

P502-F

The second in a series of off-piste semi-autobiographical releases.

Momus Journal 1980

Somewhere there are people like me

“A puppy playing with dead men’s slippers.” That’s how the future Momus—a twenty year-old literature student at Aberdeen University called Nick—characterises himself in one of the three big Chartwell sketch books that make up his 1980 diary. But the young Scot would probably prefer a germanic word like Bildungstagebuch: this is a “self-formation diary”. Drawing on intellectual gurus like Kafka, Mann, Barthes, Cage, Kantor, Benjamin, Weber, and Rilke, Momus is keen—in the words of Joseph Beuys, another hero—to “show his wound”.

Beware: this student comes across as a very special snowflake, when he’s not self-flagellating in the manner of Kafka. He’s prone to abstraction, longeurs and pomposity, so you’ll certainly want to skip. But there’s lots here that’s fascinating and insightful too: how this angst-ridden and isolated young man actually gains three sets of new friends—creative writers, Europeans, and art students—visits Italy and discovers galvanising art, from Tarkovsky to The Slits. He doesn’t lose his virginity, alas. And there’s a backdrop of deep political frustration: the first year of Thatcherism, riots, and fear of nuclear war. Salvation? It lies in becoming an artist, a writer. That’s how you “flame into being”. Welcome to 1980, seen here in granular, precise, sometimes icy detail. As Beuys also said, let’s “make the secrets productive”.

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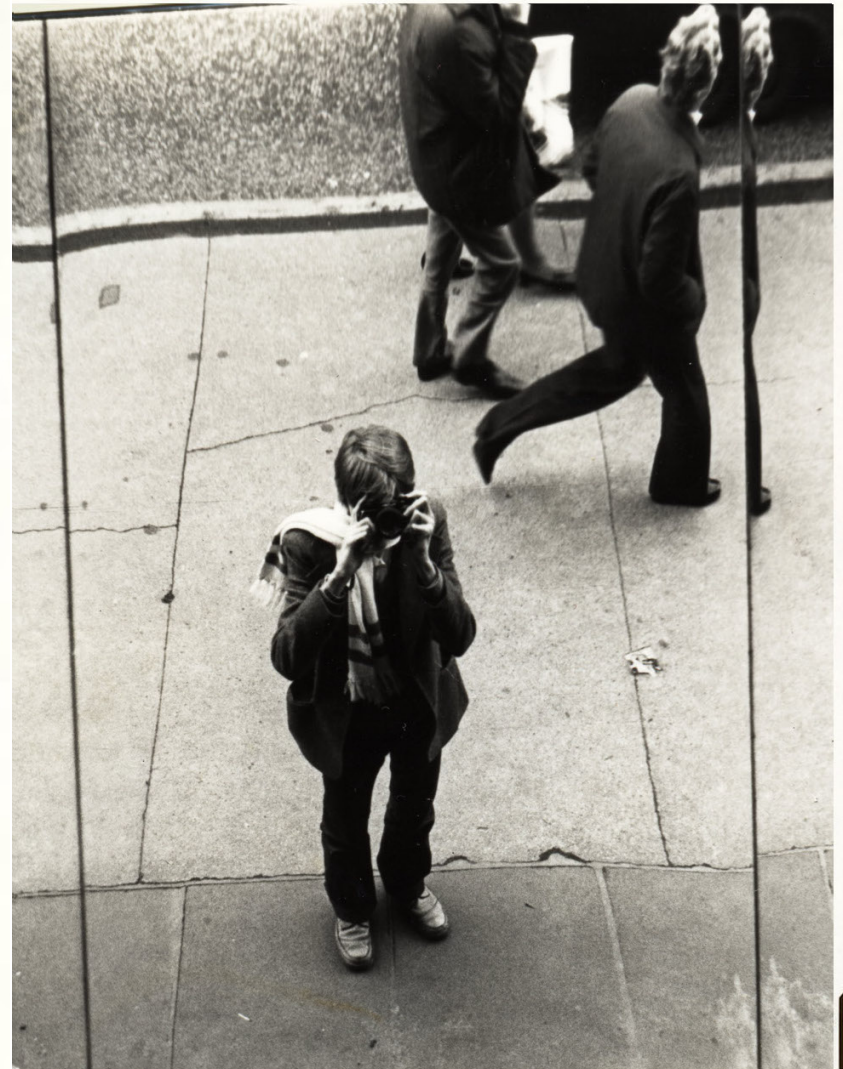
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P5014

Momus Journal

1980

Somewhere there are people like me



Texte intégral

'Inexcusable to travel — or even live — without taking notes. The deathly feeling of the monotonous passing of the days is made impossible.' *Kafka*

'Once the life of the mind renounces the duty and liberty of its own pure objectification, it has abdicated.' *Adorno*

1980

Midnight at the Tron Kirk, with a crowd as far as the eye can see. Cheering and shouting is all one can hear. I followed Mark and Nick Gardiner as we wandered upstream and down, swigging champagne and beer, shaking hands and kissing self-consciously those who offered themselves. If I wasn't drunk, I very quickly assumed the characteristics. Silly greetings — 'Happy New Wave', 'Texas?', Nick counting the coloureds, Mark mounting bus shelters. 'I worm my way into the heart of the crowd, I was shocked to find what was allowed' — the possibilities are always beyond one's capacity to reach, so one drifts with a permanent half smile, forcing mischievousness from time to time. Glimpsed: Guy Pelpoe, 'Igor', other EA peers, university people; returning at 1.30, kissed Delie Letham and friend, kicked beercans, played temporary Samaritan to a drunkard, meeting Mel's friend from Aberdeen, and Rosy, whom I kissed, then passed awkward remarks with. Punks, blacks, Americans ('this is the wildest party I've ever been to'), young Scots, drunk, and old Scots, drunk. A fire-eater with a painted face. A political conversation with a socialist; 'Can you imagine screwing Margaret Thatcher?' And on to the next proffered hand or mouth, wondering what absurd remark to make to someone one would never normally meet.

Tuesday, January 1st

The day's first engagement, Kenny Everett at 3.35, presented David Bowie in a padded cell (Kafka's metaphor for the world) and a kitchen with exploding appliances and windows, singing 'Space Oddity'. His expression was of bewilderment, fear, his Little Boy Lost manner, used to uneasy effect.

Meanwhile the media paraded predictions, people projecting their own psyches onto the future.

Soon I returned to my two-track machine to regain the purposeful & creative element so necessary. The chief achievement was 'Catalogues', starting as a rhythm track with tin, bottle and shoebox percussion, then gathering layers. Finally it had a stereo vocal, an alliterative, nonsense-cum-critical lyric with stuttering rhythm. I worked some time on different versions, very tensed and eager. Listened to it on the stereo while Father and Chris Garner (colleague in Athens) talked shop; predictions again. Some very bitter coffee compounded the effects of my nervous mood, and I continued my bizarre habits regarding sleeping hours.

Scraps: dinnertime conversation touched the possibilities for my future (Father thinks missionary work!) and the over-exuberance of Douglas Ashmeade last night; lifting his kilt to his guests, insulting his wife.

The hamster grates his teeth up and down the bars of his cage, widening the furrow in his jaw, as if his life depended on it.

Wednesday January 2nd

In the papers NATO screams for Soviet blood and the Pope warns of the horrors of nuclear war.

Mark's friend, Ali Sim, takes the Introversion / Extraversion test and scores 24/48 — a dull boy who hesitated at each question and couldn't correlate the repeats.

An uneasy night in which I heard scratches and bumps from the attic, or so it seemed, was followed by a tense day; the sky seemed to whine with missiles, my body couldn't stay warm in the house, and to venture outside would have taken more resolution than the new year has yet seen.

On my Aiwa 2-track it was reggae night, delicate dub chords on a fat, happy bass. On Peel, PiL and Simple Minds, whose 'Real to Real Cacophony' rekindled a lost love for the crisp, modern world in which I once saw myself wandering as in a vast hall of mirrors.

Thursday January 3rd

The satisfaction of an early start degenerated into self-disgust as I spent the morning walking in the lifeless damp from electronics shop to electronics shop. I was shopping for a cheap keyboard instrument, but found nothing appropriate. But the clusters of entranced people before the video games, and particularly my reluctant fascination, depressed me. It may be 'subjectification' of the potent trivia's effect — from the merchandise to oneself — which gives rise to the self-contempt, or perhaps the conflict of the two strata of one's character; the apparently dominant idealist struggles with more base but deep-seated desires, and is not sure if it's right to repress them.

The delicatessen: on entering I discover the Polish couple in discussion, he leaning on his broomstick, she arranging a shelf. I ask if they have any bread (although I've already noticed the empty trays) and they say no as if sympathetic, then immediately switch back to Polish, in anxious, urgent tones.

'Natural' jealousy between the cats.

I am jealous of the TV, which has intervened in our family life to the extent that we are virtually strangers. It commands more attention than any member of the family, and always wins when there is a conflict (as there is when I want to play someone a composition of mine) because of its superlatively undemanding

character. This evening I resorted to the pathetic, childish gesture of turning it off at its inaccessible socket just as Father was about to return from the phone. He'll have no trouble deciding who was responsible, but will take it as another example of my supposed desire to flout him out of spite.

With horrible blindness the world blunders, with Afghanistan its trifling pretext, into the glaring arena of destruction: a new Cold War is beginning, the SALT treaty spins away, and with a fulfillment of the initial moves which one can't believe possible to anyone with foresight, the political giants close for the ultimate, absurd conflict. There is a limit to the number of times one can shout 'Bastards!' at the TV screen, the words don't exist to show people the ridiculous incongruity between pretexts and consequences. Have the warnings of two wars not been enough? Is the death sentence the only solution for our case?

The fact that my response is rhetoric shows that I don't understand the gravity of it either. Insanity would be the response if it weren't the stimulus.

Kierkegaard & Anais Nin.

Friday January 4th

Mark reprimands me for telling Father I find my public school education 'an embarrassment' (in fact I gave a qualified agreement to his specific, loaded phrasing), calling it ingratitude. Should I be grateful for the privilege of serving in a closed institution (boarding school) with authoritarian, homosexual masters moulding me, or for being taught by archaic and prejudiced (the criticism is not of prejudice, which is unavoidable and not even pejorative, but of the claims to objectivity and the unstated allegiance of the prejudice to the Establishment) methods?

I was always at the bottom of the C stream, though I don't think I'm unintelligent. A latent talent for art was neglected because of narrow favouritism in the art class. In fact the only positive result of this education (leaving aside the detrimental effects of missing other experiences in Athens and Dedham — but

perhaps boarding school was an important formative experience, if negative) was learning how to process photographs. Certainly I learnt how to disappear in the midst of a crowd, how to be an outsider. A composition I wrote in Mackenzie House began: 'I am a social outcast, walking on the sands of time...' — in the Senior Common Room there was a scuffle to read it, and I preferred to destroy it than let it be read.

The escapes — to Athens & Montreal — were always unsuccessful, I was always returned to the self-righteously Spartan classrooms, the pompous mottos, the disciplinary rugby, the cliques with their 'hate sessions'... and the sentence was from my parents: always with regrets and consolations, but never doubting that it was essential for my correct development.

But it's buried in the past now, my memory is mercifully brief, and all that remains is a few injuries to my personality (Mother once said: 'Nicholas, you have no soul.' It's there, but has developed a hard shell by the same process as that by which an oyster makes an unbearable grain of sand into a pearl) — and perhaps one of these injuries makes it impossible for me to respond with the diplomatic white lie required of a question like 'Nicholas is probably embarrassed by the education he's had, aren't you, Nicholas?'

I strut through the sunny streets wearing a black tie.

The self-consciousness of this diary, illustrated well by this very entry: will more come of it than mere self-indulgent introspection? A reaction against the tyranny of concrete 'events', which are tedious to write and read. Undoubtedly, as renditions of each day, these entries are inefficient. But is this a loss? I have more faith in the potential gains than the losses. The only danger is that the diary takes over, that I live for it instead of for myself. All the more reason then to make it myself!

Relations with Emma: I still assume an air of distant distaste — but why? Envy, perhaps, that she should not be forced to exert the same shameful self-control that I felt — by inference only — was expected of me, mainly by Father, also by

peers. Certain instincts had to be repressed, I learnt, especially the need for approbation: it could not be solicited, but had to be awaited patiently. Emma never misses an opportunity to sing or dance if there is an audience even half-receptive (and often when they are absorbed in something she cannot follow), and it sometimes seems that every little movement has been dramatised for specific effect on others. Perhaps I share this need to be appreciated, but have felt it repressed. As a result I feel that I have to communicate the same hostility, implicitly, to her. She, however, lacks my sensitivity in these matters, and takes my lack of enthusiasm for license to perform, and for a dourness on my part ('Billy-Goat Gruff'). Recently, piqued when she came into my room to ask my opinion of some trousers, I cried 'Will you never learn?' And the other night I was surprised when she said of my imminent departure: 'We'll miss you.' (Father was probably embarrassed to be spoken for like this — his message, not just implicit, is exactly the opposite!) Miss what? The brooding, snappy presence about the house, proud of the unease he creates in the family structure, the constant bizarre or aggressive music?

I sat eating a lemon in the breakfast room. Why? Because I had read an article on the front page of The Times about lemons (as a potential energy source; frivolous humour to leaven the propaganda). Earlier in the day I bought Simple Minds' 'Real to Real Cacophony'. Why? Because Peel has been playing tracks from it, and NME ran an interview with them today. Is my hatred of the media based on my own suggestibility? Many would say that they were not at all influenced by TV or the press — Mark, for instance, although he lies for hours before the set, and has the Sanyo TV by his bed. Perhaps this is because he is less conscious of individualistic, unusual attitudes than me — he does not monitor apparently innocuous comedy shows for implicit (that word again) social imperatives, because he feels at one with the society of which the TV is the apparent voice, he has no axe to grind, no minority to defend.

So-called 'open-mindedness' is vacuity, an inflexible tolerance born of lack of conviction, lack of commitment. The principle it seeks to defuse and replace is that of imagination of another point of view — which is impossible if one does not have a firm point of view oneself.

Do I imagine it, do I bring it about? Father comes into the sitting room, I am listening to soft Eno, he asks me to turn on TV, I comply, making some half-hearted criticism on the triviality of the local news programme. Then Father comments loudly and enthusiastically on the items, or mimics an accent, and soon he is asking me to turn off the music. On the panic rush on gold, I remark jokingly: 'It signals the decline of capitalism, the end of money.' Father, turning his attention on me for the first time, demands 'Where would you live?' 'There would still be houses with people in them,' I reply, but already it is specific, absurd, defensive. Mother then says 'But people wouldn't look after the houses, just as they don't look after council houses.' I reply, but Father cuts in, saying 'You've got a lot to learn.' I am by this time angry, and say 'You've got a lot to unlearn, vested interest.' Father turns to Mother for support, but she says 'I haven't been listening, I'm watching this girl singing.' And our attention goes back to the television set. 'A wonderful sentimental song!' pronounces Father, when she has finished. I put on the earphones and return to Eno.

Saturday January 5th

Fear and trembling. Carter demonstrates his emotional attitude when announcing his disastrous countermeasures to the Soviet Afghanistan invasion by calling the Kremlin 'this atheistic government' — it is disastrous to have a Christian with control enough to destroy the world — perhaps he thinks he is the appointed executor of the Last Judgement? Diplomatic relations are damaged, grain supplies withheld, and the Olympic Games in doubt. This is a disaster. Carter says 'The Soviets have dealt a blow to world peace' — but the matter of Afghanistan is as nothing compared with the crucial and precarious state of East-West relations; NATO's reaction is the threat to world peace. Hysterical reminders of the domino theory are thrown about — why don't they remind us of Hiroshima instead?

There must be a turn-around, people must disown governments, disown the vast amounts of power which are so out of proportion with human responsibility.

The sky was clear, I could see across to Fife. People walked in their Saturday clothes, bought things, drove their cars to hypermarkets, watched the endless American films and serials on TV. What hope is there of any salvation, one day destruction will simply come from the sky because of a disagreement between two men.

After a nuclear explosion of some force, every inhabitant of the world would receive enough radiation to produce ghastly mutations in most of his/her descendants. The ozone would drop its protection from the sun by 50%. A few (some millions) would die instantly, many in horrible agony after a week or so, most would develop cancers sooner or later. The temperature of the world would drop, a new ice age might begin. Vegetation would be destroyed extensively.

There is more explosive material on Earth than food. The glass house is packed with stones — and they tell us this is to ensure that none are thrown.

Reading Anais Nin's diaries of 1939 — all were sure that at the last moment the war would be averted, that it was all a bluff. Then, when it began, they saw it as the revolution, and the new world was to be egalitarian. A.N. says 'The wars we carried within us were projected outside... I had seen all the private wars... I had seen the secret love of destruction now mobilised.' Yes, but nobody wants total annihilation. It is only possible to stumble into that blind, or be pushed in by more easily comprehended fears — such as Jimmy Carter's fears of the 'atheists' of Russia. No matter how well-argued a political stance is, it originates in the gut. But some things are blocked from the mind and cannot penetrate the gut, simply because they are too ghastly. They then become a comparative sanctuary which all the other fears lead one to.

A solution: everybody, no, half the population of the West migrates to the East, and vice versa. This is repeated every generation. The closest reality comes to this is the Moscow Olympic Games. Now they want to boycott them — have they come to the same conclusions as me? Personal experience of a formerly abstracted 'enemy' is essential for peace. This is why TV cannot educate, only

propagandise; only the openness, the meaninglessness of unguided perception can teach the absurdity of hate. One can only hate abstractly. From my notebook of last year: 'The fall of mankind may be brought about by nuclear holocaust, but the real cause will be abstract thought.'

I could continue for pages, but it would only increase my trembling.

German arts: last night on Radio 3 an excellent review of the current scene there; guiltily, the authorities pour money which other countries are spending on 'defence' into the arts. Long live guilt!

Today bought Bananas Review; splendid German edition — I feel great affinity with their psyche. The 'Neue Innerlichkeit' versus politically-oriented art — the two alternating currents of preoccupation for me too.

The musicians assembled in the basement — 'Tower Volts and the Generators' or whatever. We played our old Beatles songs as ever, an extended reggae piece with a dub percussion track, wandering on and on. Colin had his quiet girlfriend, who obediently joined Emma at the sink after supper. An awkward moment when I played my compositions; my attitude of shame — extreme modesty resembles guilt — made reaction difficult for the others. At 12.15 they came upstairs to the sitting room, ablaze with lamps. Henry rolling about on the carpet, lunging at a feather.

Leaving. I had closed the door after brief salutations when the doorbell rang. 'You're not getting away as easily as that,' said a Brown, and shook me by the hand.

My reaction to these friends is not warm — they are ghosts, we are strangers, and the group mentality, with its narrow, repetitive range of permissible expressions and responses, is constricting on any natural flow. I need people to rescue me from my solitary morbidity, something to rekindle the *joie de vivre* which would at least make the end of the world a kind of *loss*. But these are not they. And anyway, it is never the alchemist who produces gold, never the grail-seeker who

makes the great discovery, but someone who is indifferent to such things, and stumbles upon them as an invitation, an obstacle to some less attainable goal.

Sunday January 6th

Back in my little room in Esslemont. Everything is very stark, technical. Stepping into the place as into a shoebox, I feel it is clearly a compartment in the machine, and reflects the machine's characteristics in microcosm; such an overview is easier here than in the family, where activities and relationships distract attention (mercifully?). These characteristics are: the consumption of food (bought alone) and power (six plugs suckle like pups). The prominence of the technology of propaganda: radio, cassette, newspapers, magazines. The solitude.

Waiting for Morag: the sitting-room groomed, the fire burning, the table set with care, casual clothes all pressed, we awaited the entrance of the actress. Father complained that she should be so important: 'Next time we should ban her... as a person.' I left, at 3.30, without seeing her — I have yet to meet her. Perhaps she never came.

On the roads, the stimulation which comes with uneasiness, which comes with transition. At the beginning of the journey I reeled the steering wheel this way and that, and decided that this was an excellent metaphor for the control I would like to have over my life... even a passenger sitting silently beside me would have spoiled the effect. But nearing Aberdeen the roads were only visible as a diminishing string of cats' eyes, the cars were reified into their headlights alone. I remembered this time last year, when Paula's first letter awaited me at Hillhead. This year there is no-one, and the passenger seat is still empty in the darkness.

The BMW 723 ahead of me stopped on a fast stretch of road behind a Jeep we had passed on the motorway. An arm waved the BMW past, and when I followed the Jeep accelerated violently. It was all I could do to pull in ahead of it, and its beam headlights, close-set, glared angrily into my car. Was it some insane elitist, giving 'due' precedence to the £10,000+ BMW, or an anarchist attempting ambush? I was glad to put a large bus between me and the narrow headlights.

Comparing commentaries: BBC World Service says of the Soviet initiation of detente: 'They undoubtedly have their own reasons for it... this is where we can attack most effectively, by refusing to go along with it.' Radio Moscow on Carter's stance: 'He is behaving more like a presidential candidate than one in office.' Mass sales are more important than product quality, it seems. International situation worsens as U.S. defence secretary allies with the Chinese, promising common resistance to the Soviet Union.

On TV, a programme about a Japanese village, ridiculously traditional and formal, everyone putting community before self. Yes, communities are important, and it was touching to see a house being built by a man's relatives and neighbours. But what are the people like, and what do they so fear in their individual selves that they must repress it? Conservatives attack the 'monolithic state' of socialism. But surely if individuals are diverse, this doesn't matter. True totalitarianism is manifested in individuals, and controls absolutely because the social milieu is real and unavoidable, whereas 'the state' is an abstraction, and at best 'represents' inadequately.

In Japan it is very bad manners to blow your nose in public. No such repression exists in the U.S.S.R.

Monday January 7th

The difficulty of avoiding (without glasses) half-acquaintances scattered throughout the breakfast hall. I yearn for some particular, occasional friendships, but am not willing to share my meals regularly with the same person / people. Added to which, I have not the ability or, sometimes, inclination to make advances upon those I *do* vaguely know, and they never approach me. I passed Joanna this morning (after looking carefully away while she was choosing a seat, as if to say 'Don't let me see you influence where you sit — if you want to join me, do so of your own volition. But I didn't want her to come, for what could I have said to her?'), unsure whether to greet her or not. As she didn't see me approaching, engrossed in conversation as she was, I decided not to. But as I

passed, she looked up. But I could only see this out of the corner of my eye, as I didn't, or couldn't, turn my head. Consequently our co-incidental meetings this term will be cool — though this may just be my way of trying to claim responsibility for something outside my control, and inevitable.

Shaving, I looked at myself in the mirror and said: 'Of course, this solitude would be unbearable, indeed impossible to sustain, if it weren't for the peculiar conviction that it has benefits' — one is that it keeps the peep-hole on the world clean, if only because it is manageably limited.

No more projections, abstractions. The diary must be a personal record: comments on missiles etc. are only useful to gauge the amount of adrenalin in my system.

An alarm-bell rings, as in 'Happy Days' — but my monologue has already begun. The burst of fear it causes in the stomach, no more than that prompted last night by a noisy gust of wind.

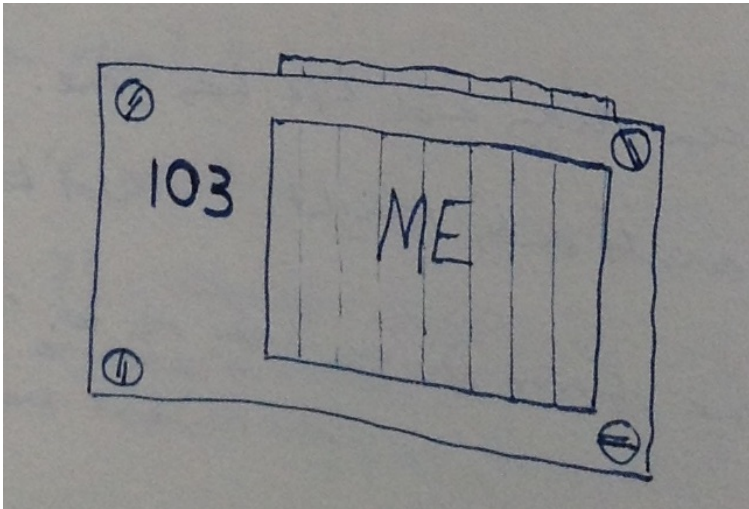
The barrier between diary and life has gone. Diary *is* life. If I were to write an events entry tonight, I would have to say 'After breakfast, wrote the diary for an hour or so.'

The English Language course is truly absurd — O.D. Macrae-Gibson's text raves enthusiastically, describes what lies ahead (lab sessions, exercises, feats of memory) as if it had a purpose, learning Old English. In fact, we might as well be learning the telephone directory by heart — though even that would have its uses. The modern methods of learning the subject resemble the administration of anaesthetic before the application of leeches.

Things are at their best out of context, hence the magic of mundane objects or facts or atmospheres in childhood. This is not because the face of things can only be looked at with approbation under distortion, but because a context is an invisible, ensnaring web learned of, not experienced. It is the product of statistical surveys, cartographers, and so on, not of individual subjects receiving

specific impressions. 'Out of context' does not mean afloat without references, however. The context becomes the mind, memory and imagination of the perceiver.

On my door:



Noisy grating outside — it can only be Byron returning. Yes, it is. My door remains closed. Whistling, the distinctive click of heels. Up and down the corridor. Soft singing. 'Hello, Jeff.'

A nuclear war would only be justly understood out of context as total destruction, the apocalypse, an act of God. If one saw it as the end result of bad diplomacy, and followed each step which preceded it, it would seem too grossly unjust, so condemning of mankind, that its *effects* would almost be justified.

What do I owe those around me? That's the wrong way to look at it, of course. Should I re-befriend Byron, or disengage? Remain where you are, let the world come to you, 'in ecstasy it will writhe at your feet'. But remember to keep the door locked.

Byron is talking to someone now, the onus isn't on me any longer. He wouldn't have noticed the difference if it had been me, anyway, nor would it affect our relations, at least on his side.

Later, he knocked on my door — the summons. Over a slice of walnut cake, I heard all the details (again) of the Barcelona holiday — the incoherence remained intact. The most important aspect which emerges from these details is the punctuality of the holiday, against all odds. The details are just now being repeated, distinctly, through the wall — a more sympathetic listener, Angie, exclaims between anecdotes: 'Oh By, you never...!' She, however, has her own breathless tales to relate, and since they both manage to get their oars in, their boat speeds noisily upstream. *Bon voyage!*

I, meanwhile, spent the evening writing a short piece for next week's Creative Writing Group meeting. It's called The Stadium Lights, and is a somewhat absurd, humorous exposition of the strange scene in a stadium, seen from the top of a lighting mast; an endlessly circling advocate orbits groundsmen who must lay turf incessantly, like the painting of the Forth Rail Bridge. Cramped, quick style, written very slowly, badly paced, but with an interesting flavour. No clean message. Idealism.

One of Byron's anecdotes to Angie, in a tense voice: 'One thing that happened... we met these three girls, and the guys that were with us started teasing them, and they were laughing, then one guy grabbed this girl and started rummaging around in her handbag, and she was groping to make him stop — (he senses the *double entendre* of 'groping' — or at least I do) — then they took the bag from her, and tossed it back and forward, then one of them took something out, and it was a packet of Tampax! By this time the joke had settled in on me... but I had trouble with the language (etc, etc, etc.)' The inappropriateness of telling a rape-symbolism joke to a girl, if at all! And the cruelty of the original prank.

Tuesday January 8th

The ridiculous lengths I go to avoiding Joanna B. Murray. We entered the breakfast hall together, but sat separately, a circumstance contrived mutually. Then I saw her ahead on the path to Seaton Park, and lagged self-consciously. The annoyingly slow pace of the group — I was forced to take a grand detour around Seaton Park, and even then they stretched across the path just ahead like a moving barrier. I walked down to Old King's by the Taylor building, not High Street, where they held sway. We all arrived at the lecture theatre, inevitably, at exactly the same time, but could afford anonymity in the waiting crowd. In my lectures I sat alone, for this is the only way of maintaining a respect both for other people and for myself.

Read N.Y. Review of Books & Design & Zigzag — articles on T.V. graphics, Moonies, Talking Heads.

A lab session with Old English; humiliating drudgery — perhaps this represents the end of my university career, for I am stubborn, and *will* not wrap my mind around so perverse and futile a subject. I have avoided learning grammar up to now, perhaps it lies in wait in this course to avenge itself for my neglect.

Overheard conversations: the effect is increased — either they are loathsome, or painfully attractive, reminding me of my isolation.

The girl ahead of me on the path: fur coat, high heels, standard to good proportions. Looked as if she were suspended by threads from above, yet had enough contact with the ground to bounce pneumatically. The thrill of passing her.

Byron calls from his room as I leave for supper: 'Going for supper, Nick? Wait a moment!' We sit together, without conversing. Byron, perhaps mistaking the speech of the boys opposite for mine, murmurs 'Mmm', 'Yes', 'Aha' every now and then.

The gap between intention in a work of art and its reception — the qualities readers appreciate are often the least important elements of his text to the writer.

Creators have a much higher opinion of their work than readers — but because the audience glosses the process of creation with mystique, their opinion is absurdly high, although for the wrong reasons: their ignorance leads them in the writer's view to underestimate the work, but by the standards of, say, critics, they overestimate it.

So, from countless examples you have decided that it is you who disengages from others, not vice versa. But perhaps you only do it so that you can reach this very conclusion. And even realising this is painless, provided you imagine you have the power to stand the inevitable so successfully on its head, making it an act of your will. But the illusion collapses, quite literally, when you become self-conscious enough to see that it is actually you standing on your head.

Wednesday January 9th

A spiritual vacuum, repetition, inertia.

In my car, passed through vast, homogenous housing estates, grey and damp, lifeless. Hands became progressively white and numb.

At 8 I went in the car to Torry, to a top flat, where Joy and the rest of the Creative Writing Group (core members: Ian, Vivien, Angus) sat in a sparse, studenty front room (Stevie Wonder music, electric fire, woolly dog, cat, plants). Joy had bare legs & feet, peasant dress, and sat on the floor by the fire. General observations: Ian puts a lot of conviction into supporting people regardless of whether it is warranted — because what warrants it is his own warmth and love of accord. My inability to surrender to this motive — if it doesn't come naturally, it can't be forced. I must agitate, question, or be silent. I'm not proud of this, it is simply an observation.

A glimpse of something better — indulgence came in the form of a performance of a show they're doing (to which I may contribute), all for me. Suddenly inhibition, self-consciousness faltered. But their encampment is too well-established. My smile was difficult to resist, but also to endure. Leaving: Joy had

hugged the others, and said to me 'I don't know whether to hug you; I don't know you well enough...' 'What's the convention?' I said. But she was pushed forward, and some kind of embrace did take place. 'I don't get enough of those,' I said. This description is awful, but the point is, for a moment I was another person, and it was very pleasant. Just to feel someone's unreserved faith, or love, to be the object of that kind of blindness, would be — what? Bewildering? Stifling? But that's me talking. In someone's arms, released from myself, it would simply be a revelation, a transcendence, life.

Our writing was fairly poor — undoubtedly creative writing is the sole consolation for solitude, productive consolation, that is. But my leaden reservations about life were valuably assailed.

An argument with Byron about Socialism v. Capitalism showed what an awful thing a bad relationship can be — aggression, pride, assertions one disowns before uttering, but utters anyway, ridiculous coldness.

To shake off this demon, this rational, 'objective' thing, Puritan, ascetic, hater of others, what contortions would I have to go through? I'd have to scream and shout, completely debase myself before someone, and be willing to bear complete domination, dependence. A regression to childhood, a different childhood, that's what it would be.

Ignore politics, ignore the tedious, hollow academic disciplines, be the savage — but how, at what cost? Oh, for the restrictions necessary to limit the excesses — a padded cell, a strong woman with my trust, a different self.

I hate this entry, it's false. Even this is false. And this... ad infinitum.

An optimistic note: a change only seems impossible until one occurs; it then seems, in retrospect, inevitable. (But the fact that this way of thinking remains before & after shows that the change has been largely illusory.)

Reading a description of Kantor's 'The Dead Class' in 'Gambit'.

Thursday January 10th

Within myself I am very well balanced, and my potential for fulfilment is infinite — completely on my own terms. This fulfilment must be literature, I have always felt this vaguely, but recent pressures to recalibrate my inner balance (political awareness, academic work, social pressures) have shown how well balanced I am inherently, without reference to any outside stimulus but literature. If I can maintain this stimulus, and independence, and a basic material welfare, and allow myself to develop purely literarily, I am functioning at a level close to optimal.

Creation: just that, godlike, without the duty to describe the world or reproduce it. I reproduce only myself, and the world only as I have experienced it; as a set of atmospheres, coloured by my character and mood. But not even at face value — I must reproduce myself in unrecognisable forms, the world must be processed by my imagination and regenerated, otherwise it and myself will become stale.

Dream this morning (I lay in until 12, missing Literature, Philosophy Special Class, and a Kafka lecture!). A party in our house (a cross between Drummond Place & Ainslie Place) — old school friends, dressed up with plastic features (lips, ears, limbs) which I threatened to cut off with scissors, though didn't. In the kitchen, adults were adding water to a powder which turned into enormous flies, which sat on the dark stairs, alive, growing then gradually diminishing into nothingness. I found them loathsome, and stood on one with bare feet by accident in the dark hall. Upstairs a guitarist strummed, people sat in rows. In front of me sat Ian Gibson, who thought himself very clever, making critical remarks which interrupted the music. I told him to shut up, and he turned round & gave me a hostile stare which lasted a long time — during it I, unconcerned, lay back in my couch (or bed) and closed my eyes, concentrating on the music.

Very refreshing to remember the imaginative escape offered by dreams. Also gives insight into the subconscious, though I dislike the determinism of Freud's notions of dreams, and prefer to treat them as a literary phenomenon.

This morning I felt the only positive emotion I am properly able to sustain in my little body without it being defused by accusations of pretence or swamped by counter-feelings of an apathetic nature. This emotion was a childish excitement, a senseless glee manifested by little spasms of the chest and throat. Its essence is solitary, its cause is renewed activity of the imagination, and the range of opportunities for creation that signals. It is, however, a precarious state, and one thing which can dispell it is the care I take to protect it, for then it realises how fleeting it is.

Actually, the mood was triggered by the new faith I have in literature after reading Kantor's 'Dead Class', by the meeting last night (insofar as it strengthened my writer role) and by the dreams of last night, as well as features in the music press on Bowie and Eno, who echoed my 'contexts' comment of Monday's entry.

Of course, it may be that this joy in creativity I've had of late is the result of seeing myself in a flattering context. No matter, no need to analyse it, it exists and is a force of life. One only questions forces of death, because questioning is essentially negative, accepting positive.

I accept that my role is to question.

It is a joy to see one's subjectivity objectively.

Perhaps this is a spiritual Spring — this time last year I wrote 'The Bridge', the first product of my enthusiasm for Kafka, and new faith in my appointed niche, literature.

Wrote 'Resident of the Drying Machine'.

Friday January 11th

To demonstrate the existence of choice, I use the same argument which denies it: that you cannot have control over your life without the result being socially useless, and that to be socially useful you must give up all responsibility over your life. I say that a society governed by this wretched communal lack of self-fulfilment is as futile as individual responsibility without a practical or valuable outlet, and that here there exists a valid choice between futilities. I am confident, however, that the element of autonomy is the right choice, and that if it is supported, practicality will realign itself with it.

Despite everything; winter, political disaffection, arduous work left undone, alienation, utter solitude, I am happy. Perhaps only because it is Friday, because the radio, to which I nervously, excitedly listened today, gives hope that war has not arrived just yet — but all this is simply the consolation of a one-legged man who occasionally enjoys hopping.

Behind my permanently closed curtains I have two great supports: this diary and my Polish issue of 'Gambit'.

No music, no newspapers, no TV, no periodicals except 'Bananas' and 'Gambit'; I suppose this is asceticism bordering on the schizophrenic. But I feel less frustrated within these confines, and best of all I have a sense of autonomy and feel potential creativity.

If Byron were to ask: 'Why don't you eat supper with me any more?' I would simply reply: 'Because you walk too noisily.' But the real reason would be that he wouldn't ask.

In the mirror I look like a transparent troglodyte. But the advantage of invisibility is that it abolishes the boundary between self and world — the latter is simply an expression of my emotions and thoughts, it makes them visible. The counter-conviction is manifested by the stares of passers-by; yet surely this is only the expression of the self-consciousness of my self-world.

There is a padlock which seals the line between self and others. The debate rages as to which of the two parties has the key, and the possibility that there is only one party is ignored. This is because, if this were sensed, the line and lock would have to be recognised for what they are: ridiculous ornaments drifting in a limitless expanse, their only use as comforters designed to prevent the self from realising, not that he should begin the frightening, arduous exploration, not even that he is lost even before he moves an inch, but that all bearings are redundant.

Plainly, the purpose of the diary is conversion: the missionary tries to cure his doubts by barraging himself with his infallible proselytisation, not realising that this separation accentuates the irreconcilable rift and allows the doubts to seize control and prevent the faith from returning.

The occasional sweep of affection and regret still accompanies images of Paula — these seem, oddly enough, to have edited themselves into a video tape, and I can watch with the touched helplessness that characterised much of our relationship. The diary is possibly to blame for this mode of presentation, although it is not simply a visual transcription of descriptions there: in one scene she stands in a row of people, back-profiles to camera, looking offscreen, left. She turns her head to look over her left shoulder, hair falls over her eyes, she is blinking, it is as if she has vaguely heard something — the shot is in slow motion, flickering, and lasts perhaps 3 seconds. She does not move from the row of figures.

In another scene she is talking, saying something dismissive, conspiratorial, self-glorifying, with an endearingly unironic confidence. A half-smile, she blows cigarette smoke, grins, revealing her delightful, regular, small, white teeth and rounded cheekbones, talks more. The camera is close in on her face, it gazes unblinkingly. The soundtrack registers the tone and quality of her voice like a musical score, but conveys no words which are recognisable.

Shall I send her a telegram: 'Helo Paula, time heals, may I write? Silence and solitude poor friends. Nicholas.' Or: 'Let's transcend the impasse, any terms,

silence is morbid, communication vital.' 'Let's be pragmatic and human, not melodramatic and absolute, please write, Nicholas.'

The gesture is more attractive than its unlikely success, which would be a repetition, qualified by failure, of previous lack of success. But the closeness of even that possibility to the present severance of all diplomatic relations, makes the remaining channels of communication seem to possess magical properties of reconciliation. But what hope of a reply to a telegram after all those summer months of sitting side by side in silence?

Saturday January 12th

Today I bought a Memorex C90, recorded the Klee programme on Side One ('Going for a Walk with a Line') and on Side Two (blank) wrote 'Symbolic Silence — but this one ends. Let's end ours too. Please write, love Nicholas.' I posted the package to Paula with red stamps. The effect on me is disturbing — I shouldn't have written 'please write' or signed it. My insane persistence will just anger Paula. The whole thing is long buried — its reappearance will have the same effect as a walking ghost. Last night, in high excitement and love (but for what or who?) I dictated imaginary spoken letters to her — this morning their only vestige is a poisonous white spot beside my nose.

Town is a zoo, and what immensely strange, aggressive and similar creatures there are there. Certainly they are ugly, but so are their surroundings, even in sunshine, and because they are so much at home in their cars, carrying their new portable TVs, milling in grim, bright shops which sell dross and tat, suiting words and thoughts to the banality of this imposed environment — therefore they have the natural beauty of the well-adjusted.

So the swift finds the jungle disgusting as he slices through the air high above. But if it weren't for the putrid carcasses and fecund shit everywhere, there would be no flies for him to snap up, and he would flutter straight into the blood and mire — which, however, are no longer there, having been replaced by some sterile utopia in which death is the ideal occupation.

What the swift really found disgusting was his own part in the whole filthy chain of degeneration and regementation; it made him wonder whether his wings were such a blessing after all, for it was they that had given him the illusory transcendence which made him hate the jungle.

This buoyancy which keeps raising me, taking me by surprise, the freshness of old sensations, the good-humoured withdrawal from others so that I can cherish myself — all these are somehow connected with this diary, I believe. At supper: I have been playing guitar music (strange, delightful tunes fell from the frets like scales), so I am late, and the hall is agreeably empty. With a mischievous twist of the body I steer away from Byron and Mark, and sit where I can watch people as they come in. A bar of cheddar is delightfully flavoured by nearby apple on my plate, and adjacent, with her back to me, sits a girl wearing a pale green jersey and 'peasant' peach skirt: the colours blend with the tastes magically. Joanna B. Murray walks up the aisle, and my anticipation of the obligatory greeting amuses me, so that when she says 'Hello' I reply with an ironic, shy smile. Complete self-sufficiency, content comes without any change in the circumstances of my life — except this diary, which brings together two anticipatory ideas from last year and makes their fusion the hearth of my new self, at which I purr like a contented cat: the idea of moving simply to an adjusted perception of stale events by which they are transfused with novelty, mystery, possibility, and the idea of conforming to type, of giving in all ambitions to be anything other than what one naturally is. The diary has merged these ideas, for in moving towards my inner self I have encouraged deeper and more extensive observations of the world, which can then be objectified in these pages — and as well as creator I am my own, appreciative, audience. As a result, life itself becomes a creative process, and I become, as Kafka did, literature.

Only now that I have this outlet and justification can I throw myself open to every emotion that this life warrants. The frustration of last year — a frustration, of course, which sparked the whole negative Paula episode — negative in the way I approached her, not the gesture itself — but frustration is valuable. I count on it approaching this diary-self so that I am coerced into more ambitious expression,

ie prose. My present ecstasy, somewhat exaggerated, may be a ploy to hasten this plodding frustration.

Thomas Bernhard: 'Besides, in the long run I feel better on my own anyway. I only have to go into a cafe now and again and hear the others talking. I don't have to say anything myself.' 'My independence is really a voluntary compulsion. I set my own restraints. If there's no compulsion from outside then it must come from within.' This is probably all tied in with psychosexual development. Also literature.

Sunday January 13th

In dream, I commanded the clandestine affection of two women; first Debbie Harry, with whom I shared some kind of interest in a bookshop up the street, and whom I dandled on my knee as though she were a baby, while remarking on her plumpness. Then a relationship developed with a Duncan girl, not Julie, but an older sister — perhaps 'Joanna'. In between the demanding engagements of a brilliant career in classical music (she had even released her own album) she would give me bear-hugs, and express a dependent devotion which seemed at odds with her sturdy worldliness. This part of the dream took place in Switzerland, perhaps; from a road in the hills we watched the stars, somehow held in place by an orchestra down below. She lived in a steep meadow with a forest at the top. We had a honeymoon (but no marriage) on a funicular railway.

Last night, found this amusing to write:

'A Ridiculous Nonevent

Thirty-two very large cats did not, one afternoon, menace an unexceptional suburban street with their whoops. Neither did a creaky postman mistake the motionless paws of the animals for a clump of stunted poplars. His post-bag was not stuffed fit to burst with correspondence stressing the seriousness of the ten commandments. In no sense could Mrs. Malefactor, who was not hiding nearby, have been said to resemble a rhombus. And under no circumstances could a

flock of quack doctors be glimpsed for a moment scurrying anxiously from bush to bush.

In fact, quite the opposite was the case.'

It is a truism that the best literature comes with the deepest depression. That's why I await the dissolution of my present lightheartedness with impatience.

I am trying to write self-referentially, or, more accurately, inter-referentially — ie Pure Literature. But, unlike abstract painting or music, writing must always invoke the world, other literature, personal experience, and so on. Really, this is the reason for my search for purity; the over-abundance of meaning. If I were composing music or painting I would do the opposite; try to refer to the outside world, encourage heteronomy.

The piece I wrote today turned into a pale imitations of Beckett's superb 'The Lost Ones', so I called it 'The Lost Ones Reprocessed', making the differences more marked than the similarities. Of course, 'The Lost Ones' is a rip-off from Dante, I believe, but its mood is so delightfully incestuous that it can afford such references.

I kill my pieces on the second page with absurdities such as: 'At this moment, however, the bus plummeted.'

Is a pleasurable sense of being-with-others a lie (which is not to say unattainable)? If I had experienced it I could only say 'No'. But since I have not, I can only say 'Perhaps'.

This evening I read Paul Stewart's 'Ice' and other pieces from 'Bananas', then Witkiewicz's 'Hyrcean Worldview (The Cuttlefish)' — a reckless, good-humoured sort of play which, despite its emphasis on dialectics, incited me to a bohemian state of mind. No work done at all this weekend. No exercise either, and no social contact, though I did eat supper with Byron (hardly a word was

spoken, and I shook him off unkindly afterwards). As usual, my lust is for the lust for life, not life.

On the radio, a brief biography of Bertrand Russell.

Monday January 14th

How pleasant just to be here in my room, with the curtains closed and the lights on, and perhaps music if I want it. Here one would wait for even the most unlikely thing to arrive without going out to see if it was approaching.

Awake, in varying states of consciousness, since 5 this morning, when a sustained blast made me jump to the window. Although I could hear it still, the buildings stood unconcerned, mounted with spotlights as bright as ever. The sound: as though a jet were sitting in Seaton Park, running its engines full blast before hurtling along the path to clear the Machar Cathedral by an inch. Or else the thing was lying on its back, thrusting impotently, while people ejaculated from escape chutes.

Until 8 I lay contentedly listening to the wakening sounds of the flat — an electric shaver, the radio news, a door banging, taps. The chink in my curtains lost its transparency and became solid with the progression of blue morning.

In Seaton Park, I look up to see a perfect V of geese: a model of democracy, they all look clear ahead, and when a group at the back veers east, all follow in order to preserve the symmetry.

During the absurd Lit. tutorial I gaze at a dormer window, behind which sits a familiar red anglepoise, bending forward with downward-pointing shade. In the other pane is reflected from somewhere a section of gabbling which resembles Mackenzie House. Prof. Draper breaks off from listening to a reply to tear frantically at his clothes. Just in time he blasts a sneeze into his handkerchief and, while the answer continues hesitantly, he blows his nose thoroughly. He then

gives the answer *he* believes appropriate to his question, showing that in his preoccupation with his nose he has not heard a thing.

In the language lab I do not speak onto the tape, but listen to the surrealistically close voice of the previous user: her breath is heavy and every click of the tongue enters my ears with the precision of a drum-machine.

