 'There you are' as if I'd worried them. To my considerable, irritation, I was just launching on a good talk when he said, 'My taxi's here' to take him to football, on a Thursday?

~~Roy rang and turned the tables on my worry about them by saying when~~ Really my mind is going as wrong as my pen.

The Benetton shop that opened on the main entrance of 'Shopping Mall' at H'Smith, has gone bust after six months. You would think a big chain of shops like B, would know better. Perhaps the two shops either side of a major tube station are not a good bet, because the really big crowds are just rushing past on the way home.

Friday April 19 1996

Mary L rang on Wed. to complain that her decorator had arrived and worked for an hour, and been tiresome. Well, he lives downstairs and works for the flat's management committee who are paying, so she has no purchase against him. Could she come to lunch today? It was another really warm day in the seventies. I met her at the tube, after two days of exhausting tidying. She was wearing a heavy tweed overcoat, two or three layers of cardigans and sweaters underneath, a woolen scarf wrapped twice round her neck, and another over her head and wrapped round the whole.

It was a pleasant interlude on the whole. She managed to resist the slaps over the wrist which she so often deploys so pointlessly. It had given her a jaundiced view of world because she thinks other people are being awkward. We agreed how odd it was that we should be together to read the notices of a SD revival... I am thankful to say that, like me, she wished it well, if only for the actor's jobs. We watched an episode of Allan Bennett's Westminster programme, and she relished it.

Oh, and when she rang to complain about the decorator, after we'd talked of it long enough, I thought, I read her a bit of the A. Powell, which I thought was funny, to cheer her up. There was a long pause, and then she said coldly, 'Darling, I'm just not in the mood, for that sort of thing.'

Saturday April 20 1996

I cannot understand the cult or the inclusion, of violence in films or television. (On the stage, you know by the nature of the medium, that it can't be real – in the other styles, they toy, and often succeed, to convince you that someone is hideously injured to the point of agonising death.) I will have none of it. Just as I instinctively switch off at any sign of a real-life operation with blood, so do I, if there's a fight or a shot or a blow or a stab. I never see such things willingly.

Why do others relish them, and obviously so many millions do? I take it to be that the vast majority of people have no imagination, and little intensity of feeling.

Sunday April 22 1996

An evening with S, is utterly absorbing, funny and exciting. But I couldn't write straight after it, - and I didn't get in till one-thirty, nor to sleep till at least five-thirty. Two large espressos... not that I believe that.

I started by trying to get a time table of his work out of him, which I did with many sidetracks. So, first of all, here's the list: -

Monday 23rd to Italy to direct a documentary about Puccini.

29th. To London for Bob Stephens memorial service. He's lunching with Diana Quick today, at this minute. (He tells me someone? was sitting with Bob and he nodded off, saying 'I can't sleep with my cock in', so, that's how the 'someone' – who was it? – knew that Bob S had a big cock. It would have been odd if he hadn't.)

30th. To US. to see Joy Abbott, the widow of the composer of the Pyjama Game, about the projected revival. I never found out whether it was here or there.

30th - 5th. In New York.

May 6th - 19th Bermuda for holiday. (Is that his sort of place? I wouldn't have thought so.)

20th – 1. Back here to direct three Stephen Oliver one-act operas, 'The Waiter's Revenge', 'Commuting' and an Italian title that I didn't catch, partly because of my ears and partly because of my Italian. They are being staged in three separate venues on, I presume the same night to the same audience? The first, I suppose, in a restaurant, the second in an office, and the last in the Church of Scotland, wrapped around the Fortune Theatre. It has always amused me that the C. of S. owns, and is built into a house of the Devil. Though their prejudices have lightened somewhat in later years, when S revealed that lighted candles would feature in the production, there were shocked murmurs of 'Candles?' It may be fire regulations, but I prefer the spectacle of the Scarlet Woman. The third opera S. commissioned in the early '80s. Stephen O. wrote it a fortnight and then asked for £6100 to have an orchestral, or musician's, rehearsal, and S hadn't got it. So S.O. said 'Oh well, do it when you can' and give it to him. S didn't seem to have thought S.O.'s executors might have something to say. But I may have misunderstood.

(Between June 1st and 24th, he seems to have nothing on, but I daresay that will change..._)

June 24. To U.S. to direct La Calisto by a 17th Century composer who, again, I didn't catch, at Glimmerglass, a sort of minor, newer, Glynbourne, at Coopers town, in upstate New York. That Opens on July 28th.

Then projected for the Autumn, a four-man season of 'Shirley Valentine' with Pauline C. in her original part, at – The Haymarket. Four months, because P.C. will only do four months. Bill Kenwright – Ugh! This would/might clash with an offer to be in Bill Alexander's prod. of The Alchemist at The National.

Now what strikes me about all this, first, is that there's not much money in the definite things, and the possibly profitable ones, - Pajama Game and Valentine – aren't definite and mightn't run if they were. He said he thought he'd make £60,000 out of Valentine, and when he said the part he'd been offered was Epicure Mammon, I said I didn't think there was a choice.

He told me the story about Lady Cawdor that he told to us before Christmas. But he did tell of a smart party, with real gossip-column names, and Stephen Daldry leaving early hissing 'Nobody's heard of me, I'm going.' And another one, given by Tom Stoppard in his, huge I suppose, penthouse overlooking the Thames. Huge, because

two hundred people sat down to dinner. It seems his son, aged twenty, Toby? organised it. Miriam S was there, and as S said, 'If a bomb had dropped, or there'd been a tidal wave, the London theatre would have had to begin again from the bottom.' At I'm not sure which party, probably the second, he observed an elderly man, bent almost double, being dragged along by a tall commanding elderly woman, waving her stick for space. She pointed her finger at S. and said, 'I know you but you don't know me, Faust, Amadeus, The Infernal machine.' (And now S's very resonant, not to say loud voice was at full volume, the restaurant stunned, waiting.) Do you know what's wrong with young actors? Balls (f.) Balls (ff) You know, balls, round things hanging in a loose bag. I like them. They haven't got them.

Well, it depends because, in one very important sense, S. hasn't either. Oh, and the couple were Yehudi Menuhim and Diana Gould. Is it Gould?

He's writing a column in the Sunday Express, which he asked me not to read. So of course I must. I suppose he's doing it for money, and he still seems to be beleaguered but I can't be surprised. He cannot think of anything in the end, but the pursuit of noble and beautiful things. That often leads to poverty.

His company is so warm and genial and funny and inspiring. On the way out, we were so agreeing on the deadening effect of slap-down discouragement, and someone came up and asked for an autograph. He pushed some money into my hand for a taxi. As the time had gone on, I had asked him for the taxi-fare, after I'd realized I couldn't get home on the tube – he gave me £30. Lovely, but I wish he could find some sort of financial foundation. But who am I to talk? Except that I never had the chance to make much money.

Tomato and Anchovy salad, chicken chasseur, cheese. It's going off a bit that place. The young maitre is pushy, and recommended a cheese which tasted nothing. He claimed you could get it nowhere else in London. I fear his tone suggests that he keeps too ignorant tourist company.

Today, on the news, Clinton and Yeltsin were canoodling together. I'd love to have been a fly on the wall, when a cynical speech writer chose 'vibrant' as the adjective for 'Russian democracy.' And put it in Clinton's mouth. Of course, he did go to Oxford, so perhaps...

Suddenly realized an old crone in the TV series Hamish Macbeth was Edith MacArthur. Quite good. No doubt experience and adversity have tempered the tiresome mannerisms of thirty years ago. I believe she had a bad marriage.

Later. Well! Well! Julian rang, an event I was dreading, to thank me for my card. I braced myself for some wincing sentimentalities and searing emotional vulgarities, and I did suffer a few including 'What sort of life have you?' I thought I hadn't heard, and he repeated it. And then he said 'I feel so guilty that I haven't been able to help you.' As usual, he wants to be forgiven for a sin he hasn't repented.

However things swiftly jollied up when Julian told me the first night party had been at the Connaught Rooms. (Coo, the dreariness of those rooms – they could kill anything, and mustn't they have been far too large?) and Joan came and introduced herself to

him. I suppose they met thirty or forty years ago for five minutes. I felt a momentary pang of responsibility, and said ‘What a course-textured thing to do, but then she is.’ And then I thought well, J is just as coarse-textured, despite Eton and Cambridge. When one thinks of him shaking Geoffrey Parson’s hand after a Wigmore Hall recital and saying. ‘I’m Julian Slade, I wrote Salad Days.’... it’s a wonderfully funny to me to think of these two impossible beings locked in insensitivity on the first night of a SD revival. I’m right with Samuel Butler on the Carlyle’s marriage, ‘How kind of god to make two people unhappy, instead of four.’ But the fun wasn’t over. He then told me he’d been to Ann’s Birthday-party, and she’d left Donald – she’s got someone ‘Very nice,’ ‘Is he a musician?’ ‘No’. But everyone is ‘very nice’ to J. in case anyone says he isn’t very nice. I felt exhilarated, as one does at other people’s misfortunes, and at being proved right. I have always thought she’d leave him at forty, which I suppose, is about where she is. So that’s why the poor sod inquired about the B’mouth house. What a mess he has made of his life! As Daddy would have done if convention had not been so much stronger then. Neither of them have, or had, any emotional wisdom or instinct at all. I cannot bear to think what terrible childish primitive ‘scenes’ must have gone on, before the separation. Oh, how right I have been to have little or nothing to do with him over the years. I suppose it must be a measurable number of times in the last forty or so years.

Had a great time ringing round with the various bits of news, Mary L, Sharron, John N. (who was convulsed) and K. As it happened, I’d rung him at lunch-time to say about S and ‘S. Valentine’. He already knew, and said he was in a meeting. At quarter to one on Sunday? He rang back to say he’d done a commercial for The Labour Party, and they’d been sitting in the garden while he did it. Then I rang to tell about Ann – he was riveted because he fancied Ann, and she stroked his hair a couple of times more than Donald liked.

I galloped my gin and tonic, and dinner. I watched the BAFTA awards in my usual sidelong way – it’s another wince. John Schlesinger was given a Lifetime Award, and I was shocked at his frail incoherence. I fear he’s gone.

Later. I keep laughing. I consider Julian’s call, and start laughing. It’s so funny to think of that gruesome revival first night of SD, and the gruesome C. rooms, and gruesome Joan turning up from nowhere and boring gruesome Julian... and neither of us had to be there.

I keep going back to my book Where Angels Fear To Tread to counteract the film, and laughing again, at your photo darling. Oh, how you would relish these absurdities – not in the least unexpected by us.

Yes, I may be a bit drunk, too, but it’s continual bubbling laughter.

4.0 am, sitting up in bed, laughing and laughing again about Ju. and Joan and Ann (sad that Ann’s still in touch with J. professionally speaking.) Even after a prolonged snack of toast and soup, I lay down again and started laughing again in the dark sitting up to read again, I start wondering if the Australian lot, no blood relations, one found out, would ever turn up, and convulsed myself again by saying aloud, ‘I’d better get my hair cut.’ Well, it is rather long....

All this happening, flux and change bring change.

Monday April 23 1996

The Queen is 70. I wonder what she thinks of it all.

Dream a.m. wandering round St George's, and then on train, someone took my seat while I was in loo, quite young and wouldn't give it up. And I was looking everywhere for K. and couldn't find him... well, we know what that means...

Christopher Robin has died aged 75. I wonder if he was wise to articulate his dislike of his 'legend' I see that you can't give bone marrow, except between 18-40, so I've escaped, perhaps, having to face that particular horror.

One or two further thoughts on S. he and Chris have decided not to be sexual partners any longer. It seems they sleep together most nights – now it will be just sleep. Odd life, in one life or the other.

He also talked at fair length about Les Enfants. I didn't, of course, open the subject, - he might well have been sick of it. He was quite sensible about it, saying that his mistake had been to aim for the grand romantic style, which James Purefoy, for instance, couldn't reach. However, he didn't mention the length, so neither did I...

Later, much later...

I was sitting, minding my own business on my second gin and tonic about five to eight, when K rang, in serious mode. Could I go to the studio and pick up two reel tapes, and bring them to component videos. 'I'll give you the details when you get to the studio.' 'What the time scheme?' 'I need them by ten.' I think even he was a bit taken aback that I only said three short sentences and rang off. I am proud, I admit, of always doing anything I can for him at once. So I dressed, swallowed a couple of slices of cold potato, - I'd been just on the point of dinner at 8.0, - that's how I knew it was serious. So there I suddenly was on the tube and at Elfort Rd. I was irritated that the studio curtains weren't drawn, and the lights were on. When I got down there, the glass doors at the back were unlocked. Must be mad. I was nervous that I mightn't be able to work the wandering 'phone. But happily it was a more or less ordinary one, and right by the mixing-desk. (I'd dreaded running up and down the stairs to the studio.) I found the tapes at once and I could tell straightaway he'd put them out to be taken, and had forgotten... he started to describe the studio, and I'd looked it up, and I know that part anyway. He was surprised. 'Take a cab, I'll pay when you get here.' But I wouldn't for two reasons, first, I wasn't sure I could drive to the door, and I imagine leaving a suspicious taxi-driver to run through an unknown passage to an unknown studio to an unknown receptionist to an... and I was determined that I would save K any expenditure for this little outing. I changed at Holburn, and I got out at T.C.Rd, up Rathbone Place, Swerve left, down a passage by the Newman Arms, and into a cobbled area still unmistakable as a large mews. I'd peed before I left home, peed at Elfort Rd, but the gin and tonics were still coming through, so I turned left into the comparative darkness, and filled a cobbled gutter to the brim. (I knew that K would find it trying to take me to the loo, because of time.)

There was component videos, brand spanking new. I rang the entry-phone, thinking I heard him call Angus from inside, but that may have been my imagination. Or perhaps not, because he answered the door, not the very young ginger-haired boy at the reception-desk. Oh, it was worth all the rushing around to see him. Looking fresh and not tired. He has that soft transparent skin – and I suppose flesh – that shows every strain for instance, I have never looked puffy under the eyes, because neither my eyes nor their sockets nor my skin are built that way.

I said ‘Do you think I’m the oldest person who’s ever delivered a couple of tapes here?’ and I think I must be. I doubt if there’s anyone over 40 in the building.

I left in a glow. Because I had really been of use. I could tell that, because, as I left, he said, ‘Angus, I really – ‘ when one’s nearest and dearest uses your name, it’s serious! And never at any point did he actually admit he’d forgotten them... I love him for that.

Tuesday April 23 1996

Oh, no, isn’t it today the Queen id 70?

A wind. A bit chilly. Slept in till two. Got my pension and shopped. The L.P. Hartley Life is no good. That is partly because L.P. H’s life was no good, but also because the author has little perception or thoroughness. The back is surrounded by all the apparatus of a scholarship, but not penetrated by its presence. The man is a superficial ass.

Wednesday April 24 1996

Now nicely roasted meat and mobile phones give you cancer. Well, something has to. What a mealy-mouthed generation!

To the barbers at last. On the way up Regent St. saw a black-leather document-case flat on the pavement by Salusbury’s, the hand-bag shop. Told the uniformed commissionaire at Austin Reed’s, as a xxperclim. To him ringing police. Nice humorous face, came out in the road and looked at it hundred yards or so away, and told me to go to Vine St. Police Station. As it’s the main station for the wilder parts of the West End. It had a small hall, then glass doors opened only the constables behind the desk. (or perhaps all P. Stations have such doors now.) There was a rather tall man in hotel uniform waiting with a thin package (What? And a you black boy at the desk. I said to the tall boy that I had a possible bomb to report and could I go first? He said ‘You better go straight in. How near is it?’ The girl at the counter opened the door, she scribbled down the details, didn’t ask my name, and I left. I was much impressed to find a police-car and a police man bending over the case, as I got back into Regent St. which took me about a minute.

Created a faint sensation at the barber’s. Then my barber saw an unattended John Lewis bag bulging under the table where all the newspapers and magazines are. More

sensation. I seem by the way, there's now an electric coffee percolator and cups on this table. Free coffee.

Extraordinary film taken by a secret police camera of an old warehouse where a gang of criminals can take a lorry to pieces in 45 minutes, and sell the parts abroad. They've cannibalised twenty lorries in a month or two. Why are we education people, or rather not educating them, to be interested in such hideously boring activities, people quite unable to enjoy the money they think is the crown of life.

And talking of money, the sums being paid at the Kennedy sale are grotesque, repulsive. Americans have too much money and no sense.

The man called the Unabomber in the states, photographed at 16, 19, 20 and 22. One word for him, smug.

Thursday April 25 1996

Well, I was right to report that possible bomb, yesterday a bomb was put under H'smith Bridge. Happily it didn't go off – only detonator – just as well as it was the largest bomb ever on the mainland, and it was in a black-leather brief case. It was at ten to eleven, and of course I didn't hear it. But I was touched that Hazel rang 'To see if I were all right.'

In the p.m. to The Gate, to see Nelly Et M. Arnand again, treated by Mary L, rather nervous at the end, as I had recommended it pretty highly, and you never know with Mary, she is so prejudiced. Happily, one word, 'Terrific' and agreed on the way to the bus-stop that it was more less perfect. A relief... not that I care what M thinks these days.

When I got back K rang. Also asked whether I'd been bombed. 'Well, you might have been walking past' At ten to eleven?' 'Tomorrow night? Look at the garden, I've got a salmon again.' Heaven.

In the later p.m. to film White Squall with Janet. A 'real life' story of a sailing-ship run by Jeff Bridges, who takes on seven or eight uniformly beautiful young men, and Caroline Goodall, and no doubt many exciting things happened to them all, had I been able to stay to see them. The first White Squall, with nothing to look at but the ship, up and down, up and down on that big screen which fills your whole eye, and even with my eyes shut, nothing to hear but the fearful rhythm of the heaving, and the fearful sound of eight beautiful young men heaving, did for me. And I left for fear I should heave myself.

But then I am the son of a mother who was sick on Long John Silvers' pirate Ship on the way to see Santa Claus on the top floor of Beales in Bournemouth.

Friday April 26 1996

Saturday April 27 1996

A lovely evening as if I need to say, he finished something off in the studio, put his shoes on, and came out and joined me in the garden. The raised bed was a complete sea of weeds, or rather, interestingly, one weed, Herb Robert. Why it should have flown from somewhere, - cottage path, for instance – and filled the entire bed to the exclusion of everything else except four or five dandelions, is one of nature's mysteries. However, the good thing is, that it's a beautifully easy weed to pull. I had cleared the bed pretty well, to find the roses, the blue-bells, the Bergenina and the ivy, had not surprisingly, survived, and a little clump of the Variegata Peniwinkle, which would have covered a couple of square feet, if looked after. Meanwhile, on my advice, K had punched some holes in some hosepipe, and closed one end to make a really easy watering. I need hardly say that he laid it out before I'd finished weeding, and turning it on while I was leaning over particularly close to it. Strange to appear in a Beano comic strip at this late date. By half past seven, I was finished, in both senses.

Soup, cauliflower and stilton, - 'So I thought no cheese sauce for the broccoli' dear little thing – the salmon, and er – the broccoli. Delicious. Then we sat down to get up to date over the coffee.

Bits came out over dinner, but I'll put it all together. The Portugal visit was an unclouded success – I was quite wrong about that. She's coming to stay for a month in August – that'll be a god test, as he's by no means free by then. I said 'Did she work an hour a day?' 'Well, not the first days. Nor the second. On the third she did two hours work and never did any more after that.'

He is still very very busy. He played me a four-minute and an eight minute show-reel, made up of sequences mostly lasting only seconds, of bands sold by Noiseworks. I had no idea they'd sold so much – Movies Games, and videos used them for instance. Wonderful. He's setting up a second company called HullaBoo... He told me he spends one day a fortnight, or less on paper-work, VAT, PRS invoicing etc etc. and the Labour Party person said he oughtn't to have private 'phone calls interrupting their time. (His mother rang.) She was quite right, of course so – he needs a secretary or an assistant. If only I were younger and knew enough about the music business... 'And I'll have to get a cleaner.' He's had some more decorating done, the hall and stairs at last started on, the bottom of the banisters properly taped etc. But it's not Wendy, 'It's just decorating, not designing, so I called the number on a card that came through the door, turned out to be two middle aged woman. They seem to be doing a good job. Cost £500 a week. Sign of the times, unimaginable even a few years ago.

As for the cleaner, I sent him a card I'd had, well produced, quoting insurance and journey costs included, for £5.50 an hour.

He seems all right with Sharron. I don't quite see why she doesn't want me to talk about him.

Gave me a salmon steak, and the tail-end, - he remembered. Heavenly.

Sunday April 28 1996

Another even more frightful shooting over thirty dead, this time in Tasmania. The only positive thought is that it may help once more to amend the gun laws. Strange to think one of the dead could be a cousin of D's.

Rang Sharron to give her R's address as she'd sent me her change of address card to forward to him. She sounded rather brighter, and indeed said she was. She'd been out and about on Fri, and last night, and I think had a little meeting of some sort. Good. In a basement bar somewhere, she met Chris W. who told her he and S had not been together for a year. That doesn't at all square with what S told me however you interpret it. Unlike S to mislead me. (Interesting that I assumed she met Chris, the oboist of long ago. Thank goodness he's vanished. And it's true that Chris W had never really engaged me on any level – I can't recall anything vivid about him but his appearance.)

Started to watch the South Bank show about Albie Finney. I still have a residual affection for the smiling cheerful boy I shared a dressing-room within 1956, and still can be shocked by the cross affected provincial butcher he seems to have turned into. I could only watch the first minute and be amazed at the display of self-conscious provincialism as he and M. Bragg come into a restaurant and showed off with the menu and the wine list. Heavens, haven't they got any further than that? Like Lea R becoming a wine snob.

Then there was an extract from M. Sherman's play at Hampstead. Always a tricky thing to do as the perfs come over artificially, and they usually look a bit greasy, because of the lighting. I was amused that there was no sense worth Rupert in...

Then there was a feature on Beckett. I think little of his very minor, very narrow talent, and even less of his tastes in acolytes and actresses. His favorite, Billie Whitelaw, seems to be without any particular talent, or interesting personality. In my opinion, a small part in East Enders is the most I would cast her for. Odd. A youngish trendyish woman director said 'We humbly sit at his feet, and obey his stage directions.' Hm. I bet Shakespeare and Shaw are envious.

The only thing that shakes my opinion of B, is Tom Kenpinski agrees with me. He has shed eleven stone and written twelve plays, all in two years. Or is may be twelve stone and eleven plays...

Just as I did to Sharron, I pretend to Hazel that Boo has a personality. And still the big trees look bare.

Monday April 29 1996

Arranged the weekend so that I could stay throughout, to rest for tomorrow. It's going to go chilly again. Finished Wild Swans. Remarkable, but has longueurs as a work of art. Most touching the last photograph in ravishingly pretty clothes and a hat. I have to admit, that every now and again, I lost track and was surprised at some bit of comfort or luxury. But that was bad art.

Forgot – how could I? – that he played me two of the songs he's written with Pete Sinfield. One was sung by a session singer, a girl, quite good. I said, at the end of the song, 'Anyone would want to sing that' and meant it. Not that I didn't think the lyric more or less illiterate rubbish, what would be the point of saying so, when the music will carry it, and all modern lyrics are more or less illiterate rubbish. I do mean 'illiterate'. I was amused by the one of Thomas Sutcliffe's articles expressing irritation at a lyric giving a list of various happenings and events, summed up by 'isn't it ironic?' 'No, it isn't, because the author didn't know the meaning of the word.'

Another, with 'Moonlight' occurring, a lot. K was singing it. I told him the end wanted lifting – in the music, not the singing. Pete is really excited about the first one.

Barbara B rang up, after a long time. Just as on her card, she thinks she's told me about her operation. But she hasn't. It was a cyst on her spine. She had the operation privately, discharged herself after a week. 'Another week would have cost £4000.' She was flat on her back for two months. Her nice lodger, Margaret, he's been 'kind, happily – and she is to be in a new series by the authors of that frightful 'aristocratic' sitcom, I forget its name, she asked me about a watercolour she's brought. She goes to a hairdresser in Maddox St. 'It's more of a drawing-room than a shop, and he sells a lot of bric-a-brac hanging about – I can see him – 'I thought it was a song-cover.' Odd that she should think that when there was no song-title apparent. Why she was interested in it, at all, is because it was a picture of two actors, Doris Buckley and Horace Sequeira, they were married, lived near B's drama-school, whoever that was, and had an open day every Sunday afternoon, when drama students could come in and there would be play-reading. They both died in the '50's and '60's. Horace Sequeira's name I knew quite well. He was a funny little character actor, shallow or Verges, so I was surprised but to find him in Who's who in the theatre. It turned out to be an original watercolor of the two Dickens 'Old Chimes', and the artist's name was W. Fletcher Thomas. So we'll see. She offered £100, but he wouldn't take less than £150, so I suppose it was originally £200. Rather overpriced, but what you might expect from such a milieu.

I'll see what I can find out.

Tuesday April 30 1996

To the taxman. Or rather tax-woman. Anodyne. I can still give a good performance.

Mary L told me of a good domestic agency, 'Karin has a gem.' And said it was called Hunt's. No sign in the business directory, no help from the directory enquiries. She waits for Karin to ring her, which she did today. It's Mrs. Hunter's Domestic Agency. Mrs. H is a dragon she's hard to be – and forbids cleaners to accept a cup of tea or coffee (How would she know?) Deposit of £40. £6 an hour. If not satisfied after a month, you can have another cleaner for no extra charge. Wrote to K to say I thought he ought to have a firm with references to complain to, rather, than a card thro' the door, with all that expensive equipment. Not to mention Prim's cleaner long ago, who left a note saying 'Have spilt glass of water in piano. Hope this is all right.' Prim having a cleaner! Rather good searing prog. about America's President and

illusions by Gore Vidal. Does he privately pronounce 'Constitutional' constitooshanal?

Wednesday May 1 1996

A deputy head-teacher: You have to be careful how many corrections you put on a child's work. Too many corrections of mistakes can be very demotivating to children.

School children in St. Alban's got hold of some counterfeit money, £10 notes, and went out buying things. One hamburger joint got a tip of £2,500. I wasn't clear what the school had £10 million fake notes for.

Another obscene use of money. The best cabins for the world cruise on the QE2 cost £60,000.

Did I copy in that sentences from Clayhanger that I read to K? 'The importil and unmoved spectator that sat somewhere in Edwin as it does in everyone who possesses artistic sensibility, thought how strange this was.

And a Poe Quotation a bit like Swinburne.

To one in paradise.

'And all my days are trances,
And all my nightly dreams
Are where they dark eyes glances
And where thy footsteps gleams
In what ethereal dances
By what eternal streams.'

Someone rang with a mysterious 0773 no: orange? Incomprehensible.

Thursday May 2 1996

In the p.m. to film 'Jeremy' a gay film but supposed to have some quality, from a fringe play. I left after half an hour, finding it feebly facetious. Justin had recommended it, but then that is a 'Interested recommendation.

Did I say that, instead of paying the rest of the telephone bill – part of it he paid, most unsatisfactorily in gin and whisky – and coming round to take away the quite considerable amount of stuff still left here, he sent me a silly letter, not directly apologizing, but vaguely mentioning his pathetic finances. He rang tonight, obviously expecting a jolly chat. I think he had a little experience of people disapproving of him. He said he'd had to go to an 'old client' to get rent money – why? hasn't he got his Housing Benefit? I suppose not, I said he must get a job. He said he'd never been able to do anything like that since he was 17. 'If you could tell me why I've been living like this for the last 9 years...' so I did, telling him he was the most self-indulgent person I'd – almost ever met, and therefore one of the most

selfish. He called me 'vicious' and 'a great disappointment. Completely spoiled by his mother and sister, he might have been even more outraged if I'd put it more pithily, 'He does nothing but sit on his bottom, except when he's selling it.' Poor silly little boy.

Friday May 3 1996

A woman in front of me in the queue to pay at Safeway's scruffy, tired strained, about twenty-eight. Two children, seven and five, both boys, from a West Indian father. Very badly behaved, the elder pinching a plastic aeroplane from the younger, running in and out and disturbing people, the younger screaming, in that way that disturbs you as you, hear a child spoiled probably for life. He had clearly never been checked and will suffer all his life for it. She had not managed to get by any means everything into their bags, long after the next woman's groceries were whizzing down the slide, suddenly the screams became even louder. She threw a plastic bag of sweets onto the floor in front of them ten yards or so away. She finally finished packing the plastic-bags, and then, rather slowly, decided not to afford a large packet of fish-fingers. She slowly picked up the two pounds change. Even then she took sometime to move. The woman in front finally got her to move. I started to pack my stuff. During the painful incident, I'd exchanged an unspeaking glance with a rather smart forty-five year old woman, as I was moving away, I said, 'It's sad isn't it?' She said, in a marked Austrian accent 'I am glad I have no children.'

I was waling away, when I saw the mother buying a lottery ticket, poor wretched creature, she looked a bit bruised. I expect she lives in a high-rise block on a motorway.

In the p.m. was going to a new film, but, as so often now, didn't. it just wasn't attractive enough to bother. It isn't the content, it's the execution, that so often puts it off.

Too extraordinary a letter marked Re-turned to sender in large red letters. It was addressed to a girl in a collage in Ontario. It had a Canadian frank on it, and two Canadian postmarks. Now this was rather odd, as it had written clearly on the back, From Matthew Wootton, and my address. And all this is very strange, as there is no trace of an English stamp, and the postmarks are dated 1990. Which is when Mathew was my lodger. Where has the letter been all this time? A nice little point. There's a drawing in the card inside, 'But the best of it is, THATCHER'S GONE.'

Fay Maschler's cookery column recorded a verbal comment from the next table at a new restaurant in Fulham. 'By god, there'll be no chinks at your wedding.'

Saturday May 4 1996

R rang at last, to tell me about his job, Production manager for an arts festival in Copenhagen. Part time, July, Aug, Sept, 31 Oct – 3 Nov. A ferry, cardeck converted into theatre, other parts into concert rooms. Music, digital something, computer art. Coming to stay with K on Tues, and K says he'll ask you to dinner...

ANGUS MACKAY DIARY NO. 141

May 4 1996 (cont)

June 23 1996

Saturday May 4 1996 (contd)

I'm very pleased for R. back in the business more or less. I'm also pleased that R. is at last doing the work for K.

I was amused that Ken B. was mentioned in London's Burning and the stuffy one said 'who's Ken B.?. Now that's fame.

Sunday may 5 1996

Dream a.m. Is this the first time I've dreamt about that seemingly popular subject the queen? Not that she actually appeared. We were waiting to go downstairs to be presented and at the last moment, put my jacket on to find the collar ripped off, exposing the canvas. At another point, in separate dream, in the house at Doncaster, crowding into the centre of it, no windows and no cellar, to escape end of the world bomb.

Roy at last rang and we got up to date. They did go away for ten days or so to a farm in Devon. His Whitehall 1212 film is being re-written. I hadn't quite realised that the BBC commissioned it, so he's been paid and that's it. So I suppose they'll do it so as not to waste it. There is a bit of a complaint that there are too many police and hospital series - and there are - so they might do well to wait a bit. Of course they aren't filming till next summer at the earliest anyway. He's trying to persuade them to change to a more autumn schedule, to get some darker nights. Marian's got a job and turned down too small a part in a play at Hampstead. Told him how busy K. was etc. and yet again, felt that faint withdrawal or at least not an open pleasure as K. always shows at his busyness. I know I am supersensitised where K is concerned, but I don't think I imagined it.

Mary L. rang to say she'd been called 'old lady' etc in the pub she sometimes goes to in St. John's Wood, where she used to live, in return for me being called Grandad. I was foolish enough to mention Roy's 'twinge' and she struck like a viper. Perhaps it was a result of too much Kevin talk. I could have kicked myself, as I am now skillful at not giving her those opportunities. I told her of K's job and all she said was 'My god, Copenhagen in November will be freezing. She really is a walking compendium of how Not to Win Friends or Influence People.

On the theatre programme, an excerpt from Tartuffe at the Almeida. I was amused that the modish director, Jonatan Kent, felt obliged to apologise for setting it in its original period and costumes of course that got rid of a lot of frills and so on. So the women's dresses looked like under-dresses. Otherwise, tho' it's not fair to judge, it

appeared to me up to a fair provincial rep standard. Tom Hollander playing Tartuffe, who also fancies himself did not, like Rupert, appear. I also see D. Jacobi got appendicitis during DR of Love for Love at Chich. and his understudy took over for the process show. David Weston, hit over the head with a make me 25 years older magic wand. Such a charmer. I bet he didn't know it. I believe he was v. good years ago. A bit of a wasted life, I think.

Why don't I record what I read? After all, I do read more than anything else. Re-read lately most of Arnold Bennett. I must get hold of Imperial Palace. I thought I used to have it. Also most of Muriel Spark, at least a dozen of them. Even the later slighter novels do not show a falling off. They are slighter thro' judgment. Gulliver's Travels. The end vol of A. Powell's Diary, which I read over again at once, to catch every bit. Am just finishing Mutiny on the bounty. Was more struck than before by what a huge bore the virtuous Peter Heywood is. His statement at the trial says it's his duty to trespass further on (your attention) as little as possible and the delivers seventeen closely printed pages of an O.U.P. world's Classics. Both he and his incontinent sister, Nessie, - what a monster - show us what a clumsy instrument the classic style was in any but a master's hand. And her poems - beginning like 'O gentle hope! With eye benign... Golly. But the whole thing is in essence fascinating. No wonder Hollywood has latched on to its many unbelievable clichés.

For the first time had a N.Z. frozen shoulder and found it perfectly palatable. The sort of thing that makes me despise business men and administrators, is that meat from literally the other side of the world, should be at least a third cheaper.

Tuesday May 7 1996

Long tangled theatrical dream, almost as tiresome as a bad DR. Decided to stay in to save money for yet another day. It's interesting, it's getting a bit like the cottage, gradually becoming more and more pleasant, not to speak, not to converse, to read and listen to the silence. Which is sometimes quite satisfactory.

Not that I ever mind being alone. Except for one person.

Wednesday May 8 1996

Yes, Gulliver's Travels - hm. Parts of it are magical but great tracts of it are just that, - political tracts. Than which nothing is more boring. Odd to think that the edition I read as a child was bowdlerized, the Yahoos throwing shit, and glum dalclitch's breast left on, for instance - Offered The Munchausen to Roy. I have not been able to read it. He might like it and the volume itself. I owed him something after all. I ought to sell it, I suppose. I have £14 to last till Friday, when a cheque may have come through. I went to Safeways and walked firmly past rows of forbidden fruit, not to mention meat, groceries and drink,.

I see the Lyceum is topped out. So chequered has been the history of its rebuilding that I hadn't quite realised it had begun. It is costing £40 million. It is amusing that Irving's name gets bandied about, since little of his theatre remains, except the façade

and the back wall. (it may have been changed now, but until lately, the back wall looked exactly the same, as it does in a photo of Irving arriving at the stage-door)

I must refresh my memory, - perhaps the rebuilding of the auditorium after I's death in 05 did not extend much backstage, - it often doesn't. We want to one of the last - perhaps the last - of the Old Vic Balls, at the Lyceum. (It had degenerated into a more or less unrelieved drag queen's outing, and was abandoned shortly after.) Although the stalls floor had been lowered and so on, the shape and decoration were perfectly worthy of the great age of theatre building. I presume it is that auditorium which is being restored. All we hope is that it won't be helplessly delivered over to Andrew Lloyd Webber and Cameron Mackintosh. If they really loved the theatre and really didn't think of the money first, they wouldn't allow their shows to run such disgustingly long runs.

Amusing interview with Simon Gray, who shortly after Stephen Frey's debacle was told he had two years, possibly six months, to live. But it turned out the doctors were wrong and had to recant. Perfect subject for him.

Thursday May 9 1996

So, Justin rang briskly and said could he come round at two. No five. He turned up. I said 'I'll open the bottom doo9r'. He and a young black man I glimpsed from my bedroom - window, put the stuff into a large car. It only took a few minutes. I'd said 'give me a shout when you're finished'. He did. I said 'Bye' from the drawing-room. And they went. I had thought there might have been some attempt to talk, but he had at least enough sense not to try. What a relief. So we consign poor silly Justin to the fate that no doubt awaits him.

Lovely the room is clear. It just shows what a few harsh words will do!

Went to draw what I could from the Halifax, thinking it would be only £8, but there was £50 odd available. Amused at myself that I went all the way to the Chinese Halifax in Frith St. in case ... On the way back, I see the wisteria on the cemetery wall is colouring, in that almost inimitable way that wisteria does before the leaves. But the big ash is still bare at a glance. I went to the new Row Tesco's on the way home and then out again to the film, and at the end of all, found I wasn't at all tired at the end of the evening. Indeed, in the taxi on the way home after the film I talked rather more and rather better than usual. I think that was the result of getting rid of Justin's little mess. Of course, he can't be expected to know the unpleasantness of when-will-he-come-round hanging over me for the three months - He's never had somewhere of his own, poor thing.

So, to the film, it had an unprepossessing title, 'Rough Magic'. It didn't come off. It is so important when you introduce the supernatural (sic), that you stick to the rules that you have started with. This film doesn't. and to interleave it with ordinary conjuring is an even bigger mistake. On top of all that, the attempt is a 30's - 40's private eye - girl, get-together on some mission or other, late-each-other, love-each-other, get-together finally. Alas, the secret of the movement of a film like that to work, is not given to the makers of this film. Sad, because the perfs., from Bridget

Fonda and Russell Crowe, were quite good enough to bring off what the film was aiming at. It was directed by Clara Peploe or some such name, who Janet tells me is Bernardo Bertolucci's wife. We were supplied with a sixteen or seventeen page introduction, telling us what a difficult time she'd cover the film, and how it wasn't near what she'd meant to make of it, and... Mr Schneer was cross. To him it was an art film.

Item about S. Heaney, reading his poems. 'The spirit Level' 'And tell your Mother to find me a bubble for the spirit level'. Sounds like prose to me.

Friday May 10 1996

Oh, the catholic church. Antonia White. I sometimes wish I'd never been brought into and up in the catholic religion. It was a true choice for my father. It wasn't for me. But I can no more escape from it all though I can restore the lenses to my eyes or straighten my broken finger. Er- yes. Brainwashing. How cross they are with the Nazis, but ... Oh, the boredom of catholic guilt, which they think is interesting the second volume gets successively more interesting as her 'faith' declines and she gets more interested in other people, instead of self, self, self, which I would have thought the reverse of being a good catholic.

Another financial obscenity. An idiot woman has left #4 million to an animal sanctuary in the west country. Owners interviewed, operating theatre, new wing etc. etc. ugh.

I see Frank Dunlop is directing Cliff Richard in CR's version of Wuthering Heights. How are the mighty fallen!

Saturday May 11 1996

Still cold. No sign from K. while R. was there.

Sunday May 12 1996

K, rang 8.15. Tues for dins? Cook dinner? Wendy's decorating still. He'll start on the sitting-room when I can get someone to do the skirting – boards. R., didn't come again, that's why I wasn't asked. 'I just wanted to let you know I was still alive. I've been working like a pig'. Asked me tenderly about money. Said I had none. Also wanted me to buy more glasses. Got enough for that. Transformed the day.

Good talk with Roy, tho' he didn't have much news. Refused the Munchausen I offered. Just like me, he read as far as the fifth or sixth chapter and could go no further. So I can sell Daddy's copy. How like D. to buy it!

I must give that dinky toy bat mobile I found in the tube to K. for his executive toys table.

May 13 1996

Bought the glasses, as I could get a little money out of the Halifax. At most welcome cheque for £59 odd arrived, but won't be available till the 22nd. Still £2.49 for three. Has he broken that half-dozen I brought round a month ago.? Yes.

My dear pen has started a bit of flooding. I hope it will adjust itself. Felt a bit chokey and stifled after lunch.

Tuesday May 14 1996

Wednesday May 15 1996

Oddly, felt the same yesterday morning, that is, and decided to have no lunch. It isn't exactly feeling sick or actually choking, or really hungover, a bit of all three. Went off as afternoon went on, sitting quietly. But it came on enough to make me get off the tube three times, finally getting off at Holloway R. and walking. It can only be psychological, as it stopped once I was walking. I used to have it a lot years ago when D. was getting ill. 'stress'. They'd call it now, but why yesterday? No reason.

Quite interesting – Holloway Rd, not seen for about a year, is slightly more random still, more shops shut, and no new ones, let alone any smarter ones. And the organic butchers with the shutters down. When I thought they must have been doing specially well. I suppose it's possible they shut one day a week, like the fish monger's.

He wasn't in the studio for once and 'Wendy' was coming down the stairs, halfway through doing the bathroom. The lavatory pan under the water-line, is very dark brown. I suppose he's picked up this shade... And oh the smell of varnish, really overpowering. K. had some work to finish, so I got going on the garden and more or less finished planting up the raised bed, saving some of the potted plants in a bad way. That old cheese plant I split into three and took the weedy little one home with me. Sowed parsley. Worked for about an hour and a half, as much as I can really do these days.

K. said he'd cook the dinner after all, and I chatted to 'Wendy', more or less on his way out. Pleasant, intelligent, tells me he's got a car, a bit of a relief, as I thought the tiresome journey to Brockley might mean him staying in the house rather too often. Father lives in Leamington, which roused a few memories. How curious that so many spas should have fallen into decay, just as so many people started buying mineral water. Rather more feminine in clothing – a sort of dress, with trousers underneath, a little echo of an Indian woman. Wendy's real name, Ben Broughton. He went and K. told me that he was going to start turning things down. Indeed he already has. The man at Granada, who's a friend, offered him 'a children's series, twelve episodes, '£4000 an episode?' 'No, for all twelve'. Well, that's ridiculous because of the time it takes. And so ridiculous is it that the friend wrote to apologise and hope it wouldn't any difference to their friendship

He told me Arlette was supposed to ring but hadn't and he would be annoyed if she didn't because he'd half-arranged for him to go over there or her to come here for a

week. I knew they wouldn't wait till Aug. She did ring at 10.30 while we were in the studio, and I had a little awkward talk as usual, 'It's lovely and warm?' 'How are your exams going?' but still I love to hear her warmth and softness. He keeps emphasizing her dizziness, her complete lack of sense of direction and so on. I don't think that would be so evident away from him!

He played me his own show reel – impressive, and I heard the song again. It really might work, as it does even with the session singer. How interesting personality, or lack of it, she has an excellent voice and noting individual.

Just before dinner he said, 'now money'. He realised I needed cash and looked in his wallet, where he had £60. He gave me £40, as he had to go to C. 4 today and a cheque or £100 to tide you over'. I asked if he could spare me a bit of whisky, as I found it so difficult, after a lifetime to go to sleep without it. He filled a tonic bottle with Famous Grouse.

Later I told him about the little book I lost on the tube. The Complete angler by Isaac Newton. 'I thought Isaac Newton was the one who discovered gravity with the apple'. I went on gravely explaining rather drunk, until he realised I was quite wrong and shrieked and rolled around in his skittering chair. Between his machines, and squealed 'I've waited for fifteen years to correct you in a literacy matter'.

Isaak Walton ...

So today, sent him card telling him I was wrong ... Felt slightly chokey again, and went without lunch. But perfectly all right. Went to pay in K's £100. Bought some haddock, cheapish in Safeway. When I got it home, I found it was three small haddock, with the fillets still joined. I daresay regarded as inferior because not uniform enough. Grilled them gently, delicious, one side only, thin enough for that

Janet rang to say she'd got a bit more money than she thought so we'll go out to dins after the film. Good. A saving and a pleasant saving.

Thursday May 16 1996

Well, collapse of evening. One way and another. Janet rang to say that the film was long, we wouldn't get to the restaurant till ten o'clock so can we take a raincheck on dinner? I haven't actually been offered that idiom in real life before.

Later in the afternoon, I was feeling chokey again, and cried off the film. I do hope she didn't think it was anything to do with the meal being called off. Tho' of course, it was in a way, because I felt I mightn't be able to eat it and get into a taxi straight after it.

I didn't go out at all and made a meal out of a tine of 'chicken in red wine' etc. and some spaghetti. Felt better and read 'The Nine Tailors'

K. rang, Sharron was there and told him his hoover was bought at Curry's so that's where I can get the bags he wants. I said we'd got a Curry's in H'smith. Of course 0181. At first I thought he was asking for a recipe. Really.

Friday May 17 1996

Got to the tax woman at last. Mr, Mackay asks for Miss Morris. A woman comes and asks if I am a Mr Morris, for a Mr MacKay. Turns out a Mr MacKay, a tax officer is in same office near Miss Morris. Ludicrous, as if a tax-office wasn't a silly enough place to start with. What future ages will think of us for the absurdity of taxes. I don't know. Well, I do actually.

To Halifax on way back to Picc. Circus station, bought a lovely piece of skate at the Brewer St. fishmongers. Forgot to record that K. said one of many reasons why he wouldn't want a baby, was strongly underlined by someone professionally present in the studio for a recording bringing their toddler along. I won't bother to enumerate the irritations – they are too boringly obvious – he was more surprised than I was that the mother didn't have nearly enough perception of his outrage. Well, mothers.

Saturday May 18 1996

What is it about the tube? I see people standing in front of the list of stations – not the map, which more conceivably could lead to discussion – pointing to one and another, rubbing their finger up and down on the name and altogether carrying on as if they were teasing out the difficult solution of an interpolated palimpsest.

Bought a N.Z. shoulder for £3.19. English now about £6.00 and smaller.

Sunday May 19 1996

Dreamt about K last night, which I don't often do. It must have been the cheese. ...

Caught Sidney Poitier in some old epic. Do you know. I think he was in black face. He was certainly in brown chest.

Still a horrible violent cold wind.

Monday May 20 1996

Last night there was a three and a half hour programme about that footballer, George Best – on BBC 2. What are we coming to? I was struck all over again what a completely uninteresting activity football is, just kicking a ball about and trying to get it into a net. No doubt there's some skill in it, but so there is in Ludo and Scrabble. And you are left with nothing in the end, except a 3 ½ hour tribute to a 50 year old mess who had to give up at 27 because of booze.

Did I say a card from Neil? An extended stay. I wonder what that means. It will be lovely to see the dear chap, but I rather dread the hours of career talk, or rather no-career talk well, look at my no-career. How can we complain? Vermeer died at 43, leaving a mass of debts and 8 children. His widow has to sell her favourite out of his paintings. And there were only thirty something altogether.

The London Theatre programme – at midnight, showing what clout the theatre hasn't got - was depressing. There was an extract from the three sisters, now at the Lyric, H'smith. The acting was stale. It was 'acting' with nothing fresh or real, noting from the centre of the character or the actor.

A pretty girl Elle Macpherson? Was heard to say 'Acting and modelling are completely different crafts'. Er. Yes.

K. rang and said I must come and cook dinner and finish anything in the garden. Spoke to Wendy first who said K's back was bad 'I wasn't going to tell you, said K.

So I bought some lamb steaks – 'I only seem to have turkey kebabs – Ugh. and some courgettes, because he always seems to have carrots and broccoli, tho' I did take one of R's carrots. (shows how long they last in the salad drawer.) I took some cheese for myself and of course, some jersey royals. I said to him, 'you once said to Robin that you weren't sure that angus was serious about potatoes – well, I'm not sure you're serious about jersey royals'. I could see that his back was quite painful, so I was very pleased to see him sit down to a table he hadn't laid and a meal he hadn't cooked and all in his own house. Told him of the La Boheme tape and he agreed to see it, tho' its always difficult for him to listen to music 'off-duty'. During dinner the phone rang, there was a few anodyne sentences. Who was that? 'A 39 year old, who's after me'. 'ho, ho' 'No I've been a good', still. I could see that he had certainly not put the 39 year old straight out of the window. If Arlette had been there and were in love with him, she'd be troubled.

Wendy might have joined us, but couldn't finish his work in time. the bathroom is now bronzed and the lavatory tank shimmering gold ... This time there was no doubt about it, Wendy was wearing a dress. A short black dress with a boat-neck, short sleeves, knee-length skirt. Accessories included hair of an unlikely ruby pinned up at the back like a Victorian slave, bare legs and very large heavy boots. How strange that so many young people seem to want to make their legs look thin and silly!

He joined us after coffee, and was quite funny, I think. Anyway, they laughed. He asked to pay for the dinner. I was pleased to let it go. Later he said when were alone 'Don't hesitate to ask'.

Tuesday May 21 1996

Sharron rang and we had a good long talk. She seems in better spirits, but I am still worried about her lack of financial progress. I wish I knew more of the world she works in, but I can't help feeling that if she were going to make real progress and her business take off, there should be some signs of it, by now. I am getting used to leaving K. out of the conversation.

Wednesday May 22 1996

Slept right through and woke at twenty to one midday. As I ate the rest of the chicken at ten to two a.m., I didn't feel very fresh, and continued to feel below par all day. But if I feel I can't sleep, I do seem to be driven to a snack. I do go without lunch the next day in an attempt not to over eat too much. But I must stop it by some other means.

Almost everything in America is secondhand. A new series is called 'American Gothic', for heavens sake. Like all second hand information, it is imperfectly understood.

It seems that thirteen minutes of Ken B's Hamlet, all that was ready, was the hottest ticket at the Cannes Film Festival. Thirty seconds was too much for me. A bit of the nunnery scene, - how people do force things now and the girl has that awful sloppy-common accent, like the duchess of York. Then there's Al Pacino as R III ... Yes, the disassembly, of European civilization goes on apace.

Dear little Paul rang to ask me to dinner at last. I couldn't ring him as it would look as if I were expecting to be asked, after his last call. Like John N. a long time, June 16. Oh, did I say, John N. rang on Sunday to ask me to go with him to the private view of the Degas exhibition Simon couldn't go. I heard myself saying - it was to be Tuesday - that I was going to Paul Ryan's. Various reasons. No clothes. Possibility of meeting people from the past with depressing effect - 'I always believed you would' - the exhaustion of getting there and back and looking at pictures for more than half an hour. Dear John. He chuckled as he said that I was the first person he'd asked. I was flattered that he's not ashamed to be seen with me these days, in what are now his circles. But I am ashamed that I hadn't the courage to go. Conversely, when Paul asked me if I was free on Sunday, and I said I was seeing Neil ... what shall I say to Neil?

I suppose age is a defence. I need my own terms. I', always safe with K.

Thursday May 23 1996

Talking of forcing, Patrick Cargill is dead. Two or three minutes of the news on TV was devoted to him, with a tribute from Derek Nimmo. Well, he majority gets its taste. At least the tribute was from another forced caricature of an imitation of an 'English gentleman'. Terry Thomas. Patrick McNee, Peter Cushing, etc. etc. etc, I should have realised I had no chance.

I see that Mike Leigh's new film, which got the Palme d'Or at Cannes, stars B. Blethyn who also got Best Actress. Much is made of M. Leigh's rather repulsive and pathetic 'Method'; Living a part outside rehearsals, is a confession of failure to any good actor I've known. I have seen a number of excerpts and I can tell no sign whatever of any change in her 'method' from Chance in a Million or anything else I've seen her in. Nor in her voice or action or accent. I yield to nobody in my great

admiration for her work and herself, but I think Mike Leigh should be grateful to her rather than the other way round. I find out, from the interviews and so on, that Mike Leigh gets part of his tiresomeness and paranoia, which everyone seems to bear witness to, to being half-Jewish, half Russian. He doesn't understand one English and England all that well, and tangles with them. The resulting conflict is interesting to some people, but is too crude and blunt ended for me. And I imagine for Alison Steadman by this time.

Friday May 24 1996

Met Mary L. at the Gate to see R III film. She was wrapped in a thousand woolen shawls as usual and had come by tube. Sensible for a change. Film not bad for what it was, a sketch of R III, cut to ribbons, set in the 30's, R. got up like a sort of Hitler. Ian Mck. As good as I've seen him which isn't saying all that much. He's lost whatever looks he had and this has discouraged the poutings and flirtings that I found so distasteful. Indeed his bags are now spectacular especially under his left eye. Rather appropriately, it looks like the beginning of the monster starting melt down. But as ever with modern dress shakes. However cleverly or smartly applied, in the end the result is lightweight and diminishing. Of course it doesn't matter so much with R III as it is a shallow play, - as Shaw so rightly said Punch and Judy - tho' I would mind very much with others. (I think history will take my view of Larry O. when they realise that his most completely successful perf. was R III). The most impressive thing about the whole affair was the supporting cast. Apart from two Hollywood second-string stars, almost everyone else had played the leading part or parts in major films or TV series, Jim Carter, Jim Broadbent, Bill Paterson, Adrian Dunbar etc. etc. But how they blur into similarity. When you think that we get Nigel Hawthorne instead of Joh. G. for example and who? Instead of Ralph R. how lucky L.O. was and how we've come down. Mary L. thought it 'terrific' I saw her onto her one-decker bus which she only just got into out of the rain. Why not the tube? Less chance to complain, I expect.

Caught a second of a programme about 'UFO'. A poor creature, who used to work at the Min. of Defence, came out for 'UFO's', saying in confirmation, 'Many reliable witnesses, for instance, military personnel... Military personnel? Nobody is more credulous than a professional soldier, out of his province. Simple souls.

Saturday May 25 1996

Rang Mary L. to see if she got home alright. One of her classic slaps. 'I've' got a sore throat and I had my purse stolen on the bus. Sad, of course, but made to sound my fault.

Still no message from Neil. Very unusual three days without an enthusiastic call. That and extended stay on the card, makes me suspect something different. Unless his staying with his another.

K. rang. Dins Monday. How can I have not recorded - it was because it happened in between times - that on Friday night at 8.30 when he would never ring me because of

dinner, and announcing g 'Angus it's Kevin, two names he seldom uses, he rang to say his minicab had arrived to take him to meet Arlette at H'row and he'd shut the door behind him, leaving his keys inside. He betrayed his slight panic by saying, after picking them up on his way to H'row 'perhaps we could drop in on the way back for a drink'... hm. So I went out into the garden and picked a few sprigs of rosemary, which is in flower at the moment, wrapped it in a bit of tissue and wrote on a 'choosing' postcard, 'I know you have rosemary in Portugal, but here it gleams with rain instead of sun. He arrived at the front door, shaved, his hair washed, in that nice dark blue shirt, a happy thriving lover, took his own keys and zoomed off into the Heathrow night. And I came back and sat down and laughed. I'm so touched that he wants me in this crowded week, work, clubs, meals and unlimited shagging. You need to be stopped by something – it's better.

Sunday May 26 1996

I like the Antiques Road Show within limits because beautiful things and expertise interest me. But I wish that there were no emphasis on price and its accompanying whiff of greed. Again, within limits, I like to hear values, but far too often these are controlled by the unhealthy collecting instinct, wanting something not because it is a link to other knowledge, but because nobody else has got it. Ugh.

Monday May 27 1996

Tuesday may 28 1996

So I got there, taking some bits of things with me, those nasty Philadelphia samples given away at Tesco's the scented nightlights Janet brought round which I'll never use, and anyway they probably smell horrible, some bay-leaves and a rue plant. I planted this at once, and it'll fill a space nicely.

He was in the studio for a little while, so I read my book. I could hear Arlette moving about upstairs. I dare say she's always a bit late. When she came down it was worth the wait. Her hair was down and the slightly austere impression she made at first, hair up, rather tailored, was completely wiped out, she was wearing a black mini skirt - and now saw she has superlative legs – shoes with a multiplicity of slightly fetishist straps and very high louis heels, and a white silk chiffon blouse, with deep ruffles round the plunge neck and deep plain ruffles on the cuff, as deep as the first knuckle. She looked delicious. I quite see. She asked to see the rue. Then I read her a bit of Ophelia and one verse of Houseman. Of course picking up D's dear old tattered shakes that I gave him, meant I went on a bit. (I'd forgotten what I'd written in it. D. bought it in Reading where she was when the war broke out. It was a gesture ... so I wrote in to K. who hates war as much as she did!) I read her just a little bit of R and S. 'I would I were they bird' She loved that. I don't mean I read to her. The whole reading lasted vie? Mins at the most.

K. had said G and T and went off to get it and start cooking. The phone went and he talked for some time and called 'it's coming'. It turned out he'd been telling Wendy off! It seemed they all went out to some club and Wendy was beautifully dressed and made up and looking, no doubt to 'score' – (and by the way, he likes girls, though to

someone innocent like me, it's difficult to imagine a girl who would like him) but he had Also drunk a half bottle of gin straight off and was therefore more or less insensible. K. tore a strip off him for his stupidity, and quite right. But such behaviour spells deep self-hatred, and when I found he was K's age, I became much less hopeful for change.

Watercress soup, guinea-fowl, chocolate pudding, strawberries. It seems Arlette, as well as being late, is slow over meals. Well, it's the Mediterranean rhythm. When I asked her whether the discos club etc in London were very different, the only difference she mentioned was that in London they open and close so early. It seems in P. you arrive at 2.0 am and leave at 10 the next morning ...

Lovely chats, she is so soft and warm and pretty as well as being intelligent. It is astronomy she's really interested in and she was transported with excitement when I told her Fred Hoyle had been on my staircase (or rather I on his) at Camb. I found him very dull at the time. I expect she was surprised that I left so early. He put me in a mini cab. She was shivering in the mild May night.

I was so moved by his pleasure in me being there and getting on so well with her. Amazing when I look back over the years. I am so blessed.

Sitting up still awake at five to four, I can hear a faint dawn chorus.

Oh, I did have a lovely evening.

Wednesday May 29 1996

K. rang because Arlette felt guilty for not thanking me for the rosemary and card. Dear thing. 'She's still a bit intimated by you, all the knowledge and fluency ... 'Really?' 'Well I was a bit intimated by you at first'. It can't have been for more than five minutes'.

They were off to dins at 9.15. Not the fish and chip shop, she closes at ten, we're going to Aquilino. Memories.

Thursday May 30 1996

A talk on American manners (sic). It seems its rude to blow your nose in public now...

There is more and more talk of supernatural happenings and UFO's as the hysterical nineties progress. More sic. There are apparently more sightings of UFO's in Walthamstow, as its natives pronounce it – than everywhere else put together. Yes, I daresay there is a higher proportion of demi-semi educated people unable to weigh evidence or separate fact from fiction there than most places.

Later. To film 'Now and Then'. Poor and misguided. Four friends meeting twnty6 years after school and then back to them at 16. But as the older manifestations

include Demi Moore and Melanie Griffiths, expectations are roused and ridiculously disappointed by them only being on for about an eight if that, of the film. For the rest it's full of obvious and intrinsic American sentimentality, with a number of apothegms intoned by voice-over which would take me through a rich spiritual progress, comforting me the while, if they hadn't been pinched from the back of a 'greetings' card.

To La Perla. Janet Brown not as boring as usual. Told of her visit to Hong Kong. She was flown. More flooding, bother. There on a Sat. and did her Mrs Thatcher turn on Wednesday, for a company which she said, last year had a turnover of something something trillion dollars. She performed to six hundred people and they presumably paid some thousands of pounds for this recondite pleasure. The night before Edna Everage had appeared and the chairman was still shaking at his savaging of a director's wife's wardrobe. Another wife confided to Janet B. at the reception afterwards that she thought Dame Edna was a man. And that douce little Janet B. can go and tangle there. Well, it shows what no imagination can achieve. And to what simple people is given the gift to make immense sums of money.... I had mushrooms deep fried – far too many about 15 - and scallops and Janet B's wine.

Friday May 31 1996

Rather an energetic day for me nowadays. I forgot to take a handful of dust to the film last night (Janet M. had been listening to it on the radio and missed the last episode and wanted to know how it ended – oh dear) she'd said she'd be at the office in the p.m. so I went to Selfridge's and paid – down to £40 now, soon be over. To John Lewis for those little whatever-they-are that you knot the blind cord into. Mine put up by John Lewis in 1981, are starting to split – two of the little plastic bobbles have gone. I find the only ones available are brass, 59p each. Why not brass in 1981? Wouldn't they have lasted longer, being baked in the torrid English sun every summer? Then further along Oxford Street to get some money from the Halifax. then on a bus to Janet. Quite a bit of walking one way and another, which, only a few months ago finished me. I got there and she wasn't in. Actually I was relieved because I could get the tube before the rush hour.

Saturday June 1 1996

Weather still very poor. Darling Arlette will get out of it today and back into the warmth. Still, I have to say I never really like it above 66 or so.

Had a much more tolerable theatre dream this a.m. Everyone there getting to rehearsal, I knew and loved. Journey there fun and all together, so no worry about me being late. Through a big church and up or down – in a lift and finished in a lovely garden outside Gloucester/Cheltenham. So quiet, a lake, swans, As Ian Mullins passed dressed as Oberon in a tall headdress, I said 'Wearing you lifts them?' Ian M. now 6'3". No D. or K., but no sense of loss. What does this mean? ...

There was a pop group some years ago from Norway of all places called A-ha. The lead singer who had a name like Harkan Brisket. Even I could see he was like me at

twenty-something and it made me realise my Nordic roots. The same straight nose, small eyes, and especially high cheek bones. Interesting. It saves you from bags under the eyes.

Sunday June 2 1996

Sign of the Times. An advert for a study bedroom, or people who work at home. An elaborate series of fitted cupboards, four doors of which open and you pull down a bed! Another two open to unleash a tower of expanding shelves with lap tops, screens etc. etc. or it can be a sewing-room. Literacy spread on a wide and wider scale. One of the cupboards conceals what the advert calls 'a discrete pop-out sewing-machine'. I expect they'd be surprised to hear that they've advertised a sewing-machine that isn't actually there.

Monday June 3 1996

Still no word from Neil. Letter from S's Secretary, Karen, saying she wanted my signature again, as secretary of his company. And could I dine with him on Thursday at Peg's club in Mercer St. Wonder if it's new. Looked it up and found I know it perfectly well. If you live in London, you don't notice the names of streets you've known for thirty years. It runs from Sh. Avenue to Long Acre and I must walk down it often...

Read the theatre list in the E. Standard for the first time for a while. Depressing reading. Endless long-running musicals, and disgraceful long runs like the Woman in Black and the Mousetrap. Is there a new play of real quality in the West End? No. And in the announcements for Chichester, there is an adaptation of Mansfield Park from a novel by Jane Austen – Sondheim's passion is coming off – it's no use. I have little time for him except as a musician. Most depressing of all, Michael Higgs has taken over in the woman in Black in its eighth year. Nobody of quality would do that – scrub floors, rather. Standards at the National and The RSC interest me not at all, as they topple downwards day by day. The Three Sisters at the Lyric Ham, - have I said? - has not a single actors name anywhere in evidence, only the names of those who are not seen by the audience. And all the time, people repeat, like an obsession, that the English Theatre is the best in the world. I'm afraid it may be.

Tuesday June 4 1996

Really hot for the first time. Ugh!

Theatre dream this a.m. Everyone word perfect except one, rehearsing in a lecture theatre with some people in the seats. But I was not worried just wanting to keep my book a little longer than some. This I did in reality. I always thought that a lot of actors learnt it and put the book down, to be able to stop thinking about it. It was the first rehearsal, Reggie S. cast me, nobody else identified. I don't know what my subconscious is getting up to, but the parts are getting better. I was playing Hamlet.

Stayed in all day in my thin summer pyjamas for comfort. Yes, these days are like cottage days, only in the middle of London. I really believe if K. died, I would never go out except for food. But then I wouldn't want food.

Wednesday June 5 1996

Good notice for S's operas in Independ. Makes it sound fun .

K. rang to say, would I do a voiceover for a commercial he was doing, this p.m. or Friday morning. 'I bet it'll be Fri a.m. making me get up early after evening with S. #50.

Later. It is Fri. a.m. but also it's £100... Is it something I can do, that suits me? 'oh yes it's for an insurance company'. So I must summon my pin-stripe voice back from the past. It's beastly hot. Bother. It muddles my head.

Thursday June 6 1996

The 379 .4480 number I didn't recognise, is Janet's outgoing no whose number I can never remember. A relief. Arranged asparagus lunch on Sunday on the strength of my £100.

Mary L. rang to say there was an article in the Stage ab out D. and I at Cheltenham. Odd, but felt mildly pleased all the same. Someone called Tudor Davies who must be d'un certain age.

Braced myself for a lot of noise because I had seen invitations for some sort of celebration at Queen's for the long tall think streak of nothing upstairs. Family firm of stocks. Only sign before I went out to S. one pale blue balloon was limping about in the little hall.

Sen t bank statement to Roy with the 'discrete' joke on, and realised I hadn't heard from them for at least a month or more and of course, I haven't been there since before Christmas. Oh dear.

Friday June 7 1996

Saturday June 8 1996

Phew! so, last night got to Mercer St. and found Peg's in a side street, actually the restaurant is on the ground floor, and the bar and drinks area in the basement, a series of cellars and alcoves, opening out of the one another. Well arranged because you can be alone in your alcove and S. was in one of two rather shabby basket chairs. In fact the whole place was quite shabby in a rather pleasant way – it certainly had no design concept, which is refreshing. The dining-room was just an old-fashioned dining-room. There were only two or three other tables occupied – good for the old ear. Food good, Italian rather than not. Fresh grilled sardines, red mullet, kiwi and

melon cocktail, which looked like loose summer shit but tasted delicious. How different other people's taste-buds must be! It was billed as Red Mullet with onions. The fish grilled, with three or four tablespoons of neat onions in quite a spicy sauce. If I'd had more than a tiny taste, I wouldn't have been able to taste the very distinctive red-mullet taste. But perhaps others think it has little taste, like plaice. He had the sardines and cod – I can't follow what his diet is, but I will remember spinach en branche – he seems to ask for that every time.

He was in fine but less obviously ebullient form, which was a change. We had a delightful giggly conversation, only possible between old and close friends, and quite impossible to describe. But, for example, how I sympathised with his description of a night of Edna O'Brien's, a very large party, she couldn't afford it now, when there was a ghastly moment when she announced in her fiercest Irish voice, that everyone must sing a wee song. Like a dreadful game. Of course, S. said he couldn't sing, and it's true he can't, not in tune, that is, and at a party of actors ... And it was T.P. McKenna who did the Lalla-Donald of course you can sing Simon, with that great voice of yours, come on, be a sport etc etc. How I cringed remembering my youth! I've always thought T.P. McK. Had a mean mouth and eyes.

He spent yesterday or rather Wednesday, mostly with Lord Snowdon. He's bringing out a book of theatrical photos and wants S to write the text. I would have thought he could do it himself, - still I'm glad for S. I was interested to hear that he's had great difficulty finding a publisher – more evidence of the diminishing clout of the theatre.

He is doing the Pyjama Game. Says Abbott's widow is funny and charming. And he's persuaded Pauline C. to do the Shirley Valentine revival, after all, she's only got another couple of years in a bikini. Bill Kenwright is playing up as usual. I was surprised to hear that the original production did not make money and was seldom more than half-full. It'll be a different story this time. She only did three months and didn't get to the big audience.

But a most moving thing happened S. said he thought he mightn't see me again before my b'day and gave me his present, a simple card simply inscribed 'Waterstone's Booksellers Ltd. Please supply Angus Mackay with any books he desires and invoice account no etc etc.' and it was signed with a person's name in ink, a sure sign of a very special arrangement these days. I wept with pleasure. 'Any books he desires' – what if I'd known that at nineteen? I think it must be the second best present I've ever had. I hope he can afford it. I told him I am ordering the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics in fifty vols. At £75 a vol.

On our way out a small ratty man I didn't like the look of much leapt up and greeted S. I moved quietly on and didn't meet him. Turned out to be the ruling spirit of Bertram Rota. The immensely distinguished antiquarian bookseller. S. assures me that if Shakespeare wished to sell his private papers, that little shifty thing would oversee the sale. Was Wayne Sleep's boy-friend for twenty? Years, a relationship punctuated by rows notably violent even by gay standards. (talking of which, I saw Miriam Margolyes being interviewed by Anethea Turner and was startled to hear M.M. say 'You are not only very pretty but very intelligent, looming over her like a genial grizzly over a pretty but apprehensive rabbit. Then I remembered she was gay. Well).

What a generous soul he is! Can he afford it? Well, I won't insult him by not using it.

Today was the voiceover day. Of course, I didn't really sleep at all, because I was so afraid of not waking. I realised, more acutely than ever before, how much I'd hated TV and film for that reason. If it's one-off, I never sleep – I have to have a routine, which the theatre supplied. Felt 'chokey' on the tube, and got off twice, and waited a bit. Only in the mind. Wendy greeted me, garb equivocal this time.