I browsed in the stack amongst Czech and Polish literature, then read Max Frisch's 'Sketchbooks'. Outside, talked to Ian Stephen, who made the mistake of asking 'How's study going?' I replied flatly that it mattered little to me, and dismissed him with a 'See you Wednesday'. Trees beside King's Chapel seem to have punctured a green canvas from below, and are still holding it visibly taut with their roots.

Downtown, the fumes from cars! A dapper man is quite enveloped when he steps behind a Cortina which suddenly moves off.

The sky goes a glossy grey and great blobs of snow fall. Then suddenly there is sunshine in a remote place between buildings, and soon the sky is repossessed. Against a hazy grey background of a graveyard I watch snow fall vertically while wind billows more flakes horizontally across it.

One man alone cannot tire of life — there is just too much that is new, enjoyable, stimulating, and too much of himself lies beckoningly unknown. But merging with a communal perception of life can make one, somehow, believe it stale, hateful, pointless. This is because when one is told: 'That's trite, that's a cliché,' one believes it, and turns away from it. The mercy of solitude is that, whereas 'common knowledge' covers more than an individual can experience, and has long ago decided that 'there is nothing new under the sun,' — yet for the individual *everything* is new. Common knowledge is the fruit of the forbidden tree, the punishment is boredom.

Of course, it is possible that this recent ecstasy of autonomy and psychic self-sufficiency (a psychiatrist writes) is simply a desperate defence by the ego against

the hostility and rejection of society, with which it secretly wants to, indeed must for its own survival and growth, blend as into a Bacchic procession bound for some utopian collective unconscious (by now the tangled imagery of this sentence has given up all hope of seaworthiness and sinks to the depths). This is at least the view of some psychologists. But does it spawn literature which strikes a chord with all the hopelessly neurotic, alienated, desperate people everywhere who could not, without these afflictions, develop such a healthy interest in Psychology, Sociology, and especially Literature?

So many of my relationships with people have failed because each party looks in the other for a strength which turns out not to be there. Ironically, it is a strength possessed only by stupid people, those just as unable to be affected by the general atmosphere of uncertainty and mistrust as by the needs and feelings of the people around them — although the two are related if not identical. Paula wanted a Father-figure to indulge her and humour her, Byron would like a different type of strength; the strength of blind faith in him. John likewise, though to a lesser extent. In all of them recurred one outstanding characteristic: intolerance of all but the sound of their own voices and opinions. Worst of all was Byron, who asked me yesterday 'What've you been doing today?', then let his attention wander while I said 'Writing fiction', and then proceeded to give me — or rather just to give, for he never looks at me, and when walking past an obstacle makes no alteration to let me avoid it — a list of his own very routine and inconsequential doings. As a result of all this excessive indulgence expected of my tolerance, I have become more egocentric and intolerant of others myself — the disease spreads like the plague. And what all of us begin to wish for is some personal messiah with an inexhaustible supply of 'objective' compassion, instead of delighting in the wonderfully human imperfections of our fellows. This was and is an important part of my affection for Paula, although at the beginning I took her for my pillar of strength, my confessor. Ironic that disillusionment of this kind should make me more acceptable to her, at least in theory — in practise the damage was done during an early confession in her kitchen, when I said, with some irony no doubt missed by her, 'I can't look you in the eye for long because, well, it's difficult to look into the centre of the universe.'!! A healthy transformation, at least, occurred on my side: my love transferred from a

metaphysical symbol to a real person. Perhaps I flatter myself: evidence that I still see her in terms of my own salvation or conclusive destruction can be found in my stubborn reluctance to accept her indifference: with the petulance of a little boy daring God to strike him down, I continue to make gestures which are incomprehensible in the context of a pragmatic human relationship.

Tuesday 15th January

Contentedness and the ability to live for the present make me a dangerous person to society, especially if I can lift the weight of expectation from others' shoulders by my example.

I walked to King's behind a short girl, though she was very indeterminate in age and sex. She wore drab clothes; a staid checked jacket, too-short brown slacks, ancient Hush Puppies. Short, dull hair, conservative briefcase, packed with books. Thick spectacles which seemed to be a natural part of her face, just another bone. Anaemic skin. Each brisk step was the same, always her head jutted into the resisting air at the same angle. She was probably dying to find some remote alcove where she could delve once more into her work. Scared of the world, people. When I levelled with her at the main road, I saw that she was only about my age, though everything about her was middle-aged and spinsterish. This, one feels, is the ideal academic student, delighting in work only because she finds a refuge in it.

I should have bought Sweet's 'Old English Primer', but the Preface said — '... essentially the original text of 1882, which, though its use has declined continuously since, is still the only comprehensive introductory text to the subject...' — a sickly yellow book, filled with grammar, utterly rational and completely dead. I refuse to waste my life poring over such sticks of bone.

The reports of machine-guns and mortars ring out across Seaton Park, condemning the world and tainting everything. The weather is drab and dispirited — but one can still rejoice in living by looking at the groups of girls, or boys, and having one's look returned. Perhaps one embellishes, but that is the

prerogative of loneliness — one doesn't have to empathise with other people's depression while using them as a cure for one's own.

Last night 3 girls visited Byron, past midnight, to cheer him up. Vicariously, I too was pleased — this kind of 'purposeless' contact is very healthy amongst people. Of course, it wouldn't be enough for me, and that's why it doesn't happen to me.

In Sociology the American, Martha, sat beside me, probably accidentally. The desire to hug her good-naturedly, not because she's attractive, but because we sit so self-absorbed, tracing lines on our faces with the side of our fingers, and yet I feel exceptionally aware of her all the time. Rich, luxuriant melancholy swells at such thoughts, and affirms life magnificently. We exchanged a few words about the lecturer afterwards, but didn't once look at one another, or rather she didn't look at me.

I tend to see the difference between my very occasional and brief contacts with people and the sustained communality of those about me as qualitative, not quantitative. There is some acceptance, some take-off point, which I never reach. It may have something to do with faith, and I am too wary and doubtful to let things leap irreversibly into the air.

Wednesday January 16th

Fell in love with Joanna's (not B. Murray, but the fat one) friend in Lit., as she sat some rows in front, hair short, wavy; innocent little ear naked.

Sat reading the N.Y. Review of Books in the Pavilion Cafe, reading about Semiotics. Also for an hour in F01, awaiting the Creative Writing Group members. Read 'The Stadium Lights' fairly well, but giggled when others talked about it: Angus describing his fear of being up the lighting tower, looking down. Not many comments, some admiration for the prose, imagination.

Afterwards Ian, Angus, Vivien and I sat in the Pavilion Cafe. Discussed literary magazines — ‘Open Space’ contains a couple of my pieces. My ‘Ridiculous Nonevent’ will be in the ‘Glass of Words’ show.

Nervousness dulls all emotions of warmth in me, and all that remains is the effort, half heroic, half hysterical, to hold myself together by force.

Wajda’s ‘Kanal’ — a disappointment; flat characters, monotony, nothing really outstanding in production or atmosphere. Some moments were memorable, though: people rushing through the sewers of Warsaw shouting ‘Poison gas!’, watched by the Commanding Officer, who says firmly ‘There is no poison gas’. The Composer wanders along the steamy tunnels playing pan pipes. The soldiers are afraid when they hear the diabolical howling of a wounded man: ‘That’s no human voice.’ On the whole, though, an ordeal, with annoying improbabilities: a character is always blown up by the last grenade he nervously defuses, whenever freedom is said to be round the next bend, one knows it will not be. This is intentional, though — the film introduces its characters and says ‘Watch them die’. Reactions were too idealised & literary — the hell was Dante’s, not Warsaw’s.

Thursday January 17th

To live happily it is necessary, not to disclaim fantasy, but to affirm the precedence of ‘reality’. But with my use of quotation marks in the last sentence I reveal my attitude — I can believe in fantasy, but cannot mention ‘reality’ without deep scepticism.

Fell in love again — though I should re-calibrate my phraseology according to frequency & intensity, or how will I describe *real* love? Felt a strong but momentary attraction, then, to Barbara, of my Philosophy Special Class — firm dark eyebrows, rounded face bones, brown eyes with fine lashes, no make-up, dark brown hair, fairly straight. She was speaking to the guy next to me, but since he wasn’t looking at her and I was, she looked at me as she spoke. Beautiful voice, quite intelligent, though she remains silent during the class, only laughing

occasionally when a joke is made. The unlikelihood of communication, contact, relationship, saddens me, and I sit with my chin in my hands. Contributed to the debate, which was on the continuity of personality; interesting. My views were psychologically and existentially biased.

Dream last night — on an island off the West Coast of Scotland; its tourist economy meant it had an incongruous city street in the middle of wilderness. Our family drove (separately) around in cars, and the contacts we had were with other tourists, not locals — Mark befriended a French girl who was studying ‘English Literature and New York’ at college. My envy, compounded when I heard her subjects. John Thomson was with me, and I also had a cat, which turned suddenly into a spider, without any corresponding diminution of affection from me. John, however, treated it differently — as it hung from a thread in the kitchen, he kicked it casually (the smack it made on the top of his shoe!) behind a radiator, killing it.

Darkness makes clear: at night we can look into the infinite vault above and see the stars at their enormous distance: and we can see our own artificial lights, small, communally powered, specifically human. The co-existing differences of these lights should teach us much.

Friday January 18th

The rush of traffic, darkness still behind the blue curtains, but my watch indicated 7.30, and my body was glad to rise from the low, narrow camp-bed, fully clothed. Outside; cold, noise, the smell of baking bread. Factory bustle.

Breakfast back at Hillhead, meeting Simon at the pigeon-holes, greeted as if I’d been in all night. A hot shower. Side 2 of ‘Low’, drowsy in my room. Passed J.B.M. on the Seaton Park path, calling ‘Good morning’ in passing. Met Ian Stephen on High Street; he arranged a meeting at 11. Read NME in the back row of Mike Spiller’s absurd Critical Theory lecture. I snorted and rocked with outraged laughter at the assertive simplicity of it.

Too diaryesque.

Walking to town. The cold wind, breath of death. Cars pass interminably as one waits to cross a road. At a corner one comes face to face with a blank old woman, leaning against a wall, resting. The cruel man-planned environment — mental excrement, completely without imagination, indefensible. To the art gallery, where I read 'New Art'. To W. & G., bought Frisch's 'Homo Faber' and read it over lunch in Martin's. At the next table, a flow of recollection from an old railwayman. His companion, with his back to me, either spoke very softly or not at all. On the bus, the very heart of the city machine; stopping and starting, lurching, rumbling with the city's rhythms. Everywhere mothers and toddlers; silent, solitary old men in anoraks.

Splendid calm of the language lab, somewhere nearby a girl murmurs in French, and I sit by the radiator and the clock reading Frisch after abandoning Old English without any regrets. Sunshine — the sun is a great benign drug which causes my pleasant drowsiness to seep out across the park, the cobbled road, tree-trunks, and my future. . . I decide that money is to be avoided, as are responsibilities other than literary. I shall live for the moment, feel the moment, transcend the moment, and objectify that transcendence. . . my feet palm the soil like those of a buddhist monk in contemplation, walking up and down a smooth path in the forest.

There is work to be done — it snaps once or twice at my shoe-laces, but dares not disturb my monumental calm, and scurries off to wait, in a hole in the skirting-board, until I begin to crumple under the weight of my own strength.

Between 'mental excrement' and 'art gallery' came a swift change in mood. Walking between the Union and Schoolhill, I remembered that I was not unwilling receiver of an alien, dead environment, but that my perception altered, interpreted and *created* all I saw. So a long building of delicate wrought-iron became a Mississippi paddle-steamer, lumbering up rapids. Meanwhile the cars were canoes, shooting down the strangely even, light grey and opaque foam. From then on the day was mine.

By some acoustical quirk, every car passing the Niteline office sounds from inside like a jet plane searing along just above the houses. On top of this, the radiator bumps every eight minutes. Amidst all the mechanical cacophony, the human can be distinguished by his silence: the animate by his inanimacy.

I've done it again, it's so easy, but always disturbing, always regrettable. Tonight I listened to the radio for hours — West German (Cologne) and R4's 'Any Questions' — and Alasdair Cooke, and the News (the ear behind the grille begins to twitch with anxiety as the sins mount up), also even some T.V. I now feel that impotent, anxious, insignificant mood; the direct result of the one-way 'openness' of democracy — sure the channels are there, but they only enforce a particular view of the listener / viewer and the society, and their (also one-way) interaction. One may know all the facts (delivered with the proper emphases, accentuations, distortions), one may not use them. Unless one counts 'The Vote' — ha ha! Elect the man who has the best campaign manager, the best photographer, the best speech-writer. . . I will stop this. I refuse to look at the world through the spectacles, the Viewmaster stereo-enhanced *weltanschauung*, of the media. A certain sociological awareness, yes. A monopolisation of one's conception of 'reality' — NO. The only possible personal world-concept comes from percepts, from experience. The media do not supply experience, but entertainment, comedy, and the joke is on us, with our two-TV, four-radio, two-daily-national lives. Now I am going to read Max Frisch.

Those able to pass public judgement on their society are already predisposed to judge favourably because they have succeeded in reaching this position. In the same way, a judgement of life and history is made in the knowledge that circumstances have been favourable enough to bring one this far.

Saturday January 19th

It was numbingly cold in the greyness outside, depressing but for one view, through the car windscreen, of King Street, a brief dose of sun, dinking momentarily through smooth cloud — King Street as through a foreshortening

lens, exhaust fumes visible and obscuring, movement of traffic queues, people; life almost seemed breathed into this northerly place which is so reluctant to admit to anything vital. The wind rapidly anaesthetised, like dry ice.

I read on in Frisch's 'Homo Faber', very enjoyable, evocative, makes its important indictment of UNESCO man with subtlety as well as force. Nyman's slow, baleful piano chords reverberate and roll around my room, pushing the walls far into the distance.

Within the limitations of our society, my present solitary life is as close to freedom as one can comfortably come. It is, however, possible to imagine a society in which freedom draws people together, not apart.

Such imaginings only diminish one's sense of freedom, which is itself imaginary.

Last night as I crossed the hard Hillhead grass, I looked at the rows of buildings with their yellowish lights, the cold white lamp-posts, the young trees, the paths, and felt that somewhere there was one word which could sum up the scene and describe it completely, somewhere between an adjective and noun. Since I don't know this word, I must write a whole paragraph of humdrum, ordinary words. This is tiresome and uneconomical.

Supper with Ali, discussing music.

Sunday January 20th

So, one leaves Walter Faber lying in a Rome hotel room with his daughter asleep on his shoulder and a noisy Alfa Romeo revving periodically outside on the Via Veneto. And one lies awake for two hours, joints restless like tangled bundles of elastic, and thinks of how little of life and people one — I — see. Thoughts such as this are all very well at night, alone. But if one — I — sit in the dining hall and look at the people I can (if I'm enterprising, unusually resourceful and lucky) choose from, I begin to value isolation more. Nonetheless, this is simply

ignorance and prejudice and fear on my part. Also a certain understanding of my own inclinations and capacities.

The greatest compliment that can be paid to an era by future generations is authoritative condemnation. For all its faults, this era enabled such self-confident and upright descendants to accede.

Do you want to create the world or understand it?

According to Father (when I phoned home) I am a typical product of this age, 'which thinks highly of itself', when I question Aristotle's view that art is imitative. I quote Klee: 'Art does not reproduce the visible, but makes visible' — or rather, I misquote over the phone, saying 'art does not make visible, but creates the visible'. Mark reports the skiing trips of last week — just dates — then remembers that I'm not interested. Mother says 'Hello Nicholas' in an exaggeratedly affectionate voice, then sounds impatient to call off. I tell each in turn that I'm just calling to report that I'm alive, thereby giving them the responsibility of filling the silence with routine questions.

My room is in order; I spent the afternoon moving furniture, tidying wires, fixing lighting. Now three lamps give a fair impression of sunshine, the blocks of colour glow agreeably on the wall, and a whole range of activities of varying practicality lies within easy reach. I chose, for instance, to postpone Aristotelian Athens for that of Hanna Piper, as visited by Walter Faber. An excellent book, follows my world-movements uncannily — a sea journey across the Atlantic, driving from Paris to Florence, Rome, etc., and then Athens. Also, briefly, New York. Compare Faber's Atlantic voyage with Karl Rossmann's in 'The Stoker' ('Amerika') — they take place in different universes. This is the strength of fiction; that one can have an experience oneself, read one description and sense a different perception while lending it some of one's own, then the same can happen with another description with a completely different effect.

I am reading. Byron is talking in the kitchen — '...nervous energy, I could go for a run, but...' Upstairs chairs scrape, the bus' diesel engine runs. A girl's voice

calls outside my window 'Come on, cripple!' Then 'Alison! Sandra! You coming up?' 'What for?' 'To speak...' Arrangements, conversations, life. The sunshine lamplight of my room is exactly the same as ever, the shadows haven't moved an inch.

All this living-for-now is just the consolation for being dead.

In the Television Age, humans are voyeurs.

There were two negroes in the launderette. I sat beside one, waiting for a machine. We both looked at the machines. I wanted to talk to him — where do you come from, don't you find white men horrible; dangerous, deathly? The skin on my hand was pink and scaly.

To the BBC1 lounge; empty, chairs arranged in lines around the edges. A girl came in for a while, but left soon. I jumped over a row of chairs in the dark.

Passed Martha on the path outside. She wasn't going to acknowledge me, but I said 'Hello', and she replied, her eyes fixed to the ground, only tilting her head. Tone of voice hard, reluctant, as though I were repulsive.

Later, however, Fiona, who was talking on the stairs, said 'Hello, Nick' in a friendly way. I don't even know if Fiona is her name.

Monday January 21st

Part of a dream: a polar bear was in my room. At first I was only concerned, as I listened to Gary Numan albums, about the sinister birds which hung tenaciously around the window frame. But when I saw the bear, I ran out of this attic room, closing the door. Downstairs, parents were entertaining — I had to say 'There's a polar bear in my room' several times before anyone paid any attention. The vet was called. When he arrived, the bear had knocked the door panels out of place (earlier, my warning that 'He'll find the handle any minute!'). The vet had a

sedative device, not so much a syringe as an axe — he flung open the door and sank this axe into the bear.

English Lit. tutorial — I have not read Aristotle, so I sit tight-lipped. The American hasn't either, and when Prof. Draper asks him about Aristotle's view of Purgation (he doesn't even know what Catharsis means) he waffles embarrassingly, with mock sincerity. Then Janet, who murders the English language every time she opens her mouth, yet who pleases Prof. D. simply because she responds to his questions — Janet answers a question, then Prof. D. elaborates, agreeing, and she feels she must nod and say 'Yuh, mm-hmm...' for the duration of his answer, which is long. She thinks she's curtailing him out of modesty, when she should be listening. When he smiles (it is a tic, nothing to do with humour) she makes an artificial laughing noise to support him. It is impossible not to be alienated in these circumstances — I would really like to comment on these mannerisms, but can't, since I would then throw myself open to questions about the text.

Prof. D. has a ghastly 'back a' and violent consonants. He says 'Macbeth' with the accent on '*Mac*', and it sounds like a fish being slapped against a stone.

Finished 'Homo Faber'.

O.D.M.-G.'s paternal concern about my difficulties with Old English — he misses his 4.30 bus to finish the exercise. As if it were an important issue! Luckily he is offered a lift. He lives at 'Rubislaw Den South'. Sounds cosy. No doubt an accommodating wife awaits him, perhaps even children. He has an oak study, and is writing a book. The atmosphere of this room is seductively archaic, and one can ignore the sounds of traffic and helicopters because the room is stronger. The book will be published by the University Press, a copy will be shelved in the library, the 'Date Borrowed' label will remain pure white for an indefinite period. Nonetheless, it gives him a reason to be alone in his study instead of lying before the TV with the children or sitting with his wife, which makes him uncomfortable.

A video on Peru in Sociology. The vast, jagged mountains. The Peruvians; Spanish or Indian, beautiful people. The women attractive in bright cotton and hats. Handling potatoes. Girls reminded me of Paula. We of the northern hemisphere are like insects, ants with myriad enslaved aphids whose beauty makes us jealous. Nobility of poverty. Simplicity. Human warmth. All this on TV.

The atmospheric effects of distance, which TV incorporates, enhance. This is what I isolate myself for: I want to keep my respect for others.

At breakfast a girl in my Sociology lecture sat nearby. Close enough to flavour my roll unpleasantly with her smell. I dislike her already because of her appearance, and because I once read a letter she was writing during Sociology; it was trivial, depressing, immature. She is popular — perhaps this is what I most dislike about her. I stood behind her at the door to New King's — she greeted every second male coming out of the Law lecture. I think she's 'in circulation'. How easily she could hurt someone. How easy for her to think herself a success. Her garrulousness.

Read New Left Review: Hans-Magnus Enzensberger.

The walls are thin, it's true, but what makes each office as public as the corridor is the air vent set in the wall at ear level.

Paula's pensive self-portrait in oils: as soon as I saw it I knew that I loved it more than her. The night I last kissed her, yet still the beginning of our 'relationship' — stillborn.

Tuesday January 22nd

In the side streets, mannequins appear.

Dream: new College was on fire, the family had decided to sleep in a small room after extinguishing the flames on the lawn outside. Across the corridor was a room. In this room lived ghostly creatures, human, but with porcelain-white,

flattened features, no chins, wide grotesque-like bodies. I suggested we go home to sleep. Nobody heeded. I went for a second glimpse into the grotesques' flat, eager to precipitate a crisis instead of hearing sinister scuffles from the family bed. The old grotesque was in bed, but he had a beautiful human daughter, who threw her arms around my neck. I knew it was a trap, but played along.

We went together to an aerobic circus, but she had changed into a mechanical model on a leash, and I sat down and threw this model up so that it hung limp over a trapeze, still attached to the leash.

What prevents me from having erotic dreams? Inhibition? Yet I would *like* to have erotic dreams. Alienation? Yes, because I cannot hold onto any woman as an ideal for long — and my absolutism leads me to condemn them for the slightest tarnishes — hence avoidance of JBM, perhaps.

Planned a play today. Consists of people running round a curtained cubicle in five three-minute 'Moods' alternating between Quick (bright light, clockwise) and Slow (dim light, anticlockwise). The inconsequential dialogue is orchestrated with overlaps, so the text is laid out in three columns with complex cross-references. No plot. Called 'Fifteen Minutes'. A figure in black, Hamlet, controls events from the sidelines, announcing the remaining time every five minutes. I drew all sorts of graphs and diagrams to clarify the rhythm and shape of the piece, but it became mechanical and the core was as obscure as the black-curtained cubicle at the centre of the stage. Wrote one page, the first three minutes — it could never be performed, it's too complex. Nonetheless, pleasing project to play with, an excuse for neglecting other work, literary or academic.

Saw a Fassbinder film, 'Effi Briest', about the murderous rigidity of 19th century German aristocratic life. Rich, dark b/w photography, atmosphere stylised to the point of ridiculousness, but powerful. Its strength lay in preventing any easy relationship between film and viewer — one could not adopt a well-tryed mode of viewing, and never knew quite where one was with it. (This 'one' which keeps jumping out of the shadows like a cape, covering the impropriety of my nakedness.) (One's nakedness.)

Read about Gunter Grass, half attracted, half repelled. Usually I can let one side win, and assimilate its opponent to its own view, but with Grass they remain distinct. His politics — are they right wing? Nonetheless, some very exciting imagery is quoted, a sympathetic tone, inventiveness & imagination.

Back to the erotic dreams entry: this attitude to women, the angel / whore duality, is most unhealthy, suggesting repression, inexperience, and a projection of sexual guilt. I react all wrong to girls — usually a 'relationship' is signed and sealed before any real contact is made — I don't know JBM at all! But I see her with her pug-like girlfriends, overhear a phrase of conversation, and say — 'disconnect', as if there was a connection to dis-. This suggests over-sensitive protection devices, and lack of self-confidence where others are concerned. Psychology!!

Wednesday January 23rd

In the monastic calm of the stack (iron floor, view of the empty quad) I translated a passage of Old English about Columba on Iona. JBM came in and we exchanged rudimentary sentences, then she had a long conversation in whispers with an American girl at the next desk. Such a conversation it is only my place to overhear, it seems, like the remark about 'revelling in the grass' overheard in 'Conversation with a Supplicant'. On the bus to town I followed the words of the girls behind — their accord was such that it was more a monologue than a dialogue: Monologue for Two Voices.

Bought 'The Tin Drum'. Ch. 1 very enjoyable; simple, surprising, pleasing.

Dream about a S. England hotel.

Anonymity is a privilege, you have to fight for it, and the main opponent is within.

Thursday January 24th

A video on Chinese community life, very appealing aspects — togetherness, a sense of purpose, belief in ideals, in an ideology. Figures with economical haircuts, regulation smiles (yet no less agreeable for that), and simple, handsome work-clothes. Girls at work sing a song about the Gang of Four, how life is bountiful now they are gone, and the spirit of unity and hope transcends the crude propaganda of the lyrics. The scale of things is human, every landscape is dotted with industrious people (not hard with a population of 900 million), machines are notable by their low profile and small scale. Labour as salvation. But only as a concept, naturally!

Despairing of himself, he was driven to commit solitude.

With Ian Stephen in the cafe at 11. He showed me two poems ('International Movie' and 'Dancers') and told me about a play of his which seems to have potential ('Barometer'). Nonetheless, I detected in the meeting an awkwardness, consciousness of inadequacy, which drove me to compose the previous paragraph.

On first arriving here, I developed the notion that now, independent, I could move completely freely in the social realms of my choice, modifying mood & identity at will, no longer caged by the tedious constancy of established relationships. The temperamental flux materialised, and for that I am grateful, but social mobility has proved antithetical to and incompatible with this.

I read on in 'Anonymous Communication' — the mass media & mass society are fascinating subjects. I now realise that 'Profile' wasn't about a boy falling for an enigmatic girl, but about the power of message (Fran) over medium (the editor, Michael) — and the corruptibility of medium by false message.

Simplicity and faith are alright in theory, but the wavering diversity and ideological confusion of advanced, decaying Western Europe is much more exciting!

Spent the evening driving like a demon from bedsit to bedsit, with a varying payload of creative writers. First to Ian Stephen's attic — up a ladder; a pyramid, or a large rowing boat upside down, with two minute windows with views of chimneys and a spire.

Drove to Torry. Angus & Joy's light was on, and we thought we heard a scuffle, but it was just the dog, and the door remained locked.

Then, via Osbourne Street, to Cults, where we entered Kath's well-appointed family detached. There Angus & Joy awaited us. Kath is a mature student in my English class: she said she faintly recognised me, but couldn't believe that we spent two hours a day in the same room. Singing bawdy Burns: Jon Anderson my Jo. Bladder at bursting, I stood on the landing while a child pottered at his potty — family living! Angus was dropped at his night-work as doss house warden, then we visited Vivien, my petrol low and all garages shut. Another reading of the 'Glass of Words' show: I have been allocated two shorts in addition to my own 'Ridiculous Nonevent'. Lindsay, Viv's flatmate, sat listening as Ian & Joy described the intricacies of the group's emotional conflicts last year — Graeme's flirtation with Kath, clandestine, yet responsible for an arrangement to prevent their attending the same seminar. Black coffee, cigarette smoke. How easily I am propelled from an inaccessible periphery to such central positions as these tatty bedsits! Their occupiers will be harder to reach, despite surface willingness. Progress nonetheless: spaghetti bolognese tomorrow afternoon at Joy & Angus'.

Friday January 25th

I stand fresh-laundered (in fact, still damp), deodorised, hair-sprayed, nervous. It is five past two, and soon I shall present myself at Joy's flat, eat spaghetti bolognese (avoiding the pieces of meat discreetly), rehearse, then — then, later, stand before an unknown quantity of spectators, reciting my tongue-twisting 'Nonevent' to the incredulity of all — or perhaps indifference. Confidence! Or at least the semblance of it!

I am furious at this incompetent, inhuman government of ours for announcing further vast attack expenditure (let's call a spade a spade, counter-aggression or aggression, it's still attack) — this the day after saying that the NHS would have to be reduced in size for unavoidable reasons of economy! My feeble response will be to pronounce 'Mrs Malefactor' with as strong as possible a resemblance to 'Mrs Margaret Thatcher' in my recitation tonight.

It's 3.30am. Between the last entry and this one an incredible string of events has run through my fingers — I must record fragments before it becomes completely dream-like.

The afternoon at Angus & Joy's. We read London short stories, rehearsed 'Glass of Words', talked, drank. I ate meat! (Spaghetti bolognese.) We left the flat, singing, at 7. Drove to the Technical College, on the outskirts, where our bar was — a smallish, modern room. We sat around the middle and performed. My nervousness left me — it had peaked hours earlier, and was long gone by performance-time. Afterwards, talked to the husband & wife journalists — Evening Express & Northern Light. They encouraged me to contribute a short story. The 'English Lit. Advanced' girl — sat herself beside me and talked in an endless stream about the department. Feeling of unreality — that this impossible contact was taking place, and that I wasn't expected to guide it in any way — I couldn't interrupt if I tried. The confident Italian-looking N.L. girl who said to me 'I couldn't have performed that, I admire your courage!'

Then to a party at University Road, the hostess a black girl. I sat with peripheral CWG members; Carol (Pre-Raphaelite hair) and Clair. The latter a biology 1st year who found the work easy. We sat cross-legged facing each other, discussing our common interest in observing the party — etc. Then conversation with Carol about her writing; she is also on the Northern Light editorial board. Ian brings in Di, an impressive Welshman with a suave, barbarous aspect smacking of sea life and the Pacific islands. His roguish, immaculate pronunciation didn't detract from this. An artist. He commented on the lit. girl's shoulders — this sent her into a coy mood, and she insulted him coquettishly while making eyes at her boorish,

drunken husband. (Who had earlier told me how his first taste of the class structure was throwing stones at Lorretonians in Musselburgh.)

Then I drifted into conversation with a tall, dark-haired Senior Hons. French girl, Fiona McQuay (?), from Dollar. We were about to dance, but the record-player broke down. We sat side by side against the wall for about an hour, discussing Sartre, France, feminism, ambitions, and my self-indulgent theories of this & that. I became far too serious and intellectual (while, ironically, decrying the lack of gut feeling, spontaneity, and honesty in life), but she was interested, and the conversation went well, until 3.00, when Carol & Clair left, and I rushed out to offer them a lift (again). But my car wouldn't start in the cold, so we all walked home through the frost, our separate ways.

Suddenly one has the key to the castle, in fact the courtiers mill pleasantly on every side and even vie amongst themselves for one's attention — how can it be other than a dream? And yet (though this perhaps proves it is a dream) one is not surprised, takes it naturally and skilfully, and matches the astounding social leaps step for step.

Saturday January 26th

A parcel of Bananas comes for me. Rich fruit! New horizons, etc. — invaluable stimulus. Excellent material.

My voice today is hoarse after public and party speech — not feeble, but deep and textured. So the dream carries over into more normal hours, a lasting adjustment informs me of the nature of this experience.

Planet

mountaineering on territories of unfused glass which depthless press of shoreless space has sheened to gloss to every face
how light would glance or sink (refract) if bluff could be distinguished from the black

and how I would ascend each inestimable height if each flat slope were not upright
meanwhile this unblown globe bowls on in random orbit home

—

It's extraordinary: I suddenly look different! Thin, rather fierce, strong-minded, bohemian — I can see the same sort of slightly insane aspect shown in certain photos of Beckett. It could be because my hair is disordered, because it's 1.30am, because I've been watching Mia Farrow ('Rosemary's Baby') for 2 hours, because I've had little sleep recently... but nonetheless, either perception or perceived has altered. Perhaps both. I look mature, ready to take on the world. Another comparison (equally flattering!) is with early photographs of Stravinsky — his serious, rather ugly but startling features. At the same time, aesthetically pleasing. Extraordinary to see oneself all of a sudden!

Sunday January 27th

A bustling London station, troubling travel, return, a high block of Victorian flats nearby, the Sarrias flat, a meal, older brother and sister, Paula indefinitely expected, parents quiet and polite, eventually I left, hoping to find Paula outside, searched a train, visited a museum, visited the cafeteria of Mac High School, naked. Didn't find her. I was awoken by two books spontaneously falling from the shelf, beside the clock, which read 12.45.

Reading this diary, it is easy to justify my lazy, lonely way of life. This would only be a danger if the self-confidence it inspired were not an inevitable source of change.

Mark's descriptions of dissecting dead (human) bodies in 'the drain'. They go green, are stiff, smell. They are constantly being turned over, new bits cut into. The boys punch or slap them occasionally with affection and familiarity. Mark described his detached attitude, as effectively protective as gossamer gloves. Last year Graham (who occupied the same room) never once mentioned 'the drain',

though he was on the same course. Mark: 'Perhaps I shouldn't be talking about it.'

Byron suddenly bursts out of his room calling 'Lep!' as if Lep as been discovered writing secret letters warning Sally of Byron's inadequacies... but he only says 'Have you got the time?'

Only a diary can show what a long time a month is, in terms of personal development. And to read last year's equivalent — the writer was a different person!

Byron calls 'Lep! Tea!' and Lep comes out. I play music, so Byron knows I'm here. Then, when I turn it off, Byron says 'Lep! Do you fancy going out to Deeside for a walk up the river sometime, cos I fancy doing that.' Exactly what I was roped into last year! The friendship doesn't bother me, in fact it's a relief, but I wonder whether Byron is deliberately rubbing in the fact that he can happily switch his social needs to Lep, or perhaps he doesn't notice the difference!

Monday January 28th

I bought a paper today for the first time in at least a month. The signs point to open conflict... this is why I don't buy newspapers, they make me despise the government of this pitiful country, they make me despair of man's future, they enforce this jaundiced view by misrepresenting reality, and at the same time reminding me that those in control *do* think this way about life — which wouldn't matter, in fact would be a card up our sleeves, if *they* didn't possess the power to destroy all. And act like idiot children with this incalculably important 'responsibility'. At Boomtown Books I bought booklets on nuclear disarmament & nuclear facts & figures, and at Nightline I got the address of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

Much of this academic life is oppressively absurd. Mr Hargreaves lectured on Old English. Here are my lecture notes:

He swings from side to side of the blackboard like a suited monkey. The chalked words stagger in all directions. They are meaningless. Outside are missile carriers on training manoeuvres. 'Have you learnt these strong verbs yet? You should have.' 'Every word... every syllable of every word has some gradational series.' You turn to share the joke, but nobody else has noticed. When they talk, they are using the meaningless words. They do not even understand one another, and thus they are the best of friends. The machine will excrete me. I will be glad of the opportunity of escape. This encourages nihilism. Mr H — he quotes the Authorised Version as a joke. Tying his shoelace at a chair during the lecture. Voice interrupted, distorted by digestion. The pedantic pronunciation is incorrect. This is the Theatre of the Absurd. Nothing could surpass it. The tragedy of the comedy is that the performers really think they're being serious. What's more, they have the power to make us act on this misapprehension. Gross mis-application of human intellect.

A good conversation in the Lit. tutorial, flitted from Aristotle to Miller, Beckett, etc. Can the Common Man be a Tragic Hero? Can anyone else be in the 20th century? Of course, one has a completely different thinking-cap on at such times from the one worn for writing. The latter, it goes without saying, is many times more valuable.

In Bisset's I overheard a phonecall. The assistant repeated the titles being asked for. 'Pigswill and Cattle Production'. She went away to look for it. 'Sorry, we don't have it. Well, I'll look for a card in the index.' Later: 'Sorry, there's no card even.' 'What? The Fermentation of A-M-S-Y? Amsy? Fermentation? No, we certainly don't have *that!*'

Buses everywhere. Self-conscious in yellow shirt and red tie. Flea-bites. Laughing in the street. No calls last night.

In the freezing cold, friendless, I love life. But others act as if they understood nothing of its immense value, its transitoriness, its potential.

At 5.25 Byron surprises me in the kitchen. 'Helleoaw,' he says. 'God, you almost made me spill my tea,' I say, and he says nothing to prevent me from disappearing into my room.

But for the insane vertical frond of headhair, he would have lived on to this day.

Desperate creativity, mystery of identity, uncertain destiny. Jottings: 'These people who, when they have not heard your question, think it safe to reply "Oh, incredible!"'.

'Once she told me "Corporations scare me." I smiled, and without excusing myself caught a fly in my beak.'

Language Laboratory becomes Labyrinthine Minotaury.

'My old grandfather stretched his arm out so that his damp thick palm covered my eyes. "Never stoop to the avoidable," he cried, unavoidably.'

'Thieves posing as seagulls made off with three garden rakes, police told bystanders today. The officers were clearly shaken by the scene.'

Posted a whole series of these news parodies.

Tuesday January 29th

Fiona joined me at the snack bar (pavilion) — we spoke about school, work, the world (Fiona says that Britain is on nuclear alert!). Ian Stephen came up later and reminded me of Viv's workshop session tomorrow. Friday's party, Fiona told me, had gone on until 6!

'Metaphors from the kitchen have eaten hungrily into Grass's poetry, prose & drama.'

My lecture notes for Language today:

'Rattle on, tin-trapped stone.'

'For *this* people reserve their subservience?'

In Seaton Park, men stand in the bushes, conversing.

I'm back from an uneasy CWG workshop session, held at Viv's flat. I was edgy. A new guy was there, didn't look at all imaginative but produced a fairly striking poem. I was handed these images to weave into something autonomous: 'A silver plummet from a blue sky onto / into a flash of silver under the water. An old, soaked newspaper. Pipes, tubes, powders & fluids. A dome of rock. The extract of plants, used for healing. A man, wearing jeans & cowboy boots, dredged from the water.'

I wrote this:

Police Photograph

The officer in charge of operations stood on the bridge of the launch. He missed the gannet, diving recklessly — it was out of his range of vision. The concrete piers and jetties reflected the scream of his loudhailer. His divers were apprehensive; they spoke of pipes, tangled on the harbour floor, lingering with intent. Disrespectful gulls mocked the officer as he waited. A cameraman had taken light readings and was ready when the rubber broke up through the surface of the water.

Some months later, the gannet sat on its pierside dome of rock. Beside it, fishlike, lay an old soaked newspaper. Flanked by divers, dots and tones represented the figure of a man, in jeans and cowboy boots, breaking the surface of what must have been harbour water.

The fish the gannet had just glimpsed was passing through the caption.

Unfortunately, I laughed and couldn't control my voice when I was asked to read it 3 times! The newcomer, commenting encouragingly (at least this was his intention) said 'The last sentence is a full-stop of cleverness.' I found the phrase absurd, and laughed immoderately.

I shall analyse the piece. The gannet, it turns out, is the subject of the story — alienated from the human events, I keep the camera on the bird. When the drowning is recorded for good, and even the newspaper, its receptacle, drowned too, the gannet is still catching fish, unnoticed. It is the same gannet, only it is real. The human event has become a symbol. From the gannet's p.o.v. this is absurd; the symbolic representation, the newspaper, appears to the bird to be a fish. Therefore, when one tries to reconcile human and gannet perceptions, the result is a fish passing through a newspaper caption. Animals mock human symbolism — the officer is mocked by the gulls, standing officiously with his loudhailer and his limited attention. A man was drowned — so what? The birds still stab fish with their beaks. The divers are closer to hostile reality, they understand the inanimate threats, ironically human-caused ('pipes lingering with intent'); they personify them as the gannet personifies the paper.

The last sentence: the original gannet had glimpsed a fish, just out of the photograph. The later gannet has also just glimpsed a fish, but now we are looking at the photograph, and again it is just beyond the border (just as the gannet was just out of the officer's vision). One cannot catch the full sense of the piece, all its coherence skips just out of range. The divers only sense the danger of the hidden pipes — it is not quite clear why they fear them. The later gannet has 'just' glimpsed the fish — this refers to the split-second simultaneity of a photograph. The bird had seen what the camera had not. Because it is the same bird, and because the past is really contained in the present, not, as newspapers would have it, safely over, thus it is the same fish that the same gannet sees again every time the picture is studied. I'm confused.

Wednesday January 30th

Sparks with ODM-G when I admit that I don't have Sweet's 'Primer' — he points to exhortations in the text to consult it, and I explain: 'If the ultimate aim is to be able to translate Old English unseen, the end justifies the means — my inability to cope with grammar is compensated by my intuitive method of translation.' I wanted to appear modest, so I added: 'I only say this out of knowledge of my own abilities.' Of course, I should have said restricted abilities, or deficiencies, but ODM-G took me to mean my prowess at intuitive translation, and stabbed his finger at my unseen, saying 'Well, if you're happy to go on making damn-fool mistakes like this, that's up to your own discretion, of course. If that's your attitude, there's little point in prolonging this discussion.' He reeled off a list of exercises I would have to ignore, and I didn't contradict him. Fumbling with books, I was about to take his. As we parted, he said: 'I shall be very interested to see how few mistakes you make in Exercise Six, if you could have that in my tray as soon as possible.'

That one's expertise could so colour one's perception of other people that failure in terms of the special subject means the whole personality it written off! This suggests an inevitable conflict between personality, appreciated or rejected for itself alone, and the professional grounds which are the 'acceptable' basis for most human relationships. Of course the relationship between ODM-G and me is a teaching relationship, and if I refuse to be taught I am severing the only reasonable pretext for the link. But I have never seen the link as reasonable, from my point of view it has been absurd, and yet endurable. I even quite like ODM-G for the misplaced faith he has shown in me, the time he has spent trying to communicate to me his cherished special subject and all its joys. Nonetheless, this is all incidental. Principally, it has been a torment. My attitude is only inexcusable from the confines of Old English's worldview. It is understandable as a manifestation of my own personal priorities for my life, which exists in the present. In my scales of justice a person always triumphs over an idea or discipline. Especially when the person is me, though here of course I am biased. I am only sorry that in this case a person is representing the discipline, for this means the case is only won by my own bias.

This is the crux: are we to point to a lawyer and say: 'There goes the law'? I cannot agree with Popper that books represent objective knowledge, read or not. Disciplines occupy one level of the identity of an individual. One has a business meeting with someone, then afterwards meets him again 'socially'. He is probably an entirely different person on the two occasions, using different language, talking of different things in different ways. There is overlap, of course: he can talk business in the pub, or slip a sailing phrase into his analysis of market trends. One could even interrupt his sales report to say 'What a raked we're in, eh George?' and he would overcome his surprise and agree. But what is the true George? He can be alienated from his work, from his family — all these roles are changeable, but isn't there a constant, can't we find a way of sending him through his collection of masks in such an order that he is caught suddenly without one, and for a single revealing moment stares barefaced, horrified and fascinated? But if this is, as it can only be, a fleeting moment, it is no truer than any of the masks. No — seen from the present, it is the only self. A change can be forecast, a past mood can be remembered, but they are abstractions, and only the present is real. So, what precipitates this particular state, and what are its defining characteristics? Alienation from the world; 'work, my life, wife, home, of all quite sick'. What is left?

The same thing that has stirred the unease, the over-burdened, under-developed, unrecognised self. The core, the inner self, with its capacity to sprout limbs like tentacles, each of which extends the personality in narrow, specialised directions. These limbs are Home-self, Work-self, Hobby-self, Sex-self, and all the other do-it-yourselfes which have been knocked up like makeshift shelving to accommodate the bric-a-brac of life. The limbs tangle hopelessly, so that one can hardly be told from the other. Some are tiny, some abandoned, one or two very large indeed, hardly able to support their own weight. Or rather, the core cannot support their weight. Because this little core is, in our times, sadly neglected and much abused. All demands seem to want to make of it one long tentacle — the man becomes his specialisation; he is nothing more than the sum of his roles. Mr Zero Nought, MA, Phd, married with three children, member of the faculty Chess Club. 'But who is he?' you ask. 'I've just told you,' comes the reply.

And what is the answer to all this? To thine own self be true? Renounce the world and turn to God? Or consult a computer before selecting a career, transforming inner needs, characteristics, special peculiarities, to data input, pencilled in HB on a preprinted grid? I am not allowed to know the answer, because I have found my own: in literature as a way of living, experience as an end in itself (with the comforting shadow of literature waiting to benefit from it), and every whim as the imperative demand of the sacred, enshrined ego, spurred on by the harlequined demon Id and chided by sober whitebeard, Superego.

Fish and Gannet postscript: the past is contained in the present: this applies equally to the newspaper, which reactivates past events in the present. The story, the omniscient narrative, is looking at the picture — from the bounds of the story the dots and tones are reading themselves. But this p.o.v. does not exist — the story is the only reality. So it actually *is* harbour water evoked in the photograph, because the 'screen' of the story has been filled up by the newspaper photograph, and it becomes the new story. However, it is static, and already the fish has, in the comparative reality of the wider story, moved beyond this limited view of things, watched by the gannet, who is the eyes of that level of the story. We only see the gannet and the photograph, however, and the gannet's perception of the fish is, for us, mingled with the level of symbolic representation displayed by the photograph. Why this confusion? Because to the reader the whole thing is a symbolic representation. This makes distinction between these invoked layers of action more difficult than for the gannet, which only sees what is there, being spared the confusion between the world and its names.

If I must be isolated, why can't it be somewhere with the characteristics of real isolation? This lonely crowd idea is abominable. It turns people into two-legged obstacles, emitters of noise pollution, and cultural stones around the swanlike neck. We all dress ourselves up in eye-catching packages, and indulge in ritual displays in the social market-place, each locked up behind unbreechable shop windows. There is no community, only the disadvantages of community life. Show me to my moorland cell, where I can live without men, manners of mirrors, thoughtfully waiting for the merciless white flash.

The closing section of Berio's 'Visage' is the only imaginable artistic response to the insanity of the world.

11.45 — someone — apparently deliberately — broke a thin plastic pipe in the drying room upstairs. Water is cascading over the stairs and flowing from floor to floor. It can't be stopped, because the faucet is padlocked and no-one has a key. The whole neighbourhood is out, the story got around very quickly.

Thursday January 31st

Philosophy Special Class topic: free will and determinism. The professor gives examples which include igniting gunpowder (a true story, he says, which happened to him 'in a moment of foolishness') and drinking strichnine.

People do not like me. Nor I them, at least when I am confined to my self-disgusted solitude. Nonetheless, the state is tolerable.

I spent the whole evening writing a CWG story: 'The Freedom of Travel'. Composed without preconceptions, slowly and laboriously, from scratch, it still built coherently and in acceptable order to a philosophical / existential climax. A change occurred on the second page: visual imagery became subservient to exploration of the character's position — his lack of freedom. The freedom to select the object of perception & imagination is the theme: the train-confined character exalts in this liberty, until a tunnel swallows it up.