He was in the studio with a nice dull boy and girl. Went up to have a pee and Wendy said 'Mind the bath' and when I went in, the disconnected bath was upside down on the floor, covered with copper-glittering paint, Coo. The script (sic) was written in green ink and a certain amount of illiteracy and consisted of four line, 'Is my business protected? Lost?' 'confused?' 'You won't be if you go with GFM Insurance'. Or something like that. Done in ten? Mins. They are so amazed that you can read it off fluently, and change it if necessary. Lovely to sit there with K twiddling round with his head-phones with on, and to feel so utterly familiar and safe. He said 'leave us' and I realised the girl was the other voice. Went upstairs and read the Spectator that I'd brought with me. Funny little drawing for once, Galley slave to neighbour 'You're going to love Carthage'. In about twenty mins. K said all was well with the tape, and as it was only half past eleven, went thankfully home, warmed by a hug and him showing me a cannabis plant in my border. I think the pet thought I needed to be told about it in case I weeded it out. I suppose he doesn't really believe that I can tell plants apart by leaves alone.

Later. Neil rang! He arrived yesterday, so I've had all that worry for nothing. Looked gaunt, keeping thin for the fucking camera. We had the usual conversation which I might sum up as we're definitely coming back. Lucy's growing boobs and she's been very difficult and any minute it'll be too late and Linda's doing very well with her reflexology. We've lived on that, she's got Ted Danson and Mary Steenburgen and we're definitely coming back. I've had lunch with my agent here, and she's encouraging and I'm in a different age-group now and we're definitely coming back unless I get a part in this seventy-five part series I'm up for! He stayed for a couple of hours. I couldn't offer him any food. But I love him for the kindness he has always showed me. He is raw and naïf but his love has come out of that.

Oh, and K pushed my fee into my hand. £100, in cash. Alas, the 'phone bill was at home, £97.40.

Sunday June 9 1996

Got myself out of bed with the asparagus and wine and A Handful of Dust for Janet. Collected edition 1948, from Michael? Bishop? Why? No idea.

Andrew J. was supposed to be there at 12.0 to do various jobs, but, as usual, didn't arrive for an hour, claimed to be in traffic jam, on a Sunday? Very pleasant all the same and brought me back four books I'd completely forgotten I'd lent him one of them, I couldn't remember owning at all. Kenneth William's diary. I found it

impossible to get it over to Janet that asparagus is a complete first course and followed by strawberries, is a classic English summer lunch. Andrew J. had brought a fairly substantial salmon and dill quiche. Janet provided the usual seven or eight dishes of salad, prawns in mayonnaise etc. etc. and a well-loaded cheeseboard, with three sorts of biscuits. With the coffee, three sorts of sweet biscuit, one of them chocolate. I think Janet probably nibbles all the time when alone and as usual, wonders why she's fat because she eats so little ...

The other guest, Jeanie (insisted on) Sims was my age, worked in films all her life, with that particular raddled appearance which comes from a refusal and dislike of old age. Just as I expected, it was not long before sexual exploits were being shoehorned into the conversation, in this case a dalliance with H. Bo9gart. Equally expected, over coffee, 'what sign are you?' were a cancerian ...'

I left first, and was home by quarter to four. Started on the K. Williams – is there something worrying about writing in a diary about a diary? – the main fascination for me is that he was exactly the same age, and an actor, and that has so far kept me going through a melancholy document. The malice and self-pity and tastelessness are quite startlingly nasty, and made all the worse by the curious streaks of intelligence and taste – the remarks about St. Joan, for instance. The continual bursts of 'what's the use of it all?' the boasting the insecurity, not to mention the near pathological pollution mania and you have about as unattractive a self-portrait as I've read. Still, let's hope the reality was more pleasant. He seems to have had friends who were genuinely fond of him, Gordon Jackson and his wife, for instance (by the way I never shared the widespread admiration for G. Jackson 's acting. I found it sentimental. And I longed to reshape his hair.) But one way and another K. Williams is yet a further example of the danger of semi-education. As for his acting, I could just bear his Dauphin, but only because it's always played as a screaming queen – why, I don't know. But for the rest of it, I really couldn't look. It is cautionary to read of his surprise at being catcalled in the street. His voice, face and walk were a parody of an old queen.

K. rang, for a lovely long talk for once. Off to Portugal again!

Monday June 10 1996

Two minor coincidences. While I was reading K. Williams, with the TV on sans sound, the cricket unexpectedly finished and K. W. appeared in a Carry on compilation. During my dinner with S. we talked of Peter Glenville, for reasons that now escape me. And at the same time, more or less, he was dying.

Poor K.W., he complains of the vulgarity of the Carry On's, yet the jokes of his own he quotes are just as vulgar and his own perfs. were quite the most vulgar in the films.

Tuesday June 11 1996

In the p.m. to shop for Mary L. – the stall had reduced the asparagus £1 a big bundle, quite enough for two. Went to Ken. High St. and bought some more books, Alan Clark's Diaries, a new detective story. Lady Gregory's Diaries and the Bush Theatre

Plays, four of them. Read two of them, one, Boys Mean Business, not very original, I liked Two Lips Indifferent Red by Tamsin Oglesby. Now I can keep up a bit thanks to dear S. Started on the Alan Clarke, but I think it won't do for me. I did not realise it was to be so much about the foolish world of politicians jockeying and lying for position and power. And he really admires Thatcher. Ugh. Shopped for Mary L. Asparagus, Still £1.

Wednesday June 12 1996

Went to meet Mary. Temperature 75 or so. She was wearing a thick chunky polo-neck sweater and a winter coat in pale pink. Her absurd affectation about warmth and the sun led her to sit in the middle of the rosemary bush, with her left foot firmly on the mint. However, she was rather less abrasive this time. I played her the last ten minutes of Act 1 of the Sydney Boheme, and she found nothing adverse to say. Mind you, she did say she thought the rosemary was dying....

Still no word from Roy and Marian. I don't believe it's just because of the child or work. Something must be wrong. I don't think I have offended them in any way, and yet I haven't seen them since New Zealand, which is not at all like them.

Thursday June 13 1996

K rang just as I'd written to him, so I was able to give him the number of the delivery service that Janet sent me this morning. The Food Ferry Company Ltd. – London's Home Delivery Supermarket based in Battersea. Don't know how it works quite as this is only a covering letter, which Janet retained from Paula Wilcox, who uses it. Says he's going to Portugal on the 21st. I expect her topless dance on the beach surrounded by young men sent him hotfoot. Dinner on Saturday. I shall have to have a minicab back as it's the day of some football match with Scotland involved, at Wembley.

Talking to Mary L. about Kenneth W's diaries. Annette Kerr, with him at Swansea in early years, remaining a friend, told Mary that he was a terrible stirrer and bisected the company. I bet. I didn't tell Mary that Peggy Ann Wood, who ran the Little at Bristol for many years with her husband, Ronnie Russell, said to me exactly the same thing, in different words, of Mary. 'The most destructive person we ever had in the company' Ha.

Gaytime TV has a slot Gay Icons, and to my amazement, I see that Penny is doing the voiceover for the slot. Golly.

Friday June 14 1996

I see a man has died of TB caught in St Thomas from a woman who has been treated for it there for some months. They are now trying to get in touch with six hundred or so other people who may have been exposed to infection with a form of tuberculosis

which cannot be treated with the usual antibiotics. Our isolation procedures are being reviewed. Er – yes.

I intended to go to the new film Beautiful thing as I'd read the play when it was at the Bush. Found the cinema packed and left at once. I can't sit comfortably with seats full on either side of me any longer and I certainly couldn't sit in the middle of such an obviously 'interested' audience. I usually go on a film's first afternoon and the usual audience is about ten people. I do hate prejudiced audiences, either way and this was a ghetto audience. I turned tail and went down to Waterstones and bought the new vol of P.O. Toole's biog that Mary recommended. More trouble with S's card – I was told to go to the W shop next door and an assistant had to come with me carrying the books, because I couldn't leave the shop carrying books I hadn't paid for.

Told Mary when I got back that the Nureyev book in print and she actually said she felt guilty in case I didn't like it.

Paul rang to say could I come at eight instead of seven because Ben wanted to watch the football. Good heavens. A letter in return to mine, from the Kennel club, giving me the address of the secretary of the Pug Club, saying in a charmingly elliptical phrase 'He may be delighted to accept but I'm afraid it is not wit, but muddled business phrases.

Saturday June 15 1996

Hazel rang today as she has a Crime Writers' lunch tomorrow.

Sunday June 16 1996

I woke this morning with lead in my stomach of course I had a lovely evening, except for one thing. After dinner he said he'd wanted to talk about Arlette, and said that it was a fairly serious thing. He even mentioned Jenny Sheppard. This interested me for I have long felt that was his only love that really possessed him in the sense that I understand love. He said again that he thought it possible that A. might transfer to an English university in London, of course! – when I said that would be difficult for many reasons he then with a certain amount of sophistry, said that it can be an advantage not to stay at University and get on with it. That can be an advantage with music perhaps, but not with an academic subject. I said I quite understood that they wanted to be together and told him again, tho' in milder form, that she's in her first year and think what that means in terms of meeting lots of new men at a very impressionable age. Think of himself then – he slept with almost every woman in his year if you think strictly of her, he is depriving her of some precious years of discovery and experience. Of course I am well aware he is an experience. However, as he went to get the coffee, he said, with dignity and believably, 'she is devoted to me'. I hope he won't be hurt, as his deep emotions do seem to be engaged.

Sharron came in for a drink before – I don't quite know why, unless it was what she said before she left. I was interested to find her determinedly bright and ordinary

being interested in the redecoration which she might well have been snide about. I haven't seen them together since the split and was hopeful. Nevertheless I thought it strange of her to come round at such a time, so that she would be forced to walk away alone leaving us to a good dinner and a cosy evening. She stayed, uncomfortably until the lamb and vegetables were in our mouths. K. said, as she broke off a bit of lamb, 'Stay, there's plenty', but she wouldn't. But she still sat there, in one of the armchairs, at a lower level, embarrassing. When she did go, she called K. away from the table about something and then came back into the room with him reproaching him for not having done something, or looked up something. When she'd gone K. made a (very rare) complaint that she hadn't asked him to do that something. I fear the whole little incident simply goes to show that she has to get at him somehow. I was disappointed in her.

Before dinner I'd had a little look at the garden, everything alive but I shall have to weed at the weekend. K. said he'd seen a toad – I could hardly believe it, but he looked among the bergenia and there it was, a female, I think, as large as the palm of his hand. As the raised bed is only the width of the garden by about three feet, it is not the rich pickings my garden and pool would give her. It must be on the dry side with less worms etc. so he put it in a deep box, saying 'and you've always wanted one, haven't you?' He remembers everything. We brought it into the sitting-room, where Boo immediately showed interest, quivering and looming over the box. He had to put it on top of the TV from which there came an occasional scrabble – from the box. I mean (Bad grammar.) Oh, and I was too touched that my nail-brush had vanished. Wendy had used it in his decorating and ruined it. Aren't people extraordinary! It was quitter new and obviously in use. K. had bought another. Told him and sh. The limerick from one of Bush plays ...

There was a young fellow called Denzil,
Whose price was as sharp as a pencil,
He went through an actress,
Two sheets and a mattress,
And shattered a bedroom utensil
They both laughed – a lot and later on K. got me to record it.

The lead in my stomach was not caused by any of this – certainly, not the limericks – but by him saying the Pete Sinfield song has been recorded already by this new girl and will be on her first album, possibly the vital second single. If it takes off and even now a successful single still makes substantial money, he said that if Arlette can't transfer to England he might to and write with Pete in Portugal for three months. He is so quick at telling how I feel, I hope I showed nothing except the same interest. I don't think I did. But I imagined the winter without him, and I realised even more acutely, how completely I depend on him. Not having him to turn to and lean on. If Lalla died while he was away for instance. I have had to give up practically everything else and I am afraid.

I asked him to get me, buy me a mini-cab. There has been one of those wretched football matches and Scotland, I think lost. The tube might easily be awash with jeering and vomit. I kissed him and sank into the car by the driver, as I have done so many times. The driver was from Turkey, asked me what I did and was completely silenced by the reply. We raced through those anonymous ugly streets of which so much of North London consists. When we reached the comparative civilization of the

strand, I saw the illuminated sign of Salad Days in the distance. It was then hidden by traffic and I was looking forward to a good glance, we came round a bus and the light went out. It was midnight.

When I got home I took the box out to the top of the four steps into the garde. I turned it on its side gingerly. There was a scrabble, and the toad scrambled out and – well, there's no polite word for a toad's walk – waddled forward, looking from behind like Les Dawson in one of his women's roles. She stopped after about two yards for at least two minutes and then moved off into the huge dark jungle full of what ... I shall probably never see her again .

And then the lead came back.

Monday June 17 1996

Oh dear, I get a day behind if I got out. I tried to put the lead behind me – can one? But it was hanging over me all day. I may as well mix my metaphors really firmly. I had decided to go to K. on the tube, and get a much cheaper mini-cab to wildest Stapleton Hall road. To someone like me it does feel miles from anywhere. So I had a nice little talk. He didn't mention the lead so I hope he didn't notice. I have no right to feel it at all. Ben and Sari were already there and I was suddenly struck at the way in which two young 'mates' still turn into two young marrieds. Not that they are. Ben will never change. He's as thin as rail and will probably remain so, just as his brain and tongue will remain as sharp as a razor. His humour is dry, his wit genial and an excellent judge of a film, tho' naturally he goes further in the approval of 'action' than I can ever do. I think and hope we talk on equal terms. Sari's appearance rather shocked me, - her pale fine skin was dull and there were deep blue bags under her eyes. She looked five years older instead of two. Pregnant? I U ? unhappy? After they'd gone, I found out it was hay fever. She doesn't seem to mind being a spectator most of the time, - little chance of anything with Ben and me at the table. Nada is such a pleasing looking girl, with a really merry smile that makes you feel better. She is already a good hostess, the flat is so trim and fresh, no particular taste, but the comfort of it belonging to a self-respecting girl. Only crumpled rose-leaf, she's a vegetarian. Both dishes were good, but as often, too similar. The first was a sort of ratatouille with a not too piquant sauce, sliced courgettes, aubergine, celery and so on. The second was a vegetable lasagna with a cheese topping, but with, as far as I could see, the same vegetables underneath, chopped to the same texture. That's the trouble with veg. the variety is not there, unless great care is taken. The pudding was fruit salad, one of my favourites, but still chopped fruit. Her hold on the evening is so good, rare in her generation, in that she does steer the conversation which I think nobody but me noticed. She may not notice herself, but she is quite decided. Darling Paul made little impact on the evening because he didn't need to . He's moved in and they're together and he's himself. His main contribution was to show us a series of contacts of himself at 17, just after Oliver, of unexampled awfulness, when he had a stuffed arm. But that shows he rightly doesn't care. And it's his gift for friendship that got us all there.

K's off- used mini-cab firm was late at K's and rather tiresomely late at Nada's. In both cases the drivers claimed difficulties with drunks. It's odd that, as I drove away

from K's a mini-cab stopped a few houses away, and a rather small woman pulled and dragged and pushed a rather large man out it, propped him precariously on a parked car while she paid and I just saw him quietly leaning over as we left.

Tuesday June 18 1996

Wrote to John N. asking him to pay the telephone bill until I could pay it next week. Can't ask K at this point. I have two cheques to cover it but they won't be cleared till next week. Also wrote to K about his plans for Arlette.

Wednesday June 19 1996

Couldn't write last night, as Sharron didn't leave till half past one. Shall have to find a way to let her know this is know too late for me. (except for K. of course.) She has a car again and I benefited from the great blessing of the car. She works in the art shop in Crouch end on Tuesdays and usually lets herself in with her key about seven or seven fifteen. Now that she has a car, she got here at twenty past eight. Usually she leaves about twenty to twelve so that she can get the last tube. Tonight she said how nice it was that she didn't have to get the last tube. I have always thought how nice it is that people have to get the last tube. However she was very bunny and sweet in between. (and, of course, I did not bring up her behaviour the other night. Well, I can't mention K. for a start.) The first set-piece was a visit to Brent Town Hall to see her brother's girl-friend in an amateur production of 'My Fair lady. I don't think she'd seen an amateur prod. Before, so my amusement was heightened by her discoveries. It was the chorus smiling in that silly way because they knew they were being looked at. And the brazier in Act 1 was left on in the middle of Higgin's studio. The girl friend was only playing a maid. Her parents helpfully pointed her out whenever she appeared. She'd had to drive to Watford to pick up her mother and take her home. The hall smelt disgusting, and the parents were humourless and pretentious. Three days later, the brother rang to say he and the girl had broken up.

Her love life took rather longer. This time, as there are three of it. Chris is back in her life, the one who just didn't turn up, after quite an affair, and making a firm date. She finds him very attractive, he's intelligent and sensitive. She's seeing him tonight. She hopes. I fear he's only a more subtle example of only after one thing! The second affair is Howard who chatter her up in the shop. He's black, West Indian origin, but again 'intelligent' very analytical. He's 37. They went out for a drink, played pool, got a bit slashed, he said he'd walk her home. At the gate she heard herself saying 'do you want to come in for a coffee?' 'Are you sure?' She was sure. And she's been sure three times since. Then there's someone she met at a party, but I can't remember anything else about him ... She took Howard to a party at her old flat which Alex was giving. He has a new girlfriend. Francesca, who's six feet tall. She did look silly dancing. Howard had brought some proper dance music, a good thing as the party kept folding. Whenever he put on his music,

Francesca looked daggers at me!

I am struck by the boredom and horror of a youthful night out these days. To the pub and club, and disco and club and disco ... Oh the H and b – only not them of course. What a darling she is.

I wish she'd bring my chain and ring back. It's been round my neck for nearly twenty years, except that she's kept it for over six months. A distinct failure of the imagination on her part.

Today another packet from S. A photocopy of the type-script of Enter Certain Players. A book of essays celebrating Hilton e. and Michael McL. and the Gate. The illustrations come out surprisingly well. Oh, and forgot that at K's I'd seen a large gilt edged invitation card Simon Callow and Chris Wood's a party in the Underground something in Camden. Wrote an outraged p.s. on not being asked to a party I didn't want to go to. Mention this to Sharron, so that she could repeat what C.W. said to her the other week. 'I asked how Simon was, and he said he haven't you heard? Etc. etc' Well, Janet always said he was two-faced.

Thursday June 20 1996

Very funny letter from S. 'I had arranged this surprise party for you... p.s. it was Peter Barkworth's idea actually'. I am so glad that he is one of S's bits noive, too. A calculating creep.

In the p.m. to film Down Periscope. Quite funny in places and on the whole well acted, but someone has not decided whether it is farce or comedy. It started out with an airplane type beginning, but wavered between genres thereafter.

A Kubrick retrospective. I have never felt the smallest desire to see any of his films.! Only Sari the first twenty minutes of A clockwork Orange because I refused to allow the ode to joy to be associated with ugly violence. Just as now I refuse to let it be associated with football. Great visual qualities. A move studio is the best toy a boy ever had. O. Welles. Not for grownups.

Friday June 21 199

Watched Ascot v. briefly and was even more struck by the huge apparatus of course and horses and jockeys and trainers and bookies and people all swirling round something so completely trivial.

In the p.m. up to the Angel to see Beautiful thing. No ghetto audience here. As disappointing as reading the play. I think if it had been a straight affair, it would have been much more heavily slated. I was amused, too, that the love-scenes between the two boys, which in a straight film . would have made up the major part of the film. Took up ten minutes at the most. And then were generally followed buy some retribution of one sort or another.

On my way out I went to Sainsbury's it is by a good deal the most attractively designed of all the major super-markets. On the corner of Upper St. a young man on

a bicycle rushed thro' the crowd, only just avoiding knocking someone over. As he vanished towards the traffic lights, a young woman rushed after him, screaming 'My bike!' 'My bike!' 'You've stoke my bike?' so many cyclists seem to be on the pavements these days, in circumstances of some danger, that nobody thought anything of it till the girl shouted. I said to the nice black woman standing next to me at the crossing, 'they go just as fast even when they're not stealing it' One of the staff walked through the cinema at least six times.

Saturday June 22 1996

I see Greta Gynt appeared in a cast list as Great Gynt. Am reading a newish Elizabeth George. She writes – well – quite rich detective stores and seems to set herself the hurdle of choosing an English background really difficult for an American to apprehend. By intelligent careful research she brings it off. One of them was set in a public-school and I detected no false notes. This one has a famous cricketer as its murderee. The one glaring mistake, had nothing to do with cricket. In describing a village, she said that on one side of the street, there was a row of ancient thatched bungalows. That an obviously intelligent and cultivated American could make such a plain mistake is not a sign that she is careless, but that we really don't share a common language. And Americans more or less complete lack of instruction in the derivation of words, prevented her ear from telling her it was an Indian word and therefore too modern to be ancient.

Decided to look round consciously as I went shopping, to see if the football which 'all England' was watching - well, all but one – really made any difference to the streets. Round the corner in the distance, came two sturdy t-shirted figures, short hair, surely they were football material. Then as they got closer, I saw that one of them was leading a little fluffy dog ...

Sunday June 23 1996

Another theatre dream in Birmingham this time tho' theatre nothing like it. (perhaps B'ham because of reading about Albert F. in P.O.T.'s book.) the first reading of a Shaw like play, then nothing and I realised the first night had arrived without any rehearsal or lines learnt. Decided just miss it, but went there just the same. In trying to get out of the building found myself briefly on stage. None of the cast spoke to me or reproached me. Finally left and walked as I have done in life in provincial towns, looking for the station but without asking. In the countryside, passed two of the management going to look at a garden of lilacs. They didn't see me. Back in B'ham and a bit like it used to be round New St Station forty years ago. Asked a paper-seller the way and he directed me 'past that pub where the dear little welsh children are'. As I went towards it, wearing my cassock dressing=gown, a woman said 'Oh Father, Father, they didn't take that money'. As I got near the pub, a horrible tramp lying in the road began to gob huge spits, finally vomiting huge projectile bursts of grainy bloody vomit, splattering my skirts and making huge pools on the road. This was so disgusting I woke myself up.

Hazel rang as usual. I'd seen an article in the Independent on Thatcher's . She knows all about as their house is thatched. She said the figures were all wrong. A doctor had said a roof lasted thirty years and cost £14000. More like ten and £10,000 at least each time. Theirs is a National Trust property. She hates the N.T. they demand everything and give almost nothing.

To K's – Freud – to John Nick's in evening, by way of K's to feed Boo. To my irritation someone had been there already and fed him. I don't quite know what's happening. Oh, I forgot to record that I went yesterday and found that the sitting-room had been painted a uniform cream, ready for Wendy to wreak his worst – very well painted and the furniture in both rooms well covered in the centre of both rooms, and all very professional. On the doormat was a long white envelope with nothing on it and the keys inside. This I presumed was from the middle-aged women decorators, as everything was in apple-pie order, even tho' K's bike was in the kitchen – it could have gone back in the hall. I put the keys carefully on the kitchen table. Today there were dirty cups about, K's bike was in the garden and the envelope was back on the door-mat, with the keys inside and a message, obviously the middle-aged women, asking them to lock up when they left, and an undecipherable signature. I hope they have a duplicate set. If it was Wendy, he has done a bit of something to the windows in the bedroom and hadn't covered the bed and bed clothes, or the furniture. After I'd fed Boo and seen him rush around as usual but then only was a mouthful I looked again and found a half-full tin of cat-food with a piece of foil over it on the kitchen table. Instant botulism in this weather. I just hope Wendy remembers and bothers to water. Shall go again on Frida. I think the sooner we get rid of Wendy the better.

So to John's. such a warm welcome. Our length of friendship, what we have been thro' together, makes us so comfortingly familiar. We think the same about most things and have the same frame of references. It's so restful. How odd time is, - he used to be generations younger than me. And the flat is so big and looks out on nothing but the sky and the tops of trees. Now, dinner, everything's cold, asparagus soup, salmon, new pots, mange-tout, strawberries and blueberries. All utterly delicious. (only except for J's love of herbs sprinkled on nearly all meat. Which I don't think salmon at all needs.) But beautiful Meursault, rich, heady, somehow a bit smoky.

Fascinating talk after of his new job as Director of The Royal Academy Trust. For the first few weeks he felt he might have to leave. It was as if he was back at the ENO with an impossible boss. However, happily others thought him impossible, too and J showed me a letter from the trustees to Piers? – never caught the name but heir to a baronet – with a really unanswerable and irrefutable request for resignation. But of course Piers? Being of noble blood, perhaps, didn't. However, he is being side hired. J. is obviously finding allies among the Trustees. One of them - was it Roy something, I never get name s the first time unless I write them down, I don't think actors do, we use darling – who is the head of Marks and Spencer, said, rather wearily at the end of an unsatisfactory dissection of the fraudulent bursar and Piers? 'John, why aren't you running the RA?' Another day he went down to Lord Carrington, tea served on the terrace etc etc. Another good talk, situation exposed, Piers? Pilloried. Lord D. 'You and I wouldn't have stayed, would we?' I had read about the appointment of David Gordon and thought him a possible good egg. Sounded practical. It seems he's also Jewish, always desirable where art is concerned. Sad

that Jews still have to assume o.k. names. I suppose. News of his family, of course. His brother is falling to pieces. The M'chester family are still in bed. Simon R. is in Hong Kong.

Every now and again I felt my stomach drop again, when I remembered.

ANGUS MACKY DIARY NO. 142

June 24 1996
August 15 1996

Monday June 24 1996

I suppose I've used S's present about four times, and bought a dozen? books. There's a little backlog about that, so that the last time I was in Waterstone's I couldn't find anything else I Want. So I suppose it'll only be thrillers and something new from now on. Of course so few books are kept in print these days.

Neil rang and he can't manage this week – a bit of a relief for much as I love him I find dealing with his wishful thinking a self-justification over his wearisome career somehow it is more difficult now that I no longer act myself. J Sands is staying with Julian Slade, who predictably gushed all over him. Said how wonderful I was etc. etc. as a friend and an actor 'so fond of you' etc. etc. Poor Julian, he goes in for this sort of thing hoping it'll be returned. That's why he never 'criticises'. Taking N. to Salad D. can you beat it? It's nice to think there are those quiet days ahead.

Tuesday June 25 1996

Stayed in all day, and watched some Wimbledon, the only sport I ever watch, because there's none of that tiresome 'team spirit' young English player beat the French open champion, in really commending fashion. I mean it didn't look like a fluke. Even so I kept turning it off. I couldn't watch tennis for three hours at a stretch.

Oh, John mentioned again that he'd told his psychiatrist the first experience in his life that really gave him self-esteem was coming to dinner with us all those years ago.

Wednesday June 26 1996

The six o'clock news was actually delayed without announcement for three-quarters of an hour, by the wretched afternoon football match and its extra time. A quite pathetic and disgraceful lack of sense of proportion. England lost. Ha ha.

Thursday June 27 1996

Headlines in both papers for football. An article on the leader page of the Mail caught my eye as it was by a Fellow of Jesus, Oxford. I thought I might catch a faint echo of my views, but no. The second paragraph, I found 'however little you care about football you cannot deny it, this morning you feel depressed'. If I could be bothered. I would write to him – Niall Ferguson – to rebuke his lack of scholarship in making such a ridiculously inaccurate comment. At least it wasn't our Jesus.

And now there's a tube strike. When is the next post-strike? Tomorrow.

By the way, there was no difficulty in finding German fans to be interviewed in English and good English. How far would you have to search the other way round.

We have to get over this urge to win, especially for silly little contests that aren't worth winning. Oh, the embarrassment of taking games seriously.

Watched the tennis desultorily. A new Australian Philippoussis, or some such name of Greek extraction, I suppose. Is 6' 4" and big with it. A strange effect on court, making the net look lower and the whole place smaller, like a trick drawing in a children's annual.

Sharron rang, a cheering-up call. She's had various difficulties, practical as well as emotional. One practical one is that the stall at Manchester Exchange theatre that is quite a good outlet for her jewellery, may never reopen. It seems the theatre itself will not reopen in the foreseeable future, and all the shops around it are totally dependent on its audiences for their customers. The woman who owns the stall has not yet been allowed to see what can be salvaged. It seems that not only has a lot of the glass from the dome come down, but plaster etc as well. However, I imagine that the real and frightening reason for the ban, is the possibility that the theatre itself might be unstable. It is certainly free-standing in the centre of the big exchange and I believe suspended in some way from the walls. I have a rare memory of that when it was built. If that suspension has been at all basically damaged. The situation is indeed serious.

A very unpleasant riot in the Trafalgar Square last night by soccer fans (sic). How much more vivid and disturbing these affrays are if you know every inch of the ground. It's one thing to attack each other, or even the Police, but they attacked a perfectly innocent couple's car, just because it was German, tho' the couple were from Bournemouth. They smashed the windows, kicked in a panel or two before it was driven away. And all this on that bottom left hand corner of the square, where a thousand times our taxi has swung round to make for Admiralty Arch.

Friday June 28 1996

Another idiocy. The battlefields of the first world war in France are visited by tourists with metal detectors, with which they detect live shells etc, dig them up and take them home. I hope they blow their silly selves up quite often. It's eighty years since the Somme and yet one saw a party of Frenchmen digging up and carrying away on a sort of wheelbarrow piles of shells, many of which were still live. One of

the Frenchmen said, of the tourist's behaviour 'C'est idiot et criminel'. Precisely. What's more 'idiot' is a much stronger adjective in French.

Only twenty five million people watched the football. I think the other twenty five million of us deserve more consideration.

Mary read me the report on the Manchester Exchange Th. From the Stage. Very touching to hear how the BBC, Granada, the Library Theatre, etc. etc. have rallied round in force, so that they can carry on. The first offer of help came two hours after the bomb. BBC North is, I presume more like the old BBC than the new.

Saturday June 29 1996

Thought I might hear from K last night, and worried I haven't. I am a fool. Or even a French idiot.

K rang at 2.15 quite safe, and warm and all there. Has three deadlines to meet by Monday. I find, so can't talk long.... Lovely to have him back.

Somebody said, introducing a Hyde Park concert with Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton Et Cie, all over fifty, and referring to sixties idealism, 'the ideals may have changed, but the music stays the same'. Well, yes and it's getting positively unhealthy. I looked at them and the audience jogging from side to side and snapping their fingers to the same rhythm as they have done for the last forty years or so.

And talking of time, two English players had a match on the centre court for the first time for fifty-eight years. One half of that match was in the audience, that old Nazi, 'Bunny' Austin. It rained for about an hour and a half at W'don, it seems. Not a drop here.

Sunday June 30 1996

Finished Derek Jarman's Kicking Against the Pricks. I find him much overrated as an artist, or at least as a film director and writer. I see his charm and his resolution in carrying through his projects. (though when I saw him interviewed, I was a little taken aback by a camp little chap who tittered at the end of almost every sentence for usually no reason.) His writing is rather clumsy, and unclear, but worst of all, he remains a student of the 1960's looking for someone to rebel against.

The Sylvia Townsend Warner/David Garnett letters are a delight. I polished them off at once, talking of good writing. Except for them both being sentimental about cats.

I don't know whether it's age, but I find less and less to read with interest isn't the papers. I don't think it's me losing interest. I suppose part of it is that I have now read an article about everything under the sun at least once. And there is no decent scandal. I used to enjoy sycophantic articles about the Royal Family and there are none of those. I don't read the theatre reviews any more ...

Monday July 1 1996

A flash of the football crowd. A make-up girl had set up a little stall, well, a chair really, to make up St George's crosses on silly fans' faces. Enterprising. I wonder how much she charted.

Concorde going over. I remember when there was the first rehearsed flight, D. came out of her sewing room in tears, fearing a crash. I wrote to the Times in disgust. So gradually quiet and privacy are whittled away and reactions coarsened.

One of the two English players has got through to the last eight, for the first time since 1973 two years before he was born.

Skipped through Agatha's Destination unknown and was amused that I don't think I'd noticed before that one of the characters was called Thomas Charles Betterton. I wonder where she'd heard that name.

Later John N. rang again. Forgot to say that he rang a couple of days ago to tell me he'd met rosemary? Who is secretary of the Artistes Benev. She administers a big Trust of her father's and John met her in the course of his fund-raising for the R.A. She said she felt that she ought to confine herself to theatre in future, so they talked about that and actors' difficulties. He said he'd got two friends in difficulties, and to my great irritation (which I successfully concealed) mentioned my name. I might be reduced to applying to a theatrical charity at some point, but this would be the last one. Penny K is it's present and my pride would be hurt. Then Ba Lott and John Warner are on the board. She regaled us with many of the 'cases' they considered, financial details and all, - I remember specially her scorn at the size of Rita Vale's overdraft - in the days when we used to see her, despite us attempting to stop her indiscretions. John W. is quite capable of writing me a baybody letter, with censorious surprise at my extravagance. I conveyed all this to John, again I hope without anger or irritation, because, of course, he was only thinking of me out of kindness of heart and friendship. But it was even harder to accept mildly his suggestion admittedly as a rather tentative aside, of 'Denville' Really, not quite yet. If I do apply to a charity, I might try the PRS charity, for which, as D's widower, I think I am eligible, where I would be pretty certain nobody would know me.

However J's call today was of a rather different cast. He told me that an admirer, to whom D and I were good years ago, wants to give me some money, but wants to remain anonymous. 'How much'? 'Seven hundred and fifty pounds'. Most interesting and most welcome. I said I was glad not to know who it was, but of course that doesn't mean I'm not guessing. My first thought was that it was John himself. 'You'd like cash, wouldn't you?' 'the cheque is made out to me'. Why? Well, John may have told him I had no bank account. Hm. I could not think of anyone who was in touch with John. Later in the day suddenly thought of Dave G. and heard myself saying aloud, 'if it's David, it ought to be much more'. and shrieked aloud. I often laugh aloud when I'm alone, sometimes even at myself in the glass, if I happened to be looking into one at the time. Felt no special elation at the news. Odd.

Tuesday July 2 1996

One of my favourite lunches, no, two are coming in with July. (Not that July is coming in as much I'm back in a sweater, it's raining and I've closed the fanlight in the drawing-room – I usually open it in June and forget about it.) An omelette fines herbs, not all that fines, a handful of basil, two sorts of min, and parsley. And tomatoes basilique, slices of chees, slices of tomato on top. Vinaigrette, lots of chopped basil.

In the p.m. to the film I missed on Thursday, Moonlight and Valentine, script by Neil Simon's daughter, based on read (sic) life. There was scarcely a single moment of reality in the entire film. The four main characters were played by actresses of some merit, especially Elizabeth Perkins, but all showing unmistakable signs of knowing there was something needing saving. The pop star Jon Bon Jovi had a near-cameo part, announced as his first acting role. My heart sank, but it needn't have. He has a lot of charm, of a very pleasant kind, and can phrase and time to a certain extent. Added to which, if he chose the part himself, he has judgment, because it cast him perfectly and was sort enough for him to manage it as a novice. Somebody will be made not to groom him into a lead. His billing also may have been his own choice, as I've never seen it's like before. Not billed with the others at the start of the film, but in fairly small letters at the end of the film, just before the cast list started rolling up. His name was in the middle of the four stars on the poster, but not his face, as theirs was. Now all this again shows judgment on someone's part, perhaps his, balancing the smallness of the part, his great fame as a singer, and his acting inexperience. It must be wonderful to take refuge in something simple like games or politics. Like being a Roman Catholic.

Wednesday July 3 1996

During more or less three hours of rain at Wimbledon, Cliff Richard was interviewed and was persuaded almost at once to take the microphone and sing. So were regaled with Cliff geriatrically swinging, eventually being backed by a no. of women players including Virginia Wade, swaying back and forth and snapping their fingers, in those movements that have set into granite in the last forty years of getting with the beat, or whatever the current expression is. the expression changes, the gospel service movements remain the same. Of course he sang in broad American and all this in the Royal Box. The craving for informality and lack of dignity gets worse.

Later. Just back – twenty past twelve – from my lovely evening with Roy and Marian – at last. Haven't seen them since before Christmas and now they are going away on August 5 to M'chester where they've rented a house for Marian's six-part series, where she plays the lead. I noted the titles, but got muddled so it may be called 'Born to Run' or 'Fragile Heart' tho' I think the second is C4.

A last minute change of plan again, Roy rang at five-ish, to say, owing to change of plan with baby-sitters and so on could I take a minicab and they'd pay. Apart from the expense, I didn't relies getting there and saying to the driver 'I'll just run inside and get my friend...' In any case, they're usually late. So I went on the tube, getting

a train almost at once in the tamest way. The restaurant has a double shop front on that raised bit of pavement in Chiswick High Rd. more or less opposite the turning to Turnham Green station. A fairly big plain place, wooden floors and tables with just a white paper cloth diagonally, but real napkins and big well shaped glasses. And they were there, and it was all lovely. I love Marian, she is so quick and has such a ready laugh, and such a sensible and perceptive attitude to her work and the theatre, a thorough professional in fact. Gave Roy my copy of Barry Jackson and the London Theatre. Good plates. Menu was very tempting. – I could have ordered almost every dish. They had fresh sardines, or rather fresh sardine, which I had considered but was glad I didn't as the solitary s. was a bit large and served with what looked like a pretty hot sauce, I like fresh sardines to be small enough to eat nearly all of them, with just butter so I had crab (with mayonnaise) as it was billed, and that's just what it was. A crab still whole, but prepared, with a pair of crackers shaped like crab –claws and a pi-piquette? – I don't think I've ever written it down before, although we've got four, given by Edna hoping for lobster. And it isn't in the Concise. I might have had had John dory, lamb's kids, lamb, all sounding delicious, but I had sea-trout with samphire in a butter sauce. Then crème brulee, so much for dairy products. A small espresso served at the bottom of a large cup. Service good and cheerful. Place full and obviously hitting the target youngish richish Chiswick residents plum in the middle.

Marian has three jobs, one of which is the lead in a six-part series, being made in Manchester. So they've taken a home in M'ch. For as long as it takes. I don't suppose I'll see them again for another six months. I suppose since I retired, I am duller, since everyone but K and Janet are seeing me less and less.

They offered me a lift home, or a taxi, but I knew they had to get back to Ella, so I set off walking with great enjoyment. I think they were nervous for me as people with cars are. I walked all the way back to H'smith tube, starting at eleven thirty, and passed only about a dozen people, all of them unthreatening and respectable. On H'smith station itself, there were some silent people who looked as if they'd been there most of their lives. I waited about ten minutes, during which the only entertainment was a madman with an almost impenetrable Indian accent, who kept announcing what trains weren't coming. So I came out again and walked, thanking Ken Livingstone yet again for my free travel. Were it not for that, I would have wasted a ticket for no journey.

Thursday June 4 1996

A really heavy shower kept me in for a while in the p.m. but it soon stopped and the sun came out. This happened four or five times at W'bledon. When I did get to H'smith the main concourse of the station was closed owing to flooding! This is the part in the middle of the shopping mall (sic) of an ultra-modern building only opened the other year. Now staff were sallying forth with mops and buckets and the near-rush-hour crowd were streaming and crushing into the smaller entrance up the other end. Absurd.

Much struck by Rupert Graves, of all people, doing a perfectly straight nostalgic piece about a childhood favourite romantic place, the smaller pier at Weston Super Mare,

of all places. So perhaps my letter to him about his local park, described when it was still a private garden, Springfield Park, which I sent him after an evening round Christmas we spent together and which he rudely didn't acknowledge, wasn't wasted after all. I just concluded that he wasn't interested in the past or history at all. Even so he's probably only interested in his own past.

At last wrote to Martin Clunes, to tell him a remark of his father's whom I think died when he was eight. In a break in rehearsal at the Arts in the 40's, someone lifted the lid of the grand piano on an idle impulse, and said to Alec, 'How disgraceful it's full of cigarette ends, and sweet papers and all sorts of rubbish'. Alec came over, peered in and said 'yes, and there's a bloody great harp in there as well'. Not unlike M.C.'s character.

Friday July 5 1996

Nice theatre dream for a change. Coming down to Nottingham to be in next play, and going back with D to digs, a mixture of the flat she had for opening of N'ham and the top floor we had at Cheltenham. Talking to D. and unpacking, table laid for supper and her going in and out of kitchen, and she was there in an unpumped quite natural way, and sowing me where she'd scraped her dear leg on a flat doing a quick exit. Most vivid and pleasant and ordinary. Why now, when I have longed to dream about her ever since? Happy. Mind you, I still hadn't learnt my lines and it was HIV Part 11.

Bought Frances Partridge's memories and two vols of the diary, which I've had to miss. Golped half M. tonight. Wonderfully good, and a great testimony to Bloomsbury, whatever people say about it. Also that new novel A.N. Wilson raved about and Clive James first book of reviews re-printed and in the sale. I've leafed thro' it and it has a fresh preface and quite sizeable footnotes commenting on his 1974 opinions.

No word from John about the money. How odd of him.

Saturday July 6 1996

So amused K rang about half past seven on the train to L'pool 'for a cousin's bash and I've got a deadline on Monday, so I'm coming back on the 9.30 train' ! 'You're going straight to the party now?' 'Yes' 'where is it?' The trophy room of Liverpool Football Club. I don't think he'd realised quite how funny it was until I had to put the phone down to laugh. If I were the L'pool football Club I would be nervous. K's family may very well include a pick-lock and a kleptomaniac among the aunts. Told him about Roy. He told me Roy and M are having a party for R's fortieth, and asked him if I should be asked. Why not ask me? They and Simon are silly little things in that way. I expect they're frightened I might accept! Now K would never, has never made that sort of mistake.

Sunday July 7 1996

Neil rang at ten past eight, just as the first mouthful of salade Nicoise was in my mouth. After twenty years or so of friendship, he still doesn't believe, I suppose, that I always have dinner at eight. Still no arrangement and will ring tomorrow night.

And no message from John N and no money. How people even dear John, lack imagination! Any delay in money arriving, after all these years of waiting for B'mouth, is very frustrating. I have never, I thin, showed that frustration to anyone, even him. I can control it, but it makes something slighter like this, even worse. I have noticed, all my life, that people assume that I can bear such suffering or disappointments as have come my way. Very rarely have even close friends sat me down and said now collapse. Dear John did after D. died. Well, I suppose I must give the impression of some sort of strength. Even D. said, in answer to a similar question, 'I expect you seem self-sufficient to them'. Well, I'm not. And he knows.

Nevertheless, it was unimaginative of John to tell me about the money, unless he could give it me the next day. Yes, I know how desperately busy he is.

Monday July 8 1996

Have I said I've had three beautiful cactus flowers? Two rich red and one a beautiful creamy white, still out. They sprout from odd thick stems that themselves sprout from long flat leaves, so thick are they that they look stuck on. The flowers are three or four inches long and three across with delicate almost luminous stamens. The cream is the most intense subtle shading inside, the words are white and yellow. They collapse suddenly special stem and all.

Another frightful attack by a man with a machete this time, on some primary school children. – flooding again, bother – in Wolverhampton. Ghastly wounds, but at least no deaths. The Dunblane lawyer and parents calling from a ban on private guns, pointed out that if the W'hampton man had used a gun instead, it would have been another Dunblane. There is some talk of the man who lives in a block of flats overlooking the school, had had a row with someone in his flat and then come and taken it out in this way. 'A nasty attack of temper'. He has to have his own way etc. How I experienced that as a child with Donald. Y earliest memory, almost, is of him tripping on the stairs and hurting himself. I was sitting on the floor of the hall reading, of course, and he came over, snatched the book out of my hand, threw it away and said it was my fault that he'd tripped. I suppose I was six or seven and he was eight or nine. No doubt if he'd had a machete or a gun ... It's dear old egotism or selfishness or hubris or pride.

Tuesday July 9 1996

As I still hadn't heard from John, I rang his secretary, Katie, who sounds about twelve, who said No he won't be at home tonight, as there's a big reception and a major banquet afterwards. So I felt immediately guilty and left a message saying 'Angus quite understands, and will speak to you some time'. Of course he did ring back later in the afternoon, and he told me he'd been at some function with King

Constantine of Greece there, and David Frost there, blowing cigar smoke in Norma Major's face. He said he'd hope to get to the bank and stuff the money in my wallet and you can come and call for it. So tomorrow – what a relief.

One of the bereaved Dunblane fathers composed but with dumb pain in his eyes said 'I think my daughter's right to live is more important than anyone's right to own a gun'.

Wednesday July 10 1996

Waited in all day listening for the phone. Tantalizing, that's the word.

Only slight flaw in F. Partridge... the faint affection all professional actresses develop, veils her. Now she can be allowed her opinion of one particular actress, in this case, Amaryllis Garnett, then, I think at RADA, so not an actress at all, but a possibly pretentious drama student not yet in touch with theatre life. (incidentally, thirty years later, she is scarcely a household name and I would guess that she found herself unsuited to the theatre). No, the complaint I have of F.P. over this, is that she has generalized from insufficient data, a misjudgment she would not dream of making with authors or painters or musicians. There is no evidence in the diaries that she ever meets any real actors, except for sitting next to Michael Redgrave, notoriously shy and odd, not to mention drunk and with Parkinson's disease. But I have often noticed how those who count themselves cultivated in the arts - and the Bloomsbury's are an excellent example – know little or nothing of acting as opposed to the texts of plays, with the amusing result that the most obvious stage tricks can be greeted as the finest strokes of art. This is the reason the standard of operatic acting remains so low. They simply do not notice the, as it were, out-of-drawing out-of-turn and out-of-date skills, which would make them wince in the other arts.

Thursday July 11 1996

Warm again, bother. At last dear John rang, at about 2.30. 'If I wanted to pick it up today ...' 4? Oh, well.

In the R.A. the enquiry desk, not for tourists of course, is a very utilitarian bank of grey-painted plywood. Kathie is a mild plain little thing. I shouldn't have told her she sounded about ten on the phone. She doesn't look much more and probably dislikes the fact.

In the forecourt I took the new £50 note out of the envelope and a dear note from J. 'Isn't this lovely?' spend, spend, spend. I paid two instalments of £32.07 at the Alliance next door.

By the way, under the board advertising the summer exhibition, was another, presumably announcing another exhibition, Roger de Grey. Who's he? No one I've asked, has heard of him. He's probably an R.A. ... Made my way to Soho and bought a small sea bass, just right for one and was a bit shaken to be charged £6. Still I went ahead, for a treat and also some fresh peas at last the bass which I baked, was a bit of

a disappointment, as it has always been, but I thought I'd try it once more. It's goodish, but the flesh is soft and with no special taste. The peas on the other hand, were heavenly.

Friday July 12 1996

Lovely shop this a.m. Only small usual things, but I could buy them all at once, and not think of the cost at all. Bought a huge chunk of Yarg, the sort of cheese I have to top myself eating all at once, and two bits of Churnton to have by me.

O, have I recorded my correspondence with the Kennel Club and the Pug Club? I asked the K.C. for the address – it turned out to be in Sheffield. I loved the phrasing. It was suggested I contact (sic) the National Pug Dog Club Secretary who may be delighted to receive the photographs. I love that 'may', quite unconscious of course. There was such a long pause, I was for giving up. Then John smith! The Pug dog club will be delighted to accept the photographs which will be added to our historical collection for future generations under the control of our historian! The President is Mrs Brown.... So Dorothy Hatrick and her pugs have a little caring niche.

Saturday July 13 1996

Another luxury shop. Only treat was a reduced duck, not in size of course. Quite a sizeable one and down to £5 odd. It'll do three meals at least for just me. I also bought a bundle of Peruvian asparagus for £1. Had it for lunch and I don't need to try any grass but English. It tasted slightly bitter and rather coarsely green, no comparison. In the p.m. to the Earl Courts Waterstone's, got another David Armstrong a 'reduced' life of Gerald Brenan. He sounds such a shit, I thought a six-hundred page biography might redress the balance. Also what seems a witty academic book about homosexuality, called Male Impersonators. It may be the usual special pleading, but perhaps not. It was. I didn't finish it.

Sunday July 14 1996

K. rang. Sounded tired but loving. Has a business lunch tomorrow at a smart hotel in Holland Park, and that there is some news. 'So much has happened, I'll tell you tomorrow.' Noting bad? 'No, no' But it might be and my imagination has been and will be, working overtime till tomorrow. Two years in L.A.? Life in Portugal? He sounds a bit tired. No wonder.

Monday July 15 1996

Seventy. Good gracious. No letters at all let alone any for me. Heartbroken ... Expect there's a postal strike I haven't heard about.

Dear film last night 'Overboard' a sort of combination of Taming of the Shrew and Cold comfort Farm, brought off very well, by another combination of as good script

and two excellent tight comedy actors, Goldie Hawn and Kurt Russell. I hear that the 'three tenors' effort at Wembley brought them a fee of a million dollars, - or even pounds a piece, disgusting. Even the trailer contains barbarities such as each of them repeating the last two notes of La Dona e Mobile one after another. The whole thing is obscene.

Now there's been a call from S's Karen. It seems he's sending me a packet. Oh, surely not a book or indeed any other present.

Now John has rung to say the wine will be arriving this p.m. the biker has arrived with S's packet. He offered an usual extra service 'sign here, please and may I tell you a little about Jesus? 'No. I am the son of a clergyman'. The packet was S's intro. To Tony Snowdon's book of theatrical photographs, with a letter asking me to check the facts, dates, etc. Did so and two were wrong. He wanted it back today - isn't modern science wonderful? So another biker, happily a silent infidel arrived on the doorstep with Haynes Hanson and Clark. Two cases this year, one of white, thank goodness Saint Veran, a white burgundy of 95 and Ch. Vieus Manoir, 93. I've had Saint Veran before and it is delicious. He's so good.

The post has now arrived, £35 from Ernie and Marj. 'because you look half your age'. Ho, ho.

As it's three score years and ten, I may not get another chance to note down from the list in the Independent, b'days, deaths and events on this important day. Well, I share a birthday with the richest man in the world - isn't he? - the Sultan of Brunei, - this is the people who are alive, by the way. - Harrison Birtwistle, not a note, Julian Bream, Carmen Callil of Virago, Trevor Horn, once K's idol - no, but he thought he knew what he was doing - Iris M. which I already knew, Hammond Innes, which I must try to forget, and - Juliet Pannett, 'Portrait painter, 85' J.P. was the pes. Or Secretary of the Theatre goes at Salisbury in the 50's. Her portraits, out of which she made a living, I think, were anodynes to a degree, but just the thing for middle-class people who liked prettified photographs - I think she also did animals. (the animals reminded me of that joke in a 20 's punch a big-game hunter looks at an even more humane lion than three in Traf. Sq. ;If I shot a lion with a face like that, I'd give myself up for manslaughter') When I had been at Salis for a month or two, I asked Jo Tenson why everyone cringed at the mention of J.P.'s name. she thought for a moment and then said 'well, whatever you've done, she's done it in Brazil'. Years later, there she suddenly was, in her car, in the street behind Cavendish House and in front of the Everyman Theatre in Cheltenham. 'Hello, Mrs Pannett, what are you doing here?' 'I was born here'. And you knew she had arranged to be born here fifty years before so as to trump whatever ace you played. Her name was to be pronounced Pane - I had no idea it was spelt Pannett as in Punnet.

The dead sharing my b'day include Inigo Jones, Rembrandt (good heavens). Henry Cole of the V and A, Cardinal Manning, Lord Northcliffe, Noel Gay of the Lambeth Walk, and Marie Tempest.

Then there are deaths on this day. Bill the Kid, Tom Thumb, Margaret Lockwood and - Chekhov. As for events, Alcoholics Anonymous was founded on July 15. And the Saints - St. Athanasius of Naples, St Barhadbesaba, St Bonaventure, St David of

Munktorp, St Donald, St Edith of Polesworth, St. Pompilio Pirrotti, St Vladimir of Kisv, and of course, St Swithin.

All I can say is so much for astrology.

He's gone and I can't write except that it was one of the six nights of my life – I am drunk. Many things but the letter he gave me his present is to put the flat right with all the damp etc. but the letter.

Dear Angus

Your friendship and love is the very centre of my life.
Whatever happens know that I'll love you always

Kevin XO

XO means a kiss and a hug he told me years ago.

Tuesday July 16 1996

Rather hungover. Fancy. Tho' I often think it comes nowadays from excitement and emotion than from over drinking. I don't think I did, much.

Feeling better now I've had a hair of the dog.

Oh, it's so difficult to describe, happiness, perfect happiness, without a flaw. He was wearing a cream self-patterned rather Indian tunic, and cream trousers. He said artlessly 'Yes they are nice, aren't they?' We had a drink and he did that thing I always love, walking round the flat, sizing it up – for repairs, of course – but walking round as a son, taking it and me on. He ordered a mini-cab a dear smiling, as usual, black man and we were there in a moment. I picked out a table for two in an inner sort of niche, and it was where the maître was going to put us anyway. He asked me to choose the wine, and choose something really nice. The most expensive white was Meursault Les Charmes. I wonder whether that was the extraordinary wine V. Redgrave gave D. for the first night of Jean Brodie and we all smelt it across the dinning-room when I opened it. It was £39. I ordered some w3hite burgundy, just called Bourgogne, - he asked me to pronounce it. He had snails for his first course and told me something new, that he went on a school-trip to France when he was eleven or twelve, and had snails to everyone's surprise and disgust. An early sign of a character never frightened of the new or the different. We had two bottles of wh. Wine and a ½ of red for me to have with my delicious cheese. All the cheeses were in perfection. Altogether the restaurant came up to Roy's recommendation and my first trying it.

Eventually he gave me the news. Nothing worrying, indeed exciting. Three possible jobs, each of which would mean real money. The first is a song for the credits and logo of a new series, to be sung by its star, Robson Greene. Now R.G. is one half of Robson and Jerome, whose two number ones last year sold more copies than anyone else's in the world, I think. No. two is something, to do with Coronation St. no less, bound to be worth a fortune if a theme was repeated. It's also tied up with the

sponsorship of Schweppes, no slouch when it comes to money. He said at first he wasn't keen as he wasn't really into brass bands, however re-arranged but then he heard that the graphics or whatever are to be by Nick Parks – two Oscars for dear Wallace and Gromit - and he said Yes please. The third is the channel 4 logo. The present one, composed by, I think, someone called Lord Dundass, - rather unexpectedly a teal lord - and in the fifteen years it's been shown, he's made £40,000 a year out of it.

He said more than once how much he'd looked forward to the dinner, just as his only night out in all the time since he came back from Portugal. I was warmed right thro' I must be the luckiest person in the world to have such a wonderful boy as my most loving friend.

Wednesday July 17 1996

Mary L. came to lunch and was in her mildest form, going so far as to say it was the nicest lunch she'd ever had. Asparagus soup, smoked salmon, and raspberries. Good, of course, but ... I must record the pleasure I get from our chats, as well as the irritation. We have so much of a shared past, despite the rift between her and D. She's the last of the old gang left. It's really hot now and of course she insisted on sitting out on the balcony after lunch, when it's in the full glare of the sun. I brought my old pale blue scarf and put two knots in it, the 'sheik' style I used for so many years gardening at the cottage. Even then I couldn't stay out more than ten minutes.

Thursday July 18 1996

Complete tube strike today. Only went to the corner shops. The tube-station doors were closed this time.

Two apercus. A cabinet minister says 'We must do something about pollution', getting out of a large car.

Robert Altman, the film-director, is a witty man, very untypically American. 'I was suffering from a rather severe hangover at the time.' Not an American remark.

Friday July 1996

To film 'Les Apprentis' in the p.m. I'm not quite sure whether Apprentis simply means Apprentice, or whether it has a shade of more metaphorical meaning than in Eng. I've just looked it up and it hasn't. I enjoyed it. It is the sort of film I very much like and that the French do better than anyone. Two young men sharing a flat and their amorous and financial troubles. Not one of the best of the genre, but notable to me for Depardien's son, Guillame – Noticeably his father's son but with no trace of the bull-like physique, he is slim and gangling about twenty fiveish. His acting is still gangling too, but I prefer the slower developer. The figure which is perfect at 18, is thickening by 25. Likewise the talent. I shall watch him with interest. Only on at the Swiss Centre. I don't know what's happening to the art cinema. Terribly hot.

Saturday July 20 1996

Was just going to ring Hazel because of going to Roy and Marian's party when she rang me because she's going out. Main item of news was that that Burmese cat that howls in the background, has had to be 'put to sleep.' Now I am prepared to be reasonably sympathetic when people lose pets. She revolted me from every point of view, not least that she didn't obviously have any idea that I would be revolted, when she said that a friend had said to her that anyone who didn't understand about pets couldn't realise that it was like losing a child. 'After twenty-one years.' I never get used to the fact that a certain amount of intelligence and perception can be combined with being an emotional cripple. She has her cat/child so her actual child likes guns and her husband likes his various neuroses. Oh dear.

Exhausting, getting ready for Sharron in this frightful heat, nearly 90. Used some of Hazel's M&S vouchers. Despite her cat/child ... Really M&S are so expensive, and rather barbarous in many ways. You can now buy new pots. 'ready to cook'. Not only scraped but with butter and mint and salt on. Just wanted two salmon steaks – but there was no choice between two salmon fillets, a tail piece and a pack with six steaks. As I had the money, in the end I bought the six at a little over a pound a steak. How odd the world of business is! There were no raspberries in the market, none in Safeways, Tesco or M&S, at the height of the raspberry season, - I went into rather upmarket Cullens for bread and they had punnets at 99p a special offer.

Sharron arrived at eight, and all was well. Except that her entire conversation, tho' I wanted to hear it, consisted entirely this time of complaints. (Perhaps I am not wrong to dislike the whine in her voice – perhaps it does stand for something negative.) The black man, Howard, is more than wayward. He has no idea of time or sticking to arrangements. (Mary L airily waves this aside as Africans having no idea of time – well, they'd better find one, if they're to make anything of the mess Africa seems to be in.) Chris she seems to be really fond of and to like as well. He obviously has something approaching a brain. But he is so insecure, and advances and retreats advances and retreats. However, I realised, that she seems serious enough for me to give her a push. The usual – only you can help his insecurity. Take yourself out of it etc. But I don't know, she seems so fixed on how difficult everything is made for her – a very good illustr. of 'nothing will come of nothing'.

At 10.30 the phone rang – K. I answered animatedly, playing to Sharron, of course. He always notices if I'm acting, as it were, tho' doesn't always chart it right. 'You're drunk, I'll talk to you tomorrow.' Well, you know, I wasn't, so I talked him out of it. He might more likely have been drunk, because he thought we'd arranged for him to pick me up to take me to Roy and M's party. But we hadn't. So we got that straight and he told me that the Coronation St. job was off, at any rate. I gathered that it had fallen through somehow rather than he hadn't got it. He asked to talk to Sharron. I went and had a pee – I didn't want to inhibit her in any way. I am in two minds about his determination to keep in touch, at least in the way he is.

She brought me such varied flowers, eucalyptus, copper beech leaves, a rose or two and ? I love her, and I don't know how to lead her out of all this. I see now what K

meant when he said they partly split up 'because she was becoming too dependent on me'. (You might think that was a young man shrugging off responsibility, whereas K's character is markedly to be able to take responsibility.) She seems to be stuck on expecting some outside agent, something, somebody, to get her work, get her love, hence the complaints.

Sunday July 21 1996

TV programme about an elephant hunt for an elephant twice the usual size. Not a mammoth, 'a mammal unknown to science',... Expedition led by Major or possibly Colonel Blashford-Snell. Bull-like, barking, monosyllabic, stiff upper lip run mad and possibly more than twenty years younger than me. Where has he been to preserve this antique persona, façade, front?

Barking mad probably. Guess what, they didn't get a photo of the large elephant tho' they had 'certain' reports of it and foot prints etc etc.

Caught a moment of the opening of the Olympic Games by mistake. Yes, I see, Hollywood is real life in America. Apparently a hundred trumpeters with silk falls on their trumpets with Olympic circles on them, just like a film of the '40s. They have no idea of the absurdity of this nor of the fact that the trumpeters with the Royal Arms on their falls here, would play and be dressed the same, on the Queen's entry, if there were no one to watch and no TV cameras. Their whole civilization is based on advertising and surface and devoted to reducing the rest of the world to the same condition.

A wonderful illustration. The Olympic flame was lit by Muhammed Ali, his left hand shaking helplessly through six or seven inches from his brain damage, and an uncomfortable pause while he looked at us with dead eyes. A tribute to the dead hand of the Church of Sport, and American sentimentality.

Hideously hot.

Monday July 22 1996

I find it always hard to remember what we talk about – I just go into it. But I have now remembered one of my better moments, when I analysed why he might get on with Michael Grade. Whom I don't know, but he was impressed, 'That's incredible' and I think it was.

So hot today, worse even than yesterday, and I've written both days down here in the book-room in the basement. Yesterday was so hot I got ready for Roy and Marian's party, got as far as H'smith, was waiting for the bus, looked down at the two foot square black patch of sweat – there was sweat all over my diary when I got home – the edges of my hands all sodden and white, and I knew I couldn't face facing people like that. I turned tail.

Today I went to the pictures partly to spend the hottest part of the afternoon in air-conditioning. Happily the only film I wanted to see was at Whiteley's Multiplex, which has the fiercest. The film, *The Truth about Cats and Dogs* was a rather charming romantic light comedy, a genre which cannot be attempted without appropriate acting. All three young actors have the proper light touch. Uma Thurman, whom I haven't seen before, has apparently been 'a sex bomb' till now. She has a pleasant and appetizing sense of her own absurdity. Ben Chaplin, an English actor I have briefly glimpsed, is equally good, rueful and funny – I have to admit, I find him very Jewish-looking. The special one for me is Janeane Garofalo – silly name, but it's probably her real one and she's sticking to it. She's got something and can look it.

Pretty dreadful audience, largely made up of overweight Asian teenagers - Bayswater is an Asian backwater – or perhaps front-water – who have not only no manners but seemingly no awareness of anyone but themselves at all. Soaked.

Tuesday July 23 1996

Unbelievably hot and tense. About four o'clock there was a sudden violent clap of thunder right overhead that made me jump, and was as loud as any I've ever heard. Oddly I hadn't seen any lightning. After that I counted and the storm gradually got nearer and nearer. The thunder was so loud that it gave you the tiniest idea of a real natural disaster. Two women were struck by lightning during a Buck House garden-party. They had to be taken to hospital. The Queen sent them a letter saying she was sorry and asking them to the party next year. Even a Queen ...

I have now finished the *Gerald Brenan* by J. Gathorne – Hardy. Far too long for such a minor figure. And he was a shit. What terrible crushing disgusting egotism and self-indulgence. Not badly done all the same.

Wednesday July 24 1996

There was Mr Major in the garden of 10 Downing St. with a lot of children and a ruggar-ball and lottery money for academies of sport all over the country. Cut to Duncan Goodhew, the bald swimmer. To him, Interviewer: 'We've always been known for 'it's more important to take part than to win.' Is that going out of the window?' D.G. sharply: 'I do hope so.' What a good thing that games mean nothing to me, or I'd be quite depressed. We'll be like America, only cheering for Americans. I expect we are already.

Thursday July 25 1996

I've just remembered something else about my b'day evening. These drunken memories come back slowly – this was after dinner you see. I told him about John possibly paying for D's letters to be typed and went and got one or two – honestly - and the first I read was such a vivid longing to get to the cottage, and such an equally vivid description of walking up the path with all its changes of shape and light, that I

wept. He came and knelt by me, and was so understanding. I seldom, if ever, show how much I miss her every day, tho' I do. But you see, as always with me, he knows.

All-out tube strike. I stayed in.

Friday July 26 1996

Oh, I am interesting, psychologically, I mean. Mary L. had asked me to lunch and for various reasons, I didn't much want to go. It's a fair way to Willesden and the walk from the station is a quarter of an hour, quite long enough to get soaked if it's wet. Then again she's not too good at putting a meal together. Then she tends to be more snubbing in person than on the phone. And most of all, she only came here the other week, and it's too soon. But it's the result of her ridiculous hibernation that she has to cram all her social life into a couple of months. So there was a certain resistance. I was a bit hungover which I have no doubt contributed to the 'chokey' sick feeling I got on the tube. It's more in the throat than the stomach but it feels as if I'd be sick if I don't do something i.e. get off the tube. So I did, twice, and sat on a seat and then forced myself to get back on, and in this way got as far as St. John's Wood, and the feeling got worse, and the prospect of another quarter of an hour on the tube followed by having to eat a strange lunch, was too much for me and I went up through the crowds of cricket fans and rang Mary and said I'd been sick. (I wasn't far off, for when I got out, at the far end of the train I was just opposite one of three short passages between the up and down platforms empty except that someone might walk past one end or the other. The possibility of a private vomit also made the feeling worse.) I told her I'd been sick, because simply relating a 'feeling' isn't convincing enough to cry off an invitation. But it was a white lie as I couldn't have eaten anything. The interesting part is that the moment I put the phone down, I felt better. I got the 'feeling' quite a lot when D. was so ill. I think it's my enormous uvula.

Saturday July 27 1996

Finished the 'Cyril Connolly' biography by Clive fisher. A much better book and much better subject than the Brennan. Not that I'd have liked to have C.C. as a friend, or even an acquaintance. Although nobody actually says so in the book, I bet someone said fairly often in life 'He's all right if you stand up to him'. He's very typical of Oxford as I experienced it. I thoroughly enjoyed the book with its vivid subject and varied picture of the '20s-'30s literary life, one of my favourite periods. How spoilt most of them were! Mary told me when I rang to say sorry again, that she'd had her first sex dream for ages, the night before I was coming to lunch. With that awful forced laugh she said 'I don't know whether it was anything to do with you'. Curiously embarrassing from a seventy-six year old.

That Oarsman, Steven Redgrave, who won the only British gold medal ha! ha!, seems a sensible man. Later. Viewed immediately afterwards, he said, 'If anyone sees me go near a boat from now on, they have my permission to shoot me.' I don't think I can think of any other nationality who could produce a remark like that. Only an Englishman - and I mean an Englishman.

Sunday July 28 1996

Rang K. to warn him of the seriousness of the tube strike and to tell him that he could stay with Roy and Marion at Chiswick to avoid crossing Central London. Roy told me of a friend of his who was catching a train at Fenchurch St, and his mini-cab took three and a half hours from Chiswick to F.C. St. At any rate I got over how bad it can be. Of course he can't stay at Roy's – Arlette's plane is at eight – he can't waste the whole day. He told me he'd been to present his idea for the Channel 4 music, 'Thirty minutes I was at it, before the whole board, and they said it was the best presentation they had and it's down to two now and the other is Brian Eno.' I only just know who he is, but kept my end up bravely. 'I was going to tell you, but in case..' In case it doesn't come off, but he had to tell me now, sweet. I told him that the board would remember him even if he didn't get it. He is so precious to me.

Monday July 29 1996

Last night the gay couple two doors away had another dinner party – I think rather than party – in their garden, quite soon after their last party. (With a barbecue there, I get whiffs of fatty draughts, and have to close the fanlight in the drawing-room, let alone the doors onto the balcony.) Usually it's only rather loud rather continuous chatter. I don't grudge them that at all – think of our conversation – but I have to close the windows and put in my ear-plugs, for talk invades my privacy like nothing else.

Mary L. read me a bit from the 'Stage', 'Wanted – bright competent dancers, must be under 5'7" – Heathcliff.' Poor Cliff Richard, if he can't tower and loom over them spiritually, and he can't, at least they can arrange for him to do it physically. What grotesque casting, even, I would have thought for a modern musical, which is really a pop concert, even for his fans! Sensible of him not to ask the critics. Equally grotesque, some footballer has been sold for a 'record' price, £15 million. Such excesses will have their revenge. I wonder if the Olympic Games, so widely televised, will reveal to Americans that there are other countries in the world, with their own flags and national anthems. Of course, one can't expect them to realise that many of them have an independent existence that perhaps preceded that of the U.S. and that many of the U.S.'s cherished institutions are blurred copies of said countries.

Have now finished Sebastian Faulks Birdsong. I'm afraid I cannot echo the really extravagant praise of the notices printed on the back and the front flyleaf. It is well – written and has a strong narrative drive and a certain amount of distinction. It deals with a lot of material well, and is about the right length. I imagine the people who praised it so highly knew little of the first world war, and were simply overwhelmed by the facts, and the capable handling combined. But to someone of my age there is a great deal of déjà vu, and a slight blurring of accurate detail. Just for instance, no-one in 1910 would express that they were well and happy by saying 'I'm fine.' I don't use that epithet now.

I must remember never again to have a riotous evening before a lunch the next day. Except for him, if it's sudden and unavoidable.