White paths, moon rays skidding under whole trails of cloud, the night colder and clearer than glass.

Friday February 1st

Brilliant sunshine on extraordinarily white ground, creating an impressionist atmosphere with pastel shadows.

I sat deep inside myself as I walked to King's, having missed Lit. in order to read New Statesman, New Society, and The Guardian. At 12 I met Sarah & Durian in the pavilion cafe. We discussed the essential arrangements for a Klee slide / tape evening based on 'Going for a Walk With a Line'. But I kept quite quiet during the course of the conversation on other topics — swimming, etc. Durian talked about the qualities of the sea at Malta, about the 'Jewy' blackberry drink he and Sarah were sharing, about the proximity of German to Old English: 'Of course lots of Jews came over from Germany and mixed in here, all over...' Enthused about 'Death in Venice', asked 'Do you know Mahler?' Obnoxious fellow. My only words were an abstract condemnation of the Language course.

Visited the bank, glad to be alone. Back to my room, lunch then Murdoch's 'Fire & the Sun'.

The Radio 3 short story competition was won by 'Interact', a rather mediocre love story (characters 'He' & 'She', who were always 'making love' in the woods of S. Wales, while talking in naive, dreamy sentences) smacking of the hippy drop-out mentality — a very restrained English middle-class version. Of course there would have been no justice in the world if 'The Mythologists' had won.

I read a few of my stories onto tape. They are all about neurosis or insanity.

Hillhead is deserted — an owl has just hooted, it was the only sound.

I pace up and down.

Saturday February 2nd

In dream I met Mel Wollen, and walked with her along Princes Street, wheeling my motorbike. Relations went well until we reached her institution common-room, where other people displaced her attention from me. The room was being used as a boardroom, by Shooting Times types. Earlier, we had been lying on the floor, our legs casually touching. I had been about to tell her that I had been the author of the sonnet she received last Xmas when the men came in. We then sat

at a desk. She handed me a copy of a text she was working from. She was drawing coloured marks, about twenty red ones and a solitary blue — ‘That’s not very liberal,’ she said apologetically (blue here signified liberal). By now the ambience suggested an inconclusive, imminent parting. I directed my frustrated hostility at the reactionaries at the board table. Woke up sweating.

This sickening little room where I find lonely refuge. Out, I want to escape from the cold and hassle of impersonal relations. In, I feel my own loathsome organic presence, a living aberration in the crypt.

Everywhere I look, small transparent bloodcells fall across the scene like snow. A good reminder of subjectivity.

On days like today, in the damp downtown, I devise schemes such as this: I stand as leader of the Proton party, and am swept to power with this manifesto: that all ‘defence’ spending will be redirected to the development of the Proton bomb, which, one summer’s day, will be dropped on Britain by a British plane. The people will line the streets and applaud, because this bomb acts in quite the opposite way from the despicable Neutron bomb: the Proton bomb dematerialises all inanimate, manmade structures — though artists, historians and technicians have programmed it to spare certain selected structures essential to human survival. No human, animal or plant is harmed. Then, together, the people begin to build a humanitarian, peaceful and communal society, somewhat along the lines of modern China.

(This would actually be a disaster!)

However it may sound, I shall say it: Kierkegaard and Dostoyevsky are better friends of mine than any one of a thousand ‘living’ peers. Communication between us is effortless, like communication with oneself. How heartening to discover that such closeness to another is possible for me. I have a family, after all.

In this deliciously empty flat I sanctify the atmosphere with darkness. As if in agreement, light snow falls outside, insulating all surfaces and even filling space with a congenial, dotted density.

Other people are so mediocre: the way they stand and drone in coherent monotones, sabotaging vitality. Their constant aim is to normalise, to prettify, to lower the fantastic, horrific pitch of screaming, colossal life! The flat was completely mine for 12 hours today — I played loud music, I whirled like a dervish through the darkness of the corridor, into the echoing bathroom, the kitchen with its vistas of snow territories, and back into the noise and brilliance of my room. And even when I sat quiet with Murdoch’s ‘Sun & Fire’ (or vice versa), I felt the black corridor breeze flowing through the open door, which I fanned and flung periodically, bouncing it off the cushion of air in the door-frame. Dostoyevsky’s ‘Notes from Underground’ whispered confessions in my ear, and the massive inanimacy brooded with me, quite soundless. And now these restraints, these observations of shy proprieties, all to facilitate the ditch-dull to and fro of Mark & Jeff, meekly exchanging mountaineering anecdotes!

I am secretive, but just give me the chance and I’ll swagger and shout the thoughts that would turn a listener to stone; quite unnoticed I’ll explode.

Sunday February 3rd

My English essay — an amusing hatchet-job on Plato: I have him running up and down the dead-end ramp of the cave, hallucinating and trying to convince everyone else of his visions — he is upsetting the peaceful light of the fire quite unnecessarily.

Hot milk and a conversation about the Neutron bomb. Actually, when content and relaxed, I can join in these ‘dull’ conversations in a limited way, and feel the easeful flow of human accord, at least before the panic and suppressed laughter begin to flood and ebb irrepressibly upwards.

Snow on the ground, bright tungsten, moon. A vista.

Monday February 4th

How can I explain to Prof. Draper that last night, when I had finished my Plato essay, I came back to consciousness as if rising from a fever and remembered for the first time, at 9 o'clock, that I had a tutorial first thing this morning in which I was to discuss Chaucer's 'Miller's Tale' — and that, from forgetfulness, I had not bought a copy of the book, and that, from independence, I knew nobody in my English lecture who could be located on a Sunday evening and supplicated for a loan? And how to explain, as I hand this essay to him, that my happy solution was to lie dreaming of a robbery in an Italianate Dundee instead of attending a useless tutorial in which nothing would have made sense? Why not with these very words?

Reading on in the splendid 'Tin Drum'. Oskar breaks glass in the classroom, bleeds Miss West's brows slightly.

Snow casts pure light up at my window, which diffuses it with droplets of condensation and transfers it to the shadowless white walls. In this way my room is lit, and the dome clamp lamp contributes from its enamelled paint rather than its bulb and flex. My room is a studio.

Tuesday February 5th

Reading 'Blechtrommel' in snatches, also, in the Music Room of the library, a study of Grass' conceptions of the artist.

Newtondee last night — fences, snow-covered roads, pine woods in the car headlights, alpine buildings. Not knowing what to expect, I was led into a medium-sized room in which about 25 people were interspersed amongst the 'inmates' — but I wasn't always sure if a fellow conversant was 'one of us' or 'them'... Of course, this was the intention. A pallid, thin man told me how he forgot the contents of each book he read immediately afterwards. In painfully long-drawn-out sentences, he discussed 'Gulliver's Travels' and Quakership: 'At a

meeting of The Friends in St. Andrews, we sat in silence for 50 minutes before anyone had something worth saying.' He thinks people speak to fill silences they ought to use to think. Later, the inmates shuffled out, and we spoke to the helpers. The German girl: just 18, dungarees, light blue jersey, clogs — long wavy blonde hair, fine pointed features. Sat crosslegged, talking to Joy. But her conversation was very unexceptional: 'Yes, I find it difficult to say some things, and it is so annoying...' Her plans — admirable, but so predictable! Upstairs, sat in a rocking chair, mostly quiet, while others read poetry. Ian 'loves' everything of Bernard's. So does Bernard. They compare notes on 'Annie', a Svengali figure who takes poets to bed, saying she will make them famous.

Despite these bitter notes, some good poetry was read.

I'll contribute 'Planet', 'Gannet', and 'Sonnet'. I hope Mel isn't in the audience! Although...

The rift with ODM-G seems healed — I buy Sweet's 'Primer', he tells me that the D. stands for Duncan (in an example).

My car is stubbornly buggree (dyslexia has been afflicting me of late!) buggree (again!) bugged.

Wednesday February 6th

I am free — discontent is my proof. Discontent with the buildings, people, sky, vehicles, objects I have to look at — all the things which gradually emblazon themselves on my reluctant consciousness. Like a dog, I will shake them off. But also discontent with overused modes of thought; the same patterns and directions, lazy and habitual perception. This routine, which forces such deadening of thought and vision; I will fight it with guerrilla tactics: deliberate disorientation, sensitivity to the ambiguous and the absurd, the shunning of the pathetic mechanisms of moribund logic in which everything claims and tries to be based. The guerrilla is tied to his target, but he has no marching column, no superiors, inferiors, fellows, plans of any kind. He simply expresses his refusal to

tolerate and accept with the barrel of his gun. My gun is behaviour, my bullets my acts.

In Johnston Hall I played Durian, Sarah & Adam (another girl besides Sarah was present too) the Klee tape (a slide-show is being arranged around it). Afterwards, Sarah asked Adam if he wanted to buy a hamster cage. Because some people she knew had had three hamsters until two had died and the owner, with some friends, had put the remaining one in a plastic bag and stamped it to death.

Leapt out of bed this morning, sure that the mechanical, thunderous din was the end of the world. It was just a helicopter.

Recurrent diarrhea and nosebleeds.

Yesterday Iggy Pop at the Capitol (a disappointment), tonight Joy & Angus', tomorrow Nightline, Friday — no, nothing Friday. Newtondee on Monday. Next Monday I am 20. *Beaucoup des engagements, moins l'engagement.*

'My God,' he thought over and over to himself, 'they all have hooves. Even the birds have hooves!' There was no-one to tell, and eventually nowhere to hide.

I will resist socialisation, normalisation — I regret most of what has already moulded me, for my development can only come from within. I had the answers, but nobody asked the question; instead they took me for a blob of putty, a clean slate on which to write the banal words which someone had written on them, and some more they wish had been written on them. Individual developmental priorities should be allowed to guide each person, not left to shackle others with different needs and abilities who happen to be in a dependency / power / love bond with this frustrated person, their 'teacher'. The same goes for this very idea — it only holds for me.

Thursday February 7th

At Joy & Angus' until 1 o'clock last night. While Joy organised, I spent forty minutes composing a poem about the difference between the Aberdeen Donny B. Macleod had been describing on the radio and the real place. It was partly in response to Ian's many enigmatic snippets, composed 'just as I was leaving the house this evening' etc. — but also to show that I regard poetic composition as easy and thus not very important. The poem, 'Aberdeen Transport', will go into the show. My 'Planet' was admired — Andy said 'That's definitely got "the itch", but it's got it so deep you don't know if it's real or not.' Despite the poem's incongruity with the other material, it was put in for the sound of the words.

Sociology lecture: I sit on the righthand side at the back. A girl comes in just before the lecture is about to begin and sits beside me — not two seats away, but right beside me — this is unusual. Amongst her notes is a handwritten letter in what could be Swedish. She writes the envelope. During the lecture she can't keep up — she asks to look at my notes. Then she files her nails. She has dark blonde hair, hazel eyes, a pretty face, wears an orange skirt, jacket, etc. She plays with fronds of her hair, tugging them round to the front of her face. I am enraptured, excited. At the end of the lecture she says 'Sorry if I distracted you' — I say 'Oh, I don't mind', and she tells me how it helps her concentration to do other things at the same time. 'Like filing your nails,' I say. I head off too quickly, and she calls out after me 'Goodbye'. Later, I think of better replies to her 'Sorry if I distracted you...' — 'Quite the reverse, you didn't *distract* at all.' 'Sometimes it's nice to be distracted.' 'But you're so good at it, the lecture was a distraction!' Perhaps it's just as well I didn't think of these retorts until afterwards! Can any regular relationship be as enjoyable as this kind of ambiguous, indefinite intimacy?

Friday February 8th

The strongest pair of arms in the world is that of the clock. This tyrant compels weak and strong to do things loathsome to them.

Nothing is necessarily so.

He wore his selves like suits.

All day I have been drinking delicious drafts of apfel... Reading morsels (well, all actually) of a Sociology handout entitled 'Towards a Sociology of the Absurd' — Existentialism, working its way down from the heights of literature, meets Sociology. An enjoyable piece, it lost momentum when it began to discuss Machiavelli.

Spent the evening writing 'The Illogical Kitchen', a symbolic existentialist (I know, a banner, a fad etc. — but the word does mean something to me) piece which, despite becoming unrepentantly abstract on pages 2 and 3, said some profound (slightly obscure, yet, I feel, 'true') things about social life. The prose — scan and rhythm crept in, then rhyming too!

The piece is perhaps too 'clever', certainly cold and hard, probably self-centred and precocious. Yet its quality is undeniable.

Visited Ali in Fyfe House. He was in bed with flu, but he played 'An Evening with David Bowie', an interview record. The room was very humid, warm, and no doubt saturated with germs. Tissue paper lay all about. I stayed til 12.10 — the record was interesting, Bowie demonstrating a mature articulacy. When he was talking about creative work being a souvenir of a particular state of mind, I said 'Aha! That's a good existentialist preoccupation!' — ironically, of course. Ali was quiet, then said 'You're a good person to ask — how can I improve my vocabulary?' Then he told me how much he admired my interest in writing, existentialism, etc. — he would like to read an introduction to this kind of thing. I was a little embarrassed, rather touched by his humbleness. He was reading a fat paperback — Science Fiction — written by a mathematician and a physicist! He offered it to me to read, but I explained that I was wading through the equally fat 'Tin Drum'.

This kind of relationship is perplexing, for he is undoubtedly more competent than me socially, and, when he's not in bed, adopts an almost patronising (though similarly obsequious) attitude. He described his Bowie fanaticism — 'It's

just that I've always wanted to tour the world, go to places like New York or the Chilean gorges, and he can do that...'

Saturday February 9th

Dream: judges drive round Drummond Place in sports cars. One of them has a red Lotus Elite, stops outside our house. We take his fibre-glass car to pieces. He later, still wearing his wig, exacts his revenge upon me thus: we are in a dark, cell-like room; he smears acid on the floor, I am barefoot, and have to jump back and forth between mattresses. Then a radio station moves in, and informal conversation with me is broadcast. I escape from the room to a large educational / amusement complex: broad avenues, caged exhibits, parties of school children. A shop, and, in the countryside nearby, toilet huts on a hill seeped with urine. In the shop I meet a girl who has written a biography of an old and respected man. I have, it seems, written a similar but inferior biography of my judge. She comments — 'Impressive machinery, but no ceiling'.

She takes me to visit her pedagogue. We sit together on a bank close to a broad, sandy road surrounded on both sides by pine woods. It is a remarkably warm day, though it seems it is still winter. I am falling in love with her. But a nearby figure — it seemed at first to be a tree-stump — is a person, Emma, and she moves closer and joins us. The girl is distracted from me, so I pick up a shell-like thing, which I peel — it has four sections of casing, and I have only picked off two before the ladybird inside flies clumsily away, still restrained by the remaining casing. We catch it again, then move into the nearby pedagogue's house, at first no more than an open-air kitchen and staircase nestling in a dell. Emma makes tomato soup — excreted into the pot by the ladybird, which then escapes. Lunch made, we take a portion upstairs on a tray. The pedagogue sits in a darkened room, watching black and white television. At first I decide he is non compos mentis, but soon he begins to talk, and a certain wisdom is revealed, despite his great age.

My room was hot, thick mist hung outside, it was half past twelve.

'My master read my work, then asked me to write a critical evaluation of it. He did likewise. Then we changed papers and evaluated our criticisms.'

Over lunch, read Beckett's 'Ping' and the utterly splendid, lyrical, evocative 'Enough'.

The mist curdles the air, giving refuge to crows, which yell to their heart's content, hidden in the sinister shapes of skeletal, insubstantial trees. Periodically there comes a parrot-like snatch, which rings back and forth against invisible objects.

I visited Ali last night to play him the 'Moon of Alabama' tape. He is coming over this evening on the same pretext. My contact with Joanna B. Murray (who now greets me with less enthusiasm — yesterday I passed her in a corridor of Adam Smith house: she was with her fuzzy-haired, winking boyfriend (?) wearing make-up. I'd also seen her at supper. An obnoxious, savage extravert had been sitting beside me, leaping onto the backs of nearby girls. He left, only to reappear, clowning in the same way with JBM, who seemed to be enjoying it, to my surprise...) this contact was due to the Hamlet tape. And now the Paul Klee project for the Arts Club (Sarah and Durian) centres around the same Memorex C-90 that I sent (copied) to Paula. The only relationship which does not have a tape as justifying intermediary is that with members of the CWG (or O-PEN, our performing name) — how long will it be? My stories are already dictated onto tape — the first step has been made!

PS: ODM-G too — his voice speaks to me through the language lab headphones, and when I try to relate to him as a fellow human, he refers to this magnetised version of himself, saying that I have betrayed him by betraying it.

I call home. When I speak to Father, he assumes it's just about the car. Says (as he has done before) 'Do you expect me to drive up to Aberdeen to fix it for you?' We discuss the possibility of my failing the course and going 'on the scrapheap, contributing nothing to society'. I stress that it's hypothetical, but say that all I need is a typewriter and relative silence. We talk about work — to finance this

writing. Father says 'You aren't built for manual labour, you're slight.' I suggest social work. I tell him about the O-PEN readings. He describes a poet in a Parisian restaurant who read his own material. Then he says 'Good, that shows enterprise, and I like enterprise.' Mother had answered the call like this: 'Hello Nicholas, my little baby!' I said 'I'm not your little baby!' I told her I was delivering 'My last message as a teenager'. She will tell everyone that I am 18 — this will make Mark and me twins.

Sunday February 10th

Dream: An idyllic hilltop village, Mediterranean in character, but located in E. England. The Creative Writing Group lived there, all together in harmony. Then, as a social gesture, we opened our fortress to the poor from the lowlands — and everything had to be locked up, rearranged, made public. Then, in N. Africa, there was a war, which was terminated by a whole string of atomic bombs. Radiation drifted north as far as E. England, and our health was drastically affected. A Sunday supplement ran colour photos to show the different degrees of damage caused by different levels of exposure (it was worst if you were sunbathing at the time of the explosion). We all knew that our lifespans were shortened, but no-one shared my degree of concern.

Last night, an OU programme on Plato's aesthetics led me to Murdoch, Nietzsche & Schopenhauer. Nietzsche was the most attractive.

A brilliant cloudless day, with spring in the air. I look out of my window and see four children, none of them more than about 3 feet high, playing outside the shop. They sit on the low wooden wall, jump off it, jump on frontwards, run along the pavement. The boy comes up to the little sedentary girl and touches her cheek. She reaches out for his face, and they pat and brush each other. Then the elder girl comes along and lifts this little girl in her arms to the sunny grass and paths. The most energetic is a dark-skinned girl, who runs back and forward, waving her arms, bending this way and that. She wears a little blue skirt and yellow boots. I pass these children, who have delightfully redefined the area around the shop and quite put to shame the monstrously large, staid passers-by,

on my way to lunch. They are all Asian. A man calls them from the launderette, because they are running on the cobbles of the bus turning circle. Oh, to join in their game! At lunch I sit with a group of Scots students. They talk in loud, sure voices about the price of biscuits, a bloody film. They have a copy of The Sunday Telegraph. In comparison with those Asian children they are already half-dead. I hate the British. I hate 'adulthood'. Education kills people.

A walk in the sunshine — through estates, housing and industrial, to a large expanse of matt tar, a screen of pine trees at one end defending the artillery depot, sunshine giving it a gloss, and mounds of red earth invoking Mars. I tried to make for the sea, which lay out of sight behind dunes, a golf course, marshes, and a small, scrubby pine wood. But the depth and expanse of the water, and the ubiquitous, malignant fences prevented me.

The beach. Approaching, passed small bungalows which had been surprised by the sunshine, and reluctantly displayed their gloomy front rooms: huge fronds of dried grass, long-preserved, no-longer-tropical. Cactae line each window of one house. Teapots another. An obscene, gaudy dwarf reclines on some steps. Cats and terriers patrol their diminutive properties, posing shabbily against the flaked whitewash.

Acquaintances: on a side-street, I sit on a low wall. I catch sight of a man pruning in a nearby garden. It is my Phil. Special Class tutor. He has probably seen me, but fixes his attention on his gardening. Entering the beach path, I pass a man who stops to watch his young son paddling in a puddle. It is Paul Schlicke. He says 'Hi, Nick' casually. Later, when I am sitting on a dune overlooking the beach, dotted with people like an 18th century print, I am surprised by a group of people on the path behind me. It is Durian, Sarah, Adam & his girlfriend. They say 'Aha! A peeping Tom are you?' 'Catching up on my Chaucer,' I explain, showing them the book. 'Where are the holes, then?' says Adam. Having nothing more to say (apart from comments on the splendid weather), they move off. I later overtake them, I on the beach, they on the dune path. The British on a Sunday promenade by the sea. A crowd of negroes, whooping and calling to each other. One plays hopscotch. Ugly, obese Scots, with brylcreamed hair and gaps in

their teeth, grin. Everywhere the sun glances off the anaemic, pale faces of people who can hardly believe that they are away from their stale rooms, standing by this dazzling sand and open, rolling sea.

It's true, the city is silver.

I read Camus' diary. PiL plays: Lydon as 'L'homme revolté'. The theological students upstairs romp, but if they catch the sounds of PiL on a Sunday, they stamp furiously on the floor — it is the ultimate blasphemy.

If there is a God, will He really be sympathetic to the argument that one should be spared from Hell because one's agnosticism was based on a sensitivity to the unsurpassable ambiguities of all matters of decision and faith?

I shall only be a teenager for another three minutes!

Monday February 11th

Tired of the elementary soliciting of Prof. Draper in my Lit. tutorial, I answered a question on the tone of 'The Nun's Priest's Tale' in a verbose, parodying way — the nerve of it caused a surprising reaction, and amidst the hilarity no-one laughed harder than me. Prof. D. enjoyed it thoroughly.

I wore white shirt and black tie. A certain vanity lent a swing to my stride — after all, I was able to fill in the space on a Sociology questionnaire asking my age as '20', while Caralampo Focas, who looked on, had '19' on his.

Cutting letters in green paper to stick on pink paper.

Delivering Nightline leaflets, I was able to tour Esslement. Debbie Harry posters everywhere, a depressing conformity.

'An Intellectual Portrait' of Hannah Arendt on R3 — the ridiculous, snappy, egocentric, insecure life of this sort of intelligentsia, open to public attack and private doubts.

Splendidly original film about Isaac Bashevis Singer on BBC2 — the greasy cafe in New York in which the Yiddishers gather at a long table, feeling themselves more in Warsaw than NY. The bachelor exclamations: 'Oh my God!' scattered through every sentence. The grotesque old Jewish women who shoot questions from all sides and smile like crocodiles not at the content of the answer, but the fact that while IBS is replying no-one else can butt in with their question. The sense of community above all else; communication, reality. This has the advantage of ameliorating the sense of squalor and decay. The little man writing, right to left, on a flat card. Doorbell rings, he runs bent to open it, unable to resist even temperamentally this interpersonal demand, for he is calling 'Yes, I am going, Oh my God, I am going!'

Afternoon in library: reading an interview with John Cage, I follow his opinion that the best music is that of the unintentional, random environment. How suddenly, how surprisingly I hear it! The lights buzz, chairs creak, and beside me, through the open window, birds, a snatch of radio music, voices on the spring air, a car. A symphony!

'Look at the environment — it doesn't ask why — neither should art.'

Developing the identity of 'Samuel Schliemann', who is doing research into Skulduggery. I composed a conversation with him, a surrogate for real contact, and billed it on my door — his door.

The suspicion that this is just a parody of a literary diary.

Tuesday February 12th

A Newtondee meeting, then rushing home to see PiL on Whistlestest — as I hurried up Don St., I passed a man with briefcase and black umbrella. 'Never doubt that the Queen is a wonderful woman,' he said, and walked on.

Wednesday February 13th

Letters at breakfast. Shirtsleeves to CWG seminar — spring. Phonecalls to Tire Services. Rehearsal at Angus & Joy's — confident reading, in contrast to the Seminar rendition of 'Freedom of Travel'. Midnight, a lift home from Andy — he told me about a play he's writing, set in a city of pyramids. The librarian's son accuses his father of hogging the city library, then stops the religious wars raging all about by saying 'My God is the one and only God' — all stop fighting and listen, and, though he is slain, the librarian's son has given the Word. Sounds awful.

Thursday February 14th

One moods of mine resents and rejects other moods. In the sense that other people, with their apparently greater constancy of temperament, resemble possible or actual moods of mine, I reject many of them and am attracted strongly to one or two when I'm in one mood, and similarly, though with different individuals, when I'm in another.

As Ian Carter talks about class in our Sociology tutorial, I butt in with my old point about academic distortion — 'It's like putting a parting in hair,' I say. 'You can choose where to put the parting, and lo and behold, the strands do lie together. But they would lie just as well with the parting in any other position.' As he replies, I see only his pink bald head, which starts at his frowning eyebrows, and I cannot help grinning.

At the door: 'Hearken unto an Esslemont Bible Study'.

I buy an introduction to Structuralism.

Friday February 15th

O-PEN rehearsal at the Walker Rd. flat of Gareth Edwards, a suave, friendly, confident student at Gray's Art College. It turns out he's a Bahai, like Ian. It also transpires that Andy was once a Bahai, and his wife still is. Angus' religious convictions are less rigid — but he's going to India at Easter, heaven knows with what intentions, on what funds. A touch of 'Invasion of the Body Snatchers' — or Soul Snatchers. Gareth (t-shirt, jersey, no shirt, eye contact) invited me to a party tomorrow evening, organised 'to raise funds for my faith' — no alcohol. He talked about the ideal size and character of Aberdeen — mainly socially. Sounded like a well-trying introductory line of his.

Some interesting discussion — the nature of reality, etc. I also propounded the views of Barthes, whose 'Mythologies' I bought this morning.

Waiting around for the phonecall and van of All-Tyre Services, I was prey to somewhat voyeuristic waves of desire; the sunshine (plenty today) reactivates sexuality.

Saturday February 16th

The peculiarly unreal feeling of getting to know people, of living at a stimulating level, an exhilarating pace. Breakfast, at 10, in the sunny front room of Angus & Joy's flat: orange juice, crusty bread, watching the cat stretch in slats of sunshine on the board floor. Run-throughs of the show — Alec, a large, sincere, slightly awkward man, came to play us his songs. Good voice, folksy Scottish mode. At 1.30 we swept out, and travelled, tense but resolute, to Jaws. The place was packed, but when Ian stood up and bellowed his announcement about the impending performance, with emphasis on participation, about half the customers left!

Nonetheless, the show went well — we cleared a space in the centre of the room, and sat around in chairs, jumping up to perform. A baby in a yellow jersey and yellow high chair interrupted vociferously — another one responded from the

other side of the room. My pieces passed well; I walked around the space, made rudimentary gestures, but always kept one hand in my pocket: token of restraint.

Afterwards, free meals for us all. Then to Ma Camerons'. Angus, Joy and Andy told me very enthusiastically about a game they regularly play; 'Dungeons and Dragons'. Angus assumed a big-brotherly aspect — I like him. Ian was tired, rather quiet — he wasn't drinking, because it's against his faith. He said — 'Nick and Viv were acting like old timers,' being characteristically supportive. I bent double and grasped an invisible stick. 'I set you up for that one,' he said.

Tonight — the Bahai / art school party.

The novelty of this kind of relationship with others — I am walking on air, quite intoxicated, no longer myself.

Angus' habit of clipping his moustache. His way of illustrating a point by an example which includes the listener — 'Let's say I'm a ten-foot warrior and you're a two-foot dwarf, you could still beat me from brain-power.' (Of Dungeons & Dragons.)

The 'party' was a gathering of 9 people in Gareth's flat. Bitter soft punch set the calibre of the evening — for a religious clique, the group is peculiarly mundane. There were perhaps 4 people from art college, the rest were researching in Psychology, postgrads. Janet Hutchinson arrived, accompanied by a stocky, dull Scot, thick-set, moustache. He said 'My politics are too right to make me want to be a social worker. They're all a flock of conformists on the left.' The conversation was extremely pedestrian — sport, board games. Religion never came anywhere close. The only hint of its presence (it was, after all, the reason for the gathering) was the small photograph of (I assume, from Collins' dictionary) Baha'ullah, watching us from its safe perch on top of a bookcase.

We played Charades and Wink Murder (the eye-contact game). The latter was very addictive, the more so because I was able to gaze into the eyes of a girl called Ruth: irritating voice, wheezy breath, habit of moving and looking in a very

insensitive way, thus exciting — could it be intentional, one wondered? Her face — well-proportioned, slightly ugly in detail, but capable of a sensuous fullness. Very curvy body; large breasts filling her Levi shirt beautifully. Whether her stupidity, her complete otherworldly (from my p.o.v.) sensibility, added or subtracted to / from her effect on me, I don't know.

Kate; dressed in a rather grotesque satiny dress of her own making and design, she sat completely withdrawn. Almost catatonic; she was dragged into the Murder game, but soon left, to hide in the kitchen, eating jelly.

I felt at ease to the point of boredom. Was on the point of saying to Ruth 'You have marvellous breasts' — but of course this would have destroyed the conditions which allowed my emboldening boredom to ripen. Anyway, I felt alienated, not in the sense of being outside, but just of having no words with meanings common to all of us. Nonetheless, 'fun' describes the evening well. Like Colonsay House last year. Murder went on until 2am. This eye-contact, with its illicit tinge, is far more satisfactory communication than banal conversation.

Sunday February 17th

During last night's charades, I set the title 'Waiting for Godot'. The actor went through the motions of waiting, and someone on the team called out 'Waiting!' I thought 'Damn, it's too easy.' The actor prayed, looked up at the ceiling. Someone said 'God' — having been told this was the first syllable. They even got 'For' — then spent ages running through all the possibilities. 'Waiting for Godding, Godet, Godain, Godfrey...' — eventually, by the law of possibilities, someone hit on Godot.

Today: Ali left the new Magazine single in my room while I was showering. I played it, and taped it, in the record room. Also played my own compositions on the TDK I was using, adding parts on the old, haywire piano.

After lunch I wrote a composition, 'Pieces From', based on Barthes' notions of literature for language's sake — the usual length; 3 pages, about 2½ hours. Sense

is unavoidable, and unfortunately a rather metaphysical symbolism seems to creep in — consciously avoiding this defeats the ideal of letting the language alone steer. The result was a babble of interesting images, many grotesque. Thus the piece lacks a unity, but has considerable fascination.

Spectacular door display. ('The Dead Class' photos.)

Read Chaucer's 'Franklin's Tale'.

Tuesday February 19th

Why did I laugh last night? As Keats almost said. It was the Borges Seminar, in a rather pleasant bourgeois front room, amidst assembled academics — Paul Schlicke, friend, hostess (dull woman), Ian. We were reading 'The Secret Miracle' at Ian's suggestion, and my nervousness, kept under control before the reading, exploded during my turn — reminiscent of class readings at school. My voice began to crack, everything was unreal, then I came to the phrase 'he pressed his attentions on her' and, of course, the smutty *double entendre* was the straw that broke the camel's back — I giggled frenziedly, apologised, continued, my voice swaying and faltering like a raft in a storm. Worst of all, my incursion into taboo / the humour of puberty was not acknowledged overtly — I was simply ignored. Nonetheless, I managed to make some perceptive comments. Paul is a 'meat & potatoes man' — a self-righteous mediocre. Talks too much.

This side of me which delights in destruction — particularly of myself. Or perhaps it is the cumulative effect of the urges to raise oneself at the expense of the world and to preserve the world at the expense of oneself: both quite reasonable motives alone, together disastrous.

Walked all the way home — at least 5 miles — around midnight.

Today: the car is fixed — another £13. I drive to the huge Garthdee Fine Fare supermarket, buying provisions like a good little consumer. The feeling,

nonetheless, that this lifestyle is, for me, fraudulent; and therefore I can quite harmlessly live it for great lengths of time.

The glimpses of garages, everyday working-class life. Everywhere radios play R1. But in this no-nonsense atmosphere it is forgivable — who cares about nuances of the banal & manipulative when great blocks of complex machinery have to be wrestled with?

Bought a semiological study of TV: 'Reading Television'. Spilt spaghetti on 'Structuralism & Since' — the red stains are not as alliterative as their description.

Language lecture on French influences: French words are less emotive than their 'native' equivalents. I think I habitually use French-derived words a lot. (See this entry: 'bourgeois', 'double entendre', 'mediocre', 'nuance', 'banal'!)

The man from the little 'cheap' garage who helped tow my car down King Street, who crouched amongst the tools in the back of the van, who was endearingly unceremonious, even peremptory, in his instructions to me ('Get in the van!') — this man arrived at the little garage at 10.30 in a shiny Jaguar XJ6 with custom number plates.

Why should the apprentices worry that there is such uneven distribution of the profits of their labour — it is a victory for the working class that it should be able to afford the luxuries of its own making. This 'boss', whom I observed carrying the rubbish along to the end of the lane, didn't have to straddle classes, because he has acted on the Tory contestation that there is no class conflict of interest, thus there is no gap between classes unless people imagine one, and refuse to cross it. He is the conspicuous one in a thousand who has been able to exemplify this shaky ideal, and thus defuse working-class discontent by that treacherous weapon, hope.

Everything; TV, government, manufacturers, the beguiling textures of products like the cars he has his apprentices wash rigorously — everything is on his side — why should the 999 other workers resist? They certainly wouldn't object to the

constitution of my 'everything', for it is the fatal weakness of the proletariat that they are, by training and calculated underprivilege, materialists. Before, it was their punishment to be the authors of their own chains. Now it is their privilege.

(All the significant words on this page are derived from French, except 'fatal', 'weakness' and 'calculated'. These are also the most forceful and felt words. French is smoother, more rhetorical.)

At the Borges seminar, it was debated whether to put the meeting off yet another week, since there was only one more person this week than there had been last week. 'It would be appropriate if it were postponed infinitely,' I suggested.

Wednesday February 20th

Something is wrong. Other people are out of step with me. Most of the time I rationalise it, make it just about acceptable that I am friendless, attribute it to my own individuality, introversion, intelligence. But come on, is it really so necessary that I and they should be so mutually antagonistic, and that, even when contacts are made, they are so profoundly unsatisfactory? Somewhere, I know it, there are people like me. But maybe this conviction is the obstacle between me and others.

Rehearsal at Viv's — convivial. Hate-session at the beginning on Paul Schlicke — Viv would like to castrate him very slowly.

Thursday February 21st

A Sociology tutorial from a stand-in with a homely N. English accent and mild manner — he gave a methodical exposition of Marxist social theory in a strangely calming way. The mixture of his bland peacefulness and the acidity of what he said (he called it 'naughty') was endearing. Five minutes overtime, he asked 'Are any of you going anywhere at 3 o'clock?' We explained it was time for the Sociology lecture. 'Oh, fuck that,' he said.

NME and NY Review of Books infused me with a measure of glamour.

Friday February 22nd

Fog, the wide rim of the wheel in my fingers. By Dundee, sunshine. I walked down the hill from the Free Car Park to the city centre — an impressive web of homely streets, glamorous shops, a slick shopping centre. An old man wearing a beret read the Telegraph. Every bench was a community of OAPs. I crossed the bridge playing 'Young Americans'. At a forest roundabout, picked up an engineering student, hitch-hiking. He was from Hillhead, Wavell House. Conversation was difficult over the engine and the music, so he smoked, and I drove, wishing I could accompany the cassette more freely.

Edinburgh. Record shops, Thin's, Fruitmarket. What a civilised place, how pleasing to the eye, but stifling too. It simultaneously opens fantastic possibilities — a culture of gallery-prompted, boutique-dressed hedonism, a radical, intelligent, irreverent street dialectic — and pronounces them improprieties. Between them, the bracketing, immaculate buildings and the remorselessly sweeping cars keep the people in line.

Restlessness: physical, a frustration of the muscles, and mental, a sense of reluctant inertia, confinement. Perhaps it's because of the closeness of the contradictory experience of car travel — at once the 'authentic existence' which comes with the defeat of habit, and the incredible, fertile thoughts & pictures it stimulates, and, on the other hand, the unwanted responsibility of being a 'road-user', following a strict, artificial code, and having to sit immobile in a very confined space for hours, unable to translate adrenalin into muscle movement.

Saturday February 23rd

This city reminds me of Paula, she is always just out of sight. In the Fruitmarket Gallery coffee-shop, amongst the shoppers on Princes Street (out of character), at the Film Theatre (visiting the loo, of course).

I watched 2 videos at the New 57 Gallery — 'Distinct' & 'Pieces I Never Did'. The first was tedious, cliché posing as comment on cliché. The second was unsettling: an ugly adolescent explained his video projects, intercut with his furious cries of 'Shut up!' One of the scenes showed him masturbating in a chair. Most of the others were pedestrian, but the overall theme was good — here were projects which he had rejected, realised. But the part of him which rejected them could not be silenced, and punctuated the video uncomfortably with 'Shut up!' How many artists have listened to this voice, and presented nothing? We'll never know. (The tape was by David Critchley.)

Narrative Painting downstairs — 3 by RB Kitaj, one of Paula's favourite painters. I didn't see her name in the visitors' book. Visited the Talbot Rice art centre — closed.

This evening, to the Film Theatre to see Wadja's 'Man of Marble'. Caroline was tearing tickets — I stood with her for a few minutes, even tore a couple of tickets. It's easy to talk to her. Then the film — about an assertive, hyper-active woman film-maker. Conventional sequence of realistic expositions of character's morality, and wider social questions. Well done. I had said I would see Geoff & Caroline afterwards about a Japanese film to be screened tomorrow, but I didn't want to. I shuffled out, dazed, and saw Caroline sitting reading. I didn't turn back.

There was thick mist outside, sea fog. I drove to Lauderdale Street and looked at the lit windows. When I got home, I walked around the block. Thought — this youth is an illusion, really I am old, life has passed me by, I am on the brink of death, nothing lies in front. The satisfaction of self-pity. The welcome state of escaping habit and seeing oneself, however painfully, once more, unfettered by routine distractions. Two displacements helped here: geographical & imaginative — this stay in Edinburgh, this film. Art too functions as it should: challenges the conception one has of life, demands a reassessment. So, it takes all these stimulæ to bring me to the realisation that I am still in the grips of the emotion that I reluctantly label love, for the part of myself, the escape from myself, the unviable possibility that I label Paula.

An awkward conversation with Mother about her writing — she has built a wall of secrecy around herself, and thinks that the greatest intimacy is to give others a glimpse of this wall's composition. The effect, however, is only more distancing. She suggests that my generation will find the writings of hers as sentimental as they find their parents'. Then she assumes her discursive, didactic air to talk about Robert Frost, and there is no stopping her. 'My kind of poet writes prose,' I say.

Do relationships between humans, easy, close relationships, exist at all? Or have I been duped by a popular myth, barricaded against its revelation by fiction & lore? If they do exist, nothing else — 'intelligence', material concerns, pride — deserves to be kept, attended to, encouraged, for all oppose the bond. But if these are sacrificed, what identifies the creatures comprising the link, what prevents the intimacy, consisting only of itself, from being meaningless?

Sunday February 24th

Prolonged dream in which I was with Paula, not her lover but a kind of devoted companion, somewhat undervalued by her, but nonetheless tolerated. The loss of waking.

Notes from the Botanical Gardens: There is fresh grass & growing wood, and on the breeze suburban birdsong and botanical scent. The sun is uncertain, but it warms my white skin. The slopes stop at my bench, from which I can survey informal vistas of branches and lawn, and often the cloudy geometry of the city skyline. Why resist the scene? It's easy to discard reservations about the close-cropped grass (I would let it grow) and nodal paths (too prescriptive, these routes) when the pigeons clap their wings with such unfussy vigour.

The paths are penitence for the aberrant strollers. If Eve had only picked, not eaten, the forbidden fruit, God would have felt it necessary only to install paths in Eden.

The hot-houses, the gallery. Back home — the house empty. Father has driven north. Mother has 'gone for a walk in the hills' — she phones me from a private phone; I tell her I'm leaving. The drive to Aberdeen in darkness.

At last, in my own room, I am lifted out of my trough of loneliness by reading a review of Rosa Luxembourg's letters to her lover / mentor, Leo Jogiches.

Monday February 25th

Very little family contact occurred over the weekend. The peculiar resurgence of feeling for Paula climaxed after I reread the April 13th 1979 diary period — at last I cried at the whole savage raising and crushing of hope. At least a temporary respite, a measure of pressure released for safety's sake.

Today, lightheartedness. Bought a canvas bag (Chinese) and ate at Jaws, reading The Guardian. Took Terry Hawkes' 'Structuralism & Semiotics' out from the Linguistics section of the library, and read about Vico (cross-hair: 'Joyce, Dante, Vico', Beckett essay) — whose ideas are attractive, requiring less concession than agreement.

I switch paradigms: the 'student' paradigm trails over into my 'family' identity, making me an outsider, not an authentic member of that set, but, by definition, an exception. Back here, I am defined by my similarity with other students, and can thus indulge my differences to establish an authentic identity.

Family roles are on the Syntagmatic dimension: elements from different paradigms (the Father, the Mother, the Schoolboy, etc.) are organised into a rigid syntagmatic structure, like a sentence. Each member must conform to his function, must converge towards his syntactic placing in order to ensure the coherence of the sentence, the family. The meaning of the sentence can be affected by all, but because this affects each role, there is pressure, especially from the dominant, governing elements, which discourages such destabilising forces. The sentence is a prescriptive, hierarchical structure. There is no individual freedom, only structural responsibility. However, when the Schoolboy

escapes from the Syntagmatic family to the Paradigmatic school class, for instance, he enters a role of potentiality. Classified by similarity, he is distinguished by difference, and can develop divergently. This notion, of course, ignores the fact that social unity is a Syntagmatic construction, and that the Paradigmatic classification of school is only a method of mass-producing cheaply and efficiently Syntagmatic units to be fitted into the repressive, hierarchical social sentence, and that the inevitable individuality of this school structure is stridently repressed by such devices as discipline, lack of flexibility of teaching according to individual traits, and, most obvious of all, uniform.

This assumes that the categorisations 'Schoolboy' etc are naturally the best way of dividing groups according to basic similarity, but what if attitudes, assumptions, etc (and these too are arbitrary gauges of 'character') are more similar within a family than in generation strata? And it ignores the tendency of the constituent elements of a Paradigmatic register to conform, not diverge.

The problem is that the Paradigm / Syntagm distinction is not fixed: according to the organisation of a social structure, it can be either. All that can be said is that in our society, to preserve coherence and prevent divisive class solidarity and 'unproductive' individual deviance, the Syntagmatic model is preferred. This is so devised that no Paradigm is uninterrupted by Syntagmatic strata, all leading in different directions: the Trade Unionist is also an account-holder in a building society (he's 'with the Woolwich', with all its silly badges and enforced identity of 'one big happy family'), or other Paradigms parading, in the interests of the establishment, as Syntagms.

This is just an expansion of Marx's 'Class Interest' to a wider context. But it rejects revolution, and defies utopianism, unless in a very convoluted form. Its conclusion is a society of rather insular communities with common interests but no internal cohesion — identity is expressed negatively — and centrifugal tendencies on the overall scale. But surely, unless there were myriad Paradigmatic cross-references — which, paradoxically, weaken the Paradigmatic structure of each set — these communities gel into Syntagms?

God, this is confusing. But fascinating!

Read Sarah McCoy's 'The Net': splendid & annoying.

Tuesday February 26th

Use of the car permitted me to visit all sorts of widely distributed places between lectures. Slept in, then drove to the gallery, bank, language, Grays art school, Sociology, Hillhead. Breakfast in Martins', Union Street: read an Indian short story in Bananas. Bought Art Monthly in the gallery: read it in Language.

Grays: a remote, flimsy but handsome modern building amidst glowering, grand trees, rhododendrons, lawns, views of damp-looking valley. Inside, the centreless corridors opening onto creative workshops, disorganised, active. Fascinating and disconcerting — our lecture theatres are, in comparison, so solid, so unforgivably sterile.

Idea for a story: very conventional narrative (perhaps a love story a la women's magazine) undercut by disconcerting shudders in the structure, breaks into subconscious preoccupations, and taboo glimpses at the harshly inanimate surroundings of the character. Or more overt subversion: snatches of meaningless, suggestive unbound language.

Free anxiety during Language — or was it a result of ODM-G's aggressive tone of voice, or my overt (though unobserved) inattentiveness, or the very strong coffee I'd had for breakfast? Combined with lack of exercise.

This course-work stifles my real development (although it could be argued that its effect is, negatively, positive: it makes my own alternatives more attractive, and more likely to be followed through) — I would like a year out (perhaps staying here — the environment is relatively well-balanced between lack of distraction and fair accessibility of stimulae) to read, say, Freud's 'Interpretation of Dreams', Beckett, all about Semiology, the various off-shoots from diverse sources such as periodicals, follow-ups to accidental finds in the library, and so on. But most

important, to translate, process and reproduce these inputs into my own output; to experiment, reject, develop, seek criticism, and so on. I want the opportunity to let the world come to my desk, to writhe at my feet, awaiting its unmasking.

After an O-PEN meeting at Viv's I conclude, not in any anguish, but simply with long-accepted resignation, that I am unreachable. Perhaps that is the unassailable definition of my self-conception — in which case 'I' becomes not the inaccessible object, but the theme of unreachability. This makes identity fraudulent, but not unworkable.

Semiotics (at least in its description of social interactions) is institutionalised self-consciousness. I use it, as I sit in a room of people watching their postures and postulating, silently, my own interpretations, to legitimise my alienation.

Wednesday February 27th

Alain Resnais' 'Providence' — a film which transposed some familiar ideas — structural complexity, making strange, parody, symbolism — into rather unappealing concrete instances; its effect on me was split between negative reaction to its component parts (Ellen Burstyn, middle-aged American woman; the dicey wit of the dialogues; the soft focus, white carpet lifestyle; the acty acting) and enthusiasm at the overall effect, which subverted these elements. Good photography (apart from the soft focus), good comments on writing. During the film I imagined myself despairing of the script's progression, and deciding to abandon its writing. Seeing it retrospectively, however, I decided it was worthwhile after all, despite its squibs.

Masturbation is commoner amongst the more intelligent — mainly because heterosexual relationships are rarer at this level (it is also a class thing).

In Bisset's I came across Barthes' 'Image-Music-Text': splendid, splendid!

Girls always tell you: 'You're too analytical, you should just accept things, not think about them.' Girls don't accept that things could be different if people

analysed and acted upon their analyses. Girls are ruined by rigorous socialisation — why? Because they are the reproducers of generations, they are the inculcators of morals & mores, they are the attitudinal backbone (whether they want to be or not) of this corrupt society. That is why feminism is much more than the solidarity of another underprivileged group — it is potentially the severance of the life-blood arteries of that greedy and expensive patient, capitalism.