Tuesday July 30 1996

Shopped and got soaked with sweat again, about three. Dried my shirt and went out again about six to buy some books at the Earl's Court Waterstone's. Despite a whole page notice in the London Review of Books, a book I asked for wasn't there. Bought some detective stories and a Jane Grigson cook book. Quite heavy rain on the way back, delicious after the stifling tube although only two stops.

K. rang. He'd told Arlette to take a taxi – how sensible. 'And anyway the house was still a tip' ... So she isn't quite such an 'airhead' or 'dizzily feminine' as he suggested, with no sense of direction. He never used those expressions, but he did say 'she has no sense of directions at all, she'd walk the opposite way! 'Dinner on Wednesday?' 'Yes. That's tomorrow.' 'What day is today?'

What poor sports Americans are!

Wednesday July 31 1996

Thursday August 1 1996

The first night with him since his letter and to welcome darling Arlette. She had that fabulous tan that only comes from living somewhere like Portugal. I don't often embrace young girls nowadays and she is a great embracer. I had forgotten the size of a slim girl. I felt as if my arms might go round her twice, and sink in. Wearing a little sun dress, just ribbon straps, mini-skirt length, made by her mother, smart, black.

I saw more of her brains this time. We had a discussion about ME. K. told me that the head of music, Ian something, got it, when he was at his busiest and most successful – about K's age. He assured me that Ian? was most eager to go on with his work etc. etc. No doubt, so I didn't bother to say that I would have to meet him to know whether or not the ME was a refuge. I told him that I would believe in ME, when (i) I actually knew someone well before and after they got it (ii) and was convinced of a proper medical diagnosis. Rather on the lines of ghost stories, I have still only met people who've known ME victims. How can one not be suspicious of a 'disease' that has any symptoms you like to name, the one common factor being a turning away from active life. Look at Karin McC. Her career failing, money difficulties, her looks going, 50?, a fat rather pompous husband – well, there you are, you stay in bed. I may be wrong – I simply record the facts.

Then – how? – the talk moved to chastity belts and at various points Arlette and I were able to reveal to K. a few interesting facts, such as the Crusades were not in 15 something and that baths didn't come in until the 19th Century. Really that boy's ignorance of historical niceties is quite phenomenal. How has he not acquired the merest outline of history just from attending a school, but he hasn't. Later, over dinner, he didn't catch a joke, and worse said something that showed he'd missed the point. Arlette looked at me just as Shar., or most of his girls have done over the years. 'I like you simple, but not cretinous.' But you see, it's so wonderful, he doesn't care. And he's right. He has other qualities ...

While he was getting the dinner and over our gin & tonic, I took the chance to warn her, lightly of course, of his absorption in his work, which is specially heavy in the next few weeks. She may find his concentration a little forbidding, as I suppose she has not experienced it before. We also chatted about what she should see in London. I said I'd make a little list of some rather less usual things and perhaps take her to one or two of the shorter ones myself, as I'm the only other person she knows here. Of course she wants to go to the Planetarium, with her interest in astronomy but that I will certainly leave to her – two hours queuing in the heat with the tourist detritus, to be subject to the most penetrating boredom I can imagine. I like looking at the real stars for a minute or two and reciting their classical names, but I don't want to be told, or to know, anything more about them. If there are places we can get to with little trouble or less walking or standing I'll go. Perhaps.

Two amusing bits of foreign behaviour. She couldn't understand us putting sugar on our strawberries when English strawberries are much too sweet to start with. When I left, they came to the door to see me off. As the door opened to let in the freshness of an August night, perhaps two or three degrees lower than the 75 it had been during the day, she shrieked 'It's freezing and rushed back into the sitting-room and shut the door. She told her mother on the phone that the sun hadn't been out much of the day. I am always amused by the wide spread assumption that ceaseless hot sunshine is an unarguably 'good thing'. What countries who have it, miss!

Running all through the evening, was the thread of his friendship, his pride in me. While she was in the loo, we had a brief talk about Sharron. I told him of her conversation being almost entirely complaining and he nodded his head gloomily. He'd had the same obviously. I also told him about my chain and ring and when he realised, he was quite shocked.

He has picked up enough of my expressions for his parents to notice years ago. So I was touched to hear her say, 'Indeed' which, of course, she had got from him. I'm influencing a generation.

Today watched an interesting progr. about police work in New York and Hartlepool. It seems a man called Bratton has made a great difference to the crime rate in New York such as murders down by half. Bratton impressed me by his mild calm manner, his neat blue suit, a blue shirt with a white collar etc. He put forward the principles he had founded his reforms on and there were various shots showing him unmistakably knowing his subordinates. Also shots of the public thanking him spontaneously, which could have been faked, but judging by him, they hadn't been. Then we went to Hartlepool where someone, I suppose the Chief Constable, had invited Bratton over - and it was working. And what were the 'new' principles? Just what I've always said we need – to start from the outside to stop bad manners going further. A good example, is graffiti leading to further breakdown. We are the victims of America making these discoveries late, but I hope not too late.

Nothing to do with the above, how everyone nowadays, in newspapers and television alike, seem to like worrying news, and are suspicious of any improvement.

Friday August 2 1996

In the p.m. all the way to Screen on the Green thinking that it would be a little less under the ghastly curse of the school holidays, as I wanted to see the new thriller, Twister. The audience was small, about thirty, a couple or four, some children, but the largest proportion of the audience single youngish men. Odd. Film very crude and little husbandry in it. They could not conceal the necessity to get to the next tornado. Left after thirty-five minutes. On the way down Upper St. suddenly saw Elena, Elena of Bianchis and L'Escargot, chatting with all her usual animated concentration to a friend. It must be ten? years since I've seen her, when S. took me three or four times to L'Escargot. So I eased by feeling it might be awkward, but walked away thinking how high the odds are in such an encounter in a City the size of London. And also thinking (very unlike me, in one way,) 'I don't suppose she'll be coming to Sainsbury's, she'll be going to her job.' Of course I met her on my way out. She deserves her place in restaurant history as a maître or maitresse by remembering me! She is very much the same, in appearance, except for grey hair and exactly the same person full of genuine amiable curiosity, looks out of her eyes, the eyes that miss nothing. I asked after her son, which is a link between us, because of her once confiding in me how troubled she was about him. Now of course, he is a settled married man, with his eldest daughter, fifteen. We parted most amicably with her remarkable memory coming out again with 'Remember me to Simon'. To my amazement I met her again on a traffic island in Upper St, and hid behind the traffic lights, watching her unmarked strong little legs carrying her off home, I suppose. Unmarked although she must have stood for five or six hours every night for the last thirty years at least. She's at L'Etoile now. I wonder if L'E is what it was, in which case it's a step up, if not, not.

Saturday August 3 1996

Attractive dream about getting huge lumps of catarrh out of my nose. Wishful dreaming alas.

One of those horror flashes that you get from turning on the television set on the wrong programme. A middle-aged polytechnic student presenter said 'There are a hundred and thirty three car magazines'.

Did I say I'd bought three Sarah Dunant detective-stories and found them very quick-witted and readable? Good. Hazel tells me she's a great Hampstead bossy boots in real life. I thought she must be with those red spiky glasses.

Sunday August 4 1996

Dream. Filming into sea, told to keep arms under shirt, immobile. Bradford and Bingley?

Finished the Elizabeth Taylor short stories. Material and form perfectly fitted and unlike most authors, both fit her picture on the fly-leaf.

Monday August 5 1996

Ridiculous 'debate' chaired by Esther Rantzen about ME. One of the few sensible people present, a middle-aged doctor – a real one – was shown the prevailing level, when he said mildly that he had been pleased at how many of his ME patients had responded 'very well' to anti-depressants, had, indeed, been cured. He was then loudly booed. Most of them were sufferers, but they weren't too tired to be there and boo. The main quality I carried away was of intense self-absorption not to mention complete absence of humour and logic. As far as the second was concerned, it might as well have been a UFO programme. I wait with malice for a certain cure, and see how many of them take it.

At the very least, you have to admit that ME and its symptoms are a malingerer's dream.

Really, television is.... A wretched plum fifteen-year-old, who has cost his parents £2000 and something in fines for playing music too loud too often, on some vast speakers in a small suburban house, was invited on the magazine programme. After Five, to demonstrate how loud it really was... I wonder what his victims thought.

Tuesday August 6 1996

Neil rang at twelve thirty – no idea of meals - and no mention of the lunch he was giving me – various bits of news. He saw Roy in Chiswick so I got his side of it, scarcely mentioned Marian, not young enough. 'Have I told you about my dinner with Julian Slade?' It seems this is another dinner, a deux. Well we know why that is. A sad tale, leaving me really sorry for Julian for the first time for ages. Neil was at once conscious of a terrible smell of sick by the sofa. He thought it was the cat, until he realised the cat was avoiding it too. He could see a damp patch on the carpet. Julian was still shaking – it seems there is a radio of Winnie the Pooh, and the director? had said there would be only one day's rehearsal or something. 'I was shouting at him.' So I suppose he was sick from rage and fear. Poor Julian, he is reaping the penalty of not being a professional. K. was sick at his early hurdle aged 21 but not since. But I do feel sorry for J. Then he had to cook dinner and serve it. And, oh dear, he said again 'I can see why Angus absolutely adores you'. I said to Neil 'Well, I quite like you.'

Roy rang and we relished Victor Lewis-Smith's notice of the E. Rantzen – ME affair. Gets it absolutely right incl. saying he's had a couple of friends with real depression and they 'Would have been unable even to contemplate dragging themselves into a TV studio.'

Is ME genuine or bogus? Who knows? I'm sorry to say this but the phrase 'release the studio tiger and we'll soon find out just how able-bodied they are.'

They have put up a sort of shed by the tube-station from which to do repairs. The whole station was thoroughly re-decorated earlier in the year, very well too, and as far as I can see, all that remains to be done, is the replacement of a few big glazed bricks on the Margravine Rd side and the glass to be set into the iron canopy over the

entrance, with BC station on it and all painted. So it seems a bit excessive to have put a long wooden shed of boards nailed together and then painted about the size of two big garden wood sheds. It also seems a bit excessive for there to be a notice on the side 'Visitors and Drivers please report to Reception'.

Wednesday August 7 1996

Tube strike. Stayed in again. One train again on Piccadilly line, from Hammersmith to Heathrow – every seventy minutes. Before it's been a shuttle service. It doesn't take seventy mins to do that journey so ...

Article about ME very appropriate. A doctor at the Royal Free – well, that's better – thinks there is a deficiency in the eyes somewhere, of something called 5HY, I think. – I've already sent the article to Mary L. for Karin McC – and mentions that ME sufferers are often perfectionists, which God knows Karin is. Or was.

Thursday August 8 1996

Forgot to say that I have sent Arlette a list of things to do and places to see. Such a list is depressing on the whole, but I had to do something. Four or five pages. Still I did put in a few shops. At her age, I'd ache to do all that by myself and did.

'Flash floods' rushed through a camp site in the Spanish Pyrenees. I bet, if you talk to some of the older natives of the district, they would tell you it was a place you shouldn't build anything. Some of the dead and living were washed ten miles down the valley. Everything human washed away, rows of trees untouched.

Some girl rang at seven thirty to see if she could give me better terms for my mortgage. I said 'I'm on income-support – you must be mad'. She giggled and rang off. What an inept firm it must be!

Friday August 9 1996

Have now finished Gore Vidal's Palimpsest. Goodness, how many people he must irritate to death in the U.S. No wonder he lives in Italy. Even though I had to skip some of the politics because first, politics bore me, and second, because I have too little real knowledge to follow or evaluate a good deal of it, I thoroughly enjoyed the rest of it. He writes so well, amazingly well for an American, and is savage about US values and manners quite in my own style. He has wit and humour and certain other qualities that chime with my own. We are almost of an age, - other things being equal, a powerful bond - and have experienced the degrading of our civilization at the same time. Wonderful portraits of Jackie and John Kennedy, his mother, his sister, and the boy he describes as his other half, killed at 19 at Iwojima. He never felt any guilt over sex, just as I have never done. Though with my background I ought to be riddled with it. It is a pity that G.V. is homosexual, not for itself but because it enables the huge philistine mass of America to more easily dismiss him. It is satisfying to hear him say that the U.S. has never had a civilization. Robert Stephens'

autobiography, Knight Errant. What a title, but for all its faults, this is what the autobiog. of a real actor ought to be like, completely unpretentious, indiscreet, on the coarse side. The coarseness was represented physically by R S's rather loose, rather wet, full mouth. But he was a genuine conduit for theatrical emotion. Plenty of satisfying commonsense on Peggy A in Brecht. 'She was terribly upset because she didn't know – none of us did – how to do alienation acting. There is, of course, no such thing.'

I have only heard fourth raters or non-actors talk about 'theories' at all. Any good actor just does it, rehearses carefully and does it.

The whole book is, mutatis mut., just a mid or late 19 Century actor's life, in its living for the moment–sleeping-around-drinking-too-much way. Really, how they all sleep with each other. He had a proper affair with Judith Stott – 'Just as I thought'. It was her sex that sold her non-existent acting talent. When I think what D. and I suffered at the Westminster years ago, during a scene between her and Wendy Williams, equally attractive to men and equally untalented, it is very satisfying, thirty or forty years later to find that their careers faded with their sexuality and that they are now utterly forgotten and came to nothing very much. They were the most irritating variety, as they were in the classier part of the theatre, J.G.'s Much Ado, B.O.V. etc. but it was dear old sex all the same.

Saturday August 10 1996

So John rang to say that they would come in a taxi after all. A relief to me as I rather hate getting drunk in front of somebody staying sober, however well I know them. Incredibly old cab-driver with no teeth.

The restaurant was even better. Had the crab again, so good, and rabbit, squarish pieces, cream and pink and brown, little bits of bacon echoing the pink, sliced artichoke bottoms and little potatoes shaped like O – not right, in a very little reduced sauce. John's starter was potato pancake, wood pigeon and watercress, was it? Simon's was chicken liver salad. It is outstanding. A relaxed and delightful evening, with all the pleasure of a thirty year friendship.

I am struck by the difference from my theatrical friends, the lower level of vitality. Actors will always 'have it all' and 'go on.' John and Simon had no pudding, no coffee. We had anyway to leave the table by 10.30 and they were quite ready to go. Little vivid in the talk to remember, but how I love them.

Sunday August 11 1996

Hazel rang rather early and rather tired, no doubt the result of her bereaved guest. She's got a new kitten. It was going to be a dog last week. A Siamese costing her £148? something like that. Called slip. I've forgotten why. Though I do remember its kennel name was Hades. It rather reminds me of that 'naughty' French farce 'Sodom et Gomorrhe' put on at the Criterion by Wyndham's as 'Where's the Cat?'

Later. To my faint amazement – I said Good gracious! – Donald rang up. Most interesting, as I don't think I've spoken to him since he and Lalla came to the Nicolson. I heard his voice as for the first time. It has a rather strangled tone and a raised slightly artificial self-conscious ring with the pomposity of a school master which he was. He gave as a reason for ringing, first, that he is still at 'the old house' with Hannah, and Ann has a flat down the road. (I had to remind myself that Ann's parents are quite rich.) Second he and Hannah are going up to Thurso and around to look for Daddy's roots, and did I know anything that would help. 'No I don't'. 'Have you his birth certificate?' 'No.' D. is a historian – well, that's what his degree was in – but I don't envy him investigating anyone's origins in a town like Thurso where I gather every other shop is Mackay. 'All I know about Daddy is that Auntie whatever said that he left home under a cloud at 19 because he'd got a girl into trouble so that should make you feel better. The only other fragment is Grandma Mackay saying Well, I suppose you're some sort of minister.' He didn't seem to make much of that and went on to say that Hannah – now sixteen – is learning the saxophone! As a prelude to the chanter, as of course, a prelude to the bagpipes. Why do I have these ridiculous relations? I remember writing under Hannah's picture, aged about 5, 'Ominously like Donald' Ought they to be chums if they're alike? Yes, for a bit. Of course she may never see what he's really like. I made it clear, politely, that I didn't want a meeting, though of course, avoiding any definite statement, or any questions. If you want to keep people at arm's length, you cannot have the luxury of a bit of a gossip.

He was justified in telling me what had happened and where he was – I would have to know if Lalla died. Otherwise I felt in him a certain euphoria and a rather tiresome perkiness. I expect he's had a fresh lease of life from Ann leaving him, no more responsibility, sexual or otherwise, except for a possibly? adoring daughter.

The bit I liked best, and I am amused that I can't remember what made him say it, was when he trumpeted, or rather bugled 'You don't change do you?' As he's never had the remotest idea what I am like no doubt, to him, I haven't. Though I think it was probably jovial headmaster talk for 'You're irritating as ever'. Rang K. and told him. Amused, except for the saxophone.

Monday August 12 1996

To the Post Office for my pension, to Selfridge to pay off my account completely at last, then to High Street Kensington to take some money from the Halifax. Across the road to Waterstone's for some books, two detective stories and the new edition of Jane Austin's letters, to Safeways and home. This perfectly ordinary expedition has left me quite stiff. Bother.

Tuesday August 13 1996

Guy Savage of the Shooters' Rights Ass. accused the Dunblane parents of seeking revenge for the murder of the sixteen infants and their teacher by 'fueling a screaming baying mob' against people who own handguns.

Then there's John Holmstrom. A House crammed from top to bottom with nothing but paintings, videos, sculptures, drawings books etc. etc. of boys of pre-puberty age, and a cook of some of the nastiest meals I've ever had has, all these years later, had enough sanity left to produce a large picture book entitled *The Moving Picture Boy* £39.50. I wonder if I've described him before. Oh well, not now, but I still wonder whether I should tell someone about him. Because there is literally nothing else in the house. Perhaps the book has been a safety-valve or perhaps ...

Neil came round for a drink and so sweetly bought a bottle of gin, which he can ill afford. Oh, he is so transparent. Told me all about his finances, so that the gin should turn to gall in my mouth if I were a fool. Oh, how he likes to get up and act out a story – takes much longer and makes my neck ache looking up. He is such a dear little boy and tries so hard to be good.

I was amused and slightly irritated that Neil told me that he and John decided that K. had turned out so well, looking after me so generously.... He's an infinitely stronger character than either of them, and I saw it, but they presumably just saw the careless boy. Extraordinary how K. has attracted patronising remarks over the years – it's his light touch, I suppose. And he never talks himself up either.

Wednesday August 14 1996

At last got to the N. Portrait G. for a fresh supply of pcs. For first nights and so on, and also to the stationers in New Row, to order some writing paper and envelopes. My own paper with the engraved address – is Basildon Bond Azure – the best cheap paper. B.B. comes in four or five colours, but azure seems to vanish from any shop I used to get it at, to the point that I rang B.B. to ask if it was being discontinued. They said No. Odd. It's just like my taste to like the one shade nobody's buying. However, they took the order calmly and I found a couple of packets of envelopes on a bottom shelf, so I'm alright for the moment. It's not just vanity – a proper letter has its effect still, on a solicitor, for instance. Bought three more plays by Jonathan Harvey, and that book by Graham P. about Noel. Back to Tesco's and picked up my two sweaters, dry-cleaned after a month, and food shopping. And wasn't stiff.

Rang Sharron, and found her perhaps a little more positive. She seems busy at any rate. Mary L. rang to say she'd sent my cutting to Karin, who thanked me. And Mary said she didn't think she'd pursue it. Of course not...

John N. rang to tell about his evening with Neil. Told John he was v. seriously thinking of giving up acting. I suppose he didn't mention that to me because he thought I might disapprove. Far from it – I am doubtful that he should ever have started. J. also told me N. was off to Turkey to do a film tomorrow and not going back to L.A. after all. It came up suddenly, and will stretch off and on over the next two weeks. And I thought we'd got rid of him the dear little thing.

Thursday August 15 1996

Roy rang to say he'd bought the Robert S. autobiog. and had shrieked, and was struck by the parallels with his own life. Not to mention that R.S.'s b'day is between mine and Roy's, July 14th.

Judi Dench, Sian Phillips and Patricia Hodge were interviewed on behalf of the Night Music production at the National Reporter. 'Is there rivalry between you?' They looked at one another and then laughed. Judi turned to Sian and said 'Tell me now.' More laughter. 'No' said P.H. 'Sorry' said Judi to the reporter.

Caught myself in drunken flight because of my will etc. picturing K. at my funeral amazing everyone by his reading of the dirge and by his devotion and grief etc. etc. as my imagination rushes forward in a second into years of events. Not a word from Arlette about the list, but I love to think of their magic days.

ANGUS MACKAY DIARY NO. 143

August 16 1996

October 16 1996 (cont.)

Friday August 16 1996

Fuss about Welsh and Scottish adverts being rude to London. Well par for the course. 'Friendlier faces' was one of the attractions of Scotland. One of the joys of London to me is the privacy, the independence of any neighbour. The delivery from that ghastly inquisitiveness, or even worse, that really terrible Northern familiarity, masked as friendliness, but which is actually the invasiveness of insecurity.

Caught a moment of a discussion of guns, and guy Savage's savage face. He said to a Dunblane parent what a terrible thing had happened, that it was immoral that her child had been taken away, 'but it is just as immoral to take our guns away'.

Have now read all three of Jonathan Harvey's plays and on the whole think all of them are better than Beautiful Thing. I may have been influenced against it slightly by the over-favourable notices, but I don't think so. I think Babies the best. The Rupert St one is vitiated for me by its setting. I find it difficult to believe in a house in Rupert St. divided into flats and bedsits at prices people under thirty can afford. Now, I think it's about time that he wrote a play without any gay characters at all.

I was amused at Albert Roux's answer, in his cooker correspondence column in the Standard, to a letter beginning 'Delia Smith seems to have become the dryenne of British cooking, now even eclipsing Elizabeth David.' The first para. of his answer: 'I can well understand Delia Smith's popularity with 'housewives'. Her recipes are simple, easy and well researched, and I am told by everybody they just do work.'

He doesn't actually say they're any good, and I specially like the sidelong way he lets slip that he hasn't tried them himself and has no intention of doing so. She must be anathema to him.

When I got back from the shops, I sat down to watch the news, and saw – no watch on my wrist. The strap must have broken. I was interested that I wasn't much upset, although it is in most ways, my most prized possession. I might have lost it anywhere, so it was no use looking. Later I found it in the tamest way on the chair in the bedroom. Extraordinary luck.

Oh and coincidence. While I was shaving, I heard one of the presenters on the radio being taken round Hatfield House by various people. Coming out of the shopping mall was Jonathan Cecil, unseen for seven or eight years. Avoided him because I can't entertain, not to mention that he never asks you back.

Saturday August 17 1996

Unpleasantly hot. Went to get my watch-strap replaced – the only reason I forced myself to go out, and found H. Samuel had no strap the right size. Most irritating, when the only point of multiple firms is that they have endless supplies of their hideously small choice. However, it did mean I went to the supermarket, where there was a great pile of really fresh small broad bean pods, bright green and obviously full of really young small beans. The most delicious size. And they were.

Sunday August 18 1996

Monday August 19 1996

Tuesday August 20 1996

I've been under the weather, probably literally. On Sunday I got up and took the papers back to bed. At 10.30 I got up to go to the loo and started to shake so badly that I dropped the papers. It was only shivering as I could control it. Back from the loo, I thought how much nicer than anything else it would be to go back to bed. When I woke next it was twenty to four. It still seemed nice to doze - it was twenty past nine then quarter to one. By this time it seemed more sensible to get up and sit in here, as a contrast and because I was getting a bit stiff. Went back to bed at about four-thirty - and woke at twenty past two. I suppose the sleep was a bit feverish as for the most of the time, I seemed to myself to be conscious running over songs and poems and thoughts, but I suppose I can't have been as the time was always a surprise to me. I stayed up this time, had a little hard-boiled egg and strips of thin bread – not hungry. Same again and a cold potato later on.

Then when I went to bed at eleven thirty, hoping to sleep, I saw the cause of it, I suppose. On my right leg, from the ankle to the beginning of the calf, an angry red and purple patch about five inches long and four across, with slightly crackly skin on its surface, but that might be me. That was what I'd thought was a pulled muscle or something. It's painful when I move, but I think only because of the swelling and tight skin.

Rang the doctor and got a very pleasant middle-aged voice – man – who tried to catch my doctor – but she'd just gone. He didn't seem to think it serious! 'But keep it up and put some ice on it' – easier said than done – what do you put the ice in? – 'and ring Dr. Thomas about 11.30.' So we'll see.

Two days, three now really, in limbo.

Stayed up late to get sleepy again and actually watched an Open University prog. about Princes, mostly of the Church, and their foundation of and gifts to various University and College Libraries. John's figured largely, theirs, not ours, and Bodley, Dublin and so on. Well put together, but spoiled for me by its author, who also unfortunately presented it. Trumpeting his blocked sinuses up to the hammer-beams his voice could be summed up in the most reiterated word in the text, which, he pronounced 'liberry'. He obviously has no ear, because he could pronounce 'librarian'. A pity.

Wednesday August 21 1996
Thursday August 22 19
Friday August 23 1996
Saturday August 24 1996

Well, what a few days, On Thursday I went to hospital for the first time and was kept in! Today, Sat, I am back home ...

By the end of Tuesday, it was much more swollen and going a bit purple, if not black and going up the leg. On Wednesday, I did the ringing, and told K. He was much concerned and said he would come round and shop and cook dinner. Getting up that Wed. was pretty painful but went when I got going. It still was only painful in movement, specially standing. K. was really worried, incredibly sweet, took command did two huge washings up and cooked the dinner, steak and a chocolate pudding. This all after a long day the day before an evening writing till 1.30, up at 7.30 more preparation, with clients till one. He told me to ring at 1.15. He was there with pencil and paper to be told what I needed. Dear Arlette was quite unsquemish about my leg, - when it was measured in the hospital it was 42 1/3" to the other's 39. (I was expecting some recondite scientific gauge, but the nurse produced a tape-measure. Oh, perhaps they're not inches...)

I got further insights into Arlette. She was just shopping in Kensington market, in the biggest dress shop there, when the manager asked her if she'd work there three days a week and where did she get the dress she had on? (Her mother made it to her design.) She'd had four modelling offers and to crown it all, there was an article in the E. Standard about whether girls mind being photographed by strangers. There were four girls, one of the Arlete, and hers was next to that of the Princess of Wales. And she's only been here three weeks! It is a tribute to her shape and nothing more. The sharp intelligent girl would not interest them.

I felt perfectly well, apart from the leg, 'in myself' as people say, and had a lovely evening. But the main pleasure was his obvious concern. Anyone can write the letter he wrote on my b'day. Not so many come to one's side when needed and do two washings-up.

The next day, Thursday, the doctor arrived at 2.15. I hadn't dared any lunch in case I didn't hear the bell - a serious mistake, as it turned out. She is not the long-haired vaguely 60-ish woman I saw with my throat. She is tall, blonde, statuesque and cheek-boned with a jolly manner causing a good many 'my loves'. Well you can't have everything. She was very sensible and decided it was almost certainly an infection from something, an injury, a bite, perhaps, but she couldn't rule out the possible danger of a clot, which might be the cause. She was almost sure that it wasn't but of course it's so dangerous, the slightest possibility must be checked. She gave me a letter to take to the casualty dept at Charing X - and then took it with her. I thus had in my first few minutes of experience with the NHS a clear mistake, and a first taste of the endless repetitions that doctors are presumably forced to use to get medical details and instructions over to their patients. Now we know the importance of repetition in the theatre - tell them what you're going to say, say it, tell them

you've said it. I quite see the necessity of it – it's just that their inability to adjust their style to those who don't need it, leaves one even more isolated than usual. And this isolation is magnified a hundredfold in hospital.

She gave me a prescription of penicillin, because she thought they would check for a clot and send me home. I asked the minicab to take me first to the chemist at Baron's C. – happily for the future the regulars were away 'Where are the labels?' - and got to casualty. Three or four people waiting, but I went straight in. (I'd rung the practice to make up for the lost letter.) I was struck first by how small it all seemed, backstage – the five or so cubicles so close to the 'counter' where the nurses drs. were. There must be some other cubicles elsewhere. The second, as I undressed and put on one of those ridiculous 'gowns', two arms and a stretch of material theoretically tying with tapes at the back. Any such 'gowns' I have seen have always lost their tapes. I spent the five hours I was there with it falling forward continuously, not to mention that the shape seems to have no point or use. I was a success with the nurses from the start, because I was quite by chance reading a Rex Stout called *Over my Dead Body*. They try to explain stage by stage, with singular lack of success. When I was without warning wrenched away from my book to be x-rayed for a chest pulmonary embolism even I was a bit shaken, thinking they had in their examination, discovered a galloping consumption. But then remembered this was simply weighing up 'the clot'.

The second thing that struck me was the nature of the various characters on show, - the mix was such as any producer of casualty would be ashamed of, or even reject. There was a small gruesomely spry drunk half-wandering half-dancing up and down a passage singing *Swing Low Sweet Chariot*, as always, with drunks, the very gloomiest thing his voice can catch hold of. In a cubicle near me, a woman was being determinedly sick from time to time, accounting for 'not bringing anything up' because she'd been sick all night, 'and I can't keep anything down', these gems of cliché embedded in a low whining whinging ceaseless monologue of complaint. A further cubicle had a more dramatic soundtrack, vomiting, groaning, moaning, crying out, even screaming and all with a strong, indeed deafening, Polish accent. I saw the healthy one, quite young - (and later when I left, the patient, also quite young) come up and complain two or three times, each time gaining intensity, until the screams, this time taking decisive first place over the other noises, the row was only quelled by the nurse saying firmly – was she Polish? 'No sir, he is not dying'.

My favourite came into the other side, after about two hours. A lower middle class London woman, about my age, the last generation to have any sort of certainty, a loud clear measured voice, with majestically hilarious timing. She was asked about any previous complaints.

'I have a gall-bladder operation down there ... the two cataracts, a hysterectomy,... oh and the uraemia and what they say called ankylosing spondylitis. I think that's why I fell off the bus ... the ankylosing spondylitis.

So they decided 'to admit me'. Nobody asked me whether I'd like to telephone anyone as I'd not known. A nurse showed me a telephone round a corner where I phoned K. for nothing. How I clung to that lifeline. The Medical Registrar came and apologised for them having no bed, and in a little while I was in an ambulance, not a real one, just with seats, and off to Hammersmith Hospital after five hours at CX

without food or drink and no lunch. Not their fault. It seemed that H'smith kitchens closed two hours before and all a nurse could produce was three pieces of toast, butter and pink grapefruit juice. I ate it hungrily in my ward, a smallish room divided into four little bedrooms by big curtains, which did draw completely round to at any rate visual privacy. (I won't bother to record the numberless times people attempted to draw them back, quite unable to believe I didn't want togetherness – I don't think I saw any other curtains drawn right round except for washing, examinations etc). It then gradually turned out there'd been an administrative error which even the local inhabitants were rather thrown by – someone at Charing X had forgotten to give me my notes to bring with me! The sacred forms! This meant that I got no treatment till 11.40, a needle put in my arm with little conduits attached to it, down which they syringed three sorts of antibiotic into me and then hooked me up to a drip which they did not remove till 12.40. Lights out, of the main lights, had been at 11.50, but fortunately there was a sort of angle poise above my head, and I was able to keep it on all night, without which ... so much for matron.

The bed was plastic just under the sheet and the pillows were plastic and stuffed with plastic. My shirt was as a result soaked quite soon. The mattress was so hard that it hurt my bottom so unbearably that after about an hour I sat in the chair. That too was plastic. I covered it with the 'gown' I wasn't wearing, and put towels on the hard flat wooden arms which hurt my soft boney human arms intolerably. I sat up all night, sleeping not a wink. Nobody asked ...

My first 'go' of drugs was at 6.0 a.m. and the drip, which was to flush the other drugs thro' and was, I think, just a solution of some kind. They often forgot to disconnect me till long after it had all gone through. If you wanted to go to the loo, you'd have to go down the corridor with a ten-foot pole on a wheeled tripod rattling beside you.

The rest of the two days were diversified by a doctor or two, one of whom seemed to have got hold of diabetes as the cause. This was on what seemed to be the dubious logical grounds diabetes can cause infections, this is an infection. Therefore ... I had two, no three proper blood tests – one went wrong - and numberless pinprick blood-tests. They have a little punch which makes it almost painless. Except that a large vague West Indies woman could not, I suppose, work the little machine properly and punctured seven fingers before giving up.

I'd rung K when he'd told me the night before. He was working on stuff to present to some clients on Fri a.m., 'but they'll be gone by one. Ring at 1.15.' I did and he was waiting with pencil and paper for whatever I wanted from the flat. I'd made a much bigger list until I heard the magic words 'You may be home before the w/e'. So I only urgently wanted ear-plugs, a book or two and this. He brought a bot of wine, was appalled to hear about the food and went out and bought some more sandwiches and a cornish pasty – some bananas. He and Arlete lay on the bed, he snuggling into the pillows with his tiredness. While they were there, 'dinner' arrived at 5.30. I'd ordered the vegetarian dish, pasta with cheese and broccoli. There on the plate was an unpleasant mass of congealed cheese sauce with a few flecks of green. That was bad enough but it was the smallness of the mass that shocked us, - for there was at the most, three tablespoonful's. And this would have been supposed to last till eight o'clock the next morning, when I would have got two pieces of toast. They left about six-thirty – he had to meet someone at the White Horse - and I faced another long

night, but I had the ear-plugs and that made all the difference. The next morning I was shaken by the shoulder to wake up for my 6.0 drugs. I don't suppose that I have been woken suddenly like that since when? the army? Just like being released from a film set, arbitrary, power conscious frightened authority suddenly announced the next Sat. morning, and I was home by midday. I was on the phone to K as I was told – he'd rung at 11.15, despite his long night. He said he and Arlete would come and clean up the kitchen and cook the dinner... Later in the afternoon I finally got him on his mobile, shopping in Ken. High St. Youth, youth, purposely near me, I suppose, to come on later. I hope I gave him a feeling of liberation and spring of joy by saying I'd rather be quietly on my own, as I was so tired. Even he.... So I killed birds with stones. I hope they had a lovely happy evening. I did. It was quiet.

If I had to sum up, there I was with this quite severe infection and deprived of the two elements that would let me conquer it, food and sleep. At the very least, ear-plugs and eye masks should be routinely issued ...

But the main thing is – he is a rock for me to lean on.

Sunday August 26 1996

Foot improved. But sitting with it up on the sofa hurts my bot. Nobody mentions it. No drink for the next fortnight. A curious flat feeling after 40 years.

Monday August 27 1996

Not so much improvement today. Hazel rang today and yesterday. She's still a bit exhausted and, as she says, 'trembling inside'. Thinks it's lack of thyroid. How odd of her to think that. She should just think I was tired with the new kitten or something. Ah well.

So the Globe has opened and the prod. seems to have worked – whether with me or not is by the way. I saw Mark R. interviewed and was relieved that the interview had no nonsense in it, an indeed finished with the realistic answer to 'What sort of audience do you want?' 'A full audience.' I was not so pleased by that dreary creature, Jack Shepherd saying 'It was more like a football-match than a play, not like sitting in a nice police theatre in the dark.' How desirable. An ill-natured remark earlier on, about J. Cecil. He is a dear man.

K. rang to say he was going to take Arlete to Portugal and stay the inside of a week and meet her mother and break it to her A., is coming to live here. I must stop myself thinking of it as his decision. It's definitely hers, too, and she is a strong willed girl, no doubt about it. I wonder how all will unfold. At the moment my main feeling is for her mother, who will lose everything. I feel very sad for her.

Tuesday August 27 1996

On the sofa all day. Like Elizabeth Barrett Browning except for the hair. Except for the p.m. when quite firmly went to H'smith and would have cashed my two pensions, but the queue was too long for me to stand. Got a taxi! to Ken. High St. and at last got my watch-strap replaced, £6.99. Then to Waterstone's and bought three Eliz. Ferrars to see, a Cautionary Tales, which I know well but have never possessed, only paperback, a reproduction of Eliza Acton's Cookery Book, most interesting, and Bert Lahr's Light Fantastic, a book of dramatic criticism. Then to Safeway's out on to the pavement and straight into a taxi. I was whisked home with no carrying and no walking. I had forgotten how delightful taxi-shopping could be. And all due to darling K. who rang to say they were off at midnight. Mentioned his will to him because if he did pop off suddenly, I would be the only person who could do anything for Arlete. He said it was in the bottom drawer of his filing-cabinet and he'd been meaning to change it for some time. Well, there you are then, 'I'm cutting you out of it.' 'Oh will-rattling now?' 'You can get me on the mobile almost any time. I've left yr. number with Simon and Nick. They'll feed Boo.'

Wednesday August 28 1996

K rang. Safely there, sitting by the beach in a café. Nervous of meeting the mother, who typically said 'Oh, the Algarve is lovely just now, stay a few days', when they want to get their meeting over.

A programme on happiness attracted me by its absurdity. I turned it on and found some tall nerd clapping and hooting some wretched people through an eightsome reel ...

Thursday August 29 1996

I have now been taking fourteen antibiotic pills for a week. There is a slight but steady improvement in the leg. Otherwise I have not noticed any other effect except that I sit more smoothly, completely and easier than usual. I don't mean that I have ever had constipation or anything like it. But now I want to go after lunch, and must go at once, and it falls out, feeling as a result more copious, tho' I don't think it is. I usually have to push a bit, but never strain. Of course there is another element to be weighed up, no drink. For the last thirty years at least, I have had a couple of glasses of wine with both meals and a couple of g&ts before, and a couple of whiskies after, dinner. But I would have thought drink would not have any sort of constipating effect. Interesting. It is also interesting to me, that no alcohol for a fortnight has caused no 'withdrawal' symptoms at all. I look forward to drinking again of course and miss it badly, but only as one would a favourite food or sugar or salt. There is an ample supply of everything on the drinks table and I suppose if I were remotely alcoholic I would have drunk and fuck the antibiotics. By the way nobody says what happens if you do drink. Perhaps sex is a bit reduced, too, tho' again that may be the result of the infection and not the drugs vide. my exhausted Sun and Mon. The three anti-biotics are Amoxycillin, two, three times a day anytime. Metronidazole, two,

three times a day with food. Avoid alcohol while ... Flucloxacillin, two, four times a day an hour before food or on an empty stomach.

Do you ever have an empty stomach? I wonder if these remedies will seem as absurd in a hundred years' time, or less, as eye of toad and what-ever-it-is of newt. Certainly everyone believes in them as blindly. Cellulitis can be, it says on my med. dic., serious, even fatal if neglected. It looked it and was going up the leg. This is the only remedy open for me free. But I can't say I believe in it.

Finished Bert Lahr's book of dramatic criticism and essay. Some goodish bits, but he is easily taken in, being an American, and all the more so because he lives here and thinks... He also shows signs of having to have some greatness in his period, whether it's there or not, with the same result as casting from too few auditions, you take the best of what's there and pretend it's good.

Friday August 30 1996

A little better again. To shops in p.m. hardly painful at all. I see Mrs W's Profession is coming on at the Lyric Ham. I shan't go of course and I don't think I shall tell Mary L. who said Shaw was so out of fashion and more or less finished.

Hazel rang again. She is still low and for her, in a bit of a state. I think she might well be. I think it's a combination of cat bereavement, the strain of a new kitten and the usual trapped-in-Somerset which seems to come on from time to time. Poor thing.

Saturday August 31 1996

Mentioned to Mary L. like a fool, about Andrew J. leaving the ENO and taking a tailoring course for nine months without payment. So, I said when he comes round to do the sewing jobs, I'll see if he knows a cleaner or perhaps wants to do it himself to make some money. She said sharply, 'You'll have to break it to him very very tactfully'. She's never met him. On the other hand, she has met me.

Am halfway thro' the Austen letters. I must check whether it's a new letter. I don't remember noticing the first time that there is one mention of 'the Mackays', spelt the right way, too. Editor thinks the family of a Captain Mackay R. N.

My eye was caught by 'beefcake' in the Eliza Acton, with 'very good' even in the index. A sort of mixture of a terrine and a casserole. Also cheesecake. Of course, but how did these two come to mean 'sexy' male and female bodies.

Sunday September 1 1996

An interview with Adrian Noble reveals that he now thinks, for instance, that the WRP did a lot of harm and instituting can't be thrown over etc. etc. Also that he should never have encouraged young actors to speak verse as prose... All these people are forced into sense, after thirty years of doing harm. One of the three rudest

people I have ever met. Have I recorded it? I will again. S. introduced me to him in the pub across the road from the Royal Court where we'd seen Jonathan Pryce's Hamlet. His expression did not change. He did not hold out his hand. He said nothing. And resumed his conversation with S. The other two were David Hare and Andrew Lloyd Webber.

One more effect of not drinking or having an 'infection', my nose is a bit less red.

Monday September 2 1996

A curious limbo at the moment. K. away, John N. away, Roy away, R. incom. and so on. Firmly took a taxi to Brompton Rd. Waterst. and bought three detective stories, and Alexis Soyer's book. I have always been caught by anyone who could make such improvements at Santari and work immediately with F.N. and not against her. The C.W-S biog. has the effect of only the greatest biographies. That, for ever after, you feel, or I feel, involved in her life. Taxi back, and woman-driver, still unusual in a black cab. I didn't remark on it, which I hope or expect – was a relief to her. A bit warmer but still tolerable. Thank goodness it went cooler just as I went into hospital. By the way no-one in hosp. inquired about my pyjamas, or whether I washed and so on. Matron is gone indeed. I miss him.

Tuesday September 3 1996

Rang Hazel to tell her I'd sent the video of Cibil Emouvante and found it was her b'day. She seemed a bit better, but it might have been the b'day.

An eighteen year old has been convicted of posing as a train-driver, uniform and all, and driving crowded commuter trains for some months at 100 m.p.h. without disaster, I note, so I hoped someone would have the common-sense to give him a clip round the ear or some such equivalent, 'and now we're going to train you as an engine-driver.' But no. Not nowadays.

Have now finished the J.A. letters. Not many differences except in details from the Chapman Edition. None of the new letters are different. I was more struck this time by how often she mentions having the library or some such, to herself, with a good fire. Privacy was a rare luxury, obviously, in that determinedly social world. I suppose tiny pockets of it survive in the men's clubs for instance, where there are certain tables where you must converse. Such country house visits as I made in my youth, would try me now, as it was assumed that you were never alone.

K. flying back tonight. I still pray about his flights... I wonder if he's brought Arlete.

Wednesday September 4 1996

Dear Tim suggested bitters in something so I tried tonic water and it made an acceptable aperitif. Makes... but come Friday. Looked up cellulitis and found it was

much the same as erysipelas tho 'not so severe'. 'In the elderly the pain may persist for some time...'

K. rang 8.15, back safely, with Arlete! Well I'll face all that when it comes, it's only interrupting her education I mind. He'd got in at 2.30 a.m. and up at 7.30 and clients, poor love. He sounded thick like a cold. Can't see me till Wed. – work and just what I asked him in my letter, suits exactly. He rang this afternoon as well the dear thing.

It's also called St Anthony's Fire ...

Thursday September 5 1996

Why I would never. More flooding, bother, change the House of Lords. Lord Bicester has been in the bin 31 years, and now he's come out, wants to take his seat in the Lords. Quite right.

I see a girl has died in Croydon who shut herself up in her bedroom fourteen years, saw no one but her mother, not her father or brother, slept on the bare boards and had a bucket for a loo. The whole thing was her will. Oh, how I know those turned-in violently insipid suburban families, especially in that vast stifling desert of S.E. London, with hygienically clean houses and utterly eventless lives. Where and how is Pam Hards now? With all her parents and Ken and Win's money and nothing to stop her doing exactly what she likes, which is probably nothing.

Friday September 6 1996

I finished the pills and I drink. Heaven.

Saturday September 7 1996

Yes, the drinks were delicious and fresh – I'd treated myself to Pouilly Fuisse - and the slight distance from reality a relief. My high spirits were much added to by darling K. ringing to say he'd got the Channel 4 logo. Although not very interesting from a creative point of view, - tho' technically interesting to him – it is a great feather in his cap, and it will impress the outside world and give him clout and identity to the idiots who need it. It will, I hope, be very profitable, too. Have I noted that the last man made £40,000 a year for the last 40 years?

And there was also a letter from S. His timetable was a bit out – his silence is because he's rehearsing The Alchemist for The National – Face. He's finding the study difficult, well, that's a combination of Jonson's massively concentrated images and constructions and his not having done any theatre for eight years. However big the part on film or T.V., you seldom have to hold on to more than three or four minutes at a time and usually there are so many takes you hardly need to learn it. Staying in Edgbaston! Finds Tim Pigott-Smith full of respectable virtues, 'Why am I falling asleep writing about him?' I found him an arse-licking creep. Flatter, flatter oil, oil.

And today he wrote again, having just heard of hospital and sent me a book. Sweet, in view of his card. It's about James Whale, and oh dear – in the first person.

And also today bought two more detective stories and a life of Cary Grant. Now as a rule film stars lives are gossipy rubbish. But, as I admire C.G. very much and I saw that the book was written by a fellow of King's. Well, a fellow of K's is no longer what he was but still I hoped it would be decently written and researched. And I think at least the facts are accurate, insofar as I can test them. Some interesting details, but a light weight affair with a good modicum of padding.

Have I said that the famous Upstairs Downstairs is being repeated? Every time I catch a scrap of it by mistake, I rush to switch off. Incredibly poor imitation-genteel stuff in cheap sets. Gordon Jackson grotesque as usual.

Sunday September 8 1996

I have now read about half of the Alexis Soyer book. It has many points of interest but oh dear if only he'd had a strict editor. It suffers from the worst Victorian prolixity, utterly unnecessary conversation quoted in unlikely detail, useless discussions on the countryside etc. etc. The interest in the book would take up only a quarter, if that, of its present length.

A slight attack of diarrhoea - I always have to look that up – only two or was it three goes. I wonder if it's anything to do with the drugs stopping.

'Friends' keeps up a high standard. Phoebe asked to sing to a primary class, '

'Your mum and your dad think she moved to Peru,
The truth is she died and one day you will too'

Monday September 9 1996

A nightmare, first for some time. In an old house, Miriam Mylne's in Cheltenham? Edith Evans something to do with it – dark shadows coming into room, four? five? Figures. 4 horsemen? Rushed out screaming to call Donald! to find him sitting up playing game with children? in the tamest way. I, received very coolly left in a huff. Back in the room examined a lot of silver jewellery.

Wonder if I actually shouted, as it seemed to go on some time.

Tuesday September 10 1996

Felt I couldn't face pulling the flat and myself together for Andrew J. tomorrow. Left a message on his machine, to find him ringing me to cry off because of overtime. His tailoring course starts next week, so we'll see. Still have to keep my leg up.

R. rang quite loving, but can't come up because he's having his mother to stay – again. Well, it's his life.

Wednesday September 11 1996

Really, when you look at the Muslims and Serbs, not to mention the Uhutus and the Tutus or whatever they are, not believing in anything very much, does seem rather desirable.

Strange situation at the National. V. Redgrave has been off for a couple of pers., – understudy on, - - third perf. V.R. had to cry off at 5.45, and Paul Sco. and Richard Eyre cancelled the perf. I find it difficult to believe in such unprofessional behaviour from all I've heard of them. What must the poor understudy be feeling? In an excellent article, someone said a friend had seen her, and 'She was not Vanessa but thoroughly adequate'. But no amount of unprofessional behaviour would surprise me nowadays. Most of the stage discipline I was brought up in has vanished. But Paul Sco. – now that does surprise me.

Thursday September 12 1996

Co-pilot of jumbo jet announced to the two hundred or so passengers at thirty three thousand feet, 'I'm afraid of heights'.

Went to Earl's Court Waterstone's and bought some detective stories, Val McDermid, after reading one good one and another Elizabeth Ironside. Almost identical kerfuffle as the first time, the silly little fat queen unable to find the invoice pad. After a prolonged panicky search, it was found by a sharp little American girl, in the very drawer where he's said it should be and he and another man hadn't found it...

K. rang at last at 8.10, just as I was dishing up – I expect he can't believe I still... and he was just going out, so all he had time to say was that everything was quite mad, and he'd ring tomorrow.

Friday September 13 1996

Most interesting, nettle-rash up both inside arms from about three o'clock till it went completely about six. I suppose it has something to do with the anti-biotics, which apparently put your immune system on hold, so that nettle-rash, tickles etc., to which I have a certain susceptibility, can come through. My lip, where I have caught the same place with my right canine, also swelled up quite big, for the same period of time.

K didn't ring and as things are now, I was glad. I'm still concentrating on my leg.

Saturday September 14 1996

In the p.m. to Notting Hill to the Waterstone's there, where I did get James Lees-Milne's Fourteen Friends, a new Reginald Hill and another Frost.

The nettle rash and swollen lip came on again, so I went on an impulse to consult the 'pharmacist'. He looked at the bumps and gave me an antihistamine hay fever remedy. I was so amused by the instructions. It included a column headed 'side effects'. A separate paragraph dealt with the possible effect on the sacred act of driving. But then went on to side effects, which seemed to me, much more full in the face effects, if you got any of them, you must consult your pharm. or doctor at once ... They are fits, fainting and/or palpitations, unexpected swelling, tight chest or wheezing, stomach upset, headache, dizziness, disturbed sleep, hair loss, rash/sunlight sensitivity, depression or confusion, jaundice, liver problems, aches, pains, pins and needles, sweating, trembling, sight disturbance'. Who would dare to take them?

Sunday September 15 1996

Quite forgot to say that Neil rang yesterday. We got up to date, and happily he can't come round because he's off to L.A. or Turkey or Turkey or L.A. any minute, and back and forth and sideways till November. And dear Tim rang, asking me for tomorrow but I couldn't face it. He was going to an interview for a two hour film of The Odyssey, Italian director at some hotel. I fear it will be a piece of disguised soft porn at that level. The period is so useful for getting both sexes more or less naked throughout. He also has a tour of Twelfth Night on tap, Orsino, for – Kate O'Mara. She's got the money together for another four. She certainly is gallant and of the old stuff, not surprising considering her family. What the end result will be of course, God knows. No I don't suppose even he does.

So to today, and a small triumph. Mary L. 'I don't know when you're being serious when you talk about health'. That is such a compliment from someone whom you know all too well when she's being serious about health. Only her own, of course.

Hazel rang and was having one of her tired days. She has not had the results of all her blood tests, liver, heart and so on, and there is nothing organically wrong with her at all, not even the much-desired thyroid. I'm afraid it's just that she doesn't like her life much and can't admit it. She said she felt much better after our talk, with its little injection of metropolitan gossip, you see. Quite a long interlude about Julian Amery's death and how badly he behaved to B. Pym and V. rude to Hilary over the biog. – she left in tears. I wasn't too good on that, as I'd completely forgotten J.AA's place in B. Pym's life, an admirer, I suppose. I must look it up. We both agreed in surprise that he was only 77. I suppose it's because he seems to belong to a distant era, and all the important events in his life were fifty years ago.

Stayed in today and a very little nettle rash, on my thigh this time. Completely forgot to take the remedy – I must try to decide what it's from. Almost certainly the penicillin.

Finished the new Frost – I notice a certain repetition of situation and plot - and the James Lees-Milne slightly disappointing in the sense of proposition displayed, or rather not displayed. I feel he may be just a bit too old at eighty-nine, to hold a whole book like this in his head. Some chapters are markedly better than others – perhaps written in earlier days. But still very readable – I galloped it down. Must write of the ones I met.

Monday September 16 1996

Yes, I met some of them, very briefly and can't remember a word any of them said ... Resby Sitwell was in the cast of Henry IV Pt. II, for the Marlowe Society, when I played Poins, and was quite known as an amateur actor. Perhaps that's why he introduced me to his parents. 'This is my friend, Angus Mackay.' I wasn't just an acquaintance, - I don't think we were ever alone together. He didn't seem of the same type as his uncle and aunt or father, being square, sturdy, rather hearty and bluff and is now, I expect, a stout red-faced very typical country gent. Osbert Lancaster and Harold Nicolson I met at St. Anne's House, when they gave a lunchtime talk, or discussion. H.N. remains with me as a series of cures, nose, cheek, head, body. They were both perfectly polite to a youngster I don't suppose they wanted to meet. In the same year, Gerard couldn't go to Porgy and Bess at the Stoll so the friend, Wayland Hilton-Young kindly took me instead. He was small, neat, mild, very intelligent and cultivated, about 30 perhaps. The highlight of the evening for me in that starving year of 1952 was being taken back to his house in the Bayswater Rd, where he lived with his v. pretty smart wife. I didn't meet her till later. He took me – was it down? – into a beautifully warm and cosy kitchen, an Aga and a delicious casserole came out of it. I got such a strong and comforting impression of a happy marriage and a well-run house. A woman's touch indeed. I felt very envious, as I was sleeping on Gerard's sofa and not eating much. Four or five years later I had my own marriage and house. Of course my host was Kathleen Kennett's son and the house, Leinster Corner, once lived in by J.M. Barrie, I think.

By lunchtime I had quite a series of nettle-rash bumps on my right thigh only. Later both arms were covered again. I took an anti-histamine pill, for the first time, and the rash had gone by five. But then it went away by itself the day before, tho' perhaps not quite so quickly. A very good illustration of my 'you can never take medicine and not take it'. Tomorrow may tell me something and there's live yoghurt!

Tuesday September 17 996

Dark weather. I did eventually remember to buy some live yoghurt. Tim W. told me that was the thing to 'take' after anti-biotics. Or perhaps it was for nettle-rash... Anyway, it was lovely vanilla and really it's very like cream and I enjoyed it. Certainly the nettle-rash hasn't appeared today, from whatever cause. I haven't taken another pill.

I see Jane Baxter has died at eighty-something. She was the epitome of a typical English ingénue. Not too pretty, tho' very attractive in a Home Counties sort of way, she must have been exact casting in 'George and Margaret' and certainly was in

'While the Sun Shines'. The first time I saw her, I think. She had a very narrow range, and I imagine, was lost outside it. Even in 'The Holly and the Ivy' although perfectly suited to the part in looks, voice and personality, it took her into emotional territory she wasn't really in command of. When Celia J. played it in the film, we were in another dimension altogether. So I was not impressed by her Viola and was relieved to miss her Mrs Alring. Funny little memories stirred by seeing that she was married to Clive Dunfee for a year or two, before seeing him killed at Brooklands. Jack D. was part of our lives for a few years, as one half of Linnit and Dunfee. Didn't he go in for motor-racing? Yes, he did, all Savile Row suits and glamorous women, a remarkably clichéd stereotype.

Wednesday September 18 1996

Two notices of The Alchemist in the Indep. and the Telegraph. The usual thing, one said 'wholly enjoyable' the other 'leaden production'. But both gave S. the notice. He has of course to assume a lot of disguises and accents and this he can not only do brilliantly, and hasn't done it quite like this before, but the speed of the part and various accents may stop him going over the top. I think his spirits will be raised by the critics echoing his judgment of Josie L and Tim P.S.

Rang Mary L. and in the interest of S's notices, exposed my interest in them in way that I have learnt not to do. Like one of those spiders who grab anything that comes too near their trap-door, she struck at once. I mentioned the various accents 'That'll stop him doing that silly little precise voice that really gets under my tits.' Later she was telling me that John Warner was in the Dream that the RSC are touring around and then to Hong Kong and Australia. I said idly that they'll probably have difficulty getting people to do long jobs like that, as they had enough difficulty getting people to go for a half-season at Stratford. Ooh, that did make her cross. As she never talks to any actors but understudies, except for me, and they just take work – a trip to H.K. etc would be marvellous, never mind the part. 'She said v. sharply, 'You're so completely wrong, we won't talk about it any more'

Poor woman, she'll find that more and more subjects will be removed from my talks with her. Already I deprive her, most of the time, of her favourite effect, disconcerting people. Her remarks reminded me of her absurdities of years ago when D. had been above the title in the West End for about fifteen years, suggesting that D. wrote in for an audition at the Open Air 'because they were doing...' etc. I don't think I have ever met anyone who laid down the law with such venom and so little information or knowledge. No wonder she is so isolated.

A child asked who Guy Fawkes was, said he 'blew up Parliament with a lot of gunpowder and plot.'

Thursday September 19 1996

Someone rang up from the Labour Party to ask me how I was going to vote. I said I always voted Labour and would this time. I say that to all canvassers. That I'll vote for them, I mean. Did I record that someone rang up to see if I wanted sky television.

'No.' 'May I ask why?' 'Because Rupert Murdoch is a very bad man.' I would have preferred that wicked had risen to my lips. The young man was Scots. I wonder if that was calculated.

Went over to Notting Hill to go to a film for the first time since my leg. A notice on the door that the 1.30 perf. had been cancelled owing to technical difficulties. That is, the Coronet's aged projections-machines had broken down again. The equally aged manager, perhaps owner, was by the box-office and broke it to me that they weren't ready for the five pef. either. I'm still nervous of having to stand for perhaps an unspecified time, so just went and shopped and came home. A comedown after a month. As it was I had to stand on the tube, both times, and both lines. Painful. 'Give this seat to ...'

Friday September 20 1996

Rang Derrick M. and had the usual long gossip talk, during which he told me that his legs were bad, intermittent claudication of the arteries in the legs. Smoking of course, like Noel and to a certain extent D. He told me of his last visit to his obviously unsatisfactory G.P. (I must record here however, that Derrick has a gift for putting people off, similar, though in different mode, from Mary L.) I might discount, therefore, the nasty receptionist etc. but this can't be discounted. His doctor said, after a chat, that he felt it might be helpful for him to see 'Dominic Fox, who could talk you about any difficulties.' 'He's not a social worker, is he?' said Derrick venomously. So the Dr. gave him a note to take the receptionist to arrange a meeting. She sneered and said 'Dominic Fox left six weeks ago.' Agreed to help, ask S. etc. as Derrick says he must go private.

Still no word from K. He must be swamped. A combination, I wonder, of a flood of other work on top of the C4 thing, and Arlette. A demanding combination. Still, I do rather long to talk to him.

Saturday September 21 1996

In the p.m. to the Ken. High Street Waterstone's. I couldn't stand the panic my account card seems to cause in the Earl's Court branch. All the trains came at once, with empty seats and in the shop I found another Val Mcedermid, the new Muriel Spark, the Alec G. diaries, and a new novel whose name I have already forgotten. Read the A.G. in one gulp. Very funny in spots, puzzling in others. For instance I was rather amazed that he thought the film Carrington excellent. One clip was enough for me, with its crudity and falseness. Maggie Smith in Three Tall Women got unstinting praise. Well I suppose he couldn't say anything very critical and of course she can be superb. But myself, I've never seen her superb all through, never a perf. without strokes of sometimes astonishing vulgarity. I thought her Jean Brodie pretty awful, very poor accent and the painfully studied over-acting that grates on me so badly. Then his choice of friends... Alan Bennett is right on the mark, from what I know of both of them and Alan has always, I'm sure, been good with older people. But John Quentin? Real name, it seems, Quentin, Stevenson and he has a large collection of 20th century art in his Kensington flat, neither of these facts did I know.

I wrote about him a few months ago, when we met by chance in the Earl's Court Rd. A very typical middle-aged homosexual, a poorish actor and a rather third-rate sort of person, to me. But was really amazed to see the names Mark Kingston and his wife, Marigold. I worked with both in the 50's. Mark, Albert F and I shared a d-room for some months at Birmingham in 56. Pleasant enough, rather a trimmer, rather venal, not intelligent or cultivated, a very typical absolutely middle of the road actor. Marigold was a rather glamorous, feather-headed to an unusual degree, perfectly actress of the same sort. One or two others. Odd one has to remember that A.G. has a complicated inferiority complex, and I bet thinks he's ill or even un-educated.

I wonder how many hours I've sat in this room, listening every now and again to the silence. Except for the newspaper seller and so on, I haven't talked to anyone face to face since he left me at the hospital. Really one might be at the cottage.

Sunday September 22 1996

Hazel rang as usual. Has been in some distress as the new kitten bolted at first sound of car. Tried to be sympathetic. Told her about the Alec G. diary and the unexpected friends. She said 'I expect they're all Catholics.' How foolish of me not to think of that. To a Catholic convert, I suppose no other Catholic can be third-rate.

Rang Derrick Marr for long gossipy talk. He's not well, can hardly walk, 'intermittent claudication of the arteries.' He used to be a heavy smoker. Noel had it badly and D. was starting it, same cause. He is badly disillusioned with the NHS and I'm not surprised. His doctor sounds pretty off hand, tho' I have had previously to allow for Derrick's very sharp tongue and aggressive manner. Still this time there was a quite independent cause for complaint. After a talk and a prescription, the doctor suggested he talk to someone attached to the practice, who makes domiciliary visits. 'Not a social worker?' 'No. He links various aspects etc. etc. His name's Dominic Fox. Give this note to the receptionist.' So down he went, gave the note to the obligatory foul-tempered receptionist. She said with a sneer, 'I can't make an appointment with someone who doesn't exist. Dominic Fox left six weeks ago.'

So now we've got to find him a private doctor. S? Hazel suggested ringing the Nuffield Hospital in Bryanston Sq. and asking for suggestions. I've never thought of such a thing, but she seemed perfectly certain, so I told Derrick. It's nice and near anyway.

A programme about miracles as usual concentrated on the cures – all of them were quite without logical, or any other sort of respectable proof - and not the hundreds of thousands of false hopes that are so cruelly raised every day. Really I think muddled thinking is one of the greatest sins.

John Mills was the subject of The South Bank Show. Yes, I see, he is false all through, so he's sort of sincere. No wonder I've never been acceptable to most actors, because I am not emotionally incontinent.

Oh, and my sex life, such as it is, has revived to its usual form, a wank most days. Today it took two minutes. 'Not bad for seventy.' Might be Mildred Faraday.

I forgot a paranoid theatre dream this a.m. I wanted to pee – this in real life – but couldn't be bothered to get up. Dozed off over the paper and dreamt that I was hated by the whole company and flooded the prop room, 'where we were holding the dance tonight', said a female S.M. with venom. The only interest is that I've never been 'paranoid' or persecuted or imagined everyone hated me. Perhaps it was all the full bladder.

Monday September 23 1996

Told Mary L. about D Marr and Hazel and the Nuffield. 'It's closing'.

Thought I was going out but didn't.

What a lot of unexpected callers I'm getting. John Warner rang to get Mary L's number because he can't get the seats for his Dream after all. I was amused that he hadn't the number. She implies that they're in touch. How odd people are. He was warm and said nothing untoward.

Tuesday September 24 1996

Dorothy Lamour has died. I expect she was a sensible humourous woman, as she used her small gifts to respectable advantage. From one of the obituaries, 'In one of her south seas films, she saved the life of an aviator, Roy Milland. In return he taught her English. 'What is this word kiss?'

So they've found a huge pile of IRA explosives and guns. One house raided in Averill St, where that girl friend of Peter Hutch lived before she went to Hollywood. Another in Glenthorne Rd. behind King St., where they shot dead one of the five arrested. When I went to the shops today, there was a sign up in King St., Glenthorne Rd closed. The one who was shot, Dermot O'Neil, lived at 77 St D. Rd from birth till his parents retired a few years ago. Went to the London Oratory School, until now its most famous old boy was actor Simon Callow! Worked in a bank at Shepherd's Bush and embezzled £34000 for the IRA, went to prison for a bit, and back to the IRA. It's an odd thought that he must have passed my house at least twice a day on his way to and from school. I almost certainly must have seen him, poor silly boy, red hair and all. A red-haired well-education Irishman good heavens. A caricature.

Wednesday September 25 1996

I thought I might go out but again I didn't. I'm not tired, exactly, but I suppose still getting over my leg and all those nasty drugs. It's still bright red, but very little swollen and only tender if you really press. And still peeling which is a good sign. It's an interesting time, as if I were at the cottage. I seem to be getting more and more attached to being alone and quiet, to read and write and watch TV. I have no money worries, due to darling K. and books from dear S. That contributes to security. I've

read half of *The Story of the Night* by Colin Toibin. Not ill-written, but it is really only a short story or two.

An artist's death is a diminution for the time being, of the world's power of seeing itself.

C.E. Montague on Rejane's death.

Thursday Sept 26 1996

K. rang at last at 9.0. Just as I thought, the C4 people are playing up. They cancelled it all yesterday and crawled back again today. Oh how sick I am of 'authority' sic, feeling they have to show power and make suggestions when they don't know what they're talking about. At least Binkie and Codron knew what they knew and did not go outside that knowledge. New deadline a week Friday and then he must go a bit wild, so after that. Two friends of Arlette rang up. Just arrived, came and stayed. One was gay and went to Heaven. Oh so good to hear him, it makes me feel stronger.

Friday September 27 1996

Suddenly saw in *Books Etc.* at H'smith the letters of N. Mitford and E. Waugh, ed. Charlotte Mosley. I looked carefully to see how much was original and forty percent of EW's and sixty percent of NM's are previously unpublished. I went straight to Waterstone's in Ken. High St and bought them and Frost at Christmas. A good day altogether, as I put on some proper shoes for the first time. I probably could have done before, but I did not want to risk going out and finding the foot had swollen round the tightness as it were. No more old sock with its elastic cut, so I feel more civilized. And thus armoured I went to a film at last. The new Eric Rohmer, *A Summer's Tale* at the Renoir? I notice a worrying tendency in the art cinemas to show more nearly mainstream films now and then, profitable, no doubt, but worrying. I loved the film, as usual. Full of truth and half-shades. So amusing that the younger critics find them slow and boring. I daresay they are faithful tape-recordings of their own affairs which of course they don't recognise. No one can be slower than a young man or woman telling.

Piled into the letters and just galloped them. Very funny comments on 'Reed's' notice on the *New Statesman* of Pursuit. E.W. much irritated, 'plainly by a homosexual. Perhaps Lesbian?' Henry, of course. N.M. pitying A. Powell because of Violet. Well, I did wonder...

A footnote, quoting one of Anne Fleming's letters, says that E.W. reduced the Pre. of the Royal Society of Arts to tears and a forced exit, attacking him for some hours and calling him Gilbert Harding.

Saturday September 28 1996

Letters full of delights and against the trend of modern books, plenty of blank pages at the end to note them.

More than halfway through. The usual pleasures of seeing how time winnows out the chaff. The Snow-Leavis tussles now look like a silly little game-show between nonentities. Snow was a vulgarian whose novels are now completely forgotten – are they in print? – and that Leavis should violently attack Snow, simply shows what one already knows, that poor Leavis had a narrow mind consumed by persecution mania. Wet, windy and chilly. I wonder how long it will take for Arlette to believe the English climate.

John N. rang at five-thirty so I registered Derrick M's need for a doctor. Sally D. is in London, doing hair, clothes, teeth etc.

Sunday September 29 1996

I imagine Leavis thinking it worth attacking 'violently' such a poor quality target as Snow. A clear indication of his poor judgment.

I have never understood why everyone gets the pension. Of course it is contributory and therefore everyone is entitled to it. But surely it would be better to discriminate and give it to those who need it, and not to those that don't. What is the objection to means-testing? After all, what is an income-tax return?

Monday September 30 1996

Mary L. sometimes disgusts me by her insensitive jeering and lack of imagination. I said I was sorry for Arlete's mother, widowed before A's birth and now alone, with her only child abroad. 'Oh, I can't be bothered to sympathise with a parent over children leaving home.' Not quite the point. The more I talk to her, the less I'm surprised that she has so few friends and never got on in the business.

Tuesday October 1 1996

At last wore a pair of shoes, and got to Austin Reed's to get my hair cut. Such a relief as it was the longest it's ever been. How do people bear the tickling? I can see that life is closing in. Did nothing else, just came home. Took down the Pursuit of Love and Love in a C.C. Read the first in one gulp sitting up in bed. As funny and light and touching as ever. 'Oh but, dulling', said my mother, 'one always thinks that, every every time.' That repetition touched a romantic nerve in all of us in 1946. Her novels went with the 'Edwardian' suits that we started to wear – mine is in the V&A - and what we hoped was the return of 'elegance' and 'style', after the dreariness of the war and rationing and that awful winter. Love in CC has good bits, but it's thinner and her lack of craft is more apparent.

'The Loved One' which I read next is another matter all together. The perfection of form, the material fitting exactly the length, and of course the writing, are as satisfyingly brilliant as ever. Not to mention one of the funniest books ever written. It always interests me that the quality of the writing is the preservative of a great book.

Rang Derrick M. to report progress about a doctor. Not much, really. I can only hope John N. and S can come up with something.

Sharron rang. She is after all moving this Friday. A friend has offered a room in her flat, where there is already another lodger and it's on the Archway Road. However, that's all the bad news. The friend's father owns the block it's full of mod-cons and the friend is welcoming. She said the name as if I'd know it but I don't. I said was she feeling a bit better. 'I've had to get everything together, most of my stuff's in the studio. I've had to feel better.' Precisely. I hope the poor dear girl will have better luck now she's made a better effort.