Rhetoric like that is laughable. Sometimes I get voices in my head which do nothing more than drone out rhetorical structures, quite empty of sense, like national anthems without notes.

Write an incoherent prose piece called 'Hatness'. Or just 'Hat'; the style set by the title, hat as symbol of pompous bourgeois ridiculousness, now discredited generally (although fashionable in the music culture).

Thursday February 28th

In a love-letter I wrote 'rescue me from this bottle in which I can only write messages which, like me, remain trapped inside' — but this is an illusion, or an affectation, congruous with love and suited to love-letters. Its corresponding image in less affected locations (like 'reality') is that of being the observer of all those others who are trapped together, with all their communications and acts, in their own great big bottle, which I sometimes wish to enter, and often feel relief at being outside. 'Love' inverts — the glass wasn't broken, but for a few months it seemed that my solitude was more confined than 'their' (her) outside communality. As if an absence weren't infinite!

A Cuban film, 'History of Underdevelopment'. Very good, study of a man disoriented by women and the tumultuous crises of the early 60s in Cuba — as a bourgeois intellectual, he finds himself suddenly 'underprivileged'.

Political polarisation in Phil. Special Class — I argued that the bonds of Western democracies were internal, thus more devious & dangerous than Eastern oppression.

Downtown in the car, wearing business-like clothes.

Reading Barthes, I feel constrained about expressing myself, language, or whatever. The film, B's book — both are measures against which my life and thought fall short.

Friday February 29th

Skipped both lectures, spent money I don't really have on Mr Partridge's 'Take Away / Lure of Salvage' — a very enjoyable yard of bizarre pieces of musical junk — great big chords, catatonic rhythms. The spaces as important as the masses. Imaginative, stimulating. (Barthes: 'little parlour game: talk about a piece of music without using a single adjective.')

If identity consists of habitual processes, here is a trait of mine: I experience emotional extremes not close to the ostensible 'actual' sources, but in small doses which increase the more the memory is re-examined, as if accumulating sediment and growing instead of being dissolved by time. The chief characteristics of this process are delay and inverse accumulation of status, its prerequisites are solitude and inwardness, and its implication is this: emotion is, for me, subservient to cerebral stimulation — or, alternatively, the cerebral function demands the role of moderator between stimulus and response, and despite its hindering effect on natural reactions, refuses to be suspended or bypassed. If this were natural, or if I used words only as they applied to what I considered to be unchanging elements of my own perception of myself, I would simply call this mode of response 'emotion'. But language is not mine to modify, and if it were, would not require modification, since I would be its standard. As it is, then, the language by which I conduct my inner investigations condemns me simply by the definitions of its words. Furthermore, it is the cerebral element which is most open to the attack of such words as 'emotion', for it is the seat of language. Unwilling to call the validity of language, and so itself, into question, it must suffer the blows of definitions which contradict its own perception of itself. Such is the folly of naming the unnameable.

Of course, I'm not really as cerebral as that implies, since I'm able to say that I wrote it in a spirit of irony, enjoying the construction for its own sake, and disclaiming any 'truth' value or applicability to the non-lingual 'real'. This may, on the other hand, be a good definition of the quintessentially cerebral: that which doesn't even seek justification from outside its own boundaries, and so denies the existence of such boundaries!

How clouds mock: by being maps of themselves.

How language is mocked: by the realisation that the word 'emotion' signifies 'the word emotion', not emotion (if this sentence is true, it contradicts itself, which probably confirms rather than denies its truth).

It is subversive to the concepts of reality and the 'necessity' of language / law structures to let form govern content to the extent that only form is real. I shall start the new Literature of Rhetoric, which, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Audience, shall spell the end of the fiction of factual language, institute the law of fiction, and delete the law of the institutions!

A dream this morning: the family was staying in a hotel in Rome. Emma had a room at the far end from the entrance, up ladders, along walkways. The isolation of this room depressed me, bracketed insecurely above a dim space with walls and ivy, so I went to the shoplike lobby at the front of the hotel — it may have been a travel agent's. Through the plate-glass window I could see a large cobbled square — buses and people were suddenly buffeted by a wind I knew was unnatural — a girl's dress blew up, hiding her head, and her panties were lowered enough to show pubic hair. On the top deck of a bus two people were swinging another girl against the front window — they threw her through it, and I watched her hitting the ground before the hotel, ejected as though she were the cause of the apocalyptic wind.

Symbolism: I can choose either to lurk inside myself, my family and past, or else watch the inaccessible world destroying itself from the vantage point, and with

the identity of a voyeur. I'm not willing to subject myself to the horrible wind, nor to enter into the violent (sexual) relationships by which the square-strollers destroy each other. But the role which these reservations forces one into makes it possible that I'm responsible for the events beyond the glass, that the wind is my spiteful desire.

Sunday March 2nd

Yesterday and today I am in that archetypally modern position of being locked away in my room, remote from other people, indulging in secondhand contacts — an advertisement in Radio Times confirms the general applicability of this syndrome: Buy a complete set of Dickens, (bound in 'real kidron') — 'Dickens is warm... Dickens is *human*. His pages teem with *real* people...' Dickens goes right to the source of the modern disease, social isolation, and, with his unique hallucinatory action, eases the tensions and smoothes away unbound anxiety — fast.

For me, it is Chaucer. (The other author 'surely... to be found first in every English-speaking home.') I'm reading 'The Miller's Tale', about the student Nicholas, the busy lodger, who seduces his landlord's 18 year-old wife with a ruse about the second flood. The lust and the ruse I could muster, but the modern room no longer has nubile landladies hovering outside the door; instead there are everywhere other students, bracketed securely in a vertical register with me, for statistical rather than constitutional similarity, and nowhere can I find the formula to initiate a translation to the horizontal (in every sense of the word) — the institution penalises obliquely by preventing the formation of the interactional sentence (in both negative and positive senses).

Ideas for my long essay: Radio Times as haven of bourgeois values, photographs, metaphors. Gloss. Food. Cleanliness. Emphasis on consumption. The family. Leisure. Business. The deviants are 'mean and hungry' — they do not eat. H.G. Wells is 'well-fed' — and was upwardly mobile — 'The former draper's apprentice has achieved fame'. Class structure is emphasised in relation to upward mobility: 'There's still time to improve on your children's mocks'...

Monday March 3rd

Parts of the dream-fragments of an uneasy night:

An episode with a communal shower (in the Thomsons' garage) in which I stood naked, as certain female students amusedly approached. Only mild embarrassment. As they came in, I walked out, towards the house.

In the close, crowded room of a Creative Writing Group seminar, though not presented as such, but as a group which I knew slightly, and expected to know better. In response to a disturbance outside, I mounted the precarious tiled roof, with dormer windows, ridges and chimneys, and watched the storm — black clouds in an unbroken bank towering over a great moon & hills, constant green lightning high up, and scattered, battered cottages down below. Ian Stephen called around a gable-ridge, suggesting that I come back inside.

Large capital letters cut out of green paper sit on my white walls like dozing, buzzing insects, waiting to swarm together on a sheet of blank paper into some sort of mutually definitive meaning. The effect is grotesque, truthful — what more is the room for than the coding and decoding of such signals, what more am I than an apprentice codemaster?

Human spring has come, although the crocuses have been out for a week: everywhere one passes those self-congratulatory three-legged races, couples. Let copulation thrive.

My sex-drive is rebuffed, and must turn in and against me.

After Language, during which I'd sat high up where I could look out of the window at passers-by, I went to the Sociology department for a Xerox. I stood in the corridor reading a display about Class. I was just beginning to feel depressed that my confident & sociable mood had been frustrated by my isolation (the handsome women walking in the sun were, for all practical purposes,

hallucinatory). I saw a notice announcing a class rep. meeting I should have been at — it had started half-an-hour earlier. I stood outside the door, and could see the shapes of people in the frosted glass panel. I walked home, having sat waiting for the Sociology lecture to begin before realising that there are none this week.

I am not derelict, it seems to me that my doors stand open and I await occupation. But there's no knowing the verdict of my assessors, and the boards may already be in place.

Project: provide the English language notice-board with a motto: 'Non compos departmentis'.

Tuesday March 4th

The property is maintained: Jessie is here, cutting through my oversleep and silently (and with much din) pronouncing me redundant. No such service is available for mental well-being, and so what affects the psyche is the contingent effects of a physical process. War is a good example. But, granted cleaning is a positive function, one can only cite such incidental therapies as having one's hair washed and cut as more fortunate examples of this refusal to cater for body *and* mind.

I'm talking, of course, about directly human services: I don't count the opiates, electronic, celluloid, or whatever. I accuse this society of neglecting the institutionalisation of human affection in the same way that it has institutionalised everything else. Either we must progress back to the more open times when people spoke to each other, or we must (*they* must) introduce a currency of psychic welfare, the saleable commodity of human interaction. The first steps have already been taken in prostitution and computer dating.

As regards sincerity, I am different from many others not because I adhere to an identity more fixedly, or flit from one to the next to an abnormal extent, or do likewise with an opinion, or a purpose, but because my actions in these spheres are regulated by self-consciousness, awareness and observation of the rigidity or

flexibility of the processes, as well as the usual, common determinants which mostly go unnoticed or unacknowledged.

Let me use the preceding paragraph as an example of its own point: it took shape as much in response to the rules of rhetoric as the 'truth' it was setting out to express — for this was not fully formulated when I began writing. Yet, when it was finished, the paragraph seemed to me to have said what I wanted it to. This is because the relationship between Signifier and Signified is dialectical to the extent that they cannot properly be separated. Thought is language, language thought: this is all we know and need to know, to abuse Keats.

Nicholas, you're so sincere that you can't stop yourself from exposing the fraudulence of sincerity, if only because that leaves you as sole vehicle of Truth.

Fellini Satyricon at the 62 Club, amongst glamorous gays and attractive women, then driving back to Hillhead in the car, rushing around corners in the dark, empty streets, quite surprised.

In Design magazine, a furniture manufacturer predicts a trend to living alone, along with all the other fruits of our future: electronic gadgetry, poverty. 'Marriage will be too risky for people,' he says. He implies that people will be too risky for each other, and will stay at home with their trusty products.

This is a blow to me — the future is, after all, the only place I ever meet people these days.

I'm proud, morose, apathetic: friendlessness just feeds these insatiable gluttons, who are responsible for it in the first place. The circle would be unbreakable if there were not more to me than this. Roll on conflict.

A circle of vicious chickens and eggs: that these voracious traits were the necessary consequence of friendlessness, perhaps.

Kafka, Kierkegaard, Eno; all testify to the beneficial effects of thoughtful solitude. Kafka: 'This much is certain: I could not have achieved what I have so far without being alone.'

Tiredness, restlessness, indigestion.

Wednesday March 5th

Brecht's 'Caucasian Chalk Circle' at His Majesty's. Met Ian Stephen at the interval, he bought me an orange juice. At the end I walked out ahead of him & his friend.

This evening, high spirits in the flat: buckets of water against people's doors, ironing boards in their beds, which have nothing supporting the mattress, and cave in when I am on. It was Lep's birthday, so he was victim of this mattress trick. We had all closed our doors, but were waiting for the yell, so doors furtively opened along the corridor — unfortunately, Lep's was one of them, and so the thing continued, bars of light being thrown out periodically into the dark corridor: I knew because I was crouching around the corner, eyes at floor level, watching it all. Of course, when the bed finally collapsed, nothing more was heard than a brief laugh.

Exhibition — 'Style in the 70s'. Large, colourful abstracts. Also Grays Sketch Club show; some very good stuff along with nauseous rubbish.

It's not necessary that I ponder Brecht's political message from 'Caucasian Chalk Circle': not only have I seen it before (only two years ago, but I hardly remember it), but I'm writing an essay today about the de-radicalisation of the Labour party, myself expounding the arguments of Marx and the New Left.

Thursday March 6th

A half-hour conversation with a pleasant Sociology postgrad from Algeria about Semiology and my long essay: suggested books, talked around the subject. A

young Highlands specialist also contributed. Caramel-coloured office, postcards of Algeria to introduce me to his colleague. Their interest surprised me pleasantly, the subject came off the pages into the human world, and I was briefed as its representative.

After supper I walked through the snack bar. Saw a Guardian on a table, decided to look up TV listings. Asked the boy next to it, who was reading The Times, if he was reading it. 'No,' she said: it was Mellinda Wollen! My pulse sped, but I decided to stay and read the paper. Hardly dared move, but soon calmed; read an article about W.H. Auden by Philip Larkin. Mel kept eating and paging through The Times. She tilted the paper towards me — at one point our page-edges touched, but when I looked up she moved hers away. Her feet shuffled towards mine on the bar, she propped herself with a hand on the cushion of the stool between us. She had finished eating. My feelings were mixed, but it was enough to be close, uncommitted. My only decision was that I wouldn't leave first. Presently she left: I was surprised, I hadn't envisaged the possibility!

O-PEN rehearsal at Andy's. Egyptian cats. Drove Angus & Joy home. Angus asked me where I was born, whether I'd lived in Britain all my life. When I'd explained, he said, 'I was just asking because I know quite a few people who've lived most of their lives abroad, Kenya, Iran, that sort of place, and they have the same air of distance as you, as if they're not really worried by the things that concern most people.'

Friday March 7th

O thou uncalled, inescapable messages,
O thou ideological images
My duty is to destroy you, you leave me no alternative

Women? I see no descent from the abstract to the real, not for the indefinitely continued time being, not for the ever and the ever, and will I really suffer? I think not: as Ana said as we drove along Princes Street, having dropped Paula for

the last time, 'Love is like ice cream.' 'I wouldn't say it was quite as cold as that,' I said. 'No, I mean if you've never had it you can't miss it,' said Ana.

No matter that life has given that the lie, it gives itself the same, and discredits its own discrediting.

Games.

Byron's radio infringes on the soundspace of my room — no, he's turned it off. And gone.

At last external reference is severed, and with it my loneliness.

Journal 2

A puppy playing with great men's slippers

Sunday March 9th

Caught in the machine. Yesterday I went for a drive in my car: 50 miles, Stonehaven, S. West, Stonehaven, Aberdeen. Last night Nightline — the new girl breathed heavily, hardly spoke at all, and went home soon. No calls. My car wouldn't start this morning — pushed it down to George Street, abandoned it. I would spend my time with people if the alternative was open to me. Right now I'm listening to my tape machine, while my washing is spinning in the launderette. Bring on the new Luddites.

As for all this humanist education, it merely isolates. No time to interact with people when one must read about their interactions in literature, sociology, or the medium of their communication, language. And then when contact does, exceptionally, occur, one is too self-conscious, too cynical, too analytic, to be able to bear it.

Conversation is dead. Radio 1 inescapable, Western Europe unmistakably in decay. 3 Middle Eastern students sat outside on a path in the sun, in a triangle,

talking animatedly. They asked me the time as I hurried by, carrying my Akai in my arms like a baby. Later, with Simon, with Ali, with Jeff, sparse, awkward words in unfinished, uncertain sentences. People do not reply, reservations turn our reserve to silence.

But is this really a cry from my heart, or just further compulsive analysis? Worse still, are you incapable of distinguishing between the two?

A paradox contains no contradictions.

I've spent a surprising length of time today sleeping.

Monday March 10th

English Lit. exam over, about the see to the car, stranded at George Street, made this not to represent a certain lighthearted business.

Byron's habit of coming in and turning on Radio 1 as he would turn on a lamp annoys me intensely. Why don't I tell him? Because it is a crucial part of our relationship, which consists now in negatives, that he annoys me. If this were not so, where would we stand? Things would be ambiguous, our distance uncertain, and thus determinable by minute, peripheral circumstances. Criticism implies both distance and closeness: objectivity (ie distant, less charitable subjectivity) and the will, the commitment to positive change.

Alternatively, I don't attempt to silence the infuriating chatter & jingle of the radio because the anger it provokes in me conveys a strong sense of Byron's presence, and constitutes, in this negative scheme of things, a closeness.

Bought Camus' 'Youthful Writings'. Reservations: at his best he is a pale imitation of Kafka, without K.'s imagination. He is too sentimental, too respectful, despite his radical pretensions, towards literature, art, culture, and he is absurdly religious, despite his atheism (a familiar existentialist trait). To his credit, he anticipates these criticisms.

Browsing in a psychology book: at my age, it says, one begins to lose the adolescent identity one has worked so hard to create as one enters peer and sexual relationships. Only this denial of oneself permits further maturation. If this were my goal (which is by no means certain), this diary would only be an albatross about my neck if a clear picture a) emerged, and b) was taken as authentic. Certain features recur to make a) possible — depression, isolation (if not loneliness), cleverness (at the expense of deep perception), but as for b), I'm not so stupid as to overlook the entirely normative forces which determine what gets written, their lack of particular relevance to my own individuality. Am I renouncing the notion of individuality altogether? Quite the contrary: my strategy protects my 'soul' by pronouncing it inaccessible, impenetrably personal, a shrine locked even to my own investigations. My intention is to laugh so hard at the concept of individuality that I will be able to keep it, as an old man contrives to keep the old dog everyone advises him to have put down by kicking it in front of the neighbours.

The radio is the voice of your illness, which is the inability to hear the silence, listen to its emptiness, and understand. The radio trivialises, and that is why you cannot survive long without reaching for its switch. No matter that it insults you, wastes your time: anything is better than the understanding that utter thoughtless quiet brings. Anything is better than realising what you are, or are not. Your illness makes insult flattery.

Men can be divided into those who piss directly into the water and those who aim discreetly for the walls of the bowl.

Camus' early writings: not since coming across Kafka's 'Wedding Preparations' & Diaries have I had this pleasurable, onanistic impression of looking into a flattering, exotic mirror, and seeing a face which is unmistakably mine. The differences just confirm the resemblance. (These paradoxes are getting to be a bad habit.) 'In the Presence of the Dead' says things about Paula and me with unforgivable baldness, clarity for which I am grateful.

Two girls sat ahead of me on the bus. The one on the left was Indian, with straight dark hair, long lashes. On the right, a Western girl with incredible, wavy hair, very saturated and impenetrable, but copper red where the light caught it. They spoke in soft voices to each other, their heads no more than 15 cms apart, shoulders touching. The Indian girl looked constantly into the face of her friend with absurd simplicity, devotion, dependence.

Tuesday March 11th

In a dream, JBM & I ran our hands through each others' hair, drowsily. Hers was thick and wavy, and there were peculiar bumps at the back of her skull.

'You live your life divorced from reality.'

'I didn't know it was necessary to marry it.'

My writing is not what it could be. It cries out for seriousness, commitment, emotion rather than skittish intellectualism, a concern for human interactions, people living. But I have very little experience of this, want to condemn my society for its inducement to a pitiful poverty in social relationships, and so want to avoid producing escapist affirmations for it. Seriousness, commitment — these are the most important things: a sense of purpose, not this easy flippancy, facile anomie.

Wednesday March 12th

The new ascendancy of text over writer has unsettled the criticism of personality — but it has responded by emphasising the 'enigma' of the author. Thus the irrelevant and invalid act of inducing from text to message to man is perpetuated with the effect of intensifying the stature of the producer / generator and underlining the need for this critical approach.

Rehearsal at Newtondee: arrived late, very wet from the rain. Read 'Undercover Sonnet' from the top of a ladder — the others thought it appropriate that I should be 'aloof'.

Thursday March 13th

White sunshine is washing around everything. The Language exam passed pleasantly in a spacious, remote gymnasium with condensed sunshine and religious silence. We translated the texts of antiquity with monklike devotion and Machiavellian guesswork. And then I walked up and down the glaring cobbles of High Street, from McHardy's Post Office to Bisset's to the library to Bisset's, where I bought Walter Benjamin's 'Illuminations'. I have a great love for Jewish intellectuals (as long as they are left wing and European!) but today I would have a great love for anyone, provided they didn't impose on my freedom.

I had done no revision for this exam, but last night lay intense and bitten, considering the state of my writing, or more accurately the state of its possibilities, because what I have in my drawer is immature, pedantic, shameful. I can't take my own life as a subject, not directly at least, and I dislike unrestrained fantasy. I reject escapism. I want to combine 'social relevance' (ie worldliness, commitment) with implicit reassessment through imagination ('making strange', alienation). I would like to show the destructive effects of capitalism without creating prose so gloomy that the Sunday Times colour supplement is a welcome antidote. I would like to develop a private style with universal effectiveness. I would like there to be sunshine and life in my writing, but at the same time no clear distinction between form and content. These are critical terms. The last prose I wrote was 'Pieces From' — a dead end. Where now? No affirmations, no direct experience, no abstraction, no fantasy, no omniscience... the possibilities are not closed, negation could continue indefinitely without narrowing the range.

I have started a piece about a black man. Begins:

Without warning, the black man makes his first appearance in my diary. 'Wednesday,' it reads, 'white sunshine washed over everything. Lecture on Aristotle; hair of the girl in front. When I got home I found a black man in my room.'

Friday March 14th

O-PEN: Bernard is trapped by the duality of his writing roles into a characteristic mode which cannot transcend either, nor fuse both, nor plump for one. The roles are: Bernard the bourgeois and Bernard the poet. Neither can accept the other, and the only harmony comes when irony is heavily applied to mediate between them. So we have sarcastic stereotypes like the short poem about a bourgeois who is agonising about how to be a good poet, and decides to 'die' at 44 of sexual excess and consumption — 'why didn't I think of that before?' It is the ancient stereotype of the romantic hedonist, a singularly middle-class conception. The irony is that it kills the poet's search for his valid development stone dead, by bringing out the bourgeois in him, as if in condemnation, to deflate his pretentiousness. A simpler, unintentional irony makes the same point in a poem he has written about the Newtondee mongols — the imagery is brooding, the inmates described as insects, chewing on white paper words, unsettling. But the powerful imagery is the servant of the staid bourgeois dislike of deviance from 'the primrose petal path' of suburban norms. To Bernard, a lady with purple hair is a freak, not a dull banality. His descriptions of the 'pot plant land' and lovingly intricate, evocative, but populated by characters who are easy prey. He does not mock the middle-classes, but those who let the middle-classes down, who show their weaknesses — and he himself, with his pretensions to poetry, is one of these threats to stability, and must consequently be pilloried. The answer to Bernard's literary half, in his search for direction, is to pass the point of no return, beyond the boundaries of 'Irvine and Pittstrewan Road', and find a new subject matter; to start anew. Once outside, he could write about suburbia with real effect, real commitment. Needless to say his family, lecturer's post, house, will prevent him, and poetry will remain his guilty icing, gaining in avenue-credibility (and so losing the qualities it is capable of) with the minor

successes of 'Certificate of Excellence — 13th Prize for 'Lilac With Love', and our O-PEN performances. Should one complain? Probably not, just sigh.

Ian is a different case altogether. He has serious intentions for his writing, to the extent that his ambition and confidence in this realm give the lie to his fanatical concern for smooth social links — the residue of an island upbringing in a community which fears dissolution, and binds itself with the grip of survival, of isolation. The Bahai faith represents Ian's central preoccupation — to extend his values and thus his acceptance of and by the whole world. He explains Bahaimism thus: 'Roughly, the idea is that all world religions are basically the same really.' His poems share this sentiment: My Brother concludes: 'dreams are the same wherever you are, and people are people'. The strong narrative quality of his prose and performance repeats this by imposing an unavoidable intimacy — even in rehearsals, he fixes us with his sincere stare, yet acts his poems, and demands that the audience, or even his fellow O-PEN performers, act the part of listeners. At first sight this concern to lubricate relationships, formal or not, favours the oil at the expense of the hinges, or rather for the sole sake of the whole door. But if we turn to Ian's poetry, we get closer to an ulterior, but well-intentioned and sincere, motive. Ian's literary quality is at its peak when his poetry is most personal and private: 'Boatman, creelman, cling to your rope, for there's more than a job and a lobster to hold while your brother, in his room, has his hands in his head.' He has a talent with harsh, pure language which he smoothes with his island settings like pebbles on a beach: 'Black & white is in the flight of sheil-duck, over sulphur steam... cracked red... sheep snatch the rich of moss... scrambled up so close to the spine'. ('Volcanic Ridge') The mood is Celtic, puritan and pure. But Ian cannot 'indulge' himself with this for long, for he feels the strange, alternative world of cities, the South, the world, pressing on him; places where he is a foreigner who will be 'grudged and shunned' if he does not do as the Romans do. So Ian pulls the wide strands together in several ways: he begins to deprecate his own manner in his poetry: 'Too much point or too much span takes no grip on any globe'. I'm too insular, he is saying, I'm too cosmic too, take this penitent poem as my apology. It is as if he must periodically draw attention to his characteristic preoccupations in order to bring them home better next time to a placated and sympathetic audience. Ian's 'global' side is a net to

catch all men and draw them to the fold of the 'point', which is located around Stornoway, and comprises Ian's reality: but we do not need these forcible enticements, we would like to be transported there of our own accord, the delights of the language, the sincerity, these are enough. Ian is an outsider who feels the bonds of community very strongly — he must either retreat to his own parochial roots or universalise the feeling in the Bahai faith. I think the desire for universality is harmful to Ian's work, because it waters and corrupts the personal ring of the 'island' poetry — which has a natural, personal universality of its own. In the same way, his desire to be acceptable socially detracts from his natural charm — by ironing out the inevitable crumples, he not only flattens relationships, but begins to burn their very fabric.

As often happens, Ian made a salient criticism of himself once when he was ostensibly addressing someone else (Paul Schlicke). Paul was rejecting Borges — Ian said 'There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in your philosophy'. Ian's philosophy tells him that he must be a fisher of men. His intended profession is teaching. His poems are not content to present Ian's world — they must connect Ian's world with the world in which we all live. For this feat there is 'too much span', and the poems which attempt it suffer from the disparity. Ian must accept, in my view, that his poetry will fall into the hands of people who are far beyond the realm of his philosophy, that there *are* some of us so different, and that this does not detract from Ian's subjective view of his corner of reality, but gives it its true value, which is commensurate with its high degree of individuality.

These sketches detail the 'impediments' to their subjects' literary development — but can literature flourish without such a base to push itself off from? Is my problem that my literature casts off impotently from literature itself, like a man trying to climb off the ground by stepping up the rungs of his own limbs?

A splendid radio production of *Equus* blended with the misty view from the kitchen window. The boy and the horses, the path the houses. The psychiatrist, the kitchen.

Supper at Joy & Angus', then in my car to HM Theatre to see the London Contemporary Dance Company — first piece disappointing, second redolent of Major Tom and Kraftwerk's 'Mitternacht', with extraordinary gestures and exciting electronic music, final piece whimsical and seductive: a school-marm intoned banal verse, her young proteges flounced in their peasant skirts over cane chairs. The girls' act is a gamble — to be successful, they must force you to fall in love with them. Their success is inevitable, whatever dispassionate reservation one clings to at first.

A 'bop' at the Union (though Ian left us) — I danced 'til I was hot and exhausted, but Joy or Viv pulled me back onto the floor. The impersonality of disco — no-one looks at their partner. On the whole, so life-affirming that to observe this is to detract from it. Angus' peculiar friend Nick, who mocked my 'spaced-out' comments about the white gulls that circled high above the lit church steeple at Schoolhill and imitated my glee on hearing PiL's 'PiL' in the dungeon, but who was nonetheless awkward and buffoonish himself. Joy's obnoxious social conscience — washing dishes, smoothing things with her 'Alright, people...' — forgivable, of course, because of her universally acknowledged attractiveness and guilelessness.

Saturday March 15th

A rehearsal at Newtondee: breakfast at J & A's flat, tea and a fight with a Siamese at Kath's, an enjoyable rehearsal attended by a portly man sporting a full grey beard and whiskers — the community's resident philosopher. Back to Hillhead after lifts, to empty my room and move in Hector Boece 270A: a room inferior to mine. Mushroom-coloured walls, the smell of smoke, a book provided in the loo entitled 'Narcotic Plants'.

The coins splashed in his pocket.

Why is it not vanity to like one's own prose: because it is a contribution to the credibility and respectability of that nationalised commodity, language, not an expression (at least not primarily) of the 'self'. And anyway, vanity is a harmless

enough affectation, prizing as it does certain values chipped from the communal tablet and mixed according to the rules of accident, aptitude, self-conception and normalisation.

Since it is impossible to escape the communal, be deviant! Since there is no real self, be selfish! In this way you are pioneering new territories for your community psyche.

Everywhere I contradict myself — it is my consistency.

Monday March 17th

The Newtondee performance — splendid audience. Passed quickly. Afterwards I was cornered by one of the villagers, who wanted me to help her on with her coat, and acted coyly. I ran away rather precipitously.

Coffee in Newtondee House. Philosophical dispute / conversation with Dennis, a South African house organiser. He expounded the Steiner philosophy (the subjective objectivity, the 'scientific' discipline of furthering sensitivity to the spiritual world) — negatively, in the form of doubts and expansions on doubts, I put my position. Both our weltanschauungen are contradictory.

'My commitment is to the search.' 'For what?' 'For the highest level of potentiality open to me.' 'By what criteria?' 'Those gathered during the search.' 'You mean your direction continues its own momentum. But what began it?' 'The commitment.' 'It is pointless.' 'Its point is itself: it is a commitment to lack of restrictive commitment — it affirms my freedom and responsibility.' 'But these words mean nothing when you are only free, only responsible to this directionless wandering.' 'But in this "only" is the assumption that there is something better — I do not assume this.' 'That is your loss.' 'But you lost by assuming this very thing!'

'My commitment is to spiritual truth.' 'But believing in such a notion is an act of faith, and acting upon it an act of restriction — in order to follow this path, you

must turn away from all others without considering them.' 'But your commitment has the same disadvantage without the central point of finding the true way!' 'My true way is the appreciation of the variety of ways open to me. My direction is towards greater diversity of ways. This is my tentative commitment. I have the whole diversity of my own potentiality, and even your path is not closed to me.' 'But you have nothing. You have no way of entering any path with the necessary conviction.' 'But you, by doing just this, have thrown away an actual, tangible freedom; that of the awareness of potentiality, in favour of a narrow, assertive code. You are no longer a person, but an idea, and not even your own idea, for you have compromised an intuition for someone else's dogma.' 'But awareness of potentiality is futile without eventual selection, commitment.' 'No, it is a commitment in itself.' Et cetera ad infinitum.

'It's a pity you came so close to faith without being able to make the leap.'

'It's a pity you had such a sweeping view of freedom without keeping hold of your own responsibility to press on to a higher, richer variety.'

No, that doesn't represent my view. The variety is not *seen*, but created, and from that range the preferable direction is chosen. It is a process of self-actualisation. Only if the variety is 'objective' and 'real' is there the denial of freedom by the determination of the chosen direction by 'actual life' as opposed to the forming of life according to the selected direction.

One must be more creative than created.

(Fine, but the relationship is inextricably dialectical.)

Ian gave me this dialogue today, based on an exchange of ours on Friday:

N: I have this story that's a nightmare: going home, discovering this creature in the corner, at home, who's crouching with a pad of paper, (making a disconcerting figure), until I remember he's one of my characters and I should

take charge, have power, only he writes the last word of that, (oblique), this story.

I: I have this fear. You see I live, literally, up a ladder...

N: And that makes you frightened?

I: No, it's normally a happily realised dream, but... there's a lot of books up there that spill from shelves and, sometimes, form into little heaps around the squarefoot summit area of the ladder and...

N: And?

I: And I'm sure to open one of your stories, one day, and read of a man engulfed by his pages, or else, (more constructively), intent on architecturally constructing a cathedral with outer walls made of volumes.

N: Volumes?

I: Of books.

Tuesday March 18th

The sea exploding over the harbour wall at Stonehaven: the great mass heaves up into the air but does not fall back again as expected, instead disappearing into the wind.

A brazier with holes punched in it — at each shines the orange of the fire. (Dundee.)

Texture of lightly snowed hills, smooth grey sky, the tarmac road. The puritan perfection of it.

The doctor who stayed for dinner: believer in 'positive health' — like a disease, health is infectious. He is R.C., with a French wife. Has met Sartre's cousin, founder of the positive health idea. Sees 'Red Robbo' as one of the woodworms of the British heart of oak, relishes Anglican pomp and ceremony, yet agrees that much ails our society, that our sickness is caused by a radical flaw in the system.

This doctor had a spiritual crisis at my age — he walked all the way from London (where he was later to study medicine at St. Bart's) to Devon. He stopped at a monastery, and almost joined — but it was too abstract and intellectual for him.

Wednesday March 19th

New 57 Gallery ('Mysteries' — too banal not to be ironic: detective game pictures, a bathroom with clues), Thin's, Talbot Rice (Derek Roberts) — unimaginative, bland abstracts. Read several editions of Artforum in the opulent, empty hall — fascinating crowding of impenetrable, exciting projects. Encapsulated the dyspeptic energy and the straightforward directness of NY.

Better Books — fine socialist books, Benjamin, Althusser, Williams. All too expensive. Bauermeister's — a new Beckett story in NWW. Traverse — bought a ticket for this evening. In between, record shops, the student centre. Women and men on the streets — attractive, chic exteriors, unreachable selves, self-consciousness. Can I deny that this is my home? I could if I lived here, but as a visitor, aware of the place, aware of myself in it, I see too clearly the match.

Diaries — Pavese's & Brecht's. The most interesting books.

'Hard To Get' — by a woman, it put forward the gulf between women and men well. I mistrusted its realism at first, as it seemed to rely on an outer shell of recognisable life to hit targets which were in fact as peripheral to the audience as their corresponding portrayals. But the surface actualities added up unavoidably to something believable: women forced to be 'nice', having to separate their real pleasures (like vocational work) from their 'feminine' identities, under pressure from the expectations and judgments of men & other women. Neither were the

men flat — the intellectual (vegetarian, socialist, writer) was, on the surface anyway, uncomfortably familiar — but these are masks; 'some things are too secret to be understandable'. This defence was offered for the women, but the men were to be taken as they gave themselves. Such treatment is permissible when the inequality, the grossly patronising dominance (emotional terrorism) of men remains.

How far can you separate surface from core? At all?

The cruel dramatic irony of the rebuffed Glaswegian's declaration of love — he reaffirms his love with devoted altruism, 'understands' her rejection of him, yet is still a bastard, still blind and patronising because he fails to see her position in any terms other than his own. And to cap it all, she submits to his boyish rhetoric, despite understanding its bluntness, because this is how men act and this is how women act, and idealism only leads one into solitude.

Contrast between individual and social levels — is my preoccupation with my difference, uniqueness, simply a subjectivity which prevents me from seeing what a well-worn path I'm embarking on? Or does the stereotype of, for instance, the intellectual in this play, ignore the complexity and justice, and thus the moral imperative, of following this path? Learn from the play's observations and move on, above, beyond.

I told Father about the newness of Structuralism. He said this was old hat, and explained the difference between apriorism and empiricism!

The habit of intellectualisation: I turn people into ideas, I make the characters of my stories the actors of ideologies. But I do this not because I put the world of ideas above the world of people. Quite the contrary, I have become an intellectual because it introduced me to a new circle of friends: Kafka, Camus, Barthes, Adorno, Benjamin, Frisch, and so on. I specialised, turned away from social commitments to ideological ones, only on the condition that the ideologies condemned the perversion which forced me to do this, and affirmed the primacy of that which they were used to replace.

Thus existence precedes essence, capitalism is to be condemned for the subjugation of human relationships to commodity values. But the risk is that the ideas are more attractive than the reality of their realisation; even if it happened, one might ignore it deliberately, and turn back to one's books.

This is the problem of realistic literature — if it is really accurate, why read it instead of living it? Reading should remind you that you are reading, and prompt the question 'do you want to be reading?' If the answer is yes, ie commitment, then literature has the mandate necessary to be itself, with all the potentialities and resources it has. If then it chooses a realistic mode, it does so incidentally, with some wider purpose than imitation, with an unavoidable irony.

Friday March 21st

John Thomson yesterday. Wally Dug. John's garrulity in anecdote, his taciturn responses.

If one is truly concerned with literature in itself, one must acknowledge and emphasise the symbolic nature of all writing. This is done by the active creation of symbols, rather than self-conscious adherence to and exploitation of conventional symbols, which feign invisibility.

Father seems intent on making people humour him. Because I find this unacceptable (it is degrading to him) I persist in my provocative manner, waiting for the concessions which will break our deadlock by denying the need for constant competition. But all I seem to provoke is further aggression, and so a greater need to concede, tongue-in-cheek, to the all-encompassing authority of fatherhood.

All conflict is based on insufficient understanding. It is a right people will die to defend.

Saturday March 22nd

The paper onto which we are dribbled has as much depth as surface. Knowing this, I smear in many directions, making a fine mess for those spectators who have not acknowledged the depth of the pores, of which I am one.

The radio, the cats, books, television, employment: the neutral ground for our exchanges. Our exchanges: the radio, the cats, books, television, employment. (If the medium is neutral, the message is void.)

Of irony and its straight-man, reject the latter — otherwise the straight-man will grow bloated under constant nurture and eat irony, which is nature. This drip-feeding process is called specialisation, its home is university, its aim is safe integration into the rotting cuckoo's nest (in which the single cuckoo has convinced the proper inhabitants that they too are cuckoos who must join with it in ejecting the few dissenters from this view).

Demarco gallery, Stills, 1st of May bookshop. Silly utopia across the supper table, forced to the logical extremes of a moral & social intuition. BBC2 Playhouse — 'Rottingdean' by Richard Crane. Sarah Neville as Janet, reminiscent of Paula, the kind of girl I wish existed.

'Aspects' magazine.

Sunday March 23rd

Locusts, bears, stars, but no plot.

He patted the bungalow bricks into shapes, he populated the inner space, he was constricted by the similarity of his structure to countless real examples, and became its prisoner.

Lips-babble, brain-babble, burst babble.

An elements of the received identity of women — the constant assumption that people are all essentially the same, alongside the contradictory efforts to hold to common ground at the expense of original, personal conversation (which implicitly acknowledges radical variety). The result of the gap between what is accepted in theory and what is encountered in practice. Practical experience is thus managed, engineered, to fit the theory of the received identity / ideology. This is why it is doubly true for women that 'the personal is political'.

Why do certain women tolerate the obvious discrepancy here? Because the assumed similarity gives them a protected, privileged social role, that of social management. Thus the hostess, the muse, the mother, have a mythical objectivity in the community, an affinity with nature: they are somehow beyond all the complexities of autonomous identity, merged with other women into an essence, the mythical abstraction 'Woman'. Like a bottled sample of this ubiquitous vapour, each woman is measured by her proximity to the essence. Characteristic of the essence is its ambiguous blend of transience and subservience (the one justifies the other). Thus the 'enigma' of women simultaneously 'exalts' them and justifies their role as props to the excessive male ego.

Still water goes stagnant. The house of Strindberg's 'Ghost Sonata' (BBC1), in which the uncleanliness & age of the characters hung inescapably in the air.

Walk: Tollcross, Morningside Road, Marchmont, the Meadows, Cockburn Street, home. Sunshine melted most of the snow. George Square with bare trees. The great distances of the Meadows, snow-clad, grey fuzz of trees, gulls circling far off, low. Women in pairs on the streets, scrupulously avoiding my eyes. Why this inevitability which says 'It was your own choice; you shunned, or were turned away from, or were ashamed to enter, the legitimate channels of access, and you surely didn't think you could reach people any other way, by stopping them in the streets, did you?'

I can only mumble about believing in people's freedom to escape such restrictive structures, about some mystical magnetism which can be counted on, relied upon, to make the appropriate link with the same inevitability, the same

beneficent inevitability which steered me away from the blundering, obvious, fallible channels.

It wasn't that the communal mud-bath disturbed his notions of cleanliness, it was just that he wanted his filth to be exclusively his own; his distinction, his identity.

'There were six or seven black brushes. We tried to avoid them, but they had the agility of mountain lions. The aim seemed to be to tar and feather us. We dashed for the door. It was artificial. A splendid tarpaulin drape dropped imperiously from the ceiling. We were enveloped. My companions bleated like goats. I alone remained rational, invoking Kant. At this point in the proceedings, stainless steel stakes were driven through the fabric which covered us. Soon each was isolated from his companions by this device. All memory subsided gently. The monument was calm, the only sound the flapping of pigeon's wings. Suddenly one amongst us spoke. His words dropped to the rubber soil with a gentle thud. All spoke. The impression was of a lazy forest drumming, in a damp-leafed jungle language. Even when we stopped, a token door banged on, articulate, inanimate. Then all at once the moths hatched. The air was afuzz with their furry skins. We embraced them, we enslaved them. The flesh is mortal, it should be cherished. Of moths, no more remains in time than dust and brittle. It was in this knowledge that we clung so tenderly to them, and they buzzed snug in gratitude, forgetful of rolled newspaper.'

Monday March 24th

Mology-Nagy, Pavese's Diary, Siouxi & the Banshees with John.

Tuesday March 25th

This time and place which you think you understand so well that you can afford to cease being surprised and openly bewildered, and push to replace, on the basis of some strung-together overview which is really only an affectation, for every real perception denies the evidence of books, and every book asserts itself

once more... could you answer even one question to the satisfaction of a *real* outsider who took you as the learned representative of the time, the place?

Realising one's lack of wonder is enough to bring about its return, though never with the spontaneity and purity of the real thing.

What an unpleasant stage of life this is, when I have lost the naivete of childhood but retain its frivolousness, and have acquired the pompousness, the tiredness of maturity without its seriousness, its fearful investment in itself.

If you choose to develop alone, you must disclaim all 'truth', since this is a societal notion. All you can do is turn the spade in the rubble of your own peculiarities, and dig for the sake of digging.

Yes, that would be true if it were possible to develop alone. Working with language, however, means that the rubble is common property, and has wide relevance if your peculiar digging style has any efficacy or originality at all.

Literature must break down compartmental barriers and restore the recognition of one's language as one's vision. A unified vision, that's what is needed. A vision that sees its own limitations as well as potentialities, ie recognises its arbitrariness.

This enormous empty room. A tiny insect alone shares it with me. On the television are the Brixton blacks, conscious of their culture, unified by their sense of being alien. Why must my sense of being alien isolate me?

Wednesday March 26th

Frisch's 'Sketchbook', Benjamin's 'Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'. A walk to Shandwick Place via St. James Centre. Sunshine.

My hope: to reach the end of these endless preparations, or rather to continue them, suitably altered, in a real life where *books* are hypothetical, not events, relationships.

Every path is provisional, tentative: one takes it telling oneself that it will not prevent the seizing of the definitive, awaited, ideal route.

Slow, desperate eating, constant. Mirror on the bus — my face refused to break out of its apparent sulk, even when I smiled experimentally, quickly returning to the neutral when I saw the old man behind, also looking into the mirror.

Dream: my curtains were too bright, over the sea was a white light which could only have been nuclear. But the radio said it was only a light plane which had crashed. Embracing DB. I became the protege of an elderly man — arm in arm we walked around his enormous walled garden, viewing the flowers while the servants made their discretion obvious.

Writing is not my hope, it is the expected consolation for my failure, or even just the most honest face of that failure. I might still escape it; indeed I am unlikely to be brought to it if I don't try to escape it.

Thursday March 27th

Why do I cherish these ridiculous hopes of meeting women here, and not in Aberdeen, where the opportunity is much greater?

Friday March 28th

The bell has just rung 5am. I haven't yet slept tonight, seized as I am by this Radio Times essay. Unbelievable how quickly time passes — half-an-hour seems like five minutes! Perhaps I fall asleep without noticing. Now it is 5.11! Notes, schematic diagrams.

I fell asleep at about 6.15, awoke at 2.30. Dull day. Now it's 12.44, and I feel frustrated that I couldn't have been out dancing tonight, on a date, with prospects, the agreeable blend of risk and safety in a role equally condemned and approved by the social ideology... blah! That's what I want to escape, the jargon which has been vomiting itself onto paper most inelegantly. I want life, an authentic existence. What can I do? Join the 1st of May bookshop collective? Yes, possibly. And tomorrow I'll be at Colin's, playing music... it's something. Oh shut up, Nicholas, and go to bed. But this time last year... fuck it!

Records made very big sketches in my head. My limbs moved but little before complaining. As if on elastic, the head always bounces back to the body, quite putting its schemes to shame.

Saturday March 29th

Important recent influences: NME article on women in rock, PS interview with Scritti Politti. Latter: the notion of 'art' is slimy, hegemonic. Former: no-one has the right to be famous. These challenge some implicit assumptions of mine — that art is beyond challenge as a cultural institution (provided it leads to cultural change — but is it not then politics? Everything is political... etc.) Creativity, individuality, the mainstays of much of my philosophy — are they part of the cultural hegemony, the domination of the underclass (since they are privileges, economically determined because they can only flourish when the forces of economic determination are held at bay)? As usual, it seems to be that they are acceptable practices only if they do not rest on the artificial support of an iniquitous system, which at present they do — some are more individual than others, and no criterion can justify that. There is nothing wrong with individuality as a definition of paradigmatic differentiation, but to make this a privilege dependent upon different services from different people (the proletarian's faithful labour, the baron's ancestry) *is* wrong. There is nothing natural about either individuality or creativity: both can be developed or suppressed according to the designs of those in power.

But: to concrete actuality. I have been privileged (countless thousands of pounds have been invested in my education, world travel, correct feeding, etc. by parents, British Council, HM Government, etc) in my upbringing, and it has happened that part of this privilege was the freedom to discover that it *was* iniquitous. But change can be helpfully effected by those trained for the very core of the decadent institution. I shall be the fifth column of the bourgeoisie! The centrifugal corrective to the centripetal 'corrective' to natural dissolution...

This irony will have to go for a start. It is language (the tool of the ruling ideology, or its very realm) chiding me for expressing in it, for soiling it with, subversive sentiments. My criticisms of Mother's Vogue-addiction, Mark's self-indulgent skiing holidays, are couched in nervous, self-deprecatory irony. Where's the justifiable anger which these sickening practices warrant? Language will not allow it without a struggle, an act of will, of commitment which I have not yet made.

Here's an act of commitment: I've joined the First of May Bookshop collective. On Wednesday I serve in the shop.

Sunday March 30th

One of the appeals of socialism is that it means, for me, a methodical erasure of my past, or rather the past as it was organised for me. A different past, the Marxist emphasis on the historical, is then substituted; a past consisting of ideological struggle by the intelligentsia, social formations viewed from above. Obviously, this new past is just a retrospective projection of my ambitions for the future!