The Archway Rd. – well. Just opposite the Highgate tube-station, she said. Can it be? That dreary row of shops I went to with Mummy during the war. I hope it's at the back and I hope it's been cleaned up a bit. I might go up and have a look.

Wednesday October 2 1996

The nettle-rash has still not quite relinquished its hold and I still can't be sure that the tablets I have taken have really had any effect. Today I had three or four spots on my left arm only, I took my pill, and the spots had gone by seven, but that's when they go anyway. I'd thought perhaps it was the laundry, but then it would be on both arms, not to mention all over. I can't narrow it down to anything external. I'm sure it's the lingering effect of those ridiculous anti-biotics.

That stupid venal girl? Mandy something, has, of course, lost all eight babies. I wouldn't like to look ahead at her life, especially after her saying she'd do 'exactly the same thing again'....

Thursday October 3 1996

Endless anxiety dream again, combining B'mouth and theatre. Took a lamb! to a meeting in Archway (Daddy's central hall, not Sharron.) and had to look for it endlessly. Then the lead in some demotic play, - oh, the accent and the script a random selection of different sized pieces of paper, very inadequately held together. D. was supposed to be arriving, but never did. Tiresome.

Again I expect the tension is wanting to pee.

Oh, the things I can't watch on the news, politics, sport, accidents, disasters, - the news, really, but I did watch a woman from the Snowdrop Group, formed in the wake of Dunblane. I am sure it will be described as 'emotional'. Well, describing the deaths of sixteen children and a teacher, might be expected to rouse emotions, tho'

not, I suppose, in the heart of someone interested in guns. In fact, it was a dispassionate factual statement. She asked for a complete ban on hand-guns. Only someone unhealthy somewhere would resist a ban on guns only made to kill. Firing at a target is still fulfilling an instinct to kill – to finish. A Knightsbridge Court has not taken away the license of a gun dealer in St Johns Wood, despite them finding a revolver in the pocket of a combat jacket on a hook, other nastinesses, not to mention him saying aloud that Dunblane had done great harm to his business and many like him '75% down'. Need I say more? I hope not.

One of my little comforts is thinking of all those awful things I'll never do, or have to do. Years ago, it was an active pleasure to me to think I would never have to play rigger again. I hope I'll never have to travel anywhere, unless it's on the tube. Sea, air, ugh. I can often feel warm with negativity.

Friday October 4 1996

The multi-murderers West, have already disgustingly become a cult. So I am pleased, if that's the word, that Gloucester Council are pulling the Cromwell Rd. house down and not only pulling it down, but grinding the bricks into dust, burning the wood to ash, and melting down everything else, so that souvenir-hunting will be completely prevented. Oh, English understatement. How odd it must seem to Americans and how valuable it is. A ginger-bearded neighbour, about thirty-something said how glad he was it was being pulled down. 'You keep thinking those poor girls. (there were nine of them.) Not very nice, is it?'

I've copied out for pleasure, one of my favourite bits of Uncle Matthew from the Pursuit of Love. Unwisely, they took him to Romeo and Juliet. He came out, grinding his teeth and in floods, 'All the fault of that damned padre. That fella, what's his name, Romeo, might have known a blasted papist would mess up the whole thing. Silly old fool of a nurse, too. I bet she was an R.C., dismal old bitch.'

Saturday October 5 1996

Saw a face of a young man with black hair heavy brows, thought it reminded me of someone. No wonder, his is Alex Garland and he's Nicholas Garland's son. We saw a lot of Nick when he was assistant director of Cheltenham, when it first opened as The Everyman. He was, I expect still is, intelligent, charming, funny, wayward and gifted. He loved and admired D. and I feel affectionate towards him for that. Old age is strange. I haven't seen him since he was his son's age ... and there's this great strong boy who's written a novel The Beach. Wonder if it's any good. N. very successful cartoonist – wasn't he on the Telegraph? Well, he thought he was very radical in 1960. I remember especially an exchange between him and D. walking away from the theatre, after one of the emptiest houses we'd ever play to. The director, Peter Powell was weak and indecisive and Nick was quite rightly angry. Raging along the road, he said 'If I had this theatre, I'd wake this audience up. I'd do' - and he hurled seven or eight Royal Court failures into the Cheltenham evening air, 'I'd wake this audience up.' There was a pause. D. said, 'What audience?' She and Julian were at the height of their SD fame at the time. They wrote W. Dreams for

Chelt. On the Tuesday night someone had to scribble a House Full board. This continued for the whole week. One of the complaints had been – not by us – of poor publicity. Not the answer. They knew where the theatre was when they wanted to come.

Sunday October 6 1996

Mary L. is a funny mick. Astrology came up. I told her about Derrick Marr and John Nick, which I knew I'd told her before. She didn't remember so I told about D. and White Liars, or rather just referred to Peter Wood and Binkie believing in it. She said, with tremendous sharp irritation, 'Yes, yes, yes, we don't want to go over all that again.' Really, it reminds me of Sir George Sitwell, I wonder what others think of such incredible rudeness. Then she said she'd been looking through her books and would I like a copy of Tess 'which D. gave me in Minehead and wrote a verse in.' Yes, I would.

S's Karen rang to say, S. would be in H'smith on Wed. morning, so could he have lunch here? I suddenly realised it was his first night. Flattered. Extraordinary, however the only place D. and I went on a first night was the loo.

Oh, yesterday bought a couple of new detective stories, and Ned Sherrin's diary. Covering the cast and rehearsal of SD, at least the tour. I've never quite trusted Ned Sherrin, and this diary does not convert me. His attitude to 'anecdotes' is a very contrived one, as this diary underlines. He ingratiates himself with one, in a way too shallow and venal for me. He reminds me yet again why I didn't really chime with the ordinary body of actors. He quotes Stephanie Cole, with great admiration, saying of an old actor who was irritating her, 'Bless his heart.' Ugh. I've never been able to talk in clichés, and that has been a hindrance. I suppose that's why S. is thought by some to be 'insincere' or 'pretentious'. Interested that N.S. writes openly of his rented sex. I thought him more cautious. One of the thrillers is called Poet in the Gutter. Hm.

Monday October 7 1996

Tuesday October 8 1996

K. rang last night, no Sunday night. 'It's over.' So we went out to the Chiswick last night, just the two of us. Arlete decided to spend the evening with her gay friend, as he's going back soon. I was glad to be able to get properly up to date and poor Arlete must have had enough of the C.4 logo. How easy he makes everything. I was just worrying about a traffic jam and exactly when to order a mini, as he was arriving at 7.30 the table was 8.0 and the Chiswick really don't keep tables. He rang to say he was five mins away in a taxi and would pick me up. Oh it was so lovely to see him after all this time. He was shocked to learn it was six weeks. It led him to tell me how lost he's been in the wretched thing. For instance, the TV has been down in the studio all the time as they needed an extra screen and the little pink radio has been in the bedroom with Arlete. 'What does she listen to?' 'Dance music, always dance music, there's that boom boom boom, it's like living with a teenager. No....' (Oh what love and age can do. I can just imagine what the Kevin of ten or fifteen years

ago would have said. And done...) So he's not seen the news, or heard it, for all these months. And all for five seconds of television.

What a sorry story unfolded! Very usual but sorry all the same. It can all be traced back to a creature called Ceri Richards, paranoia and money. Ceri Richards appeared to them first in the guise of an underling and was later revealed to be in charge. He looked rather like Andrew Lloyd Webber. 'Well, that should have warned you.' I can't chart every stage of the thing, because I don't understand it well enough. Just a few vignettes. The designers were with him throughout until they resigned because of Keri Evans. Bit by bit, he ate away at everyone's 'creativity'. 'It must be humanistic.' He means of course, naturalistic, and would no doubt be surprised to learn that he was recommending Greek and Roman studies and antiquities, among other things. Someone who K. thinks may be a spin doctor, brought into to burst all apart. 'What he's done is forty natural shots of someone knitting or whatever, twenty of which will be accompanied with K's sound design and twenty with 'natural' sounds. So why engage K in the first place?

At one point, he wanted to withdraw from the whole thing, as he was no longer in control and it was being watered down with the interference. Simon his partner, and Claire, were so appalled at the possible loss of the money, that he walked out on them, - 'they, as it were, turned me out of my own house, Claire was in tears as she's just got an office and started her agency.' I would like to have heard the dialogue between them when he was out. They both must know it was he who got the contract and him being prepared to drop it, will of course add to his domination of both of them. But oh dear I'm afraid it's opened his eyes to their qualities, or lack of them, and he will not feel the same towards either of them. I think the foolishness and lack of proportion are mostly shown in this. He'd put four silences in the gate, whatever that might be, a section of the five second sequence, I suppose, which silences the designers before they walked out, thought wonderful. Ceri demanded that they be filled, no doubt with humanism. Under the terms of K's contract, they are paying him not to have the silences, a buy-out of £18,000.

We talked briefly of Sharron. He'd thought he told me but he hadn't. Arlete and Sharron have met! It seems A. and he went to the White Horse, near Music House 'where I've often gone on a Friday night, nearest thing to my local, so it was rather silly of Sharron to go there, I mean, I wouldn't go to the pub on the corner by her studio. She may have seen Arlete and me coming along and having a cuddle or whatever. They met, Arlete was what you'd expect and kept out of it. I told Sharron about you in hospital and all seemed all right. A bit later on she came out to me and said something like 'I thought you knew how to treat a friend', quite unpleasantly. Three days later she wrote to apologise and asked me to lend her some money.' Oh dear.

We had squab, but it was roasted and delicious, but had to be bitten off the bone. He only had that and some pots. specially ordered of course. I expect he's not been eating all that much lately and the less you eat, the less you eat. I must remember that.

Today, Tuesday, S's Karen rang, to say she was biking a letter over; he's lost his voice and has to be silent till tomorrow night. How sad. Even if his voice is brought

back by some means, even tho' Punt is dead, that abandon and rapture that such a protean part should be thrown off with, won't be there. Another evidence of his eight years off, - it's that long since he spoke in a large space. I had a great day today, knowing I've got a few things to do tomorrow.

Wednesday October 9 1996

I don't know whether I was just having an off-day, perhaps I am getting to the stage of 'one of my good days'. Here is what I did and had to do. I went to H'smith to the Halifax to draw out £100 to pay the TV licence and pay in a £20 cheque for Dr Who, bought two sandwich packs at Pret a Manger, chicken and smoked ham, and egg and cress, to the Post office to get my pension and pay the TV licence, I had to queue in both places, walked back to the tube and ate the chicken sandwich on the last seat up the end at H'smith – people look rather askance at someone my age taking part in the universal habit of eating in the street – tubed to Waterloo, I was much struck by how long it must be since I was round there. The way up to the platform was different, and a great new glass roof shedding a bleak light on that old familiar station. A pee was still 10p. To the National. On the way found, as usual, various changes that always make the walk longer. You can no longer walk through the Shell building garden, for instance. It seemed a long way past the NFT to the National stage door, stage door, indeed, it's just the reception desk for an office block. I left S's book, did I say, Ben J's talks with Drummond of Hawthornden, quite a nice old edition from the 20's. When I came out and walked along the embankment, I felt really tired and when I'd climbed the double flight to W'loo Bridge, I felt a bit faint, a lot dizzy, but what I've felt years ago after a thirty-mile walk or twelve hours gardening. I couldn't have walked to Janet's and took a very rare taxi.

Her new office is charming, on the ground floor of a Georgian house in Whitcomb Street. The Leicester Sq. end. Door opens straight off street, white walls, grey carpet, smart, business-like. There was a neat man about sixty sitting at a side table, 'assisting' Janet by sending out signed pictures of Greta Schachi. Felt chatty as I've only talked to K in the last six weeks. Told him a few stories which he liked. Later Janet rang to tell me she was so grateful I'd come in and chatted. He'd just been very stropky. He's very pernicky and was getting at her for the way she'd hung her pictures, really quite trying. I finished my day with Tesco's at H'smith. Well, I must be careful in future.

Saw Claire Bloom interviewed. Oh dear, she is such a humourless chump. And she can't speak Shakespeare for nuts. K. Tynan raved, but then his ear for such stuff was his weakest point.

Thursday October 10 1996

In that Australian TV thing, Home and Away, they had a dear little earthquake today. I could just see the second assistant shaking the flat and someone dropping a few bits of wood and a pebble or two from the crane. If they have such a thing in that studio.

I forgot to say that K. told me Arlete 'was missing her studies'. Very characteristically, he suggested, rather two days with Patrick Moore at £5000 a day, than two years at a polytechnic. She doesn't seem to be cold yet, and the shop has asked her to go full time....

Friday October 11 1996

I saw on the news something I have liked the thought of and proposed as a traffic solution for years – an armchair with a little engine in the seat. The young man says he'll now convert the rest of his three piece suite.

Saturday October 12 1996

Rang Hazel because Janet is coming round tomorrow, and found her in bed. It's a bad tummy upset this time, but I don't like it much combined with the odd exhaustion that keeps coming over her.

A young actor, Mark Frankel, who S made me go and see, has been killed aged 31 on a motor-bike. Wife and child. M-bikes should be banned. Their only purpose is emotional. Their actual practicality can be exactly served by motor-scooters.

Sunday October 13 1996

Janet came round at six to return the Alex G. diaries and we had a drink and a jolly chat. Her humour and friendship are a great pleasure. I wish I could have kept her for dinner but I hadn't the food or energy. Made a note earlier today for this entry, and I can't tell what it was about. 'Both back against the wall because of instant gratification'. Sounds fun, whatever it is.

Poorish notices for 'Alchemist' but good for S. 'One, the best kind, deals fairly harshly with everything and body and then starts the last para But above all, S.C. ...' Good. It means his return to acting on stage will be a success, for later ventures.

Lavish party for the tenth year of Phantom of the Opera. Funny little Cameron in his kilt, Andrew L.W. in his ugliness, warm embrace. Better two unhappy than four.

Monday October 14 1996

Stayed in, till after dinner, realised I had no whisky. Saw there'd been a recent shower and thought I'd skip between. But as I was passing the hospital, it started and teemed down. I sheltered under the little ledge of the bus shelter for five or ten minutes. It was a perfectly warm night and in just a shirt and sweater, I wasn't cold. But, after I'd decided I must get on, I was wet, as wet as I've been for years. My shirt was soaked. The last three hundred yards was diversified by as strong a need to shit as I've ever felt. I shat in my clothes with relief and pleasure.

Tuesday October 15 1996

Bought the Francis Bacon biog. the other day, did I say? In many ways he was as unpleasant as his paintings. Not that I am in any way a Judge of them. His life was maimed in many ways. I am not so inclined to listen to the thoughts of a maimed mind and spirit as many people seem to be. So much of his life and thought is, to me, so painfully negative.

Oh, dear S. rang on Thursday during the show, to thank me for the book and to say he'd got through all right.

What a giveaway it is to read between the lines in America. During a programme about Steve McQueen it was revealed that he wanted a part because, being a suave polished 'aristocratic' (sic) part, it represented a step forward in his career. But those parts were always offered to suave polished rock Hudson or aristocratic Paul Newman. They're all the same oiks to me.

Now that I have the Telegraph, which has the old Births and Deaths page, I ought to look at the deaths. And lo, the first time I looked, the first name was Peter Aldersley. He was my first director in weekly rep. He was rude, incompetent and had bad breath. Later President of the Elvis Presley Club.

Wednesday October 16 1996

The gun debate in the House of Commons. To my surprise, they propose to ban all hand guns, except 22 which are twenty percent of the total held legally. Fifty-seven thousand people own a hundred and fifty thousand guns. To my amazement they propose, in future, anyone wanting a gun-licence must produce two references. In future... How many references have I signed for jobs and passports and in future... the people who like guns are incapable of catching the feelings of the rest of us that guns, especially hand-guns, are deeply repellent in themselves, so that any measure which gets rid of any gun, has our support. 'Anyone who wants a gun, is unfit to have one.' Still, it's a start, tho' this wretched Govt. only did it because they had to. I was delighted to see beleaguered Gun Club secretaries and gun shop owners coming on with as much reproach as they dared. Wonderful.

Later.

K. rang to say he's off to Portugal tomorrow at 1.0 a.m. with Arlette for a little break. Quite right. Told of TV prog, friends talking of one another. 'You and me, you saying you want me to cut my hair etc. I couldn't do it.' Nor could I. So sweet. Said wistfully.

ANGUS MACKAY DIARY NO. 144

October 16 1996 (cont.)
December 21 1996

Wednesday October 16 1996 (cont.)

'I don't see you for six weeks and now I ask you to feed the cat'. Do you know, he means that with all I owe and go on owing him. He forgets the money, completely. So we had a chat. Arlete's mother's house is quite big, four or five bedrooms, and of course I'd forgotten, her brother and his wife and children live there too. So A's mother will not be 'bereft' and she also seems to have enough money, despite being widowed before Arlete's birth. Of course it is useless to expect social nuances from K. Like most young men, possibly rather more so, he is usually unable to describe or chart a house or a dress, or furniture or pictures. But then so was D.

Thursday October 17 1996

1.30 a.m.

I hope he's safely up in the air – oh, now I hate him flying. But what's the point of that.

Oh, Mary L. I said Beethoven was... She said 'You've called him that so many times I could scream. If you thought of a different composer each time, I might be amused. Sometimes she is harsh and unpleasant, but at other times I think she thinks she's being playful. Bad acting again, you see.

Friday October 18 1996

The Queen launched a big pleasure boat on the Thames, part of a fleet started and owned by a big simple ex-skinhead illiterate who relies on his eleven year old son for most reading and writing. A dear, as far as one can judge by three sentences. I rather liked the presenter in Wellsian style, saying 'A pleasure boat to take people along the Thames well into the next century'. Better than Disneyworld. Which I should think wouldn't be difficult.

Dear S. sent such an excellently optimistic description of a doctor for D. Marr. Wasyl Nimenko, in Devonshire Place. I daresay D.M. will find something wrong with him ... Also a typist for D's letters. Rang him and thought him nice and dry and factual as he should be. To my amazement, it turned out he'd done the Peggy, R. letters for S. – Can't remember the surname. So once again there is a connection. Odd.

To feed Boo for the first time. The house, inside and out, is now immaculate. The stove gleaming white. I love going in as a ghost into his life. Boo odiously superficial as usual. On the way back to Earl's Court Waterstone's, the little fat gay

said 'Oh dear, there's only the two of us'. 'Shall I look for the invoice pad myself before I choose my books?' I bought a couple of detective stories and the Peter Cook book, and the new life of Pinter, authorized up to a point by Michael Billington. Ah well, could be worse, and I daresay H.P. likes his second-rateness, as more easily manipulated. Not that I accuse H.P. of lying. But controlling, I bet.

Saturday October 19 1996

Found myself in Arsenal station as the football crowd started to come down. A little later, I suppose I'd have been directed up that little railed off section of the slope up to the entrance. As it was, I got a tiny taste – tiny, because it was only the avant garde – of how frightening a crowd can be. Many of them were running, as there was still just room to do so without causing an accident. I was struck all over again by the mindlessness and arrogance of a big crowd – even commuters – which expresses itself in an obvious outrage that anyone should be walking the other way. Outside, the usual array of Police and mounted Police and everywhere fenced off with metal barriers, manipulated the crowds into three or four manageable queues, by making them walk three times the distance. When I came back, I saw something I hadn't seen before, three queues at least a hundred yards long for the tube! I sat on a seat and read my book for twenty minutes. One of my absolute hates is standing in any sort of moving queue and will do anything to avoid it.

Oh dear, Mary L. and the past and her tastelessness. She asked how my nettle-rash was and said 'Your wife would say it was caused by incidents in yr. childhood, ideas she got from George Painter.' I dislike anyone putting words into D's mouth, not to mention that Mary is talking about an affair fifty years ago, reported from conversations forty years ago. I never heard D. say anything of the kind.

On my way back from feeding Boo, at about six, saw a Parcel Force van parking on the corner awkwardly, an usual time and place to see such a van. A girl was at the area gate of the Russian Church House, now alas with a Sale Agreed board. They didn't seem quite right. I hope they're not squatters ...

Sunday October 20 1996

Had a bad night, unusual for me and I can never find any reason for it. Eventually dosed off at five-thirty and woke at twelve thirty, so I suppose seven hours, but didn't think I'd really slept, and feel like a wet rag.

Roy rang! Quite bland, as if he hadn't gone off for eight weeks without leaving an address or phone no. Hadn't much news because he's used the M'chester stint as a bit of a break, if being a house husband is a break. He's also teaching at his old drama-school, £25 or £27, I forget, an hour. 'Don't tell me -?' 'Yes creative writing.' What other sort of writing is there?

Then R. rang. He's been very busy. On his ferry in Copenhagen harbor, he's now got two hundred and fifty performers. The acting space is the car deck, with I think he

said, three different shows a day. He has a staff of twenty. Well, it'll be a good item to flourish when he gets back. Affectionate.

Nice to have them both back.

Monday October 21 1996

Another bad night, complicated by a really violent attack of nettle rash at five. And when I say 'violent' I mean both arms and legs and bottom, bright red and covered with corrugated spots. The itching! Little on my chest and back oddly. As I have never had it at this time, I searched for a cause, perhaps easier to find, eight hours after my last meal and just lying in bed. In the med. ency. saw that aspirin is one of the possible allergies. I'd taken three about an hour before, hoping to sleep. I realised that my arms were becoming swollen as well as spotty. (It's funny how quickly you can forget what size yr. arms actually are.) I began to worry in case anything else might swell, legs, throat and I'd run out of antihistamines. So by six a.m. I was shaved and dressed and out. I don't know when that happened last. On the chemist's door at the corner, I thought it would have the nearest all-night chemist, but no, just the nearest if ours was shut. Went back and rang Boots at H'smith to find they opened at eight. Went, finding my travel permit didn't work before nine, and it was only a sympathetic booking-clerk, Indian, of course, who let me off, a £10 fine for not having a valid ticket. Ridiculous. Bought a small bottle of fresh orange juice, as I fancied it, after all the spots and itching which were still going on. Things were better after an hour or two, and I went back to bed, too hot before. Woke at twelve-thirty again, and rang Sharron to put her off again. Apart from all this, I can't go and feed Boo, and have someone to dinner anymore.

Looking up something about the Mitfords after the letters, I'd forgotten Lady R. saying, when told that Nancy had had both ovaries removed, 'both? I thought we had hundreds, like caviar'.

Struggled over to feed Boo. Tubes made hideous by half-term.

Monday October 22 1996

A.N. Wilson reviewing Ned Sherrin's diary was uniformly kind, full of praise, in fact. I suppose a bit of log-rolling is going on as I cannot believe that someone as sharp as he is, cannot see the venal and shallow man in the book. Odd.

The people who rage at English weather always surprise me. I have never wanted to escape the weather that comes day by day. But I have savagely wanted to escape crude manners and voices, hideous rooms, and dreadful art. I don't need to go abroad to do that.

K. rang from Port. sounding a bit guilty about not having given me his cleaner Martina's number, 'in case anything happened'. I don't remember him saying he would, but I was touched that he was still worrying in case it was too much for me. I

was deliberately 'up' and I hope not too cavalier in convincing him how it didn't matter. It's 30 there and he's been in the sea, the dear.

Tuesday October 23 1996

The teachers at a school in Halifax are going to strike, unless sixty children are expelled. It seems they are unteachable and I suppose rampage about in one way or another. There are six hundred pupils altogether, but it's still a striking percentage. By the way, we mustn't say 'expelled', children are now 'excluded'. George Orwell, thou shouldst be living at this hour, euphemism rules. And it's not o.k.

Of course, Halifax is no surprise. Not that I think dreadful school-children are the monopoly of the North. But I have to admit that the first time I went to the North, when the family moved to Doncaster, I was amazed and disgusted at the crude and sometimes non-existent manners, the pathetic insecurity forever asking you how wonderful Yorkshire was, under the guise of telling you, the harsh ugly voices and most of all, the really terrible familiarity. It is certainly a fact that 'fine shades', 'fastidious', 'delicacy of feeling' and so on, were not part of our lives there. Doncaster made my family seem part of a Henry James novel. It wore off when we moved back South.

To my disgust there is to be another lottery every Wednesday. On the news, 'More people gambled on the rollover of £20 million in the lottery, than voted in the last election.'

A quite ordinary young man, Irish, of course, on a holiday progr. can easily include in his telling about his horse-trekking, 'but it's quite beautiful as well'. Imagine a Yorkshire boy saying anything like that. Oh dear, the neuroses of Yorks. Think of Geoffrey Boycott, a quivering perverted mother-ridden maniac.

Wednesday October 24 1996

Oh, dear, the level of ignorance, nowadays. Diana Rigg got an honorary degree from somewhere called the South Bank University of London – is that London? and the reporter said then she returned to her first love, the theatre, and her media ...

Mary L. coming to lunch tomorrow. Bother.

Only funny if a child 'Who was Robin Hood's girl-friend?' 'Betty Smith.' I am amused by child sayings provided I haven't got to be there when they're saying them.

I am being Americanized.

Thursday October 24 1996

Mary L. to lunch. It was 70. I went to the station in a shirt and trousers. Mary came out of the train in a polo-neck sweater under a crew-neck sweater under a cardigan.

Over it a heavy tweed overcoat, and a foot-wide woolen knitted scarf wound twice round her neck and once over her head. When I brought the coffee up, she was sitting on the hearthrug pressed against the fender. At seventy-six as well.

However, that was the only sign of her affectations. She presented me with a copy of Tess that D had bought second-hand, 3/6 and given her. It had an inscription in it.

Mary from Dorothy.

Away away from men and towns
To the wild wood and the downs.
To the silent wilderness
Where the soul need not repress
Its music, lest it should not find
An echo in another's mind.

Ilfracome. 1946.

Well, darling, the middle two lines don't scan, but otherwise touching.

Friday October 25 1996

Went to the new French film at the Renoir. Its title stupidly translated as When The Cat's Away? from the French Chacun Cherche Sou Chat, Everybody looks for her cat, which is exactly what it's about. Slight and charming. And quick. She finds someone to look after her cat while she's on a week's holiday and it's lost while she's away. The holiday is represented by one flash of a shot of her alone in the sea.

K. had rung when I got back, so I growled a message that I don't want to know what he might say. I'm just glad you're alive.

What even he doesn't understand, is that if you have once found the person you love most in the world, dead ...

Saturday October 26 1996

Janet rang to say a friend of Paul Daniel – no 's' – had a musical on tap, indeed, had a contract from a producer and wanted it vetted. K. rang not so long after so I could ask him at once. He suggested Pete Sinfield's music lawyer, Mark Davis, who charges £150 an hour. Alternatively, Rachel Daniels, the agent I met. Especially as he's got a contract – she may sense a client.

Further to possible squatters in the Church House, whoever they were, they certainly didn't know the light-switches, as they have left the light on on the box with the list of services.

Memo: Mary L saying 'and you know French so much more than I do.' Fancy.

I see Mary Tuck is dead. Seems to have had a distinguished career of some sort. We found her rather trivial, not least for having married Robin T. who was really a comic chump, as his appearance should have warned her. No doubt she grew up and changed. Four children, good heavens. They separated, I think, as proof of change.

Sunday October 27 1996

K rang and said we're going to be in yr. area, shall we call round? Yes. At two forty five or so, no-one. Rang again at four thirty, to say that they were in Battersea Park and ... why? There's a really good market. Be with you by five. And they were. Darling Arlete still with a skirt to her crutch, but at least a sweater. Lovely hour and a half. They hadn't eaten and were going to Deal's at H'smith. 'But you can't eat now' he said, and I couldn't. So I sent them off with such love.

Article in the How We Met series, Bernard Ingham called Janet Brown 'extremely clever' twice. If he's thinking of her art, he's overdoing it, and if he's thinking of her brain, he's insane.

When I told Hazel of Mary L. being dictatorial about D's letters – not that she knows of my intentions – she said that Robert Liddell was exactly the same about Barbara, he knew what she wanted, just like Mary, from years before. Mary still quotes D. from the nineteen forties.

Monday October 28 1996

A school has been closed because of one ten-year-old who has been behaving 'disruptively' on television, thus feeding his already considerable vanity. Things are really falling apart.

Sorted D's letters for tomorrow, without reading them. I doubt if I can. Oh, K confirmed 'toke' = joint.

Tuesday October 29 1996

Mr Povey, the man S. recommended to type D's letters, called. Tall, cultivated, quiet, polite, no doubt excellent. Read a bit of a letter to see how difficult her writing was, looked in the case and estimated - £3000. Sad. But good of him to come.

Child remarks. Little boy: Women like a man who's kind, they're attracted like a magnet ... and it happens the other way round.' Little girl, asked 'What is a wedding?' Well, there's a big cake...

Wednesday October 30 1996

S's Karen rang to say she'd got my seat for the Alchem. and would I meet S. in the mezzanine restaurant. Hazel rang to say her cat has been doctored. K. rang while

washing up, to say could I feed the cat on Sat. and Sunday. Probably. There's no doubt I have a glamorous life.

Thursday October 31 1996

Friday November 1 1996

A night of mixed emotions. Not too hot, not too wet. Bought a little packet of cocktail sausage rolls to nibble on the way. I did not have a drink before, as I am tired of wishing the interval to come so that I can pee, as well as wishing it would come. I have to be careful eating on the walk these days, you realise that more breath is needed than you sometimes have. So I had a Waterstone's carrier-bag with three uneaten mini s.r. to get rid of later. Also Muriel Spark's latest Realities and Dreams. I had got £50 out of the Halifax, in case ... And in case happened almost at once. I was ordering a drink in that desert of deserted offices that the National calls a foyer, when Brenda Blethyn said hello. I was quite amazed that she recognised me. It's odd how so many more people recognise me than I remember others. She looked rather soigné – proper hair, little black dress. Success you see, but otherwise just the same, with her nice w-class mum. Mum agreed with everything I said, as an easier option, in case I was upsetting B. And I must have done, as I said what I thought of J. Lawr. – not really an actress - and found out from S. they were closest friends. Well, I don't regret it, it was a sincere opinion and I believe it to be true. I also think B.B. is such a true actress herself, she must sense the emptiness in the middle of J.L.

Oh, dear, the play was very poor. B.B.'s first sentence in the interval, was 'Simon's doing it all on his own, isn't he?' And he was. Happily Jonson's breadth and quick sketches suit S. and his huge vitality and lightning assumption of various disguises and accents endeared him to the audience, especially as some of them were assumed in full view. But oh! the rest of the cast and the production. At a rough computation it made about ten per cent of the effect of the 1947 production. To take two examples, Auanias and Abel Drugger. Peter Copley, in 1947, wore an all-black outfit, with a witch-like hat (what's it called?) and a drawn face grey-white with guilt, shame, pride, censoriousness and repressed sex. He was pursued by continuous laughter and at least twice brought the house down. Someone called Paul Connolly wore a grey coat, or long jerkin, bare feet, a head of curly hair like an Antinous, 'I am playing a funny character in a 1610 play. I shall therefore bend forward from the waist, open my eyes as far as they'll go and keep my mouth in a funny oh!' One Jamie Newall played A.D. 'zanily' – down at heel stockings, a 'grin', tousled hair, and little else besides no timing or comic force. Neither of them had the slightest effect on the audience. In the 1947 cast the actor made one entirely understand why Garrick played A.D. because it was Alec Guinness.

As S. said over dinner, 'It's not just bad rep or amateur, it's school play.' It was lovely to see him. As we hugged, I said 'Oh, let's get the praise over quickly. It's one of the best things you've ever done and you were very good too.' We dissected the whole thing, winced at Tim P.G. 'sending his best love to me' - you see, he is a creep, best love after one meeting in a passage at the Oval rehearsal rooms – agreed about Josie L's emptiness and the rest of the cast. Talked of his recommendations and of course the publisher paid the money for typing Peggy R's letters and when I asked S. how much the doctor charged, he looked a little distraught and said the bills

were sent to his accountant so he didn't know... He also claims to have amoebic dysentery, perhaps incubating since his African childhood. He didn't drink at all, but bought me a bottle of Meursault, delicious stuff, and I drank it all. A chicken dish, breast stuffed with mozzarella and mush., cheese. A perfectly good restaurant, entrees top £11 or £13 not more expensive as in theatre rests. often are, like theatre bars. I wish I saw him more often. He gave me money for a taxi on Waterloo Bridge.

Oh, audiences don't change. As we came out at the interval, a hearty upper-middle class voice said 'Not quite your usual drawing-room comedy.'

Today, Friday got a little more done than usual. To the Halifax in Lower R. St. to draw some money, to the Alliance in Piccadilly to pay the insurance, to the Piccadilly Cinema to 'Boston Kickpoint' to the New Row Waterstone's for books and finally to Tesco Metro and home. Boston Kickpoint an unedifying little affair of four awful teenagers whom we were obviously supposed to find sympathetic. Oh, how I do hope none of them has been given delusions of stardom. I only lasted to the end by dozing off and thinking of missing the rush-hour. As for the books, bought Clive James' new novel, 'The Silver Castle', Pinter's The Hothouse, the new Elizabeth George and a ghastly little book about Noel and Cole P. 'Genius and Lust'.

Saturday November 2 1996

Went to feed Boo. The studio light was on, but nobody there, thank goodness. How we pamper our pets. Each of the dozen tins of cat-food had a different recipe. And K. is not like that – he just buys what's going.

Sweet exchange from new film Brassed Off. Girl: Do you want to come up for a coffee? Boy, looking intently into her eyes: I don't drink coffee. Girl: I haven't got any. Hope to see it on Tuesday.

Sunday November 3 1996

P.C. from Portugal, late, of course, from K. finishing up Arlette is an ever-changing fountain of love in my life and you are a rock of love I could not live without. Why am I so lucky? No, why am I...

I struggle to put up the newspapers in carrier-bags and put them out at the front for the council recycling vans. Humping them down and out brings out in me the spirit of the blitz.

Monday November 4 1996

K rang this p.m. Back safely. Oh youth and love. It was a pretty disastrous weekend, rain all the time, Arlete was sick all night, 'palpitations and I got a doctor to give her a shot in the morning.' 'Palpitations' are just Mediterranean angst, I think. 'We did go to the wedding reception for a couple of hours.' How wonderful to have a really good excuse to leave a w. reception, always a gloomy and gruesome event. All the same, I

bet they remember the whole weekend affectionately. Still very mild. I went both days to feed Boo in a shirt and trousers, no vest even. Is this global warming? And I sweated.

Rang Roy and Marian. Spoke to her, and how we agree. She can't see the point of Billie Whitelaw either.

Tuesday November 5 1996

To new film *Brassed off*. It had very good notices, as a small scale well-acted British film, with a touching feel-good (ugh) factor.

It is quivering with all that delicate feminine sensitive trembling sentimentality that is so essentially Yorkshire. One incident will do. One of the main characters comes away from the hospital where his father, the bandleader, is dying of lung cancer just as the band might go to the Albert Hall and win the Brass Band final if only the colliery hadn't just closed, and goes to entertain some children at a Harvest Festival after his wife and children have left in a van, because the bailiffs have stripped the house of everything. He breaks down and rushes to a statue of Jesus and begins 'What is God doing? He left John Lennon be shot, and Margaret Thatcher goes on living ...' He is dressed as a clown. I left before the final 'feel good', when I presume they won at the Albert Hall and the father died happy. Oh dear. That bit of dialogue I quoted the other day was the best bit, no quarrel with the acting, under the circumstances.

On the way to the tube – I was at the Tott. Court Rd cinema – I knew I wanted some cheese, and thought it was probably hopeless in the Charing X Road. I went in one rather ghastly little supermarket selling everything to nobody. I gave up and went on to Leicester Square and suddenly in that row of shops under that new colonnade on the right, there was the International Cheese Co, a small shop, all marble slabs and the real thing, a nice plump girl in a white coat, altogether surprising and pleasant in such an area. Bought a piece of caerphilly with the proper chalky rind.

Before that, bought the new biog. of Freddie Ashton and Violet Gordon Woodhouse. The last is by her grand-niece, Jessica Douglas Home. Of course, I know the chapter in *Noble Essences*, but I didn't know she was a monster. But then I might be a monster by the pathetic standards of today.

Wednesday November 9 1996

It's Tampon Alertness Week in June. I hope we can all be ready to profit from it.

I have now read a chunk of the F. Ashton, and am as usual repelled by the incontinence of the gay world. Fidelity seems to mean nothing. But I must read more. I laughed at him saying, of a Graham Sutherland abstract during the war, 'It's got to go, I keep seeing a gas-mask.'

Naturalists are rather absurd sometimes, proclaiming that a tiny beetle is extinct. I presume they have sieved every atom of leaf-mould in the kingdom. Even sillier with plants which may be hidden anywhere. Now I know there are some which have special habitats, still, their conclusions are too sweeping. And think of Africa. One of the game reserves is the size of Wales.

Thursday November 7 1996

In the p.m. to see *Trainspotting*. At last. Not a very good advertisement for drug-taking. Not badly acted but in a genre that is sad. For years now, there has been a sort of demotic film that only depends on going one further on still expecting there to be a bourgeois audience to be shocked. 'Gregory's Girl' was a charming example but it is a slippery and parasitic slope. For example there is the usual scene of the boy too drunk to fuck, waking up in the girl's pretty suburban bedroom. Twenty years ago he would have broken something. Ten years ago he might have wee'd an unimportant bit. This time he had copiously shat. He brought up a handful. The girl had slept elsewhere and is already at breakfast with her parents, everything neat about them. He appeared at the door, with the sheet folded, saying he would wash it. In a tug of war with the mother, shit flew all over parents, daughter, room, food. No way out.

It's still on, all these ages later, at Panton St. So popped in to Janet, just round the corner, she's booked some tickets for The London Film Festival and would offer to take me to three or four. Now I can't afford to pay and don't feel I could take more than one film from her. But I couldn't find one I could sit through. I do hope she didn't feel hurt. Went to pee in her basement, incredibly low doors and ceilings. Georgian servants were dwarves.

By the escalator in Leicester Sq. station a rather plump round-faced, rounded-headed fair girl was pleading with or possibly rebuking an indeterminately looking foreign man. Closed face, possibly Arab, Turk, Cypriot Greek. You could see how they'd attracted each other. The scene was more than half way through, as the mascara which had reached her jaw-bone both sides, was already dry. What a lot of feeling is packed into L. Sq. station, from 1940 and Highgate and now.

Friday November 8 1996

In the p.m. to the new Peter Greenaway film *The Pillow Book*. Not quite so absurd as most of his, but just as humourless. For instance, at certain important moments on the highly distinguished expert sound-track – I suppose every now and again at certain climatic moments, there was a loud, painful, ripped out belch...

Went after to the Notting Hill Waterstone's, but found nothing more. There are some books I'd like such as Frances Spalding's *Life of John Minton*, but though it was only published eighteen months ago, it is out of stock and out of print. That happens far too much nowadays.

On my way home with the shopping, when balance is more important, a young man burst past me on a pair of those roller-blades, so dangerous to wearer and victim. My

rage was slightly eased by seeing, as he swept round the corner, that he had a rear light on each heel. If anyone had been just round the corner – me, for instance – they would have gone flying. And why wasn't he on the road, quite empty at the time?

Saturday November 9 1996

Dropped my distance specs on the dining room carpet, as I've done many times before and found one of the eye-piece frames was cracked through. Odd. Sticking plaster, but didn't dare to go out in them. I was interested that my old horn-rims whose lenses must be at least twenty years old, are still usable. I was able to read the Standard and the distance part is almost the same. So my eyes can't have gone off all that much.

Rang R. at twelve as promised and we had a nice long getting up to date chat. He was pleased that the programme went off without a hitch and must have been a considerable feat of organisation on his part. Isn't that what they always call it? I want to find out more detail, exactly how many productions and companies there were. It seems they were Austrian and Danish – nobody else? No German? No English? He's just the same, not volunteering much, got a college friend coming to stay, didn't tell male or female, of course, and no mention of a girl-friend. You need a corkscrew.

Rang Hazel because I was tired of waiting for her to ring tomorrow and told her I was going to a film with Janet tomorrow. She's still having 'bad days'. It's probably that cat combined with her life.

Sunday November 10 1996

Had occasion to ring Hazel again and had to lie again and say Janet had cried off. Oh dear, my poor soul. She told me she'd sent back the tape of Cibil Emouvante and she thought she'd put a cutting in but she hadn't so she read it to me, from the Telegraph. It reported that S. had been seen fidgeting in the stalls at When We Are Married and pushing out in boredom before the end of the first act. I find it difficult to believe he could be so discourteous. I find it even more difficult to believe he was seeing WWAM in the first place. It sounds such a coarse production.

It's no use. I must say it again, the evidence is all over TV and the papers all the time. How extraordinary to feel at all strongly about games and sport.

Sheridan Morley was heard to say, apropos of the revival of Death of a Salesman, 'I still think that after Long Day's Journey into Night, Death of a Salesman is the greatest play of the century'. I hope he just forgot the 'American' between 'the' and 'greatest'. Tho' knowing S.M.'s record, I doubt it. In which case, you might murmur two names to him just to start with. Ibsen and Tchekov.

Monday November 11 1996

Tuesday November 12 1996

K. rang at 2.30ish to say they were in the area and should they come to dinner? I hummed and harred and he caught my unease as he always does, so quickly. I can't clean the house, do the shopping, queue for my pension, get the dinner and entertain, all on the same day. Not anymore. He was very good about it and even sweeter when I got there. Arlete was standing as close to a roaring fire as she could get. She's still in her mini-miniskirts. I suppose she has no idea how much colder it will get. They'd been to Selfridge's and South Molton St. passed Fenwick's – why? – one of the reasons was looking for bedclothes, duvet-covers and pillow cases and sheets. I thought he had plenty – I gave him some didn't I? But of course they don't want white nowadays. They couldn't find anything they liked at Self. which doesn't surprise me. So I suggested Peter Jones and The Gen. Trading Co. Now the G.T.C. is one thing, but I was surprised he hadn't heard of Peter J, nor knew where it was. He must have seen it many times, so funny, to think of all those Sloanes going white to the lips at the idea of anyone not knowing Peter Jones! (What are Sloanes called now? Whatever they're called, their wedding lists still go there. Their outward style may change, their inward greed remains the same).

He can always surprise me by his total recall of everything I've ever said. He told me that Arlete is 'like all of us, she puts her hand straight on the most expensive dress on the rack.' A handbag for £1200, but he's so sensible and I don't think they bought anything much. Not even a h-bag for £195.

Interesting talk during dinner – salmon, goats cheese, 'can I have that banana?' – he talked briefly of the C4 fiasco with real pain. I am annoyed that I hadn't quite realised how painful it had been. I thought it was just a technical job because there was not much creation about it. But I was wrong, he was hurt, as we always are by people only interested in power. Then he told me he was doing a film for C4 'who are all mad about me' on Thursday and Friday for £2500 – I think certainly £2000 for two days. And went on to say he could see how he could make a really good income with no trouble and he'd like to concentrate on song writing now. 'I think I'm going to sell this house and have a new start – perhaps a small place, with just the equipment, because we've got this studio in the West End now that Claire's got access to, belonging to Peter Greenaway's son and his partner, who are in L.A. all the time now, so that could be our social studio... and as well a cottage in Portugal.' I always think I am good at concealing my feelings, but not from him. I hate change, especially any change that even might mean I'd see less of him. He noticed at once and put his hands round my hand and said 'Has it not occurred to you that I might move nearer to you?' I looked. And he went on 'Now you're so old and frail...'

Amusing over the coffee, telling of the equipment firm he rang up, to ask about a keyboard with speakers on it. Of course the sort of keyboard that amateurs have, who have nothing else, has little playbacks on it, but he said that he and his contemps. have decided they wanted them, too, to save turning round continually, I suppose and had heard of them being available. The young man who answered, adopted a tone lofty enough for him to reply 'I'm afraid we only deal with professionals'. So K. said he wanted it to connect with a pifflebanger Z727040, a slotblossom 530, and a Whang Pragma 08. 'Oh said the young man, we're not as professional as that.'

When he talked of that ghastly C4 man, he said of his film job, that it was on condition that 'Ceri thing had nothing to do with it. He will never be in this house again.' I was amused that Arlete, when he said she spoke to him, and I said what was he like, she said, 'Frightened.' Well, you see power....

Arlete is very quiet and takes herself out of the conversation much of the time. I don't quite know why. She clasped the toy panda over the coffee.

Tuesday – Awful dark wet day. Stayed in.

Wednesday November 13 1996

Started Isherwood again. Now that I am over the dreadful first 400 pages or so, it's getting, well, not better, but more readable. Bitching about film stars and writers is preferable to shallow philosophizing and absurd religion. The overwhelming impression is of affectation and lack of wisdom. The 'camera' thing is revealing – it lasted only for the freshness of youth.

Thursday November 14 1996

An article commenting on an evangelical fundamentalist protesting about homosexuality because it's forbidden in the Old Testament. The article goes 'It is true that the Old Testament denounces homosexual acts as an abomination along with bestiality and incest. But it says the same thing about nudity, eating pork and prawns and wearing garments made out of more than one fabric. It is not clear what is Mr Calver's stance on cotton and polyester shirts or bird's eye fisherman's pie.'

Lack of humour and lack of brains can bring you to a pretty pass.

Friday November 15 1996

Depressing and worrying letter from the DSS saying they want my pension-book back 'because you are in arrears with your mortgage.' What do they mean? They are paying my mortgage. How do they know about the arrears, if I don't? Took all the pleasure out of the day, and replaced it by worry. I would love to ring him for some comfort, but must not until I have some facts to give him. I can't bear it if all goes wrong again. What hell the bureaucratic world is!

Saturday November 16 1996

Went to Ken High St and was more grateful than ever to S. that I could cheer myself up by buying some books. A biography of Tallulah B, Neil Simon's memoirs, the biog. of Lady Lavery, and a new Fletch thriller about F's son! And a reprinted Gladys Mitchell.

Read the Tallulah in one gulp. On the trashy side, and no doubt a re-hash of her memoirs, which were ghosted anyway, but not too ill-written, and full of stories and remarks I hadn't read before. She had a really quick wit.

Suddenly saw Judy Campbell in Casualty. She must be over eighty and is still recognizable. At the Arts, in the old days, D. had no respect for her acting at all. For instance J.C. picked up one of those old irons without using a cloth and of course the handle would be as hot as the ironing surface. And she said what did a detail like that matter? She has played with her career like the amateur she is.

Sunday November 17 1996

Hazel told me that S had written to the Telegraph in answer to the para. He was there, but of course left because of the amoebic dys. I suddenly realised he was probably there for casting the Pyjama Game. A good letter. A nasty thought – is it just amoebic dys. or ...?

I forgot to say that I got a leaflet from Nada, saying she's in a double-bill of Overruled and How He Lied to Her Husband. Was D. in one of those at the Arts in the old days? She was in Passion, Poison and Petrification and Great Catherine. I must look the others up. Read both of them. Slight but still worth doing. The mark of a great writer is the unmistakable style in words and atmosphere and character and action immediately apparent. Present in the bad and the slight plays as well as the good and the great. Tomorrow – ugh!

Monday November 18 1996

Rang the DSS. Relief. They are recalling the book to subtract £2 odd from my pension to pay back that £500 arrears that someone at the Alliance mentioned eighteen months ago, but made no mention of me paying it back in my present circumstances. The woman said I could cash this week's pension and when I did so, the P.O. had already had instructions to keep the book. The ease of communication these days, means that the woman I spoke to in Wigan could place her instructions on the P.O. clerk's monitor in Hammersmith between ten o'clock and three thirty. How odd that all this communication has not led to any advance in efficiency – rather the reverse.

Had the energy to do a few chores. Sent the Violent Gordon Woodhouse book to Hazel, saying in my letter that the photos of her at her clavichord were a complete thing. Paid £40 for tax, after getting my £68 pension. Drew enough money to pay two months of the video payment, £35 – from the Halifax. Shopped. Some haddock and cheese. And all these mean queueing, when my back hurts. So it's more of a satisfaction than it sounds.

Tuesday November 19 1996

The electricity people rang to ask why I hadn't paid my bill. I was interested that it was a mild woman completely unaggressive. Just as well, as I had to say in effect 'The cheque is in the post', and a limp 'A friend is paying and he must have forgotten'. Which is exactly what had happened. I saw him put the cheque on the end of the sofa. It had slipped down and then he'd paid the laundry and that confused him. He was so sweet about it. R. had rung and cancelled and then rang me, so we settled that.

On the way back a little woman came from behind, said we were neighbours and ... oh dear, she was talking to that ex clergyman's wife when I stopped to talk to her, last summer. Still she told me something perhaps useful. The Russian Church House, she thinks, tho' sold, will remain empty for six months, before it can be de-consecrated. That will be restful. The days of the services seems in another life. Well, the whirligig of time ... On some quiz, no one could recognise or name The Warsaw Concerto.

Wednesday November 20 1996

The ultimate blonde bimbo, Pamela Anderson, who can't have seen her feet since she was thirteen, has filed for divorce five months after her first baby. Headline, Pam's bust-up.

A survey of schools. Someone wrote rather smugly, 'London has the best and the worst schools in the country. The worst is in Islington, especially bad results in English, - name, the George Orwell ...

There is banging next door.

Janet said she'd take me out after the film. Good.

Thursday November 21 1996

Janet rang to say she'd got a splitting headache, so no supper. I'm not surprised, as last night there was a total tube strike about nine-thirty for an hour and a half. No Taxis, when we came out to go home, queues of getting on for a hundred at every bus stop. I walked home. And she lives in Shepherd's Bush.

Strange sensation, a hand-held camera in a prog. about London going to places I know really well, like the Shaft Av. Staircase to Piccadilly tube. Real feeling of being there for a moment. It's really cold.

Friday November 22 1996

Ankle very itchy - I suppose it's a good sign, but trying. Once more I was going to the pictures, but once more it seemed pleasanter to say sitting here. Yes, I'm getting old.

I see Mastermind is being axed. If only it had been twenty years ago, when Lalla insisted on me watching it, just because she knew it irritated me. Allison Pearson who now has a weekly page in the Evening Standard, amuses me. She said of Mastermind that she only regrets it because it was a refuge for many endangered British species. 'Where else would you see a 1974 Laura Ashley pinafore strained over a really enormous bust of a sub-postmistress'

Saturday November 23 1996

Finished the Isherwood diaries. Don Backhardy has done him a great disservice by printing it in its full thousand page tedium. A short book of gems would have been to the point, and even the gems would only have been decidedly semi-precious.

Did go out after dark to buy some more books. A detective story, Significant Others by Robert Richardson, The Gossips by Teresa Waugh, Wilkie Collins 'No name', the two plays, Odd Couple and Barefoot in the Park because of N. Simon's memoirs.

Sharron rang and thank goodness in much more positive mood than for many months. Nothing like a little time at home to give you a springboard. She's got herself a place to live, a four-girl flat, in a Georgian house in Milner Square off Liverpool Road, so that she can walk to the studio. Only snag is the sizable room she is to have, will not be hers till after Christmas as the girl suddenly changed her mind and stayed on. So she'll have to go into a small basement room till then. But a Georgian house will please her aesthetic sense, as time goes by and may soothe. It's just at the back of Almeida, quite trendy.

A programme about Lord of the Flies with four of the original cast of boys going back to the island where they filmed it, held me or a short while. I find William Golding over-valued and I remember at the time the film came out, we were amused that people were impressed at the breakdown of civilized little boys into anarchy. Not only impressed but surprised and shocked for all the world as if children were not born savages who have to be trained not to murder one another.

But I was impressed and shocked to see, of all people, Toby Robertson round the table in playful argument with P. Brook. My opinion of P.B. has never been so high as many people's but it went down a good few notches to see him in cahoots with someone as venal and third rate as Toby, who doesn't seem to have changed or developed at all since Cambridge. I loved P.B.'s earlier work, Ring Round the Moon, Irma La Douce. Since he's been in Paris, what actors or playwrights has he discovered or encouraged? Nothing but doubtful esotericism

Sunday November 24 1996

Finished the Lady Lavery book. Considerably bored by Irish longeurs. I ought to have realised it was not a balanced biog. with a name like Sinead Mc something. Complete lack of proportion. No doubt her political interest and her relation with Michael Collins were the weightiest parts of her life, but they need a better context than this.

It is also necessary to point out the build in extreme boredom factor of Irish politics, which the poor woman discovered for herself before the end.

Monday November 25 1996

Made an effort and went to the three-fifteen performance of the Royal Command film, True Blue, about the Boat Race. A poor flat script, a great deal of wooden acting, poor Queen. One long speech, at the election meeting, I devoutly hope was written by an American.

Read and finished T. Waugh's The Gossips. Neatly written, witty, about a little enclave of people in Hillgate Village, those little painted houses behind the Coronet, where Robin and Anne Tuck lived. In and out of one another's pockets and the harm that malicious and inaccurate gossip can do. It passed some agreeable hours – two, perhaps, and is obviously the product of a cultivated and kind person. But it's slight and any moment now I will have forgotten everything about it. She's Auberon Waugh's wife – isn't she?

R. rang and it's Thursday. He's just spoken to K and might call round here first. Bother, I shall have to Hoover the drawing-room.

Tuesday November 26 1996

They are, after all, working next door, the usual banging and crashing, but I am worried lest all my damp becomes an issue. I must get it done and get it settled with K. It's my own inertness, encouraged by the strange life I lead now. For example, again I have not spoken live to anyone since I was at K's on the 11th. No money means taking no chances. Nothing from the DS.

Wednesday November 27 1996

Still no sign from the DS, so rang them. They blandly said they'd put a giro in the post. No apology of course and no perception of me perhaps having no money for food for three days.

Little boy: A surgeon is a man who wears a mask and robs a bank.

R rang and he's staying with K tomorrow night and so we'll have a jolly dinner.

Thursday November 28 1996

Friday November 29 1996

So I got there at 6.45 and dear R. was already there, coming running up from the studio with that open face and sunny smile. Funny it should go with his caution. Arlete wasn't home. K announced that he had done nothing towards the dinner, but it

was organic guinea-fowl and the pudding was from Arlete. We had one or two comic tussles and the boys were already showing signs of the helpless screaming laughter. I seem to overwhelm them when we're together. K. went to the kitchen, - the table was extended and laid, with a lovely branched candlestick with pink candles. R and I settled down to talk about Copenhagen. The companies were varied, dance, drama, a one-man show, music, almost every one needing a different use of the space, conventional, banks of seats on both sides, audience standing and so on, with only an hour's turnaround between the two or three shows a day. He ate mostly on the ferry and found Danish food a bit wearing with its heavy emphasis on masses of meat. I think he was quite proud of how it had all gone. I do hope it'll lead to something. It will certainly look good on his C.V.

Suddenly there was a flurry at the front door, a clatter of heels, a cascade of laughter, the whole thing sounding like Marie Tempest working her audience up for her entrance round and Arlete fluttered in, making for the fire in high bat-like shrieks. She gave me a big, all-pervasive hug and R a lesser one, as she had never met him before. K. asked me to carve the organic guinea-fowl. The knife is a bit blunt, and the skin of the bird was remarkably tough. The whole bird was a little dense, not exactly tough and I must say it was the largest g-fowl I've ever seen, approaching a capon. The pudding was ice-cream snowmen on sticks. Such was the state of the boys that two perfectly ordinary remarks of mine produced wild shrieks. One was me saying, on A's producing the box with her secret pudding, 'Is that a large video?' It had a similar picture box. After a comparatively serious remark, I dropped, with the most obvious comic timing, 'Can my next drink have more whisky in?' I do not record these remarks as wit obviously, but as examples of the effect that love and familiarity and drink and complete relaxation can have between true friends. Sometimes I make them laugh with superior material. Silliness is however not to be despised. I was very pleased that Arlete smiled mildly throughout, not always easy to do during what must have seemed private jokes between old friends. I took as much care to explain and include her as I could without spoiling their pleasure.

Another heavenly evening, not spoilt even by waiting over half an hour for a cab. Interesting that K. gets such service from a firm he uses quite often. Rare too at half-one. I'm not sure they weren't going off to a club, - unimaginable. He pushed a £20 note into my hand and such a hug.

Today, as usual, I sat and got over it and remembered.

Saturday November 30 1996

I see Anna Pollak has died at eighty something. I saw her quite often at the Wells in the old days. Much amused by the description of her lesbianism in the obituary. After her retirement, she lived with her great friend Erica Marx, until Erica's death in 198? Then Patience Collier took her under her wing. She was unmarried.

P.C. was notorious. She tried to take D. under her wing at Cambridge in 1936 but D. pushed her wing away.

If only people would emphasise the positive in the vast majority of English people. For instance, The Blue Peter appeal to raise money for leprosy, has resulted in 67,263 requests for the Bring and Buy sales packs.

A famous presenter, a rather unappealing red-haired creature called Evans gave a hubris-soaked looked at the camera. Worrying.

Sunday December 1 1996

I hardly notice the progression of the months any more.

I have to admit that I am never really interested or attracted by black artists, either physically or artistically.

Yesterday I bought Frank Kermode's biog. a new book of short stories by Francis King, A Hand on the Shutter, and a Beryl Bainbridge, feeling I might try one after the brilliant reviews of her latest about the Titanic. I couldn't read that of course, so I bought the Bottle Factory Outing. Neither of us were drawn to her over the years so I'll see. I expect F. King is a bit cross about his dust-jacket. He's quoted V.S. Pritchett as saying that even at eighty-five or so, he is still eager to snap the shutter on something interesting. The picture is a hand opening a window shutter. I expect he found out too late to get it corrected.

Oh, another thing which convulsed the boys, the ice-cream men had brown smarties for noses. Mine had a nose on its ear ...

Monday December 2 1996

Finished the King with the usual mild pleasure, partly from the comfort of a contemporary. I'd forgotten how funny Harrod-Eagles is. She is certainly one of the half dozen best det. writers nowadays. The relationship between her main detective and his musician girlfriend would not disgrace any modern novel.

Tuesday December 3 1996

Rang Janet to see if she'd like some of the leeks and parsnips, as I knew I wouldn't use them all. She said she'd make vegetable soup and would love them. So I set out at three, and thought how nice it was to be sitting in a warm room with a dear friend having a comfortable cup of tea in the very centre of London. Certainly the stairs at her old place have put me off ever dropping in on her. A very pleasant chap called Maurice? something dropped in. I wonder who he is and what he does. I couldn't ask him, as Janet didn't tell me. Left at 3.45 and to new film, Fear. Very so so.

Wednesday December 4 1996

Janet asked me to a film show at UCI in Beadon Rd. just past the market, v. easy for both of us. I was struck yet again by the extravagance of the film world. Another great big black glass building with a marble foyer and a male receptionist, who pointed me to the bar area of the viewing rooms. Here there was unlimited and rather good wine, possibly spirits, too, a considerable spread of food, a sumptuous little cinema with widely spaced bright vermilion seats all looking new, seating fifty or sixty, a smart girl ticking off the list of guests. There were seven of us.

The film *The Chamber* was muddled and inadequate. A rather wet and boring young man in the lead and Gene Hackman doing his considerable best to try and save the affair. Nothing could have saved a film with no centre and the underlying fearful exposé of America's moral bankruptcy. Still, I saved on dinner.

Thursday December 5 1996

I see that the young man from *My So Called Life*, Jared Leto, has now been given a lead in a new film by Gabriel Byrne. As Claire Danes is playing Juliet in the new film, I don't think I chose badly by praising them.

It seems V. Bottomley attended a party at Faber and Faber. She went up to Julian Barnes and said 'What do you do?' 'I'm a writer.' 'Who do you write for?'

Now of course it's no surprise that she's never heard of J. Barnes, but you would think, you might think, that she would have a little more self-preservation than to ask someone at random at a very famous publisher's party. 'What do you do?' I must try and get to a party and ask her what she does. Except alas that I know.

Friday December 6 1996

It's rather odd that, of all the public events of my life, I recall the Abdication at this time of the year, over the anniversary. I don't think it made much impression on me, unlike the Coronation in 1937, which did. But I don't think of it every May.

All these new 'complaints' that keep appearing – dyslexia, ME, attention syndrome and so on – no, I say noting as to their reality, except to remark that the symptoms are impossible of objective proof and the remedy is invariably one-to-one concentrated attention, the sufferer becoming the centre of his own little universe.

In the p.m. to the new film *Last of the High Kings*. What is called a 'little' film, but no worse for that. Considerable charm all round, not unexpected in an Irish movie. The part of the mother was rather over-written, loomed too much and abandoned her (very) strong prejudices in a most unlikely way, to prepare for a happy ending. The boy from *My So Called Life* was excellent and surprised me. He is so good-looking, in face and figure, that it is quite a treat to find that he can really act. For one reason and another I can see him being quite a big star. Perfect Irish accent to an English ear

– not that Irish isn't the easiest accent for an American – so much Irish in Eastern America.

K. rang. Money talk. Could I cut down on laundry. Will try. Told me he's opened a bank a/c for Arlete and the bank manager came to the house! Thinking of their treatment of me. It was all about money – he's giving me some cash on Thursday, and I'm dining on Sat week, he'll ring tomorrow to confirm, the night before they go to Portugal. Has the Terry's All-gold commercial going out before Christmas. Took a year to prepare, script only six words, something like Old Gold, New Gold, All-gold. K said to the writer (sic) 'So one word every two months?' 'Oh, no, we had All Gold already.' What a grotesque world. He's also got the C.4 Schools Logo. Hm. I hope that Creative Director, or some equivalent, won't turn up to ruin it this time. The thing goes out eight or nine times a week and K reckons it should bring in £10,000 a year. What a bother I am to him. I'm just so grateful that he's doing so well, it makes me feel a little bit better at being such a drag on him.

Saturday December 7 1996

K. didn't ring. Too busy. And all sorts of other things on his mind and to be decided.

On some TV programme, I suddenly caught sight of Gerald Harper. I use the word accurately and literally, he looked desiccated, dried-up, shriveled, yellow. I wouldn't be surprised to find the poor chap was ill. It's more of a shock to see someone like that, who's been so full of sometimes rather arrogant life.

Sunday December 8 1996

K rang. The Saturday is on, and so is Thursday. He is so good. But I am all the same troubled if the money comes between us. There's no way at seventy I can make any money. Not in the present world at any rate.

Monday December 9 1996

The River Café which I will keep calling the Riverside Café, has a rather unhappy arrangement of two sittings. Roy's booking was for the second. They were coming at eight for a drink, but he changed it to nine and me to come out to the mini-cab. I was glad for the mini-cab – I don't like a non-drinking driver brooding at the table, looking gloomily at the drunken fools around him. A funny cockney driver, but my deaf ear can't catch demotic speech propelled forward. We arrived at the anonymous turning. I noticed that the glamorous young man in the uniform great coat and leather leggings had gone. I'm glad. He seemed too caring and capable to spend his life parking cars. I must say every member of the staff is attractive and they seem efficient, too, unusually. A few niggles. We sat up at the bar to wait for our table, - a bar-stool is not my favourite seat these days – I ordered a gin and tonic. It came in one of those nasty tall narrow glasses. You can't get your nose in them and you have to tip them up so far to get at the drink. Worse, it was filled to the brim with tonic from one of those awful nozzles. Now that I regard as Trust Houses Forté behaviour.

At the table, there was a small ciabatta loaf already thickly sliced. I asked for some butter. The young waitress seemed to find this an unsuitable request. At any rate, I never got any. They asked, before we'd ordered the pudding, whether we wanted coffee. (That is not one of the niggles, though it is. It doesn't seem to matter how good and grand the restaurant is, they will ask at that point whether you want coffee. Why? You'd think coffee took half an hour to make. It leaves you with the feeling of being pushed a bit and the fear that the coffee will come with the pudding.) Roy ordered his coffee with his pudding, mine to be later. It came with my pudding and was cold when I'd finished.

But – the food is still very good, and the wine. I had Parma Ham, well, actually San Daniele with parmesan slivers. They had a pasta dish with spinach and broccoli, Marion had scallops. Roy and I had pot-roast wild duck – well, one of the owners (or both) is Yank and that's what they call casseroled; with mashed potato, then a chocolate and chestnut torte, with a little dollop of very creamy ice-cream in a little separate dish on the plate. It seemed to me that the clientele was showing a shade of what happens to most smart restaurants eventually – the proliferation of awful business-men discovering it seven or eight years after its opening and gradually stopping it being smart. I record the niggles for interest. But we had a wonderful, funny, happy evening. It turned out to be Marian's b'day, so I gave her those pearl stud earrings D wore in *What Every Woman Knows*. I found that little pig-skin purse of Edna's for Ella's b'day and of course Roy took away a bag full of surplus books. He said he'd got my Christmas present and put it on the TV – a cheque for £300.

Tuesday December 10 1996

Faintly hungover, but nothing to worry about. Decided to go to the Renoir and see I shot Andy Warhol, mainly because there is a Safeway's nearby, and I have a marked dislike of going backwards first to H'smith.

The film was fairly faithful to its subject, as far as the gifts of its director and writer and actors allowed. That is, it was acutely boring, rather than transcendently boring. The woman who shot A.W. was, I take it, even more of a mess than most of the people around him, which is saying something, - insecure to a degree, aggressive, endlessly uselessly self-assertive. The wretched girl who plays her – Lili Taylor – has no other idea than to be insecure to a degree, aggressive, endlessly uselessly self-assertive. There is no artistic filter, it is a bore boring. I wish she'd shot me.

Once more I only stayed to avoid the rush-hour. What was Stephen Dorff doing in it? Well, to do something different, like his Beatles film. And I suppose Americans don't realise such stuff is rubbish.

Wednesday December 11 1996

Funny exchange with Janet. 'What is the film next week? I know I don't want to see tomorrow's.' 'It's something called 'Shine'. I don't know anything about it.' 'Well,

find out and let me know.’ ‘Thank you very much.’ ‘I don’t employ you as my secretary for nothing.’ ‘You do.’

Thursday December 12 1996

So, in accordance with instructions, I got myself to Elfort Rd. at about one-thirty. I had, I really had, a premonition that he wouldn’t have the money. And he hadn’t.

First shock, floorboards up and a big solid fifty year old – ‘plumber’ – opened the door to me. Putting the central heating in at last. Second, though not a shock, he was working with that rather pale hollowed-eyed look that worries me. He gazed at me from a long distance away, just managed to say he hadn’t had time and pushed his credit card into my hand. He has a kind of terror that I’ll embark on a long talk ... I think his concentration is extreme, so off I went to Piccadilly, where I knew there was a Nat West nearby. It was very cold today. In the Nat West, I got in a muddle as usual with the wretched machine, made worse by five pairs of eyes boring into my back. A nice young man came to my aid, I recouped myself with the eyes, by saying I was always nervous that if I pressed the wrong button I might go through the machine myself. I went away with £200, enough for the bills, and got back to E. Rd to find him gone. Thank goodness, as he’d been already very late for some session and I didn’t want another non-talk. Then I went down to H’smith and did a little bit of shopping, including some reduced kangaroo, wallaby, perhaps.

I must have spent some two hours and twenty minutes on the tube, the last diversified by a delay, occasioned by someone having a heart-attack at Holborn. I can’t quite see how that could cause a bad delay, unless he or she were so ill they had to be treated on the stationery train. A bit tired.

Friday December 13 1996

Lived up to its reputation by landing on me a letter from that awful Mr Weng at the Tax Office saying that as I hadn’t paid the tax since Sept. the arrangement was cancelled. I was able to send him a receipt from Nov. Hideous creature.

Rang Mary L at two-thirty, engaged. And it continued so till I went out to the shops at about four, and it was still engaged when I got back and after a long talk with Derrick Marr, it was still engaged. I eventually got her at six thirty when she sounded really ill, far more than she ever has with ‘my chest’. Violent sickness and diarrhoea – most peculiar. She’s had a couple of goes of a mild tummy upset this year already, - it was the ‘most peculiar’. I didn’t like. The curious veinings of contradictions in people – she may be ridiculously hypochondrical, but she is not self-pitying. How somehow like her that it should descended her on Friday Dec 13.

There was a double-page spread in the Standard, listing the violent films of the last twenty-five years or/so, and picturing the stars. It’s in connection with yet another movement to try and curb violence in films and TV. I was interested that I had seen none of the films and very few of the actors and them only in non-violent films. I simply cannot understand how people sit through them, let alone like them. I

instinctively close my eyes and jib away at any pictured violence and I cannot understand why everyone doesn't. I did once go to Taxi Driver and left after half an hour at the most. I cannot follow evil like that. Not to mention that so many 'action' violent films fall into the category D. described as so much happening that there's no time for anything to happen! How can anyone willingly watch a war film which glories in and obviously approves of war and killing. The answer is complete lack of imagination.