WBC: I'm in a rut of my own making. Do you think I'm in a rut?

NJC: Well, as you say, it's a rut of your own making... you can admire the contours of the mud. In fact, you could say that that's ultimate aim of every individual: to make a rut which fits the shape of his body, custom-made, exactly.

The BBC has cut the line 'There's humans, there's patterns, there's fucking, there's rhythm, there's God...' from The Slits' 'In the Beginning There Was Rhythm'. The argument is presumably that it might offend listeners. Implied: that standards of 'decency' exist over and above broadcast practice. To concede that these 'standards' are partially *created* by BBC decisions (just as BBC English has become a standard by claiming to adhere to outside standards) would be to admit that broadcasting is culturally central, and *prescriptive*. The fact is that listeners will only find 'fucking' offensive if it is generally taboo — and a BBC ban perpetuates the taboo. Why? (For it cannot be accepted that BBC controllers *really* believe that they have no moral social influence, whatever they claim publicly.) Perhaps the connection between beat music and sex is actively repressed (witness the TOTP fiasco, when Gang of Four were dropped from the show because they mentioned 'rubbers' in 'At Home He Feels Like A Tourist' — the advantages of repressing the pop - sex link outweigh those of making contraception an acceptable subject, as it ought to be). Why? Because music for British youth is 'tension management' — it simultaneously 'earths' the pent-up sexual urge of the viewer and presents the female-as-sex-object, male-as-pursuer stereotype. Sex, channelled thus, is a central binding force for society, not the subversion of 'acceptable' roles which The Slits, with their acknowledgement of female sexuality, or the Gang of 4, with their suggestion of inconsequential pre-marital sex, present. (Viz also Siouxi's line 'You may be a lover but you ain't no fucking dancer'.)

Monday March 31st

In my car to George Square. Saw the first Paula chaining her racing bike to the railings in Buccleuch Place: baggy white trousers, tall, beautiful lank dark hair. I turned the car in time to see her disappearing into a basement. Saw the second Paula in the student centre, studying a noticeboard, back turned. Pink trousers, Paula's bag slung across her shoulder, Paula's hair. Respiration, heartbeat rocketed. I glimpsed her face in profile as I passed: make-up, common face — not Paul.

A three-day pass to Edinburgh University library. Panoramic views of strips of green; inside, slabs of impersonal space. 'Silence'. Beyond the meadows, the solid Victorian roofing of Marchmont against veined Pentland snow; inside, extensive, deserted art section. Leafed through Leger & Schiele reproductions, looking down at George Square branches from my window-side desk.

Conversation at supper — Mother cannot understand why people — acquaintances of long standing — ignore her on the street. She has plans to live in France: we (les enfants) support the scheme (naturally). Then she and I discuss education, social mobility — is the former necessary, the latter desirable?

Introduction to Radio Times essay completed: 'The necessity of Utopia in mass industrial capitalism'.

Posted a letter (yesterday's Slits argument) to BBC Radio 1 controller.

Tuesday April 1st

Gillian Bell — Mark's fate as Lorretonian. I opened the door to her. Not knowing me, she said 'Is Mark or Emma in?' I tried to introduce myself into the scene — 'Are you coming in, or is Mark coming to the car?' She replied 'Would you get Mark?' A dull girl with the infuriating self-assurance of the wealthy. Her loud voice and boarding school accent are her passport to continued protection from reality.

Read about Artaud, wrote about women in Radio Times ('Myth thrives by incest, but the reader is always welcome to the happy family').

'Power & the Glory' at Lyceum — a near ideological package, giving the bourgeois reasons for their complacency. Lacked the sense of inevitability which Aristotle prescribed for the mode in which Greene chooses to write two thousand years later. A 'good play'.

Wednesday April 2nd

I was either a customer playing at shops or a shopkeeper playing his own customer today at 1st of May bookshop. Either way, the barrier remained intact — being on a common side of the barricade, the staff and I nonetheless retained bourgeois modes of interpersonal relationship (ie minimal communication, with priorities for business matters). Perhaps it was partly my fault — I declined the cups of tea (a sign of mistrust) offered, and relied on the women to overcome my alienation for me. They didn't, of course. They are insiders at ease, I am the opposite — but does that give one the right to expect charity, or even acknowledgment? My training was limited to Andy, who left early. The girls were all about my age (or a few years older), at university (or just left), involved in publishing, feminism, counterculture, loosely and variously. They talked about their Eurail Pass holiday, the recent book fair, the folk concert for Chile ('absolutely fantastic'). They spoke with the remote intimacy of the self-assured, observing the expected modes, seeing only through the established channels. I was not there — the accounts, the books, the recounted peak experiences and plans, the secondhand dresses one had just bought, her publishing friend with the cramped flat, the bathroom of which she had not seen, though another of the girls had... all these things crammed the room. I bought a book. The girl who took over the till after my duty thought I was a customer. She even asked if I was interested in helping out in the shop (when she offered to fill in the sales books for my purchase, Williams' 'Marxism & Literature').

Back home, I talked to the cats, who were perplexed that I should descend to their level, and became scornful.

Last night dreamt of losing Paula once again — she was lifted on the shoulders of a Spaniard, out of my reach. Also, I dreamt that Henry bit the head off the hamster (also called Henry in the dream), which subsequently ran, headless, under a rug. When I drew Mother's attention to this, she grinned from the sofa.

Like a man who sees the brink of absurdity close by, I laughed desperately, alone.

Pathetic TV, being facetious and predicting the sweeping changes of the microchip revolution. We must take advantage of the instability of transformation to insert *our* revolution, the humanist, not mechanical (electronic) revolution. I had to deprogram myself afterwards, venting my rage by striding down Leith Walk. Passed Radio Forth, ITV studios, then an angry, muttering man, & deep blue sky with one star — some signs of hope. Passed a cemetery: the dead are quiet, they understand. They rot, but so do the living, too noisily to understand. Across the road the posters screamed commands. A platoon of jogging soldiers forced me off the pavement, the CO giving orders, directions. I wanted to call out — 'Discipline kills!' or 'Who is the enemy? Only the man who assumes power over other men!' — many things. But they were soon gone. All the rooms without windows, but TV sets instead. The unacknowledged complementariness of the districts, slum with terrace, bungalow with town-house.

Mother & Emma have been to a fashion show. They criticise the appearance of the models — they have been let down by Women.

Mark & Gillian are back. I come in and meet Gillian in the hall. 'Hello,' I say, but she greets the cat, which has come in with me. Later I hear her through the sitting room wall talking to Mark... about the cat. 'Henry is so intelligent'. She and Mark drive to Ellenford in the Golf (with its ski roofrack still fastened from their daytrip to Aviemore) — Mark will stay there overnight.

The institution of Loretto school lends its benign authority to both Mark's skiing holidays and his girlfriend — how can Father resist? I, however, am alone. Does the left look after its own? Such was my hope, until today. What did I expect? The opportunity to accept the blame for my isolation by showing the freedom to choose and enter social channels, which exists at the beginning (the theory blames my isolation at Aberdeen on passivity during Fresher's Week). It does not exist at the beginning; it is a question of forcible entry, not deliberate, but automatic. You must be a sleepwalking burglar to enter this house of fellowship — unfortunately, all the beds are inside, and I'm an insomniac anyway. Little comfort that, as a voyeur, I know the inside better than anyone else.

The British blacks are rioting — this is crime. Pym spends £800 million on 'defence' — this is government. A question of degree, I think.

Thursday April 3rd

I swung my legs through many Edinburgh streets in sun, sometimes wearing my spectacles and sometimes not, sometimes looking up at London Road dank daffodil windows perhaps, and imagining, perhaps... or else admiring undersides of railway lines and framed hillsides through black stone archways, and two tiny people on the path of the hill face, both industrial views of sorts, near Holyrude, where I stayed little time, moving, as I was, towards the Southside cityscape, and institutions amongst dots of desirable but decadent dwellings, domes amongst the dots, and children on bicycles, and Thin's, and the Museum, and its coffee room, where I orange-juice read and smoothed Williams' leaves by tablefuls of unsuppressible children, happily, suppressed, to my bane... to my home again this time leaving less spring on paving flags behind, despite the CBD pull, bare as it now is of brothels, no clots in these muscles, just windows, but some rewarding scaffolding, and especially the shapes it made in sharp sun on its mellow renovated wall, if only they would show the rough with the myth, the money smooth, deceptive to lure and leaden eyelids, Jenners is a ship, lucky it's not at sea, else it would sink to the belly bottom, overladen, bloated, batty with crystal sober chandeliers, all would drown, amongst the staff Ana wasn't, for I looked, and left, and passed a boy who called, I grinned, I paused, at York Place I stopped diagonal with the window-cleaner's ledge plight, he slapped and knocked, and as I crossed, decisive, he called, and then I answered, and climbed the inner sanitary stairs to a door with a 'pretty' faced opener who had been in the other room and left me, as male, to open the window to the window-cleaner, who had been worried, on his ledge, about the state of his tea.

Scuttle the corrupting juices which coagulate on the cracked mantelpiece. Snatch the jars from the hands of the masked grinner-jugglers who pour, who pour, who pour, to stop stagnation's rattling voice from seeping out across the room to lick around the fleshy ears.

Nothing weeps, the cars sit under streetlamps, and neither they nor I weep, though we should, with relief, with justice. The uncertainty stops us, the lack of a glimpse of what we are missing, what we have lost — of this we have only an intuition, which huddles up to the other intuition which so much confirms — that, beneath their triviality, their diversity, things are bad, wrong. Together these intuitions huddle, arms wrapped around each other, and it is here alone that hope lies. We might yet weep.

With melancholy you are not alone. You have the pressing forms of memory and imagination. That is why it is a more tolerable state than vacuous content. And there is always the possibility that things will get worse, and that real misfortune may bring its own vacuity. Melancholy is the fruitful oasis between these expanses of sand.

Friday April 4th

I drive to North Berwick. The air radiates with light and life. It makes me into a ghost. My appreciation is reluctant, and turns to a satisfied malice. At supper Mark says he thinks I am naive. My sentences jumble and scratch themselves in their haste to get the conversation under control, meanwhile remaining lethargic. The result is cruel: I degrade this valuable communication with my extreme distance, the heaviness of lids and lips.

With music I coped with time.

The men (and women) who claim to be realists, who talk about facing up to facts, *create* this 'reality'.

One is only degraded, embarrassed by the ways one copes with this empty home (looking at old things, literally, from new angles, seeking insanity, introspection) when one must submit to the scrutiny of others. This self-consciousness is also brought on by the mere presence of others, and by their mechanical representations (the media).

If I could write without writing, without even thinking of writing, what would I then write?

The constancy of other people's preoccupations amazes me. Perhaps on the outside I too appear this way, despite my forgetfulness, restlessness, impatience.

If language were a unified abstraction, it would have been ruined long ago by its use amongst politicians as a tool for the maintenance of hegemony. But the apparent separation of literature from politics perpetuates the abuse. Poetry & prose protect the rhetoric which *alone* makes government, in all its colossal, murderous filth, acceptable to the people. (They also show it up mercilessly.)

Pavese's diaries — much is instantly recognisable as true. Or is it just tempting to support what one would like to believe (were any sort of belief possible) by reading the assertions of the famous? Does the fact that my views correspond so readily with those of the famous (the published) mean that I have been corrupted? (1. They don't often correspond. 2. The freedom to select one's own corruptions keeps one untainted.)

The immense effort of unbelief consists not in denial of what is openly presented for belief, but in the imaginative perception of the expanse of covert belief. It is limitless, your search for its dimensions only confirms this. The more stones you overturn in triumph, the more appear beneath.

Saturday April 5th

Alone all day in the house. Marcuse, my freedom alone; these calmed me. Also seeing Tony Benn on TV — it is as if the onus on me as political activist is lifted, and he becomes my representative — although he was saying, rightly, quite the opposite.

Listened to the Sitwells' 'Facade' — splendidly moving in the unlit sitting room, with ghost reflections of the astragled windows moving in car headlights along the wall. Read their biography.

Sunday April 6th

Analyse intuitively. Intuit with the range of intellectual tools in your kit.

Monday April 7th

Cherish the Flesh / Perish the Thought.
Bolt the Horse / Stabilise the Door.

Read 'Marxism & Literature' on a bench in Princes Street Gardens (tourists from England selected paths, a tramp chose me as benefactor), a seat in the National Gallery (the rheostat skylight, the click-board floor, tunnel-quake, Eurobourgeois talktones, soothing), a table in the Fruitmarket Gallery coffeeshop (ash on the daffodils, wailing babies, a Posy Symonds couple). Paula's ghost is everywhere inescapable, the city is fraught with associations. Fell glum in the St James Centre. Depression, self-hate. Alleviated by conversation with siblings. Collage from newspapers & Shooting Times incorporating above captions. Visit to Cash & Carry, 7.30.

Tuesday April 8th

You gave me short shrift
I pulled the short straw
When we locked antlers
In our imperial standard love

(Notes towards a pop song.)

Radio Moscow, Peel, the Sitwells, NY Jewish sitcom, 1978 diary.

The incompatible, ineradicable woman. Forever anticipating the return sweep of the door, relief of the fall of the face, the last quarter of a cigarette to smoke in peace.

Wednesday April 9th

Stomach pain ('functional' dyspepsia, I think) surfaced in the dream landscape of early morning in several ways. I was led along a path in wooded countryside by a farmer who told me he was dying. There were large domes in the distance. On our route by an uncomfortable drainpipe, at 45 degrees elevation, down which we had to wriggle (vaginal symbol, unless I'm much mistaken). Suffocating, claustrophobic. Then it was a tutorial at university — Paul Schlicke presided. I came into the room and saw a girl amongst the group — we looked round the intervening figure simultaneously, and were both surprised to recognise each other — it was Paula. Nothing could change, but we had this encounter — sadly I caressed her arm. She then metamorphosed into a fly, and as usual I had to prevent other people from swatting her. I was rewarded by a brief reappearance of Paula — confirmation that the meeting had been real — before I awoke with a constant and nagging stomach pain. It left suddenly at 10.40, substituted by great hunger.

Thursday April 10th

There is a Paula in you who is not a citizen of that noisy, stupid mechanism which calls itself the real world. This is the Paula I love. She was least in evidence in your letters, in your monitor role, in your social self — when she appeared during these moments it was by accident: nonetheless these 'accidents' happened enough for me to have my commitment confirmed. I too am a prisoner of the inescapable 'real', but I recognise that there is more to myself. You are the only person I have been close to who gave me the same impression. This other side of you is inaccessible just as mine is — it has expression in your painting, in my writing (though not all the time) — but it radiates like a hidden flame, and enchants the other side of you, your surroundings, your activities in a world which is hostile to it. If our relationship consisted only in the exchange between

our noisy, stupid, 'real' selves, you would be right to call it 'pointless', and it would be quite pragmatic of me to turn my attentions to some other person, equally noisy, equally 'real'. But our relationship consists in the (almost impossible) communication of these 'other' sides of us. Whatever difficulties, hurts, disappointments I may (and already have done) suffer, I consider this communication, and the striving towards it, imperative. The 'other' Paula is evident in your large, contemplative self-portrait in oil. This is the closest I have come to seeing the flame. Other images remind me of it — significantly, the faces of children: a young Peruvian girl who lived in a shanty town (Sociology video); a poor young Barcelona girl, holding her mother's hand, looking up into the sky (photograph, 1937).

It was this last image which sent me to Marchmont today, which rekindled the pain, which nurtures itself in darkness, but is nonetheless the most noble and positive of my possessions.

I would like to destroy everything inimical to this 'otherness' — I have already stamped out much in myself redolent of this opposition. My politics has the same inspiration. It is possible that something ought to (indeed must) remain to allow this other dimension to retain its important quality of 'otherness'. (Utopia is unrealisable — this confirms its worth, rather than denying it. One must strive towards Utopia *because* it cannot be attained.)

To acknowledge and respect the inaccessible ideal — that is enough to make the inescapable real forgivable, liveable.

Understand, Paula, that by making yourself, your whole person, inaccessible to me, you give yourself the same characteristics as the part of you I principally love, the 'other' Paula. That is why I love you most when I am most apart from you, and why an absence of eight months increases, rather than diminishes, the feeling. This distant adoration is nonetheless 'false consciousness', because it suppresses the 'real' side of you which is integral to the 'other'. By suppressing memory of this 'real', I make of the whole 'ideal Paula' a shadow, a ghost. The

'ideal' seen from a distance is simply a mirage — one must be very close indeed to begin to see the true 'other' taking shape.

Basic Space Dance Company at the Theatre Workshop — the aristocrats in their threatening black wedge — appear, wearing grinning white masks, and surround the lone dancer. They move in. Her movements become short and awkward. They grab her — a thunderous, screaming din, then darkness, but for a red spot on the Gnome, who is tearing out his intestines and dropping them (strands of golden paper) from his perch. The aristocrats then reappear for a tap dance — the dancer is now one of them, and together they placate us with their fixed smiles.

The girl in the Meadows, who walked past my bench and back, crying. Diminished into the distance, a tiny, self-absorbed speck. More than the ritualistic footballers nearby, she made the vast space her own.

Friday April 11th

Car stolen: only fragments of broken glass left on the ground of BBC car park.

Nocturnal walk, 8pm - 10pm — the inevitable districts, a close beat through Marchmont, without expectations (the Garcia Sarrias may even be in the States — although I thought I saw Betty yesterday). The spiritual quiet of the street parallel with Lauderdale Street.

'The Republic consists in the methodical extermination of its enemies.'

Saturday April 12th

Planned a summer trip to Poland & Czechoslovakia (Warsaw, Prague) — guidebook, maps.

Family tensions.

Bought 'Textual Strategies', Bananas.

Finished Radio Times essay with 'History' section. '...only when it casts its 'objective' gaze upon itself will the dispassionate 'superstructure' admit that it is base.'

Sunday April 13th

Edinburgh — Aberdeen. Girl opposite in the railway carriage arranged her legs so that they made a buff backcloth for 'Textual Strategies'. The delightful textures of 'dry' critical discourse.

Tuesday April 16th

At Ruffles yesterday evening. Clustered around the bright bar, black-jacketed youth, mostly male. The dance-floor a pale colour, empty. Ominous towers of speakers churn and rumble African music (chaotic, exciting ritual reggae). Ari Up is at the controls. I hang myself over the fence and watch her. She wears her hair in bizarre dreadlocks like a shot sprout atop her head, or a fountain of twisted jets. Her face is European (she's German), clear of make-up, radiant, pure. She wears a black-and-white striped jacket over a black jersey, and a white skirt (50s style) across which printed zebras gallop (around and around, nose-to-tail), black socks and pumps. She sits in her chair, her pale face intense, and swings back and forward to the thunderous reggae rhythms. Then she stands before the controls, pushing the volume switches up to pound each drumbeat home, up and down, up and down (it's her, of course, who's responsible for the line 'There's patterns, there's fucking, there's rhythm, there's God...'). She has resisted the systems of remorseless normalisation which cause the rest of us to stand around in pre-arranged poses, in determinedly inconspicuous fashion clothes — she is alive (as befits a 'star', who must make up for, take over from, all those 'dead' citizens who spectate passively). Onstage, she dances and sings splendidly, improvising constantly. She tunes the bass player's guitar while it is being played, stands back-to-back with Viv (?), practises her tearing high-note 'Hell, I can't get it tonight, it must be your fault...!' After 'In The Beginning' she

leaves the stage, saying 'Predictable? Walking is predictable, a song isn't predictable!'

During the Pop Group set (usual full assault without convincing substance) she sits on her chair sidestage, moving back and forward with the rhythm like a child. Afterwards she jumps onstage and says 'Where's the man with the acid? Somebody here wants some acid!' Undoubtedly something of Paula about her. And me, if things were as I'd like.

Today: read, from 'The Rights and Wrongs of Women', 'Women & Equality' and 'Landscape with Figures'. The actual landscape (with figures) was thus dulled and dimmed, perhaps mercifully: Sociology lecture on Durkheim was the only scene worth surveying.

Mist makes clearer the natural whiteness of all objects, which the refractive properties of light colour.

The feminists and I are close in temperament. Perhaps they are the group that might best suit me — a pity I am fundamentally unqualified and must remain a solitary sympathiser.

Isolated. Some compensations, but my silence, past and present, rolls constantly, like a great, absorbing, insulating carpet, stretching narrow to the horizon.

Isolated. For: independence, intellectual freedom, the savouring of imagination and potentiality, proximity to the *range* of 'others'.

Against: realisation of the absolute nature of human relations, lack of social expression without self-abnegation and compromise, cumulative weight of silence, loss of the 'lack of opportunity' excuse.

But the process is never complete enough to evaluate definitely. There is always tomorrow, next year, some indefinite hope. And resolution — go to London, Warsaw, Prague, for a new, more accessible range of people. Or just fend off the

disappointment from day to day in such a way that they are evenly dispersed, and not allowed to accumulate in a single heap.

Wednesday April 16th

Yesterday's compensation was that 'you're not the only one who's lonely'. Today's, lifted from the absorbing 'Sex, Gender and Society' (Oakley), is antithetical — 'All our differences are in common'.

KS (Kate Symington): delightful initials: Egyptian, bird-like cry, 'kiss', Kafka, chaos, French suffix '-esse'. Pale, slightly bulbous flesh, hair like Paula's, mascara like a residue.

'Lecture' notes: Eng. Lit. (entitled 'Introspection'):

Every day a new process of disillusionment. New opportunities stifled. The temptation to romanticise and embellish opportunity, this rendering it unreal, and its removal irrelevant ('I never *really* had it...') This defence mechanism is brought in early (perhaps 10 o'clock). By midday, it has become counter-productive, seeming itself to distance relations, blur and bar opportunity, as it does. Next: an indulgent, ostentatious melancholy. Since this is exaggerated, it is not long before one says 'Pull yourself together! Look, here are opportunities for contact on every side!' And the process begins once more. (Disadvantage: that the objective impersonality is converted to subjective fraudulence & shameful fantasy.)

And whilst this brooding is stupid, save me from indifference, complete anomie, for that is death. A hopeless situation met with hopelessness leads to nothingness. Sometimes a strictly inappropriate response is best. There is no experience from which one cannot learn volumes (or write them!).

Since then, conversations with Fergus & Byron ('the revolution'). And books. I feel socialised enough after this to be properly independent.

'Sex, Gender...' — to know, have knowledge about somebody (here, women) is to have a certain power (potential). Or else the first step to an appreciative equality, a step which demands a response ('Now you must find out about me...').

Evening light, distant blackbirds, unserious voices call along the path, up at the windows. It is the visiting hour. (7.30.)

I indulge in vigorous socialisation by reading, perhaps afraid that Durkheim's dictum is correct: that, divorced from society, the individual is not human.

'Females are more aware of any stimuli, whether connected or unconnected with the task in hand.'

Thursday April 17th

Philosophy Special Class: the Prof admits that he is tempted by the departmental fallacy: to judge the whole student by his performance in the particular specialisation of the department.

Derek McClure: inspires an interest in Scottish history with his tense enthusiasm. Scotland was Europeanised before it was Anglicised.

Sociology lecture: Weber. Very appealing exposition of his views — how familiar the connection between Calvinism and Capitalism is to me, from observations of the Curries! Things begin to click astoundingly quickly all around. Compelling conclusion — that the bureaucratic future is grim, reducing (as it does) people to predictable, normative elements in a machine concerned with immediate, material pragmatic functions alone. An important point: that socialism is not a solution to this, as it just increases planning and the need for predictability.

A Student Christian Movement meeting — 'Communism & Christianity' with Prof. George Yule. Points: man is sinful, self-seeking. This is why communism must

exert state force to suppress human nature. If Marx hadn't rejected Christianity, Catholicism and Communism could have joined forces and taken the world.

The two girls: The Radical (badges — 'Why shouldn't women be priests?' & fist and crown of thorns motif) — cropped hair, sharp, boyish face, enormously baggy dungarees. Said: 'I don't like Christian Union people.' The Christian Union Girl: didn't like this at all — if looks could kill... She has a beautiful, rounded face, but plain straight hair and muddy brown dress, split without intention to excite. Fervently Christian. She asked a question about Communist commitment, and said that those Communists she knew were aching for the spiritual dimension she felt; the presence of Christ inside her, giving her an inner strength. 'You can't do it on your own,' she said, twice. Classic sublimated sexuality. I talked to her afterwards — intensely earnest, committed. The Radical joked, made coffee. A boy asked her if she was going back to Halls. No, she was going to the library. She asked me back next week. Attractive. I walked homewards with Prof. Yule. Awkwardness: I asked 'Do you have a post at the university?' He is head of the History department, as I was told in today's Sociology tutorial (A funny guy, combines great sympathy for communism with religious belief... eccentric... would be great if there were other professors to counterbalance him, but as sole author of history department policy... well...?). Next week: 'Buddhism & Christianity'. I fancy the Radical... and of course I could learn something about Buddha...!

The CU Girl: said that most 'Christians' were guilty of Nominalism; didn't accept the word of the gospels in the only way it could be truly understood. She bases her Xtianity on puritanical elitism, on disapproval rather than 'universal love'. But what deep brown eyes she has, quite unshakable, fearless. No thaw can reach her.

Weber lecture: importance to Calvinists of accounting for every minute of time led to popularity of diaries, a means of checking over your past to see that time was spent profitably, for the greater grace of God! I see horrible resemblances with my '79 entries for April: 19th 'bought a Prize bar & New Society at the PO' (financial accounting); 20th 'sat reading America as I waited for the

bus' (time well spent accounting). 19th: 'I spent money in Tesco on luxuries.' — Chris Wright says 'The capitalist Calvinists thought it a sin to spend money on personal luxuries... like food!' He, of course, was joking. I wasn't.

I must fight my asceticism with art and sex.

Friday April 18th

Another dream of Paula. I heard, from her brother (?), that she was quiet and sad. Phoned her — she asked me to move in with her. Then began a process of disappointment — she started to avoid me.

This dream hung over me most of the day. I bought some pastels downtown, decorating the coloured paper on my walls with them. Met Joy. Eye contact with the Austrian (?) girl in Language (she's only here for McClure, who was less inspiring today). Sunshine, high wind.

Wrote the beginning of a bleak story, then read (re-read) Pavese's 'Suicides' — relevant to P., but tragic & depressing enough to make *my* state seem trivial. An empty evening followed. Read about the Social Psychology of eye-contact. If only I had as much eye-contact with eyes as with the printed page!

Saturday April 19th

Today, more eye-contact. Alison Rutherford's lunch — five people including me. Helen: the girl in my Philosophy Special Class, referred to in the diary entry for January 17th as Barbara (wrongly). 'The unlikelihood of communication, contact, relationship...' — but today I met her, had conversation, sat with her on two buses, and was able to look into her golden brown eyes (is that sexist?). She comes from Oxford, her father is Master of one of the colleges, she is doing first year English Lit. & Linguistics (as well as Philosophy). She has never felt that women are denigrated in society. (The conversation wasn't raised by me, but I directed the question to her.) She took a long time to get used to Aberdeen. She moved from digs to halls (Dunbar) to look after a friend with suicidal

inclinations. Her tutor is Dr. Hewitt. She was silent during our group conversation, but together on the bus we talked easily, between silences.

The other girl — I didn't catch her name — sandy, lank hair, Aberdeen 'Oilthigh' (whatever that means) windcheater. Intelligent, talkative, rather dominant. Was at St. Leonard's with Alison. Socialist leanings (believes in equality, but not women's lib) — both she and Alison are into Rock Against Racism: a surprise.

The two boys — one a conservative, quiet medic, the other an engineer (in electronics, I think), who seemed, rather incongruously, to be living with the intellectual girl.

I am hardly 'loveable' — my gaunt, stern boy's face, my radicalism, cynicism, introversion — these militate against what is thought of as 'loveable'. My hope lies in the difference between being 'loveable' and being loved.

Typed a letter to Paula before leaving for Alison's: final paragraph: 'Having mentioned 'history', I now want to forget it. I am sick of living sunk deep inside myself, I'm sick of asceticism and solitude. You can free me from these burdens with a few words, and without my obsession I think I can be an entertaining person to write to. No human relationship is 'pointless', and I think we have a lot to offer each other at whatever level and whatever the obstacles (past, distance). We are in control.'

I bought stamps, but will not now send it. Its pathos is horrible. It is cold, hard and calculating. Pirandello was right about the 'sublimated corrosive of logical deduction': 'The heart is pumped dry as a cork and the brain is a chemist's cupboard full of little bottles, all bearing on their labels a skull and crossbones and the legend: POISON.' Pavese is right too: 'Love is desire for knowledge' (30th August, 1942) & 'Cleverness itself, like an immense impersonal machine, leaves any woman quite unaffected, a truth you must not forget.' (31st August, 1940). Love can bring you knowledge, but knowledge will never bring you love.

Sociability too easily becomes banal and passive, at least when familiarity and domesticity set in. I need currents of tension, the negative energy of conflict, to weigh in profitably to a group conversation. I leave it to others to start the action, and am content to throw a bizarre wobble or lurch in at intervals. Occasionally, however, I can lift the whole contraption into the air for a fraction of a second, to the astonishment of the others and myself.

These stupid metaphors have no value beyond themselves.

It is easy to bear the flesh, ash and linen of living with another when you cannot tolerate the heady silence of your own voices / vices.

Sunday April 20th

SIDNEY: 'Invention, Nature's child, fled step-dame Study's blows'. Ironic that it is now lines such as this which are studied: the false satisfaction of indulging in a copy, a construction, which condemns copies, constructions. It is the equivalent of modesty: in both devices, the intention is to sweep reservations aside, to bind you even closer to that which is ostensibly denigrated.

Sartre is dead — it's a measure of my isolation that I didn't hear of this until today (he died on Tuesday). But, as if in mourning, I have been wearing black all week.

Monday April 21st

A talk with Caralampo Focas about organising a culture group of some kind. (Sat with Doll & 'The Intellectual' of Saturday, as well as a Greek girl called Erica.) It should de-program, rival the institutions (departments, careers, etc.), surprise, provoke, challenge, unite, etc.

Slogan (for wall posters): YOUR FUTURE IS YOU DESIGNED BY A COMMITTEE.

Tuesday April 22nd

Theory subverts practice, or makes it. The categories are antithetical. To study abstractly is to be anti-social, because it requires an unwarranted interpretation, based on unavoidable preconceptions and habits of perception. To represent is to challenge, it is an attempt to reduce to definitions, thus change. Social institutions are based on this reduction, necessarily. They do not, however, admit the opposition between theory & practice.

Struggle to judge independently of the 'objective' power relationship. ODM-G on Satan, hero of 'Fall of the Angels': his fault is to remove himself from the social order, ignore the sovereignty of God. 'This flaws all this other qualities,', 'blackens his other virtues', 'sours', 'corrupts the rest'. This is my 'departmental fallacy' at work, perhaps more accurately the 'compartmental fallacy'. Relevant to the 30/1/80 diary entry. Is it confined to ODM-G, academics, men, capitalism, mass society, all societies? The circle of demarcation must be widened, the many people within a person must be seen as one. Once the individual has become indivisible, the category can serve its social function unhindered.

Dream: Father fell from a tall structure (tower on which he was conducting repairs?). I had to calculate the force of the fall: 1 unit was 'Clunk!' — Father incurred 1111 units of force. He did not die, however. He became unpredictable, impish, slightly mad, but witty and youthful. He sat on a chair in the open wardrobe, overlooking the sea. Freudian implications!

Bought 'Femininity as Alienation: Women and the Family in Marxism & Psychoanalysis'. Phoned home: my car found in Newcastle.

It is expected of me that I submit to the uncared-for role of cog in the drive for credentials for placement in the next machine, in which I will be equally anonymous.

Wednesday April 23rd

CWG. Reaction to 'Pieces From' surprisingly favourable. Its profusion of images 'nauseated' Viv. Joy found the language interesting — she later told me that she didn't think in words! Graham thought a computer could have written it (since the grammar governed the words), but admitted that the programmer would be, effectively, the author. Ian liked it, compared it with Gareth's painting method.

Later, in the pav. caff, Joy told me about her view of women as insincere: this is something she has recently accepted. Men and women are complimentary (yin / yang) — bad relationships are the result of a failure to acknowledge difference, which leads to mutual destruction.

Thursday April 24th

At the beginning of the Sociology tutorial I cast my eyes over Ian Carter's desk. There was a letter asking for biographical info to accompany an anthology to which he had contributed. There was an essay with a sheet clipped on top with comments. 'So good it is difficult to put a mark on it,' it said, and below, '90% — but the mark is meaningless.' The name at the top was mine! Carter snatched it away soon after, pushing it into his briefcase. At the end of the tutorial he took me aside and said he would be very disappointed if I didn't do Sociology honours — and that I shouldn't be too worried if I failed English Language, since I could then do advanced Sociology.

'Look at this picture, we're in there somewhere, this is a family affair... ' To be valued and wanted by people is quite extraordinary. How vulnerable one feels, yet how strong!

'But what is to be done if the direct and sole vocation of every intelligent man is babble, that is, the intentional pouring of water through a sieve?' Dostoyevsky.

Friday April 25th

Stop the world, I want to get off.

How is fear and disgust possible when the sun pales the TV screen, fades the newstype, and birdsong ridicules the radio?

Through the high, cool blue sky of evening flew two jets in formation, their vapour strips pointing north. They sewed on together for a long time, very high, searing straight or curved, plummeting to north, bound for Greenland, perhaps, or on to the East USSR or Alaska. Military planes? Or leaders with information, making their lonely, cynical escape?

The news gives one controlled glimpses of the workings of political systems which, although one is an element in their constitution, one can have no power over. It effectively overcomes this disparity between governors and governed by presenting world affairs with a frequency and depth which suggest that the citizen *should* be well-informed enough to make the decisions of government. To have this information with no purpose would be illogical and irrelevant, so the illusion that knowledge is power arises. Otherwise it would have to be admitted that the news is a ghoulish entertainment, with a moral purpose besides — to remind the citizen that he must suffer the consequences of government policy because he shares the viewpoint of government: he is not the subjective underling, captive of his individual circumstances, but fellow statesman, sharing the guilty expediency and the cruelly dispassionate overview of politics with those who are *really* in charge. The trick of 'democracy' is to keep people generating power whilst emphasising the undesirability of having it (such responsibility is detrimental to 'individuality' and 'privacy'), but at the same time to remind them (at least five times a day) that the political worldview is *their* worldview. Thus the all-important abstract level of political action is reinforced at the expense of the concrete experience of the individual, so that people will vote according to political, not personal, criteria. The two (political / personal) are separated by the news only to be fused again with the authorised, government mode affirmed. This is seductive because it seems to offer a mass identity of the whole nation, a commonality which is available in no other way (and the scale of *individual* communal perception is continually reduced). In fact, the commonality is an artificial and controlled one: it resides not in mass interest in mass activity, but in mass faith in a single, selective mode of perception. The

news has universal relevance because no-one can escape its (simultaneous) selection and verdict, its *level* of vision, not because it actually says things of relevance to the whole range of diverse citizens. Like pornography, the news offers an illusion of power and possession which distracts the attention from the *real* opportunities (always less glamorous) open to the individual for action. In both cases the omission is a hidden repression, a safety control. The analogy breaks when we point out that pornography is sufficient to itself — if it were like news, pornography would show the viewer pictures of women possessed by the publisher not just because the viewer had chosen passivity rather than sexual relations with these women (at best an imposed choice), but because he, and all the millions like him, had driven these women inevitably to the pornographer's studios, and his bed.

Without the news, people would base their political activity solely on personal experience, work and home. They would thus realise the unity of their interests (individually and within the immediate group of which they are a part) and act to decentralise power. A family, a factory, would generate and distribute according to its own abilities and needs (these needs including interaction with other groups, of course). The concept of 'state' would be stripped of its meaning, it would be an abstraction like 'universe' or 'horizon', a border unable to be plotted or straddled by some malignant colossus.

Of course, a system of policing would be required, to ensure that no-one stole another's right to himself as a unified creature. Every group would have to be open to every other, thus conditions in each would have to be comparable, varying according to different aptitudes, not different power or status levels (ability, not ambition). Similarity of groups would be effected by the emphasis on the precedence of the group's character as a human organisation rather than a product organisation — the work relations would, to the extent that they could be separated, precede the objects processed... Specialisation would be minimal, since this only differentiates and fragments and imprisons.

So, put these proposals on air five times a day, and we will soon switch from one (flailing) 'Utopia' to another one (yet to be proved)!

Saturday April 26th

After supper a long walk around the northern suburbs. Ended at Marishall, where the Charities Procession was assembling. The spirit of Bacchus, it out-Fellinied Fellini. Plain-clothed, I was an alien. The Bahai float — Ian and Gareth, dancing and standing self-absorbed on their platform with about six others: a religious text on the back. On the bus home: Adam and Durian (whose hair is copper-green) — gay?

Reading the old diary for 1976 — how depressingly passively I take life! How dull I was then. Have I changed as much as I'd like to believe?

Sunday April 27th

Playing the pariah (in a sense inevitably), I keep my existence-profile low. It is a nice compromise between the stupidity of life's rush and the useless deliberation of death.

The door crashed. A flat, stupid voice said 'I'm back now', but the utterance was swallowed up by the indifference of the air and the beat and scuffle of a ball-game on concrete. (3 seconds amongst a sectionless continuum.)

More brain fun: see everything in terms of similarity and difference. For example, the news, which gathers notable deviations from normal life and presents them in a scrupulously regular format, where they replace their original difference with the minimal differences between bulletins and items. Moreover, they are transformed, by the normative nature of the news service (bringing together viewers on terms which reflect an enforced consensus of values), into a (if not *the*) central point of social *similarity*. The republic is not always the methodical destruction of its enemies, it is their legitimiser. The news is the ceremony in which the state does not reveal its failings (as news is when it reaches one by rumour or underground communication, even the same news), but expands itself out to new, threatening territory, and applies (inherent in its acceptance of

this territory) its own criteria. Alienated activity like a strike is only subversive when it is different, ie when its relation to the 'hub of power' is measured from the inside to the outside, and thus emphasises similarity, or rather, as it sarts from the self-appointed seat of all similarity, it gives the strike a difference meaningful only in terms of its relation to the hub — it reasserts the syntagmatic model, whereas the strike has probably been sparked by a paradigmatic (ie subjective) concern such as pay parity relative to other, similar companies' workforces.

'Alienated activity' — but there is a further level. Let us use art as an example. If the criteria of the 'hub' are completely rejected, so that distance is not the principal concern of difference, and becomes irrelevant, then a truly subversive state is achieved. 'The Establishment' must either ignore such activity ('avant garde'), or initiate the process of measurement & compromise: criticism. It will only do this if it thinks the new, distant (different) activity is going to affect it in some way: challenge, alter, threaten. In order to reassume control of the direction of social movement, it appoints itself agent of the development's effect — thus, the critics champion what they cannot resist as an act of self- (and establishment) defence. The artist is forced to measure the distance between himself and the critical / governmental hub. If s/he continues to proceed as before, s/he has conceded, been returned to the fold in return for esteem and power. An artist in such a position can renounce the established art hub (it will be seen as ingratitude) or ignore it (as Beckett has done).

This is why I shun publication — I would like to take a place directly in a family of creation, and address a family of consumption, without having to be measured and filtered by the critical hub. But hasn't this hub furnished me with all my criteria in this matter? Is it acceptable (to my integrity) to use this hub and not expect it to use me in turn?

A central question, that. Responsibility to parents, teachers, initiators of all kinds. Have they taught simply to receive, like usurers, a return on their investment? The examination as rightful return of taught information, model of its repeated subsequent return in practical circumstances. But there is an alternative duty —

to give more and different information back. This is what education neglects: the acknowledgment that there is nature before and simultaneous with nurture, that only in combination can the two speak profitably. So, endure the provisions of education, but take advantage of its maltreatment of you to withhold any return obligations. Force it to recognise, when you do make your reply, that it didn't know what it was in control of, force it to doubt the basis of its preconceptions. Emphasise that you are not a 'despite' but a 'because'; your inversion, based on the struggle of 'despite', has compromised enough to become a causal tangent.

Tuesday April 29th

The train has two classes (the tabloid and the Telegraph classes) — a class divide is recognised, emphasised, reasserted. Nobody needs to check tickets: the separation is effected by the workings of the train's social design upon its passengers, the forcible presentation of a dyad. The bus used to have only one door, and people knew that it was the convention to let passengers off before mounting the bus. Now the bus has two doors — the convention (which gave people a sense on consensus) has been subsumed in the design of the in- and out-doors.

Where, in the minds of the passengers, has the problem (of which the convention was the popular solution) gone? It is another reified possession of the invisible controlling intelligence of the planned environment. 'They' now look after most interactions — as a result, 'we' fades, and there remains a crowd of 'I's, stepping absent-mindedly on and off buses. Similarly the train — 'people like us' are a 'natural' part of the set-up, not the result of rejection of and alienation from a visible other: consciousness of others is fractured because a human code is incorporated into an inanimate structure, ie naturalised, sublimated.

Home: Mother gave me £10 for my Sociology essay success — but she hadn't liked it when she read it (women, cosmetics, etc.); I suggested that the money should go to the marker, since she was obviously pleased by the evaluation, not the evaluated. Father said as I was leaving 'Bring success to the family name' — I

objected, to his dejection. But always it is the *other* party to which they refer, themselves or my tutors, never me. Implicit: that one only has existence in relationships with others — but not the relationship in which this evaluation is being made! Like TV, presenting the relationship of, say, person and event (each giving the other newsworthiness, definition), whilst ignoring the immediate dimension of TV —> person / event.

Yesterday I pressed tight and hot in a packed room, three feet from Howard Devoto. The sweat suddenly flooded my eyes. Hugely tiring, to strain in the sway and bob of bodies.

Wednesday April 30th

Cut yourself free from the mass products and mass ideas, also the synchronised elite market. Sever the notched rope which was your previous obsession (a nervous concern for my 'difference') and drift thoughtfully, self-assuredly loose. Then stand up in your boat and begin to sing, as loudly as it pleases you!

How nauseous and full of silent groans I become whenever a change is forced on me — a change such as travelling from one place to another, or having to stop travelling in order to arrive somewhere. But also when something foreign begins to pluck and chip at my state of mind, for that cannot be ignored. The best response is to make it my own by reacting with uncompromising fury. This I did today when Byron came into the calm flat with his whistling, clattering egotism; thoughtless, nervous solicism. He turned on Radio 1 (without any intention of listening to it, just for the reassurance of *noise*). I found a harsh, pure synth-tone on a piece of tape, and played jarring snips of it across the radio's babble. The effect was very like that used by some dentists — the patient is given soft music on headphones, and a volume control which he increases when he feels the cold nag of the drill: his sense of control eases his tension and his distress. It matters little that the original stimulus has not changed — the drill still cuts, the radio still washes limply through the wall. The patient has signalled, if only to himself, his defiance, if only in principle.

Foucault & Adorno — my only teachers.

Curtains open: self-consciousness, glimpses of the blurred forms of others. Sunshine, an old view newly lit, a potential beyond.

Curtains closed: a comfortable limitation of variables, shelter from one's own wary surveillance, control of lighting, posture, etc. Freedom within a narrow space. The possibility of a happy, selfish limbo in which one can prepare surprises and entertainments for oneself — yet one does not feel confined: one retreats further than necessary, into the head alone, and has the whole room to explore if this is not enough (and it ought to be!).

The coffee-girl on the BR 125: 'Coffee? Tea? Sandwich? Milk? Sugar? Twenty-six pence.' How horribly mechanical, I thought. But then she passed by with her friend, the hot-water girl, saying in a loud voice: 'All for £36 a week! Is it really worth the hassle, is it really worth the hassle?' Then I knew the official mask was justified — she had not sold herself with the job.

'I observed, for instance, that one part of my hand was comprised of narrow, notched strips of skin which resembled a drawing of ropes...'

Thursday May 1st

Now, and soon even more so, *people* are a minority group in our society.

Roland Barthes died on 26th March.

Talking to Joy: she subscribes to the Zen notion that everybody is an they are because, however they dislike aspects of it, they accept the arrangement. Violence occurs between people because both agree to it. War happens because the energy which is unleashed by it is deliberately stockpiled by everybody in society. She found my point, that everybody's every action affects everybody else to some extent, hard to accept. One can avoid being hurt in a relationship by denying the validity of the barb, by 'rolling with the blow' as in judo. I responded

by saying that this is to deny the main grounds of the relationship. Joy's tricks of rhetoric: staring blankly, saying 'wait a minute' then waiting *a minute*; asking you to repeat yourself repeatedly; saying 'no, that's not what I mean' when you paraphrase her.

Friday May 2nd

But Joy has a point. What right have I to decide what is best for a whole, diverse society on the basis of my own experience and understanding? But the fact is that a minority group has already made this decision for a whole society — I am suggesting that one could break the hold of this group and replace it with a system which let everyone know their importance to the flow of social relations, gave the more control. Does this limit people's control by substituting for many privately constructed realities a single, monopolising social reality? Is there a right to ignorance, to fantasy, even if it involves effect upon others? Should one person consider the effects of her / his actions upon others, or should everyone be responsible only for resisting or accepting others' effects upon them? It is a question of involvement. As I said to Joy, if there is to be a relationship between people, it means that there will be a part of person A in friend B, and a part of B in A. They will act according to their conceptions of themselves in each other as well as in themselves: A acts as (A) and as (A in B in A) — he is not only self-conscious, but image-conscious. This tallies with Sartre's notion that one regards oneself as a subject, but one's relationship with the other hinges on treating him as an object where one's own image is kept; in Sartre, existence is only properly confirmed in this *image-consciousness*, not self-consciousness. So one cannot stand apart from social relations and make 'objective' decisions or evaluations — one's existence is unavoidably a social existence, and one can either be aware or be ignorant of the many social currents (power) which flow through one, and which one is and is not responsible for, according to one's consent or lack of consent. One must know the effects before one agrees to be used as the cause, or becomes the cause voluntarily. What's more, this responsibility extends to potentialities and unframed possibilities too — *not* to act is an act the consequences of which one should be aware.

One cannot know all the effects. The extent of one's causality is always hidden from one. Responsibility is denied by both the powerful and the powerless. So who or what is in control? Systems, processes, bureaucracy. This is the reason for the dehumanisation of society. Without knowledge or responsibility, people are like children, and like a school, the systems will make of them what they like, will systematise and standardise them. People then become unknowing, willing accessories to power, which can get on much better without them anyway. And may.