December 14 1996

This p.m. went to the maelstrom of Kensington High Street and felt the usual irritation with the Christmas shoppers. How they love crowding together like sheep, or, in some cases, pigs. It is irritating because I would be there anyway. At least bookshops are, by nature, not full of complete brainless wandering idiots and louts.

Bought the Long Johns, John Birds and John Fortune's duologues on Channel 4 which amused me so much and amused me just as much to read. I Laughed aloud many times as I gulped them down in one go over my gin.

Also the River Café Cook Book, all very well and fine but where do I get a lot of the ingredients, let alone afford them? Nevertheless, I like browsing, before dinner. The novel of that film I saw last week, The Last of the High Kings, published in 1991, reissued with Jared Leto on the cover. Elizabeth McCracken's The Giant's House, about a boy who grew to eight foot six by seventeen. Hm! A good notice made me try, but it's American and I see no improvement in Yank novels, now that I am again trying them. They are still soooo sloooow, that I can skip three or four pages and miss nothing of the narrative.

So tonight I cooked my first kangaroo steak. It was a rather characterless looking piece of meat, no veins of fat, no shape, no edge of fat, tho' it was called a rump steak. It may be that the butchers are not quite skilled in the cut of the steak. During grilling it shrank, becoming much thicker and in the end, I had to slice it in two, to grill it evenly. However, it tasted most acceptable and I would have it again if it was cheap enough.

Sunday December 15 1996

It seems there are 1,295 books about King Arthur et cie in the British Museums. The legend has never captured or interested me. I have never been able to read Walter Scott or RLS or anything else 'romantic' – even Dickens is too romantic for me.

Finished the Giant book and it fulfilled all I've just said about Yank writing. Every four pages.

Monday December 16 1996

Another popular disease, peanut allergy. It sometimes kills, - 'there were five patients a year some time ago, now there are five a week'. Throats swell, lungs flood and so on. People have been eating peanuts ever since I can remember and we heard nothing of this. It must be the usual hysteria of children getting asthma off polluted roads from the transferred mania of their feminist mothers.

I am having difficulty in finishing Frank Kermode's autobiog. The book seems to have no relation to his reputation. It is slight, unsure of touch, self-deprecating only when it shows him in a 'sensitive' light. I find him really rather repellent. What does his reputation rest on? He has been Prof. of Eng-Lit here and there. What of that? As an ordinary cultivated reader. I have scarcely registered him.

Tuesday December 17 1996

In the p.m. to Belsize Park for the first time for months, possibly year, to see film Home for the Holidays, a family gathering for Thanksgiving and the resultant tensions (by the way, no wonder Americans are neurotic wrecks with two family occasions so near together.) There was some goodish acting and some fair scenes. But for instance, the dinner where restraint breaks down and confessions and recriminations start breaking out – a common scene – was badly timed. There should be a 'happy' family atmosphere for longer. A whole dinner, even in America, would not be totally abandoned before anyone had had a mouthful of turkey. The feeling for time and the writing generally let the film down, as did various clumsiness of invention and direction. For instance the Turkey, under inexpert carving flew across the table into the sister's lap. She screamed, probably being about to talk on pollution mania. Two of the others picked up the turkey, and could invent no further bit of comic business but to pick the turkey up, take it backwards over her head and obviously tip the fat over her head. Somebody might have tried to make it look like an accident. R. Downey Jnr. showing a few signs of his difficulties – rather frenetic and his wonderfully clear face a bit flabby and blurred.

The excellent Belsize book-shop has changed for the worse. It used to be so clearly a privately owned shop, with every inch occupied and an eye for the interesting book. Now there are a series of handsome single-pedestal tables, no central shelves and the 'handsome' imitation mahogany shelves all round the walls, seem to be almost entirely travel, than which there is almost no duller subject to me.

Wednesday December 18 1996

Another nice Christmas present, the Alliance tells me I must pay £101.34, a shortfall because the DS doesn't pay enough. Paid it from Roy's Christmas cheque, sad. Went straight to Ealing to pay it, because there's a Halifax and a Safeway's all nearby and that is a consideration now for my legs. Footsore. Forgot to take the letter and paid £104.34. Oh well. The graspers. K. rang, twiddling my world around. Would I do something for him. He knows he comes first and he does. And he's so busy. Would I get to the Tanzanian Embassy (High Commission actually) and get visas for him and

Arlete to go to Zanzibar on Jan 1 for three weeks. Details. Pick up her passport photos from Arlete at her Ken. Market shop, right at the back, everyone knows her, ask Mo and Chico (or some such.) 'What are they?' 'Moroccans'. Then I must go up to Elfort Rd and get the rest of the gen. Then to the High Comm. before 12.30, to make the application, and pick up the visas next day. Also get him an international driving licence at the AA in H'smith. Easy, as I pass it every day. Pete Sinfield has a rented house in Zanz. 400 yds. from the beach. Cheap air deal. Sat back in a whirl, and decided not have a whisky after dinner. What little worlds he whisks me into.

Thursday December 19 1996

An exhausting day. Of course it was drizzling the sort of drizzle that gets under an umbrella. And of course the subways at Hyde Park Corner were in disarray and I went along a long passage and up and down a couple of staircases and had to retrace my steps, which I especially hate and was hard on my poor old legs. But I am ahead of myself. I was at High St. Ken station by ten o'clock. K. had rung at nine fifteen! to say I might catch her at the passport photo booth, 'It would save you having to go to the shop.' She'd just left, and I did catch her. She got the photos done. I was struck by her not changing the pose for the four snaps as most people do and no funny faces either. A certain oriental something comes out in the photos. It was our first meeting on our own.

Then to struggle with the H.P. subways and a damp trudge to 43, Hertford St, and I thought of E. Waugh and his 'sheepish house' to please Jessica Mitford – a standard Mayfair town house, no wider than this. The front half of what was the morning room still with its pretty plaster ceiling, with a sort of P.O. counter opposite the windows, was lit by the usual hideous neon tubes. K. had said the woman he spoke to on the phone was rather aloof, but the girl I spoke to was all right. I filled in two exhaustive forms, handed in the photos – K's unshaven and very tired-looking, even more like a serial killer than usual, paid £63 and came away. They are to be picked up tomorrow – again before 12.30. Oh dear. Trudged back to H.P. Corner and found him in full steam at Elfort Rd, doing something in the studio, greeting me, calling to the dust-men coming up the road to come and collect all that bagged rubble from the garden. Good.

It shows how tired I am, that of course I went to K before the High commission, to get the money. 'Had I time for a cup of coffee?' Yes, and he discussed my present. Can't think what to get. I suggested a new pen. He gave me £100 and told me to go and find one that suited me and bring it on Saturday and he'd wrap it!

So I got home in time for lunch, and very much a propos Hazel and Geoffrey's smoked fish parcel had arrived. Smoked fish is not only one of my favourite lunches but one of the very easiest. So some smoked salmon and smoked duck's breast went down a treat. Oh and K asked me to get him an international driving licence, which he's arranged for my convenience, at the AA in King St. I pass it most days anyway.

Sat down. I had such a bad night last night, as I always do when I have to get up early with fear of over-sleeping. I had said I would go to the film, so I did, but was afraid I'd nod off and I nearly did. I can't say I liked Shine. It was a dear old 'biopic,' with

a few modish touches strewn about the place. The main character, when mad, spoke very quickly very close to people and repeating each phrase twice. A cliché and very easy to act. The fact that it is apparently an exact copy of the original, means nothing! But what really got on my nerves – it was about a concert pianist – was the awful banality of the music chosen. It really might have been an illustrated Twenty Favourite Classical All-time Greats. Hungarian Rhapsody, Prelude in C Sharp minor, The Moonlights, Funiculi Funicula etc etc . Didn't bother Janet at all, who loved it. Ah well.

When we came out, we walked up to Oxford St. where I presumed we would get the usual taxi. Now I am very grateful for the lift in the taxi and quite understand that sometimes she feels she can't afford it, and before Christmas might be one of those times. But when she suddenly said 'I've discovered the No 10 bus which goes to H'smith ... I was a bit miffed. It's all very well for her, who has to go on to Shep. Bush, but if she'd said earlier, I'd have gone to the tube. I can get home direct and in half the time the bus took, let alone having to get on the tube at H'smith and come back.

It's all Evita and Madonna at the moment. Retro of M. from 84 on, - didn't know one of the hits.

Still, I noticed a sort of theme park advertised, near the Tower of London. Its attractions are listed as a series of headings – Plague, Civil War, Blitz, Docklands

Friday December 20 1996

Had a fairish night after I realised that I needn't get up till eleven. As it happened I woke at seven and decided to leave the house at ten. I was at the H. Comm. by quarter to eleven. Everything in order. The two girls were 'joshing' with another man and a porter on my side of the counter. I was suddenly reminded that the H.C. is Tanzanian Territory, and I was watching a tiny exiled fragment of Tanzanian life. As I had the pen money and stiff legs, I decided to take a taxi. It's so long since I took one myself, it was still raining, it's Christmas and it took me over twenty minutes and over five pounds to get from Hertford St to Lower Regent St. Even then I had to get out half way along Charles II Street, where we'd been stuck for six or seven minutes. I drew out some more money from the Halifax, as I seemed to remember a pen like this was now £125. It is so important to me to have the right pen, and I don't want to ask him for any more, tho' he'd willingly give it me. In the event, a similar model turned out to be £85, mottled in two shades of blue and black like my school-boy pen which I still have. The nice girl who served me, could not find a broad nib for some time. Considering the pen craft shop sells nothing but pens, you might think they would have some better method of storing and displaying nibs, than obliging the nice girl to drag all the trays of pens onto the counter and opening each one to inspect its nib.

TV has an interest for me like obituaries. I find out who world famous people are.

Saturday December 21 1996

So here I am writing with the new pen. It's still ever so slightly scratchy in comparison, but the ink-flow is good. It'll wear in, I hope.

K rang to say he'd felt rotten yesterday, so bad that he would have cancelled if dinner had been last night, but he was o.k., just tired. But he didn't think he should go out and nor did I, its freezing. So would I do some shopping for tonight? 'Smoked salmon, two lemons, broccoli, b. sprouts, cheese, grapes, scotch'. I went out and bought two coffee cups of the same blue rim and four wine glasses, the last even cheaper at £2,99. Did the shopping and a piece of Chanel soap for Arlete, £13. All with dear K's money of course. Completed her present with some old stage glitter of D's, those two thick satin Victorian bow-ties.

About six he rang again to say could I get some crackers at one of the local shops? It seems they don't have them in Portugal and when Arlete was offered one in Liverpool, she screamed when it cracked. Of course she did poor girl, she would think something had gone wrong. A bit later he rang and said could I bring some cigarettes? Marlborough Lights.

I couldn't get any crackers. Rather a relief as I already had four heavy carrier bags. Trains emptier than God and found him a bit low physically but otherwise all right. I know exactly what happened. Yesterday was one day he knew he must finish working and he felt ill because he knew he could. He has such a healthy metabolism.

I unpacked the shopping. He was a bit scratchy at first as he is when he's tired. I've learnt to say as little as possible at first. So he brought me a gin and I put my presents under the tree. I sat for a while and he came in with his drink. I asked about Liverpool and of course, he was hopeless except for the cracker, just as I knew he'd be. I shall find out more in the five minutes if I talk to Marjorie on Christmas Day than he did in two days. His very virtues make him a poor gossip. He has no class-consciousness at all, so naturally doesn't pick up those nuances. His main memory was of arriving at the Adelphi (which sounds worse, not better as Tom Holt said) and ordering drinks and getting scouse ribbings and nudging's about the four-poster bed from the night-waiter. The four poster bed shows the commercial traveler taste that now rules most such hotels. They then – for some reason – took their drinks and wandered round the hotel. Why? It was eleven when they arrived. They found themselves in some empty and hideous conference type rooms, and empty unmanned bars and a general sense of lack of management and then suddenly, in the ballroom, in the middle of a Greek Scouse wedding. Now they saw why there'd been tables uncleared and various chaos. They watched, and put more water in their whisky and were approached by a bouncer asking them why they were gate-crashing and 'drinking our wine'. I was simply fascinated by them wandering about like that when they'd arrived at eleven and a tiresome couple of days to come – imagine us doing anything like that, and I mean at the same age... and in the same hotel, still then at its Zenith.

Arlete arrived in a flutter of clothes, her throat bare, not seeming cold at all. We settled round the fire and K brought the presents from the tree, - there are so many.

I'd packed Arlete's in white tissue-paper from the laundry. K. said 'A present from Martina? You open it, as you've got less presents.'

ANGUS MACKAY DIARY NO. 145

December 21 1996 (cont.)

February 17 1996

Saturday December 21 1996 (cont.)

How many people would think to say that? Martina's present was two small flat candlesticks of the cheapest silver appearance, which will tarnish and peel almost at once. However, it was very kind of her to give him anything and I feel particularly warmly towards her because she will save me from having to feed Boo. Nearly a month of one and a half hours a day in the coldest month was a little forbidding. Then Arlete opened my poor little offerings and seemed to like them. K. said she had a necklace in other colours very like the one of mine. The next present was his. 'You've been longing to see inside that, haven't you?' It was a toy dog, the size of a few weeks old puppy, light fawn, poodle-like as much as anything. It was obviously well-made and well-designed, but its most striking quality was its exact balance between limpness and firmness. It is cleverly balanced to feel as near living as possible. Not that I was able to test this for myself for some time, as Arlete cradled it in her arms for some time, the tears pouring. I can't honestly say that I am caught by the soft toy magic. But then I am not caught by the real dog magic – far from it. She gave him a red telephone, in the shape of huge red lips. He gave it the accolade of the moment, 'Brilliant', repeated two or three times. They seem rather trivial presents to our generation for 'a serious relationship', another of today's phrases. However, that's their business.

Dinner, two pheasants, was delicious, the pheasants being done exactly right. I was amused and pleased that they had a slight argy-bargy over dinner. I saw his face setting as it does when challenged. I notice she's not allowed to interrupt him either. The subject may be summed up in two sentences. He: Portugal is so beautiful and unspoilt and should stay that way. She: But, Kevin, the people are so poor. I sat between, putting in a soothing word v. occasionally, hoping for the cheese, and being thankful I wasn't young anymore and don't have to fight 'thro' such arguments.

She's an interesting girl, sometimes looks at you so blankly, curious streaks of child and adult side by side.

The taxi arrived on time, at 12.30 and I left in a little cocoon of happiness.

It's no use pretending that I'm not frightened of him going to Zanzibar. It's so far away and so strange.

Sunday December 22 1996

Talking of violence, I see a video advertised 'Motor Race Mayhem'. It consists entirely of racing-cars cashing. It isn't made clear whether they pursue the mangled drivers into casualty. I expect they'd like to.

When Hazel rang as usual, we didn't talk long, as she was thick with flu. Told her about Zanzibar, and she worried me by saying 'rather him than me'. 'Why'? 'The natives are not friendly.' Because I was worried, I idly repeated this to Mary L. who became incandescent with anti-establishment rage, not, of course, hearing the inverted commas. She is under the illusion, as on so many subjects, that only she really understands or appreciates Africa, or Dorothy or the theatre ... when I said to Hazel some time ago that Mary was semi-educated – always an uneasy state – what I really meant was that she is an intelligent arrogant sixth-former, confident that she sees all round every subject and needs the corners rubbed off at a good university. But it's a bit late for that at seventy-six.

No acknowledgement from Roy and Marian of the photo of D. It doesn't occur to them, as it didn't to David Gilmore with those letters, that giving away anything belonging to her or a photo or whatever, is like having a tooth out without anesthetic.

With all K's arranging to do and so on, I am tired. Now I just have S's lunch, and the visit to Janet, and then I can sit down for three days and not speak. I wonder if S. is lunching here – I hope not, for the trouble.

Monday December 23 1996

S. arrived at twelve! with a huge carrier bag, as slim as I've ever seen him and looking very well. No doubt the result of the diet and all that rushing about in *The Alchemist*, raging at the poor cast. I mean, at their quality – they weren't even good enough to profit from any criticism. He had a huge Dixon's carrier in his hand, and I realised at once that my casual remark about the Cavalli CD, had brought his terrific generosity into play. And so it was, a combined CD player, cassette player and radio. It's amazing what a small space it goes into nowadays. They'll end up the size of a deaf-aid. Apart from the C.D. - a treat in itself – characteristically he brought three CD's, the complete Beecham *Bohème*, Bryn Terfel singing Broadway hits, and Cecilia Bartol, a selection of French songs, as it were, lieder – one cassette-player packed up completely and the other is fifteen years old and scratchy, and neither had an aerial for the last two or three years, so no F.M. He set it up for me, knowing my gift for getting the faulty model. Of course he's no idea what a hole the batteries will make in my week's shopping.

So I said did he want lunch here? No he'd booked a table at The Room at Halcyon Hotel. Big double house on Holland Park Avenue, painted a delicate pink, down into the area, done as a garden through a passage and the restaurant opens on the garden at the back. Good space between the tables, at least six feet, good for my ears. The ambience is of a first class restaurant, but the reality is a little different. The wine waitress had a smile and a sentence too many, betraying the sort of customers she must deal with, unless it is just her bad judgment. The (very) young waiters were quiet enough. But really good service must be unobtrusive, not interrupting the conversation, except for certain essentials, choosing one's food for instance. Intimate conversation, with food appearing without any sort of pressure. As for the food itself, cooked by a chef who sent thro' Chez Nico. Hm. My first course was salmon mousse with a little dab of caviar on top, the plate spread with a delicate green-

flecked dressing, edged with a tiny frill of dill, a caper or two the same colour as the dressing. It looked beautiful, but tasted of nothing much. My main course was partridge, braised, for roast partridge is so often dense if not tough. Again it was a pretty picture, tho' a composition less appetizing to me. The partridge breasts in the centre, two blunted cones, one spinach-wrapped, one toasted-bread-crumbed. I tasted the spinach one, - it had inside chestnut puree, the texture of melted toffee and a nasty grey colour, tasting rank. I didn't chance the bread crumbed affair and the partridge was a bit tough and a bit tasteless. It certainly wouldn't have fallen off the bone if there'd been a bone. I had a rather elaborate pudding, ices and fruit. Nobody had said one of the ices was flavoured with prussic acid – a hate of mine, and the slices of mango weren't ripe. S had baby dover sole! and something? and heaps of vegetables. The wine was Cote du Rhone and v. good, thank goodness. So was the conversation.

I asked first about his work plans, while I was still sober enough. He is still doing the Pyjama Game, in June, now. At the moment, he's thinking of Steve Coogan for the lead – a mistake, I think. Is he an ensemble player? Isn't he mut. mut. Peter Sellers? Would he want to do a show eight times a week for months? I doubt it. And although he can sing well enough for a send-up, can he when the audience is expecting an original? If so, why are Sinatra imitators acclaimed as 'perfect', not famous singers in their own right? He also said he's thinking of Liam Neeson. Now that's a better idea. I've never known an Irish man who couldn't sing at least wholeheartedly, - like the Welsh, tho' in a different mode, thus making the most of whatever voice they've got. He might well fancy himself in a musical – most people do these days - and Natasha R. might want to do a play or a film over here. I'll say it again in my thank you letter. Oh, he also suggested Charlotte Cornwell for the steam heat girl. I thought she was a middle-aged character-actress, but it seems she's that stubby girl who shared a flat with Hugh Grant at the beginning of Four Weddings. His other job – I was glad to find that this time there were only two, was The Importance of Being Oscar. (At this point, the wine waitress Germanically smiled in, seeing we were so eager for her company and her comments. She left and S. said that this was the table he always had with Simon Gray, who would just say 'Shut up and go away'.) He says he feels enough distance and time from Michael MacL. He opens in Dublin in March and then Boston, Chicago, New York, in a proper theatre.

We talked of our Christmases. I told him of mine on Saturday and he told me of his with his mother and aunt. They downed the champagne, and he produced a bottle of claret, 1982, I forgot the vineyard, but he foolishly told them it had cost £60 or £80. 'Sixty?!!!!' They tasted it. Aunt: 'Pure vinegar.' Mother: 'They've put something in it.' Took them some Fortnum & Mason crackers, £50 or 6. They kept them to impress the neighbours. Apparently you can get six crackers at Harrods for only £500.

Then he told me about a Jessye Norman recital Jane Glover asked him to go to as her escort, and to supper with J.N. after. He had thought that meant just the two of them, but it turned out to be thirty-two of them. They went round to the reception room, where J.N. kept them all waiting for forty-five minutes. She greeted them with arms flung wide in that conventional gesture of welcome, 'darlings' being hurled round, claimed to love S's work, everything he's ever done, 'tho he was convinced she didn't know who he was. When they got to the restaurant, I think he said Wharton's, but I probably misheard for Walton's – she kept them all waiting another forty-five

minutes. When they were all seated, the manager came in and said that he had to apologise for a delay, as the chef has been tragically knocked down and killed in a road accident and thirty-three of London's finest gripped the edges of the tables to stop the shrieks of laughter. A doctor's wife volunteered and cooked most of the meal ...

Then he happened to go to the Ivy just after Madonna, that American pop star, had been there. As a very good illustration of my description of Americans digging up bulbs to see if they're growing, she hired the upstairs rooms – how I remember it – sent in her own recipes and arrived with – how many security men? – and was televised leaving one of the most individual restaurants in London, having, I presume only used it as publicity. Poor Madonna. S. knows the owners who surely don't need any publicity. They could hardly be fuller, and I don't want Evita's fans at the next table. Sad all round. What on earth would James Agate think.

Over the coffee as usual, for intimacies, with almost everyone, except K and D, we got on to Chris and Peter Gatton. He and Chris sleep together in one or other of their houses but without sex. Peter Gatton? – I have yet to ask him to spell it – he sees at P.G.'s scruffy flat in Deptford – 'nothing works' once a week? And Chris is outraged at his sexual infidelity --- even tonight I cannot remember whether Chris has been sleeping around or not, oh dear. It's the usual trivial, impossible-to-chart-surface-stuff. I don't understand. By the way, he told me Dick Bird's name was Dick Smith and I was too drunk to correct him.

But what an adorable lovable human he is, the warmest kindest person imaginable. Oh don't I know how lucky I am to have him as a friend, and that he sees my very unsaleable qualities, and still loves me.

Went home first and then to Janet's office with a bottle of John Nick's wine. It is a great pleasure to me to have it to give away, and a great help too. She gave me a parcel, which, when I got it home, turned out to be a box of sweet biscuits, some chocolate, a thing she has never seen pass my lips. Ah well. She apologised for it not being more. As if I expected anything. She should never be hard up – I'm still sure she doesn't charge enough. It's a treat to visit the new office, and not an ordeal like the old one. To the New Row Waterstone's for some books, New Boy by William Sutcliffe, a new Val McDermid, Blue Genes, Modern Baptists by James Wilcox, compared, in the notices, to Barbara Pym and Alan Bennett ... Looking for the new Rambert book, I found on the Ballet shelves, Richard Backle on Ballet, his criticisms, published in 1980, marked on the flyleaf, £8.95. Very cheap now for a big book of 400 pages, and on such a subject. Fresh label on the back said £10.95, all right still cheap, but odd. Where has it been all this time, now being presented as new? Tasted it, most entertaining of course. How he must have upset everyone at first. He can jolt you into seeing fresh qualities, and has a very rich range of references. Is he still alive? I think he is. I believe he's the king of procrastination. He's only got to Vol II of his autobiog. I don't suppose we'll have any more – he's a jump older than me.

On his film programme Barry Normal summed up 1996 and the Top Ten Box Office films. I had only seen No. 4, 'Seven', and no. 10, 'Trainspotting', and both were too violent and crude for me.

Tuesday December 24 1996

A programme about the American comedian Sid Caesar. He was very famous in the States in the early days of TV, but by the time he might have been famous here too, he went on to drink and drugs and left the fame to his protégées and followers. Judging by the elderly men – who used to be a generation younger than me – who filed on to the stage after him, Neil Simon, Mel Brooks, Larry Gelbert, and Woody Allen somewhere in reserve, he was an impressive leader and mentor. He seemed not exactly a wreck, but a little removed and remote and said little. I liked Neil Simon describing a walk with Mel Brooks in Central Park, trying to worry thro' to the next week's programme. 'I saw two nuns approaching and I knew Mel was going to say something awful. As the nuns passed he said 'You're not in the sketch'.'

If I had been Sid Caesar, I'd have died rather than been there. But perhaps he wasn't.

Wednesday December 25 1996

There was a three-hour programme about American Ballet Theatre. I taped it because I knew at once it was going to be boring, with nothing and nobody identified. An easy job for the director. I read Richard Buckle during it with the sound off. Later watched Faust with the vision off to forget the assistant pork-butcher and that plump girl from catering with the bad skin who happened to be able to sing Faust and Margarita. Their singing was certainly not good enough to make me turn the vision up again.

Rang Marjorie and Ernie after the Queen's speech as usual and got no answer. I was a bit miffed, as I had said I would ring on my Christmas card and had felt complacently magnanimous at remembering to ring them tho' K wasn't there. It would be, after all, rather vulgar not to ring them. I suppose they're next door, or at Philip's.

K rang from Portugal at 8.45. Their flight was delayed at 2 a.m. Marjorie's in hospital. Went there on Monday because she hasn't eaten anything for four days. Not good news as there's nothing of her to start with. I can't imagine she has much resistance but then, as I told him, you can never tell, either way.

So how were they getting on? Yes, he had had some presents, a bottle of delicious Portuguese liqueur and a bottle of scotch. Yes, I see, there's someone a bit crass, as if Ernie gave Arlete something Portuguese he didn't understand. He put Arlete on to wish me a Happy Christmas and she went on and said Kevin passed out and hit his head! He took the phone from her and told her she wasn't supposed to say that and he'd tell me himself. He knows how much I feel any illness or whatever. Silly of her really. He told me they take up to the bedroom a metal bowl with a burning log off the fire – no central heating, tho' it's been quite chilly and pouring – which does the trick well. However, he went to pee and the smoke got to him and he fell and passed out and bruised his head. It must have been a bump through all that hair. I do hope he can tell me whether metal bowls are par for the course or lower middle class... could I get two note books like this one, as Arlete wants to keep a diary in Zanzibar. I

shall be really interested, as a character point, whether she does. Even every other day.

I am sad about Marjorie but all the same I hope it does mean the beginning of the end. I hate poor Ernie devoting his whole life to a broken inert body. I cannot see the point of it, any more than I have patience with parents with a child who can neither speak, see, hear or understand.

I enjoyed my lunch of smoked salmon thoroughly. Still buoyed up by the pleasure of not having our ghastly family Christmas lunch. Tonight I had a guinea-fowl, which is in some ways, more to my taste than pheasant. At twelve-thirty I came down and finished it, just as I knew I would.

Thursday December 26 1996

I looked forward to the film of the Matthew Bourne Swan Lake, running so strongly at the Piccadilly. It's now being advertised as the longest running ballet of all time. Amusing, as ballet is mostly in repertoire, or in monthly or so seasons. The run it has beaten seems to be the Diaghilev 'Sleeping B' in 1921, which, by the way, was a failure. I enjoyed the film very much, tho' I can't understand the claim that it isn't a gay ballet. Well, I don't know, but if an unhappy young prince spends all his time with his mother, the Queen, and then goes out into a wood and meets a bare-chested Swan Prince, who dances with him, rubbing his cheek against the Prince's chest and then later at the ball, they dance with three or four girls each, looking over the poor girls' shoulders to see how jealous they're making each other, you do begin to suspect that it's on the gay side. It has a determinedly unhappy ending, so they're not left together. The Swan Prince is Adam Cooper, possibly the most definitely hetro-sexual dancer in the western world, so any awkward difficulties are smoothed over for the audience that has made it a success. Never mind all that, it kept me touched and amused. There is a lot of successful invention and occasionally more than that. I think Matthew B. should haul back on his use of arm movements. Adam Cooper is a real star.

Friday December 27 1996

It snowed. About an inch, which had gone by the time I went out to the shops at six. But when I first opened the curtains, I wished Arlete could have seen it, that light fall which doesn't smother everything but outlines and emphasises. The canellia leaves just duplicated in the snow – magical, the footprints in the pavement and the different light.

William Sutcliffe's New Boy went down at one gallop. My definition of well-written. Aged, 25 first novel. I look forward. There is some fruitful complexity here, unusual in someone so young. Really cold.

Saturday December 28 1996

Am I hibernating? Went to bed at twelvish. Had a welsh rarebit snack at 1.30. Woke at 9.0 because of workmen next door. Read the papers. Snoozed for an hour or two as it seemed, and surfaced at 3.45. Cut bit out of travel section of Independent. Trouble spots. Only five, one of which was Tanzania, so I must show him. Oh dear. I wish I wasn't so fearful.

Oh, rang Roy and had a lovely talk. When I said How was your holiday, meaning the week in the Canaries, he started to describe their Christmas. No, I said. 'Oh, haven't I rung you about that holiday?' No, they hadn't. They had appreciated the photograph and are thinking of having it framed. He actually asked whether it was the one in the hall that I'd.... What incredible lack of perception even Roy can be capable of, that I could give away any image of D. forever. Now you see K would always understand that...

Sharron to dinner tomorrow. I long to see her, but I rather dread getting the dinner nowadays. The coffee-beans are six months old, and the cafetiere no doubt covered in grease fumes.

Sunday December 29 1996

Different dream... K and living together, here, more or less, Lalla staying, Pat Routledge coming round! Put tape on of herself singing Danny Boy, beehive hair and pale lipstick, a la 60's, a look P.R. never had. Rushing noise like coke tumbling down. Balcony balustrade gone and garden bare with streaming water. Down in what was more M. Rd dining-room, windows blown in. Pat and Lalla getting ready to go out, - to church perhaps? Not impossible, I can quite imagine P.R. in a Methodist congregation. What I can't imagine is what the dream means. I think a good proof that dreams mean nothing.

Sharron came to dinner for the first time since the summer. She was in much better spirits and therefore much better company. Her love-life sounds healthier, less desperate, not just on the rebound. She is amusingly naïve sometimes. Out for the evening with a cockney carpenter, she parted from him with the words 'The 73 bus goes from there', when he expected to be asked in and was understandably miffed. Though not understandably to Sh. Mushroom and anch., grilled salmon, and an apple pie she brought - and a lot of laughter. By a stroke of irony, K rang at 9.30 while we were still at dinner. He'd been up to L'pool. The news is not good, she's in a mental hospital. 'Lying on a flat bed, looking dead already, with her mouth open, - she didn't want to know me, seeing her like that. It's severe depression, seems to have come on after her birthday. Tomorrow they're giving her ECT treatment.' I wonder if the birthday was the trigger - I don't want to live to another b'day like that. He sounded all right - of course they'll depend on him. I told him Sharron was there and he said 'Don't ring Ernie and tell Sharron not to.' Rather unnecessary, as neither of us was thinking of it, but you get like that at such times. 'Ernie's O.K.' I expect so. Lack of imagination is a help. He's put Zanzibar off for a week, til the 8th. I wouldn't be surprised to hear she was dead.

After Sharron left, I had such a mixture of feelings. I'll only list the selfish ones. The others go without saying. First, satisfaction that he called me to pour it all out.

Second, relief that he's not going to Zanzibar quite yet, both for doing without him and the danger. (Did I record that Tanzania is listed in the danger-spots in the Independent?) The usual disgusting pleasure in another's pain and misfortune, because it isn't you. Which is why funerals go with more zip than weddings.

She's always been a woman for appearance and I'm sure finds her situation repulsive. 'If Nigel came back from Australia she'd freak out.' She might die quite quickly, and I hope she will

Monday December 30 1996

Yes, the irony – Sharron heard me say 'Give my love to Arlete'. However, she did not lose her spirits as she would have done a year ago.

It's going to get really cold. Poor Arlete, just as she was getting away to the heat, I think snow won't be so romantic after the next few weeks.

So Hazel got a card from Penny Keith and Roddy. I didn't. Shades of Hilary Pym. Mind you, I haven't sent them one, lately.

Thora Hird's *This is My Life* conveyed nothing of the completely self-obsessed bore, intent on getting her own way, and talking ceaselessly on and off stage, of herself, so that, in exhaustion everyone gave in. I was disgusted that the Archbishop of York appeared, and disappointed that Victoria Wood joined in. Alan B., who has written most of her best work did not appear or send a message. I was pleased. Pat Routledge is another Thora.

Mary L. told me that ECT destroys bits of yr. memory and thus reduces depression, by getting rid of some of its sources. Hm.

Tuesday December 31 1996

Very cold. Went to South Ken. Waterstone's for some more books. The biography of Yves Saint Laurent, much talked about on the wireless the other day. Three new detective stores, Mike Ripley, and two other – they're in the bedroom and I can't get up – Oh yes. Minette Walters.

Neil rang from California. He knows that he should have rung before he went back in November, when he'd promised to take me out to dinner. He is hard up, but finds it difficult to say so.

Roy rang. So good to have him back, because he is one of the few who rings me up just to tell me something funny. Then Janet rang. Never a quiet moment.

K rang at sevenish, to wish me a Happy New Year. Told him that ECT was not physically painful. Each time I said this, there was a long pause, as if he didn't believe me, very unlike him. 'How are you?' 'All right.' 'Do you want to come over?' I interpreted this as an attempt to do what we've always done, but I was fairly

sure he wasn't in the mood to cook dinner and talk and laugh. And I don't relish going out now on any Bank Holiday, let alone this one. I can't think he'd get a cab for me on NYE. So I said No. I hope I was right. I think he's probably a bit shocked, seeing his mother like that. I took the opportunity to say that Arlete might use the next few days to write to University College, so that the answer would be there when they got back and he was vague about that too. I'm beginning to wonder if he's serious about her going to a university. He would have made her write before now! Well. He'd've made me... Told me Marjorie had had the first shock and did improve, but has now relapsed.

Spent the evening listening to music again, Beethoven's last quartets, Mack and Mabel, Fille Mal Gardée. I hope I was right not to go.

Wednesday January 1 1997

Very, very cold. Stayed in all day. Unusually felt claustrophobic for a time. A letter from Ronald Wood, Derrick M's friend, who helps him with any business. Enclosed a cheque from Carlton for me, for £50, but made out to Derrick Marr Ltd, of course no longer trading. Could I deal with it? 'Derrick always speaks very warmly of you.' Fancy.

I don't know, but it seems to me, that Marjorie's condition is a sign of giving up. Played Swan Lake again and read the John Harvey. He is an excellent, if a little harsh, discovery.

Thursday January 2 1997

Notice of Carmen on Ice. Sent it to S. with a rebuke for lack of vision in only mounting a black Carmen. I love to think of the broiling Spanish sun blazing down...

Rang Ronald Wood and had a jolly talk. 'I've known Derrick for forty years and he's always had a problem for every solution. Tells me that, with a little persuasion from him, Derrick has decided to go to S's doctor. Rang Derrick and didn't mention the cheque. He didn't mention the doctor.

John Major was a circus child and ran away to become an accountant.

Friday January 3 1997

A drawing in The Spectator, a man reads off an aerosol can of spray paint 'Preferred by seven out of ten mindless vandals'.

Another offer of an American Express card. Encouraging in a way, as I thought there was supposed to be computers bursting with intimate financial details of us all, all over the world. They can't be v. accurate, as I have absolutely no chance of an A.E. card, with no money, no bank and no income support.

Someone on the news talking about traffic, said Is London heading for a complete gridlock? Why is it a question? Of course it is. It is comic seeing them avoiding the inevitable conclusion that selfish people will have to be less selfish with their cars.

K rang this p.m., 'Oh, I thought you were working'. 'I was, but Mum died last night, so I'm not'. She had a stroke. What a blessing, a quick end to all her suffering. I think I'm right that she had given up. 'Do you want to talk?' 'No.' The funeral will be next week, I hope early enough to let him get to Zanzibar, even more needed now. The trouble is it's too far to go for less than a fortnight. Perhaps he can extend it the other end. After all, it's friends, not a hotel. I said – anything I can do and so on. He was very quiet. I am a little surprised that he cancelled the work. I wouldn't have. – I didn't. Not that I think he's wrong, we all have to decide for ourselves at these times. K. loved her and was maddened by her in probably equal proportions. It's his first really close death and that's always a shock. Poor Arlete too.

Saturday January 4 1997

I thought about him and Ernie all evening, and about 1.30 a.m. just before I lay down, scribbled on a bit of paper, 'Those extraordinary suburban marriages. With both disappointed and yet struggling together, in a way that we would die rather than undergo.' Yes, it's certainly true that Marjorie was disappointed in her marriage. A certain bitterness and a feline malice were certainly to be perceived in her from her very first remark to me, when she met me at Lime St. station with the car. Difficult to believe that she could once drive or go out alone. I'd expected Ernie and recognised her by her likeness to K. I asked what Ernie looked like. 'Thirty-seven going on sixty-five'. She had a light quiet voice, but which could yet insert a needle between K's ribs at exactly the right place. He told me that there was a time when he hated her. When he moved away, of course, things improved. She had more than the usual dose of suburban social ambitions in clothes and so on, with the usual suburban inability to recognise the best she thought she was aspiring to. For example, I gave K. a suit I couldn't get into any more, a dark grey worsted with an only just discernible self-check – delicate squares – from Carr Son and Woor in Savile Row. It still looks more or less new after forty years. He wore it to a family wedding – he still went to them then. There is a photo of him looking furious. He was sickened by the expense which he knew the uncle and aunt couldn't afford. However, the point is that his mother cried when she saw the suit, because you must have a light-coloured suit for a wedding in their circles. Light = show the dirt = affording an impracticable garment. She could not alas recognise the sort of suit worn in the sort of society she was sort of aiming at. That is the negative side.

All the same, she had a spark in her which in Kevin is a flame. Of course she envied that flame, which is why they crossed swords. She was good company, could be funny, could be curiously hilariously naïve, like K, had a pretty laugh, often using it, and was very brave about the terrible progress of her illness, never burdening you with it implicitly or explicitly. What she was like alone with Ernie, I don't know, but nobody could blame her if she lost her temper. And she had a temper, again like K. Ernie has done everything all these years, and although he is the epitome of a small man, both in body and mind, yet I admire so much his uncomplaining shouldering of

all that work and responsibility and grinding routine, that I couldn't begin to match. I am sorry I shan't hear that fluting L'pool voice again.

I have been thinking about him most of the day, and I realise that, although he is the person I know best in the world, I don't at all know how he is taking, or will take, this death. Cancelling the C4 thing was a surprise to me. He has very strong feelings and takes care not to stir them up carelessly. I wait.

Sunday January 5 1997

No word yet.

I suppose Hazel values our Sunday phone calls for a bit of metropolitan chat. I may be wrong.

I am enjoying the life of Yves Saint Laurent, within limits. I have always been interested in the technique and organisation of the fashion world and this book gives me some clues.

I have abandoned one 'thriller' by someone called Maginn, and am much repelled by a book taking a carefully pessimistic view of the London of 1996, tho' he seems to me to be describing the London of some nine or ten years ago. Everything for him is soiled or corrupt and he spells his Christian name on the title-page, Mike, to prove it.

Monday January 6 1997

The extreme cold has slightly retreated. I ran out of whisky last night so decided to go to bed when I felt drowsy, which I did about tenish. A great mistake, as I woke at ten past three. There is no doubt that that is the sort of time at which it's easy to die.

On that young critics prog. 'Movie watch' all students, they praised 'Shine' – 'the music was stunning' – oh well – but 'I never knew what was going to happen next'. Gracious, I could have predicted every scene. If I hadn't been with Janet, I would have done aloud.

Still no word. I must leave it to him.

Tuesday January 7 1997

Finished, or rather lavishly skipped, the life of Yves S. Laurent. Many chapters were entirely about business and finance. Of course I ought to have been warned by the blurb which told me that the author had spent ten years on the Financial Times. I suppose YSL has done little in his life except design dresses, drink, drug and laze about in Marrakesh and I know a great deal of money is necessary for him to be able to do that. But as he has obviously had absolutely nothing to do with the business or the actual gathering of the money, as far as I can tell, it shouldn't loom so large in his

autobiog. She had to make a book and knows more about money than fashion. A disappointment.

Another Tory sex scandal, a gay one, this time. The MP denies it all, but as he's an obscure back-bencher with no political post, one might think the young man would have chosen somebody more illustrious to expose, if he's just a fraud. More money. If the MP's love-letters are genuine, his denial of sex seems v. unlikely. Especially as he is 'never out of the gym'. The young man seems everything of a bad bargain, rather cheap and rather epicene good looks – he looks exactly as I imagine all those clerks who gave evidence in the Wilde trial. And he's training to be a tax accountant – oh the glamour.

12.30 a.m.

Oh, I wish he would ring, but I know he has a good reason.

Wednesday January 8 1997

He rang at fourish. He's been in Liverpool all the time, taking Arlete with him. He sounded alright and was so sweet and loving. 'Your letter came and it was lovely'. There was a post mortem, because - I don't know with what evidence – there was a suspicion of suicide. The cause of death on the certificate was dear old bronchial pneumonia, a stroke and severe depression. Enough to kill you. 'A lot of funny things - just to give you a taste, the woman who made up the certificate was completely pissed.' I suppose it had been a wedding before. The funeral is a week today so Zanzibar is off, though they could go some other time as Pete S. still rents the house. Nigel is flying back from Australia, and K. is meeting him off the plane at five o'clock tomorrow morning. Ugh. Rang various people to give them news. I felt relieved to get things settled, as I was in a bit of limbo, not knowing where he was or what was happening. Warned him that Ernie might have a strong reaction to his release from ten or fifteen years of caring.

Forgot to record from Simon's lunch, that he claimed to have drop-foot, as he skipped into the restaurant.

Watched a fascinating prog. about the Namibian desert. How lovely and empty Namibia sounds, three times the size of the U.K. but with only one and half million people. In a discussion on the gay M.P. a presenter began, 'Now tell me, is at bottom...?' I see Newman Flower, head of Cassells, has died. It was his wedding reception which Arnold Bennett left early to go home and die of typhoid.

I hate to think of all that that poor little woman must have been through in the last week or two, and after all those years of suffering.

Thursday January 9 1996

To film with Janet, 'Ridicule', a charming French film set in the 18th century, done as only the French can do 'period' films. Authenticity lightly worn, subtlety of dialogue

and acting, grown-up emotions most enjoyable. Even in French films, people don't wear hats enough.

Watched *School Ties* this afternoon that I taped last night. Not bad. Brendan Fraser is a good actor, better and more interesting than his side-kick, Chris O'Donnell, who has since become more successful. Probably nowadays because he is less interesting, like Tom Cruise. Set in a public-school type school in U.S. Many umbrellas on display - It was set in the sixties - when walking between various bits of the school, made me wonder what we did at Uppingham. It was, I think, quite a twenty minute walk down a hill and up a hill, exposed between fields, two, three or four times a day and I don't remember umbrellas. I don't even remember macs or overcoats, but I suppose we must have had them or we would have been soaked and frozen. So much for youth memories being so much more vivid. Gloves?

Friday January 10 1997

Am gradually going through my cassettes. Found a very suitable occasion, and played it at last. The occasion was the meeting of some Barbara Pym fans, to be addressed, I had thought, by Hazel and Hilary P. What appears on the tape, are a few sentences from each of them, embedded in a lot of trivial exchanges between the two female organisers, and a rather silly finish with Henry Harvey. A very poor advertisement for Barbara P, if you didn't know the novels already. Though that is not to say that B.P. couldn't have made a good chapter out of it, especially the two organisers elephantinely flirting with H.H. I'm glad I lied at the time to Hazel.

Oh, dear, Glenda Jackson. She is giving a very determined perf. of dowdiness, cropped hair dyed an unlikely brown with a dash of henna, poorish teeth, no make-up and the usual abrasive manner. I find it self-conscious. Simple integrity and application would be enough, with a well-groomed appearance for pleasure. I was always a bit suspicious of her as an actress.

Saturday January 11 1997

On the morning children's programme, *Live and Kicking*, one of the presenters was in a conventional dressing-gown, for a reason I now forget. The other female presenter said it was 'Very Noel Coward'

In another series, very American, where there was a question of a dramatic career for one of the characters, the comfort given was 'Even Kenneth Branagh had to start somewhere.'

Amusing concatenation. Film about killer bees, a ridiculous subject, called *Deadly Invasion*, raised bumps of stings on most faces. Helen Mirren in a serial-killer-my husband? film, her face with three or four raised moles, like stings. On the third channel, *Midnight Sting*.

On the front of the *Independent*, a rather unexpectedly large photo of Darcy Bussell. Now I'm all for dance or any other art being on the front page. However, I think this

was a last-minute substitution of a paragraph that had to be scrapped. Because the caption under the picture read Darcy Bussell, who plays the Swan Queen in Swan Lake, by Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, dances by Petipa, at Covent Garden Theatre in West London. I take it the assistant sports reporter was conscientiously coping with an emergency.

Sunday January 12 1997

The Noël immortality continues. A profile of the painter, Maggi Hambling, had 'I'll see you again' as back ground without anyone mentioning it.

Jennifer Saunders and Joanna Lumley are to appear in an episode of Roseanne as Edina and Patsy from Absolutely Fabulous. Roseanna herself owns the American rights, but US TV is too strait-laced to finance it for a major channel. So this is the stop-gap. Edina is in P.R. and is trying to get Roseanne to back 'a Jackie Kennedy theme park. 'We are going to clone hundreds and thousands of Jackies. I've bought the DNA. It will be like Jurassic park'.

Rang K. to ask, as I had to, for an address to send flowers to, not that I could afford it. No answer, rang his mobile, which that wretched woman said was switched off.

Possible plot for Roy, the island of Fetlar, on the outskirts of the Shetlands has a population of ninety-seven. There has been no crime of any kind within living memory. Until now, when there has been a sudden rush of bricks through windows, little fires, burglaries, nothing lethal but they're looking round at each other.

K. rang back at ten past eight, Ernie wants no flowers. I misjudged him. K and Arlete go to L'pool on Tuesday for the funeral on Wed. Nigel went up yesterday. He's still a bit stunned and it's Arlete's b'day tomorrow. Poor Arlete... I feel he's feeling a lot but saving it for when I see him. He won't be showing it up there, I hope, what with one thing and another. Between Nigel, Ernie and Phil, with their lesser feelings.

Monday January 13 1997

43,000 children run away from home every year. I suppose most of them are only away for a short time, but it seems a big total. I would have done, if I'd had more courage and it hadn't been wartime.

Oh, I bought some more books yesterday, another John Harvey, the new biography of James Stewart, a book about horse training, The Man Who Listens to Horses, about which I'd read an intriguing notice, and at last I found a copy of '101 Dalmatians'. The Waterstone's in Ken. High St. never seemed to have one despite the new film.

I see Antonioni has directed a new film for the first time for twelve or fifteen years. He's had a stroke. Just a clip, and the usual miasma of acute boredom rose about me. Oh how we suffered thro' L'Avventura, and didn't he do the 'The Blow-Up'?

Tuesday January 14 1997

Woke rather early, so had an extra hour to fill. Read 101 Dalmatians. Hm. A strong narrative sense, of course, and some charm and the qualities that made her plays a success. But all soured for me with the unpleasant dogs are more faithful etc etc than people. The obsession that made her life rather repulsive for me, too. It is difficult to like immature emotional cripples. 'The Man Who Listens to Horses' has none of that, and is so far entirely delightful and wise, about people as well as horses. He has been much taken up by the Queen. Another example of her good judgment.

Funny conversation with Roy who has still not sent his film script. 'I'm sending it now.' He found he had no copy and had to print one out. He has his own photocopier. How odd to think of a few years ago.

Wednesday January 15 1997

Really quite a thick fog. The penny papers made a stab at 'pea soup'. If only they knew! The last real fog in 1952 made me lose my way going from Her Majesty's back to Kingly St. I turned along Piccadilly instead of up Regent Street.

Roy's film script, Whitehall 1212, arrived. 132 pages on both sides of the paper, for cheaper postage, but not, of course, as it would be professionally presented. Not bad at all, though one or two speeches a little too overt, getting into a bit of a lecturing tone. I made some notes of the various period mistakes. I was surprised that he didn't seem to know that 'sick' for 'ill' was an Americanism. The war-time mistakes are more understandable and one of the reasons why he wanted me to look at it. 'It's only the red warning alert. Don't worry' ... I said 'The siren went and the bombs fell. That was the only warning.' Red alert indeed, that shows what careful research, coupled with imagination, can still mistake. The chief character throws a more or less whole packet of cigarettes to a more or less non-smoker, twice...

Rang him to relay my opinion and my notes and was amused that even for nowadays, bookish Roy was surprised that I got the script in the post, read it, made notes, and rang him by twelve o'clock. What is it nowadays, that people read so slowly? I expect they were taught by the 'latest' methods. Such a dear letter with the script, 'Your Opinion is of great value to me and not simply because you're the only person I know old enough to remember the events described.'

Another little girl missing, name Kayleigh. Where do they find these names?

Turned on the television-set and found a modern-looking sitcom. Very bright colour etc and what looked like Marion Lorne. No surely not. But it was, and not only her, Agnes Moorhead, Maurice Evans and Estelle Winwood. Heavens, it looked like a supernatural event. I suppose the freshness of the print and it being an episode and not a film, gave it a worrying immediacy, but I could hardly think of anything else but him and his strange, moving and possibly exasperating day. Thank goodness he's older and doesn't get so easily outraged by stupidity and tastelessness. I am sorry for dear Arlete, coming in for this so early in their time together.

Thursday January 16 1997

Woman interviewed on This Morning had two small buns on either side of the top of her head with a length of brown material – a scarf? threaded round them in an x shape. Like a cartoon Brummhilde.

To the film with Janet, another version of Portrait of a Lady. Considerably botched, with everyone taking each other's tone, with far too many 'natural' pauses in a series of identically dim antique strewn rooms. Nicole Kidman is not without talent, but is over-parted!

K rang while I was out. Rang him Saturday. Heaven.

Friday January 17 1997

Australian soap dialogue 'I'm Darren and you're gorgeous'.

Had to go and pick up a 'packet' from the P.O. at Ravenscourt Park. I thought it might be some spare CD's from S. but it turned out to be Snowdon's Book of the Theatre Photo with an introduction by S. Interesting. It's a survey of the theatre from 1954–1996, called a 'personal view' and about eight coffee table-size closely printed pages. Fair, balanced. To someone my age, it is good to have someone say that the theatre was not a desert before 1956 and that Look Back in A. wasn't a very good play. I have never thought J.O.'s gifts were primarily dramatic.

One really bad bloomer in his analysis of Binkie, to whom he is also fair. He charts, quite rightly, the changing balance of power, with the rise of the subsidized theatres, and also rightly, cites that ill-fated What the Butler Saw with Ralph R and Coral B, booed on the first night, as an example of Binkie losing touch with playwrights and audience. Unfortunately he calls it B's last production. It would be a neat finish to the Binkie section, but it wasn't his last prod. That was five years on, A Private View at The Vaudeville and D was in it. Binkie died during it. If it was just a mistake in a list, or a casual mention, it wouldn't be so bad, but it's a big peg for the end of his argument. I seem to have a race memory that I corrected this error at some point. Bother.

Saturday January 18 1997

I am writing again with new pen, but will have to take it back, as it leaks, not onto the page, but onto the bit you hold, hence into the cap, sometimes enough to make a drop on the page if turned upside down. Now at £85 that is bad!

The old pen. What a scream. There's an article in the Telegraph about the drug problem in – Bournemouth. Well, as a councillor said defensively, 'It's about as bad as Torquay and not as bad as Brighton'. I can well believe that B'mouth is pleasanter than Scunthorpe to be a drug-addict, - the climate for one thing and comparative lack

of pollution and so on, but of course it hardly fits B'mouth's image. But the real joke is that the main picture, of a curve of Victorian houses, out of focus behind a big close-up of a street sign, and its Boscome Crescent. If you went to the road just seen in the middle of the crescent, Walpole Rd, some twenty yards and turned left, the second house facing you in Randolph Rd, a big detached Victorian house, on three floors, is the first house I remember. A nineteen year old was found dead in St John's churchyard, which I passed every day of my life. Perhaps someone's dying of an overdose in my night nursery at this moment.

Later.

I am back a little earlier than usual because they were both rather tired! They'd been to a party! or some sort of get together to do with Music House. Aaron was there and when K said someone at the funeral had said You must be the youngest brother, Aaron said Only yr. mother would say that, and then realised. 'Have you ever seen a black man blush?' Arlete was hungover enough not to drink, which of course didn't help her to sparkle. Very unlike life, little silences would have fallen if I hadn't kept going, after he'd told about the funeral. I think his tiredness was to do with the last three weeks. That didn't stop him rising to a delicious dinner, chicken a la kiev, savoury sauce – lovely, or telling. He registered the death to be greeted by an Ealing comedy cameo. Of a certain age, very much made-up, stinking of gin at eleven in the morning, her professionally hushed tones interrupted by titanic sneezes, needing a trip to the filing-cabinet for a clean hanky, displaying distinct interest in Ernie's having become a widower and leaving them with 'I've signed it Joan Conway (smile) I'm Joan (sneeze).' K's acceptance of it all is perfect. My own, and I can't say better than that. 'I met Nigel at Heathrow. He burst into tears, and cried on my shoulder. I stroked his head, and he said, 'She's not coming back is she?' and I said 'No, she's dead'. Later, at the funeral parlour □Everyone had said 'oh she looks so peaceful and beautiful, now she's out of pain'. I went in, and she looked like shit, so I stopped Nigel going in.□

Only one jarring remark from Aunty Pat, when Ernie brought in Marjorie's will... she left everything to Ernie, of course. 'I suppose 'everything' is a thousand or two. I don't know, perhaps more, as she's had so little chance to spend anything poor dear.'

Phil organised the funeral. Good, just his line. There were 150 roses on the coffin and 150 guests got one to take away. The whole affair sounded quite pleasant and well done. Another little cameo of Ernie trying to avoid hiring another limousine, 'Couldn't they squeeze in?'... No, he's all right. He said he'd take me to the Ivy next week. 'Do you want any cash?' I left at eleven and I'm sure they collapsed in affectionate exhaustion.

Sunday January 19 1997

Janet rang to say that Peter had found my engagement diary in the 20th Century Fox studio. Dropped out of my overcoat pocket. Good. Not that there's any engagements in it these days.

Monday January 20 1997

A more active day than I usually manage. To get my pension at Hammersmith and pay £20 income tax, then to have my pen looked at, was a bit early, so rode up to Holloway Rd with my Evening Standard, back to the pen shop, where they gave me a new pen, but not the inside bit, which I would have thought would be the bit that was leaking. However it seems all right so far.

Then up to Baker Street to see new film 'Sleepers'. Left when a Catholic Priest was asked to perjure himself in a Court of Law, by swearing that two young men had been with him and not doing a murder, a murder which they had in fact committed and the priest knew they'd committed, and the Priest agreed so to swear. The film was a great success in the U.S. Robert de Niro, one of their most respected actors, Dustin Hoffman and Brad Pitt in comparatively small parts, and alphabetical billing, - I suppose they're under the impression that they're in an art film. Really. Americans, they've no idea what they're doing, when they grasp the first easy advantage. The shallowness is frightening. Moral anarchy seems not far away.

On the way back to the Waterstone's in New Row, for the Christopher Wood biog, Tennessee W. ditto, a memoir of Gerald Durrell, two detective stories, no, three. Did some shopping among the smarties in Tesco and home, quite pleased that I was no tireder than I was.

Tuesday January 21 1997

Hideous Weng tomorrow. Found out that the Durrell house in Bournemouth, was in Parkstone, not a part I knew then or now. He describes a wonderful garden, big enough for twenty bungalows to be built on it, which of course is exactly what happened. I just remember such gardens, already endangered by 1935. The one we had a garden-party in, now has four hideous blocks of flats with twenty or so flats in each. It's extraordinary to think that it was on Sea Rd about a hundred yards from the sea. It gave you a glimpse of B'mouth in its rich Victorian heyday, in space, at any rate, like the Vict. Riviera it echoed.

Woke up early, 4.30, feeling stifled and slightly panicky. Too many clothes, of course, now it's milder. During the cold spell, I had to bring the bananas up from the unheated dining-room. They would not ripen properly and tasted like hard dispirited turnips. A cooked chicken lasts me four days.

Later.

Sharron rang at ten thirty. Good, and we had a long jolly talk - even better. She was in real spirits for the first time for ages. That PR woman has real connections, if she is to be believed - Liberty's vogue, Harvey Nick's etc, etc, etc and really likes Sharron's work ISITBB. Not in proper room yet, but doesn't seem to mind. No particular man. Also good.

Wednesday January 22 1997

Weng interview without Weng! An Indian lady whose accent made it difficult to hear in the middle of an office with other interviews around. The tax from 88/89 that I have been paying back at £5 a week, they now want in total and Court was mentioned. I have nothing. I feel it unfair as this tax came on me three years after I had thought everything settled and K had paid off my overdraft and the accountants had said there was nothing more owing. The Indian lady said if I had set something aside.... By the time I received the demand I had been out of work for three years. There is no more to be said of interest. If K. cannot help me, goodness knows.

After the boring three-quarters of an hour, went up to Waterstone's and bought Antony Holden's biog. of Tchaikovsky, two detective stories, and an atlas, a nice easy family atlas. Foreign parts have very little reality to me.

Thursday January 23 1997

Still mild. To film with Janet, 'Carla's Song'. I was a fool to go as it was Ken Loach. What a hopeless old left wing romantic he is! Two demotic characters shouting at each other simultaneously at the very pitch of their lungs, fuck every other word, is his idea of piercing, gritty reality. When you actually need to hear what they say, his touch is less sure! And the usual lack of economic or human 'reality'. They go off to Nicaragua for an unspecified time on a recently sacked bus driver's savings. Rushing to find his love later in Nicaragua, he drops his pack and hijacks a bus to go and find her. For his exit from the film his pack is on his shoulder. It is not explained how he gets back to Scotland without the passport and the money and the clothes that would certainly have been stolen by the gallant left wing peasants. He is such a chump.

On the way out, - Frances was there, too, - and taxis were on again. But they wandered all the way to Portland Place from Soho Sq. as if we couldn't get a taxi. Dozens. Now I have no right to be irritated - the taxi home is a treat to which I cannot possibly contribute, and we walked to leave Francis near to her flat. I think my irritation was most from my v. strong wish to exit decisively and get home quickly. Beggars can't be choosers.

Friday January 24 1997

To sum up, Ken Loach, I mean. I can't stand sentimentality of any kind and least of all 'Left Wing' 'gritty' 'sentimentality'.

Another of those days when I had decided to go to a film in Baker St, and just went to shop instead. Heavens, at this rate, I'll be having good days and bad days. Rang Roy and got Marian and we had a lovely little chat. I must try and forge more of a friendship with her separately. She still says 'Roy isn't here'. And I love talking to her, sometimes more than Roy! I'd rung to tell him about Billy Connolly saying he was nervous about appearing before a London audience after a big gap and would he have anything to say, but, as long as catholic priests are shagging little girls there'll always be material! He's grown his beard again, good. Well, he makes me laugh.

Saturday January 25 1997.

Dozed in bed for the first time since the fierce cold, no heat in bedroom., read the Sunday papers and dozed again. Lovely.

No letter from hideous Weng, he certainly takes his time. Hazel rang today because her stepmother's in hospital, saying she's dying. A bit of a chest, 88, but it needs a quarter of an hour drive there and back. Tells me the PLR payment has come in, £2,500. There have been 140,000 borrowings of her detective stories. I asked whether each book was particularized. They are, and her first book is the one most borrowed. Hm. Tom's are much the same and his childhood poems are still occasionally taken out. The stepmother won't eat the hospital food, not surprisingly, but not what Hazel brings her either.

Watched a bit of Blind Date. If only they'd let the people speak for themselves! One young man did and they left it in. 'I have my own group.' Cilla B. 'What's it called?' 'Aunty Mabel.' 'Do you write some of the songs?' 'Yes, the favourite is Tank Top Disco Queen'.

Still suffering from the noise next door. How long ago the Russian Church chanting seems!

John N. rang to see 'on very short notice', if I were free for dins. tomorrow. I am, but said no. It is sad to me to think I once had lunch with him every fortnight.

Sunday January 26 1997

D's b'day, 83. Strange. Finished The Hottest State by Ethan Hawke. Not half bad, no doubt autobiographical tormented love, but well and plainly written, with none of the usual American pretentiousness or sentimentality. I am pleased, as he's also a good actor.

Hazel rang again in a slight state about her stepmother. It seems she was a bit short with her, and felt guilty. She said she did her duty, but no more, 'after all, she's ...' and so on.

I was quite pleased she could tell me. I think she needs a few lessons in not being guilty for nothing

Halfway thro' the Ingleby life of Christopher Wood – very well done, intriguing. A mention without identification, of a French-novel, I suppose, that I'd never heard of, let alone the general reader, Les Anwars de Raspoutine. I was amused by the author, quite straight-faced, following the picture of C. Wood consorting with Cocteau, Tony Gandarillas et al and smoking opium every night, obtained in Marseille, Montmartre, the Riviera and so on with, on their return to London, 'Certain hard drugs could be obtained in London under the counter at a tea-shop in Richmond.'

I must say, C Wood's affairs remind me of S. and others, all five minutes and fast forward; even Ben and Winifred Nicholson, such a solid married couple to C., yet divorced a year after his death, still in their thirties. He strikes me as a shallow man, yet even I can see the merits of his work. That has always puzzled and interested me. How often an artist is a rather contemptible light-weight human being. Perhaps there's isn't room for personal weight.

Monday January 29 1997

Tuesday January 28 1997

I felt strangely tired and in a little cloud yesterday, - hungover no doubt in some new geriatric way. Only event yesterday, K rang and I was able to tell him about the tax at last. 'Do you think you could afford to pay it?' Monday for dinner. I'll say not the Ivy, quite expensive enough. He is my rock.

Have now started Antony Holden's Life of Tchaikovsky. Am much amused to hear that T., asked at the Conservatoire to conduct for the first time, went to a friend, apparently in all seriousness, and said he was very afraid to conduct, in case his head fell off. And it seems that for four or five years after, whenever he conducted, he held his head on with the other hand.

Wednesday January 29 1997

Television shows an edition of Pathé News from 1957 every day. It's odd to have the ordinary change of any cinema one went to in one's thirties presented as an antique. I was struck today by the crowd at the football match. Much bigger than today, all standing in a vast bank of faces, from a huge height to within ten yards of the pitch with no fences, no police, nothing between them and the game and never have I seen them move.

Today I was not in the least surprised to hear that West Ham fans, after their team was beaten, blocked – was it Arsenal? from leaving. The coach was delayed for an hour. I wasn't clear whether it was the coach who trains them, or the coach with the players in. Either way it is a sinister development which doesn't surprise me at all. 'Playing the game' and not caring about winning, isn't such a bad idea, you know.

Thursday January 30 1997

Card from dear Tim in Derby, just about to open as Falkland in The Rivals. They play at Derby, and then go to the Walnut St. theatre in Philadelphia. 'Do you know it?' Well, not actually, but I do know it's the oldest theatre in the U.S. Opened in 1809 as a circus and then as a theatre in 1811. T and the throwaway says it opened in 1812 with 'The Rivals'. Hm.

Also letter from Alliance, apparently demanding £141 a month. Rang the arrears dept. with my tremulous OAP voice, to find that this aggressive document needs no action from me at all. It's just 'reference'. Disgusting.

In p.m. to film with Janet. A film written by and directed by Steven Buscemi, a goodish character actor. How hard it is for such an actor in the States to work away from the main-stream. It was called Trees something, I've already forgotten what, the name of the bar it mostly took place in. A very usual mistaken American format – a dozen or so assorted characters, living out their difficulties, truthfully acted and written within limits. Those limits unfortunately do not exclude boredom and the feeling that you have been shut in a bar with a lot of unhappy drunken people for an hour and a half against your will. A party you had to go to that you couldn't leave.

Janet said Shall we go to La Perla? 'Yes'. Frances was there and so off we went. The waiters are good and so is the food in a quite unmodern way. The paté was slightly fragrant, the toast hot and fresh and I could have eaten another slice of paté. The veal marsala and beans were all they should be. I was afraid there was to be no wine. Janet usually orders a bottle and I drink most of it. However, the dear did order me a glass with the veal. They both ate vegetarian dishes and drank water. How anyone can eat anything approaching a classic meal without wine, when they can afford it, I don't know. I would have a different meal. Cold water with a fatty dish is disgusting. The fat congeals in ones mouth and that is one of the reasons for not having white wine with certain dishes, because it is chilled. The film was Steve Buscemi's Trees? I forget the second – oh, I've said that.

In the taxi, after we'd dropped Frances, Janet said she was depressed because she was out of work and hard-up. I thought she did so well.

Friday January 31 1997

Comically phrased letter from an estate agent, getting beside themselves with the recovery of the house market. 'Substantial list of applicants who are specifically looking in your road for property to buy. If... Contact us... If your home was valued more than a month ago we would recommend a reappraisal as market values have continued to rise quickly making previous valuations historic.' That's the word I treasure.

Did I record that loathsome and ridiculous woman, Jeanette Winterston, in her poverty-stricken lesbian youth, pleased home counties house-wives, being paid in Le Creuset kitchen-ware?

Saturday February 1 1997

For once I said something funny to Mary L without noticing until I'd said it. We were discussing ghetto literature, gay, black etc. and political correctness. I said, 'the way things are going, it'll soon be compulsory to have a gay actor in every cast.'

R rang this p.m. and we got up to date in a good long chat. The project is a study of young people between sixteen and twenty five, their opinions and lives and opportunities. His partner is Leslie Stuart, fresh from directing at six part series on C4. It's funded by Huntingdon District Council and the councillors are behaving like

councillors. One of them suggested a title 'How Green Was My Alley? I suppose he has no idea that nobody under sixty five would get the pun. Asked me if I knew a book called Dear Nobody. No, but I'll try to find out.

Sunday February 2 1997

I'm glad to say that a review in the London Review of Books says exactly the same as I did, of the new biography of Yves Saint Laurent. 'She unfolds her skillful narrative of Berge's adroit financial maneuvering for YSL with an impassioned flair quite missing from her descriptions of clothes, costumes and fashion changes.'

Three pathetic misprints in Telegraph and Indep. Today. 'Palette' for palate, 'Signets for Cygnets', Mina birds for 'mynah'.

I do enjoy my Sunday chat with Hazel. She usually has little news and I think, likes to hear mine. I tell her what I write here.

Monday February 3 1997

Surprise order from B'mouth tax for interview in Ringwood in March. Hm. Oh what a bore it all is. If only it were over.

K rang to postpone again. Wed? Poor boy, he's so busy. Even with him, I feel a little pleased to go on sitting on the sofa. Age.

Forgot to record that Janet rang last night. Her cold had done, but she was hungover. She had helped Maggie Smith pack up on Saturday after the last night of Talking Heads. At some point it was revealed that Peter Shaffer has agreed to a tour of Lettice and Lovage with – Hinge and Bracket, the female impersonators. 'What did Maggie say?' 'She just looked'.

Rang Derrick M and got a tale of woe, genuine for once. He's old and ill and his flat is heated with calor gas! In that smart block, isn't central heating built in? Obviously not. And a new cylinder hadn't been delivered. He rang in some urgency and that BT voice said the number was not available. He rang BT and real people repeated the same words and wouldn't tell him what they meant. He went as far up as he could, and got nowhere. (Mind you, he is, like Mary L, adept at putting peoples backs up. He rang another branch and got a very offhand woman, but did get a new cylinder. Then the carer who comes to help him to shop, isn't coming any more. 'It hurts her shoulder. But of course it is a real difficulty for him.

'Trees Lounge' is the title of that film. I forgot it again even when I'd checked it. It is a rather self-consciously uncommercial title from the American 'art' film. Imagine having a category called 'art film'. Oh dear.

Tuesday February 4 1997

Pop commentator in the U.S. 'Blur and Oasis are a little heavy, but The Spice Girls... 'If you wannabe my lover'.

Pamela Harriman has died at 76. I think there are elements of Pamela Widmerpool and E Waugh, femmes fatales and so on, in her. Her obituaries should have listed, for greater concision, who she hasn't slept with. The line about her 'The world's leading expert on rich men's ceilings. I must say, a truthful biog. would be riveting. I expect, you see, she really believed in her shallowness. Judging by the people she impressed.