A minority does not have the right to use the power generated by others in a way the others do not agree to. But a minority *does* have the right to deprogram the system of another minority. One may not do, but one may undo. One 'yes' is an infinite number of 'no's, but one 'no' throws open an unending possibility for confirmation. And the necessity of a 'yes' in any social organisation? But a 'government' can be an imaginary circumference, not a core, the limits determined by the furthest travels of the most restless citizens, not the imperative of the norm. Can't it?

To see people in terms of politics makes people seem very stupid. To see politics in terms of people makes politics seem very stupid. The personal is political, but more. The political is personal, but more. To align the two one can reduce the range of personality or reduce the range of system. A reduction of one means an automatic increase in the other, for the two are inimical. The question is, are the two *inevitably* inimical? Could a system be based on the inalienable (ie 'natural') form of necessary human relations? Could such a system be flexible enough to fit *any* possible human relationship? And should it?

Judgment is like a portcullis — once it is suspended, the hordes of doubts rush in and seize the castle. But perhaps it is for the best — after all, there is so little bloodshed that it seems the doubts have simply reclaimed their heritable seat, temporarily expropriated by fraudulent certainties. But as soon as the doubts drop the portcullis and make themselves at home, congratulating each other on their rightful success, they begin to hear with alarm the ominous voices of new doubts gathering beyond the castle walls. 'Men,' cries the Chief Doubt, 'we must

defend ourselves with conviction, with commitment, with *certainty!*' At this, the falsest or the truest amongst them will creep to the lever which raises the portcullis.

Magazine's 'The Correct Use of Soap': monumentally sad song on it — 'You Never Knew Me'. Splendid.

We bring home our hurts as souvenirs of an outside life which cannot lead anywhere on its own. These excursions are only of use to us when we are back in our melancholy lairs, safely remembering, embellishing with calculated indulgence.

Saturday May 3rd

My face is quite stony and long in the mirror, eyes glassed and grey in their pits and corners. My eyesight condemns me to treating others as equal in impersonality, indeterminacy. By being so, and being alone (quite unreachably, inescapably), I make myself impersonal, indeterminate. I play cumbersome but invisible music to comfort myself — all that is really there is the expressionless white sky, a fourth wall, a mere formality — the will-less self-contained have no need of containment, confinement.

I wait as if for inner energy to well, swell, of a sudden. But it will only come when I am buffeted around in storms of electric current, the huge network of social power, and I will only make it mine by running back inside myself as a refugee, imagining in my relief that all I need is in here, welling up to answer the crazy charges of the social grid. In fact I have simply gleaned a negative charge, perhaps only static, by the extent of my difference.

Sunday May 4th

I sang some songs and snaffled some coffee in my room.

Writer as storyteller: this notion has been completely reversed in modern literature. The writer is now the wo/man who *never* turns his/her life into a comfortable, meaningful, entertaining anecdote, but instead understands the shallowness and deliberate untruth of such a process, and constructs absurd parodies of such stories, generated by the conventions of artifice, or shows the incompatibility of a number of versions of the same 'events', or restores literature to respectability by severing its claims to description of anything beyond literature — this solution also gives literature an ironic universality: witness the range of interpretations of Kafka. This is the best role for writing — for experience and relevance will percolate through inevitably, if unexpectedly, with far greater effect, as a bonus. It requires, however, an almost superhuman commitment and suspension of reservations. How many people welcome uncertainty, and welcome the chance to find their own meaning and significance — without the chance of definitive confirmation — in a text? On the other hand, how many are willing to be patronised by the authoritative message, the sacred meaning, any more? Literature has come to the end of the possibilities of the writer, but the potential for active, creative readership is the guarantee of a healthy, exciting future.

'Supplements to Myself, Literature and You'.

Creative readership is not criticism, ie a supplement. It must be integral, a necessary complement. It must be impossible to judge the writing without judging yourself.

The writing could provide a sequence of short passages, to be followed in whatever order the reader chose. It would not be imperative to read all. Elements would recur, giving each passage a relation to others. This relation would be signalled briefly at the head of the passage, enabling the reader to make a sequential decision, perhaps by colour or tone.

Made a tape, 'Whoops, Your Voice', consisting of two garbled passages read simultaneously to the accompaniment of Fripp's 'Urban Landscape' and radio signals.

Monday May 5th

Viv's Creative Writing workshop. Edmund, Marion, Joy. I made terse jokes, enjoying them hugely myself. What are they really? 'Desperate rearguard actions to keep oneself to oneself' (Pinter). 'There are two silences. One when no word is spoken. The other when perhaps a torrent of language is employed.' By habit, by nature, mine is the first. I have connected it, in my mind, with solitude. So when I meet people and have the chance to say something, I want to break my silence, not switch to a noisier kind. But to say something, actually *say* something from inside, to speak Pinter's 'language locked beneath' empty speech, is self-indulgent, embarrassing, over-involved. It is like uttering an obscenity with slow gravity in company. So I begin to subvert the empty conversation with jokes which chip at the foundations of the Other's speech; by stressing ambiguities, by mistaking sense deliberately. The aim is to erase the dishonest silence of 'chat' in the hope that real silence might prompt real speech. The new beginning, the corrected orientation. But what is the actual effect of this erasure? It is understood as a game to widen the scope of the vacuum. Perhaps Viv & Joy understand its true cause, it would be wrong to underestimate their powers of perception in such matters. But they use it to push the complaining, lonely self, the self who wants to *speak*, back into its deep lair. They do this by teasing — which is justifiable, since this is what I seem to be doing. It is tit for tit, so to speak, when I am only using 'tit' to cancel their 'tit' in order to summon 'tat' (ha, ha!). But their response is based on reasoning like this: 'You are so tiresomely calling me into question (in fun, of course, at the surface) that I must do the same in return (in fun, of course, at the surface)'. I try to negate the flippant, and my objection is itself negated by flippancy.

But this is rationalisation after the event: actually it comes naturally, I enjoy it, it is my only way of 'attending' such circumstances with any integrity, however destructive & mutated.

Viv: Nick, you're always interrupting!

Me: Well, do you want me to leave you to yourself, to drift slowly to a halt like some massive tanker which puts the brakes on ten miles before stopping?

Viv: Oh, Nick, you're lovely!

Me: (Desperate, pleased smirk.)

Worse: to write something is to give a part of oneself. It hurts if this is ill-accepted. I gave 'The Motion Committee' tonight:

Those metal voices talk about the odds / — Odds?
But being strange is only normal here / There —
A lady's hat which totters as she nods / Me —
A small red-coated man on fire with fear.

These members of the board who stroll the stands / Stamp
Like 'Arab Filly' champing at the bit. / Cries
Of bull-and-bear investors in command, / 'Start!'
To steer, committee-like, the steed, my seat.

Our pack, in lock-formation, courses on / Gone —
The turning hats, the blare of chants and bands / Glance
Is lost amidst the relativist throng, / Rise
And fall; *still* horses slip the twisting stands.

They were bemused, found it inaccessible, were expecting something absurdist.

To be fair to Joy, though, her reticence tonight contained a promise, even if it only made the chatter piquant in its banality. We have 'spoken' recently, before the clatter of 'argument' cut in over the tentative murmur of speech.

Wednesday May 7th

During Eng. Lit. I made an abstract sketch: 'construct / collapse'. When I arrived home I put the pad on the floor so that I could see the lines as the red-haired girl who sat behind me must have.

Roman Polanski's 'Repulsion': just that — his disgust (and sympathy) for male sexual dominance. Images of brute force, decay, violation. But the girl, Carol, was nobody, was simply Polanski's repulsion. Granted this was the 'theme', it was an excellent way of putting it over; good tension between symbolism and realism. But was it necessary to bring in 3 murders, devaluing death and the well-caught monotony of a quiet, brooding life? I could identify with both the violating men and the violent woman responding, but the horror and relevance of the theme, that this conflict was inevitable, lost strength because it soon became clear that the conflict is all within the male, and will modify real behaviour before it becomes dangerous. And as for the female element, we are still in the dark, because the film industry, too, is a man's world.

The film used Pavese's observation that a man cannot stand watching (dispassionately) another man's affairs with women — identification with the men was at once impossible and unavoidable. Similarly, he cannot stand seeing his own relationships with women from another's point of view. This was perhaps the point of the film — to bring home this self-disgust felt secretly by chauvenistic, patronising, married men. But what of the effect of this message on me, who have been 'murdered' in my only attempt at a possession of this sort (well, a different sort, I hope) — I, who have been 'killed' before being kissed? The effect is probably similar for a woman who has been raped, and must sit through this hour of un-subtle, carefully and devastatingly orchestrated rape-imagery and rape depiction. It is not only over-kill, but the missiles have hit the wrong target on their way to the 'doxa'.

Thursday May 8th

Spoke with Shane Enright, president of Gaysoc, and Welfare Convenor for SRC. He appreciates Nietzsche, has studied existentialism at a Wales polytechnic. During our philosophy class, he argued against conventional education from an anarcho-syndicalist point of view.

Prof. Poggi, 'Political & Economic Power'.

Sunshine you could breathe.

The Christians intone soothing dirges upstairs: the notes step sedately up, step, down, down, step, like the creep of sheep in comfortable rain. Then somebody on the stairs whoops and calls — echo, echo — into their ceremony. Byron calls from the door of our flat 'Haud yer whiesht!' and the heathen is quiet. The Christians continue to placate their Shepherd with the praise of tongues, milk of magnesias, fleece of wools.

A foremost American sociologist got himself committed, incognito, to a mental institution in order to study the conditions at first hand. This he achieved very successfully. But he couldn't secure his release, and is still there!

Saturday May 10th

Oh how very stupid I have been to close my eyes to this city, which now yields itself in springshine. It has its bizarre corners, its sediments of history, its quarters of mystery. I opened my eyes to the strange dreams of its designers. People: a punkette in red amongst the warehouses, a dark black couple talking and smiling, people with dogs. In the park I read Kafka's Paris travel diaries; the twilight restaurant, the tricycle accident. Later — an extraordinary, narrow street with rough-granite stones and multi-coloured windows; straight, it curved shyly and alluringly at the end, closing its vista. The long lane behind Ian's house — low buildings, young trees with new leaves, children swinging along the shiny white road, and more figures at intervals along the mile-length. Turn your head and you see Corbusier's concrete ghost perched on the horizon. The fascination of buildings is that they expand people's dreams, and permit new ones. Lunch in a bright Crawfords on Union Street. Young waitresses. Impossible to think politically — who would cast the first brick at *this* capitalism? In a clothes shop, the young attendants approach me, like gigolos, in their brightly coloured cotton. Other Record Shop — Ali, distributing records, greets me, plays me a reggae single, acts as if I were... *there!* I buy The Slits' 'Cut'. I am good at being a tourist, and must remember that it can be done anywhere, just a few steps from

my cocoon-room. Oscillation between ascetic despair and touristic amusement, between the room and the street, is best.

Letter home: 'Now it's Saturday, and I've been out walking Aberdeen. It has made me realise how little I know the city, and how I've underestimated it. Of course, warm sunshine, fresh leaves and blossoms would make anywhere look good! But the granite, which I always tell people (the sort who ask how you like Aberdeen and expect a eulogy) I find cold and sterile, has its charms, especially when cut rough or polished. Some of the streets remind me of the old (19th C.) terrace houses of inner Montreal, rapidly being replaced by parking lots while we were there; also, there is a loose French connection: allusions to Calais (not a great compliment). The chief characteristic of the place, though, is plain innocence. It doesn't seduce you like the cosmopolitan metropolis, but simply looks at you with a smooth silver moon-like face which, in cold and wet, you taunt and scorn, but in warmth you cannot help taking to. Perhaps it's best that I'm staying next year in Hillhead, which is like a vast ship with a thousand cabins, and could be anywhere; sometimes the white buildings look like an African mission-school, sometimes like tundra research stations. From this satellite I can occasionally descend to the real world, and can leap with astonishment through a different gravity, from one indigenous sample to the next, savouring as a tourist what I might miss as a resident.'

I make it obvious that I listened to 'Lodger' first thing this morning!

Good Cuban film, 'The Last Supper'. The negro slaves, having rebelled and escaped, are tracked down with dogs and killed one by one. The master holds an 'Easter' ceremony to admit his 'folly' in 'trusting' them; their heads top posts fixed around a crucifix. One post is empty. The negro, who has promised that he will escape, is the only survivor. He rushes through the jungle, with birds, horses, streams and boulders rushing with him. Caption: 'Fin'. Announcer. The News. Headlines: the Police have discovered that a seventh terrorist, responsible for the Libyan embassy holding, is still free, having escaped the SAS storming of the building. They are seeking information. Colonel Gadafi has had another of his exiled opponents executed, in Rome. He threatens the systematic extermination

of all others who refuse to return 'home'. Film clips show, respectively, the burnt-out embassy and a shrouded corpse in a Rome hotel. Like The Last Supper's burnt sugar mill and sheet-covered negroes. Do we conclude that the film presents reality as it is confirmed in the news? Or is it that those in the business of political entertainment share the same symbols, knowing that war, like communication, can only occur when the opponents are equipped with the same vocabulary?

Barthes scorned the 'instrumental' use of language, yet used no other mode himself. He had something of the frustrated artist about him (a question of ambition, against which palpable success is measured failure) — could his notion of the 'ecrivain', in its extremity, be a critic's elevation of his ideal occupation to unreachable heights of refinement in order to justify his own failure to attain it? Somewhat like the man who marvels at his wife's 'genius' for cooking, and raves about it out of all proportion to its value in the wife's view, so that he can be absolved the task himself whilst continuing to savour the dishes. Or, rather, enthuses on the *possibility* of cooking, implicitly degrading the fare he is served with, but insisting that his wife is closer to the ideal than he could ever be, and so should strive to play the better cook to his better connoisseur.

Monday May 12th

Playing Noperson in sun, which has a dash of bitter lemon in it, amongst the ruffle of wind — a chemical disappointment, regret of the hormones that the air must trigger the blood without the blood being able to direct things out in the air according to its wishes. Which is why one remembers that the head remains dark inside, though couples, inclining theirs together, may forget.

Finished 'A Story of the Falling Sleet' below trees by the campus track. Then went back to habit, going on like this, by nature.

JBM & I no longer greet, except in unavoidable circumstances. Fatuous phatics, I want big talk or no talk. This, at least, is what I say when writing, as now; but to relate is not to take language off its shelf, brush it down, and put it respectfully to

'good use'. To relate is to create people and to endow them with a dynamism. One creates oneself and the other. Language is instrumental, incidental, and should be so. To write, contrary to the opinion of 'realists', is not to create people. It may perhaps be to recreate them in the context of language; that is, to imagine how it would be if people really did use language as authors do, as language itself thinks it deserves to be used. But really, any blend of relation and language is a confection to placate children with. Communion either happens or doesn't. Communication may or may not — it doesn't matter. But language, language is a game to itself; to apply its rules to life beyond is to betray either ignorance or stubbornness or tyranny. As it is to apply life's rules to language. Which explains why writers are stubborn and ignorant tyrants.

Before Draper, Janice, Janet and Joyce (Lit. tutorial) I only just managed to control breath and voice enough to read some Donne — loaded with double entendre, as ever, but the clamour of my heart prevented me from toppling, as the frantic spinning of a gyroscope keeps it on the taut string.

Tuesday May 13th

Byron's physiology drew him to reactionary opinions.

But, for me, all sort of life is too precarious for violence to be justified. But violence is often the only way to prevent further, greater violence. 'When nothing else remains one must scream. Silence is the ultimate crime against humanity.' Mandelstam.

English Language lecture today: Liz sat in front of me, writing this: 'I will not scream. I must control myself.'

Jealous of couples. To form one? Impossible. Why? Pretence, self-debasement, self-glorification, admission of weakness, seizure of something not due, not paid for, the price of which has already broken me. No opportunity, otherwise I would grasp at it without hesitation.

Adorno, 'Quarto', Artaud.

Self-discipline: to administer coffee at habitual intervals, to merit the maintenance of the practice by work. One good habit deserves another, they keep each other at the necessary tension, which substitutes itself for the true tension between habit and *life*.

Wrote 'Rathouse'.

Wednesday May 14th

Assembled for march for TUC Day of Action, being photographed intensively from an upper window. Slightly embarrassed parade, ending in the Music Hall. Some disruption by anarchists: their banner 'Both Conservative *and* Labour wield the Capitalist axe' was booed, they tried to take the mic, were resisted; fights broke out onstage, they were ejected to applause which drowned cries of 'free speech'. Then followed some obvious rhetoric, stirring in part, boring in stretches. Formula & convention mediated. Feminist speech was coolly received, applause coming only at the end, when a general strike was suggested. Outside, banks, shops, unconcerned people. Speakers in the hall had spoken of 'those outside this hall, the unenlightened' — defining the group negatively. Is the avoidable? It is a division, if temporary in intent, of a class-for-itself.

'Camerawork'.

Strongest applause of the afternoon's meeting met condemnation of the media. A rich vein of discontent to be tapped. Speakers were afraid that their 'unenlightened brothers' (voice from audience: 'And sisters!') would believe press reports.

Anarchists compare this Labour demonstration with church. We sat in rows, listened to sermons, contributed to a collection. There was no discussion — agreement was assumed, the grounds for this agreement were then specified by the speakers.

Thursday May 15th

I would dearly love to crush all cars and radios under my heel. Metal rushes across tarmac with ferocious impassivity. People pass each other oblivious. Radios jingle and blabber unnecessarily, addictively. Money and habit co-habit, money wears habit, habit cloaks money. We are their bastard children.

Thank God for Niteline's forcible breaking of my habit periodically. Thank God for all the discomfort, irregularity, isolation of a Nightline duty. I became alive enough to be disgusted at my life and to consider why. Complete lack of any relationships except stumbling phatic ones, and even these only when absolutely unavoidable. Partly my own choice, this, because I want reality and appearance to merge: if I am to have no friendships, I at least want the peace of isolation. I refuse to appear integrated when I feel reciprocally alienated. Also the stultification of routine. Two years is really enough time spent in one place, with one form of activity. After that, place begins to modify you. I should treat my lack of commitment to people and place as a boon, use it to my advantage by moving freely. My weaknesses can still be made strengths.

Raymond Queneau's 'Exercises in Style' — I bought it on impulse for £5.95!
Hilarious, gripping.

Friday May 16th

Today spent in erasure. Cut hair, tidied room, threw out papers, took down posters, changed door display. Traces negated.

Some seven o'clock sounds: a male sings 'Que sera sera'. Bus comes in. Birds chirp. Girls laugh. Footsteps. The squeak of doors. Somebody is clapping. A car engine. Girl's voice: rises to a squeak. Boy's voice: falls loudly. Whistling on the stairs. Loud male grunt, echo. Motorbike. Bus leaves, familiar play of gears and diesel. Helicopter approaches. A cackle from indoors. Recorded piano music (one bar only). Girl: 'Come on, Janet!' 'Get yer eyes off!' Laughter. Boy: 'You

wanna prove it while I've got them on?' People wait for telephones, converse at a ground-floor window, throw a frisbee, walk in pairs, walk alone, hands in pockets. The sun shines.

Made a snake of Blutac. It sat on my desk, casting a shadow. It didn't look right: too overt on the empty flat surface. So I put it on the spine of my Collins dictionary. Then I noticed, between its blue coils, the book's logo: a tree — the tree of knowledge.

At supper I sat near two girls. A boy joined them; one of the Freshers' week sociables, I presumed. He was rounded; simple brown eyes, longish hair, beard. He talked to the girls in a manner and language I cannot properly understand. He laughed a lot, when there was manifestly nothing whatever to laugh at. They must have private slang, private jokes, I thought. But then he asked their names. Another boy came along. When he was fetching coffee, the first boy asked the girls the name of the second boy. They didn't know, one suspected it was 'Peter'. They asked him. 'Peter'. Despite the facility with which Boy 1 talked and joked with the girls, they talked to each other, oblivious of him. He wasn't a bit put out, but listened, and broke in from time to time. 'Keep on going,' he said, 'I'm good at guessing.' They were talking about a boy. 'He dyes his hair blond,' they said, 'he's a queer. Not the sort of person you'd expect to get drunk like that.' Boy 2 talked to the girl next to me. 'I saw you at the dane. Why didn't you get up onstage with Dean Friedman?' 'I suppose we're the shy type. We're really modest sort of people.' 'Yeah, I've noticed!'

These people get on so well because they say nothing that does not comply with strict and rigid conversational convention. Rules do not just govern their language, but their every expression. Is this a means to better ends? When they know each other better, do they begin to speak from inside, to give instead of use language? Or does the frequent but shallow contact with fellow code-followers dull the need for this communion sufficiently for a painless existence?

Is this high redundancy necessary for solidarity in social ties? Or is my communication, unexpected, not anxious to give immediate or specific meaning,

yet much concerned that no implication be missed, simply also a token of affiliation to a group; in my case an imaginary one, a dead one, a published one?

Friendship becomes just another mode of activity. Instead of being the last bastion of wholeness, friendship becomes another code of practice to be learnt, another set of worldly values to be accepted because it is expedient. Placed in a new situation, today's noperson will not say 'What can be made of this?' but 'What are the rules here?' Nobody makes the rules, but everybody follows them. It is not a question of there being few kings and many couriers. Everyone could be a king. 'Like children, they all chose to be couriers. So their messages became meaningless.' (Kafka). The worst is that they might find themselves a king and believe that they've found meaning.

Optimistic egalitarianism which realises its idealism (ie the practical unlikeliness of its fruition) is akin to fascism. The businessman says 'Everybody could be like me if they worked hard enough.' He does not acknowledge that his success depends upon the failure of everybody else.

But doesn't everyone have a different notion of success? The more idiosyncratic one's line of success, the more people are measured as failures against it. To keep on good terms with one's fellows, one should simply avoid the temptation to see one's own success as having an absolute, universal value. A seductive, almost necessary, misconception! I don't exempt businessmen by this. In their hypocrisy they tell others that wealth & power is the reward for work, but tell themselves it is their destiny, an absolute and universally important success. They believe that others have failed by nature, but failed nonetheless.

There are many meanings. They can only be animated by consensus. People can be elevated as meaning-makers, or meaning can be the standard by which people are measured. The latter, based on consensus value, may seem like a fair system; the judgment of the few by the many. But leaders and commentators (politicians, media) have unfair power to make meaning. Egalitarian meaning is decentralised; it proclaims the fraudulence of a centre. It is anarchistic in its

antagonism to any creed. Consensus is an imposition — a 'natural' human solidarity would welcome, not condemn, divergence.

Perhaps the world is divided into people who are the same and people who are different. The Sames would secretly like to be different, the Differents would secretly like to be the same. This is because the systematic distinctions are, as ever, too simple: what is not clear-cut in reality must be made so in a systematic society (thus males repress their femininity, and vice versa). The Sames' fight to be sufficiently Samey involves an inner suppression of their own difference — this is universalised, and leads to conflict with the Differents (and vice versa). This is the theme of 'Exercises in Style'.

Most friendships are founded on a black joke — personalities cannot relish each other without denying themselves. So you can have a bond which consists of one dominant personality and one accessory, or you can take turns (and thus be inconsistent: fractured), or there can be nothing present except the bond itself; a railway line without stations.

Just as the master's success *contains* the failure of his servants, so failure in life is a precondition for success in literature (the two are antithetical). If I had any friendships I would not be writing on the subject. (Objections: 1. Wouldn't you? 2. Why then is success in life not dependent on failure in literature?)

Saturday May 17th

Football is not about the ball. Literature is not about language. To say otherwise is reification.

Agony purgatory of bowels — searing pain in upper stomach, unbearable descent to bowels. Cold sweat, shallow, quick breath.

Herzog's 'Strozek' — excellent; apparently true portrait of the American disease. A performing chicken, dancing when a coin was put in the slot.

Sunday May 18th

Angry, ill, ugly as sin. Insect taking a siesta. 'Modernism', South Bank Show. Phonetics / phonemics.

Monday May 18th

Victoria Park, on the scorching grass. A middle-eastern in an ugly blue business-suit sat, gaze fixed on the slender figure at the bush edge of the lawn crescent. She rubbed sun lotion into her legs, arms, shoulders. Locked in willing, passive combat. The man left, and I was the nearest male. I read Webster's 'White Devil', but she was always there, behind the pages. From time to time I looked up. She changed her position once in a while. The power relationships of sex are cast as far as the longest glance. Her compelling perfection, the absurd *promise* of a certain arrangement of loose triangles on a lawn. I couldn't see her face properly — she may have looked at me, or she may not. One always assumes that the glance has been bestowed, and may be again. Then one begins to weave the threads of a link — to this end one tremblingly and ineffectually plucks and knots blades of grass. For her benefit I reached into the hot, dark inside of my canvas bag and took an apple. As I bit it, the foam spilled to the grass. A potent, silent speech act.

The Hillhead girls (apart from their unattractive childishness) have few faults, but completely fail to interest me. They are too accessible. They authorise their attention; on receipt of the appropriate signals in the right conditions, they will flirt just as they ought. All you have to do is present yourself between their blinkers. Since they have no understanding of the oblique approach, no desire to turn towards the impossible, I have no interest in them.

To be a social success here you must be: stupid, predictable, weak, manipulable, manipulative, inconsiderate, obedient, interfering: a cipher. Because success by these criteria is not failure by those governing the world beyond, it cannot be said, in consolation, that failure by these criteria is any sort of success. It is simply

a secret possession: a weight, but a personal store of gravity. It would be useless if it didn't free one from the burden of utility.

It's a lie: to *me*, no-one could be less accessible than the Hillhead girls. Like Berliners, we both contest that it was the other who built the wall.

Tuesday May 19th

Gaudie, and most of these student people, fill me with despair. But the twin Jewish girl, on her own, deep in her thoughts, at supper, gives me a hope that makes up for it all. It was her (or her twin) whom I saw in the Arts Lecture Theatre, her arm around her girlfriend, speaking directly, immediately and affectionately to her. She, unlike all these others who debase themselves before rules and whimsy; she has pride in herself.

The boys play at being cowboys and football players. The girls play at being their mothers. Sulking with glee, I'm not playing.

There comes a sort of relief when you simply go through the motions of anger: a fraudulent fury which entertains you enough to distract your attention.

Wednesday May 20th

There is a right to be inconsistent. Like all forms of honesty, it is a difficult, exasperating path to follow.

Utter a fruity laugh and snip an illicit second from the grand eternal plan.

'Campus Crusade for Christ' sent me a booklet, 'Dear Peter', in response to my willingness that someone should come back and *talk* to me about religion — 'We won't try to convert you,' they assured. The letter I got this morning began '... you indicated that you would like to know how to have a personal relationship with God.' Of course, I didn't. I just wanted an argument! In the leaflet were two diagrams. In the first, Self was on the throne, Christ waiting outside the circle,

and interests were jumbled and fractured. In the second, Christ was on the throne, Self had abdicated, and interests were as ordered as newly-combed hair, with lines anchoring each strand to the centre. I mounted the diagrams on a piece of black paper, switched around, astride the chassis of a Fiat. Over the Christ-on-throne I mounted the caption 'Autosleeper?' Midway, a flash said 'Choose', then, in bold type over Self-on-throne, 'Self-Drive'.

Thursday May 21st

Wrote a manifesto of general principles.

Help is consistently given to those who are least in need of it. When did I last talk to someone? (Ever?) Is there the least likelihood of it happening in the near future? This summer: re-inserted into the widening axis of the family, I will be accorded 'privacy' (ignored). If I go to Poland, I will be customer / tourist, quite unreachably foreign. It seems likely that I will have no job. If a job, perhaps monitoring again, the same old boss' son distinction. My very pessimism is the greatest obstacle; my great backlog of frustration, my inexperience, both are ominously mounting up.

You expect somebody to see this towering barrier and be so astonished by its size that, with one push, they will topple it to see what can lie behind. But its only manifestation in reality is a permanent glum set of the face, which people take as an unpromising gauge of character. They may be right.

The responsibility is yours too. But outside I am too aware of the possibility of strange, unexpected events to act concertedly to bring one about. It seems, outside, that I must act very carefully to *prevent* anything extraordinary from happening. 'Not just yet,' I tell myself, content to learn a bit more by observing before throwing myself in at the deep end of experience by the simple relaxation of my muscles.

How strange, as I walk through the cafeteria protected by a set of clamps, artificially restraining my behaviour and dangling ridiculously from my body, to

hear the chuntering of the boy in front: alone, he nonetheless whistles and hums loudly as he passes tables and conversing couples, who do not even look up. What must it be like to be so much at ease, so apparently unselfconscious, and yet still to be unnoticed?

You still, *still*, expect people to jump into your life from the street. Haven't you already found that the only friends you will get this way are Moonies?

But if not the street, where? Pubs, parties? One needs invitations. Over meals, at lectures? Introductions must occur. Observation: acceptance is always backdated out of existence — one friendship leads to others. The first friendship happens at random, in circumstances (party etc.) where the individuals appear to have been accepted before by a mutual acquaintance.

When I wait, with three other, for a phone outside the refectory at six, I am the only one not greeted by at least one passerby. A spotty, bespectacled boy gives an attractive girl a piggy-back. I pretend to be fascinated by the only empty patch on the floor. I tap my foot to show that my ears are filled with internal music.

A walk in the grey suburbs. Out there it is worse. Some young girls cheered me, though, by whistling at me from a bus shelter.

The Christians drone as mournfully as ever upstairs. I tried to record their dirge on tape, but only the whine of the machine's engine was audible.

Saturday May 24th

A rum-tum-tugger on a sterile promontory.

My sort of life here is only tolerable when I can do as I please most of the time.

Yesterday, conversation with Marion & Viv — I am rusty. Today: facial tic when I passed people. Byron joined me at supper — impossible to talk. Getting more

cramped. I chose my freedom; the inside. Now the outside pushes on all sides in constrictive retribution.

Madnesses: one can choose, or be forced to, a narrow kind. Or one can escape into a wide, colourful kind, which is also more sane.

Sunday May 25th

The pain of difference is numb when one is alone. Only amongst different others does it begin to nag. Only when one sees and sees oneself being seen is it a burden.

I know and understand my capacities. Others can only judge by interpreting, which is always an evaluation. Evaluation is always manipulative: normal evaluation is normative.

No sooner has one bumped still in the silt than buoyancy returns to impel one upwards with a rush.

Monday May 26th

The babyfaced redhaired girl said, between stretches of Eng. Lit., 'I'll see you this afternoon'. After the final question, I was leaving the exam hall when I saw her with Adam, Durian, Sara. 'What did you think of that, Nick?' she asked. 'God — I was lucky,' I said. 'How d'you think it compares with the first one?' 'I don't know; I don't think you can make the comparison,' I said. 'We thought they were much the same,' she said after a pause. 'I'm just glad to get it over with,' said Adam. The group began to move along the corridor. The two nearest to me discussed Chaucer. I was ahead. I couldn't walk slowly without someone to talk to, so I gradually moved on, away from them.

A tramp on King Street: 'I'm not inebriated, I'm a literate man, as you can tell. Have you heard of the Queen's Lieutenants? Well, I was in the *King's* Lieutenants, used to be a pipe major. Brother was posted near Reading, that's R-E-A-D-I-N-G,

after he was sent to Ireland. But I'm very humble, I'm very humble...' 'You shouldn't be,' I said, but he insisted on it. I gave him £1, having gone to the newsagent for change. He shook me by the hand, hooking his fingers around my palm and not letting go.

At Viv's: sitting on an airbed with a strange girl. Ian read 'Man' in my 'Monologue'. He was eager that I should leave to revise. The 'new' couple left ahead of me, went south while I went north. I caught the bus, stepping in out of the rain. The acceleration flung me to the back seat. Then, sitting ahead, I saw the couple. They were talking, appeared not to have noticed me. When I got off at the foot of Don Street, the bus paused unnecessarily long. As it passed me I glanced sideways into it. The couple were no longer there. They must be from Hillhead, I thought; they must be walking behind me. I didn't look back until half way up Don Street, but I didn't see them, just yellow light and shadows.

Tuesday May 27th

After Sociology exam, I had lunch with Caralampo Focas. We talked about ideas for our action / agit group, and about Athens & Rome. Described scenes from these cities as we sat eating in the Johnson refectory (I've never been there before). A friend! I am at ease with C, completely untrammelled. Because he is not British? We went to the Sociology department to look at merit certificates.

Wednesday May 28th

Music in the air: against the rush of a jet crescendo, a distant ice cream van jingles with insane optimism.

Read Ian McEwan's 'The Cement Garden' at one sitting last night. Excellent control, the quality of introducing as random symbols and events which are very carefully integrated into the mounting psychological undertones. Best study of adolescence I've read, owes something to Golding's 'Lord of the Flies' and 'Psycho'.

Thursday May 29th

I am owned today.

Friday May 30th

After hours of grinding dreamlessness, the sleeper springs awake. And sees: the bushes laden with flower and scent, the sky pale and radiant, the consecutive branches of trees like a secretive highway, a silhouette of a topmost tree melancholic and grand, graph paper tiles, couples, and bats, small, as if on elastic, flickering up and down the sunken alleyway.

My lost property self and I are reunited after examination by the authorities. We have three weeks in which to nurture something by our partnership.

Saturday May 31st

I worked on ideas for a story, 'The Enemy', which turned into another story, 'Subject', about an eavesdropping lodger repaid. Wrote a page, but it seemed flat after my faint, almost religious ecstasies of imagination beforehand. Its dispassionate tone is ill fitted to my passionate concern for it.

The Spanish film: at first it seemed flabby, with even a whiff of kitsch, but transcended structural or conventional considerations because of the complete unselfconsciousness of the girl, Ana, who was perhaps eight years old, perhaps younger. Her face exploded any reservations — or made others unnecessary to prevent tears. Also Geraldine Chaplin: looked skeletal, appeared as a ghost. Told the story of 'Thumbelina'. People looking at, kissing and touching each other. But nothing maudlin about the sentimentality. Ana's hair and fine, high brows were like Paula's. I resisted this comparison because of its obviousness, but when the camera filled the screen with Ana's round, wickedly innocent face I thought 'How can you do this to me?' yet was glad that they did. Happy that this kind of human perfection exists (and that it is *not* perfect), sad that I do not know of it —

but here it is in a film which can remind me of things I have known — school in Athens, being very young, being in love with Paula.

Walking with Paula at the top of the Mound, talking about our different upbringings regarding sex and touching.

Could this have been a British film? No, probably not. That is our great loss.

Athenian smell: like wax or fat, no doubt located in the nose. Smelt mostly in the kitchen. Marble floors, iced water. Lard?

Sunday June 1st

I wrote about 2000 words of 'Subject', starting it anew after reading some of Dostoyevsky's 'The Double'. It went very well. Making up for the crisis in literary self-confidence I felt yesterday. The solution is to avoid cramp, to forget the demands of probability and to submit to impulse and simple *pleasure* in the writing as it progresses. Yesterday I was anxiously hurrying through the piece — today it took three pages to reach the point I had reached yesterday after one. Complete satisfaction, worn as a shy smirk on my face at meal times.

There is something obscene about Mark's counselling role with Byron, who yesterday smashed a mug full of tea on the kitchen floor and strode straight out of the flat. Tonight Mark follows him around, listening like a benign vulture to the endless flow of words Byron hides behind, delivered in his trembling, level voice, from his great barrel chest. The words are about Geography, The Specialisation which we all have versions of, but cannot share. Byron's tapping of this source is not, however, the healthy release it could be, but a simultaneous display of his desire to have communion with others and the admission that he lacks the fundamental qualification of self-suspension. To belch up the Specialisation is to take advantage of the problem, and people's concessions, without facing it resolutely. It is therefore a way of prolonging rather than shortening the disease. Why? Because disease is a possession and a conveniently neutral identity to nurture — it fits in with other people's easy neutrality; the

mask of the patient can look bleakly into the fixed smile of the muse forever without either of them risking a thing. Byron wants to be treated as terminally ill, and survive it.

The solipsist's tragedy: to be the only self amongst the role, therefore to try and blend self and role in order to meet others, in their roles, as the sole self, thus reducing them and magnifying himself.

Monday June 2nd

Ten lines more of 'Subject', then downtown on the bus. Plastic signs announce manufacturer's name. Housing schemes with an air of somebody's poor fantasy. An abattoir. Graphics people, the placards punning ingeniously. Prints in the Arts Centre Gallery — bright, suitable for the fashion pages of 19 magazine. An Italian-looking girl on King Street — self-consciously attractive, didn't dare look at anybody for fear of acknowledging admiration. Mascara, hands covered in silver and diamond rings — owned.

I caught sight of a familiar, friendly face on King St. — Angela Bolt, sitting low in her sensible green Morris Minor. I looked back when the face had clicked, and she was still looking at me — a rare moment of undeniable attraction. Her black eyes, round face unsullied by make-up.

Walking up Don Street, I thought how much I hate the phrase 'ivory tower'.

On the bus, everyone was sedate, standing and sitting quite absorbed.

Tuesday June 3rd

Jungle humidity, horrible fecundity. The only cool place was the library stack, where I turned Dostoyevsky's pages. If only he weren't a conservative!

I want to be where everything is fresh and new, without tiresome associations and leaden categorisations. I want to have control there, but be open to

fantastical chances. I want to embrace strangers, to hunt in summer gardens with cats.

Wednesday June 4th

Weary, I went to town on the bus. Shane Enright got on and sat somewhere behind me. On Union Street I got money (overdrawn) then passed Helen at a bus stop. She saw me coming and began to examine the timetable closely.

Perhaps people are forced to behave like this — they are afraid of losing their autonomy, or the approval of their friends, whom they have selected by the same process which rejects everyone else. Any friendship is an exclusion.

An attractive woman knows that she is bound hand and foot in capitalism — she can only accept or refuse, never choose. She is possessed by the image, status of beauty, womanhood.

Sat on a bank of the Don with a small, sleek insect which preened itself while I read about Theatre of Cruelty.

Foghorns are improvising with banal tentativeness.

Thursday June 5th

A Pittura Metafisica atmosphere hung enchantingly. Childhood memories. Heat, haze.

The peculiar spot in the Art Gallery shop where I so often see attractive girls — today she was blonde, with deep-set eyes and a fragile, angular skull. Nervous, she forgot her change, and was called back by the cashier.

Letter from Caralampo Focas inviting me to a discussion on 'Ideology & Culture' on Saturday in his room. 'There will be two other people, other than myself.

However I believe this to be an objective start, although I have little faith in the other two members.'

Byron said 'Have you had supper? I'm going down in a minute.' We were walking up to the Central Building in rain — I was about to walk along the pavement at the front, but behind me Byron opened the door to the cafe. 'Nick!' he called, as one would a dog. I grinned, now behind him, and he looked back at me, disconcerted. He stopped at the Porter's desk. 'See you downstairs,' he said. 'Okay.' There was a screen inexplicably separating the refectory into two parts. I sat behind it, near the window. Byron didn't come. When I went for coffee he wasn't in the section near the door. We passed outside Esselemont. He was talking to a friend. Inside, I came out of my room. Bryon stood in the corridor, talking to Lep in his room. I bowed as though bending into a gale. Byron half looked at me, but continued talking to Lep.

Outside, I intersected the path of a girl whom I took to be 'the red-haired girl'. She was too far away to greet, so I gave her a half-smile. We were both carrying black umbrellas. When I looked back at her I saw that it wasn't 'the red-haired girl'. She was looking at me curiously. I smiled again, but this time wholly to myself.

Thunderstorm: the sky god has orgasms. The air is pure lust, heavy with scent of outrageously full perfumes, half-decayed. On the lawns of Seaton Park blackbirds hunt and revel. A girl passes me on the avenue — wet breasts. Bubbles on the puddles. Smell of burning. Cars hurtle like sleds, the sky bangs on. The huge raindrops water trees which appear to have been substituted by Rousseau's jungle scenes. All is transformed, and I laugh beneath my black canopy. My left foot feels like a sponge, warm. I find Proust's 'A La Recherche du Temps Perdu' in the library, and sit in the French Lit. room with whispering girls (I mishear this: 'We died. You should have seen them in the trees — it was hot throb!') and a window open to rain, beyond which a squash player is bouncing his rubber ball against the wall of thunder.

When thunder suddenly splits & cracks, the girls whisper across tables to each other.

Friday June 6th

1.21(30) — blow shakes the building. I am sitting behind drawn curtains with an empty plate and cup before me on the table, my spotlight shining into the broad, spacious pages of Pinter's 'Proust Screenplay'. From the speakers above Nyman's bell composition plays.

I read extensively in the diary — 1974, mostly. Wrote several pages of reminiscences, like Ionesco's in 'Present Past, Past Present', of childhood, between 1964 and 1974. No doubt brought on by the Proust. Peculiar perspectives of now and then — a mixture of glamour and monotony. Nowhere is there a close relationship with another person. But now there is the added isolation of being away from the family without actually fitting into some other group.

Deafness in the left ear, weariness. I taped Byron's conversation with Fiona through the kitchen wall. I'm locked with him in a ridiculous psychological battle, don't even know if he's aware of it. We are like two old cripples waving their sticks at each other. On the whole, by life feels like the final act of a Beckett play: I go through the motions of the first act automatically but the situation has worsened.

Most of the time I hide in excessive subjectivity. But I've been doing this for so long that I don't even know what I'm hiding from. And I don't even know who it is that is hiding; if this is actually a person who should present himself boldly to the world or skulk in the shadows to spare people their revulsion. The mirror presents somebody interesting enough, perhaps too boyish, too intense, but certainly not something from under a stone, which is how I live.

When I see somebody who offends me by their appearance and behaviour, I think: 'How can that person be so confident, so popular? What sort of life should

that person live according to his / her merits? And it occurs to me that the person could, ultimately, be condemned to the life I lead. But no, the punishment is too harsh.

Perhaps this person's popularity would be a punishment for me were we to change places.

Byron keeps flinging himself at people, only to be flung out by them, revolted by his egotism. I don't make the attempt, but use myself as a cupboard to nurture some internal growth. If, from time to time, I give people a glimpse of the exotic plant inside, I must not be surprised that they reel back in horror. Somewhere I will come across another botanist.

A walk to escape myself. The docks, then S.W. streets lined with full trees. Young people dressed in cheap and bright. I stopped at a bowling green / tennis court enclosure (Albany Road). Flowering bushes, well-heeled rockery banks, the green immaculate. The easy concentration of the players. A man on a bench opposite read a book, looked like Samuel Beckett.

Saturday June 7th

Read on the top floor of the New Library about Poland — pictures in silver and black, the official version.

Poldino's with Byron, Jeff & Mark: to be invited to lunch with people one has little in common with is to be distanced and punished. I fell into silence and deep imagination.

The atmosphere of Poldino's: wild Italian singing and mandolin music fills the air, the taste of a sweet white wine, the Italian waitress with a quiet, Roman face and fine dark hair. The neglect and demeanour of a professional relationship with such a person is criminal. I listened to a guide at a nearby table preparing a spiel about Aberdeen & environs. McIndoe sat by the bar with a public school girlfriend. I thought of the gulf between me and such school peers, not

regretfully, just surprised by its monolithic consistency. Memories of Italian stays, Greece. Plans for Poland and a life abroad.

Sunday June 8th

Last night at Caralampo's room in Dunbar from 9pm to 4am. The untrustworthy others lived up to their description, failing to appear. All my pages of notes on the group's function ('Show that people, ideas, personal life, politics, sex, madness, science, are not separate but continuous') were neglected in favour of anecdotal conversation. C. showed me copies of 'The Dunbarbarian', a superficial magazine of jokes & poems, the cheap, flexible format of which could carry our heavy ideas.

We walked through the disorienting corridors to a small, bare room where C. made toast, talking about his father, who forbade him to work, and had had 'a middle-aged man's crisis', found religion and become a lawyer. He disapproved of C's 'trade unionism' in the SRC, NUS, etc. C. said he had avoided the Oedipus complex by desiring his sister rather than his mother. We talked about British v. 'European' youth, music, monopolies. It grew light outside, I walked home in the dawn chorus.

C. is a highly bourgeois Marxist.

During my sleep from 5am to 12pm I dreamt of a touching relationship with a dark-haired girl with firm eyebrows — she was American, lived on a sloping stretch of tarmac on which furniture stood. I would travel up and down a route like the 20 bus route, lined by vague trees at the top, then vague shops, restaurants and amusement arcades in which I made visits on British people. The girl was at the end, at the centre of the 'city'. We kissed: it surprised me.

I saw this girl in the early evening in the cafe, tilting her head down as she chewed her food. Her dark eyebrows were a bar across her forehead. Hair drawn back. I had my spectacles on at the time because I was watching TV — it was on one side of the curtain which hung lengthwise in front of me, she the other. It

shouted, she, beside her friend, was still and self-contained. I could not hug her because it was no longer my dream, although she was the same.

Byron and I have sent each other to Coventry. He and Ali listened to records, then arranged to go to the bar. Byron went. Ali stayed, tuning my guitar. He is completely tone deaf, but sat with an intense concentration, eyes wide, mouth slightly open, playing the top and bottom notes to decide if they were an octave — they were two notes out. But he sat on my bed plucking the strings, remarking on things from time to time, quite comfortable. Didn't appear to want to join B. at the bar — referred to him as 'His Nibs'. Seemed to be assuredly and guilelessly ministering to me. He has the power of confident, unselfconscious and often unintelligent people, to cast a numbing, warming spell over you, a childlike ease. Because you know his simplicity will permit no surprises, his company require no effort.

Monday June 9th

Downtown, west, south to Duthie Park, where I sat in the hot houses and coffee room, reading Beckett's 'Six Novellas' and making notes on the scene, the across the river. Ahead was an attractive girl in a long red skirt, so, having no aim in mind, I let her choose my route. She went up the Banchory Road, soon turning into a house. I continued, however, for seven miles. Asked people how far the next bridge was — told 'Two' by some labourers, then, as I looked into a very expensive hotel, two miles later, told 'One'. A false hope near the art school, which I hope to cross to — the footbridge finished halfway across. Then at a shop, two miles later, told 'Two miles'. Strange Polish-looking spires. Mercedes and BMWs on the road. Sun beating down. Tractors and astonished cows. Pigeons like dial tones. Enigmatic house with Grecian eaves and blue window-frames. At last the bridge.

I am a sick animal, huddling unused in this cave.

Tuesday June 10th

In the full-length mirror I see 'a queer fish'. Shane Enright greets me in the quad. I visit the Psychology room and take Lacan's 'Ecrits' & Freud's 'Creative Writers...' volume. Lacan's essay on 'The Mirror Stage'. New Statesman article (Terry Eagleton) on English faculty reform. Williams' 'Marxism & Literature'.