Wednesday February 5 1997

K. rang to postpone again. He's got about five deadlines and Arlete is having trouble with her teeth. Various dentists, one said nine fillings and five root canals etc. 'She came back from one visit crying', so I think he needs to go with her. Then Boo hasn't eaten for two days and just sits in a corner. He can't see any sign of a fight or anything. Poor boy, in the middle of the work. Suggested Tuesday.

Thursday February 6 1997

A delightful surprise. A cheque for £585 from video sales of One foot in the Grave and Only Fools and Horses. Interesting breakdown – in the period running up to Christmas, 1,750 of One Foot, and 40,000 odd of Only Fools. What must dear David Jason get?

A pay award to the nurses etc, sparks an outraged discussion. A male staff nurse, who qualified in 1984, said he was in the red at the bank, was struggling with his mortgage and couldn't afford a holiday this year. He only earned £17,000 a year. How wonderful it would be to have half of it.

The film tonight was a charming little affair, The Boy From Mercury, an Irish film. A light touch and swift. No scene went on too long, nothing was labored. My exit was a bit labored. I had gathered that possibly we were going to eat. Janet, I think, did say 'celebrate', as Janet Brown was going to be there. (I was interested that Janet had already told B. about Tim and Derby. J.B. said I must go up for a matinee. 'Only two hours on the train' and how many pounds?) I said I'd go to the tube, - and they weren't going to eat. I am just so determined not to give even the ghost of an idea that I take Janet's generosity for granted. But I might have done it better.

Still, it was lovely to come home to cold chicken and salad and cold sausages - I didn't want a restaurant meal.

For silver cleaning. Hot water. Soda. Aluminium foil.

Friday February 7 1997

Two school-girls, twelve and fourteen, raped on Riddlesdown Common just south of Purley. How sad and unbelievable when I think of Ken and Winnie Hards and Ada Adams fifty years ago.

Felt faintly expansive because of the cheque. Went to the pictures for the sake of it and saw 'Ransom'. I like Mel Gibson's acting within limits and the film was well enough done, but another immoral affair. Bought a sale bargain of Muriel's Wedding in Virgin and some cheese in the shop in Charing X Rd. What a treat to walk into a fresh shop in such a venue, - I don't mean new, I mean fresh. And in Murder One the three Robert Richardsons that are still in print, but not in ordinary bookshops.

Saturday February 8 1997

Rather hungover. I don't know why, I didn't have any more than usual.

Nice long talk with Marian and Roy. Marian Gluey with flu. It started on Wed, she did a commercial on Thursday. 'Well, I was in bed for it, with Hugh Laurie'. So I suppose the next thing, will be 'Hugh Laurie forced to give up million-pound movie thro' flu'!

I saw just a flash of the Steptoe and Son I did about a water-bed. I never watch myself. Apart from anything else, it was 197- something, and I was going home to D.

Sunday February 9 1997

Hazel rang as usual a bit low what with one thing and another. She does the shopping for her stepmother, I now found out. Has an unexplained pain still in her leg, which I think sounds - hm 'it may be suppressed shingles'. I almost hope so. Said she was going to look for Dear Nobody at the library. God, I couldn't live her life.

The South Bank Show was devoted to Gilbert George, who will be an eccentric footnote to the history of art in a hundred years' time. Poor creatures, it'll end in tears. David Sylvester dropped in my estimation by giving them serious attention. How easily people are gammoned these days.

How I hate answering-machines and their time-bomb feel. I'm so glad I've not got one anymore.

Monday February 10 1997

Dear Hazel rang back to say she'd found Dear Nobody in the library catalogue, a novel by Berlie Doherty. Rang R. to tell him and ask why he didn't know this. It seems Leslie Stuart's agent simply rang with the title.

The idiot preparations for St. Valentine's Day. A middle aged man buys a complete set of underwear, - probably blue or red lace - in the size his wife was twenty years ago. Every year she comes in and changes it for two sizes larger, and he has no idea.

K rang 8.15. Is 'still sniveling' from his flu but still on because of the flu when he had to cancel things. 'If I ring at four tomorrow, I'll be ill'.

Tuesday February 11 1997

Wednesday February 12 1997

A memorable night. He'd booked the little table by the bar and was there already, tho' in the loo. He was worried that, despite the little table, there was a party of twenty or so in the alcove opposite. But it didn't bother my ears, or at least not until they left. Our waiter had the usual English phrases, outside of which he was helpless. He looked like a rich man's Hugh Grant. I think he felt he was on to a good thing with K., as when K. said could he have some cigarettes, and they didn't do them – autres temps, autre moeurs – he brought K his own packet. K. had no shame in asking for another later.

We got over the business with the g&t and menu time. He asked me about it, and was questioning and sensible as always. Wrote a cheque for £1600 and murmured without looking up, 'expensive dinner'. With his unfailing imaginative perception, he knew that it was more tasteful to say something.

Then I broached for the last time, the question of Arlete's education. 'Good question', he called it. I think we're partly up against the Mediterranean pitch of mind. He said she couldn't understand the idea of applying in October for entry the following September. Apparently she's been trusted to do quite a bit of buying for the shop in Ken. Market, and a possibility of managing it. So perhaps – But I feel sorry that a good brain is not going on with academic work to which K. might quite rightly say, what future is there for such work? At any rate, I think he was glad I asked. I shan't mention it again until he does. But oh, how they don't realise how time is going by and she is losing chances.

When we ordered he had no starter. I had tomato and anchovy salad, and then he had Dover sole! and I had poulet en chasseur, all good but not outstanding. How odd that S has gone off Mon P. as K has gone on ... I just eat and expect others to pay, oh dear. A good wheeze for dessert, a plate of six or seven small desserts, two spoonfuls of crème brulee for instance, and we shared it.

'How long in Costa Rica, then?' 'A fortnight, possibly a week.' 'What?' 'Well there's a possibility of twelve food commercials.' Which would be a lot of money. But if a fortnight, then they might go on to Miami. It turned out he thought Florida was on the left. Had never heard of Key West ...

We talked of his career. 'Where's my musical?' The state of the theatre. The persistence of 'four boys with guitars' unchanged for forty years, and so on. I tried to convince him that a revolution can always happen. After all, he's always been ahead of his time, which is why he's being so successful now. Tho' I did notice, later on when I mentioned his b'day – '36' – for the very first time he winced. I expect that's partly Arlete being to him, so much younger and partly his career. I expect we will have another work crisis in a year or two, a pre-40 crisis. He had a block years ago

backing against the door like Gladys Cooper in defence of her virtue, he got rid of that by walking round the block a few times. It won't be so easy next time. Do you know, I wouldn't be surprised if Arlete left him. I don't mean for years, but I find I am not surprised to think she might.

He talked a little more of the funeral. His Uncle Ted described his war-experiences in the Commanders, and it got home to K. as personal accounts do, when history or documentary fail. He said 'If it were me, it would mean Robin, Simon and Stan killed beside me.'

And Grace Sheppard came to the funeral. 'She's lovely'. And Jenny wrote to him. She lives in Notting Hill and has three children of course. He wrote back and said 'Let's meet for a drink', but of course he's heard nothing. Oh, he will get a jump if he meets her again. He'll look in vain for the girl he thought he loved.

We parted in the rain in the street, - he offered me a taxi, but it was only 11, I'd cost him £1600, and went to the tube. I hate him flying so far. I dread it.

At eleven-thirty this morning, Wednesday, a girl rang from Johannesburg, for 'Sara'. Right number, 0181 and everything. I suppose I should be surprised it doesn't happen oftener. It gives you the feeling you should produce Sara.

Someone said on TV, 'Des O Connor has been rushed to hospital to attend the birth of his next wife.'

Thursday February 13 1997

Oh, I did love the re-appearance of a neck massager that looks like the chest of a naff female impersonator flaunting his breasts back and forth. The man demonstrating it, said 'We call it Linford'.

There was a shot of the Daily Mail - I think - staff taking down St Valentine's Day messages. A nice Kensington girl said, 'Now could I just repeat your message back to you, 'Rampant Sid'...

Friday February 14 1997

Oh science. One of the brand-new lifts at the H'smith tube station, usually requires a rather masturbatory manipulation of the button to get it to start. I often see it with the door open, having been abandoned by passengers not aware of its sensual needs. My new Sony player has been playing up, cassettes rattling with static, the CD only working on the mains, the radio needing impossibly fine tuning or it warbles. K. said take it back, or is it the batteries? They were all new Duracell. However, I thought I'd test them by putting them one by one in the old cassette-player. I did so. They all seemed to make it work. I bought a new set of batteries. Every function of the new CD player was completely restored. In Tesco the computer got over-excited and ran up a bill of 888,888 lbs. or perhaps £s. Someone had to come along and write something. In fact, machines will not behave like machines.

In the p.m. to Soho and books. To Simply Sausages for port and chestnut, £2.99 a lb. and the butchers for a wild duck at £2.90. Neither expensive. To Waterstone's etc, for a copy of Traviata. I am shocked by the complete lack of classical music in Hammersmith and in Soho etc. I shall have to go to HMV tomorrow. The fish shop in Brewer St is not what it was even a year or two ago, unless I caught a thin patch. Only lemon sole, bass, one halibut steak, farmed salmon, prawns and squid.

Oh, the Traviata. He'd been amused by 'Oh my Alfredo', because Arlete has called the toy he gave her Alfredo.

Saturday February 15 1997

To HMV in Bond St. It's half-term – ugh, and that reminds me doubly why I don't go out on a Saturday if I can help it. As I was coming up the steps from Bond St. tube station into Oxford St. I was, of course, supporting myself on the hand-rail as I have to nowadays. A tall black man, late 20's or thirties, came down and refused to give way and I had to stand unsteadily in the middle of the crowded staircase. HMV was hideously full as a sale was on as well. I was interested that there are now no cassettes in the Classical dept. Still there was a very comprehensive selection of Traviatas. I chose the cheapest and probably for me the best, Callas at La Scala live in '55.

Had to go on to H'smith to do a bit of food shopping. Couldn't account at first for parties of smartly (sic) dressed matrons with tight hair. Of course, the Richards/Heathcliff audience.

Sunday February 16 1997

I forgot to say that K. expressed interest in a book! The Ethan Hawke novel. He so rarely does that I made a special journey to Elfort Rd. I had hoped to take a tape of Oh my Alfredo, but when I played the Callas, it was rather shorter than I remembered, and so painful and good that it could not be used as a charming joke. I must make it up like 'Trees' as a little 'revue member'. An odd thought that such a phrase means nothing to him. Tiptoed like a thief to the door and put the book through the letter-box. Now that the clear glass panels of the front door have no curtains, he might have been coming up or downstairs. I had come out without a book to read, but went to the Earl's Court Waterstone's and found the usual difficulty in finding the invoice pad. However, this time I got a nicely surly young man, whom I eventually led into hatred of the fat little manager. He was really pleased when I said it was only at his shop I had difficulty. A biog. of Audrey Hepburn, 'who's a Pretty Boy?' and History of Gay Life, and some more detective stories. Hazel had recommended D.M. Greenwood. Her pain turns out to be a sort of internal shingles. How we conspire to get unfamiliar versions of diseases.

Monday February 17 1997

Our thirty-ninth w'ding anniversary. He said he would ring before they flew off, but he didn't. I'm sure he's got a good reason, but equally he has little idea - and I'm glad he hasn't - of the agony of loss. Of course they won't crash - is it of course - you imagine the worst and it never happens, only sometimes it does. If he went, I would not get over it. How he would despise me.

ANGUS MACKAY DIARY NO. 146

February 18 1997 -
April 21 1997.

Tuesday February 18 1997

A busy afternoon for nowadays. I at last had my hair cut – the longest it's ever been for years, and nothing is more aging. 'It makes me look 100.'

Dear Giovanni is soothing, and tho' Austin Reed is not the most chic of barbers, it is so familiar as I have been going there since 1940. I took the opportunity to take my dear new pen back again. I'm afraid it leaked again as before. Then a talk at the Halifax with a nice jolly girl called Morris about the possible substitution of a mortgage for the B'mouth overdraft. I don't think it will work, as she seems to think John and I would have to take it on personally, which of course would be impossible. What torture business is!

I saw a hedge-sparrow at the seed today. There has been a pair in the garden for some time, and I think they nest here. I would love to find the nest with those beautiful bright turquoise eggs. Egg colour seems to have no relation to the bird or camouflage or anything at all, in some cases.

I saw in the Stage that Janet Brown's son, Tyler Butterworth, isn't playing Bob Acres in Tim's Rivals, so I suppose he's playing one of those tiny servant-in-the-line-up parts and so I suppose he just wants a trip to America. How strange people are.

Wednesday February 19 1997

To Soho this p.m. to the butchers in Berwick St. for a cheap pheasant, a big oldish one, £2.90 but delicious done slowly, like an old boiler. Huge hard feet. And another pound of those very good pork and chestnut sausages, only £2.99, good value for such porky sausages.

My difficulty in going to the theatre is not only financial, - tho' it is – but physical. I can only go to a film now if I can sit alone and move about a lot as I get stiff. In my joints, I mean. Of course I do not speak of the artistic difficulties...

Thursday February 20 1997

Another bad night. Cried off the film, the new Tim Burton, which actually I thought I mightn't like much anyway. I'm always afraid Janet won't believe me, but I think she's too sensible really.

Friday February 21 1997

Continued the T. Williams biog. I should think it's accurate and well researched as far as it goes, but as so often with American biographies, there is lack of judgment. It is at least two thirds too long – six hundred pages, and we only get to the Glass Menagerie. I wonder if the author has enough idea of what a desperately melancholy picture he paints of American life. What none of them seem to see is that it's very nature does not conduce to high art. To someone who might say, 'Oh, but there's...' I would say sharply, 'At any rate, up to now, it hasn't'.

The only exceptions became Europeans. The word 'great' is used about T. Williams, but it can only be so used in a very insular context.

Oh, I forgot to record, didn't I? – oh, well, I repeat myself. S's speech at the Olivier Awards. He made a very short perfectly judged speech introducing a Lifetime Achievement Award – awful American term – for Percy Harris of Motley. Left a tearful message on his machine, praising his concision in the middle of all that gush. He wrote back by return, sending me, in amusement, the full text, a closely typed A4 page. I wrote back to say how stupid I'd been, as his speech, unbearably moving to someone of my generation, would have been meaningless to all those creatures, who have disgracefully never heard of Motley. D. Saw Richard of Bordeaux three times.

Saturday February 22 1997

I am taking pleasure in music again with new player. There are many tapes of the bagfuls S. gave me years ago that I have never got round to. I played some Arriaga sonatas today. He's described as the Spanish Mozart. To my layman's ear it indeed sounded like a pastiche of Mozart, one opening phrase being a direct copy. I couldn't hear any originality at all. Perfectly pleasant, but it really is washing-up music. A very trivial opera by Massenet, Herodiade, and some equally trivial ballet music for Le Cid, not so trying as it's meant to be fairly trivial. Some Bach, Mahler, sometimes I listen carefully, sometimes it becomes accompaniment.

Very elaborate stage and cottage dream, huge barn, though the dear country around looking the same. Full cast of D and K – first time, I think, not to mention princess 'Di'. Very hackneyed.

Sun day February 23 1997

I see that the Royal Court have divided the Ambassadors into two theatres for their tenure. Mary poured pitying scorn on me for saying so a few months ago. No, darling, the Duke of York's the main house, and the Ambassadors the theatre Upstairs. Of course she wouldn't really admit she'd been wrong ...

How grotesque to take a conventional very petty theatre, the smallest in London, and turn it into two studios. How, by the way? I've puzzled over it for some time and the problem of sound insulation, not to mention sight-lines.

Monday February 24 1997

Day of resolution – at last! Rang B'mouth about the tax – oh the drear. Lalla hadn't sent the forms on. Oh, well. No more of that.

And the bank had refused a credit for reasons known only to themselves. A rare occurrence.

Somebody's cloned a sheep. Once more a very dubious procedure promoted by the usual half people who have no vision except for their own little 'scientific experiment'. No doubt there was such an 'experiment' that led to feeding infected sheep to cattle. It can be done, so it must be done. Well, we can murder ...

An amusing sideline. That idiot animal-lover, Carla Lane, condemned the cloning because it would deprive sheep of their individual expression and personality. 'They will all look the same'. Not a pin to put between the two sides.

I saw some clips of 'The Crucible' film. Janet didn't think much of this version. D. saw the original production at the R.C. – I was in rep. She admired it, and I took her opinion. Nevertheless I have never been drawn to see it, nor even to read it. I don't like An Enemy of the People either. The skin of humanity is too thin, I think in both cases.

An exhausting weekend and day, getting ready for Malk and Mary.

Tuesday February 25 1997

Exhausted, imitating my previous life for Malk and Mary. I cleaned the sitting-room today, and stairs and now have only the loo, the bathroom and the dining room and kitchen for tomorrow., Not a thro' cleaning, just a disguising.

I cannot help feeling the R.C. taking pretty pros arch theatres and distorting them, is a stupid adolescent 'shock' gesture. How much longer?

Wednesday February 26 1997

Very tired, but glad it's over and a lovely end to the day. He's 36

Mary arrived first, in a mini-cab! just after twelve. I was very ready, because I didn't want to give her any handle for an ill-considered jibe. She was looking well, face a little fuller and a better colour, perhaps due to the easy journey. Brought me a big bag of my books and four others that she didn't seem to know weren't mine, although they were fat lurid-covered thrillers such as I never read and have never lent her. It reminded me of D's outrage at Edna not being able to tell the difference between Erle Stanley Gardner and Rex Stout. She would jeer at me for a 'similar' mistake, but I said nothing. She was amusing saying she would wait till twelve-thirty for a glass of

wine, and Malk arrived as I was downstairs getting it. Despite his motor-accident, he is still exactly himself – with his beautiful white hair and beard. He is like a camp Father Christmas. He has been an actor since the '40s – After he took over in S. Days, he trained and became the front of house manager of the Vaudeville, and eventually ran Cheltenham, thus knowing every aspect of the business. And he made Cheltenham pay. He is still on the board, tho' I may say he is the last person to say anything like 'When I was running'

He has just been in the panto at Guildford, 'Snow White' with Anita Dobson, whom he liked – good - and Bill Maynard whom he loathed, also good. He was appalled to find that G'ford is £800,000 overdrawn. As usual, the trouble is the ridiculous proliferation of admin staff. Nevertheless, he found the advance prog. at G'ford a great deal better than Chelt. and said so at the board meeting. 'There were a number of companies one had never heard of and I said Why not Sian Phillips as Marlene and Penelope Wilton and Alec McCowen in the Cherry Orchard, it's always worth asking'. The present director reacted defensively and said 'We can't afford a guarantee'. Malk said that G'ford had negotiated a deal with the principals taking £100 a week less, because they want to go on playing it. Malk casts his net, and nothing will come of nothing. It seems they told him there was a new PR dept. 'How did you find room in the theatre for it?' 'Oh it isn't in the theatre, we've got offices across the road'... And they're £600,000 overdrawn.

Lunch was, I think, a success. Mushroom and tomato omelette, chicory, little beans and red pepper salad with an olive oil and lemon dressing, Haagen-Daaz chocolate chip, which Mary likes, and some good cheeses from the shop in Charing X Rd.

There is something to be said for having two old friends at once, who haven't seen each other for months, because you don't have to entertain them. While I was getting the lunch, it seems Mary told me on the phone tonight, he told her he had a partner of 40, living in, and although his landlady is 89, he's all right, because the partner will inherit a house from his parents. I'm really glad, it seems a long time since he had anyone, but of course I don't know.

When they came down for lunch, I was rather startled when he said 'Is that your garden?' What else could it have been? And he didn't see the balcony off the drawing room till the coffee.

Over lunch we heard about his sister, Diana, the reason for his London visit. She's pretty frail, it seems, bent over, her lungs restricted, etc etc. But still in her flat off the Gloucester Rd. and just as I was consigning her to an immediate grave, he said 'But she's still game and gets herself to Paddington and goes off to stay with her friend in Salcombe – I'm not dying, but I don't go anywhere. However there was a sort of crisis, she is a real hoarder and ill as she was, with, I suppose, some sort of state surveillance, it became clear that her flat was so crammed with clothes of every kind, to the ceiling, and to the extent that it was a fire hazard, and she was forbidden to go back though I wasn't quite clear by who. The extent of the hoarding was startling. It took Malk a fortnight, £2000 and twelve skips to get rid of it all.

He went to see the Salad Days revival on its pre-London tour. He thought it pretty awful – significant, as he is apt to find the good in things. The main scene was a

bandstand, which had to turn round for each scene... Troppo was made up as a clown ... and so on. I am proud that I prophesised almost exactly the run it would have.

Over the coffee I saw them sitting on the sofa in a little pocket of the past. I was reminded of their lack of education and narrow frame of reference. Both of them generalise on totally inadequate evidence. You advance the argument by a sentence, and they repeat what they've just said. Although Malk has such a good grasp of a theatre's running, I am less sure of his grasp of the theatre's future or the future in general. And that goes for both of them. Two examples, I showed Malk the CD/cassette player S. gave me. 'Where's the CD part?' and he looked at Mary in amused scorn at this ridiculous modern gadget, that everyone agreed was absurd. 'Oh well, they tried to get us to buy the CDs at three times the price, it won't last, the LPs are coming back.' Unlike both of them in similar case, I didn't bother to say that, when I went to the HMV shop in Oxford St. the other week, there were only CD's on the shelves, no cassette's let alone LP's.

Mary, of course, took away another big bag of books. But I could not get either of them to betray any even polite interest in the two latest plays, a Martin McDonagh and Shopping and Fucking. I don't think much of either, but they don't know. No evidence again.

The great event of the day was later after I'd collapsed, and sat dozing on the sofa.

K rang at 9.45. Oh the relief. I said Hello and he said Happy Birthday to me. They stayed two nights in the film noir hotel and that was enough. Now they're in a rented villa with a pool and did he say a maid? Another week there, three days in Miami then back. This is £5 a minute!

Thursday February 27 1997

Right on cue, after Malk's strictures and judgments, the headline in the Stage is 'The Thorndike Theatre to close'. Apparently permanently. When I think of Hazel Vincent Wallace's brazen courage and the unpromising original theatre, which nevertheless prospered enough to allow her to build the new one, I could weep. I did.

The film tonight was Blood and Wine, with Jack Nicholson and Michael Caine, neither of whom I like much and Stephen Dorff whom I admire. He's a young actor who likes different parts and is secure enough to play a transvestite in the Andy Warhol film. The fifth Beatle was an excellent perf. with a Liverpool accent that convinced K. and the sort of part, in an English film, that I can imagine few other young American actors wanting to play. This film is pretty unconvincing and unpleasantly violent. I find Jack Nicholson rather absurd, very mannered.

Friday February 28 1997

Two letters, one from S., saying he's having a mini-money crisis and can I restrict the Waterstone's to £150 a month, 'but I insist that you spend it all.' So good of him to write himself, as there was a sniffy letter from his accountant making it clear, between

the lines, that I am probably exploiting S. up to the hilt and that the card was a bad idea anyway and S. a bit of a fool. Oh well, if an accountant were capable of imagination or fine shades, he wouldn't be an accountant in the first place. I think £150 p.m. is generous in the circumstances.

An odd figure called John Leather has died at eighty something. My eye was caught by Martita's name. He was a protégé long ago. He had a sort of success as Marchbanks with Sybil as Candida, tho' that means little as all geese were swans to Sybil, one way or another. He dabbled in art and music and Mary L told me a few more bits from her friendship with Martita. What most caught my eye was a company of three that he took round Cornwall. One of them is now, or was, a woman BBC producer and said it was chaos and shambles. And the third name was indeed chaos and shambles, John Maxwell. S.M. was a very smelly dirty drunk, kept on for little odd jobs by Reggie S. at Salisbury, when no one else would touch him – literally. Noreen S. used to stand over him in the bath, and wash, or burn, his clothes. He had a quick mind and tongue and probably at one time some considerable talents – not for acting, of course. He once summoned me to Leicester tube station, because he and the poor woman who had been idiot enough to marry him, were destitute. I do not like to think of what happened to him, to them, in the end. Being in a company of three, of which he was one, would be beyond chaos and shambles.

Saturday March 1 1997

Spring at last. Clumps of miniature daffodils in the front, - they have doubled since last year.

Coming back from the shops on to Hammersmith station I heard a sound of singing and remembered there had been a rugger match at Twickenham. I hoped to avoid the usual rowdy crowd, but when I got down to the platform, I found a group of French fans – France won – clapping and singing merrily round a youngster dancing on a seat and conducting them. I was so struck by their smiles as I went by and the complete lack of menace, compared to the sullen yowling of English fans, always with an aggressive undertone. And the reason is that young Frenchmen know how to drink and young Englishmen of most classes, don't.

Riots in Albania. How can you take a country seriously whose capital is called Tirana, and whose King used to be called Zog? What was the Queen called? Something rather attractive, I seem to remember. Emmeline? Christabel? Arethusa? I've later remembered Geraldine.

Sunday March 2 1997

The Antiques Road Show on BBC Television, gives me a certain amount of pleasure, tempered by the jocular, and the nasty concentration on money. Why can't there be a good concentrated connoisseur's programme. Arthur Negus was better. I love experts talking expertly, and I love to know more.

However, there was a charming moment in this week's edition, placed in grounds at Chatsworth, the Duchess appeared without any special announcement, to show a book to the book man. It was one of those specially bound copies that Evelyn Waugh sent to friends. I think it was B. Revisited. The inscription read 'To Deborah... Not a word to upset your Protestant sympathies'. The point being that it was a book of blank pages. The book man said that it was priceless and he was literally right for once.

Had a talk to Roy about Malk's information. At one point he called the theatre a dying art. I'm afraid he's right. Patsy Kensit was interviewed by Clive James. A silly little thing, buoyed up by sex, and a lot of vitality, unless it was cocaine.

Monday March 3 1997

Started on B'mouth tax. Wrote to Lalla!

R. rang about 9.45. Said he was feeling full of life and happiness. Well, he's been working non-stop, he feels wanted and it's spring. He did have a girlfriend for a few months last year and characteristically never mentioned it to either of us.

Card from Tim just as I'd sealed up a letter to him in Philadelphia. Really Americans are extraordinary. Instead of the theatre being the most beautiful in the States, it is a grey functional box, having been expanded from five hundred to eleven hundred in the early seventies. I thought they liked antiques.

Tuesday March 4 1997

A sleepless night again and really so this time, I didn't even doze. Read a whole detective-story. Feel scraped.

Sharron rang to ask for R's number as she's in Cambridge for the day. I have wondered sometimes if propinquity...

Another hilarious trailer from Brasseye and Christopher Morris. 'Locals say they've seen this statue of the Virgin Mary driving a Range Rover thro' the fields.' He catches exactly the absurdly hectic tone of the newscaster.

Thinking again of S's accountant, I remembered that the rather grand accountant I once had who favoured me with impressions as I was an actor. His gifts as an impressionist were considerably less than mine as an accountant, which is saying a good deal.

Wednesday March 5 1997

I have a 1930s Pears Encyclopedia, which defines Albania, as 'Independent country, formerly Turkey, war-like half-civilized people.' Er, yes.

Rang B's mouth bank and got them to pay the insurance premium. What a bore it all is. I found out why they've been a bit sniffy about the overdraft all this time, - Lalla never signed the guarantee. And neither she nor the bank told me. More bore.

Listened to Bartok's first and second piano concertos. Not at all what I expected, quite soft and pretty!

Thursday March 6 1997

Got my new pen back and the ink part has been replaced. It hasn't leaked yet, and the ink flow seems better. Why they didn't replace the ink part the first time, I don't know. The case could hardly leak after all.

A lovely surprise. The phone rang while I was actually in mid shit, so I didn't answer. I went to the shops and when I came back, rang 1471 and found it was K's number. I rang back and left a message on the machine. I spent a restless hour or two imagining all sorts of things. Nigel ringing to tell of disaster, and not being able to get to the phone again, because he was rushing to catch a flight to Costa Rica to bring back the body. At five, that dear voice said Yes, it was me. They'd come back three days early because Arlette was refused entry to the US because she's Portuguese. It seems P. hasn't got that reciprocal arrangement that the E.U. has, I suppose. So they were hurried through from one plane to another in an hour. Really, it was almost worth committing a crime to get the benefit. They got back at eleven last night, and slept till two, when he woke me. I mean, he woke and rang me. Oh I'm so glad he's safe. I don't think the holiday was an entire success. 'Too hot, too humid, and I wish the jungle would shut the fuck up'. The food was a great disappointment. In the hotel and when they first went out, it was all frozen food. How pathetic in a poorish country, but I dare say it's a combination of K's lack of knowledge of the country on a first visit, and little capital to start a restaurant with possibly dicey produce. For instance, beef is very poor, pork the best, chicken tolerable. Well of course. Why is Scottish beef the best? Because of all that lovely rain making all that lovely grass. Pig's pig anywhere. They did find a tolerable restaurant or two, but bought and cooked at home. He did get badly burned the first two or three days. 'I'll tell you when I see you.' 'What about work?' 'I haven't told anyone I'm back yet'. Nigel is applying for a number of jobs. He told me a joke about a job in Wigmore St. which I didn't get. But I am less honest than K and didn't admit to it. Oh, I am so thankful that he's back safe.

Tonight to see the new film of Romeo and Juliet with Janet. The first ten minutes as noisy as can be, and some unaltered dialogue showing that S. can write as good 'rumble' dialogue as anybody. R and J crushed, disemboweled and hopelessly vulgarised as a 'teen' picture. The balcony-scene begins with J. coming out of the ground floor, and after a few lines they fall into the swimming pool where they play the rest of the scene, or as much of it as is left. Can it be believed that, for instance, 'I would I were thy bird' is cut, along with much else. The Queen Mab speech is cut to twelve lines, the potion speech to two, perhaps just as well as the speeches are plainly far beyond the capacity of either of the actors.

There is cause for sadness for two reasons. The principal couple, Claire Danes and Leonardo di Caprio are well cast and look the parts well. She has one or two moments, more especially when she is serene and quiet. But when she has to express any strong emotion - and Juliet does - she contorts her face and screeches, betraying her considerable, probably in this field, her total, lack of experience.

Leonardo di Caprio is in another league. He is, to my mind, the most gifted of the young American actors, and like all good actors, he makes you believe what he's saying and just by his talent, gropes his way to the verse. He has that most precious gift of deep emotion. When he cried, you cry. He is slight and everything runs thro' him. Even in this travesty, he brought off some heart rending moments. I can't believe that he is not actor enough not to want to play the whole part.

Some other cuts, by no means comprehensive that occur to me, 'Not so deep as a well nor as ...' 'Gallop apace' cut to four lines. 'Night's candles are burnt out'. A lightening before death. No Paris in tomb and Juliet wakes before R dies... The penny-gaff cheap Victorian actor-manager fairground booth keeper did not live in vain.

But my real sadness is reserved for those coarse and ignorant American teenagers who have made this film a success and have been deceived into thinking they have seen Romeo and Juliet. It's cheating.

Friday March 7 1997

A delightful cheque for that Steptoe and Son all those years ago, £698. It was a TV I unusually enjoyed. 1974. My scene was set in a bed department in a big shop, its highlight (and purpose) being a water-bed. I had just been in the Pallisers, one of those mangled versions of classic novels that the BBC are so strangely famous for. The script editress, supposed to be representing scholarly literacy, said in my hearing, to someone who'd said he found Trollope difficult to read, 'Well, we've boiled it down, so now you won't have to'. I didn't reveal to anyone that I'd read all Trollope more than once. Actors don't like that sort of thing...

The Pallisers was still going on in the next studio. I went to see my 'chums' and the water-bed became a magnet. Barbara Murray, dressed in the height of 1970 fashion, came to look. Barbara was rather brisk and animated, like her acting. She looked at the waterbed and then cast an eye over the others, suddenly turning to me and saying 'That would just do for my mother, how much is it?'

Then Sue Hampshire came over. She happened to be playing Lady Glencora's death bed scene. Dressed in a shroud-like nightgown and with her face made up ghastly yellow-white and skull-like hollows, she bounced up and down on the water-bed.

Hideous Weng rang, trying to put me in the wrong as usual, by asking why I hadn't paid the tax. 'Because you haven't told me the total. You said you couldn't compute it until I paid the interest bill you sent me.' Even then he gave me the sums one by one in such a way that I thought for a while it was a thousand more than K's cheque.

To Soho and got another pheasant at £2.90. Cheaper than chicken, and out of season. Frozen, I suppose, but as delicious as the last one and is certainly not deep frozen. Also some cheese from the new cheese shop where the shop assistant was a young man for a change and a charming chatty one too. Really interested in cheese. Quite right too, and a pleasant surprise.

Rang Derrick to see how he got on with S's doctor, Wasyl Nimenko. They talked for two hours. D. read me the report which included the symptoms of falling to the right-hand side. He'll have another brain scan, and find the neurological damage. But the main thing is that he wrote to D's GP and said he was on the wrong drugs and suggested further treatment. All in all, Nimenko had success with D. He's obviously a clever little thing.

Also got some sausages.

Saturday March 8 1997

Put the cheques in the Halifax – another £60 arrived, how wonderful I shall be able to pay the bills without asking K, thought I could splash out on some very necessary pyjamas and socks. I couldn't find any PJs. I asked the girl as I paid for the socks. 'We only have pyjamas at Christmas.'

Sunday March 9 1997

As well as cloned sheep they have now discovered gay sheep. Ten percent of rams ignore even on-heat ewes and attempt to penetrate other rams and sometimes succeed. It doesn't say whether the sometime ones are other members of the ten percent, or adolescents unsure of their sexuality or married rams who... No condoms, it seems.

K rang after lunch. Could I do him a favour? Yes. He's doing an advert for BT and wants phrases about time running out and so on. Got going with the dictionary of quotations. Vast majority of quotes under the very big Time section were poetry. Rang back and got it clearer, and produced a list of twelve phrases which seemed to pass muster. Worth it just to hear his voice.

Took Murder Must Advertise to bed, as nothing less would work for sleep. Much amused to be minded by the little marking in the margins that Daddy had totted up the damns and made a sermon out of them.

Monday March 19 1997

A film programme where four students vote for the best film of the week, voted R&J the best against Jerry Maguire with Tom Cruise and five Oscar nominations. Travesty though it is, such a vote is an extraordinary testament to S's enduring power.

Lalla answered my letter about tax, maddening of course. 'It is difficult for me to tell you how much my pension is, I just collect it and live on it.'

Tuesday March 11 1997

Day dominated by going and paying the tax - hideous Weng was actually there. I went into a room fitted like a tiny little bunk and handed the money thro' to H. Weng and an English cashier, a cheerful rather vague man. He counted the £1600 by laying it, note by note, in little piles all over the counter. When I'd got the receipts, he said, 'Thank you very much Mr Mackay', twice. H. Weng didn't even look up or say goodbye, let alone 'thank you'.

One some prog., or the news, there was proof of the poor taste of the majority of the public. They tried passersby with a vinegar cocktail, French wine and English wine. Forty percent chose the vinegar cocktail. I've always known most people must have different stomachs from mine. I don't like and can't eat anything very spicy, or very hot or very sour. And I don't think people should eat so much of any of them.

Bought the new book about Peggy A. Not as down market or scrupulous as the publicity led me to expect. All the same, it reveals rather more affairs than I expected. Sickert, Paul Robeson, Mark Dignam – Mark Dignam? – she had an affair with him in the '30's and again in the '50's. Of course he was very left-wing and perhaps he was physically attractive then. But there was something really silly and rather dim about him as well. A long association with Pinter, unconsummated according to him. She was pursuing him, I take it. The book is not very good. He has an imperfect grasp of the movement of a biography. Something that should be a paragraph is only a line, and vice versa.

The final impression is certainly of a woman with some odd veins in her character and possibly little humour. A wonderful actress. As John G. said to me once, 'Darling Peggy, my dear leading lady, such good work, but says some very strange things, especially later on in the evening.'

Wednesday March 12 1997

At last got myself to the Curzon Phoenix to see His Girl Friday, with Cary Grant and Rosaline Russell. When you see a 1939 film in a bright new print like this, it is very difficult to believe that everyone in it died aged eighty something years ago. It must have been extraordinary then, as it is still dazzlingly fast now. Rosalind Russell is carried up to brilliance by Cary Grant. It is one of his best perfs, and one of the reasons for the film being, on its own level, perfect. Those of us who grew up with the cinema, get a funny feeling seeing the screen masked into the dear familiar square shape and satisfying to have proof that films were better.

Before, I went again to the cheese shop. Got some talleggio, red Leicester and some Wensleydale.

K rang. 'I'm going to have a session with Pete Sinfeld tomorrow so I'll come to lunch. P.S. lives in Holland Park. Well, I must give him pot luck, so that I can

explain that I cannot rush round any more at the last minute. How could he know? Nobody young does.

Roy never seems to be in.

Thursday March 13 1997

Nigel rang to say K. had cancelled me and Pete S. etc. as he'd had a really bad dream and spent the night 'wandering round' and only got to sleep in the morning.

A young man called Lee Bachelor has been found dead in his council flat. He had died of an overdose of drugs. His twenty-two month old son had died of starvation. They weren't found for some days. The mother is in prison for burglary and fraud.

K rang this evening. In the dream a man had his hand over his mouth... dinner on Sunday.

Friday March 14 1997

Made an effort and went to Fulham to see Jerry Maguire and came out after half an hour. The immediate spur to drive me from the cinema was a scene between him and the only client to stay with this sports agent, elected to play the whole scene, every word every time, at the full pitch of his voice. But I think mainly it was the contrast with His Girl Friday that made me find Jerry Maguire slow and quite without laughs. Both were set in an office and the lack of subtlety... can't spell now – subtlety, wit and lightness of touch was very striking in the modern film. Only half a dozen people.

Saturday March 15 1997

Played some Berlioz, 'Harold in Italy'. Agreeable. More Bartok.

Sunday March 16 1997

Monday March 17 1997

Arrived at seven, a bit dark. Knocked and let myself in to no smell of cooking. He came downstairs, putting on his white dressing gown. 'We went to Camden market, and went to bed when we came back and nodded off.' I think there must have been some other activity between coming back and nodding off. 'It was going to be steak casserole, but it'll be chicken Kiev now.' I sat in the kitchen and we got up to date, while he got going with the dinner.

He got me a g&t and a little later on Nigel came back from Philip's, as we must now call him. (Not that I ever like shortened names, but Phil is such an ass.) And with him was the girl. It seems we've met before. I don't remember, mainly because I'm sure I didn't know her provenance then. (Oh dear how many more people remember meeting better than I do.) Small, fair, with a pretty laugh and smile, funny – I said

‘How old are Phil’s children now?’ ‘Six-ish, four-ish and baby-ish.’ They left about half an hour before, leaving large mounds of junk in the hall. K. looked at them with distaste but a certain pride that he could give his young brother as much space as he needs. N. has got himself a job at Kingston and is moving there. Just far enough away. Sian went back to Isleworth, tho’ whether to the Vice Squad Chief wasn’t told.

Dinner was delicious, chicken - halal chicken, as it chanced – in a garlicky tomato sauce. I was so touched that he produced some cheese, ‘It’s only ordinary’ but he’d cut it into slices, and cut the crusts off some bread to make dainty little slices.

Talked more of Costa Rica, hampered by the lack of detail. And some gnostic utterances. I asked how big the pool at the villa was. ‘You could take six or seven strokes in each direction, but it’s more of a shower than a pool! Arlete said much the same when I tried to get it straight while he was making the coffee. I never got it straight. It is not in the nature of pools to be showers, or vice versa.

He finished the BT thing before he went away, - ‘They’re mad about it’ – that is, the advertising agency - and if BT are sufficiently mad about it too, he might get the whole BT campaign. The Pete S. number seems to have faded away. Two or three other things and his confidence undiminished.

I was amused that when I went thro’ the tally of films I’d seen, the magic words ‘Trees Lounge’ produced howls of anguished boredom. ‘I thought it was about green conservation’ – not altogether seriously. I said again he must ask me before... ‘The English Patient’ made him wince. He can’t go to see it. After that pig, Anthony Minghella’s, behaviour during ‘Studio’. He looks like Jeremy Beadle and has written and directed a best seller – no surprise to me.

I talked of B’mouth. Later he glanced at my shoes and said ‘You need some new shoes.’ All was joy and comfort. Oh, he asked me to buy a diary for the studio.

Monday March. Oh, no, that’s today...

Another nasty letter from B’mouth bank. Sent £200 of my own money. But shall the dreary business no more. It’s disgusting to be still tied to my ridiculous family in this way. So Halifax, Barclays, the post-office, video payment at Shepherd’s Bush and shopping. Oh, the glamour. I enjoy my quiet days all the same.

Tuesday March 18 1997

Went to the Strand to take S. his present. I am almost sure he has Pinter’s monograph on a new McMaster, but, as it was the only remotely relevant thing I had, I threw it in. And a lecture by Henry Neville in 1875, with letters and photos ‘tipped in’ as second-hand dealers call it, ‘The Stage as a Fine Art’. I’ve tried to make him fine, but I’m afraid he’ll always be coarse. I wanted to put them in a new envelope, and idly thought I would get one in the Strand. I didn’t bother to cross over to the big Rymans, as I could go to John Menzies. It wasn’t there (how long is it since...?) Well, there was bound to be a small stationer’s between... but there wasn’t. I got to

Waterloo Bridge, and had to go all the way back to Ryman's. I took the opportunity to have a look at the newly reopened Lyceum. I was moved. More or less all my adult life it has stood shabby and often derelict. To see that classical pediment and pillars gleaming with new paint and thorough restoration – (what other frontage of that quality was allowed to deteriorate so far?) I did not realise how radical the re-building has been. Quite right, of course. At the back, the whole centre of the back wall is new, a great brick wall with a big panel fifteen feet? long, with Lyceum carved into it, above it, a new fly tower. Wherever possible, the Victorian Georgian windows and general proportions have been preserved. For example, Irving would still recognise the Exeter Rd elevation. All is, as far as I can see from the outside, handsomely done. Except that over every door under the Portico, is 'Welcome to the Lyceum'. Undignified.

In Ryman's I wanted one ordinary brown envelope. No longer. A packet of twenty or so, I'd never use. I bought a padded envelope in the end. 69p.

Back at the passage to the Savoy stage-door, somebody said, 'Angus'. Chris Woods. I have never thought he liked me, and he could have gone past - I didn't see him. He's lost most of his looks, head shaved, teeth rather yellow. But we had an amiable talk and I went to that stage-door, so soaked in emotion and still looking exactly the same.

By chance, saw Chris again in New Row and I think I pretended really well not to see him. Which partly prevented me from seeing him pretending not to see me. To cheese and sausage shops again. Delicious. Mulleins and pork and chestnut. Called in at the fish shop in Brewer Street. It used to be at the corner of Rupert St. Market and has looked thinner lately. But I was still shocked and depressed to see a notice saying that it would close on March 22, owing to the landlord asking for an increase of 63% of the rent. How disgusting and greedy and ridiculous. The last fishmonger in Soho. They don't know what they're destroying.

Even more disgusting, scandalous, a woman killed by a train was left on the track while twenty one trains ran over her so as not to upset the rush-hour!

Wednesday March 19 1997

R. rang. 'Am I speaking to you?' He's making some sort of documentary film about an imaginary school. His partner, Les – they're both straight, or it wouldn't be funny – came up behind one of the 13 year olds who was holding the camera. 'Let me see how tight you are.' R. shrieked, and all the little boys asking him what he was laughing at. 'You know Latin, don't you?' 'Well, I did' 'So translate 'Let me see how tight you are', and we'll make it the school's motto.'

Pretty poor notice from Nicolas de Jongh for S. I don't know about the piece itself, but he certainly described some of S's faults. He can be guilty of over-acting, even sometimes of self-conscious overacting. That first reaction in Four W and F was blush-making. I know it's a film. Hazel rang to say she'd sent her new book, with an extra copy for K. 'He doesn't have to read it. I put 'with love'. I hope he won't mind.' She also hoped to warn me of its arrival, so that... Afterwards, I found the

'could not deliver' card in the hall, claiming that they'd tried to deliver at 12.0 when I was sitting here!

I see from E. Sitwell's letters that Edward Marsh, as a child, called teeth 'toosiepegs', just as we did.

Thursday March 20 1997

I saw the other day that two Indian brothers had stowed away in the wheels of a British airways jet from India. The elder amazingly seems to have survived the very low temperatures and air quality. The younger, fifteen or sixteen, died and when the bit of wheel-base he was lying in, opened, he fell out over Richmond. He fell onto a building site. How terrifying. Where might he not have fallen? Through the roof of either the Richmond Theatres? In the main street? In Richard Attenborough's garden? Oh, modern life. One of the curses is travel.

Went over to Ravenscourt Park to get Hazel's books. She'd put them side by side, in danger of sliding inside one another. A better cover.

Friday march 21 1997

Have now finished Dan Farson's autobiog. Never a Normal Man. How well I remember him at Cambridge and afterwards, popping up at odd moments getting like me, fleshier and fleshier. I always thought him amiable, and he was not one of those who thought I 'was so witty' and therefore laughed at everything I said, like some. He's written a very readable book, and mercifully almost without any kiss and tell details of his gay affairs. But it is a rather melancholy story, with its deep self-doubts and even hates. I'm afraid part of it is the Ken Branagh style, making the criticisms yourself, so that you spike your critics' guns. It is always odd to me to meet or read about people who don't know when to grapple someone to their side with hoops of steel. I am so thankful that I have always known. Played Berg's 'Lulu' music and much enjoyed it.

Saturday march 22 1997

A big article in the Independent, not on an arts page, with a picture of S, Stephen Fry and Wilde. Good. It's a real talking point, on a different level from a simply artistic level.

I started Hazel's book in bed last night, and had read three quarters of it when Hazel rang. She's got two people coming round tomorrow. I was able to say quite sincerely that it was so readable that I'd go on without noticing. It is cosy, it is safe, it is bland, but it soothes. Though I can't imagine it doing so for anyone under sixty.

I see that Richard II is on TV tonight, played by Fiona Shaw. A double horror. A woman playing R II is grotesque. I couldn't watch it, whoever it was, because there is no point or reason in it. But I can't watch Fiona Shaw in anything. The crippling

self-consciousness which covers her with a stone carapace of embarrassment, oh, dear, her smile ... it's worse than Charlton Heston.

I must say Hazel's description of the studio, with all K's technical terms in, is rather a shriek. As it always is if you try to write it without knowing what the words mean. I expect K will laugh. Hazel has another just finished and with the publisher and starts another this week. She is certainly industrious.

Sharron rang about quarter to ten, and we had a long talk. That P.R. woman seems to be doing a lot, but has not so far improved Sh's finances. Still, Vogue was mentioned. That's more the style. There are, she says, six men in her life. In that case why is she ringing me at quarter to ten on a Saturday?

She's seen Chris Parsons! He asked her to repair his Cor Anglais. He is pulled together and playing again. I don't want to see him again much, all the same.

Sunday March 23 1997

S's notices in the Inde. and the Telegraph were excellent. The Observer's was more of a love-letter, finishing with profound art, which is hardly likely to be true of Wilde or S. But they are good selling notices, and one way or another, to be the feeling of an event. Good for the box office.

The estate-agents hysteria continues. A large and expensively printed invitation card for a free appraisal of the value of your property. Like a business party invitation.

I do love it, when common-sense and humour desert a whole institution. The Boy Scout Committee has voted to allow homosexuals to become Scoutmasters...

Last week L.C. Knights died. How those books of his loomed on the English scene at Cambridge. How many children had Lady Macbeth? and Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson.

Monday Marsh 24 1997

Put the ground rent of £25 through Katrina's letter box. Wrote to S.

R rang in the evening. Was I free tomorrow night? He'd stay and take me out to dinner. Well, if he can stand the dirt and squalor. If I don't have to clean and cook I don't mind who I see.

K rang at eight to say there was a window at lunch time on Saturday if I wanted to come over. 'Wanted'? Sounds all right.

Tuesday March 25 1997

Wednesday March 26 1997

Really didn't do much preparation. It's the going up and down stairs so many times I can't do any more.

R rang at about six to say he was 'fairly neat' but didn't actually get here till well after seven. He'd dropped Les, his partner, in Brackenbury Rd. It was so funny seeing him drive a perfectly conventional dull car.

A very successful evening. He looks and sounds well and in spirits. He was, for him, quite communicative. I heard a bit about the girl last summer. She was thirty-six, the sister of the pub landlord, where he's worked on and off. She said in the first week 'This is never going to work' and saw to it that it didn't. I repeat last Friday's remark.

We went to the Italian Da Bruno opposite H'smith tube, an unpromising position on the curve of Shepherd's Bush Rd and Hammersmith Rd. with ceaseless traffic. However, as I learnt years ago when George Rowell used to take me there, you don't notice the traffic at all once you're inside. It is a typical Italian restaurant from before the restaurant boom, with wrought iron and chianti bottles and perfectly acceptable food. Rather surly Italian waiters, who only smile at women. I had mozzarella and tomato with anchovies, and veal with lemon sauce, carrots and courgettes. The only slight complaint I have, is that he slightly talks K. down. Of course I talk teasingly about him, but I sense somewhere that R. thinks I over estimate him. I suppose R. would be a saint if he didn't envy K. a little.

He is a dear warm man, and so thoughtful and considerate when he left, this morning, with a hangover. He took away three carrier bags full of bottles to take to the bottle banks. Also went out last night to buy half a bottle of whisky and a pint of milk. We had good talk, tho' I can't remember any of it ...

Up till two, but have paid for it today.

K rang to say that Saturday was on and told him about the book.

The Clarence pub in Brompton Rd. is 'false fleeting perjured' not W. IV.

Thursday March 27 1997

I saw in the Stage that Arthur Hewlett had died. Poor Maggie. She married in her forties or fifties, I think partly to be married, to be with someone. She was so attractive, so funny, so talented and men and the theatre must have let her down. As a light comedienne, she was as good as anyone and rather better than some. Maggie Lockwood and Phyllis Calvert couldn't for instance, touch her in such work but they got opportunities not open to her because of their film fame. She never seemed to get into television, and when she married Arthur, I think she didn't work again. Although it was a middle-aged marriage, it must have lasted getting on for thirty years.

I feel sad that Maggie and Jo Tewson didn't want to keep in touch with me after D. died – a judgment of some kind on me, no doubt (I think they were wary of university actors, for a start.)

I know something of what she's feeling now. It's worse for her than it was for me. The one consolation after the terrible shock of D's death, was that I was fifty and could go on working, with all its possibilities of satisfaction, distraction, money and as it indeed did turn out, the making of half-a-dozen wonderful and dear new friends. Maggie must be about eighty, I think, not far off. With no chance to take a new direction. She has at least two good friends, Jo T, and Annette Kerr, who will look out for her. But I am sad for her, and for the theatre more or less wasting her.

It's so amusing the proliferation of television channels. As well as the now five terrestrial (sic) channel and the thirty or so on cable and satellite, there are now to be thirty more when digital comes in. All this when there's only enough talent about to fill an hour or two of one channel once a week.

Did not go to the film, partly because it wasn't something I was wild to see, - 'The Relic', and partly because I was still tired from R. I can't now stay up till two without making up for it.

Friday March 28 1997

Good Friday. As usual the lovely quiet as 'everyone' goes away, and you realise how much traffic there is, and how it is the main source of noise and dirt. And there are still advertisements saying in effect, 'from 0 to 60 in seconds, your own private world, to take you wherever you want to go. The insensitivity and lack of reality in most people, are demonstrated most clearly in their attitude to cars. 'Fuck everything and everybody, I must have my car.' All the same, it is a limbo, and you must be serene to enjoy it as I usually can. But just now, B'mouth is troubling, and the workmen next door being, I think, Indian of some description, have worked through the day and will probably the weekend. It is extraordinary how many hammers can be banged on what for what for months on end. The house must be hammered flat inside.

The worst incident in Albania so far sees nineteen dead, and who swoops down to report it? Kate Adie, the vulture. How she needs the low serious solemn tone she uses for such occasions. An empty life, I imagine.

Saturday March 29 1997

A rather painful lunch to which I'd so looked forward. I told him about B'mouth and the money I'd had to put in, before lunch, out of honesty, and he got really cross. It made me feel ill as he wanted me to confront Donald and Lalla in their various deficiencies. Donald stumping up money? Lalla leaving Ravins Rd? I could only just eat the smoked salmon and scrambled egg which he knows to be my favourite. Of course I knew he was angry for me rather than with me, but I was the only other person there and I find it still very very difficult. I love him so much that any rift is agony, as if the whole B'mouth wasn't agony enough. But the years are on our side

and we got through it and talked of other things and even went down into the studio and sketched in Oh my Alfred. He loved what I'd so far done. I think he was altogether a bit on edge, as he was a bit cross with Arlette too, over the 'phone'.

He knew I'd been upset – I couldn't eat the piece of cheese he'd specially bought, Camembert or something – he tasted it and said 'Disgusting'. He doesn't like cheese, odd – so we got to the hall to say goodbye he suddenly hugged me and said 'I'm sorry I was cross with you'. By the way after the crossness, he'd said 'Another idea, I've got £12,000 put away for tax in 1999, we could pay off B'mouth with that'. There is no-one like him, and he's on a plane tomorrow.

Later.

When he rang at ten to twelve, I knew it was Can you bring... so I said 'What can I ...?' 'Yes, you can bring ... What time is it?' I shrieked.

Oh, and we talked about his survival special, which I'd seen and taped. I said I couldn't see any sense or pattern in the decision to use music or not. For example, the sequences with the huge whale with great pale fins cried out for music. 'I sent them thirteen clips, they only used eight'. Are any of them musicians?' 'No they're all in anoraks'.

Oh, I said 'Is Ch. 5 so grainy with you?' He went away and looked and said, 'Yes, it is. I thought perhaps it was because you were 0181.' When we get hold of a joke, we grind the juice out of it.

Sunday March 30 1997

I quite see why The Sound of Music - being shown yet again over Easter – is so popular, though unacceptable to me aesthetically. The strongest element is bringing order out of chaos. The taming of unruly children by mild confident discipline is almost as important.

I was amused that a little feature about it, included an American saying wittily that the song 'Edelweiss' was used for the entry of the Austrian Ambassador into the White House, which perhaps tells you more about America that I care to admit.

Usual chat to Hazel during which she said she couldn't watch animal programmes because she couldn't stand seeing animals in pain or injured, even if they were cured.

Monday March 31 1997

Lost in the usual silent holiday dream. The lack of traffic always makes more effect than I remember each time.

I don't think I made a note of an interview with Leonardo di Caprio over Romeo and Juliet. 'Why are you called Leonardo?' 'My parents are a couple of old hippies. They were looking at a picture by Leonardo in the Uffizi, and I kicked, so they called

me Leonardo. Our name is really Di Caprio.' Now that impressed me, as so many older Americans, let alone twenty-two year olds would have explained who Leonardo was, not to mention saying the Uffizi in Florence, Italy. He seems to have a residual intelligence, tho' it's difficult to tell.

Tuesday April 1 1997

I see that poor silly Diana has been involved in a punch-up on the Earl's Court Road. A gallant young admirer (sic) came to her aid by beating up an intrusive photographer. This was outside her 'new' gym, where she hoped to be anonymous. No-one seems to wonder why she goes to a public gym. Good gracious, 'working out' can be done in a bedroom, and she could summon a personal trainer to Kensington Palace. So why doesn't she? Ah.

A name from the past turned up in the London Review of Books, Joseph Rykwert. When I was sleeping on Gerard Irvine's sofa in 1952 Joseph occupied the loft. He was, I think, Polish, looked like Len Rossiter on an off day and had a built-in awkwardness and determination to be a failure. There, in the London Review, is the critical appraisal of his, probably lifelong in conception, 'masterpiece' on architecture. Really I might have written it myself from all those years ago. Immense erudition, insufficient judgment, can't see the wood for the trees. Endless footnotes, too few conclusions. Poor boy. 'His masterpiece falling, dead from the press'.

Wednesday April 2 1997

Yet another production of Lady W's Fan has opened at the Haymarket, Bill Kenwright, of course. They'll exhaust that audience if they're not careful. It came from the Royal Exchange. It shows how standards have fallen that the best notice went to Rosalind Knight from Nicholas de Jongh, the E. Standard critic, 'The most delicious feast of comic acting now available'. R.K. is a reasonable rep. actress with the right accent and an aquiline profile and the assurance coming from her background. Compared to D. for instance, an adequate understudy. Imagine comparing her to D. or Athene Seyler, or Irene Vanbrugh.

Thursday April 3 1997

Really, hygiene and freshness are running wild with pollution mania these days. I bought two pork chops a few days ago, ate the first one, and ate the second today, three days past its 'use by' date, which of course is some time past its display date. It was perfectly fresh, - it didn't even smell of meat, a great sin nowadays.

I have now finished the Stephen Tennant biography. Wellish done, by the same man who did Noel's. Some mistakes, even in the identification of the photographs. I was fascinated on one level, but very irritated on another. The archetypal spoilt child, a sort of super-Julian. I had to suppress my impatience to finish the book. Talk of tumbil talk.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, in full canonicals, passed the TV cameras and said 'Hi there'.

Friday April 4 1997

Went out to buy some books and do a bit of shopping in the Charing X Road. Bought the new Alan Bennett Writing Home, with some additions. The Marthe Bibesco biog., and some more detective stories. Also some cheese, yarg and caerphilly. I always get to the tube by a quarter to five, at the latest, to avoid the rush-hour. It was shut by a bomb scare. I didn't attempt to wait, but made straight for the Strand. I had to walk to St. Mary Le Strand by find a reasonably free bus stop. I notice that, partly under the influence of all these messy tourists, the good fair English queue is disintegrating. I had a wait of at least twenty minutes, and one way or another my poor old legs were aching by the end of the day.

When I was on my way out, by the way, I saw a video on the garden-wall on the corner-house leading to Margravine. It said If you're worried about this Government, play this twelve-minute video and pass it on. Quite clever, as it would intrigue anyone, and a great deal cheaper than putting one through every door. The Referendum Party, I suppose.

On the missing persons slot, a family in Inverness are very worried about Mary, disappeared 'some months ago', aged 16 and is believed to be in London, calling herself Roxanne. Er, yes.

Saturday April 5 1997

Oh, I did say, the papers stopped arriving. I complained. He said the manager wasn't there and... the next day, they weren't there again, and so I rang and said 'What's up?' and the bill hadn't been paid to the tune of £242 pounds. Rang S's Karen. She rang to say they hadn't had a bill. The shop said they'd sent it. She said send her one of her stamped addressed envelopes and she'd see to it. Tiresome. Can't quite tell whether it was due to S's shortness of cash or not, as I'm still £150 a month for books.

There is still banging next door but a sort of end is in sight, as a For Sale notice has gone up. In my simplicity I had assumed somebody had bought it and was doing it up for themselves. It is quite beyond my comprehension that someone can buy a house and oversee all the incredible boredom of builders and decorators, for months on end, just for the profit of selling it to someone else. All the same, I was quite irritated when Mary L. jeered at me for it, 'Oh you're so naif'. Gracious, if she irritates me after all these years, what must she do for others?

Vaguely watching the Grand National, and amused by some Hong Kong or Singapore girls being interviewed, It's 'leally thrilling', when it was all overtaken by bomb-scars. Hateful of course, but then I find the whole absurd inflated ridiculous world of sport, especially the wild expense of horse-racing, repellent and couldn't repress a whiff of pleasure at its collapse. That football idiot who said 'Football isn't a matter

of life or death, it's a great deal more important that that', is still bringing down hubris on sport.

Just caught a second of the revolting Lottery announcement and there was Bob Monkhouse – strange this weekend – exiting with, 'I know I'm a sinner, but make me a winner'. Ugh!

I read an interview with Kate Beckinsale and saw for the first time that Richard B. was indeed half-Burmese. He had that curious olive skin and something about the eyes. Like Jeremy Spenser.

Sunday April 6 1997

On last week's University Challenge, the youngsters were shown the photo of John G. as Hamlet. They thought it was Larry, one even guessing it was L.O. as Richard III. Now I am far from expecting young people to recognise old actors. No, it was just that I was reminded of the time when we realised that L. was being placed above John G. and saw that this was a clear indication of the decay of English culture. Many others have followed since...

Hazel rang as usual and I rang Mary L. straight after. It is a bit of a balancing act between them, Hazel being a true blue Tory, and Mary a prejudiced Socialist. I don't think I am dishonest within them, except by default. So much the story of my life. To Let sign in the Mall has a careful red I painted in.

Monday April 7 1997

D. died twenty years ago today. Unbelievably by a lucky chance, K rang tonight, back from Portugal. A comfort. Not that I'm sad, exactly. He's got a cold...

Watched a bit of the re-run Grand National and noticed some daffodils in full flower in a garden by the race-track. They've been over down here for some weeks. I can never bother who wins.

Tuesday April 8 1997

Oh, travel programmes. Just a glimpse is horror and makes me glad I never go, Jamaica over-run with amusement parks and ghastly hotels, a fat family said 'We haven't set foot outside this complex for a fortnight, there's so much to do'. Sun, and heat, otherwise they might be anywhere. And I presume Jamaica has been more or less ruined in the process. How I despise tourists laying waste for tasteless self-indulgence. We left the cottage as we found it except that I'd restored the garden and made the path more beautiful, but still a perfectly natural country track. It looked as if, anywhere you went in Jamaica, you were only feet from such large hideously noisy mechanical something, power-motor-boats, anything bursting thro' the water not to mention everything on land. The way all mechanical perverts say 'From 0 to 90 in 3

seconds' gives one the key – what a price they exact from those of us who value quiet, to escape from their said selves!

Rang Derrick M and found an encouraging outcome from my efforts. He has got, through Dr. Namenko, a new G.P. who has chucked out the first one he went to in the new practice. She was a Dr Rothenberger, a woman who was just going on holiday the day after his first appointment. With Derrick's prejudices, oh dear, a woman, Jewish and careless. This one has said the anti-blood-pressure pills were completely wrong, and 'you must lose some weight' – I knew him as stick – 'come to me once a week for six weeks. I am so pleased that he is pleased, and at last someone is taking trouble with him. That it was his own fault is nothing to do with it.

Wednesday April 9 1997

I see Americans are flying over to queue for the sixteen seats available at the Almeida for the production of Ivanov which stars that rather limp prep. school-master, Ralph Fiennes. I was touched to see the theatre asserting its proper role in at least one department – the ASM bringing the waiting queues cups of something warm. Of course now it's not just a cuppa, it's a cappuccino, complete with the sprinkled chocolate.

It's almost enough to believe in the revival of the house market. As well as the Russian house next door, the house opp. next to the listed house, is being gutted, and a house just round in St D's Rd on the opposite side. Thank goodness the scaffolding has come down behind the end of the chapel next door, so that the workmen can't look into the drawing-room, not that they ever have, to my knowledge, because I have kept the blinds drawn. Apart from my privacy, it is wrong to tempt people.

I saw a clip of Sian Phillips as Dietrich. A silly venture - real stardom whether one likes it or not, is not interesting to try and recreate. I could see that not enough had been spent on the dress, just in terms of money. I dare say it will succeed in a rather tacky way with a 'certain' audience.

I think Alan Davies is a young comedian to watch, with an usually genial and intelligent personality.

A pleasant woman rang to persuade me to vote labour. I told her I always did. I tell that to all the girls.

Thursday April 10 1997

I might have gone to the film which seems to be a sort of English version of Theorem, with Julie Walters and Rupert Graves, called Intimate Relations. But there were two things against it, one, that I can't really accept Julie Walters as a sexual being, tho' I love her grotesque comedy, two, that Janet asked me to go to La Perla – Frances was going too and I think three other men. I am sensitive about her having to pay for me in front of strangers, who will presumably pay for themselves. And there is the strain of trying to hear, with so many people.

Friday April 11 1997

K. rang. 'How about Saturday?' 'Yes.'

Went out to see Total Eclipse, and to Soho to do some shopping. I must go to Berwick St. Market more – I got a pound of good thick asparagus, for 80p. It was well worth it, not English, of course, but very good eating. Got some more cheese and sausages and went to Somerfield's and suddenly knew I was going straight home. It is not only just tiredness or lack of interest, but avoiding the rush-hour or upsets like last week, because I can no longer stand all the way to B. Court, let alone walk.

Heartrending case of a baby boy thrown into the Thames last August, with cord and placenta attached. Nobody has been traced, and they showed the pathetic little funeral. Poor wretched girl.

Janet rang at ten past eight, just as I put the grilled fish on the table. Even close friends, even K sometimes, simply cannot believe that I always eat at the same time. 'Two-minutes?' It was to tell me that that friend of hers whose garden I promised to look at and didn't, - oh dear, age again – is also deaf and has had, for example, a louder door-bell and telephone bell fitted and so on and so on. All free under the NHS. Thus do your lies come back to haunt you, because of course I have used my slight deafness as a useful social lever.

Saturday April 12 1997

Sunday April 13 1997

I rang him at lunchtime and said I'll come at 6.30 and clear the garden up. 'Good thinking and I'll help you'. I ache all over at the moment, as one does sometimes and my back is really painful but happily his raised bed is possible. I suppose the day will come when I don't describe our friendship – but just let it lie there. Well, I'm nearly there but I still relish our intimacy consciously. We said two sentences. I gardened. He cooked.

Arlette was working late, and didn't get back till getting on for eight, looking scrumptious. Skin tight black lycra pants, a bare midriff, a delicious bright crimson top, little puffed-sleeves with fluffy braid, square-cut colletage, and entirely the figure for it, wonderful firm brown flesh, not a bulge anywhere. They showed me the photos of Costa Rica. I have to say it looked entirely idyllic. The first photo was presumably from their hotel, as it seemed higher than the villa. A large bay stretched thirty miles on the left. On the right an unbroken stretch of tropical forest, slivers of white beach – not a building in sight. On 'their' beach, below the villa, they never saw anyone except two rather small native children and a rather large (also native) horse. Oh and the great enigma of the pool that was really a shower, is solved. There is darling Arlete beckoning from the pool, and it is, I see, a small affair with a couple of steps down and a pipe to fill the pool and as he said, you could swim four or five strokes. But the vital missing fact was that the shower was over the pool. Water I suppose is at a premium and it must all go back in. I wonder why the holiday was

rated rather low. Can it have been that they wanted some night life as well? I don't think it can be as un-spoilt as that and have night life. But I know nothing of foreign parts. I could only have lived abroad, not travel. It took me some two or three years to believe I was at the cottage when I was.

Oh, and when we were still alone, I told about the electric casserole I'd rediscovered in the cupboard. 'You can leave it on for getting on for a day, - very useful for us during dress-rehearsals or whatever'. I so loved the expression on his face, affectionate but compassionate, as he said 'I work at home, if I need to turn a casserole off, I go upstairs and turn it off'. 'But if it needs to be warmed up?' 'microwave'. Collapse of aged party. I also slipped in then about Chris Parsons. 'He rang up to ask for Sharron's address'.

It turned out, I'd forgotten if I ever knew, that they'd gone to Port. for Arlete's cousin's wedding. 'Let's keep that for dinner'. So they did, with hilarious results. K started on the tale over the salmon, with snaps, prompted from time to time by A. saying 'Tell him about when the old lady screamed'. 'No, that was later. I'm telling it chronologically, Angus likes things chronologically'. I said mildly, 'Well, I can't help it. Things happen to me chronologically, I may be unusual in that way'.

The whole wedding irritated him, as weddings are wont to do, perhaps principally because of people spending money they can't afford on an empty form. It was all rather a poor affair, obviously – I was amused that he said they were all peasants, quite often I'm not sure he knew exactly what he was saying and happily A. doesn't catch the pejorative in the word in English. There was little or no music during the service, and the priest talked interminably – K. presuming it was 'will-you-take-this-man' – but it seems it was 'You will submit yourself to your husband completely' and other decidedly un-politically correct sentiments. A. had to speak, though I'm still not clear exactly what about. I suppose she was approximately a bridesmaid, but that's another sad thing. There didn't seem to be anything specially Portuguese about the whole thing. Except perhaps at the reception, when the old lady screamed ... There were no speeches, but every now and again, some older person rose to their feet and screamed good wishes to the bride and groom, long life and so on. But, even before the cake was cut, 'some ape put up a couple of chairs, a table on top of them and on it he put a fourteen inch black and white television set with only an internal aerial - and everyone turned their backs on the cake to watch a football match ...'