Dreamt of the gradual rejection by Paula again — this time her father figured prominently: he and I sat in the kitchen talked politely while P. was away doing something — but we both knew that she was on this errand to avoid me.

The peremptory last letter. How cruel those events might seem to an outsider, and consequently, by his reaction, to me — yet I can sympathise with both parties: there is no blame.

The modulation of the appetites: waiting to sate them.

Short conversation with Byron in the Quad — he was wearing clip-on shades, so at first I didn't recognise him. 'God, who's this bruiser,' I thought, for he was short and meaty, arms seeming to drag the ground, shoulders twitched from side to side as he walked. Then when we talked, his usual fractured muttering of inconsequentialities emerged — but he actually looked up at me when he said 'I'm leaving tomorrow. Dad's got the yacht at St. Andrews...' *et cetera non sequitur*.

My stories ride the surf of the turbulence exams bring on. I need such exterior agitators from which to escape energetically; there is an air of theft about it.

Wednesday June 11th

Dream: New Town streets were inside: corridors and art galleries. Abercromby Place was a river. Ana G.-Sarria. To the east was damp moorland with grand mansions and barracks — here I hoped to find Paula. But ended up in a grey barracks shop — ancient decor, full of sober bourgeois.

An image from an architecture book appeared in this dream — rear courtyard of a modern building, enclosed, stepped like an arena. In the photograph a single girl

sat on these steps. In the dream the building became a Georgian mansion where I hoped to find *my* single girl.

Planning a novel — collage construction, Edinburgh settings, fusion of dream & 'reality' without a set time sequence. Chapter headings: 'The Letter', 'The Block', 'Workshop', 'Adolescent Friends', 'Shops', 'Politics', 'Television', 'Relatives', 'In Love', 'The Enemy'. About 6000 words each. Continual references back and forward between them. The process of memory, imagination will dictate style & action. Character without bearings, sees potentialities but is swept along by the cross-references of his own mental processes so that he is always on the brink of things, always beyond them, always really in his flat alone.

Thursday June 12th

Dream of a harbour — cats and canaries (derived from Musil's 'Moosbrugger' — yachts from Byron's father yesterday).

Psychology as siren, unconscious as sacred, locked temple.

To town. Art Gallery — girl, as ever, this time an astonishingly delicately-featured redhead. I only properly saw her as she floated through the pillars, across the flags, out through the revolving door.

Record room — listened to Eno's 'Taking Tiger Mountain (By Strategy)': sometimes maudlin, but flashes of unparalleled genius, deeply saddening because they condemn the mundane tenor of life. I shared the anteroom with ageing soft chairs and the dusty windows of Marshall's granite laboratories. Cork tiles — no, wood, and people down in the street's well. Read about Mandelstam in the Guardian: Beckett's new piece, 'Company', announced.

Boomtown Books: the middle-class feminists laughed horsiy at passages from 'alternative' periodicals. I was self-conscious: clothes hung on me, almost pierced by my bones, spectacles covered my whole face with their skein of glass, silly awkward features and too-long, wispy hair made me feel like 'the scrambled egg-

head' I fear is jumping splayfoot into my shoes (which, by the way, are clumsy, scuffed, and grin at the toes).

Read around the outskirts of Lacan, feeding the ears with Eno.

On the Union Durex machine: 'Shane doesn't need these because he is a homosexual.' Simple community feeling!

Thoughts about next year's group: 'DIScourse'?

The girl's heels were stilettos. I was in the refectory, for an instant, putty on the floor.

Called in at Dunbar Hall. Sunshine and a fly navigating the corridors. At the library discovered — whoosh — a new room, packed with art books of every hue! That I could have missed it! Book on Tom Phillips — excellent! This vitality must be my model.

Lep's letter: 'Bye everyone have a good holiday see you next term'.

Friday June 13th

Spent much of the day in the Art Library. Klee, Duchamp, Nolde, photographs in Lucie-Smith's 'Invented Eye'. I came home past supper time, so borrowed next door's pots for macaroni. As I sat down to eat it, Lucie-Smith's R3 Dali programme came on, and I recorded it. Not as good as the Klee one.

NME.

Hillhead is emptying — only Jeff & Mark left. Both are out this evening. I lurk alone.

Character of my novel: called 1 (one) — looking for a close sequence of numbers, only knows 62 etc. Perhaps. Sorting into Chapters boxes, then reshuffling.

Saturday June 14th

Talked on the bus to Janice (as pretty as her name!). Then was joined in the Art Gallery coffee shop by Durian Doric. Left them no less lonely than I joined them. Ballet at 3 — Scottish Ballet Workshop. Much specious 19th C. crap, but a moving moment in 'Ephialtes' — distant, sad bell music, replaced by deep rumbling.

There was mist and sensuous rain. Through the bus window King's College was otherworldly. This strange planet. Trees: growths of green fungus.

The great relief of song. I chant and wail with Magazine. The 'creative' activity of the dancers was simply a result of the audience's cardboard passivity: between me and the musical, lit space were rows of rigid silhouettes. A baby's cries gave the hegemony of the performance away.

A tramp solicits 30p from me. 'It's a long time since I last saw you,' he says. 'You've seen me before?' 'About a year ago...'

Ian Curtis committed suicide after watching Herzog's 'Strozek'. The following day he was to have flown to America.

The enormous difference in perception of the world between being alone and being in company. The landscape becomes, in the latter state, visible only to prompt a resumption of the conversation: to *see* is to have failed in the circumstances. Or else objects are the exotic screens for the peculiar ideas conversation turns up — Mull, Janice's holiday destination, was projected onto the wall of Johnson Hall, through the bus window.

I watched 'Telford's Change', appalling pedestrian TV programme selling the haute bourgeoisie, conveying petty 'real' details in order to lie better over the big issues. Only workers shown were self-employed, etc. Bank was blameless of involvement in S. Africa, not for moral reasons, but those of profit. But the 'realism' of the scenes: Telford in his office, the builder in his cement lorry, the

wife in her kitchen — as always this realism was simply an enormous hoax, the materialist fallacy by which 'things' are given precedence over states of consciousness so that they can continue to exert their mass-produced tyranny over people. I came out of the TV lounge and there was mist which smelt of decay and the sea. The bus shone its yellow cabin lights out into this visible air and the path lamps hung metaphysically. This too is reality, and it cannot be distinguished from me, Nicholas Currie.

Good art makes you see *more*, bad art makes you see less. If you step out of the theatre, cinema, or close your book, and see less, it has been worthwhile. If you see more, it has also been worthwhile, but only to the extent that you can use your perceptions of reality to create a good work of art which will transcend 'reality'.

Returning from Athens to Edinburgh made me appreciate Athens all the more — it was good art. Yet without Edinburgh as measure — without 'reality' — Athens would have been humdrum. So if Athens hadn't existed, would Edinburgh have been pleasant for me? No, I would simply have cried without knowing it, like the visitor 'Up in the Gallery'.

Sunday June 15th

Walked to Beach Boulevard and sat on a bench (Tom Phillips' metaphor for death) to watch people pass. A cross-eyed father told his apathetic son that 'the best fucking thing for you is *labour!*' Crowds of adolescents passed, one carrying a stereo cassette the size of a suitcase. A Canadian Cadillac passed, a German Beetle. At the amusement arcade the air was asimmer with freaking bleeps and roars as the games simulated outer-space or submarine violence: great red and yellow flames and deep rumbles fill the booth of the 'Star Battle' display, the race-track cars career into barriers and each other, only to drive off again. Aggression and immortality, desires suppressed in modern societies. The asteroids game: a dart-shaped craft sits and rotates at the centre of the screen, shooting intense rows of spark-shells at ominous approaching lumps of rock. Here we have 'bourgeois individualism' matched with the neurosis of

persecution — the craft must constantly whip round to see what dangers lurk behind it. Eventually it is always destroyed by one of the deliberate, stupid, inanimate rocks, and splinters into shard which drift mournfully in the crowded blackness.

Outside the arcade there were three punks. One had a narrow strip of hair, red indian style, dyed turquoise. The second was bald. The third lay curled against the glass door, liquid of some sort spilling as if from his body across the pavement. People looked on soberly. The manager came up and locked the glass door against which the third punk's black jacket squashed. He lay still. When I came back the manager pushed past me to open the door again — the punks had gone, and he wanted customers. The punks were in the car park. The sick one was bending over with his hands on his knees and head hanging over the tarmac. His friends had bemused half-smirks on their faces. Some German boys called to each other to come and see.

I sympathised with the punks, for, although disturbing and grotesque, they brought to light the *active* inhumanity and sheer greed of the manager, concerned only for his machines and their coin-eating slots. Of course, the punks shouldn't have been drinking so much, but their concern for each other was based on a rejection of the coloured lights and machines, which I admire.

Visited Viv, who had an American boy, Gareth, in. She told me that both shows were off, because of strikes in Perth. Her mother was 'the most radical person I've met, and I've been to university!' and, being the teacher in charge of our performance, had fallen out of favour with the Head. She told me she was working at a fish factory, doing accounts, and also ushering at the Odeon, selling ice cream and shining torches. She'd seen 'Kramer v. Kramer' 7 times. For the porn film 'Playbirds', she said, the same men came back every night. Some long-lost friends arrived — Garth had left — one called 'Whisky'. Viv said 'Whisky was always a bad influence!' They were blond(e), and paired. They smiled and laughed and rattled on easily about friends and places. They had come up from Edinburgh. Whisky had a lisp, so you couldn't hear his good-natured footnotes to his wife's (?) pleasantries. I, silent in this jollity, took my leave when offered

another cup of tea. It was like a scene from one of Viv's stories, as real for her as my Beckettian solipsism is for me.

Monday June 17th

Surprised Caralampo Focas in bed. With him made major loop tours: lunch at Central Ref., to my room at Hillhead, to Dunbar via Machar cathedral, to town on foot, parting at the station. Notes made on the Edinburgh train (14.30):

'C's impulsive curiosity — he stops to fall to his knees to sniff a flower ('It's scentless!'), he peers along a narrow close ('What a strange street!') or looks into a factory workshop. The world is a succession of doors ready to be opened and freely investigated. He wonders how to get up onto the parapet of the church, or pushes into somebody's room when he finds the door open. What a shock he gets when, unlocking his own door, he hears the voice of a stranger inside! It is a maintenance man looking for a headboard. 'It's worse when the voice you hear is your own,' I suggest. He agrees.

His long and detailed descriptions of events and places: he makes sure you have understood every geographic and geometric detail; which street in Rome he is now describing events on; the structure of the church where he and his friend hid in the rafters, dropping marbles onto the congregation. And before reaching the church he has described exactly the interrelations of the walls which separate this church from his friend Paolo's house — 'if you go over *this* wall you fall straight into the street, and it's quite a height!' Not that anyone actually did, but the possibilities of the model are exhaustively explored, and it is enchanting. This description continued as we stepped out of the sun into the low corridors of Dunbar: now lit, now dark, segmented by fire doors: C. walked in front, and my mystification at the direction we were taking was increased by my picture of the scene C. was describing, casting the words back at me over his shoulder.

The riot in Rome; not the Piazza della Repubblica, but very close, continued down Via Nazionale, then to Vittoria Emmanuele, where the police formed ranks

(he looks up words in the dictionary to make sure you have the military term) and fired tear gas, while rioters threw paving-cobbles and Molotov cocktails.

C. was approached on a side-street by riot police who were running, looked pale and anxious. In 'English style', he asked 'Is this street safe?' They didn't reply, but a young officer loaded his gun and pointed it at C's heart. They were looking for looters of a nearby armoury. When they told C. to go, he couldn't move because his legs were so shaky.

The clouds of tear gas: made C. feel really ill, so when he got onto a crowded bus (going to develop riot photos) he looked awful, and people thought he was a rioter.

Words creep into these stories which are Greek or Italian, and have no English equivalents.

He translates Paolo's letter from a squat near Regent's Park: describes P's sexual exploits with an American girl: 'We went to a reggae club, and I spent £30 and had to borrow some more. I rolled myself a joint, then put my arm around her. 'Do you have to smoke before you can do that?' asked the girl.' Then when he kissed her, she said 'Do all Italians kiss like that?'

C. translates paragraphs from his Greek communist newspaper — the strange characters invoke in me only nostalgia for 1969-70.

Visited more places this afternoon with C. than all year alone! McIntyre's Coach Tours on High Street — a cosy little office with a burning fire in the grate, maps on the walls, and a young girl with thin eyebrows behind the desk. Her voice, high, petulant and soothing by turns. The rooms in Dunbar. A stationery shop. The Washington cafe — like excursions with Paula, we buy ice creams. The young girls behind the counter laugh when he says 'This isn't a real banana!' They give him a foretaste on a little spoon.

The stories I tell in reply to C. surprise me — they come up from mysterious and cool depths like wine in dusty bottles.

I hear the crack of a ring-pull can, and consider buying cider, as I always do on trains. But then I imagine the dull ache in the forehead it brings on, and only now do I realise that I do not at present have this pain — the very spot where it should be feels empty.

Tuesday June 16th

Steam curled out of the roads and fields, rain splashed down, thick mist narrowed the windscreen view, sunshine glared at the same time. Eno played the unbearably spiritual 'Pachelbel' variations as I drove past pine forests.

This household is more like a game of chess than a family — not just because everybody wants only to take, but because one makes particular moves according to one's rank. And the pawns, no matter how bloated, are never promoted.

Grandpa Currie calls — he is coherent and apologetic — 'Nobody called round to see me this evening, so I thought I'd ring you up.' The usual absurdly pompous sentences, the slow verbosity, but he laughed and was disconcerted in the right way by certain unintended connotations. He is obsessed with money — it should be put in the bank and never spent.

Wednesday June 17th

Two interviews at the job centre, a card to collect dole. Record shops, Thin's for Bananas, Fruitmarket Gallery. Read Beckett's 'Company' excerpt in Bananas. Then wrote a piece called 'Penetrations' — really the beginning of my novel, but the style seemed too mannered, a silly parody of Beckett. I had no joy of it as a piece of writing, it seemed superficial.

Peter O'Connell: left alone in the room with me, quizzes me about my writing. His benign rigidity makes me nervous, and my antithetical opinions are a cause

of awkwardness: he is incapable of polemics, and seeks compromise even when it involves absurdity. He kept emphasising the need I would have for money, and thought up ways of earning it — he told me one could write according to easy and strict formulae for 'Woman' etc. and earn a fortune. I said I wanted to experiment, using myself as a guinea pig, to see how little money one could live on. And writing according to a popular formula was letting mass sales and advertising write their own heinous messages.

On the phone to John Thomson — the subject came round to politics and missiles as ever. John fears Tony Benn.

Friday June 19th

Today I finally remeet Paula. I strode up the stairs of the Job Centre and opened the second floor swing door. She was sitting with her back to me in the last chair of the row, the furthest to the right. She had a pony tail and was wearing the same fawn-coloured jacket, intersected by her small shoulder bag. I couldn't be certain it was her, and I simply walked over to the noticeboard without looking back. I fumbled for my spectacles and pretended to be examining the cards. I was really trying to control my breath and heart beat. I wanted to give her time to see me and leave if she wanted. Then, calmer, I turned round — she, wearing her old denim skirt, dark tights, exactly the same as if frozen during these last nine months, was still bending over the green registration card she was filling out. I sat down in the chair beside her. 'Hello Nicholas.' She just looked up briefly before returning to her card. I sat back in my chair silently after saying hello. I looked at her hand writing, thought 'My God, that's Paula's hand!' Then she turned and asked me how a certain word was spelt — it was to do with diabetes. I attempted it, but didn't know the word. When I asked what it meant she said it was the name for a reaction to too much insulin. 'So, you're going on the dole?' I said — 'You're not trying for work?' 'No, I just need the money.' 'I'm starting on Monday — the dole.' Then I told her that the cards weren't looked at — 'The guy over there told me — it's just a formality.' 'Oh, well maybe it's better not to mention it then,' she said, and began to fill out a new card. This annoyed me — was she stalling? It was 12.27 and I was to meet John Thomson at The Farmhouse

at half past. 'I have an appointment to meet a friend for lunch — are you doing something just now, do you want to come?' I asked. No, she had all sorts of thing to do this afternoon, she was going on holiday next week. 'Where?' 'First to London, then Spain.' She smiled. Her face was extremely beautiful with the hair gathered back, rounder than ever. I was getting up. 'Well, I may see you around later on,' I said. She replied with what seemed like a qualification. 'Okay, bye,' I said, and left.

John was 15 minutes late. When I mentioned it to him — the meeting with Paula — he quickly changed the subject. We ate upstairs in The Farmhouse. The table where Paula & I had had our 'talk' was empty. How could we possibly have returned here today?

Talking to her was as if we had just seen each other yesterday. I left almost happily, as if we were sure to remeet again tomorrow. There was no need to say anything dramatic: everything, or nothing, was understood.

On TV Pierrot Lunaire (choreographed by Glen Tetley) died several times and was reborn. When it was over I walked to the George Square Theatre, full of exotic Edinburgh youth. They were assembled in rows in the lecture theatre. I stood on the steps in my blue scarf & buff jerkin. Then I crouched down. Elaine Tait came down and huddled beside me — at first I thought it was Delie Letham, then began to remember as we talked who it was. She now writes news stories for the Evening News, and was going to write a piece about The Cure, whom we were about to see. How easy and pleasant it was to be crouching there looking straight into her face and talking so naturally. She seemed small and delicate, her face slightly wizened yet young-looking. She left me when the lights went out. The Cure played excellently, often broody but sometimes filling the theatre with quantities of cathedral-like, full and twisting sound. 'A Forest' & 'Killing an Arab' were best, also a song about a girl pursued. I missed Josef K unfortunately, but suggested to Elaine that she mention that they are named after a character from Kafka! Outside it was 11 o'clock, the sky was in blue streaks, the castle was orange and slenderly suspended on its rock, and people listened to live music in bright bars. Everything unbelievably renews itself, no matter how desperate and

hopeless life once seemed. These former sensations have merely been the platform for an exhilarating take-off.

Monday June 23rd

9 hours yesterday with Caralampo. He was impressed by my 'Whoops, Your Voice' tape, and we discussed audio-visual presentations for next year's group. I drove him 'home' (a youth hostel beside the British Council at Bruntsfield) past Paula's house.

At the social security office. An old man with a young, sensitive voice, so frail he couldn't stand up without help. Sat in the chair next to the grille position, then moved across when his turn came, but missed the second chair and fell to the floor. A tall punk helped him up. A second old man in a flat cap — had just retired. 'Is your wife still alive?' asked the receptionist. 'No, she died on June 2nd,' the old man said blankly. The receptionist made a note and turned to a fellow official who had made a joke.

Tuesday June 24th

Ten hours with Caralampo Focas. Walking all over: bus station, bank, job centre, Phoenix, Young Street, Castle Cameras, Lauriston Place, art school, student centre, home. I am invited to Rome later this summer.

Eno's collaboration with Hassell, 'Possible Musics', is extraordinarily haunting, evocative, spiritual. It is the essence of alluring foreignness. The mass of clouds, soft rain, warm still night, the call of the tribe and the cries of animals, the song of women.

Wednesday June 25th

'Subject' to Bananas. Read about Freud, Jung, Proust.

Mother came in from a dinner appointment at 11.15. I was sitting at the table as ever, reading 'The Quest for Proust'. Mother asked if Father was back. 'Yes.' Then, cleaning a plate and picking up some pieces of potato peel: 'They haven't even put their plates in the washing machine.' 'No.' She went into the kitchen. Then, before going upstairs, she switched off the light in the breakfast room. I sat a while in darkness before crossing to the switch. I had failed to register on her consciousness. Later, when I went into the kitchen, I found the hot tap running.

Anxiety, boredom, restlessness, inertia. Little satisfaction from this leisured life, or the prospect of a visit to Italy — why, since I love Italy (God, that sounds cliched!)? Because nowhere am I free to soak in impressions like a stone, and on the other hand everywhere I am treated by others like an object. This sort of half life makes things tolerable and intolerable — if it were taken to a logical conclusion — complete isolation or subordination to the family will — it would be bearably definite, even if unpleasant. But the stifling historical self which the family addresses can only be erased by a conscious replacement which I lack the energy to summon. In other words, here limbo is not vacuum, but a place I dislike: the past.

Like the unfolding of sticky biological specimens, the sexuality of the family begins to enter its second cycle: Emma grows breasts which might just be an element in the design of the clothing she buys, Mark courts an accessory to his chosen social niche, Mother develops her 'second relationship' with 'Graham'; the last exit, incited by candid responses to the Cosmopolitan quiz. Of course there is more to these relations than this — everything is understandable in its own terms. But the result is that we back into each other with our clothes dishevelled.

With Caralampo I exhaust my vitality and everything is lost, I just want to be alone with some quiet music, without having to make some silly joke or tell a story from my past — yet C. still makes an effort to alter the mood to bring me back into the flow. And so, as with Paula, the worst is not the fact of resignation while still in need of company, but the continuous oscillation.

Thursday June 26th

NME, dole offices, Eno, ironing, 'Dead Souls', collage, Calton Hill with binoculars, the forests of Borneo (TV), New Society.

DHSS promises me £16.35 a week!

Friday June 27th

Old photographs of me in the album are little help: they give no clue about whether I am extraordinary or completely anonymous.

Some butch property men came with Father to look at the house. They had a BMW with sun-roof. Looked all round, talked, left with a wheel-spin. Mother is looking at a flat on George Street for herself, Father would like a 'pad' in the West End. 'It'll give each of us room to flap our wings,' he said. Last night they had a long conversation in the breakfast room, keeping the door shut.

The Bonnard painting in the Scottish National Gallery: the dead end lane flowing with molten, light colour. Only a small schoolgirl walks through the scene, and otherwise one is alone to squat in the glowing shadows.

I considered volunteering my services at the Demarco Gallery, but was put off when 'Ricky' ran past me to offer some elderly married librarians a place on his cruise, whilst ignoring me completely. His extravert American assistant, who had earlier explained the display to me, said to him 'I'm not sure whether to tell each person who comes about that...' — she meant that she had decided not to tell me about it.

The more 'advanced' a capitalist society is, the more expertly do its citizens make a calculated impact upon each other without any open acknowledgment whatsoever.

Saturday June 28th

Watching a horror film trailer on TV. The camera follows the naked and bloodstained man into the woman's chamber. From the assailant's hand hangs a dagger. The woman lies in a white dress in a large four-poster draped with muslin curtains. Music. The curtains are snatched aside, the woman screams. Father laughs — 'That always happens,' he says, and leaves the room. The scene's symbolism is so overplayed, its conclusion so unnecessary, that one laughs — and yet it acknowledges something that the viewer will resist.

With Mother, we viewed 36 George Street, the flat Mother has in mind. It's cosmopolitan yet decayed: when Mark tried to shut the kitchen window a piece came off in his hand. The floors dip. The ceilings are low, it has a temporary air.

Films last night: 'Claire's Knee' (TV) — excellent, formless French film about a man who is led to experiment with attachments to young girls by a writer friend while on holiday. Then I left for a cogitative walk, and found myself, at 11 o'clock, at the Film Theatre, where Fassbinder's 'The American Soldier' was to be shown. It was an awful US gangster pastiche, immature and stupidly violent. A facile exercise in style, a plodding attempt to demonstrate F.'s minority status, then betray it (ie have a homosexual shot, as an expression of the audience's desire to censor a love scene).

Sunday June 29th

With Mother we discussed the break-up of the family — her move, being of an adolescent nature, is attractive to Mark & me: she is 'leaving home'. But will the second childhood one might predict as following be best conducted alone?

We drove in the Golf around Edinburgh, to the dilapidated housing estate at Craigmillar, out the coast road from Musselburgh, to Haddington, where we drank lemon tea at 'Ewenique'. A good name for a craftshop cum cafe: combines sheep (conformity) with uniqueness (exclusivity) in an encapsulation of the bourgeois mentality. Nice jerseys, though.

Elspeth Davie has suggested that I call on her, and show her a couple of my short stories. I will do so.

Notion of the controlling intelligence — stumbling over the Fassbinder film, for instance, as a foil for 'Claire's Knee'. But it is probably a combination of my 'force of habit' and my own authorship of my own actions, subliminally, to make patterns.

Joke about the cats: suggested that next we'd have to get a flat for them too. Mother: 'A cat flat. With a door with a cat flap.' Me: 'To keep out the cat burglars... But they quarrel so much they'd probably want separate flats!'

Monday June 30th

Postcard of Karl Marx from Caralampo Focas, in Highgate.

Read 'Watt' all day. Regressed to childhood. Watched, with Mark, assorted family slides in my room. Then played Scrabble, giggling to Kraftwerk and Father's irritability. Won by one point.

Tuesday July 1st

Dole office, new shoes, Fripp's 'Queen / Manners'.

This eternal childhood. Abilities learned are just monkey tricks: maturity requires experience.

Wednesday July 2nd

But I want to keep these abilities — seeing more than is practically necessary, taking things to tentative lengths for the amusement it offers, courting the illicit. Child's play.

Cathy showed me her drawings, enveloped by plastic in a large portfolio. The variety of styles surprised me — in some there were objects, squint lines and blocks of arbitrary or complementary colours, in others finicky, story-book scenes, unoriginal. I suggested a blending of these styles: imagined events described in the rough, loose manner of the life sketches. 'If only I could!' said Cathy.

Thursday July 3rd

The music papers — PiL and, in The Face, pictures of Bowie. With this teen mag rolled in my pocket, I visited Young Street. Janet was all smiles (why did Father suggest I take her out?). Susan told me about her forthcoming emigration to Australia. Then Bill Findlay showed me the new Cencrastus, of which he is one of the editors. We stood by Father's table, turning the glossy pages one by one. Bill's eyes are prettily cut and childlike. He told me all about his financial difficulties, his university course at Stirling (where they dealt largely with modern literature), and plans for Cencrastus (translating from Russian into Scots dialect). We walked along to the lunch shop, and stood awhile on the pavement.

At home I played music onto tape, overdubbing to make several sketches and a new version of 'Hermit & Dancer', an old, muffled song of mine. Then, with two tape machines, I compiled a sequence of my songs and instrumentals on a cassette. Invented titles for some, such as 'Leap Year', 'Five Point Plan', 'Caressing Madness', 'Innermost Thoughts', 'Sleepless'. As I was completing this compilation, Father came in and switched on the blare of Wimbledon. Every time there was a piece of good play, the spectators thundered like sheets of tin in an earthquake, drowning my music. Father kept exclaiming in tones quivering with excitement, while I hunched quiet over my controls. Then I walked out, just as the match was ending and Father could hardly contain his exuberance. Mark passed me on the stairs — 'Who's won?' 'Some famous tennis player, I think,' I said as he leapt into the sitting room to hear Father's impatient account.

Then, realising that there was no supper for him, Father left for the Pakistani shop, mumbling in the hall that it just wasn't 'on' that I should be in all day

without keeping things running properly — ‘All he does is fiddle with disks and tapes!’

During the afternoon, Cathy came to the door. She’d failed to clean today because she’d been out looking for a job, and had found one. When I defended this excuse at supper, Father accused me of ‘making love to her every day’. ‘I can’t imagine Nicholas making love,’ Emma said. ‘Just because you can’t imagine something doesn’t mean it isn’t happening,’ Father replied.

Such statements are made with tight lips, just ‘humorous’ enough to be unworthy of deeper discussion, just ‘true’ enough to describe Father’s aggressive insecurity where the family is concerned. Mother has lunch with Graham every day — Father keeps worrying that they will bump into each other in a restaurant. Or that people will recognise Mother with a ‘strange man’. ‘Nobody recognises me — not even if I want them to,’ says Mother.

Cathy will draw me on Saturday.

Saturday July 5th

In good vocal fettle, I sang with Magazine until the disgruntled parents returned laden with food packages. So I walked CBD-bound, buying TLS in Menzies, reading at piazza tables in Princes Street Gardens about Derrida’s ‘Postcards’ and a study of middle-class marriages. Then to 369 Gallery, record shops, Fruitmarket, Waverley, home. Perhaps seduced by the touristic glamour of the city away from matters of ‘high seriousness’, but felt lighthearted and heavy-walleted (God forbid the connection), having received £30 from DHSS. Old childhood haunts in Princes Street Gardens — the back of the bandstand, where one hears rehearsal brass and sees only dim offices with potted plants in residence. Fidgeting pigeons, scurvy and smarmy.

Yesterday made a finished version of my song ‘Innermost Thoughts’, enjoyable and quite compulsive as a song, allowing for poor technical quality.

Then in the evening to the Nite Club, paid for by Mother, to see a band led by a St Andrews Press person, Dave, ex-Valves. A poor band, Mark & I left at midnight, before the end. At 9, before I met Mark, who was arriving separately with friends, I was queuing outside the Playhouse. Some girls sidled up to me, asking about the band, the time, the place. They were plain and nervous, yet rubbed themselves against my shoulder as if I were something solid. When I sat down upstairs in the long, low empty room with stage, dance-floor with jumping coloured lights, tables, and bar, they came and sat nearby. Talking Heads’ ‘Found A Job’ was on, and the chairs would have danced if they could. But we just sat, wondering whether or not to ignore each other. I joined Mark, Duff, Fred, and a couple of young St. George’s boarders when they arrived. They clowned and smoked (including Mark) and drank, I mingled myself with the synchronised colours on the bare boards of the dancefloor. Wound the newly-unpacked streamers which had been distributed over all surfaces. For ‘Independence Day’. Passing through the crowd, I received a puzzling ‘Hello’ from an anonymous and unfamiliar boy with a round stubbly face. The music, though poor, conspired with the drink to substitute a gentle confusion for boredom. One elevated moment: Joy Division’s ‘Love Will Tear Us Apart Again’ — some people danced to the anguish of a suicide.

Today again: the stupid, irresistible tension of the Wimbledon Men’s Final — six Lorretonians shared the sitting room with Mark & Father (and, occasionally, Mother & I) — beer cans and blue denims littered the ground. At every point Father made an excited proclamation, as if sententiously expressing the ‘unspoken thoughts’ of the boys — although he was McInroe’s only supporter (but one). Often he would echo it immediately, as if playing ‘the crowd’ in a film singlehanded. The commentators said such things as ‘This is a game that certainly won’t end until the *very* last shot,’ or ‘Both men have looked right down the barrel, but they’re not dead. Which is more than can be said for the audience.’ This addendum, peculiar in the light of the screams and roars of the audience, can be explained by the fact that to say *both* men had survived this ordeal would be to imply equality which connects in the announcer’s mind with traits such as ordinariness; at odds with the meritocratic ideology of which Wimbledon is an exemplum. So the commentator searches for the victims who

are an integral part of any victory, and settles, however inappropriately, on the audience, who must play dead for his metaphor, irregardless of the difference in circumstances between players and spectators (a slip caused by the grouping of the competing players together rather than in their 'proper' opposition). But in mentioning the audience, he makes explicit the nature of the meritocratic ideal — far from the idiotic lie that 'anyone who's prepared to work hard enough can succeed', meritocracy depends on the monopolisation by the few of a commodity or activity which the many must then actively respect and express their ineptitude at. Whether the respect is due to requirement or forcibly acquired taste is irrelevant — all that is necessary is the hierarchical structure which could be described as a pyramid of lemmings surmounted by an entrepreneurial fox.

Sport, with its phallic overtones, supplies men with the same compulsive self-degradation (combined with voyeuristic identification) that fashion presents to women. In both cases the decisive act of self-betrayal comes when the subject agrees that the activity is more valid than anything within his or her capabilities. It is also convenient for conversation that such activities involve the subject at the 'modest' distance of affiliation, complying with the rule that one can only present oneself in relation to socially determined objects, thus perpetuating their control.

The worst thing about living in a family is that I must witness, as if strapped in a chair, the perfect mechanical reproduction of loathsome attitudes.

Monday July 7th

I visited Cathy, saw her paintings, and sat in the back area to be drawn twice. For three hours we talked about psychology & people.

With Cathy, I suggested that I'd like to combine music and words in, perhaps, a singing book. Something to follow up with Caralampo.

Read in 'World Religions' — one definition of religion: 'Whatever the individual chooses to do with his own personal time alone.'

Tuesday July 8th

The process of gradual orientation, so important to me, requires sudden jolts, disorientations, to continue. I don't respond to things immediately and spontaneously, but nurture an attitude, and drift into it without commitment, exploring the possibilities of the new landscape or relationship without emotion. Because all my permanent commitments are to ideas, possible states, modes of reaction — internal events. But it is essential that I bring myself to make periodic wrenches into the new, the still-to-be-assimilated. My reluctance at such times is an unrepresentative, dead-end attitude, a desire to retreat at last from the domination by circumstances 'outside', when in fact the 'inside' relies on these even for the desire to escape them. The aim must be to keep repeating childhood under new circumstances, whilst accumulating experience constantly. 'Turn and face the strange.'

John Thomson's house. Never changes. To talk to him is to be with a grandfather whose opinions are too hardened ('sclerotic') to be worth discussing, whose difference from oneself is too great to be the cause of any breach, and for whom one must make indulgent allowances. One leaves, not condemning him, but despairing of one's shallowness — though in fact this is just a result of the narrowness of the overlap between us, an overlap dwarfed by the remainder of John's circle, which is the only one occupied. Perhaps this is a penalty of being less egotistical and more flexible than the other — these personal strengths become interpersonal weaknesses: delicately-formed concavities of the character which are brutally occupied by the other's excesses.

Knowing that nothing one said could alter such a person, one falls into saying nothing.

It is surprising how few people are above this closedness — and that they are usually not British. (Cathy, American; Caralampo, Greek; Paula, Spanish).

John played me Vivaldi (a record — ‘The Seasons’) but hushed me when I played his piano. We watched Spike Milligan’s Q9’. We talked mostly about Ireland. All that was left open to me was a playful phrasing of questions — the answers would have come anyway.

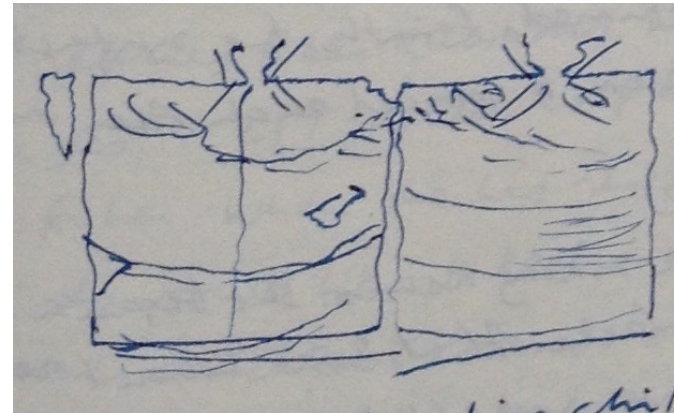
Wednesday July 9th

I walked and cycled through the irritating heat and familiarity of the small grid of streets around George Street. Met Bill Findlay in Menzies and walked with him to Hanover Street. Less rapport than our last meeting — his ingratiating manner with me, so trusting, seemed trivial. My sentences sabotaged themselves and groped blind and lethargic. The word ‘anomie’ presented itself in the middle of the rest like a flag.

By tackling Father at Young Street, I was able to get my Rome ticket paid for by the Foundation. At Mackay’s I received the ticket. The assistant there, a ‘Mrs. Mary Low’, had the slightly piqued air of such officials, which suddenly vanishes when they become businesslike and show you the routes open to you. I knew exactly which I wanted (the cheapest), but let her explain them all to me as we bent our heads over the sensible timetable.

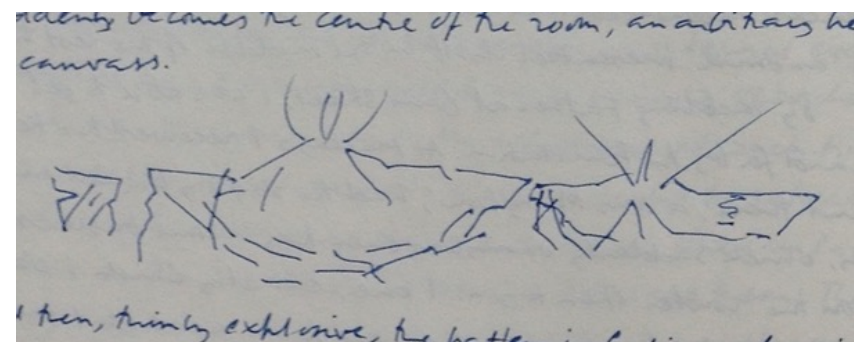
With such people, suspicion is the rule until one’s good intentions are proved by a submission to the weight of an established authority. Their religion is based on the notion of ‘society’ exemplified by money, fashions, ‘commonsense’ — a cynical, insecure blend of power and consensus. But they make sure that the two do not drift apart by refusing to let consensus exist without an acknowledgment of power. They are the voluntary warders of capitalism, and like most amateurs, their dedication is blind and total.

It’s a quarter past nine and the sun is setting. At this very moment it fades from its mottled golden patches on my wardrobe and piano. Then it shines again. Up on the white of the wall it looks like this:



— like pictures of low ice-waves caught before breaking on the shore. I have recorded the sounds of traffic on the cobbles, swifts in the air, sirens, a boy and his dog in the gardens, chanting children. As I sit at my desk, reading again MM’s interview with Brian Eno, I play back this tape. The recorded dog barks back at its real self, still casting its echoes around the serene facades.

The clouds are the palest pink against an indeterminate grey blue. Then, at the edge of this carpet, setting the tassles alight, the sun glares, making the tops of the trees glisten with a deep, satisfied green. The garden below seems submarine. Everything is now diversely levelled, and my room balances as if afloat on the sun-line. The play of patterns and emphases begins. New significances arise — a part of the wall suddenly becomes the centre of the room, an arbitrary hearth, a seamless canvas.



And then, thinly explosive, the pattern is fading, drawing itself into an image of two Japanese volcanoes before dissipating in a green and orange tint.

Thursday July 10th

Two postcards arrived, both from Caralampo. One, from the south of France, a Dali painting on the front, said 'I'm sorry, unfortunately I have to take back all I said about Rome after talking yesterday with my parents. I regret it very much and I hope I haven't mucked-up your plans.' The other, showing an old Mediterranean-Express poster, also from the south of France, said 'Sorry for all these contradictory information I'm giving you. But after talking again with my parents, I've found out that they are all leaving on 15th of July so the house will be empty and I would be very glad if you could come.' The postmarks confirmed, faintly, the syntactic clues to the sequence of cards, allowing them to cancel each other out.

Saturday July 12th

Yesterday I posed for Cathy for many hours. She began a large gouache study on canvas, then we broke off at 3.30. When I returned at 7, we ate a salad supper, then conversed all evening. Very expansive talk — experience, philosophy, problems, relationships; the consciousness circuit.

The painting of me was completed today. I don't like it. But there is more from the sessions than this image of me with pig snout, one eye narrowed in hateful analysis, the other bewildered and wide, enormous head on tiny body — because I have three portraits of Cathy: she kept a fourth. These encounters were important, but their implications are too great and complex to go into here and now.

Miss Universe: 600 million viewers, Miss USA (blonde hair, blue eyes) won. I recorded parts of the grotesque thing. A digital score was superimposed on the womens' bodies — it rated each one between 0 and 10, to three decimal places.

Me on tape ('78 and '79) — mirror incest.

Bought Cocteau's 'Les Enfants Terribles'.

Drew — a new satisfaction. Father said 'You have talent.' Incredible that this can still encourage me. Yesterday I explained to Cathy my resentment of Emma, based on jealousy of her popularity with the parents. By that time I had given up hope of being 'appealing'.

Sunday July 13th

Met Elspeth Davie as I was climbing her stairs to deliver my stories. She was with George, who seemed very old and senile. She was hobbling with a stick — she recently broke a leg. We sat in the 'minaret' with its incredible views over the Meadows, tiling, trees, the castle, Arthur's Seat. Views to south, east, north. Elspeth, in her shy but investigative way, asked me questions about my way of writing. She sat in a lower chair than me. I made tentative and careful replies to her questions, made brief by her way of saying 'Yes, yes, yes...' as I replied: as if a word or two were enough, more than enough for her. When she has read my stories, I will revisit her. Points: she would like to keep a notebook, but there are certain large events which she cannot write anything without approaching, and they are difficult to surpass. She believes that strong form is the most important part of a piece of prose. Even the desire to overcome crampedness (my state) is not as important as keeping a tight hold on form.

Henry King, let loose in the attic, got lost in its dark recesses. First Emma was vexed, then the whole family — except me — joined in the search: with torches, ladders, shouts. At last Mark, in a particularly inaccessible place, retrieved him from a deep hole. He was grey and blinked silently at us. I had resigned myself to his death. Father shouted instructions to Mark, even though he knew nothing of the terrain.

The family sits in the sitting room. I play Eno ambient music, Mark watches showjumping, Father reads the papers on the long red sofa. Mother sits at the other end of this sofa, drinking tea abstractedly. Father keeps turning his attention from one activity to the other, as if playing puppet-master in a play with real actors attached to the strings. As soon as he has elicited some response from one person or another, he loses interest in their reply — because it has become their property, not just an acknowledgment of his authority — and starts to watch TV or admire the Akai deck on which I am recording Eno.

Friday July 18th

Travel notes: 125 from Edinburgh — I sat with two young girls, aged 10 and 13. The elder one played Mother. She had a round face with hair held back. She kept asking me the time.

Victoria Station — waiting for the 20.10 boat-train — I sketched hikers and girders. Some willowy Canadian girls, ageless and prettily sexless, spoke to me.

London — Hayward Gallery: British Art, 1940-80. A couple in their 20s kissed passionately, stifling giggles, at bends in the stairs or before abstract canvases. Viewers passed discreetly. I walked towards the Tate past the Houses of Parliament. Denis Healey: tall, ruddy, corpulent, stopped at a corner to speak to a gentleman with a deformed face. Healey was like an actor. Nearby was a negro policeman.

The boat-train: found myself in with public-school / university peers. Their slang, excited levity, repelled me. Such obvious conversation, the tired Python jokes. Also, the working class group — had been to France, Spain, Greece, spoke with the authority of Dr Johnson.

The ferry. I grabbed a window seat. I wondered which passenger would become the focus of my interest. The seat next to me was the last to be occupied. She was a Scandinavian girl, about 18. Her mother sat in front. The lights went out, so I stopped reading Beckett's 'Watt'. The girl huddled ingeniously in her seat. Her

lips grazed our shared armrest. Then she changed position, letting her head droop towards my shoulder. Slowly I moved down in my seat, willing her to relax her neck. But only with the rocking of the boat did her hair brush the fabric of my jacket. Yet when I looked at her, she seemed so close. To her mother it must have seemed the same. When she awoke at Dieppe she gave a little sigh.

Paris. It rained. I walked for impossible miles along the impeccably proportioned boulevards. People shook hands but seemed proud and reserved. Ahead of me on the Metro escalator two girls shook hands with a young man shyly then walked, in the same direction as him, away. I sat in the church beside Sacre Coeur, exhausted. Great darkness, ripples of conversation, candles, stained glass. Cold. Montmartre — like a stage set. Artists pushy for commission. The boulevards once more. The demoralising queues in Transalpino for reservations. Cinema off Champs Elysees — saw Isabelle Huppert in 'Les Heriteuses', a Polish tear-jerker, with some good acting: the woman who went from fury to wheedling ingratiation in an instant. The final frozen shot of Isabelle Huppert, siezed by the Nazis for transportation to a camp. Her expressionlessness more effective than anything.

The interminable train through Italy. A carriage with a nun who flirted with her male companion, two Scots Italians, two madonna-like Italian sisters with enormous, twisty eyes and cafe au lait skins — almost middle-eastern.

Rome. The hassle of incompetence — couldn't get a phone to work, couldn't use the metro, didn't understand the restaurant system, couldn't order, was taken for an American, became drunk on rough wine. But got to Via Giulia without paying a bus fare. Narrow street, chicly decaying. Speckled marble floors, timid cats, temporary air, no light. Aldo, Babis' (Caralampo's) stepfather: a writer, angry that he can find no solitude. Dictates, has a secretary to type his books. Has a Neanderthal aspect, an air of huge suppressed violence tempered by apathy. Ignores me — can't speak English. Caroline: Babis' french girlfriend — 'easy'. Studies Economics at Nice. Blonde hair, skin like syrup. Obviously identifies with her mother; henpecks B., has the air of a bourgeois housewife. Kills her sexuality

by being explicit, as if insecure. Reminds me of an Aberdeen girl: childish, knowing. Greatest insult is 'C'est pas normale, ca!'

B's mother: Greek, energetic, intelligent, troubled in her marriage. Works late every evening. Left wing. B — dominates. He showed me television, flicking endlessly from station to station according to his whim. Confides embarrassingly that he will not be sorry to see Caroline return to France. (We will both visit her in August.) Caroline's joke — *menage a trois*. B's Mother, passing by the lunch-table, found it funny.

With B ('Caralampo' always sounded false) to the Museum of Modern Art — the lit mobiles. Villa Borghese gardens. 'Best ice creams in the world' — coffee and lemon for me. We discussed cars. Penetrated many courtyards. In the evening (Thursday) we went with Caroline along the smelly, weedy banks of the Tiber to the Isola Tiberina. Some activity — exhibitions, music, mostly over by the time we arrived. The smell of excrement on the river terrace steps. We visited the sewer. A wall-weed resembled a giant insect. A courtyard: statues, dark windows, falling ivy, the feeling of being watched. Cats. Dark staircase. I felt — you are watching yourself, can no longer use the excuse of distance from life to buy some compensatory immortality. These are friends, this is an exotic place, this is living. Thus brief, thus to be grabbed. But I can't. This train of thought was perhaps in response to the speed of the streets. Nothing stops to think. The graffiti is too forceful to have considered anything for long. The people on the streets are bodies, and appraised as such. This is the first thing Italians make clear to tourists. Even the priests and nuns have genitals beneath their robes. But perhaps this recklessness contains the greatest profundity: it acknowledges death in the most philosophical and most appropriate way: by living.

Saturday July 19th

Today: breakfast with Caroline. Spilt coffee...