And at last I got a little more of a picture of A's mother's house and the family and their habits. Although they are not at all well off, the house is quite big with six bedrooms and I suppose much the same space on the ground floor, though none of the rooms are as big as the front part of the sitting-room at E. Road. Some of the inner rooms have no windows at all and he described them as 'paranoid' about heat. 'They have shutters and blinds and the blinds have little holes in them, which can also be closed.' Well of course that's how you bear high temperatures in Spain and Port. I have to draw the blinds and curtains in London. But he loves open windows and light, in a way I don't care about. I have to have curtains that can create darkness in the day if I want it.

I was amused that, when I asked what Arlete's sister-in-law was like, he said 'Ask Arlete.' She said, 'Ask Kevin' – obviously a bit of a Joan, one way and another. She

went on at A. that K. should learn Portuguese. As it was none of her business, that can't have gone down well.

There was a curious recipe or two, as well. He has described the delicious fish barbecued on the beach and A's mother has done them like that too. But this time, she said she had mackerel – oh good - and she cooked them for three-quarters of an hour in the oven. Then again, a man came to the back-door with armfuls of fresh green leaves. And she cooked them for half an hour and welded them into two wedges like school dinners – worse of both dishes. A. said they were her favourites (another confidence before she arrived.)

He described the patio – I suppose a genuine one – at the back of the house shaded by a trellis with a vine and grapes 'I went out for a smoke (?) and there was nothing to sit on. They never eat out there. On the last night I took them out for dinner. It was a pleasant restaurant with a sloping lawn going down to a lake, where the tables were. They marched straight into the very back of the restaurant building, and asked for the windows to be shut. It was 35 degrees.

Somewhere, during all this, we finished a bottle Glenfiddich, Nigel and Sian coming to join us – they still haven't found a flat in Kinston. I liked her again and kissed her nose by pissed mistake on parting, but she didn't hold it against me – the mistake, not the nose.

As revealing as anything was K. telling me her mother had bought new furniture for their bedroom – it is amusing to see K. as a rich demanding homme du monde - and that K. had said to A. about the whole thing 'I can't do this again.' Stay there, he meant.

I was pleased that she spent the last hour snuggling up on my shoulder and he took a snap. He bought me a taxi and we didn't mention B'mouth.

Recovered fairly well by the afternoon and had to go to H'smith for some wine. Through the station were limping and stumbling refugees from the marathon still wrapped in their flora foil capes. With all the exercise I expect they'd be very tough. A father and son team, craggy and rather absurd. The father fiftyish, the son late twentyish, the father limping, the son not.

Hazel low, not surprising. Her stepmother is ill again.

Monday April 14 1997

Dear John is 93. I never want him to die. Except that he may want to.

A whole box of free-range eggs turned out to be double-yolked. I felt like Caesar. I didn't dare to look into the entrails of the cold chicken.

Thank goodness it's April. Otherwise...

S. rang during the half, very merry, tho' if he says 'The business isn't to good', it's bad.

Tuesday April 15 1997

Another round of noise from next door, I think this time it must be sanding – machines, which suggests that the end is near. I looked in the window the other day and saw the old chapel painted a tasteful light cream – it's in again - and those wall-lights which throw the light upwards, at head height. An odd choice, as surely light fittings must be individual choice, and these, removed, would leave marks on the plaster difficult to completely remove however careful you were.

This time the noise did drive me out of my house. The only film I could bear to see was Total Eclipse, despite its poor notices. It isn't at all good, like a mixture of a H'wood historical nonsense and a bit of soft porn. I can't say I ever thought all that much of the play. Writing about geniuses needs a touch of genius. There is always that awful moment when Rimbaud sits down and pens a world-famous poem. Or a clatter of Tudor pewter and 'Oh, Master William, always writing, writing. David Thewlis was better than I expected, but still lightweight. Leonardo di Caprio was again very well cast as Rimbaud. He looks very like one of the paintings and has that emotion inside him but not the savagery. But alas he didn't have the luck not to be born an American. His accent is unlike anyone else's in the film and comically modern. Looking at him dispassionately, I am rather sorry for him. That slight boyish look does not age well.

Rang Karen yesterday to see if the paper-bill had been paid. The delivery has not been resumed, before complaining I needed to know. It's good to have them back. I worry about B'mouth and stay awake composing letters to the bank etc, and the papers distract me for a time. Karen didn't ring back almost at once, as she usually does, and I had fantasies of S. having gone broke again etc. However, an understudy rang and said it was paid and Karen was in Tenerife.

There's been a male rape in Bury St Edmund's – where next?

Wednesday April 16 1997

Re-read J Osborne's auto-biog. As readable and as questionable as before. I think what struck me this time was his poor judgment of character, especially of women! – but also his nasty portrait of himself. Judging by his friendships, certain letters and so on, he must, in life, have been a great deal more loveable than he presents himself as being.

Thursday April 17 1997

The film was The Saint – it sounds awful, but it wouldn't be my sort of film, even if it were good. And Janet wasn't staying, so I didn't go.

Paid the B'mouth water-rate and my gas bill, £160 odd, so my nice little balance depleted by this stupid B'mouth thing.

Friday April 18 1997

Felt curiously whacked all day. Only went out at 8.0 to get more gin and whisky.

Saturday April 19 1997

There is a new play opening based on the master-classes Callas gave at the Juilliard after her retirement. It stars Patti LuPone, whose name I thought was the usual trashy American nonsense but it turns out she is named after Patti, who was great-grandmother. The article quoted an exchange which both amused and moved me, because it represents the way we, and all the great ones, too, work. Callas: Now what's happening here? Girl student: It's a cry of despair. Callas: No, it's not a cry of despair. It's a B.

Sunday April 20 1997

Still feeling below par, bloated, - the worrying, I expect.

Some people laugh at nature programmes – I can always watch natural creatures and find it comforting and satisfying.

Oh, curious little dream about eleven dozing over the papers, a few of us at the stage-door, friendly and warm – an odd old lady with wild white hair, emoting and singing, sending a message to me as to which hand she should make a gesture with. Should I direct her? Behind her an enormous crane a good deal higher than any building. No meaning at all.

Monday April 21 1997

I don't know why, but I was more breathless today, going up and down stairs. Heart? But annoying as I'm sure John must have noticed. 'I don't like the look of that breathlessness...' but perhaps it seemed more obvious to me. Sat and waited for him, looking at a door where employees in and outed and he came from the left. He claims to have taken me to Franco's before. And I did claim foolishly that it was nearly a year since I'd seen him. We were both a bit wrong. But I don't remember Franco's and it was before my leg and therefore the first week in August.

Franco's is Frank's from all those years ago, having spread into the shop next door. An old fashioned affair, with Italian waiters in green silk waistcoats, pink table cloths and napkins, 'traditional' cooking, an upmarket La Perla, tho' probably only in price. Not our sort of place, with everyone in suits and a decided air at certain tables, of taking part in exciting haute cuisine, far from being the case. Stifling on a hot day, I should think.

John very very sweet in his busy life, giving his full attention and suggestion to Bournemouth. We left with me either to try and extend the overdraft or go ahead with the mortgage. His family is in the usual stage of disarray. Joyce is much better and teaching dyslexic children. She's seeing an analyst three times a week, who doesn't give her any advice... Odd that he doesn't seem to wonder why I haven't been to an analyst. Oh well. He was very sweet too, about K. 'I told Joyce Kevin has been very good to Angus.' 'What, that wild boy?' Well, people get left behind easily and K. is astride the real modern world.

ANGUS MACKAY DIARY NO. 147

April 21 1997 (cont.)
June 20 1997

Monday April 21 1997 (cont)

I had sea-bass in a cream sauce, with thin hoops of, I think, celeriac over it. I say I think, because it was quite uncooked, and therefore, by me, uneatable. But the fish was alright and so was the spinach. Nothing else, an espresso.

Afterwards, we walked back to the Academy. We went up in the new glass lift to the new(ish) bit, John saying con con brio, 'The Queen Mother went in this lift' to the tepid amazement of three assorted tourists. He walked past the cash desk of the Grosz exhibition with a nod to the man, and left me to have a look around. Apart from the obvious, I was interested by the early and late figurative stuff and by the colour, so attractive. J. had mentioned a caricature of Hitler as Siegfried. It is certainly riveting, by its date, apart from anything else. There's the hair, the moustache, the mad contained face in middle age, as I remember from the news reels in the thirties. Below the hirsute, pelted body of Siegfried. And the date? 1922. Artists are indeed prophets.

Despite breathlessness, walked to the Charing X Rd. Waterstone's and bought a couple of detectives. The new John Harvey, for one, and William Corlett's Two Gentlemen Shaving. Even poorer than Now and Then, which is saying something, slackly plotted and written. He is an adept at making nothing much happen at length. Shan't bother any more. He has got fairly glowing notices from fairly serious papers, - depressing.

Then to new film 'Box of Moonlight' at Tott. Court Rd. Directed and written by Tom DiCillo, and starring John Turturro. As sometimes with independent films, there is intelligence there and therefore much less chance of longeurs. Everybody is well-cast, everybody can act and everybody acts well. A delightful new young man, Sam Rockwell, an artlessness that brought a tear to my eye, and John Turturro is always excellent, a character-leading-man. I thoroughly enjoyed it. Their relationship reminded me, at many removes, of K. and me.

By this time I wasn't at all breathless. Odd, but I hope reassuring.

Tuesday April 22 1997

Dreamt I was at B'ham theatre, and was working with Brad Pitt, and then realised I didn't know my next scene at all and the scenery was turning into place. Then it was back into the old search for the stage door tho' I had just come out of it.

Interesting Brad Pitt included as I very seldom dream of real people. We were talking quite sensibly, as one actor to the another. It may have been the film, I suppose, as

Tom DiCillo directed B.P.'s first starring role, Johnnie Suede, and B.P. is the same physical type as S. Rockwell. That must be it.

Why Birmingham crops up, I don't quite know. My first rep. I suppose.

K. rang about S's play and we arranged Wed week, Arlete perhaps coming, according to her taste, or not wanting to be left at home or whatever. She isn't a demanding girl at all.

Wednesday April 23 1967

This morning lying in bed, I had the idea of selling the upstairs flat at B'mouth. After all, the money raised may bring us more than the rent, which was only £2000 this last year, with all the repairs the letting agent demanded, instead of £4000 not to mention the cost of the overdraft and it would let me off some worry and a lot of stamps. I left a message on John's machine with some excitement, especially as yesterday I had a disgusting little talk with the computerized manikins who run (sic) Barclays at B'mouth and they refused any extension of the overdraft. How odd banks are now! How could they lose £12 or £15,000 on a house's title deeds worth £200,000 and all that interest. But not sufficient income (true in the long term) but 'Miss B. never signed the guarantor form'... 'But you'd only get your money, when Miss B. is dead'. Tepid shop-girl voice 'Oh yes, I imagine, we have been with that bank since 1927 and of course it means absolutely nothing.

Then off to lunch with Mary L. There's no lessening of the pressure. Happily, my legs and her pavements are rather better and therefore the walk from Willesden Grn. To Chichele Man. seemed that much shorter. I was rather fascinated that she apologised for there being nothing much but the smoked salmon. She also asked my opinion of an upright armchair upholstered in embossed pale blue satin? with false arm-covers!

Imagine the scorn she poured down at M'Churia Rd when we first had ours done... I assured her that smoked s. and a tiny salad was all I wanted. She produced Sainsbury's hock, slightly warm – warm wine is another of her absurdities, because of her attachment to heat, and too sweet for me. Still, on her own ground she tries her best, and as long as we talk of books and the past, all is usually well. But there are still undetected minefields everywhere. You might think it safe to enquire, as I always do, after old friends and acquaintances, in this case, Karin McCarthy and Roly Davis. 'How is Karin?' 'I don't want to talk about it, it's too awful'. 'And Roly?' 'It's even worse, tho' we're not sure. I don't want to think about it.' And this not in a tone of pain, but with venomous reproach, as if it is not only my fearful taste in asking, (a question I always ask when we meet) but as if their troubles are my fault. Now this mistaken tone is partly the result of the same tone-deaf failing that made her a bad actress, but also that essential childishness, that has insisted on having her own way until she is pretty isolated. Poor darling, she has no idea.

I took her a bagful of books and took away another bag of mine. She lent me a book Karin had given her, The Life of Ellen Ternan by Claire Tomalin. I'm hoping for a

really good portrait of provincial theatre in the fifties and sixties, a period still much under illuminated. I look forward to it. What a funny mick she is.

When I got back I rang Derrick M. He sounded very dicey, almost a bit drunk, but I think it was just tiredness and breathlessness. Thank God the new doctor Nimenko got him, is working, even tho' the drugs he's having for his high blood pressure – the second try – have given him diarrhoea, but at last this man says now we try something different. What an odd thing high blood p. is! Nobody knows what causes it and I wonder sometimes whether it exists, except as a complaint to be addressed in the interest of American immortality.

Dear John rang at five-thirtyish to applaud my idea of selling the flat – 'Why didn't I think of it?' – dear thing, he was between two meetings. He thanked me again for the John Wesley book of Physic. I knew he would like it.

Rang and got darling Tim back from America, what a sweet mild dear man he is. Sweet and mild are vividly complimentary adj. to me.

Thursday April 24 1997

Stayed in all day, my solitude enlivened by two leaflets. One was from the National Law Party. At the bottom there is a panel headed 'Integrated national consciousness – the basis for successful government'. It suggests that we should practice Maharishi's Transcendental Meditation and Yogic Flying. Picture included of two young men in yoga position a couple of feet off the floor, entitled First Stage of Yogic Flying. Other leaflet, Easter Miracle Crusade. 'Poverty? Bad health? Poor relationships? Feeling alone, afraid or guilty? Need to be free from drugs? With God, nothing is impossible. Such a relief. Nothing being impossible starts at 6.30 every evening.

Rang Mary and unwisely said the farmers needed rain. She bit my head right off. 'Don't give me rubbish like that'.

Friday April 25 1997

K. rang twice. First to say he and A were going somewhere in the New Forest, as she wanted to ride. That's new. Told him to avoid Lyndhurst and Brockenhurst. Hope I was right.

Rang again to say we'd have to put off Oscar because he's got a sizable job on that Wednesday that he can't turn down. A pity, but that's the business. It's on for another week, till May 17, interesting as I thought it wasn't doing all that well. We discussed B'mouth and he said at once he'd put the £12,000 in to save us the bank charges till the flat is sold. There's no-one like him.

Saturday April 26 1997

Found myself reading with enjoyment and speed, always a sign of a certain sort of good writing and most unexpectedly, an extract from the memoirs of a woman who owns the Washington Post. Clear and rather touching, telling about her husband becoming ill with a manic depressive illness, one symptom of which was going off with a bimbo and after much vicissitude, coming back to her to die. She is unusually rich, even for an American. But my eye was caught by a bit of tumbril talk, in an interview she gave Allison Pearson. They sat down in the drawing-room, and Mrs Graham said to the maid, 'Deux cafes, sil vous plait.' The maid looked baffled. 'Oh, of course, the French one was on yesterday.'

In the p.m. to the Renoir to see A Self-Made Hero, new French film. Lately I have not gone out on Saturdays, but it was unexpectedly tranquil. The film was a disappointment. Within limits I like someone elaborately getting up a pretense – in this case a Resistance fighter. But it needs an exact sense of reality and fantasy. This film didn't have it. It was not only slow, but also had strong whiffs of pretentiousness.

Still, Safeways and the tube are just round the corner.

Sunday April 27 1997

Roy rang and told me an only fairly funny Irish joke. Very drunk, stopped going the wrong way up a one-way street, 'Didn't you see the arrows?' 'I didn't even see the Indians'.

There's a woman on the Clive James show who sings at the end, called Margarita Pracatan. She is so over-the-top one's eyes pop and one screams with laughter. I defy anyone not to laugh.

Isn't it an odd thing that a hundred and twenty years of universal education has made no inroad on certain classes' use of double negatives?

Monday April 28 1997

Drafted letter to the letting agent and was sitting innocently reading the Standard, with the flat filthy around me, when K rang from Hammersmith Bridge to say they were to call in. I just had time to use the dust-pan and brush to pick up the worst of the fluff under my feet in here. But his love doesn't worry about things like that. There they were at the front door, hugs and kisses and off he went to get a parking ticket. Darling Arlette said it had been a lovely weekend, the best ever. I'm glad that she had found the countryside so beautiful. Back here he went about as I glory in him doing, 'fridge working well?' out on to the balcony, looking at the damp, 'Weren't you going to get quotes?' blowing through the flat and out into the garden to get some bay leaves, say the pond was a bit low and fixing up the hose to top it up. I'd completely forgotten that R had fixed the hose to the waste pipe of the loo when it was overflowing!

So they stayed at a hotel which was classy enough (sic) to insist on no jeans in the dining room. He's hopeless at such stuff but he did think there were a lot of Germans and tourists. He has no 'hang-ups' either way, - he is not intimidated nor does he have to shock. They'd been put in the Bridal Suite - I tried Bridle... - and he rang down on the Sunday to hire a couple of horses from the stables. 'I'm eleven stone, Arlete is eight stone... we've just had breakfast... He claimed that he was talking of time. I think he was worried about a couple of rashers and a fried egg weighing down a large horse. They stayed about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour and left me completely warmed through.

Mary went off to stay with Gabrielle Blunt for the inside of a week. Where did she meet her? Quiet weekend.

Tuesday April 29 1997

Wrote and sent letters to the letting-agent and to Lalla and Donald! How comic it all is! I laugh when I don't groan with boredom. Oh my ridiculous naïf family.

After tomorrow night the election will be over.

Wednesday April 30 1997

Thursday May 1 1997

The only note I made last night, Wed, was how strange John Major and his family must feel, knowing that as they watch TV they may have to leave their houses.

And, of course, they did have to. Oh, the relief of all those awful creatures gone, swept away at a stroke. Let's hope.

For once I stayed up and watched extraordinary overturn - till nearly four so I am very tired. I hope the sight of David Mellor and James Goldsmith jeering at each other will remove them both from the scene permanently. What creatures there are these days!

Friday May 2 1997

Stayed in. Still too tired yesterday to record that I took hold of the pencil on a bit of string in the voting booth and found the string wasn't long enough to reach to the paper. There was the usual atmosphere among the helpers of a respectable church bazaar so I reverted to my youth and said jovially 'Is this a communist plot?' Shrieks.

Well, I don't care. When you think of a lot of the rest of the world, the atmosphere of a respectable church bazaar in a polling-booth is something to be proud of. Voted Labour.

S. rang during the half - this is still Thursday - and said he was rather dreading the audi. because... Earlier he had a cold 'and it affected Lady Bracknell.' My heart sank

a little at that, as I do fear his treatment of that scene, no falsetto swoops, I do hope. But I am not altogether sanguine about the whole thing. I must warn K. Oh, S. said Wed was no good, because it was before the matinee. 'But you said...' So we settled on Monday the 12th. It seems business is good. So now for Friday. Karen, S's secretary rang to tell me something funny. It seems a school girl of sixteen, because of some school project, wants to interview S. She left a number and when Karen rang, she got the father. I can't bother to build it up, - it was Donald and Hannah. Pathetic. I cannot believe they haven't thought of the connection. I haven't seen Hannah since she was two, three, five? They sent me her photo at five? and I wrote underneath it 'ominously like Donald'. Rang and left that phrase on the machine to warn S.....

K. rang very short, to say he would send the cheque, asking how.

There's an organisation against genetic engineering, Super Heroes Against Genetics, SHAG

Saturday May 3 1997

Not a peep from Lalla or Donald. I hope he's not turning to a Solicitor. He's fool enough.

Sharron's jewellery in Telegraph magazine at last. Beautiful ring, £337! Fenwicks, two other venues, Joel Jewellery. It's getting going, I really believe.

Up and to the West End in the am. Amazing. Sold some books in the Charing X Rd as I had no money. Rather disgusting that look in the man's eye as he decides you're a mug and he can offer almost nothing, always the case with me.

Talking of money, K rang - we had a long comforting talk about B'mouth. He is my rock.

Sunday May 4 1997

I have now read The Life of Leigh Bowery by a close friend, Sue Tilley. She has never written anything before, but it does not lack the freshness you might expect but seldom get. She very obviously loved him, and was a generous friend. She joined in his life always lived to extremes, from the curious security of a job at the job centre. I have one major complaint about the structure of the book, no doubt wished on her by some 'experienced' (sic) friend. Each part of his life is dealt with separately, and a great deal of pace and drama is lost. If ever a life took place in time, this is one. Leigh Bowery must have had a very strong and charming personality to get him over some of the very repulsive pages in this life. Certainly some photographs are of an open very handsome and engaging face. (The lack of chronology made me miss the point, if it was ever recorded, when L.B. put on the weight that turned him into the monster that Lucian Freud was fascinated enough to paint so many times. L.B. was obviously gifted in many ways, but the immaturity that made him interested only in shocking, nullified his gifts and killed him. Wanting to shock is such a parasitic need,

and I fear, no more interesting than a little girl saying ‘look – knickers!’ I mean, of course, wanting to shock and only to shock, as an end in itself, at any cost. The end is tears of one sort or another.

Labour’s luck seems to be holding, with Eurovision, and a possible win of the Ashes, and perhaps also that wretched football thing, whichever one of the ridiculous number of ‘Cups’ nowadays. It is absurd that such things rub off on a government, but it seems they do.

When Hazel rang she told me that Geoffrey had fallen on some steps and injured his hand quite badly, and is at this moment trying to do some potting tho’ his hand is in a plastic bag bandage. Oh dear, he is a driven chump. I’m quite surprised he hasn’t popped off with his angina and his need to work. There have been the first extracts from the new volume of A. Powell’s diaries. I was all prepared to say how I’d relished them, when she said eagerly, how disappointing they were, much thinner. How people’s prejudices appear. I could see no difference, but I can only think that H’s knowledge of the Powells made her see a falling-off. I’ll wait for the whole book.

The South Bank Show was about Paganini – a bit difficult for them, as the absence of contemporary photographs and recordings put them considerably out of countenance. All the same, joking apart, the portraits all show his extreme character. Sharron had rung early on, so I rang back, after seeing her jewellery in the Sat. Telegraph mag. A v. good photograph of a beautiful thick silver ring with – was it a peridot, or was that a story she told me? – anyway, it was priced at £337 and the outlets were headed by Fenwicks, couldn’t be better. We had a jolly chat, but I said I hadn’t two pennies to rub together, literally a pound and a few pence till tomorrow. I take it Fenwick’s as well as the price, is the PR woman. Good. I do love her - Sh. I mean.

Monday May 5 1997

Have now finished the Bogart biography. I’m afraid it makes me no more eager to review his films. I never liked the gangster as hero. Most of the bits I liked were about Lauren Bacall. She was so good for him clearly. He went on a night out with a chum and they picked up a couple of very drunk ladies – possibly, if unbelievably, drunker than they were - and a couple of life-sized panda toys – he was being questioned by two Policemen the next morning about it. In the background L. Bacall was humming Some Enchanted Evening.

I lay in bed thinking of Mrs Graham’s tumbril talk, and wondering, if the seriously rich have further refinements. A Thai maid for a Thai menu? Only the German chauffeur can drive the BMW?

David Helfgott has given a concert and been rightly much criticised. I was shocked to see an article in the Independent taking the music critic to task for saying ‘The concert hall is no place for making allowances’. Tut-tut.

Oh dear, sport. Oh dear, the dreary little creatures who succeed at it.

Tuesday May 6 1997

There's a series on Ch. 4 about Hercules, starring someone called Kevin Sorbo. I suppose the joke will be lost for anyone under fifty. Not that body-builders don't look as if they'd bounce.

Rang Roy and Marion last night to say I didn't want to go out tonight because I had two outings today, to get my pension and then to the Alliance in Ealing. However R. never rang and had obviously forgotten about the date. Ah well.

I also have left two messages for Tim with no result. Perhaps he hasn't got them. Perhaps he has no money – like me.

Wednesday May 7 1997

Rang Roy and actually got him. He was apologetic, unusual for him!

Bruce Willis' response to bad notices at Cannes. 'The written word is a dinosaur'.

Thursday May 8 1997

Decided not to go to the film, despite it having Minnie Driver in it.

Oppressed by B'mouth and general inertia. Eventually went to the shops at seven o'clock.

Did I say I read a Life of James Dean? An impossible creature. Very conveniently put everyone out of countenance at rehearsal by erratic behaviour and swanned in with a terrific perf. on the night. If he hadn't died, he would have had a bad time. Well, look what's happened to Brando, who was a much more considerable figure.

Oh dear, I see more and more the advantages of staying sitting on the sofa.

Friday May 9 1997

Ben Travers was so right, 'Foreigners are funny'. Look at the Dutch. The Dutch Prime Min. has come to see Tony Blair. Wim Kok. If it comes to that, Kohl is the German word for 'cabbage' as in Kohl Rabi. 'The Prime Minister, Mr Cabbage... oh dear, I sometimes wonder whether anyone else but the English have a verbal sense of humour.

Then there's a pop group called Skunk Anansie. Impossible to tell whether wit was a godmother of the title.

Another traffic inquiry. If traffic goes on as it is, London ~~will~~ may be completely gridlocked. No wonder I put 'will'. I wonder if it will ever get home to Barbara N

and Myles K etc that they must give up their cars. Their private little selfish worlds that we cannot afford.

They're showing that absurd film 'Ghost' on TV, with the tag, 'Some don't laugh, some don't cry, and some still don't believe in ghosts.' One day that will be actionable under the Trades Description Act.

It's starting to rain.

Saturday May 10 1997

Wet. Read a biography of Brad Davis. Not too indecent a book. His wife is perhaps not the usual sentimental American mess. But oh, American life. I was interested because B.D. has always reminded me of Neil.

Got the cacti down from the top shelf of the green-house and watered them, all dulled and dry. It's wonderful how they go green. Commercial with Marian showing her 'flu.

Sunday May 11 1997

Hazel rang as usual oppressed by the trip to the States. I don't think she really lives the life she wants to at all. They stay a day or two in a friend's flat at Brooklyn Village 'where I know the shops'. But after that they go touring round on one-night stands looking at battlefields. H. is very loyal to Geoffrey, but I cannot believe she has any interest in battle-fields and the timetable is a real strain on them both. After all, he has angina and an injured hand. But convention ...

Tried to fill in the two new tax-forms. Very confusing, if you are literate, trying to fill in a form composed by clerks who are not.

Monday May 12 1997

Tuesday May 13 1997

Tired but v. happy, half-way through the Roy Strong diaries, of which more later. Hazel off to the U.S. Rather her than me.

So. Last night, which I was dreading, turned out to be a delight. I rang K. to say we'd meet in the Coal-Hole and when he said What time is the show? I couldn't find the time in the paper quickly enough. He had a meeting to go to and there I was, fiddling with the E. Standard with one hand, the blinds were drawn and suddenly the sun went behind the clouds and made it difficult for me to see. 'Angus, I'm late for a meeting' said gently, and I felt an old fool, quite rightly.

So I got myself to the Coal Hole, not too hot, but I'd left my tie off, as this particular shirt, exactly like the other four, is rather tighter than the others. Once in the Coal Hole, for the first time for thirty? forty? years, I remembered I had told him it was

down the stairs from the Strand. It isn't, it's on Strand level. I didn't investigate and memory can betray one, but I do think there was a lower level entrance. It's still the same dreary affair, with a fairly sparse clientele, little pockets of grey-suited nobodies, with their unsuccessful affairs, or just with the lads. No music, no pin-tables, a juke-box but nobody played it. Into this walked K absolutely focused on the evening. I could see at once. Hair immaculate, in a beautiful black brocade suit, slimly tailored, he looked so smart and handsome. You only saw the brocade close up, and his height and long legs make the best of any suit – a pity the young don't wear tailored clothes more, while the planes of material can hang so charmingly. A pale yellow shirt of thick satin. Big boots. I felt so proud of him coming to me, with such a loving smile. I immediately said I was so sorry to have fiddled with the paper on the phone. He made it all right. We drank and chatted. 'How is darling Arlete?' 'She's spending the night in'. Poor darling, but probably for the best as the piece is not for her, and dinner after difficult to include her beyond a point, with so many common points between the three of us, so difficult to explain so soon and so quickly. But she won't mind, she is more secure than Sh. In herself.

The theatre is v. smart and polished after the restoration. He ordered drinks in the stalls bar – a snooty little boy of a barman. Our seats were in row BB, the third row, tho' why called that I don't know. Two men came in after us, one middle-aged to elderly, the other big, dark and burly. As the older one sat down next to me, I realised it was the writer and dramatist, Julian Mitchell. We met when D. was in his adaptation of Ivy C.B.'s *Heritage and its History*, in 1965 I think. I re-introduced myself and to my amazement, he remembered my name tho' I haven't seen him since then. How people do it, I don't know. Later I found out that he has written the serene play of the Wilde film that Stephen Fry is in and the big dark man is the director. Of course I didn't catch his name either time I heard it. A small audience, about four or five rows full, a diminishing V behind, then about half a dozen rows empty, before the pit, which wasn't bad. The dress circle sounded reasonable. The applause at the end was solid, fervent, with a scattered cheer or so and he had to take five calls.

Now I think, all the way round, it was as good as anything I've seen S. do. He is sometimes accused of going over the top and has been in this by some critics. I cannot deny that he sometimes includes strokes that I don't like. But here his wonderful vitality, and feeling and most of all, his voice, are deployed splendidly. It seems a long time since I heard a voice used purposefully and with conscious skill all over its range. So few younger actors seem to be able to do anything but chunter along on two notes, and every now and again throw in an Olivier shout at an immensely expected unexpected moment. There is the additional element of the meretriciousness of most of W's writing, the poetry, the essays, *Dorian Gray*, *De Profundis* (most of it) and it is 19th century meretr. His treatment of it is right. Even *Lady B.* was all right, except for some squeaks on certain words – 'immaterial' for instance. I told him those words were not as audible as they could be – true – but hoping he'd cut down on the squeaks.

After we'd sat down, the company manager caught K. on his way back from the loo to say he'd get us a drink in the interval, and here are some programmes. Better late than never I suppose. So, in the interval we were led to a little sitting room off the circle bar, with a little private loo. Absurdly K had to go in there for a cigarette. I'm glad D. didn't live to see these absurdities. Back in our seats, we agreed that

company managers and front of house managers don't change. The FOH man by the way was in a single-breasted dinner-jacket, with waistcoat and properly starched wing-collar and shirt front. Unusual now. At his own expense?

The dressing room wasn't one of the star-ones on stage-level, was quite anonymous. It was of course a solid mass of books and CD's, clothes, bottles, glasses and cards, pictures and bibelots. On the window-sill for instance, was a row of CD's at least three feet across. A female dresser... We had no time alone, as Julian M and friend came with us. S. said 'What a creep', when he left. There is a certain feline quality about J.M. and a smallness of soul. A funny little chap who had also been a dresser for Michael Mach. stood about for a time. Two earnest Americans – par for the course – arrived, one of them saying would S. talk to his students over here on an English Theatre Study Course. There were one or two other odds and sods I forgot. I must have said before that the dressing-room reception is as responsible as anything for people thinking actors superficial. They may be from any part of your life, and quite incompatible. And they know your name from the programme. Finally they went and S. helped K tie his tie. In the Coal Hole, an exchange had taken place between us, for the very first time this way round. K. asked me whether I'd got a tie, because we were going to the Savoy Grill. To think that that scrubbed boy... Very convenient as it was a showery night and very interesting as I haven't been there for years. I chose a tie from a plastic bagful and I'm afraid there was a plastic-bag just under the surface all night. Whether they have actually changed anything lately, the dead hand of forte was certainly on the veneered chairs, wall-lamps and paneling that might have been any provincial hotel. We had a glass of champagne to start with, to their surprise I didn't bother to say, but it seemed to me indifferent, tho' fizzy drinks are not by their nature, for me. Pretty, large tulip glasses. How little people eat nowadays – after all, every menu still offers three courses. But K was paying and S. had just done a hugely demanding show. I would have loved a starter as well. I ordered something I've forgotten – probably fish - that was off, so I had the saddle of lamb with K., and S. had omelette Arnold Bennett, first made here for A.B, I think. I don't think I ever had it here, but it didn't look right to me, - it was quite round, about an inch thick, with no apparent filling. Of course this may be authentic – it should be – but it certainly didn't look like any omelette I've ever seen. However S. loved it, and I quite see that omelette and salad was good for his life at the moment, with that mountain every night. The saddle of lamb was plentiful, with mint sauce and/or black-currant jelly offered. I ordered sauté potatoes and salsify, which I'd spotted in the starters and hadn't had for ages (when I first came here, they had salsify at Safeway's but that's ages ago and I've never seen it in any supermarket at all lately). The lamb was good, the potatoes rather sodden, the salsify fashionably al dente, to just that level at which the taste doesn't come out. Ah well. K, never has a pudding, or almost never, and S said austerey, 'I haven't had a pudding for fifteen years. I spotted blueberries on the pudding trolley and had a good heaped dish of them with cream. Coffee and so on, K had two whiskies. I didn't, partly out of economy, partly because a very old-fashioned 'the bar is closing' atmosphere was settling down. Oh, well, the Sheffield plate saddle of mutton trolley and the pudding trolley – the trolleys themselves, you understand - are worthy of the Savoy's reputation. Not much else. My half bot. of Pouilly F. alright, nothing extra, tho' S. and K. liked their red. So that's the Savoy.

But the conversation. K. said various things to S. in the dressing-room, as he said, 'Before you and Angus start the onslaught'. I suppose our clotted talk of short-cuts and quotations and what K. calls 'references' is a bit of an onslaught, like all short-hand. I brought out my bits of scrap paper and asked S. what he was doing next. From May 23 he's playing Count Fosco in *The Woman in White* for the BBC – oh, dear, not so much money, but an excellent part for S. I said, 'Who else is in it?' and he said wearily 'Oh, everyone!' By which he meant Kika Markham, and Corin Redgrave, (groan) and James Wilby (groan2). That'll take four weeks – oh, yes, Tara Fitzgerald. Then he's back to Broomhill to direct *Il Turco in Italia* – oh dear, bad money again – mid-July to mid Aug. Oh he does love Art, the dear thing.

I asked about the Pyjama Game and he was a bit vague. It's obviously not coming off this year, tho' he said he's trying to get Mark Morris to do the choreography. Wonderful, but is he right. Would he be interested? Still, oh I love S. for going to the best always.

After the coffee – isn't it odd, it's still after the coffee, D. – S. queried K about the Snoo Wilson play he wanted to do – groan groan – in August, about the Duke and Duchess of Windsor – groan, groan, groan - and I was rather fascinated to see K in sought-after-professional-musician-mode, saying that the connection he had with Channel 4 was so substantial, that he could break it for a month but no longer for it was too good to give it up, as might happen if the break was longer. He said he was taking out seven of them who had given him so much work, and he'd booked a table at the Criterion on Thursday. S. said No the C. has gone off, M.P. White has gone, leaving it to underlings, L'Odeon in Regent St. would be newer and better. The only bright spot for me with the S. Wilson play, called excitingly, H.R.H., is that Maria Aitken has already toured it and is going to do it again. I find it difficult to believe that she would undertake the usual first draft of a sketch of a mess, that is the usual S. Wilson offering.

We were turned out about one, all the dreary business men, married couples, only about half a dozen of them having gone long ago. It must be thirty years, no, more, since everyone went there after the show. And the tie-business – it doesn't seem to occur to them that their sort of restaurant must be smart or fail and 95% of smart men no longer wear ties. They ought to go to the River Café and have a look round.

The Commissionaire got us two taxis. S. and K. both tried to give me money for a taxi. I took K's saying 'If only I'd spoken to you separately'.

A perfect evening, except for the Grill, and even that was interesting. Oh, darling K. how impressed I was that the bill, presented in a leather folder like a menu, - too sordid to be actually visible – had a credit card dropped on it without so much as a glance.

Oh, now, I'd quite forgotten the bit about Patrick Garland, being a lucky boy again. 'He was very good at listening to my notes about myself'. But he brought Prince Charles one night and they all went back to St James for sups. S. was struck by a tale of Prince Phil. going ha-ha-ha during a seminal moment of P.C.'s school *Macbeth*, and his beautiful manners and hospitality. Well, few people know more about beautiful manners and hospitality than S.

One way and another, I was wakeful and at four a.m. came down and had a Welsh rarebit with an egg on top, a banana and a big slice of granary bread. A pre-war upbringing is a burden

Oh, yes, the Roy Strong diaries. Very like the man. Fairly poorly written, with a sprinkling of quite glaring grammatical errors, but some witty insights and judgments. But, (again) he can't apply the wit and the judgment to himself with the result that there is far too much about his rightness in any situation, anything wrong being other people's fault. There is also little or no sign of the distinguished scholar, not that I saw many signs of it in our brief acquaintanceship in the sixties. We dined with each other at least once, and I remember asking Stephen Orgel, with whom he wrote a much praised work of art history, how serious was his scholarship, because of his very lightweight personality, and Stephen O. said, 'He understands the nature of a fact'. He was funny, he was warm, he could see the point of us, but on top of everything else, he could be an affected ass, as his accent and his jacket photograph can testify. I enjoyed the diaries as an observer.

Wednesday May 14 1997

Went back over bits of Roy's diaries again, as we knew him. Thankfully no mention of us. So much crème de la crème later. I felt quite nervous about wasting his time having him to dinner in Clapham and taking him out to L'Escargot when we went to Colnaghi's to choose David G's wedding present.

Now reading an American novel Getting Off Clean by Timothy Murphy. It has a pair of gay lovers as its theme, but was among the 'ordinary' novels in W's, quite right, as it's not a 'gay' novel in the sense of being a ghetto production and just as well written as if he were straight. Seriously, it is much better written than the majority of American stuff I come across. I may keep it.

Getting warmer, bother it. Spent all day without a word from anyone, as is the way now for two or three weeks at a time.

Thursday May 15 1997

Another disagreeable letter from Lalla, who has actually been to a Solicitor. Can I bear to explain the reality of the situation for the hundredth time? I just echo D's resigned remark about Molly, 'If only she weren't so stupid'. I think I shall try once sentence this time. The trust was so underfunded that we have had to use the money we'd like to have given you, for essential repairs and redecoration of the house, and even then we've had to borrow £11,000. I wish there could be an end to this.

Reading back over my entries about Roy S. I realise that I have left it unsaid about his scholarship. I meant to say that I have no reason not to think that his reputation as a scholar is anything but deserved, and my saying I saw no sign of it is a compliment rather than anything, as his field of expertise is fairly arcane to the ordinary man, and largely to me. All the same, when we went to Colnaghi's that day, they asked him to

pronounce on a Jacobean portrait, and he moistened his finger, rubbed the paint and said it was of the period. They took it. I was also pleased that they produced a theatrical drawing supposed to be E. Terry, and I was able to say it certainly wasn't because, and he supported me.

Friday May 16 1997

Little left in Halifax so went to Frith St. Halifax, to avoid remarks at my local. A hard-up weekend.

Two issues of Spectator at once, as last week's not delivered. A bit of a treat. I liked a Conservative survivor looking at the ranks of Labour and saying 'My God, they look like a lot of damned constituents'. But nobody I've told it to seem to think it's funny or significant. The other, a nice jolly man with a microphone, obviously at an amateur concert, a woman wiping the desperate sweat off her forehead, standing behind a board saying 'Signing for the Deaf.' Man: Now I'd like to do 'I am the Very Model of a Modern Major-General'.

Saturday May 17 1997

Ages ago, after Celia Bannerman directed me in something, was it that play at Croydon? Sometime after, she borrowed the script of the Saki revue thing, that Emlyn W. wanted D to do, when she was already ill. I remember I handed the script over, for some reason, outside the Albery, where I was with R. also for reasons that escape me. Today she rang up to say she was going to see the show at the Jermyn St. Theatre (where it got fairly dastardly notices), and would I think of going? And she was very conscious that she'd had my script all this time and she'd return it. I naturally cried off the show, which was fairly poor in the script, let alone twenty-five years later in a wretched production.

But aren't people extraordinary? I had long given up the script, precious to me because it was about the last that D was offered. We went and had a chat to Emlyn and I could see he could see she was ill. And she talks as I would if I'd kept it for eighteen months and she's had it for ten years.

Sunday May 18 1997

Rang Roy and left message on machine about an article on screen writing. Douglas Kennedy greeted by the stranger who'd screen played his novel. 'I'm the writer who fucked up your book'. Roy is never in. Or never picks up the phone.

Having bad nights worrying about doing my tax, the Alliance, the letting agents and the rage over Lalla's stupidity, composing endless savage letters which I can't send.

Monday May 19 1997

Did both lots of tax, ugh!

Although the Powell diaries have been reviewed everywhere, they are not in the shops yet. How mysterious publishers are! Surely the moment after you read the notice is the moment when you are most likely to run out and buy the book.

One of the most beautiful springs I remember – I can't see any signs of drought.

Tuesday may 20 1997

No, front of house managers don't change. The dinner-jacketed one at the Savoy, turned up today on a collectors' programme as an obsessive collector of – yes Gilbert and Sullivan.

A disgusting car advert where a weatherman in America predicts a hurricane. Everyone leaves the city. You then see him screaming with laughter, as he drives home along the empty motorway. Ugh!

Wednesday May 1 1997

On the way to post copies of the Lalla letter to K and John N. met the motorbike boy from the house opposite, a house now being gutted. I suppose he was visiting a friend. He's quite a pleasant chap close to. He now lives in Paris, rather surprisingly. I feel sorry for whoever lives opposite there.

He confirmed that the big tree now chopped down sadly, did indeed come up in the front room. 'We kept plucking bits off'. I asked him only out of politeness, where his father had moved to. 'Only Olympia. I'll give you his number. He often talks of you.' Really, people are too extraordinary. I must have had, at the absolute outside, half a dozen chats to him in the street, a few minutes each at most.

Of course I am a monument of wit and charm, so I won't ring him.

Thursday May 22 1997

After all the confusion about the Dr. Who CD rom contract, I phoned Vicky Shepherd at the BBC to be sure that it had got there. We had a jokey little talk about royalties and fans. There is a large swathe of people I am always amused are shocked by any mention of age or death. So when I said I was thinking of writing back to Dr Who fans who want my autograph from an episode or two twenty one years ago, saying 'What makes you think I'm not dead?' there was a distinct tut-tut silence. I suppose she's in her twenties or thirties. Comic. The sort who'd say to a confession of being seventy, 'you mustn't – oh, that's not old' and so on.

There is now a car-free estate in Covent Garden, based on a pioneer idea in Amsterdam. You only get a flat if you haven't a car. Well, it had to come. What good's a car if you work in C.G.

Friday May 23 1997

Went to the shops in the a.m.! And to film 'Space Truckers' recommended by Janet from last week, when I didn't go. A disappointment. I thought it was going to be a gag-packed send-up of space epics (which bore me to sobs, Star Trek, Star Wars,) like airplane or Naked Gun ½, the Zucker Bros. stuff. Alas, no. It fell smartly between stools. It was light comedy of a rather insipid kind, too slack to be satire, and too loose to be real trekky stuff. A pity, as one of my favourite young American actors, Stephen Dorff was in it, has usually been in good films. I expect something went wrong with it or the director at some stage. Not enough or too many jokes.

On the way back in the tube saw a two or even three-inch main headline in the Star, or was it the Sun, two papers I literally never see except in the tube, in someone else's arms in the opposite seat. Death of the Queen? Death of Tony Blair? Nuclear War? Mavis leaves Street. A bleating character in Coronation Street, which I can never watch because of the really hideous quack of those entirely unmodulated Yorkshire and Lancashire accents. They aren't thought of nowadays as impossibly coarse and crude as instruments of civilized speech. They still remain so to me.

That ass, Sara Brightman posturing on top of the Pops – No 1: - with a blind tenor and an antediluvian romantic duet. Oh, dear, she is going to be a silly old woman. Or even middle-aged.

The moment I'd written to S. about Oscar, there arrived his memoir of Peggy R. about sixty A4 pages, as the frame, I suppose for their letters. Quite brilliant. What an extraordinary concatenation of associations has linked me and D. and Bill R. and Peggy and S. He mentions Peggy 'stealing' Bill from D and here is S., one of my closest friends and Peggy's executor. Odd. Anthony Powell would be pleased.

Saturday May 24 1997

For the first time for a while, having no new books demanding attention tho' there are still one or two around, plucked out The Fashion in Shrouds. I hope one day Margery Allingham while still remarkable in having all her detective stories still in print right back to 1931, will be recognised as a remarkable novelist in her own right. She has caught certain characters, Lugg, the old vicar in Tiger in the Smoke, Georgia in Fashion, some wonderful Lalla's in all their complacent peasant stupidity, like nobody else. I know many Georgia's still in the theatre. Going even warmer, bother. Read the A. Powell again, a falling off.

Sunday May 25 1997

Dozed off after the papers, dreamt I was in my bedroom here which was in an old people's home. I was visited by the Miss Sherwells, who were miffed that I was still in my dressing-gown (not that I was, only pyjamas). Now the first bit is obvious enough, boring indeed, but how odd the mind is to dredge up the Sherwells, whom I haven't even thought of or remembered, for at least twenty or even thirty years. Could have been so many others, and no apparent reason.

Turned on for the news. Caught a frightful English hypnotist on an American programme, being interviewed and hypnotising away like anything. Nobody seems to notice that all they do is to make fun of people. Still I liked him saying 'All great creative people create in a trance, all of them, like Einstein, Mozart and Walt Disney'.

The series Marian went up to do in M'chester isn't bad as such things go. Marian clever, like a banked volcano disguised as an over-weight housewife, very few lines but all there. Woman director. I marvel again at Billie Whitelaw's reputation. A weekly rep actress without any interest or distinction of any kind. A small part in Coronation St. would tax her. Another nail in S. Beckett's reputation, as far as I'm concerned.

Monday may 26 1997

Bank Holiday. As usual covered indoors, taking refuge from the turquoise shell-suits and the ravening half-termers.

Tuesday May 27 1997

Derrick M. rang me rather than the other way round, about coffee this time. I could hardly believe it, but he's lost the Algerian Cofter Stoves leaflet I sent him a few months ago, and he can't remember the brand of bean that he first tried either. By a very lucky chance I was going up to Soho, so I got another leaflet and asked a strikingly gaunt young man to solve, or not solve as it turned out, another of Derrick's problems. They deliver, but in the usual square paper bags and D. cannot get down to the front door in time, because they won't go through the letter-box. No response from gaunt young man, rather foolish I'd have thought. Fewer and fewer people are at home to greet the postman.

Very hard up.

Wednesday May 28 1997

Dead on cue, the rest of the 88/89 IT came, £1232. Felt sick for a time and then had an inspiration. I sold a lump of my Alliance and Leicester shares. It was so easy I couldn't believe it, two phone calls, the sale itself seeming only to take two sentences and I was £1300 richer, or poorer, according to how you look at it. I was able to keep 40 of the shares, so I will make something if they go up as everyone seems to think

they will. And I still have the Halifax shares. What an odd thing these 'handouts' are! So unlike life, and of course showing what billions they must be making, for such creatures to hand out such sums. Of course K would help me, but I think I was right. How quickly things are moving next door! The For Sale board turned into sold inside three weeks and now three weeks later still, two full size removal-vans are outside, reassuringly marked Headington, Oxford. I suppose a whole house will need a good bit of stuff. I first saw the vans at 3.30 and they are leaving now at 7.15.

Only sign of other life, a bouncy fair girl, heading for the basement, - au pair?

Thursday May 29 1997

There was yet another van outside today, and when I got back after the film, there were lights on and makeshift curtains of sheets of cardboard etc. I liked that. I hate people seeing right through to the back of the house.

Rang Mary L and she was splendidly pessimistic about B'mouth. Goodness, how unpopular she must have been in the dressing-room.

I shouldn't have gone to the film, 'The Devil's Own' about an IRA terrorist, set mostly in America. Both boring and disgusting. Goodness, Americans are hell. Their ignorance of world affairs is startling.

Frances? has now started her new job. Waiting For Godot at the Old Vic for Peter H, with Ben Kingsley, Alan Howard etc. B.K. quite humourless, no surprise. Said Do come and see it. Before I could stop myself, I said I couldn't sit through it again.

Friday May 30 1997

Lynne thing rang from B'mouth to say the tenant had not been in touch and said he was rather vague. I will leave it till after the weekend and then ...

Wiped Roy's Back Up off the tape last night. Freud. Bought some books to cheer up a weekend without money. The Peggy book, Tom Hiney's Raymond Chandler, R.C.'s The Big Sleep, Will Self's Great Apes, a novel or two and a detective story or three.

Slightly miffed to see, in the Peggy book, D. described as the co-author of Salad Days. Really, the literary manager of the RSC should know better. Otherwise rifling through, Bill R. doesn't sound at all like all of their descriptions of him. I expect Mary L. will waltz about it.

I do see what age does. I do turn to the obituaries. I don't want anyone to die, but all the same, there are certain endings one wants to see. And I don't mean Lalla.

Certain people do harm and it would please me not that the person had died – never – but that the harm had stopped.

On my way back from High St. Ken. I was amused to see further up the carriage, a little black boy with his mother – I suppose he was about six or seven – with an inflatable Neptune Trident about six feet high. Fork red, handle black with a red knob on the end. His mother prodded him with it. Shrieks. They got off at B. Court and I got to the bottom of the stairs at the same time as her, to find that she had an eighteen-month-old affair in one of those modern push chairs. ‘Would you help me carry it up the stairs?’ So, carrying my heavy bag of books, I did. I was glad she felt I didn’t look too decrepit to ask.

Saturday May 31 1997

Two small pleasures. A rare flamingo was stolen from Gatwick Zoo (fancy Gatwick having a zoo.) The keeper said, ‘She wouldn’t leave her nest, so she was a sitting duck for a thief’. An item in the Radio Times, Four Goes to Glyndbourne – I thought for a moment it was something to do with Enid Blyton. Introducing opera to the kiddies perhaps.

A properly laudatory article in the London Review of Books about A. Powell by John Lanchester.

Otherwise the day was not a success. Having completely run out of money - and oddly it was completely, to the exact penny at Tesco’s – I thought the moment had come to sell the three carrier bags full of surplus Simon books. Saturday afternoon seemed to me a good time, as it’s when most people are free. So I toiled up to Charing X Road – to find the buyer was away at all the shops – because they only have the one. It was hotter. I toiled up to Cambridge Circus and thought I’d try the book-stall in the little market in Denmark Place, is it? I’ve never noticed the name of the street. It had gone. I toiled down Monmouth Street, past a lot of people sitting down having a cool drink. Crawled onto the tube - and sat down. Decided to go to the shop off Fulham Broadway. Toiled... it had gone. On the way home in Margravine, one of the bags broke... It was now something after four, and there would be just time to try the shop in Richmond. Sunk in the sofa, I asked Directory Enquiries for the number of the Richmond Bookshop, knowing they always used to be open only on Saturdays. I rang, they were a nice girl said the man who could authorise a purchase would be coming in at five, so if I could ring after five... My heart rose. I rang at quarter past five. A pleasant voice that I remembered, said Oh yes, - but – it seems he’s sold the shop but after June 28th

Not my day, right to the end of a no drink and no-sleep day.

Sunday June 1 1997

Stupidly told Mary L. about the mention of D. in the Peggy R. book. As always with a tender place, she struck like a viper. ‘Of course you know she ruined herself as a serious actress by being in Salad Days, which she so nearly was not. She ruined herself with the public and with a certain proportion of the profession.’

Fascinating. It bears all the usual marks. Going back to the past, sweeping generalisation, only she really knows. What it really is, is the usual sweepings from the understudies room and the wardrobe. She has never met anyone in the profession, on equal terms from any other stratum of it, except, amusingly, D. I humbly acquiesced, knowing that she wants me to be cross.

Hazel rang. Back from the U.S. It all seems to have gone well, except that Geoffrey's hand is no better, just as I thought, because of carrying all that luggage. He is a chump – he cannot stop. As she spoke, he was out gardening. I was very interested in her picture of New York. Very different from the usual drug ridden crime-sodden picture. They stayed again at their friend's Brooklyn Village flat. 'It's all as clean and peaceful as you could want. You can walk by the river at midnight – never feel nervous. The Staten Island ferry is a terrific view of New York and is also as clean as a whistle, and only costs a dime or a nickel or something. Like Kew years ago.' Then they went to some sort of rally in Central Park, all classes, all ages, no bad behaviour of any kind and she often saw rubbish being carefully disposed.

Am much enjoying Tom Hiney's life of R. Chandler, exemplary in arrangement and length. Two bits I enjoyed. R.C. very Anglophile, writing to friend during the blitz, 'The English are the least hysterical people in the world. They can take an awful pounding, and still keep on planting lobelias.'

He wrote a screen play for The Blue Dahlia, but it was butchered. The NY Times said in 1944, 'A very stupid little movie; whatever it was this actress never had she still hasn't got.' Actress in question, Loretta Young.

Article in one of the Sundays about blue plaques illustrated by John Mills unveiling Vivien's (why him, by the way? He's a publicity hound of course). I was shocked to remember that she has been dead for thirty years. Oddly the last time we saw her, we were walking past a blue plaque, that one of Mozart, somewhere in Chelsea. It must have been in the sixties, she was with a woman friend. I daresay she would have remembered me if I'd spoken to her – she was rather royal in that way, I think. But of course I didn't. She was laughing, but I felt sad that that exquisitely clean cut face was becoming blurred with middle-age. Her chin was quite small and a little receding – she was getting a bad double chin, and of course, lines and bags as she certainly lived it up. She was the same age as D. – an odd thought. No two women could have been more different, except for working hard.

Monday June 2 1997

Wrote to Sharron as I haven't two pennies to rub together and didn't want to leave that sort of message to a lot of people I don't know. I'd just posted it when she rang. We had a good talk. She's been seeing someone for two months. It's such a time since I saw her, but what can I do?

Tuesday June 3 1997

Yes, I see. The new government are starting special literacy classes after school hours. Children interviewed said 'Yes, I might come to reading'. It's a subject to them, I suppose. How wonderful theories are. We all learnt to read without them. Indeed I can't remember not being able to read. Why did they change? Somebody had an idea.

Tony Harrison is the translator for the National and RSC of Moliere and so on. I have always been suspicious of his suspiciously demotic versions, though I have only read them, I have to say. Tonight I heard him talk. As dreary and tuneless a voice as I've ever listened to, and he talked, not surprisingly of Arthur Scargill.

Wednesday June 4 1997

I must make a study of ill-matched unsuitable expressions and gestures. Today a man from the NSPCC told us that they are expecting a fifty percent increase in child abuse during the school holidays. Parents in poor circumstances especially go frantic after eight weeks or whatever it is. He went into it a bit and interspersed these painful forecasts, with many flashing smiles quite unattached to any emphases and those curious gestures that so many men make on television, from P. Charles down, throwing the hands out sideways again in a meaningless counterpoint to the words.

On This Morning I saw the stars of 'Always', a musical about Edward VIII and Mrs Simpson. The public are extraordinary. The moment they began to sing, I shrieked at the reckless absurdity. The music was derived from Andrew Lloyd Webber 'There's a Time for Loving Hearts ...'

I have now started the Colin Chambers book about Peggy R. Hm. Full of factual interest, of links between people that I didn't know about, of events I didn't know about, betrayals, dishonesties, selfless support, brave stands for impossible causes and so on. But the book is a pretty good mess as a biography. One chapter, Queen Bee, can stand for the rest. It is really a series of notes for elements that should have been integrated into the life. That is why a biography is difficult, because of the necessity of suspending the various events and influences of a life in the clear chronological stream of time. (I'm afraid there is always an impatience in me when 'people' say of a personality, 'as long as you stand up to her/him, you'll be perfectly all right.')

I have been struck all over again by the crew of '60s playwrights (sic) encouraged by subsidy, so that so many of them have never reached anything that I would call a real audience.

Quite a lot of interesting stuff, that she read for Linnit and Dunfee, E.P. Clift and Binkie. Was dogsbody at the Bristol Old Vic under Hugh Hunt in '46. An extraordinary list of clients, in quality, of course, but also in quantity, three pages of three columns of small print. She left £1.5 million. S. is her executor. No, Bill doesn't sound like D's Bill at all. P. Wood, on the other hand, does, finagling away as usual. Well, one must remember what a terrible time he had over Loot, and in my experience, with Incident at Vichy, I daresay other gruesome affairs, knowing his deviousness, I expect in private life as well.

K rang at 8.0, 'I know you're just sitting down to dinner, I'm still alive, my stomach's better, I still love you, I've been up to my ears, I'll see you next week. Must whizz.' That's son talk.

Thursday June 5 1997

A jay in the garden. Swooped about, stopped on next door's garage, vanished in the trees, perhaps to eat a fledgling, stayed a minute or two. First time in the garden, tho' I've seen one or two in the big trees in the cemetery.

A friend of Duncan Grant was staying at L'Hotel de L'Univers and du Portugal and asked 'Is Portugal then not included in the Universe?'

Friday June 6 1997

Waited in most of yesterday for the B'mouth Solicitor to ring. Today he finally did, and I was disarmed by finding him very pleasant, humorous and intelligent. I hope. We talked through everything and I felt fairly confident in him.

A teenager, helping on a farm, fell into a corn silo, and was smothered to death. Aged 14. Name, James Mackay.

Found myself watching cricket. I very occasionally watch a little cricket or rugger to remind myself how lovely it is that I'll never have to play them again. (Oh, the cold, on the cricket-field, as well, people forget that.) But even more occasionally I watch a success, Ian Botham walloping away at Leeds, was it? and now I watched England bowling Aus. out for 118 – at one point they were something like 54 for 6. Then later I turned it on again and found a partnership of over 300 going on for England. Someone called Nasser Hussain scored 200 plus. Interviewed later and didn't look or sound remotely Indian. Oh perhaps he was Egyptian or something. How interesting it's getting.

Saturday June 7 1997

Reading the new biog. of Duncan Grant by Frances Spalding. Rather second-rate showing lack of judgment – it's too long - and no particular perception. Still there are things to interest and rather repel me. It is difficult to believe in so much of Bloomsbury, when their emotions seem to me so fickle and shallow. He must have had potent charm and sex appeal. The two qualities most difficult to re-create for a biographer. I did not know before that Kenneth Clark was as much of a supporter and admirer as he was. I must say Vanessa Bell comes over as hell. Likewise Clive Bell.

Still, a misprint made me laugh. He was at school at Rugby. I was shocked to find that pages started to fall out of the book when I was a third of the way through and the whole book would have come away from the spine if I hadn't held it together, not the nicest way to read a book. Shocking to think it of Chatto and Windus, but then they

aren't Chatto and Windus anymore, but Random House. Another blessing from America.

Sunday June 8 1997

Rang Robin. Pleasant chat, except that he has always so little to say and this time seemed to keep 'switching off' so that once or twice I asked him if he were still there.

Hazel H. rang. Geoffrey's hand is no better, tho' he's working in the garden. They went to another consultant, who discovered that the finger was dislocated. So he went to the States and back with a dislocated finger. Is a dislocation difficult to detect? I wouldn't have thought so. Doctors!

Monday June 9 1997

Too warm. At a high school 'prom' in America a girl gave birth to a 6 ½ lb baby in the ladies, put it in a rubbish-bin where it was subsequently found suffocated, and went back to her boyfriend on the dancefloor, where she requested a favourite number from the band. The paper didn't reveal what the song was called. A pity – it might have been the disgusting cherry on the top of a revolting cake.

Tuesday June 10 1997

Rang Roy and Marian about nine thirty to be sure they got my messages. Marian answered, so I was able to get straight that I wasn't ringing up after every episode. She is very good in it insofar as you can be, and it may put her up a rung or two. But we talked for about twenty minutes about Roy 'You're the only person I can talk to about him.' He's been having a bad time with his writing or rather with the people who are dealing with his writing, the false promises and false hearts and stupidity and selfish calculation, are v. difficult to deal with. I have always been aware with Roy, that there is only a thin crust over a passionate and possibly violent nature. (I don't mean violence to other people.) I can also believe that he may find it difficult if M. becomes more successful than he is. There is only a few years between Roy now and the Roy who played football with the sort of men who expected the girls to stay in the other bar. I was able to tell her how relieved and admiring I was by the way she's coped with Roy. I hope it didn't sound patronizing. He's such a good man and together they make a good couple. She is just the mixture to cope with him, funny, talented, can give him as good as he hands out, - Irish, you see.

Wednesday June 11 1997

Turned on This Morning for the news and found Marian was to be on. Why didn't she tell me? Very funny. It was the understudy couple of interviewers. The silly little woman spent most of the time telling Marian the plot of Born to Run and the events of M's career and hardly let M. get a word in edgeways. I think she only got seven or eight sentences sitting looking elegant and ever so faintly incredulous...

I left a message and Roy rang back, I thought about the interview, but it was to ask me to dinner tomorrow. 'The Chiswick?' I said 'Well, I'll see.' He hinted at a secret. However, he rang later and it is The Chiswick. Nine o'clock. I'd forgotten that the C. does that rather uncivilized two-sittings scheme. Nine is a bit late, but it's better than sitting under a guillotine that you might forget about just before it hits you.

He's just rung again to say that Marian says Angus likes to eat earlier than that. She is so sweet and thoughtful.

Thursday June 12 1997

Friday June 13 1997

Getting over last night! I really still feel a bit drunk.

K. rang during the day to suggest Sunday for dins. Told him it was Father's Day today, so he can ring Ernie. Told me he's been doing a Vodaphone commercial for the last four days. The girl doing the voiceover was having difficulties of some sort, - coming in at the right moment or catching the right rhythm or something - so K did it with her. The clients happened to come by and heard that rehearsal track 'Who's that?' 'Me.' 'We like that voice.' So he did it. 'I take back everything I've said about actors. I sweated. I started saying the words the wrong way round. They said That's good, we'll do it again and can you give us a different inflection on that word when - NO Tell Roy.' I did.

Roy had booked a table for 9.30, the second sitting, 'but get there at 9.0 and we'll sit at the bar.' I got there at 9.0 - of course he wasn't there, but the nice man in charge was able to take me to a table, for four, so I realised Marian was coming too, tho' Roy had never mentioned her... I ordered a large g&t, and took out the R. Crusoe edition I'm giving Roy. Showed it to the nice young man, who said he wasn't good at 19th century dates, but I said it was 1752. Illustrations, calf first volume with front board off, but delightful scribblings trying out writing on the fly-leaves with sepia ink. About 9.20 they arrived and I had the warmest of welcomes. I twitted Marian about This Morning, and I said I'd taped it, and here it was, because Roy hadn't seen it and of course M. hadn't. Oh, the menu is good. I'd said to the young man, I do like this restaurant, it's always so zizzing and full of smart young people, and he said that was so during the week, but on Saturday and Sunday (only lunch on Sunday) it's much less interesting. 'A bit turquoise anoraks?' He agreed.

So we ordered. I had Perrona ham with a dear little salad of asparagus tips and artichoke hearts on top. I asked R. what Perrona has was - he is quite a 'connoisseur' now, so I pretended! He had sweetbreads, a favourite, and Marian had a stir-fry of seasonal vegetables, aubergine, etc, couldn't see anything seasonal about it but she said it was good. She and I had halibut on a bed of little beans and spinach. A bottle of something white, Chardonnay of some kind, two red Bordeaux, never saw the label. I had cheese and Roy offered me a glass of port, which seemed a good idea at the time. They drove me home. A lovely evening. At the end Marian gave me a big hug and put a folded paper in my breast pocket from Roy. I thought it was money for

the taxi that might have been, but it was a cheque for £350. Oh, the relief. I can pay the telephone bill and the gas bill without asking. Shocked.

Saturday June 14 1997

Another divine dinner at the Chiswick with John Nick. I am always amused by motorists. He rang at twenty-five to eight saying that he was totally stuck in Pembroke Rd. and would I ring the Chiswick? So I said I wouldn't quite yet, so.... and sure enough he got here just before eight. By the way, there seemed no particular traffic when we drove to Chiswick. He'd brought me a present, three special bots of wine, a litre of Ballantine's whisky, a litre and a half of duty free Gordons, which is 43.7% proof.

Over dinner J. announced that he was full of pain-killers for toothache. He has been treated for an abscess, root-canal treatment and it's cost him £2000. I hope he made a mistake in the sum. If he's still on pain-killers for an abscess after £2000, he must have a rotten, not to say corrupt dentist. But what a funny mixture he is about money! This morning he waited two and a half hours at his NHS doctor - I forget what the complaint was....

He thought the menu very good. We both had the same – smoked eel, little beans, quail's eggs, rocket, then wild trout fillets. He didn't drink much because of driving, so I had quite as much as I wanted and not a bit too much, as with Roy. Not that I'm complaining either way.

What a life he leads! Going to Sainsbury's for the week's shopping, at 12.15 a train to St. Anne's for a family funeral, back to London.

I think the pain-killers and fatigue made him a bit more expansive and loosened his tongue. He talked about his Simon, still in Uganda, advising the Govt. there! Told me of his chequered life. His parents turned him out because he was gay. I was electrified to hear him say that he thinks 'Simon sold his body'. Hm.

His new car is a Ford, apparently common. This model is a bit of a space capsule, its great advantage to me being its size, unusually small from front to back. He was able to slip into a small space most cars couldn't fit in. It was right next to the restaurant and as it was pouring with rain I was glad of it.

Sunday June 15 1997

What odd creatures infest the academic world today. Someone's published a book called Women and Alcohol.

Back from K's not so drunk as usual because I left at 10.30. I didn't want to be late, after my junketing this week. And I thought they were both a bit tired. We had quite a talk about his stomach. He is concerned partly because he's getting one, and partly because of what sounds to me like indigestion. For instance, he said 'I feel full after eating less than I used to.' Or again, he went on at length about 'honking up my ring'

– being sick - and there being completely undigested slices of mushroom in it. He went on about that a lot. However, as it then turned out they'd had a hamburger that might have been dodgy, and the honking up had taken place at six a.m. after a night of clubbing. He has been working like a maniac – between now and his going for a week in Portugal on Friday week – he has four commercials and an album of library music to get through – staying up how many nights and coping with a 23 year old girl of passionate nature who doesn't cook. And he's 36. I think part of it is simply that he's going on as he did at 20, and it's just the age when you realise vaguely that you can't and usually attribute it to something else. After all, I needed glasses at 40 ...

Dinner was steak. I'd brought some pots on instruction – he'd run out of potatoes! – Jersey Royals, some sugar-snap peas and beans and some strawberries. I brought 3 mushrooms which I like fried whole with the steak. So I provided everything but the (frozen) steak. So I knew it was his one, partially, free evening. He chopped up those nice big mushrooms into a garlicky creamy sauce, delicious. But looking back, I wish I'd offered to cook the dinner. Arlete went off to the kitchen when all was dished up, her steak on her plate – it turned out she was making herself a salad, grated carrot etc, no dressing. She cut all the delicious fat off her steak and I suddenly realised, together with K's talk of his stomach and 'it takes you over after...' that she was dieting. With her figure? She passed her strawberries back to K. who said quite rightly, that they weren't as good as Eng. straws should be. True. Hideous supermarkets want perfect equal-size fruits tasting of nothing. Well, Safeway is an American firm. But I thought A. was a bit down altogether. It was certainly striking how much more animated and laughing she was with the two calls she made to Portugal. The calls were supposed to be telling them when she was arriving. Not that her plane was booked. K was still toying to get her to make up her mind, tho' the booking has to be done tomorrow a.m.

He tells me he's turned down HRH, thank goodness. So I hope not to have to see it. He showed me the letter he'd written to S. and it was clever, not saying about the play. He couldn't commit that far ahead and he didn't want just a bit of sound design. He wanted a whole score. And he used comic exaggeration to account for his ambition 'and it's all your fault' in caps. Good. S's answer began 'Well I suppose I understand. K. wondered whether he was offended. I said I didn't think so especially as the letter went on to say how 'beautiful' K had looked the other night. Indeed, he said it twice. Hm.

He asked about the B'mouth money and said his £12000 was just sitting there. So I said I'd let him know, when the next bank-statement came.

Have I already recorded that Nigel is still there but most of the time in Vice Squad's marital home in Richmond! Where is Vice Squad? Somewhere else with someone else, I expect. Plenty of opportunity with his job.

He told me that Pete Sinfield took him to the Ivor Novello awards. He was sitting near Sting and George Michael and so on. Now the I.N. Awards are a rather more dignified award-ceremony than most, not that that's saying much! So when the Spice Girls came up for an award and one of them said It's so and so's b'day, so let's sing Happy Birthday to You, and K watched George M. and Sting being asked to sing and doing so through clenched teeth, I was carried back to 1955 and darling D. going on

stage, the only woman at the Winter Garden, in that beautiful pleated silk skirt and even more beautiful chiffon shirt, both black, to get the statuette – was it the first year of the awards, I think it was. I remember she caused a frisson as a woman. The music industry was then all middle-aged men with views to match.

A. is off to Portugal on Saturday, K. following her the next Friday. I told him about Roy's cheque, as he was going to ask about money.

Monday June 16 1997

Two melancholy professional facts. Ewan Hooper has taken over in 'Woman in Black'. I was depressed enough by Michael Higgs going into it. That crossed him off for me. Better the dole... But Ewan who was such a determined highbrow and uncompromisingly left-wing, - I cannot believe that anything but financial necessity has driven him to it. The only possibility is that Ewan is hoping to get some money together for some theatrical venture. I hope so.

Even sadder, is that the ghastly musical 'Always' is directed by Frank Hauser. It is tragic that someone of such intelligence and taste should be driven to direct something that he must have recognised as rubbish as he read it. I wonder what his life has been in the last ten or so years when I have heard nothing of him. When one thinks of his regime at Oxford ...

Watched the first round of the Cardiff Song Contest and thought Sonora Vaice terrific. But Gwyn Hughes Jones won, wrongly. His voice is a mixture of lyric and dramatic tenor and not the usual vulgar Welsh yell. Nevertheless he is an impossible performer visually. Pear-shaped in body and balding head, he is ridiculously ill-matched to his voice, even for the concert hall. His instrument is good. Cannot he perform behind a screen? I don't quite know why so many singers look so silly. They seem to be much vainer than instrumentalists.

In the p.m. to new film 'Alive and Kicking', screenplay by Martin Sherman. Oh dear, the usual faintly embarrassing fatally self-conscious dialogue and special pleading. And things are not improved by one of the protagonists being played by A. Sher. Do you know, I don't think I've seen him before. And I've missed nothing. Oh the mannered trickiness, the ever-so-natural hesitations and sudden unexpected hesitations, the continual nudging reminder that he is acting and acting rather cleverly. Add to this an appearance and personality best suited to a stall-holder in a run-down market... The main part of the dancer who is HIV positive – oh dear, it reminds me of my youth and all those films about TB – was a new young man Jason Flemyng, who rose as far above the material as he could and may be a bit of a star. Rather old fashioned looks, more my generation, rather aquiline nose, laughter lines to a wide generous mouth. Humour and such vitality and really good, vitality under control. Only flaw, red hair and freckles. Still, he's started well with a film-carrying part. Rest of the audience, three, presumably gay couples. A pity.

Tuesday June 17 1997

That awful creature Eugene Terre-Blanche has been sent to prison for killing a black servant – was he? or a party member – for six years. Good. How odd, for all Mary L's violent views about Africa, and South Africa, she'd never heard of him.

In the p.m. to another gay film - there seems nothing else now, except block busters – 'Johns', of a stupefying boredom. Left before the end to catch Berwick Street market. Amazing prices. Raspberries and straws were 3 punnets for £1 – in both cases, the young man gave me four without a word. Two old men, who looked French, I don't quite know why, no berets or concertinas, were selling almost nothing but G. Artichokes, and let me have two sizable ones for 50p, the two. No English asparagus there, or in my market. Why not?

Wednesday June 18 1997

How I love wrong inflections. Conscious ones are fun enough, like Edna's 'Just to the brim' in the tone of just a drop.

Today I heard a tube-driver give the middle of these three phrases, a minatory tone. 'Mind the doors. This a wood Green Train. Mind the doors'. Wood Green doors are particularly dangerous the weather is really awful.

Thursday June 19 1997

A letter addressed to Benedek Godollet, the address quite clear except for a wrong post code, turned out to be a NHS card, newly issued. Now that is disgraceful. With any major card like this you can get all the others. That it happens to be for a child of two is neither here nor there. That any such card could go astray, is very bad. On the black market goodness knows how much.

Really, the tide of illiteracy runs stronger every day. An advertisement for a rather expensive sort of dog-food, with a classy-looking girl feeding the dog, has the tag-line 'To love him like he loves you'.

Friday June 20 1997

I was thinking this morning how lovely it is I don't need to mention K. all the time – he's just there.

Now an NHS card has arrived for

ANGUS MACKAY DIARY NO. 148

June 20 1997 (cont.)

August 19 1997.

Friday June 20 1997

I presume, Benedek's sister, Anna Franni Godollet. Really. No Godollet in the 'phone book.

Went at last to get my hair-cut – I pretend to Giovanni that I live in the country and can't bother to... He would be upset if he knew I couldn't afford to come in as often as I used to in previous years. We talked again of Mr. Mather who cut my hair all those years. We also talked of his eighteen year old son. I've always asked about him and the wife and found I was thinking him permanently about ten. Poor little man, the boy wants to be a film editor, and of course he is worried about the insecurity. It is an unusual aim and the positive side is that, if you get into it and succeed, it is less insecure than most jobs in the profession. I wonder if I could do anything. Probably not. Again bought rasps, peas and br. beans in Berwick St. So cheap.

Saturday June 21 1997

Chilly dark and wet. To Safeway's about six and found the usual running-down-for-the weekend, which I have not seen in other branches. I don't know why this one is so determinedly down-market. No bananas at all left by then, quite absurd. The two little ones at B.C. have them.

Sunday June 22 1997

A good letter from B'mouth Solicitor, but what a bore it all is !

Rang K, and he was able to have a chat. That is such a treat and joy to me, and makes my day.

Terrific claps of thunder, houses struck by lightning in Sydenham. Great mounds of bricks crushing cars.

Spoke to Hazel yesterday, as she has guests. She does ache for London.

Thanked K. for the cheque, of course. I hope nothing goes wrong. Our family has such power in that way!

I watched the Australian Surprise Surprise for a bit and found I was crying at the families meeting after 30 years etc. and was interested. I think it's the emotion, and

the applause. Vulgar of me, especially as any reunion of long-lost relatives is a positive nightmare to me – or any short-found ones for that matter.

Monday June 23 1997

At last wrote to Lalla, the letter I've been writing in my head, being kept awake by it. I answered the Solicitor's letter and wrote to the letting agency to get them to send a copy of the Tenancy Agree. to him. Most intrigued to see that he says Donald is not a Trustee. When the Bank wanted him to be a Trustee seven or eight years ago, he was sent an agreement to sign. I suppose he never signed it. And the Bank never checked. So I said to the sol. Let sleeping dogs lie.

Went to pay K's £12,000 in. I am always amused at my naivety in subliminally expecting amazement and respect at the size of the cheque.

Tuesday June 24 1997

Dreamt that S. Rew was dead. Rather disgusting of me, or rather my subconscious, thus allowing me to be magnanimously comforting, in answer to John's devoted care of me.

I see homosexuals are very non persona grata in Zimbabwe, President Mugabe being very fierce, 'This filthy practice is a threat to our nation'. And the former president has now been accused of it. The accents were very thick for people who use English. President's name? Canaah Banana.

Wednesday June 25 1997

Poor Frank Windsor. His 29 year old son has been drowned under strange circumstances. He went to a country Hotel with someone else's wife, they had dinner, went up to their room. Another guest heard a car leave the car-park at 4 a.m.. The car was found, its headlights still on in about the only part of a local river deep enough to cover it, both dead. They had left a bill of £100 unpaid, (rather cheap.) Sounds like a suicide pact to me. Perhaps he has inherited some instability from his father. We did a tour and then a season at Brighton, of Toad of Toad Hall in 1952 was it? He was quite unusually self-absorbed even for a young actor – his lack of success and money more important than anyone else's. This produced what would now be called 'stress' and was then called 'worry' to the extent that he had a nasty case of alopecia. The director was a friend and could give him the part because he was a weasel. Or a stoat. I then met him years later when he was a sort of star in Softly Softly. He'd got his hair back, but playing a leading part in a series had increased his self-absorption to screaming-point. He almost never stopped talking and whinging and picking and interfering, all quite humourlessly, and all with reference to his own part. I imagine that's why he has been so little seen lately. He must be very difficult to work with over a long period. All the same, I am very sorry for what has happened. It must be unimaginably terrible for something like this to happen to a child, and with unpleasant circumstances surrounding it.

I listened to the Prime Minister's statement about the new initiatives in the N. Ireland attempted settlement. I don't see how there can ever be a 'settlement' when the IRA want only a united Ireland at whatever cost, and the Unionists want the status quo. How can there be compromise from two such bigoted sides? I did spend a year in N.I. fifty years ago. You might say that that doesn't fit me to assess or judge N.I. now. The saddest reply that I could give, would be that I'm afraid it does. The level of prejudice is something I've never encountered since.

Thursday June 26 1997

It has rained almost continuously for the last three days. Ha ha.

Noticed a book called Lesbianism Made Easy. Another evidence of the relation between lack of humour and good jokes.

Saw Peter Usti. on a youth programme with six young presenters, whom he dominated, amused and charmed effortlessly. Said he'd been at a summit conference in Copenhagen and that Mr Major was inconspicuous by his presence.

Rang Roy and M. yesterday and got the baby-sitter, who said Ella was ill, hot etc. so I rang today at midday, to ask after her. They are never there, but this time of course, my wretched imagination pictured them in a soap-opera hospital waiting-room and of course they didn't ring back.

Yet another TV prog. about UFOs and aliens. What a disproportionate number of idiots there are in the U.S.

Friday June 27 1997

The darkest wettest and windiest June I ever remember. Left the phone in the hall with a list of things in case he rang. He said he would 'give me a bell' before he went. It's no use, I worry about him flying and wish he'd rung to say goodbye. I am such a fool. The poor boy must have been so pushed getting everything finished and him packed and off. Rang Mary L. She said she hated 'Brits' and England would never be forgiven for two of the things they'd taken to Africa, money and Christianity. Asked after Karen and Roly. Again she put me off. 'It's too painful.' I presume Roly has cancer or something. So who is to look after Karen? Poor people.

Oh, I wish he'd rung. Rang Roy and Ella's all right.

Saturday June 28 1997

I hope I am not getting forgetful. I always thought that was one of the points of keeping a diary. (By the way, I looked up 'diary' and 'journal' and was interested to find that the dictionary makes no distinction between them. I think the best meaning would be 'diary' for the small week on a page book everyone has in their pocket, and

'journal' for something like this). So back to my memory. I completely forgot to tell about a film I saw on Tuesday and on the same day, the aftermath of a murder. The film was *Love and Other Catastrophes*, an Australian film set in a university. There were goodish bits, but some rather ridiculous camera-work and more baddish bits, a student party-scene, for instance, that was every bit as boring as the real thing. I did stay to the end, tho' the rush hour did have an influence. I went up to Berwick St. market at about six o'clock to catch the cheap end again. I got no further than the far end of the Raymond Revue-Bar passage – what is it called? How many streets a Londoner walks down every day, remain just that to him – I'll look it up. It's not altogether clear on the map, no wonder, with all those small streets. It's probably just Berwick St. too. Anyway there were those black and yellow-stripped tapes that the Police put up round an 'incident'. The stalls were not merely not selling, but not there. I went back to Rupert St. market, not much of a market, only two of the fruit and veg stalls left, the rest selling tat to tourists, ugh! and asked one of the traders what had happened, while buying some asparagus. It seems two homeless men, who have been sleeping in the same doorway for some time, and given bits of food and an occasional job by the stall-holders, were stabbed to death by someone, another down and out, I suppose. Poor wretched creatures, as if it isn't bad enough being homeless and on the streets.

Sunday June 29 1997

Hazel rang yesterday for our usual chat, because she was having guests today. Oh no, she was being a guest, going to a Golden Wedding. She rang again today, after she'd got home, to say she'd read S's article on Peggy R. I'm glad she thought as I did, that it was self-indulgent, especially about Aziz, and about love generally, about which he understands less than he thinks. She also said she felt she knew no more about Peggy or what she was like as a person, after reading it. I said she was quite right, but that wasn't necessarily S's fault. It was the reason I thought the 'Official' biography not only rather poor but unnecessary. Apart from her genius for recognizing and encouraging talent and getting the best, in every sense, deal for 'her authors', I don't think there is much more to say about her.

Monday June 30 1997

Bought some books at the High St. Ken. store yesterday. I bought four of those 'past' books, Chelsea, Covent Garden, Bloomsbury and Notting Hill Gate. I find them fascinating, especially photographs of buildings and interiors long since reduced to dust. I bought a poor detective-story and on an impulse, after reading something about him, one of Redmond O'Hanlon's travel books, *Congo Report*. Now travel and books about it are an instant boredom to me, but I did start it and read quite a lot. I am interested in how he wrote it. The story is told largely in dialogue, with an immense amount of detail about appearances, animals, birds, food, in such profusion that it makes you eventually wonder how authentic it really is. They are in great straits physically most of the time, with all sorts of disasters and difficulties, all that it could be of impossible conditions for taking notes of any kind, if he is presenting the truth. Four hundred and sixty odd pages of dialogue recalled is suspicious after a time. Fairly enjoyable.

Did not go out after all, still chilly and wet. It's another day without my pension.

Tuesday July 1 1997

For once fate plays fair and I don't need my pension so fiercely, the fee for the Jewel in the Crown repeat arrived, and, stale from the affluent eighties, it turned out to be very nearly £1000. I'm sure it was only a day, tho' a part that needed someone who knew what he was doing because it was small.

A long article on the anniversary of the 'Consenting Adults' Bill. Lord Arran, who piloted it through the Lords, was also concerned with a Wild Life bill, - possibly on some sort of joint arrangement with Leo Abse, and was heard to say to a reporter, 'What I want to stop is people bugging badgers and badgering buggers'.

Richard Ingrams' mother has died, - an extraordinary link with a remote past. Her father was Sir James Reid, the doctor who became Queen Victoria's doctor and confidant after John Brown's death and the Munshee's disappearance. He married at over fifty, Susan Baring, one of her Maids of Honour. So R.I.'s connections include Maurice Baring, Lord Revelstoke and Earl Grey. Surprising. Queen V. didn't like any of it.

I see there has been a tragic road accident. A family car was crashed into by a lorry. The father, aged thirty-something, and two sons aged four and two, were killed instantly. The daughter aged six was badly injured. The wife seems to have been less seriously injured, but had to have an immediate caesarean for the full-term baby. The lorry-driver, Stephen Murray, aged 25, had been taken on by the lorry-company only the day before, and had taken out the lorry without permission, he was over the drink limit and with his girl-friend. There is naturally total and widespread condemnation of him, for such a ghastly accident. But I do spare a thought for a stupid young man who did what so many stupid young men do, drive recklessly, and the inches went the wrong way. When I think how K. used to drive during his move to B. Rd! Only his luck lasted. In Court Murray was in tears and when the injuries were read out, he was actually sick and had to be taken out. What hell cars are, a life ruined in a moment.

Went to Berwick St. market again, and asked one of the stall holders about the murder. They were sleeping just past the sausage shop, in the shelter of the pub, which is set forward from the shops a little. Their throats were cut. 'You'll probably see the flowers.' They'd already gone.

On the way back home, saw the poor old man who has lived in the house on the other end of the terrace since 1931, the Keating boy mentioned him the other day as having 'a serious condition'. I see now what it is. He is bent over almost at right angles, but still marching forward intently, a hat, a neatly tied tie, shined shoes. Ex Battle of Britain pilot. 8..?

Wednesday July 2 1987

Mary L. was having the plumber round for a leaking loo, so I said I'd ring on Thursday. However, as I saw a report on floods in Forres, where her friend Sheila has just sold her house, moving into a caravan while taking a home improvement course to do up the new place, I thought M. might like to know so as to show concern. She simply said tartly 'I was depressed enough about the plumbers, and now you've given me something else to be depressed about'. Similarly, when we were talking about Wimbledon on the People's Sunday, knowing she has now TV and no paper delivered, and often, more often than not, doesn't know some ordinary fact or piece of general gossip, I said 'So you know it was a much more ordinary audience at much less prices...' In a tone of weary throwaway condescension, 'Yes, Angus. I did know that'. Really, it's a wonder she hasn't been strangled before now.

Went to Ealing to pay Alliance and to avoid the budget – interminable in every medium and just after Hong Kong... Bought some flowers, freesia, for the first time for years, from the nice middle-aged woman who runs the stall outside Ealing Broadway station. Every vase, every bunch is meant, and the whole makes a satisfying picture. She told me that the elderly woman who had previously owned it, had taught her how to arrange the flowers most attractively. Interesting as to, how far such instruction goes back.

In the Notting Hill Gate Past book, a word used in a description of a school uniform, 'shutes', – obviously some outer garment – I must look it up – couldn't trace it at all, even trying alternative spellings, even in the Shorter. How many foreigners use 'good' for 'well' – 'I did good' – Wimbledon interviews illustrate that neatly, even from people who otherwise speak English good. Odd, as I would have thought it one of the easier mistakes to correct. Not that many native speakers don't go one worse, 'I done good'.

Thursday July 3 1997

Rupert E. all over the papers just after a very successful film with Julia Roberts no less, pursuing his usual hubris and telling how he was a rent-boy for two years in his teens perhaps, tho' that isn't made clear. 'I had no money, as with so many upper-class people' and so on. With the usual more or less ludicrous air hovering over the article. I do hope I wrote about one trip to Selfridge's at the time.

Went to Earl's Court to shop and book. The wretched little plump man at the Earl's Court Waterstone's surpassed himself today. I went to the pay desk at the back as always directed. He was on the telephone and waved me away to the other desk, saying 'I'm taking an order, you must go and pay over there.' I said I was told account customers should pay the ... 'Oh, I recognise you now. I'm taking an order on the telephone, I can't...' I put the books down on the counter and left. Poor little fussy thing, the very type who should not be a manager.

On the tube a full-size poster, on the other side of the tracks, of a wistful 40's heroine, advertising a book, and saying 'weaves together the intricate lives and loves of two generations of family and friends, in war and peace-time'. And indeed that is what

War and Peace is about. Title Apple Blossom Time. I do hope it has a family tree at the front, or even a plan of the family factory.

Friday July 4 1997

So went to Ken High St. and bought the same books. What a contrast. Three very pleasant young assistants. The gay boy who served me – fairly closely shaved head, tight blue t-shirt, tattoos – must look formidable to the innocent. As mild as milk, and obliging enough to spend five minutes looking for a book which he knew they had five copies of. He went up to the first floor and down to the basement. The other male assistant was quite a different type. Slim, glasses, bearded, monochrome clothes, the very type of the intellectual. He withheld himself more, but nevertheless joined in the search unasked, after looking at the computer. The female assistant was the most senior, I think, but not with any specific position. She had an angled parting in a black straight sleek vaguely Jennifer Aniston hair-do rather subdued for work. An aquiline nose, self-command and also a keen glance at the computer. Eventually a copy was found under one of the tables by the intellectual, who handed it over with nonchalance personified. No silly plump manager there.

The book they were looking for was 'Loaded' by Christos Tsiolkas. This was recommended in the Spectator by Tom Hiney, the author of the Raymond Chandler bio. I thought so well-written. Along with it was God of Small Things by Arundhat Roy, so I got that, too. Also a Magdalen Nabb detective, and Birds in Europe, much recommended.

The poor little English tennis-players are better than before, but were enveloped in such a tornado and whirlwind of hubris, that the gods got angry and squashed them flat. K back.

Saturday July 5 1997

Films that pop into the future need careful and logical treatment. I mean, if you're going back to stop President Kennedy being assassinated or avert the Vietnam War, you have to be careful because writing nonsense needs a very strong suspension of disbelief. You need H.G. Wells. Was the Vietnam war ten years long? I scarcely registered it at the time, I'm thankful to say.

K rang. Safe.

Now that poor wretched lorry-driver, Stephen Murray, has tried to commit suicide in his cell, by sawing at his wrists with a broken light bulb and that poor mother is probably coming out of her double shock, - triple, quadruple - and its blessed anesthetic. Oh, the misery. What about the effect on the baby being in a crash, in the womb? Of his mother's absorption in him? K may buy cottage in Port.

Sunday July 6 1997

Too hot and I've got a streaming cold.

A man appeared on TV to recommend Esperanto as a remedy for almost everything. His voice, his face, his hair and his clothes were the very personification of nerdism. Like Esperanto.

Hazel didn't ring and didn't ring. Difficult, because one can't settle to anything. Eventually I rang her and we had our usual lovely chat. During it she had one of her rare moments of insensitivity, saying that she'd been waiting for a call from the U.S. and it's difficult to settle to anything. Er, yes.

Told me that A. Powell wasn't well enough to go to his great-grand-child's christening. That pretty girl – what's her name? has married that young man she was engaged to or going around with, in the last volume of the journals. Toby something.

Monday July 7 1997

Tenant supposed to be out of flat ... Hot. Cold.

Mary L. told me another little glimpse of D. Three or four of them sitting in the dressing room at Wyndham's, D. examining her Dutch Cap for a possible hole and an expensive replacement. D. 'Wouldn't it be wonderful if they invented something that you could just take not to be pregnant?' And the others just laughed at her. They were the practical ones, you see.

Tuesday July 8 1997

Hot. Less cold. Wrote to the B'mouth Solicitor. In the p.m. went to Leicester Sq. to take the Cary Grant biog. to Janet. She wanted to read it anyway, and needs it earlier because his which? wife, Betsy Drake is coming to London and J. has to look after her. Handing it over, I was struck all over again by C.G.'s good luck, or distinction or 'style' or 'class' in getting a fellow of Kings, no less, to write his biography. Sleeves soaked by the time I left, the back and front saved by a vest – in July – on the way back, was approached by a group of American schoolgirls, v. young, fifteen, sixteen, eggshell all over and did I know where the nearest American Express was. Led them down to the Haymarket, where happily it still was, tho' I hadn't thought of it or indeed seen it consciously for years. I looked at those artless vacuous faces and told them some of those pointless facts that Americans like. When I discovered as I left them, that they'd only been here for two days and were leaving tomorrow, I left them amazed by saying 'Well, you should be grateful I didn't lead you to the Rio de Janeiro centre for White Slave Traffic and really, if you've been here so short a time, I'm probably the most English experience you've had.' And looking at their incomprehension, I knew I was right. On my way to the tube, I was struck by how many similar parties of very young tourists, seven or eight at a time were milling round the West End as far as I could see, without any supervision or any knowledgeable adult or near-adult. In front of me, by the tube, very tall boys in

shorts, looking at a glance, seventeen or eighteen, but at a closer look, very possibly thirteen or fourteen, American greed being what it is. Perhaps Rio de Janeiro wasn't such a joke.

On the way back Earl's Court station was closed, I couldn't quite hear why, tho' I realised back here there'd been a bit of a cloud-burst.

I sometimes think we make friends of those who can see through us, or who take the trouble to see through us, well me.

With a little more money for the moment, bought a new umbrella, £13 from Boots, a far cry from Brigg broolly I treated myself to years ago, and D left on the tube almost immediately. Quite good, all the same. That awful modern umb. I left in the P.O. the other day. A lodger's cast-off, with no loop and a straight handle so it does not leave one hand free. Idiomatic.

Watched Steven Havers talking about mice and rats as vermin. A wonderful English monomaniac who has found his rat hole. Expert.

Wednesday July 9 1997

Oh, dear, what a lot of squalid and awful and constant crime there is in the outer suburbs, Ruislip, Ilford, Essex, - I'd commit crimes if I lived in Ruislip.

What I escaped yesterday! I might have been held up. Earl's Court was flooded, and further floods in Chiswick, where people had to be evacuated apparently.

A tiresome rash on both arms, not nettle rash, but v. small red patches. Itchy, of course. Took anti-histamine, which stopped the itching, but didn't remove the red patches.

I wonder if it's anything to do with the fly-spray or the lump-fish caviar or what?

Wednesday July 9 1997

Reading all those 'Past' books makes me very thankful I didn't move here a few years earlier. As it is, I don't miss whatever was knocked down and a lot was. I did rehearse at Queen's twenty five years ago, and at some sort of church hall beyond what was the Odeon, H'smith, certainly before the flyover was thought of. Or indeed the widening of Talgarth Rd. and the new road system at Hammersmith, Charing X hospital, the new buildings in King St, not to mention the knocking down for the Lyric, Ham., where we played in '60s and the market traders hung turkeys on the dock-doors. How sadly shrunken the market is today. How depressing to have lived through all that if I'd already been here. It's so interesting to me the moments in life that you remember with a sharp clarity, sometimes for obvious reasons, sometimes for none. For instance, it's not surprising that I remember vividly arriving at Baron's Court station that first time, - after a rather laborious trek from Clapham South and seeing Queens in the distance, because it was the first day of a new series. The Way

We Live Now, in which I had a fairly leading part and I was therefore nervous. But another moment, when Emrys James, who was giving me a lift back from the Centre, had to stop at the traffic lights in Beardon Rd. I remember equally vividly why? I didn't know then that twenty five years or so later I would pass that spot every time I went shopping.

I am also interested in houses, or even sites, that remain empty for years. One was that house in Panton St. The other is that site in Maiden Lane, next to the back of the Adelphi Theatre. It has been empty down to the cellar since the war, tho' as the Covent Garden Past book says, there is now an ugly mobile restaurant, a sort of large caravan, on a temporary base. This site must be immensely valuable. I once heard that it was the result of Woolworth's having bought the whole block and just waiting for the Adelphi Theatre lease to fall in so that they could knock it down and build a new shop on it. For various reasons, not least the serious tho' not at all surprising decline of Woolworths, it never happened. What I didn't know, was that there was a house on this site, No 21, whether it was the one that was bombed, isn't clear – where Turner was born in 1775. What's more, Andrew Murrell lived at no. 9 in 1677. I expect that site belongs to Lalla ...

Forgot to say that I watched a film with some amusement, a film called Grief. Richard Glatzer directed it – did he write it? I think so. And there was that silly girl, Lucy Gutteridge, after all these years. She seems to be in the same plastic bubble as usual.

Thursday July 10 1997

No wonder I'm frightened of flying, 'Arrive terminal'. Watched a bit of a programme about Patten and Hong Kong, not a subject that remotely interests me – you can only be interested in Hong Kong if you're interested in money – but I suddenly caught sight of Percy Cradock. I often heard him speak at the Union, and very witty and brilliant he was, though cold. I was fascinated to find him as nasty and malicious an object as I've ever heard on television. He was really unusually vicious about C. Patten, all the more fun because I have absolutely no idea of the relative merits of either man.

Rang Mary L. who had been to the AGM of the Actors Benev. Talked to a nice woman called Virginia – turned out to be McKenna - and Mary rather cleverly switched to Nairobi and they had a jolly talk. V.M. is the most unpretentious of stars – not that I've ever thought all that much of her acting. Donald Sinden was the guest speaker, and began 'Since I became a knight, I have been asked to speak at Alcoholics Anonymous, the Ex-Prisoners Association (bother, I've forgotten the other two, but they were equally disreputable) so I am afraid that many people here will be hearing my speech for the fifth time.

Friday July 11 1997

Hot. My rash no better, tho' it goes up and down and I think is partly related to heat. Janet wants me to go round and look at the garden next door that she's looking after.

I've said I would, tho' I don't know what state I'll be in, with the sweat and the rash. How I long to be a wrinkled old prune, longing for the heat. I am still obviously in some way too full-blooded.

In the p.m. to new film Swingers at the Renoir and it is certainly true that my rash had much faded under the influence of the air-conditioner. The film had certain merits, a bit of fresh language, a bit of fresh acting, but the main character played by the author of the script, came over as more neurotic and boring than I think he meant. Two of the five young men were so similar in type that I thought at first they were the same actor with different hair. It passed the time as my itches faded. They returned in the middle of a mass of insensitive German teenagers at the tube. I hope I infected them with it.

Saturday July 12 1997

Still hot. Rash no worse but no better. Rang Janet to cancel and when she told me I ought to go to the doctor, I pretended that that was why I was cancelling. Rang Roy to see if he'd got my message about Back Up. He had, and we had a chat about that. There are to be no more Back Up's and he said he would always in future, write all the episodes of a series he'd started, if he ever wrote another series. Told me he was having a b'day lunch tomorrow, 'to which I am not inviting you'. Apart from anything else, it's a Thai restaurant and if there's anything like a party, I wouldn't hear very well. Not to mention that I'm sure there are some of Roy's friends who would not chime well with me.

Told me that if property was really that cheap in Portugal they might buy one too. How cheap? K says he's seen a villa for £15,000. Of course, near the sea, it would be much more.

K rang later on, saying they would drop in on the way back. The restaurant being The Blue Elephant at Fulham Broadway.

On Police programme, young man found weeing at midnight in the doorway of Dunn's in Sutton High St. When challenged by Police, he said Heil Hitler.

Found some old notes of various things. The weather in my childhood, for instance. Do all children remember just 'long golden summer days'? Or have I some factual justification for it? Well, I was brought up in Bournemouth so... Agate mentions the weather, among others, and I have pieced together 1932, 33, when I was six and seven about right. In 1932, there was 'a second heatwave' with 'the second hottest day in five years' mentioned in August. Another source on August 18, called it the 'worst' heat wave since 1911, 96 degrees in the shade.

In 1933, in Feb there was the worst blizzard for fifty years but I don't suppose we got it in B'mouth. The summer was described as 'memorable' and on Sept 13 'the longest drought for 30 years ended today. So I must have had a good many cloudless days on the beach two years running, at probably the most impressionable age.

Sunday July 13 1997

Checked the Donald Sinden story with Mary L. It was actually 'Much has happened to me since I became a knight. I have been asked to speak at Alcoholics Anonymous, the Ex-Prisoners Society, Gab Lib and now here. So I'm afraid many of you will be hearing my speech for the fourth time'.

So I did a tiny bit of cleaning and tidying and sat and waited. And waited and waited. And waited again. By seven o'clock I'd tried his mobile and no reply and was a little worried so rang Elfort Rd. He was apologetic. Arlette hadn't gone with him as they'd been clubbing till four o'clock and she was too hungover to be able to go. I suppose she's not used to spirits yet. A pity, as I wanted to hear Roy and Marian's reaction. Still, it means that perhaps I'll see it for myself.

Watched Corin Redgrave's programme about Michael R. One knew he was rather hell, not to say unbalanced, but it was on the whole rather worse than I'd imagined. An opportunity missed by not finishing the programme with the end of his ventriloquist's scene in *Dead of Night*. Not only is it one of the most mesmerizing bits of film acting I've ever seen, but also displays clearly the unbalanced man behind it, I now see.

Monday July 14 1997

Tuesday July 15 1997

71 today. No difference. A lovely evening last night. Arrived at Mon Plaisir to find it festooned with red and white and blue rosettes and red and white and blue balloons bobbing from the back of every chair. When S. arrived, I said You strike up the Marseillance and I'll leave. He got the giggles after a bit with the balloons coming out of my head. Even less English among the writers than usual, perhaps owing to the berets they were wearing those large flat over-one-side ones only worn by comic Frenchmen in pre 1900 *Punch*, or Buntorne and Grosvenor in *Patience*. I had the same as last time, tomatoes and anchovy salad, and poulet chasseur. Quite good, but the tomatoes were the ordinary ones, and the poulet's sauce was, I thought, congealed from being kept hot. A bottle of Pouille Fuisse for me, - part of his regime is no white wine, goodness knows why - so he had a half-bottle of red wine, I forget what, and had a bit of a tussle to get it cooled. Comically he later ordered another half bottle and even funnier, the prohibition of white wine did not extend to an aperitif of a glass of champagne. He was looking very smart and well in a light jacket in very pale grey and a fine knit white sweater. I wish I could remember all our talk, for our mutual quick wittedness is a great pleasure to us both. It's not just the Pouilly Fuisse, taken over four or five hours. Before I got at all drunk, I went thro' his plans and wrote them down. Today, Tuesday he starts *Il Jurco* in *Italia* at Broomhill. It opens on August 10. On August 11 he starts rehearsals for *HRH*, management. Paddy Wilson. (At some point later, S. said 'There are no real producers these days'). He told me that K. had been quite right to turn it down, from his own point of view. I was even more pleased with my opinion of *Snoo W*, to hear that Maria Aitken has backed out. My guess would be that she asked for re-writes and so on, after the tour, and *Snoo* did not satisfy her, or perhaps just did nothing. After all, most of his plays are half-finished messes. He hasn't yet re-cast *Mrs Simpson*, but he has cast *Edward* - Corin

Redgrave. Coo. It opens on Sept 11 at – The Old Rep in Birmingham... Is there a staff? Is there a publicity machine? Is there... Then Bath for a week and I suppose somewhere else, because they open on October 5 at The Criterion. (Can it be the fifth? I wrote it down as he said it, but do plays open on a Sunday now?)

Then the Cavalli opera that he did at Glimmerglass goes on at the Sydney Opera House in mid-December and January in Melbourne. Then Imp. Of Being Oscar in Sydney, followed by a short tour in U.S. – was it San Fran., Boston, Chicago – no mention of New York. Finally in the second week of the tour of HRH he does a film entitled Bedrooms and Hallways. We got, as so often, distracted, and I heard no more detail about this.

The big set-piece was telling the inside story of the Windsor Pygmalion debacle, as dispiriting a set of mistakes, dishonesties and general mis-management as one could wish. Bill Kenwright, of course, he's set up a production of Pygmalion opening at Windsor, which he's supposed to be 'saving'. He also 'saved' Leather Head which is now closed... He cast Emily Lloyd as Liza, she 'leapt to fame' in a film some years ago, has been much hyped in Hollywood, with little success and a reputation for waywardness. (This seems to have been confirmed.)

She has no stage experience at all. Faced with one of the most exacting of all female roles, she was bound to have trouble. After three days, Giles Havergal went to Bill K. and said she couldn't do it. Bill K. came to a rehearsal and said she was going to be wonderful. Three days after that, Giles Havergal gave in his notice. (What was he in at all for, with Glasgow and all? Doesn't he know about Bill K?) Roy Marsden fuming by this time and rang S. to ask him to take over. S. could see which way the wind was blowing and refused, being in any case 'too busy'. (Oh, and I should have said that Chris W. is doing the sets.) So Roy M. took over. A digression at this point while S. told me what he thought was wrong with Roy M's acting. I said it was what was wrong with Roy M., that he was unable to be natural. So Ann Mitchell was engaged to coach E. Lloyd. It seems she has something of a reputation as a teacher now. So she took E. Lloyd away for three or four days, while the rest of the cast rehearsed all those myriad scenes in which Eliza doesn't appear. She then brought her back into rehearsal and I can imagine the atmosphere. E Lloyd never took her eyes off Ann M and when Roy Marsden wanted to change a move, she flatly refused and indeed refused to do anything that Ann M had not rehearsed with her. After some days of this, Roy M. went to Bill K and said he refused in future 'to be in the same room as that woman'. Was there a point where Roy M. took over direction? There may have been. But in the end Ann M. was offered it, rang S. to ask if she should take it and he said 'Get out now'.

So Ray Cooney took over... I'd thought he was in essence a tacky weekly rep. director with an extra bit of business sense, but it seems he is also a first-class pig. Made every member of the cast cry one by one. Was very rude, uselessly so, about Chris's sets, in front of him and the company and so on...

They opened with the understudy, everyone as usual saying how splendidly she'd done, and as usual going off her a few days later as the lack of rehearsal and personality begins to come through. I think there were suggestions that she might get the part – Bill K will say anything to get what he wants – then she was told she was

going back to being Clara, but she must go on playing Liza while they looked for a star. So they went away and looked for a star and came back with a girl of 20 still at RADA, who will walk into a totally demoralized company. And it's coming into to the Albery ...

S. went to the first preview and the lighting was abysmal. Roy M. asked him to come in and redo it. He expected the lighting designer to turn nasty, but he just meekly noted down the new cues, like the simple electrician he really was. B.K. economising - I think he's in trouble. There's going to be a crash, if you ask me. He is the sweetest-natured wittiest of men, and so good to me. He pushed some money into my breast-pocket and put his head back thro' the taxi-window to say 'Do you want to go to the Kirov?' When I took the money out, it was £40.

I am proud that he confides in me, most precious is that, apparently the most confident of men, I hear his misgivings.

During Monday, spoke to M. Llewellyn who had spoken to her friend in Forres. She said tartly, about the floods, 'If only you'd been through the war, you'd know it was a lot of fuss about nothing'. I didn't bother to remind her of the pictures of many acres under water up to ground-floor windows and the thousand people head to tail in the community-centre. Only result, if I can do her a similar favour in future, I won't do it. Characteristically she said she'd gone right off the Independent, as it was their report I read to her. She doesn't admit the evidence of television.

Rang K and said 'Now you can wish Happy B'day without the bother', and told him about S's 'K was quite right not to do HRH.' He was pleased and so sweet. Oh dear, he's so busy.

As I had a bit of money, thought I deserved a birthday treat. I fancied a bit of Bradenham ham - it's years since I had some - so I went in the a.m. to Harrods. How long has it been - seven, eight, ten years? What loathsome crowds! You almost have to queue to get out of the tube. Slipped in the side door and found little changed in arrangement. At the meats counter, a square foreign-looking middle-aged man in the usual boater, said, in that unmistakable tone acquired from years of ignorant customers, when I asked if they still did Bradenham, that they didn't but that they had something that was 'exactly the same'. The something was a piece of ham, an ordinary pink, with an outer layer of white fat, no skin that I could see and bearing no visible resemblance to the deep brown-black rind and yellowish fat and pink-brown dry lean of Bradenham. 'It doesn't look at all like Bradenham ham to me'. 'I shan't say another word'. So I just walked away, feeling a bit sick at the inaccuracy and the cynicism.

I rang Paxton and Whitfield's when I got back and they do still have it. Perhaps. It's now called Black ham because 'someone bought up the firm and wasn't allowed to use the name. Hm. We'll see.

I had cards from Hazel and Mary L. Janet rang and sang Happy B'day to you. No word from Robin, Tim or Paul. I think I'll let the last two fade away. I expect they don't need me anymore.

Rash going off, left arm less red during the day.

Wednesday July 16 1997

Much amused by Jeff Goldblum saying during an interview about the dinosaur movie, that the cast and crew had been forbidden to use mobile phones or computers or laptops because the twelve tone - or whatever weight they are – models are run by computers and might be interfered with and cause terrific damage.

Hazel rang today because she had people the last three days. Geoffrey's hand is still bad, partly because he will use it. They're going to a specialist. Well, fingers do take forever.

Thursday July 17 1997

Caught a bit of a golf tournament at some course that is 'historic', being a hundred and something years old. Struck all over again at the huge expensive organisation, the thousands of people willing to drive a long way, and most of them stand in the sun and wind, then only to watch one hole, unless they trudge round with the players. Really ordinary people are too extraordinary.

Michael Jaffe dead. An illustrious career, principally as director of the Fitzwilliam. Said he could be dismissive. He certainly could be. Played Cardinal Campeius in the Marlowe's Henry VIII with me in it, too. Had the most ridiculously over done de haut en bas manner, in real life, I mean. It suited Cardinal C. rather well, and although he was no actor, the part was short enough to be played on an attitude and a nose that was born to be looked down. His abilities must have been considerable to override such a rebarbative personality. I know I knew him only as an undergraduate but that sort of Eton and King's arrogance is intensified rather than modulated by experience. I bet he got up some noses.

One of the golfers called Kim Jong Duck.

Friday July 18 1997

To Ealing to get the cleaning. The grumpy woman was quite wrong – the feathers have gone. And D's pink shawl looks pristine. Bought some fresh sardines. Janet asked me to go round to look after next door's garden. Dreading it in the heat, but she has been so kind, I've put it off once, must go.

Saturday July 19 1997

Not as bad as I'd expected, as J. had a good fan, and we just sat and talked till I got cool. Lovely chats. She told me what Frances had told her of the state of the Old Vic season. The losses are considerably more than a million. Ed Mirvish is in Canada, with his son, Dare, running the theatre. Ed M. nearly went spare when he heard of the

loss. Godot is the only production packed. J. and Frances really believe that this is P. Hall's last throw. Bill Kenwright and Duncan Weldon won't have him, because he is too extravagant. I should have thought it a blessing personally not to be wanted by B.K. but it seems not. He, P.H., changes his mind so much and suggests time-schemes and so on as if he still had the services and resources of the RSC or the National or a major opera house. And there is the innate difficulty of the Old Vic itself. A perfect theatre, but not for repertoire, as the National found out. I tremble to think what the bills must be for the storing and continual moving of scenery. And the National had a large subsidy. The lack of space is naturally crippling. Frances had to do the breaking-down-of the Godot clothes in the car-park. Not that I regard that as shaming. People are too spoiled nowadays.

The journey back was rather absurdly tiring and trying. It was still very hot. I waited on S. Bush's Metro station in the full glare of the sun for twenty minutes and then a bit of a wait at H'smith as it was Saturday. I left J's at 6.15 and got home after seven. How far is it? I could probably walk it in twenty minutes.

Good article by Peter Porter about Peggy R's archive going to the British Museum Library. It seems bits of it are already on show besides bits of George Eliot etc. I should think she would have despised any such show, but I think she, like Mary L, is wrong.

K. rang while I was out. Bother.

I see that awful man, Sir James Goldsmith, has died. How horrible to leave nothing behind you but a fearful lot of harm and fearful lot of money.

They showed some excerpts from Michael Parkinson's interview with James Stewart in 1983. I think. It was all quite wonderful in timing and integrity and humour. His wife joined him for the last few minutes and you could quite see why he never got over her death three years ago. Wonderful. But It's a Wonderful life, his favourite film, I have never been able to watch, shot through, as it is, with that really rancid American sentimentality.

Sunday July 20 1997

Monday July 21 1997

A lovely evening at K's until I brought up the wretched subject of B'mouth. He is quite right to tell me to be bolder and get my own way etc etc. The trouble is that I am quite overwhelmed for hours if I am at all at odds with him. In addition, courage comes easily to him at the moment, but I have had to be brave about so many things, not least D's death and giving up acting, that I feel my stock of courage is running low. And especially as this whole thing is no fault of mine. I left without having a scotch as I was too down and worried. Hateful.

Today I feel tired and don't feel like writing any more. And he's going to be so busy for the next three weeks.

Tuesday July 22 1997

What an age we live in. I note that American scientists call the rocks they are examining on Mars by the names of cheap children's cartoon characters – Scooby Doo and Yogi Bear. It is only another example of the threadbare nature of American civilization.

Rang Derrick M. and cheered him up.

Mary Llewellyn went to *The English Patient* and thought it v. good, I expect because there was a lot of Africa in it.

Wednesday July 23 1997

Very hot. Cut my nails.

Thursday July 24 1997

In an interview with the best-seller authoress Barbara Taylor Bradford billed as 'the richest woman in Britain', she was asked whether the leading character in her most successful book, *A Woman of Substance*, was based on herself and replied 'I infused in Emma a lot of my traits.' So helpful to demonstrate so early in the interview and so economically, that she can't write and has no ear. The interview reminded me, *mutatis mutandis*, of an interview I once read with Marie Corelli and in another hundred years (or less...) B.T.B. will be just as completely forgotten. Marie C's real name was Minnie McKay, I hope no relation. Did I say that S. found Pat Routledge just as rebarbative, affected and neurotic as we did.

Friday July 25 1997

Someone was claiming the unfairness of London having four times as much lottery money as anywhere else. As it is the centre of English culture, having more galleries, more theatres, more concert-halls, more famous buildings and has a population more than Wales and Scotland put together, the complaint is ridiculous and yet another evidence of provincial insecurity and inferiority complex.

Enchanting owl story. A middle-aged man in a small village in Devon was fond of owls. He decided to try to attract owls to his garden by imitating their call in the evening twilight. After a while he was delighted to hear an owl answering him. He went on with this nature study for a year. Then his wife met another woman in the village and told her of her husband's success with his owl calls. The other woman's husband liked owls too and had attracted an owl to the garden by imitating its call... Both men had been calling to their owls for a year...

The women said 'We only stopped laughing long enough to tell them.' One of the men said 'I didn't know my call was as good as that'. I love that. He doesn't seem to

see that he was only convincing another man. And I presume that neither of them actually saw an owl in their gardens.

This is a very English absurdity. I can't imagine it in any other country. Nor can I imagine two women doing such a thing – for a year. What an excellent peripheral joke it would make in a film! I can see its pay-off coming after the pay-off of the film, as an affectionate coda.

Saturday July 26 1997

I don't always write it down, but I do always remember my favourite author's b'day.

A television programme called Citizen 2000 has followed a number of children from birth till, I suppose, 2000. They are now about 16, and all three tonight were Indian. Interesting points came up about the embracing, or not, of Indian faiths and customs. Guess what, the girl with a father and mother buzzing around in Mercedes on corporate management business or whatever, had the least interest in aforesaid faiths and customs. But even the one from the East End hated his visit to India, as, more or less, they all did. Well, I mean, no TV, no electricity, no drains, no...

But the interesting point to me as an actor, was the variation of accent in the East End family. The older sister, about 18 or 19, had a palatable cockney accent. Anwar, the 16 year old had a quite thick Indian accent. So many people have very poor ears. My barber, over here for at least twenty years, has an Italian accent so thick that even now I sometimes miss a whole phrase. He's at Austin Reed's so there's no question of an Italian ghetto. Goodness how clear it is that religion is the opium of the people in Indian culture.

Sunday July 27 1997

Citizen 2000 might be better if they did a short update on all their children as well as more detailed treatments.

The book programme announced the winner of the UK's Favourite Book Contest in which fifty thousand people voted. And who won? Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, a book nobody I know can open, let alone nobody in criticism whose opinion I respect. They played a bit of an interview with Tolkien and no wonder I find him unreadable. The interest in Norse legend I knew of – that's enough – but he also announced that the years from six to ten were the happiest of his life, his work was a quest for lost childhood, every novel is really about death, and to crown it all he's a Catholic. Well, the best-seller public are spoiled children.

One-liner during the programme. In Birmingham Public Library there is a book that has never been borrowed since first being put on the shelves in 1878. It's by J.R. Crump, and its title, Mucus.

Mary L. jumped in quickly on cue – why do I still give her the opening? – to tell me that D and I had always over estimated John G. ‘He was always too camp and pansy’, so that’s John G. and Edith crossed off. I wonder where it will stop.

Monday July 8 1997

Sharron is coming to dinner tomorrow. Even the minimal preparations are tiring. Just carrying the Hoover up and down stairs... I have to spread the preparations over three days.

Tuesday July 29 1997

Wednesday July 30 1997

More hard work. I spent most of the afternoon with nothing on at all, streaming with sweat. After all, I sometimes stream with sweat just sitting on the sofa, in weather like this. It was a successful evening. I think. She enjoyed her dinner, salade Nicoise and raspberries. (Odd the young are, the first raspberries she’d had.) And dear John N’s wine had arrived during the afternoon, white, thank goodness, delicious Saint Veran.

She is as dear as ever. But I worry for her career, and her life generally. She says she hasn’t got the studio rent, due this month. There is money owing her which hasn’t come in. All these difficulties have been going on too long for a business that is going to be successful.

The ‘whine’ in her voice that I have never liked is a sign of a downbeat quality in her character, which, while I find it appealingly vulnerable, is not a mark of success in the great big world. She’s going out with another man with a handful of imperfections. As I never meet any of them, I can’t tell how near to or far from reality is S’s account of them. Her self-depreciation may call the wrong qualities out of them.

Today to Ken. High St. for books. I was intending to get all the rest of the Sue Grafton detective stories. I enjoy them, and there are eight more to go. To my great irritation, part of the crime section was boarded off for ‘alterations, and the bit unavailable was Crime A–G, so I got a couple of possibles and the new James Lees Milne diaries.

Silly little girl all alone on desk – it was seven o’clock - and went through a ridiculous rigmarole. Actually rang Charing X Rd! And, of course wrote out all the names of authors and titles in detail on the invoice although they are all on the pay slip stapled to it. Even so, I had to tell her where the invoice pad was.

Thursday July 31 1997

Mary L. rang to tell me about Amy’s View at the National. ‘If I could get hold of another ticket, I’d go again.’ Amusing, as David Hare has been criticised for writing a rather conventional old-fashioned, almost drawing-room play. Difficult to tell what

it's like, and M. is little or no guide. I think the backstage theatre better-than-cinema element probably had an influence. And if there'd been a mention of Quiet Weekend – she and Sally Blunt were able to go to a sold-out play because a friend of S.B.'s had two seats for her and her husband to have a night out. Mary started to quote S.B.'s description of the friends and even she finally saw the comic potential of it. Prue has recovered from cancer, but her husband Gordon, is drinking himself to death from bitterness at a failed acting career, 'The house is so damp I don't think I can stay there again'. The daughter is about to give birth to an illegitimate child by the boy-friend who's just deserted her. As the play begins with an unwanted pregnancy, and the two seats were not together, it's perhaps a celebration better abandoned. Prue gave up the tickets partly because of the daughter – any minute - and partly because she was doing a day's filming as an extra. Of course that's what I always thought extras lives were like, or like Mary L's, full of jeering snubbing bitterness. I cannot laugh at M's life because I know her and still love her. But Prue and Gordon are a Royal Court Theatre Upstairs soap-opera and the ridiculous piling of one misery on another is comic. The reality – poor wretched creatures now with a baby to care for and what an upbringing.

So Rosalie Crutchley has died, only six or seven years older than me, but those vital war years. I first saw her in what I now find out to be her London debut (I had never had occasion to investigate her fairly short theatre career.) She played Angelica in John G.'s Love for Love at the Haymarket in 1943. A velvet riding-habit, a tilted tricorne (happily chiming with the hats of the day) and that imperious scornful nose and mouth, in the service of an ingenious role. The combination secured her, I think, four portraits in the R.A. exhibit. that year. The R.A. Summer Ex. had slightly more standing then, - and I was only 16 and had never been to one before. Interested to discover that she was actually aristocratic on both sides. She certainly looked it. Gave up the theatre as opposed to TV and films to bring up her children. Any evidence they were worth it? A fairly minor but distinctive talent.

A business letter, with a window in the envelope arrived addressed to the Mutual Trust Co, 12 Dunstan Road, NW11. As usual, looked up the Co and the road. The road was there but not the Co. It was one of those envelopes that can be opened without trace if you do it carefully. Inside was a cheque from J. Pao and Co Ltd Oriental Foods, for £16,069. Rang them. Jolly girl said Lucky you. Higher-up-girl didn't smile when I said I was just off to South of France. Sent it back. I wonder if I'll get the stamp back.

By the second post, a birthday card from K. 'Love always', making up for the other night, not that he needs to. Wrote at once.

Friday August 1 1997

Had a bad night again, awake till five thirty. Thank goodness I haven't anything to do these days.

Thought I might go to the Gate, as well as Waterstone's, to see Portrait Chinois, but it doesn't sound good enough to compete with my bad night. Did get to W's tho' and got all the remaining Sue Graftons.

Saturday August 2 1997

Another bad night. But they don't panic me anymore, as I know I can rest, and there is nothing I have to do. And I have plenty of new books, so that the old ones can ripen on the shelves.

In the extraordinary way that I don't see things sometimes now, I picked up a window envelope, as I thought for me, - how, don't ask me – opened it, and found it was a bank statement for the man upstairs, and he's over £3000 overdrawn. I tore it up and put it in the rubbish bin by the tube station. He got a £2000 loan and knows all about it, so I felt no misgiving. Another statement will come soon, he'll ask for a duplicate of this one, and I will not have embarrassed him by knowing. But how tiresome, how did I come to mistake the name?

Oh, I also got James Lees Milne's new volume, *Ancient as the Hills*. As good as ever. There is a certain likeness – he has rashes, too, and the mixture ...

Sunday August 3 1997

No books I want in the Sats. or Sundays for weeks.

Mary L. told me two war-stories with rather blighting preface, 'Before I get Alzheimer's' – In the East End, a family had just gone to bed when the sirens went. They pulled on some clothes and made for the Anderson. The mother lingered. 'Come on mum'. 'I can't find my knickers.' 'Mum, they're dropping bombs, not men.' At the other end of the social scale, a nanny met her charge, a boy of 11 at Euston to take him to Waterloo and thence to his pre. School. They stopped off for tea at Gunter's. A doodlebug fell, near enough to break a window and bring down some plaster. The boy leant across the table and said, 'What was that Nanny?' 'That was a bomb, dear. Elbows off the table.' That's the tone that won the war.

Monday August 4 1997

The other notes that I found with the weather of my childhood were a little disquisition about Nero Wolfe and Archie, and a list I compiled when I was seventy, of famous people who died before, sometimes long before, seventy. Here are just a few great people who have had fewer years than me, but possibly greater achievement: Gainesboro', Evelyn Waugh, Jane Austen, Shakespeare, Tchekov, Arnold Bennett, Richard Burton, Gertie Lawrence, Ronald Firbank, Mozart, Louis MacNeice, Robert Stephens, not to mention Keats and Kelly, etc. A joke, but a reminder to be grateful.

The Rex Stout column was a fragmentary note or two on the lines of S. Holmes Scholarship.

- (i) Nero Wolfe arrived in New York and bought house in 1930.
- (ii) In 1935 Wolfe had lived in house for 20 years, last 7 with Archie.

- (iii) In 1936 Archie had worked for N.W. 9 years.
- (iv) Archie says he's more Gary Cooper than Gary Grant.

I must pursue that when I read the novels again.

At last got Roy. He laughed. Marian has irritable bowel syndrome... out of work probably. Told me a joke, nice and short. I've trained him well. Ian Paisley putting his son to bed with a fairy-story. 'Once upon a time, there were two Catholics, now there are thousands.

Completely forgot to write about the film on Thursday, which proves something or other. It was called Roseanne's Grave and is another indictment of pan-European film. A sort of Ealing meets French village picture lacking the grace and humour and reality of both.

Tonight watched La Haine, which I'd taped. What a blessing, a video and fast forwarding, especially, is for someone like me. La Haine is fearfully slow, but happily I can catch most of the sub-titles while fast-forwarding. Oh the avoidance of boredom.

Tuesday August 5 1997

A word in one of the Sue Grafton's, 'cilantro', some sort of herb from the context, I think.

Went to Ealing to pay Alliance. I always think of Hazel living a whole life here, coming back here from days with B. Pym. Bought a white cyclamen for £2. Saw the last few minutes of a Tom Cruise, Jack Nicholson film. Silly little hysterics they are.

Wednesday August 6 1997

Heavy rain all day, and heat and humidity. Awful.

K rang and we had a lovely talk. Told me a joke and as usual, forgot it. Told him Roy's tale of Ian Paisley telling his son a bed time story. It rises to a Paisley shriek at the end. 'Once upon a time, there were two Catholics - and now there are thousands'. Poor boy, he's been so busy. He never has anything to tell me, because he just works and goes out with A.

Watched a bit of a TV piece about that cult, where 30 people were discovered under individual purple palls, dead under the impression that they were going to wake up in a wonderful alien world. What made this prog. different, was that there was plentiful footage of the head of the cult, and all its members talking to the camera. There was an overwhelming stupidity. One of them said of the leader, 'He was so incredibly believable', an exact and revealing example of oxymoron.

Shortly after, I watched a bit of The X Files, equally stupid in much the same way. It's amazing to me that these men take in so many people. I can recognise them a

mile off. Of course I had the advantage of being brought up in the same house as Daddy.

Thursday August 7 1997

Watching My So-Called Life, again, and I still think it's the best straight American series. Not that that's saying much. But it is fairly well-written and well-acted. No wonder the girl and boy have been poached by films. But even a good American series loses its head at Christmas, which was this week! and the usual rancid Yank sentimentality came creeping in. A woozy mysterious down and out girl-musician loitered about being enigmatic. She kept vanishing, not quite like a ghost but enough like one to convince muddled minds in audience and authors alike. The leading girl generously exchanged her good big strong boots for the 'Ghost's' worn-out ones. How, may I ask, can a ghost go off in any new boots, let alone a pair of particularly heavy ones?

On my way to the shops about half past six – cooler, you see – I saw two young people obviously on the way home from the tube, the usual smartly-dressed business types, bending over a middle-aged man – again the usual, a blue pinstripe suit, blue and white striped shirt, some sort of club tie, who was lying on the pavement, with his head pillowed neatly on the curbstone. The young people seemed non-plussed. I said 'Did you fall?' 'I don't fall. I walk'. Pissed as a newt – no injury, good colour. So we left him. He said he lived around the corner.

Half way up Margravine, I realised I hadn't brought all the money I needed so went back and found two different young people bending over him and starting to help him into – next door. They were lower down the social scale so not so inhibited. When they left him, he was still leaning against the open door, I quite expected him to be there when I got back from the shops. But he wasn't. I think, when someone gets sozzled on the way home from the office, it's often that they don't really want to go home. Come to think of it, I haven't seen the wife lately... It's no. 14, got up to the nines two years ago. And he was reading The Spectator! What is the world coming to

Hot, eleven-twenty five p.m. and still 80 degrees in here.

Saturday August 9 1997

Really Mary L. is irritating stuff sometimes. I started to tell her about the floods round Hazel, without mentioning her, of course. M. gave a merry ringing laugh and said mockingly 'Oh you are so good at spreading alarm and despondency.' At another point, she actually said, 'You'll think I never talk about anything but Quiet Weekend'...

Heat worse. Still, it means that the tender jasmine on the balcony trellis is flooding the room.

Sunday August 10 1997

86 degrees. Hideous.

Rang Roy and actually got him. He's been in Dorset with his TV producer, working on the Spanish Civil War series. A lovely house in Winterbourne Clenston. I quite envied him. Told me Marian's conjunctivitis was cured in a day by an acupuncturist. And the irritable bowel syndrome is on its way out too. As for the first, it only displays the usual problem with any treatment. You can never apply a remedy and not apply it at the same moment. As for I.B.S., it displays the usual process by which a perfectly usual stomach or bowel upset is given a mysteriously resonant name and therefore dignified with more importance. Syndrome indeed.

I see that drug-pushing has been discovered in the Butlin's at Minehead. So Hazel still has some connection with metropolitan excitements.

The Chekov biography is fascinating. Echoes a-bound. When he bought his estate in the country – 600 acres - he planted fifty cherry-trees. Another time he came back home to treat various ailments, among which were the governess, who had fallen off a wardrobe.

A glimpse of the Eisteddfod, how do you spell it? How absurd the Welsh are, and how hideously the accent destroys the rhythm of English! 'Bumping.' Bumping indeed. And those ridiculous costumes were invented quite lately.

Monday August 11 1997

Hellish heat. Forgot to say Hazel said rather wearily that there have always been drugs at Butlin's, ever since it went so down market. Still, she told me there was an excellent butcher in M'head and an even better delicatessen run by the butcher's wife. And there's a fishmonger. Her friend, Ruth in the U.S. has a tumour. Another friend, Jan, has depended on Ruth to be strong since the death of her, Jan's, husband. Jan will, it seems, go to pieces. H. said she might have to go over. For Jan, not poor Ruth.

To shops and came back soaked as usual, up and down my arms as well.

Tuesday August 12 1997

To my surprise, the Bournemouth tenant of some years, rang up in the afternoon. A pleasant voice, with a faint American accent. The whole situation seems to have taken him by complete surprise. A pity he wasn't surprised a little earlier. But the main point is that he wants to buy the flat. He is obviously completely un-businesslike, as he asked me how much we wanted for the flat. But certainly he was apologetic and submissive. He probably thought he'd done a deal with Lalla.

It may make life easier. Lalla, I suppose, doesn't dislike him. It's preserving the status quo, such as it is. Rang Mr Stone and got it all going. Rang K and gave him two sentences, he hm'd on both.

Wednesday August 13 1997

Apparently violent thunder-storms rattled thro' last night, floods, a house burnt out in South London and so on. I heard nothing and never woke. I think it may have been very local, tho' I did sleep through the 'hurricane', whenever it was.

Oh, how people go on and on about 'pollution and air quality'! I can't notice any difference. In fact it seems to me better than forty years ago. But then I have no trace of pollution mania, very widespread nowadays.

Thursday August 14 1997

The Chekov biog. is full of interest tho' not a 'great artistic achievement' in itself. He has, for instance, only a serviceable style and I am not entirely convinced that his Russian is as good as it's presented as being, or rather, if it's good as the blurb says, why does some of the translation sound worse than Constance Garnett? A sentence starting, 'She fixedly thought' is typical. I fear he may be one of those - and have questionable humour, perhaps - who think it is right to stay as close to Russian word order and so on, at the expense of supple colloquial, witty and thoroughly comprehensible English. The best translation of the Cherry Orchard was at the (old) Lyric Ham. In 1954. John G. did it with a well-known translator, - was it Elisaveta Fen? - and discussed every idiom and turn of phrase, until an English equivalent was chosen, to take the same place in the character's mouth and the audience's perception as the Russian one. It was the best production altogether, for me. Gwen F.D. was the right weight - light - for Ranevsky, Trevor Howard marvellous as Lopakhim. Esme Percy as Gaev, a bit odd, but very sensitively done.

The Imperial Theatre Committee on the Seagull script: 'The symbolism or 'Ibsensison' has an unpleasant effect. If that seagull weren't there the comedy would not change in the slightest.... We cannot pass quite unnecessary characterization such as Masha taking snuff and drinking vodka... some scenes seem to be thrown onto paper haphazardly with no proper connection to the whole, without dramatic consequentiality.' Things don't change.

Friday August 15 1997

K rang at twenty to eight. The mobile faded. 'Hello, it's me' 'Who?' 'Me, me, me-me.' 'Is your tiny hand frozen?' 'What?' 'Are you cooking? It's twenty to eight, you're cooking.' 'No, it's cold tonight because it's so hot.' 'How do you cook an artichoke?' 'Well you boil it for at least - ' 'Don't tell me, tell Arlete, she's doing it, Arlete, Angus is on.' 'But couldn't I just tell - ' 'Arlete, Angus is on, pick up the kitchen phone, (louder) pick up the kitchen-phone.' Arlete did. 'Are you well?' 'Yes. Got to go.'

A typical conversation.

Some children found the body of a woman propped against a tree, in the bushes near the entrance to the Open Air Theatre. It seems it had been there for three weeks. Not murder. Drugs, I suppose, she was thirtyish.

Oh, the irritation of Indian or Chinese or African music! As bad as babies crying, than which...

I see exam results and students talking about them, all over TV and papers. How very odd we'd have thought it if anyone had asked us after the Trips what we thought. Got to a cinema at last and almost wished afterwards that I hadn't. Not specially because of the film, *Grosse Pointe Blank*, tho' it had its faults. It started promisingly, a professional killer going to his high school reunion. It was well-acted all round – that, at least, had a light touch. Unfortunately the dialogue was delivered as if it was funny, but mostly wasn't. The lightness of the tone and the darkness of the reality became more and more troubling and the 'happy' ending with the couple driving off into happiness with twenty murders round their necks was morally repugnant. I went to Safeways, taking time to stand by the dairy shelves – they're the coolest. By the time I got to the tube, it was twenty to seven, past the worst of the rush-hour, but even so, god, how I sweated. By the end, there were drops falling from my fore-arms onto my trousers. And it's still over 85 degrees.

Saturday August 16 1997

Chekhov's father writes 'Mother baked a delicious pie of sturgeon gristle with mustard oil.' Really, Russians are too extraordinary. But it also makes me suspicious of the translator. 'Gristle' in English, means something quite un-eatable.

How odd time has been this century, with the two wars and the huge changes spreading time out. It gives one a shock to realise that C. would have been only 80 in 1949, when I was at Camb. and his sister didn't die till 1957.

Oh dear, all this fuss about Elvis Presley. The great mass of people have no judgment, and it is that 'no judgment' that now rules. They assume that fame and especially money, are what count, not realising that the aforesaid great mass often give such prizes where there is little or no merit. Footballers, for instance. If I said that there was a scale of values by which such celebration should be made of D's talents and achievement – she died the same year - and Elvis P. consigned to light entertainment oblivion, the fans would be amazed.

Poor simple boy. Interviewed after he came back from his military service in Germany, he was asked what he thought of the food over there. 'No sir. I never ate out at all. I only ate in the canteen or at home. When he could first afford steak, he had to have it cut up for him. He didn't know how to use a knife or fork. I suppose that's why he never went to restaurants and only ate sandwiches and hamburgers and hand food generally. He wouldn't eat any fish of any kind.

Apparently Graceland is the second biggest attraction in the U.S. after the White House. What a nation, even if Stratford is awful!

Sunday August 17 1997

Hot, ugh. Hazel rang as usual. That friend, in the U.S., Ruth, has got a malignant tumour, and she fears it has been left too long, because the doctors failed to pick it up in time. Oh, doctors. I long for the time when surgery has been abandoned as barbarous

A new life of Peter Cook, which sounds as if it might be rather good. He certainly deserves one, as he is plainly a complex and contradictory character. Streaks of cruelty, self-destruction, extraordinary quickness, goodness knows what else. How badly he seems to have behaved to his women! Mind you, I worked with Judy Huxtable – was she the second? - and thought her a very silly girl. Now she's lost her looks, lives near Hazel and now everyone thinks so.

How fearfully hackneyed real murderers are. One of those men who goes around strangling girls, said 'She was pure, you see' etc etc. Is that sort of man studied and investigated? If he is, I never hear anything of it.

That friend of Derrick M, Ronnie Woods, rang, to say that Derrick was coming back from Vere Lorimar's early, as they couldn't cope. He's very unsteady and even his hands are affected by this nervous degeneration.

Monday August 18 1997

Hottest so far, for me, 89 degrees in here, with the blinds drawn at 5.0.

A plastic bag and a large label saying YES arrived in the post. A recycling scheme going one further for the Council. If I stick yes on the gate next week, I'll get a plastic box with knobs on and from those knobs, I sling plastic bags, with varying types of rubbish, glass, tins (or cans as we now have to call them) and textiles. As with the bins up by the tube-station, the glass has to be separated into green, brown and clear. Mysterious because, in my complete scientific ignorance, I picture glass melting down in terrific heat – the various colours as a little draining away sludge, but obviously not. There was a number to ring, so I asked someone how big the box would be because of limited space in the area. And nobody knew.

Amused to see two articles about Shan in the Independent Long Weekend. One was by Davie Hare, about his forthcoming Heartbreak House at the Almeida, making it clear how relevant it is to the present moment and obviously what a great play it is and how full of emotion and so on and so on. David Hare and the Almeida are the height of present modishness. The other article might have been written any time these last 80 years. 'Characters only puppets for his opinions', 'no humanity,' 'only five plays viable', etc. I liked 'Fanny's First Play and Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles' have vanished without trace, or some such expression. Well, 'Fanny' might be little done, as it was more of its time than most of his plays. 'Simpleton' was never a success, but was nevertheless reviewed at the Orange Tree a couple of years ago, and

was certainly not a failure as far as interested audiences went. (Not that it'll ever be a success). He quotes the five plays as, grudgingly, classics. Fascinating, Shaw seems to irritate violently, a certain swathe of people just as he has always done. Two big articles in the same paper is not obscurity, as Mary L. claimed for Shaw the other month. Amusing.

A girl of fifteen taking her G.S.C.E.'s has become pregnant by a boy of eleven. She thought he was fourteen. She's having the baby. He's being supportive, and both sets of parents are standing by. A medical expert said it was not such an extreme example. Grotesque.

Tuesday August 19 1997

Reading the Peter Cook biography. Very funny and very sad in about equal proportions. How badly some of the people behave!

They seem to have no moral framework to their lives at all. It's so odd to me that such intelligent people can't see their unhappiness as the result of their rabbit-like habits and self-indulgence. Alan B is a movement of piety set against them, and I notice he doesn't appear much and is decidedly tight-lipped when he does. P.C. doesn't seem to understand other people at all, especially women, and therefore spreads hurt in all directions. Great charm, of course, and gifts. How often they seem to go with hurting other people. Odd. The book itself is by Harry Thompson who started *Have I Got News For You?* and *They Think It's All Over*. It could scarcely have been better done. By the way, he suggests that P.C. was a manic depressive, as well as behaving like one. Too late to tell now. And the last wife is a monster. There'll be more trouble with her. I was amused at one American critic who said of *Beyond the F.* that they should 'adapt their strangulated triphthongs to the ears of a people to whom a vowel is a vowel is a vowel. They really don't know, do they? They really have no idea, sweet simple creatures, that they speak a dialect of English, and we speak English. It will be a shock to them if they ever find out.

Oh and Alan B. and J Miller weren't getting on at all by the end of N.Y. No surprise to me – Oxford and Cambridge again.

A message on Janet's machine says Closed for family illness. I'm not quite sure whether that's a euphemism for the builders.

Oh dear, Disney is the opinion of the people now. I thought religion was bad enough.

Not a word from fucking Beethoven since the artichokes.