Yesterday continued with a walk, alone, around Corso and north. Then, in the evening, we went out to the grounds of a psychiatric hospital to see Lindsay

Kemp's company perform 'Mister Punch'. Pine trees, dust, crowds of Italians, all in their 20s or younger. The show was pure pantomime, grinding jolly music, every joke played to ludicrous extremity (will he cosh Judy? 'Yes!' 'No!' 'Si!' 'No!' ...) But the crowd, and especially Babis, were happy. Death sequence: the black-robed skeleton moves through the crowd. Mr Punch is in prison. Death discovers Mr P and leads him to the gallows. 'Put your head in the noose,' he rattles. Much faltering. Mr P's pathetic wave. Twice he pretends to die, then asks 'OK?' At last Death demonstrates, puts his head in the noose. He demonstrates again. 'Pull the rope!' the crowd shouts. Mr P fingers the rope. Death demonstrates again. Mr P pulls the rope. Death is killed, the jangling music swells triumphantly, Mr P cries 'That's the way! That's the way!' Meanwhile, I was subject to bowel upset. The pain weakened me so that I had to crouch in the dust. When I rose, I saw Toby, Mr P's dog, indulging in all the sausages, then reeling in a whirlwind of dyspepsia, before exiting to vomit. The show took about 15 minutes after the end to finish, Mr P pirouetting back to receive light-headedly yet more acclaim.

On the bus back I sat down when a seat became vacant. Catherine (not Caroline, as I called her yesterday), in her brief blue gingham, yellow hair and skin, stared vacantly into my eyes and pressed the rubbery softness of her tummy against my protruding knee. I gazed ahead through the windscreen. Does it signify for her what it means to me? Are we conspirators who dissemble or do our actions take place in different galaxies? Sometimes it seems that behind her stupidity is a great wisdom. Then, as if shunning it, she speaks.

Today: walked with Babis to Paolo's house. A relatively modern flat, five minutes from Via Giulia. At first we sat in the kitchen with P's stepmother. Drank Coke. The table-top was green plastic, with white heat-rings. Chipped marble floor. The white walls were warm with the glow of umber-painted buildings outside. Then Paolo arrived with two girls, sisters. One was attractive, with thick short hair which she kept shaking behind her ear, and a very short white lace dress, an antique. 'I like this dress because I feel I am wearing nothing,' she said in Italian, 'and because when I walk all the currents of air come inside it.' She said to me 'You have a very Scottish face'. She wants to become an actress. Sat legs akimbo.

'You are beautiful,' she said to me. Kept asking me to slow my English down, but still didn't understand. We ate rolls, cheese, plums, peaches. Paolo: a slightly spoilt rich boy, handsome, egocentric. Laughs very loud and long at simple things. Can seem threatening simply by ignoring one, but then, when forced to reply, is trying to please. The sitting room: piano, large colour TV, record player (Beatles 'White Album'), view of the perspective of yellow terrace and crane, green shutters. Upstairs, Paolo's typewriter gives evidence of his literary ambition. A hip pidgin piece about a day's encounters in Rome, written in American '60s style. Photographs litter the table-top. English books — Huxley's essays, Penguin reader 'Creativity', pieces of machines. The pathos of mediocrity, of trying beyond ability.

Downstairs we watched the opening ceremony of the Olympics. Yellow flame against white-blue-grey sky. Aerial shot of the great pretty arena; green, pink, mottled with squadrons of bodies. Brezhnev laced tight, waving soberly. The giant baby bear symbol, raised by obedient masses in the stand.

After much hovering, B and I left for Trastevere. Came across a Catholic saints festival. Bells, carabinieri on horses, old women with pimples, candles, bands juggernaut float bearing a shop window Virgin Mary, lugged by teams of ripe young men who sweated. One of them with grey eyes and hungry jowls: rested with fierce complacency.

Back to Paolo's.

The first time at Paolo's: the girl estimated my age as 16. I was asked my star sign. When I said Aquarius, they — she — said again, 'e bello'. I replied, through Babis, by wondering if, in a maternity hospital, they could predict that a child would be beautiful just because it was to be born at a certain time of the year. I had to say something. Babis, however, lost track of my reply, so I just told him 'I'm being cynical'. This he translated. After that the Italians didn't talk to me much. They have no time for cynicism in the face of compliments. Why should they? It is just a crabbed part of me which hates spontaneous, positive feedback, collaborating with the insecure part of me which wants to build a relationship from a point of

degradation and negativity so that the heights, when reached, are secure and real. My mistake, though, was to avoid the most true and obvious reply: to tell her that she was beautiful. But how can you put yourself on a level with such a creature, even when she stoops to you indulgently?

Monday July 21st

To the Womens' Lib festival: Italy's 'foremost sociologist' speaks about love. Babis gives me simultaneous translations of this and other speeches. Then we go to the house of Laurence West, nearby. He drives a white 127 which is not his. At first he reminds me of Steve Hames: an excessive preoccupation with 'cool', an exclusivity of attention to people and events around him (which he later attributed to inwardness: he was displeased when, as he negated rumours of New York's seamy aspects, I accused him of looking out of the wrong window of the taxi). As we examine books in stalls, he recommends the Fassbinder film to ('Marriage of Maria Braun') — rises in my estimation. His very careful, self-conscious selection of words. As if poised on a knife-edge between self-respect and self-hate, for so long that he is stuck there, solidified with the aid of great drafts of borrowed ego (borrowed from his education, his friends, his money, car, cigarettes, etc). We go to a restaurant in Trastevere, sitting outside in a 'car park' of tables. Laurence, tanned, sometimes boyish, sometimes mannish, guardedly elaborates on his future plans. Thinks that he will be a personnel manager. Babis & I attack him for this — he is taken aback, explains that he only wants to do something enjoyable and 'lucrative' in life, and that no 'world-picture' which claims to explain things by ideology can go unchallenged. We have to agree. The story of Pia, his Italian girlfriend: he drove his maid to her hometown, where she always (for 60 years) had her hair done. While he was waiting, he went into a bar. Played pinball, unusually got a high score. Received money for this at the counter. Bought a coffee. Then, in the mirror ('a significant detail'), saw a group of people; immediately fixed his attention on a beautiful girl; round face, thick dark black hair, black eyes. Smiled at her. Left, collected maid. Then, in a cafe, saw the same girl — approached her: 'Didn't I just see you... etc.' The girl turned out to be the daughter of someone he knew. They exchanged addresses. Next term, in Oxford, he received a postcard from her. A

long and passionate correspondence followed. Re-met in Rome. Suddenly kissing on a park bench, driving her in the car. Sometimes he thought 'Who is this girl whom I have only been out with 4 times?' Later, Laurence said: 'I am still frightened of people who can't understand me, and in awe of people who can.' He never looks at one. Completely self-centred, yet able to give enough, guardedly, of himself to arouse one's interest just enough to make one frustrated at his closedness. Favourite authors: D.H. Lawrence, Freud (now out of favour), Joyce.

We sat on the steps of a piazza fountain amidst Americans, watching live music (awful rock). Crowds, water-melon barrows, a London taxi, trailing vines, Sabatini's tables, lights, a church with frescoes and tower. A nearby square: 'popular' music, this time for Italians. An old woman sang along in lupine howls. Laurence decided where to stop, when to move on: expected us to tag along obediently. As soon as he had stepped into his car, having arranged to call us about the beach, Babis asked me: 'What do you think of Laurence?'

Tuesday July 22nd

Jack Buckley: plump and thick-featured, he stands beneath the British Council chandeliers, talking to us in his high Lancashire accent. The grand Council building is being redecorated, so his desk is one of many in a large hall with an ornate ceiling. An old globe stands on the bookcase. We tell him about Lindsay Kemp. 'Oh Lindsay, I know Lindsay well,' he cries — he is the British Council Arts Officer for all Italy. 'People think he's very professional, and of course he is, but they don't realise that Lindsay is like that all the time: Mr Punch.' He suggested we come round to his house for 'a spaghetti' soon. He had played a tape of experimental music created by Babis & co. at St. George's to many composers, all of whom had been impressed. Talking about British culture, British food: 'I should imagine that Aberdeen is pretty much of a dump. The food in Lancashire is wonderful, when you can find the right places. Can't you get hold of a scooter or something?' Babis said he was planning to get a bicycle.

The reading room of the British Council library contains many rare periodicals (eg BFI's Sight & Sound) which compel me to return. The fascination of this inappropriate Englishness in the middle of Rome's rush and heat.

In all my relationships I eventually assume and reassume the role of a clever dog. I am, too, a distant dog — I think nothing of walking to heel, because what I consider my core self is not amenable to the grasp of the collar: otherwise I would not wear one. My tolerance of the lead is a mark of my indifference to walkies.

Wednesday July 23rd

To the beach with Laurence & Paolo & Babis. The completely straight highway to Ostia was like an endless boulevard; pines and flowering bushes. L. darted the Fiat in and out of lanes, overtaking on the wrong side, accelerating towards traffic lights and the looming backs of cars ahead. The sea its usual Mediterranean blue, effervescent. We wriggled under a fence and made our way through scrub to the empty, rubbish-strewn beach. The others stripped naked and jumped into the sea — I retained my clothes 'to protect my skin'. I walked along the line between sea and land, one way, then back to our 'camp', then the other. This way, south, led to a crowded section of beach. Two guards watched me enter this section. When I returned, they barred my way. Protesting, I obeyed, turning back to the crowded beach. I made a circuit, in bare feet, along the road and back through the scrub — hot tar, broken glass, prickles. Paolo was reading from 'Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas'. Soon a game of Go was arranged. The others lay naked. I sat clothed, making patterns in the sand. The cassette played pop. Then there was a whistle — the police came up. 'I arrest you in the name of the Republic,' the first said. He had his gun out. Recognising me, he fixed the barrel on me. We all protested that we knew no Italian. They looked at our documents, searched our bags for drugs. Paolo had smoked his grass earlier — they didn't discover his papers. This was a private beach, reserved for the President of the Republic. But after Babis had given his word of honour that we had no drugs and would not return, the guards seemed placated. They put away

their guns and accepted the cigarettes Laurence offered. The charges of 'Scandalo Pubblico' (nudism) & trespassing were dropped — we left.

At Paolo's: a Canadian girl from Montreal arrived with an Italian friend. I was excluded, played the piano. The barrier of language, the snowball of silence. Soft white peace here within.

The Museo de L'Arte Moderne — actually contained antiques: enormous scenic canvases, dusty models. The dim, damp rooms, the sequences of doorways. I considered it as set for a film — dialogue given an edge of irony by the sombre inanimacy. The large room filled with laquered cane chairs. A bronze figure sat amongst them. A girl sat at the front, by the only light, 'attending'.

Thursday July 24th

Cashed travellers' cheques, inspected travellers' shops, climbed unravelling steps, a woman watched from the top.

British Council. Piazza della Repubblica. A hallway in marble, out of the move of heat. Wrote. Bought on Via Veneto an expatriate paper: today's Guardian. Thus equipped, returned to a trattoria, waited upon by an old man, to eat minestrone, drink slimy Tiber water, eat stringy green omelette 'a verdura', eat a slippery peach. Reading the Arts. Back to the British Council; read London Review of Books, Sight & Sound.

Back at Via Guilia, completed 'Watt'.

Desire to spin, as plates on stick-ends, some project across my time. Necessary prerequisites: exotic solitude punctuated by factor X. Writing, but not like anything read, or read of: like an experience, like things not yet clasped by the pins of words.

Sunday July 27th

Some portraits: Federico — only the correctness of his St George's English betrays the fact that he is Italian. There he was head boy. Now he studies Physics at Rome University. He is relaxed and unimaginative. Speaks of 'culture' in reverential tones — when he sees that I'm examining a book of Picasso reproductions, he tells me that he is going to see the Villa Medici exhibition in Florence shortly — assuming that 'culture' interests me. His Israeli girlfriend wears a lemon yellow garment. Her skin is pale peach, which offsets a slight heaviness of build. A certain self-possession suggests an intelligence which her speech never quite confirms. She has 5 languages, English is 4th, Italian 5th. As we basked in deck chairs by the swimming pool (surrounded by apartments, palms, flowering shrubs, tennis courts) she said: 'Federico will just turn into one of these researchers who go around with a strange look in their eyes.'

Babis was making his sociological enquiries about futures. My deck chair collapsed as I sat down. Again I was the sole clothed body. Back indoors, we listened to Pink Floyd's 'Dark Side of the Moon', Eno's 'Discreet Music', and crazy Italian and Greek ranting. Over supper, on the balcony, F. confided his fear of military service, which both he & B. will have to do within the next few years. 'I don't mind taking orders,' he said (this is Babis' greatest worry) — 'once I've said I'll do something, I do it well. But it's the people I'll have to meet that gets me — all this consistent non-cooperation, always fighting the system. If we must have an army, I think everyone should be involved in it.' That F. voted Communist in the last elections just shows the degree of establishment that party has in Italy.

That was Friday. On Saturday evening B & I went to Piazza Siena in the Villa Borghese Gardens to see a couple of comedians, a light event in the International Festival of the Poets. Myriad strings of lightbulbs enclosed the arena, smoke and dust dimmed the air, and a full moon watched mournfully from behind the branches — at one point it shone through a poplar like a Magritte painting. There were at least 10,000 people standing or sitting in the dust. Families, couples, mostly bourgeois. One thin woman, perhaps 30, with a gap between her front teeth; foil to her beauty. Her friend: he wore owlsh 1930s spectacles, a sleeveless jersey. The first comedian was popular. The second, accompanied at the mic by a 'bambino' of about 5, was abysmal. Chanting soon

began, beercans flew, obscenities were pronounced. The third comedian, pretending to be an organiser, announced that he had left for an outlying district of Rome, then did so. And so did we.

The pines — stiff stems topped with knots and blots.

The bully-bells taunt and beckon.

Babis tries to monopolise whatever appears to be the centre of attention. Although motivated by enthusiasm and friendliness, this often annoys me: it leaves me no space to breathe. My dignity turns to shun trivia, only to have the object of its refuge captured by the same agent of restrictive description.

A letter from B's friend Florence emphasises the struggle for 'organisation' — this ubiquitous preoccupation which seems a property of everyone except me, yet must exist in some sort of coiled convolution, even in me. Or perhaps, divergent, I seek *dis*organisation.

B's Mother's phrase for 'the sweat of my brow': 'the sweet of my front'. She & B converse and dispute at unbearable length, taking the podium by meaningless snatches, blurting out flurries.

Today I walked upon the Gianiculum ridge and attended to the music of the cicadas. At a church's marble foresteps I sat amidst the tap-tap of a typewriter and the swish of private muslin.

Aldo, reticent statue.

Monday July 28th

'I don't know how to live, I only know how to disappear
And I don't want to travel and I don't want to stay here'

Heat saps energy. Apathy drains friendships. Strain mars solitude. I miss cool, solitude, and English books and periodicals. O for rain, dark streets, my Peking coat wrapped tight, on my way to a Bergman film with subtitles.

I have more disposable money here than I know what to do with. But I want to buy nothing: I hate the mock courtesy or open contempt of the shop assistants, I hate the trivial frame of mind of the buyer. This house is disorganised and bare of food and books which suit my taste. It is full of cat smells and fleas.

My skin sweats, aches with burn, itches with bites.

The poor approach me for money. I simply shrug them off, although they deserve it much more than I do. Haven't I simply sponged everything I have from my father?

Who knows me? Nobody. That at least is a comfort.

I feel like the hero of 'Notes From Underground'.

Tuesday July 29th

I begin to pinpoint essential services which supply plugs for the void: specialised food shops, political radio stations, good clothes shop, the record library, the English bookshop, record shops... Have recently bought Beckett's 'Texts For Nothing', a book of Thomas Mann's short stories, a shirt & windcheater.

I was able to do this only after reading several of Beckett's 'Texts' — they provided an existential equivalent of Zen calm, and I walked serene and empty through the burning streets. To be seized by cash excitement without such a counterbalance is profoundly degrading.

Wednesday July 30th

At Paolo's house were two new boys smoking marijuana from a ceremonial pipe. Paolo said: 'We have a mixed racial gathering here: one Jew, a Nigger, an Italian, a Scot and a Greek.'

With the 'Jew', longish-haired, round-spectacled, we discussed Zen attitudes — never labelled as such; presented by him as a personal philosophy of cosmic energy, a Newtonian spirituality which sees the body as a machine animated by beginningless, endless energy. Babis employed his teacher / shop-keeper-baiting method of argument, and the boy just shrugged his skepticism off: 'I don't care.' Yet the dope had made him friendly. He told us that he had attempted suicide twice, but now, rather than filling the void (largely loneliness), had come to terms with emptiness. He was studying Philosophy at Rome University. Felt constrained by it: its attempt to use him rather than let him use it.

The negro had left us to talk in the kitchen, and was listening to 'Hair'. When the Jewish / Italian left, I strolled into the sitting room. Sat opposite the negro, who was reclining on the sofa, listening to some soft, slow classical music: flutes figured prominently. I was nervous, because he seemed, in the other room, to have taken a dislike to me. I took 'Little Her Friedemann and Other Stories' from my hip pocket and continued my reading of 'The Dilettante'. I was extremely self-conscious, thrived on the tension.

John Cage pieces on a treated piano — extremely delicate, sad, evocative, private, distant, strange, moving. In the courtyard of the Palazzo Spada. Candle torches lined the rectangular facades, bright lights bathed the stage. One pale star punctuated the rectangular flag of sky. Frescos, reliefs, statues stood frozen in stone, brothers to the lines and planes of the architecture. Flame light in ancient glass windows, the upper rooms plunged in darkness one by one. The music lit pictures in me: of a still damp garden, fires on the hillside, a home in a tunnel, the coming of a train, mute uncomprehending cavemen who gaze at me from their time, into mine, the stillness of history, an igloo home which must be remade, toys which are bought and regularly lost in the crystalline snow, Paula, clearly before me, 'Topaz and the nuggets of grain', cathedral cave, 'they passed on the street quite indifferent', Sartre's 'Les Jeux Sont Faits', the Palazzo parapet

lined with the solemn faces of all those I have ever known, the sorry speed of fireflies, motorcycles outside, the intrusive, flat mass hum of the light generator, electricity, which we cannot understand, mute happy life in slow motion, with this lonely, time-stopping music, the dialogue of spheres, slowly rebounding through it, swimming, casting endlessly through the legs of the waist water blind crowd. I cried to hear and see these things.

Saturday August 2nd

I must exorcise the pressures which have, yesterday and today, been boiling secretly and may even now have caused my nose to bleed without physical provocation. B's egotism and self-centredness, amusing when we are a dyad, take on different proportions when we are in a group. Yesterday on the train from Rome to Nice we shared a carriage with several people — B found it necessary to engage them all in conversation: if they began to talk one between the other he would invariably interpose himself with his rock steady winning smile and habit of hesitating self-indulgently during his phrases, as if to topple resistance to his attack of polemic and generalisation by eye contact. Pushed his way into the sanctuary of my alienation with explanations of the conversation, monopolised luxuriously our shared leg space. He takes any signals of inadmission as reason for more concentrated approaches. He makes a mockery of my liking for the subtleties of non-verbal communication by engaging in trivial conversation with, for instance, the Spanish girl with whom I had been exchanging timid glances as she sat in the corridor.

The Italian girl who fainted — B was helpful, and as she had become the centre of attention, he had to make her his own, fanning her, fetching the doctor, carrying her out onto the station platform. Afterwards he said 'I was very touched by that girl. Why weren't you interested in her?' 'I just don't wave my arms in the air when I'm interested in something,' I said.

I lean out of the window to be alone — the journey was almost a literal enactment of my story 'The Freedom of Travel', with B in place of the stewards —

and he joins me, eager to 'win me back' when in fact he is only doing the opposite with his smothering attentions.

His good nature in the face of my inward, petulant fury, is simply insulting — it means he chooses to take this mood as a natural part of my character, which makes no difference to the way he acts. Gross insensitivity.

In the carriage full of people shaken by the girl's illness, and the girl herself, morbid, staring glazed at the ceiling, B. began to whistle softly, insistently. Did he: 1. Think that people were listening and enjoying his dominance? 2. Think that he was amusing himself alone, and that his tunes could somehow be ignored in the silent carriage? When somebody in the corridor struck up jarringly in mockery, B stopped, only to begin a few minutes later to penetrate the 'vacancy' of silence once more.

Remember that with the Jewish hippy at Paolo's house B said that he could imagine no benefit deriving from solitude and meditation; for him or anyone else. And with his mother: 'When you are asleep your brain is inactive.'

Vence: an enormous, vulgar villa high on a large hill, with views over Nice and surrounding country. Enormous dragonflies, crazy paving, tiles, quad system, wealth without taste, comfort of body amidst the picturesque and fake: copies of Renoir, old beams and machines — bellows, spinning wheel — in this modern house. Le Nouvel Observateur. Mosquitos. 'Do what you want' pluralism. Unknown guests — Catherine's sister & her fiance. No parents.

C's friend, Esmeralde. Originally South American, Jewish, spent time in Spain (Barcelona, Madrid), Italy, Paris, London. Is still in high school, will perhaps become a doctor. Large round face, long unstylish hair, quite attractive in a conservative way. Has a calm quiet which is slightly daunting; independence without any social repercussions. One minute she giggles childishly with Catherine, the next she is direct and businesslike. Would like to write studies of drug-taking, suicide, anguish of all sorts.

The Oedipal nature of our foursome: B assumes the Father role, joking continually, choosing what to do, manipulating the two women as if they are on strings. He explains his project to write a book for children: he will write 2000 words a day. He begins in the most public place, after having taken us all to Venice to buy his cahiers. Instead of writing, however, he talks to E. about his literary step-father.

B. complains about his health. He evaluates everything critically, turns to me for confirmation of his bad impressions. 'You seem to think I'm a mechanical dispense of impressions, like a bubble-gum machine,' I say. 'Now you want me to pay — I thought they were free,' he replies.

At supper he keeps asking me whether I like this or that: he seeks to draw me back into his sphere of influence.

Presenting E. as potential — Oedipal — partner, then manifesting the impossibility of any such arrangement. It is a punishment which requires, in my conception, an executor: hence, perhaps, Father Babis.

Sunday August 3rd

On my own I am strong. With others no more than a rag-doll.

Babis, Catherine & I (Esmeralde was having a period) drove to a riviera between wooded, cliffed slopes. We walked and scrabbled up the valley, B asking to stop at all the beachlets, C pushing with resolution towards 'la source'. She eventually continued wading upstream without us — we followed later.

The others stripped nude — C swam in a large pool under the gaze of a young man in red bathing trunks: he made no attempt to conceal his interest in her body. More 'naturistes' further on: two lithe girls, cafe au lait. I made sketches of the terrain when we stopped — in order to see, in order to have something definite to look at — other than C's flat breasts and neat pelt of dark hair. My foul mood lifted, and I felt able to join in with the 'betises' of B&C. Secluded

wilderness, the tumble of water, the cries of birds and crickets. Wading in the cool water, over sharp stones and smooth flags of slippery subaqueous paving. Childish jokes: B's warning about 'les policiers Juifs qui mangent les cochons comme toi...'

B became tired, and set off back home on foot. C continued to bathe naked for a while — I sat on a tall rock in shade. Then we monkey-goated our way back through the cool waters, deep green trees and glissant leaves to the car. C met a copine, an attractive blonde in pleated shorts and a red t-shirt. I drove home: with picked B up on the road.

The fight to keep two mosquitos at bay cost me all but three hours of sleep last night — the things are invisible; the only reason I included them in my inventory of blatant moths and spiders was their lingering crescendo — the peevish, determined whine of a beast of prey. I became neurotic, perhaps comparing the blood-suckers with those here around me: those who will not let me dream, but must approach again and again to insert themselves in my consciousness; orient me unintentionally to their approaches, and thus make beneficial contact impossible — in my self-consciousness I side with the invaders, only to find that there is now no target left.

Esmeralde: begins to fascinate as I see her from a closer distance. She sat with me in the study and talked about her closeness with her father — he had spent every evening of her childhood with her in long conversations on matters of principle. But when she became independent, he contradicted these same principles to restrict her behaviour — he wouldn't tolerate any relationships with boys, for instance. She was equally dependent on him, would phone him long-distance to ask permission to do things. The extraordinary closeness of E's parents. At 15, her rebellion. Visits to psychiatrists. Then, independence, but bad relations with her father — 'Go and talk to your mother,' he would say: she never spoke to her mother.

All four of us — my inclusion was gradual — had a long and serious debate around the dark kitchen table from 10 to 1.45am. Largely led by Esmeralde, an

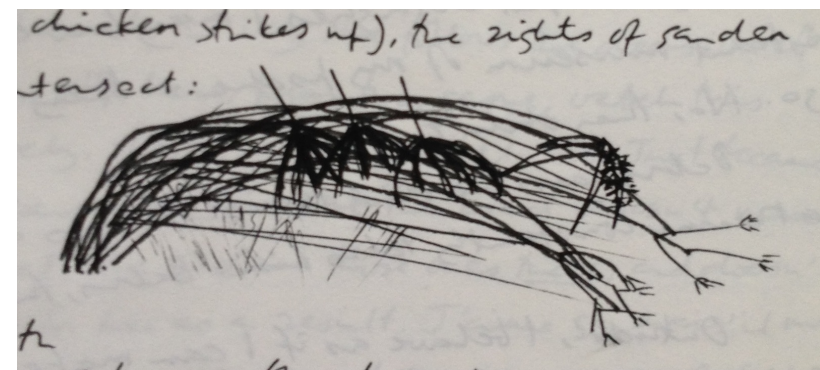
investigation of Babis' attitudes regarding threesome sex: he had made a joke about it, she had pursued it because she had had a boyfriend who suggested it seriously. 'Would you like to sleep with me?' E asked B. 'No,' he said, he was faithful to Catherine. 'But you took me seriously!' E said. 'No,' replied B, 'but I know that behind every joke there is a little part of real intention.' This exchange took so many hours of misunderstanding and flotsam, generated mainly by B, that E began to criticise his insensitivity in a constructive way — she simply put the charge to him with such tenacity that he couldn't avoid it. When he counterattacked with the accusation that she wouldn't accept the possibility of subconscious influences in her questioning, she denied it, saying that she knew the theory and herself too well to admit their juncture. Then a discussion of the cause of laughter.

Esmeralde's 'anguish' — from she knows not what source.

Which is worse: feeling something for Esmeralde or feeling nothing for her? If, defensively, I am forced to the latter stance, I will leave this place.

Monday August 4th

I am sitting in the close shade of olive trees, rushes, a small spruce. Through the branches, red tiles, roofed white chimneys, the hazy blue hills around Nice. The sound of wind, childrens' voices, a car, a light plane. Dry, wiry grass, clay soil. Light, transparent architecture of foliage, ambient music (a chicken strikes up), the sights of garden sections. Rushes which intersect:



No, I can't catch it.

This page patterned with the patches of shadows of leaves: blue, hazy, in constant motion.

Which is worse: Babis' self-centred, meaningless oratories, or my remote silence? Esmeralde may despair at his character, but she has been entertained by it, learned from it. From me she will get nothing — except perhaps a slight unease.

Some people make social compromises well. For me, this is not an option. I must remember this: it requires only this admission to let me escape to a more profitable solitude than the public one — a solitude which does not play with hopes of interruption, but possesses the things beyond it.

How ghastly — this cupboard from which I observe the room of my solitude, from which I observe the world.

And what lies, lies of style, this diary is packed with. How precocious! I mean, there I was, sitting under a tree in the garden, taking these lines for a walk, for a change, to admit a breeze of fresh air. And there I started to invert, to scrape in the dark. There is no doubt about it, I am a Rum Tum Tugger: when I'm in I want to be out, and vice versa. The same with relationships, with Esmeralde.

Babis is like Byron. And as with Byron, the girls cannot resist analysing him intensively. And their conclusion? That he analyses too much. That he is serious. That he is never serious. That he doesn't listen. I'm sure it's just another game of Sons and Mothers.

Any Oedipal intrigues I may have are kept in some distant museum of my psyche — they stopped breathing long ago. No, they didn't.

Babis says he did terrible things as a boy to gain attention. Catherine constantly tells him: 'Babis, tu dis n'importe quoi!'

'Outside', I behave as if I can make an impression by my force of passivity — with sparing utterances serving as signposts to my dark inside. But nobody takes this road; most people behave as if it were one of these posters for tires which show the perspective of a road which doesn't really exist. It seems that tactics like this are reserved for women — with them the road is the vagina, passivity is culturally endorsed. Thus, when Esmeralde and I sat outside a travel agent in Vence, waiting for the others, it was E who won our competition of silence.

And who can take a private road to a strange, dark villa without a shudder?

After I walked back here alone from Vence, the whole place took on a different aspect: I am now independent, and by my knowledge of the landscape released from the claustrophobic clutch of our exclusive foursome. Like a child, I didn't know where I was, and accepted everything. Now I begin to assemble my model of 'a small town in the South of France' — or rather, I begin to believe in the reality of this model.

Tomorrow E must leave. I'm visiting Nice, will accompany her there.

I underestimate the foreignness of places — thinking, in the streets of Paris, that I was in Rome, yet feeling at home — but overestimate the foreignness of people, and so hesitate to penetrate them, and so retain my original impressions by ignorance.

E's pride and independence: I attribute these characteristics to her because of the way she pauses before replying to questions, or repeating a remark unheard, the way she follows the decision of another (to walk this way, stop here, play this game, watch this channel) either tentatively, slowly, or not at all. Just because we pass between *these* cars after crossing the road doesn't mean that she must — in fact, she prefers those ones *there*, and doesn't care if we have to wait for her as a

result. J'aime ça, mais il me fait peur. I'm afraid of being beaten at my own game, of falling blindly for my own sincere tricks.

Worst of all, the feeling that one might be understood, yet arouse no interest. The first time, it would seem like a universal condemnation, not a personal taste.

I'm jealous of E's attention, even though I don't like her very much (lack of imagination, lack of insecurity).

Lack of interest in me. B fascinates her in his childishness. 'I like to understand my friends very well,' she says.

Wednesday August 6th

I enjoyed my visit to Nice yesterday. I noted a friendly vitality about it, a historical Futurism in the push of jets from its airport to its sky, the skitter and rattle of its traffic, the orange-suited water skier who was plucked by his green parachute out of the blue sea into the sky, kept erect on a string at 45 degrees.

I read NME, visited record stores, and in Disques Sorbonne listened to Joy Division's 'Closer'. Excellent, I thought nothing of paying £7.75 for it (import from the UK).

B's story, first chapter, gave me considerable amusement when I came home. He was sitting on the terrace in his dressing gown with a cup of black coffee and his notepad on the table before him. 'The Lion, The Witch & The Wardrobe' lay nearby for inspiration. For some time he sat writing very seriously — whenever I came onto the terrace, he would explain something about the problems of literature. When I read the piece I found it hilarious: the hero, Andrew, enters the television, strange phallic symbol, in a passage heavy with allusions to masturbation. As he is half in, his father arrives, castrating figure, to pull him out. He slips into a warm, dark tube station. End of chapter. Chapter two will introduce elementary concepts of Marxism.

B's style is appalling, rushed, syntactically and grammatically maimed. But he labours seriously at it, saying he will send it to publishers after someone has typed it for him.

My advice to B is: remember that when you are writing you are not taking part in life. For him it seems to be an attempt to dominate his inner sphere as well as the outer one — and to present this domination to us, storm-troopers of his inner self, so that he is sure it exists. He wants to be seen to be writing, to be read, to be approved. These are parts of life. Thus they are not, strictly speaking, writing.

Thursday August 7th

Last night we sat in contra-taboo conference around the kitchen table. Why does Catherine dress so scantily or not at all? Why does Babis find it so difficult to make love with her? Why has Esmeralde had anorexia nervosa for three years — a variety which makes her eat incessantly rather than starve? These and many other questions (Why is Nicholas self-sufficient? Why does he keep a diary?) were pondered at staggering length and pace. B was self-appointed patient, chairman and Father figure, seated at the head, filling in those 'awkward' silences which must invariably mean that no-one is thinking anything, helping us out of our abnormalities (ie differences from B) with barrages of one question.

At 4 B&C went to bed to try their hands at love. E&I discussed E's problem. Because of it she can't concentrate on anything: lying vacant in the sun is the only way of forgetting.

E's father openly has sex with other women when the urge takes him. E's mother accepts this. But if E's mother did likewise, E's father would throw her out of his house.

Renoir's 'Les Enfants Terrible' — I enjoyed its atmosphere — slightly naive French style of domestic, humane, stylised relations between people. I would like to write a story in this manner.

We didn't sleep until 5.30am last night.

Today. Ignored by the 3, I climbed the garden, to beyond the garden, over the fence, up onto the straw and earth of a higher point which overlooked, aloof, the tiles of the house, and a neighbouring fish pond, large, serene and round, around which dragon flies conducted their sports and deep orange goldfish hung in the green. A tap trickled into the pond, a landscape swept beyond and below it, some grove trees grew amid grass beside it, and above it, in shade, I sat.

Perceptual complexity and conceptual simplicity: trees & grass.

Small percussion instruments live beyond the thin road's apron, large oil-blooded insects buzz past between its verges.

The chapel decorated by Matisse. White, simple, slightly whimsical. The black-lined ceramics on large white tiles were the symbols of a passionate child, a precocious and obsessed child, describing an event before his birth. 'The Stations of the Cross'. The only colours came from the blobby stained glass — cactae-green foliage, happy pure yellow and mysterious recess of blue. A nun sold me postcards.

1. David Bowie's new album is called 'Scary Monsters'!
2. Asceticism is strictly for connoisseurs.
3. Today is my last day in this retreat.

Matisse has made the Calvary procession into a passionate kind of algebra in 'The Stations of the Cross'. On the grid, within the numerical sequence, in the codes of the lines, information is contained which has meaning only in terms of ecstasy. Ecstasy is 'x'.

E. is not secure. She is afraid that people will wound her, and therefore acts as if she doesn't care.

The girls circle tauntingly, laughingly around B as they do around Byron Acton. The attitude of their bodies, the arrangement of the chairs, the flow of the conversation, it all confirms B as centre of their interest. 'He has nice legs,' they say, or, 'He is very sad, he must change his character.' All this while he is there before them, their infant lover, their helpless little boy with his winning ways, their male *raison d'être*. All the mothers who cast all the words at all the sons, and all the sons who fling back what they can, if no more than the sound of their breaking voices: what does it matter that some of the words make uncomfortable sense, speak of mothers and sons, question, analyse — what does it matter that nobody is listening, nobody will change? It is noted.

Saturday 9th August

Now aboard a train, as this morning, as last night, as yesterday, I will try to wrap up the Vence week. Thursday ended, almost crumpling insensible into apathy, with a last minute decision to visit Juan-les-Pins. It was 10 o'clock at night. E, having been asked earlier then told the trip was off, now refused out of irritation. C almost called it off because E wasn't coming. But we went. I drove. We reached J, on the cooler coast. C had forgotten to replace her Tampax, and furthermore was wearing no underwear. The crumpled tissues we offered her were useless — B & I had to go from garage to cafe, newsagent to boutique (everything was very much open) asking for a Pharmacie. The obvious implication was that we were looking for contraceptives. C meanwhile sat in her pure white dress in a small, dim park on the outskirts. Finally we had to drive to Antibes. Circled round and round its dour streets searching for Place Guynemeyer. When we found the chemists it was in darkness save the bell, which said 'Sonnez'. C's dress was no longer spotless, the task of waking the chemist to ask for tampons would have fallen to B or I — we decided that C's need was not greater than our dignity, and returned to Juan-les-Pins. The crowds still surged between the shanty, jaunty storefronts, the boites de nuit were still surrounded by poseurs and high prices. B explained how much he hated the place with the enthusiasm which reminds me so much of Father. We bought some expensive pizzas, returned to C in the car, and ate them in a shady sidestreet. As I pulled out of this street I drove the

car for 15 metres on the wrong side of the road — flared yellow headlights stopped me in my path.

Friday: On the Nice - Genoa train I processed the Venice week intensively into the form of a short story, 'Penfriends'. I have been corresponding with E, her father has been prominent in her letters, she herself has been invisible in them as object. B assumes Father role when we actually meet up. E's body is disquietingly impressed on me during a sunbathing session — the hairy underarm, mutual discomfort. Life as daylight, knowledge as the highlight and shade of blight. E gravitates towards B. Then, in her room, a 'confessional' scene which reaffirms the E of the letters, *my* E. Then she raises her arm from the sheets — again the tangle of hair, presence of the body, signal of inadmission for the cerebral 'I' character. The whole will show the untruth of the power of knowledge in relationships — the power of the subconscious triumphs. It will be uncommonly 'objectively' narrated, for me, in the light, whimsical style of a Renoir or Truffaut film, or Cocteau's 'Enfants'. Light & shade.

The unpleasantness of overhearing the British abroad. Always loud, they look, for once, only inward, preserve the English mentality as though it were their very soul.

Monday August 11th

Edinburgh like a sober sepulchre, melancholic and grand, a splendid place to get some thinking done. The bookshops haven't heard of Beckett's 'Company', though, and Cage's Sonatas for Prepared Piano must be ordered too.

Cathy brought art materials round yesterday before leaving for New York. Today I drew Father in soft oil pastels. Fair likeness, better style.

Mr Law of St Andrew Press briefs me. I shall start hawking their Knox booklets tomorrow.

How to write 'Penfriends'?

Tuesday August 12th

Sales at Bauermeister's & Thin's for St. A. Press.

Laborious, glorious festival planning: my tickets will cost £44.

An evening of musical compositions: prepared piano & guitar. Father said 'There's an African somewhere in you trying to get out!'

Wednesday August 13th

I pretend to be a thing of straw, to fit, arms tied to arms, legs tied to legs, onto the great big Fatherbody, the busy mass with its mouths and its parlours.

When I visited shops, in my capacity (whose capacity?) as salesman, I wore a jacket of Father's.

No matter that I am light and buoyant travelling with my polythene bag full of product from retail outlet to retail outlet, that I sing and I speed in the car. Doesn't theft lighten the load?

In my projects of creation I want to communicate without figuration, to move into alien territories which I know to be inaccessible (and for this reason alone), and approximate the state of mind of, say, the walk I had this evening, in which a hundred sketches presented themselves to the tip of my mental red pencil.

Next time I shall pocket a tape recorder to realise this ambition to write without framing the writing attitude — stiff posture in a chair at a table under a light.

Verbals canons attract me — repetition, and an atmosphere of ritual.

Friday August 15th

I made some compositions, or added to sketches already made, today — guitars and bizarre vocal parts (such as the tongue, the hands, the hollow of the jaw) over percussive piano.

But, more importantly, I struggled to see myself, again (again) from above, below (in the basement), all around (at the Nite Club with John Peel). Jigsaw pieces which won't fit. Not mirrors but others, or none. Straddling, always straddling (always).

I slip in and out of rooms, public places, quite unnoticed. It's not conducive to the essential beliefs, the existential beliefs, those that say 'I am' in varieties of ways.

No's knife has cut me free from the possibilities of being. Does yes clutch the blunting stone, or is it merely paper, like this, or like the new volume of empty journal I bought today?

To be or to see — what if one threw quantities away by living out a false distinction like this?

Saturday August 16th

Saw Genet's 'Deathwatch' at Pleasance 2. Lyrical and sordid, stilted by stupid male preoccupations.

The unbearable — no, all too bearable — suspension between two worlds, never wholly in or out of one. The slightest events, meaningless currents of air, can torture. I withdraw provisionally — but it is always a withdrawal, never an entrance elsewhere.

The repulsive call to competition from Fathers, brothers, Toms, Dicks, Harries: can only be ignored. Yet our goals are more or less common, these sports and I. To withdraw from this field is to condemn the seeds to the eternal, dry life of the packet. Even that might have its satisfactions. But in reality they totter at the

ripped packet top, savouring the open chill and the distant, endless clamour of generations.

At a party, Cathy's former flat. I hung amidst Emma's friends: Jenny Ashmeade, Nicola, Sophie Eveling. This last quiet, pretty. Occasional smiles. I was to drive Nicola & Sophie home, but we arrived at the same time at our door as Mark. As he ate his supper (having been out with Fred's girlfriend), the four girls ringed the table, questioning him. I retreated. Mark drove the two home, the arrangement Emma had originally intended.

This was the 'meaningless current of air'. My vulnerability is perhaps due to my policy of 'no expectations — low expectations' — avoiding disappointment, I also risk the effects of absurdly small stimulæ which others, without even being clumsy, can tread underfoot.

Nothing matters. The catch is that everything matters too. People, places — none is my particular favourite, my chosen investment, so all can mock by their indifference to me, nothing more than a reflection of my apparent indifference to them.

Today I drew, reckless of dust, in pastel.

Sunday August 17th

Before one can *really* be a god, one must withdraw unconditionally from Olympus.

Great satisfaction from closing my curtains and door and settling down, away with Kafka's 'Amerika'. Only Kafka gives me hope that something can be achieved, for me and for art, by literature.

I will write to create an architectural space, one which I can live and breathe in. It will also be a place where visitors can be entertained. Not all of its corners will be lit, its walls will be changeable and deceptive, crowding in on us one moment,

sprawling at incredible distance the next. A blur will inhabit the space, consisting of forms and figures, shadows and sets of features suddenly caught in blinding light, but never for more than a moment before they move off and others replace them. Yet a constancy, like that of orbits in constellations, will hold sway. Neither will 'all be strange in this place' — the familiar, the domestic, the comical will hang like glittering apparel from branches, themselves attached to nothing. Furniture, nestling under tarpaulin, will take on the shape of the shoulders of lions, elephants, lamps under balconies, slopes under snow.

But promises like this are jealous of the things they offer, and try to make the space their own by filling it with their imaginings, belongings, and sealing off its entrances. It is best not to make them.

A crazy ragtime piano booms around the city, a stray float blunders along the cobbles, people wave their hats, the name and slogans of a bank are announced on acres of card. Some people appear at windows, and even I am enticed through my curtains to the little glazed terrace beyond, hoping to see a glimpse of the parade I thought I'd missed. But that old view, those cars, small motions of leaves, cut the heart straight out of the endearingly distorted tune, which must limp on hollow.

Monday August 18th

Nonexistent thing, wretch that I am, here on my back in the dark, nonetheless nothing stops, rather it (nothing) never stops, so here are some of the things that negate it:

Paula, at the Scotsman Steps art (students) exhibition, with a girlfriend, facing in towards the corner at the top, apparently discussing something, carrying away some insecure items from her own display area down below. I stood a few steps above them, her, us. Then abruptly came in. 'You're finally exhibiting here, are you?' 'Oh, hello!' She is a consummately good actress — could she not have seen me, could she have been genuinely pleased — or at least not dismayed — to see me? She asked me if I was reviewing the show for Insight. 'No, it folded, soon

after I left. I don't think it had anything to do with my leaving, though!' I was aware that 'it' had changed its denotation, also that the joke was old, uninspired, and in danger of conveying the wrong impression of my mood, so instead of easing it home with a smile or some other such harmless pretence (semblance of uncomplicated 'humanity' — calculation) I looked away desperately after speaking. 'How's university?' she asked. 'It's four months, I can't remember.' She was beginning to follow this up, but I had already asked 'Did you go to Spain?'

This is awful.

That's right, pretend you have feelings.

'Oh well,' she said twice. I left with the consolation of moving down to her drawings and oils. 'They aren't very good,' she said, leaving, smiling. 'Oh, I'm sure they'll be okay,' I said, leaving, smiling.

They weren't very good, except for the signatures, similar to those on letters in my possession. I might buy one to expand my collection.

Galleries. Kafka's 'America' back home. Possessive, clutching destruction of the self. Outside threats are competitors who can be afforded no foothold (especially not the binding, straw to flesh, of dummy self to partner, saviour, killer, woman).

A film, 'Journeys from Berlin / 1971 (Working Title)' — all human life is contained in it. If only I could have it in writing, yet, no, that was its greatest fault, the words flew incessantly, arrows which were unbearably accurate, unscrupulously demanding: 'You are God, you are our victim, you are omniscient, you are stupid,' they cried as they hissed into our helpless flesh (which is, after all, only that)...

Stonehenge from the air over a girl's sensitive diary entries — her distance from the feelingless slabs, her necessary involvement nonetheless. 'There will be no steerage on spaceflights departing from the earth...' 'Want an axe to break the ice' ('Ashes to Ashes') — here the axe was that of the RAF ('What makes you think

anyone's worried about you?' — Eno, RAF). Psychoanalysis, surrealism. 'My brain is lying on the floor beside tramlines that go through the wall to the asphalt six feet away...' — but it was a camera track, not a tramline.

The shots of streetscenes through windows, landscapes from trains. How Kafka would have liked them! The scenery always a slap in the face to the ideals of the captions and words on the soundtracks — not because they were 'real' — but because they were so ruthlessly realised a dream.

Wonderful city. Narrow steps off Victoria Street, up towards the castle, descended by exotic black Africans in strange brightly-coloured robes, holding tartan-covered musical instruments. Off to a pub.

The buildings, yellow or brown, swelling with pride, suffer the service of harsh lights in the interests of moral enlightenment.

The director of 'Journeys' was there, waiting to be addressed by her audience in the bar. I couldn't bring myself to confront this person who had just widened my appreciation of the possibilities of expression, and my sense of community with anyone at all, vastly. At the door of what I took to be the bar, where everyone but me seemed to be going, an official asked to see a blue card which everyone but me seemed to possess. Such devices of exclusion, even though enigmatic, surprise me less than the simplest inclusion.

The girl who sat beside me during the film. What a wrench when she leaves so hurriedly afterwards. A relief too — imagine having to speak immediately after receiving this huge inoculation of speculative stimulation. Yet she was my partner, at each shuffle or sight I tensed adoringly.

We are clenched so intensely together in this cinema that a simple release becomes a violent ejection.

'Espece de monstre, species of monster,' I whisper to myself on the streets.

Tuesday August 19th

At midday, on the streets, I found I could imagine being happy without much effort. It wasn't long before, in my elation, I could hardly keep myself from rising off the pavements into the air. What prevented it was the delicacy, the vulnerability, of others' indifference.

Between these (non)events, I was at Young Street. Nora, Susan, remarking my resemblance to Father ('like two peas in a pod'), rallied around me, left me only with great regret to await them in a chair, returned effusive with apology, and breathed words into my face concerning our common project, the decoration of an ELF stand at a conference in Aberdeen. Similarly women in shops, as I bought card, Letraset, tape, pins. And Janet and Ruth, in Janet's smoky, noisy, warm office, announced that David Bowie's 'Ashes to Ashes' was at No. 1. As if they had arranged everything specially for me. At home, Emma wondered what was the cause of my withdrawn mood — everyone else around the supper table, including me, denied that anything was amiss. Emma suggested that she accompany me to 'Josephine the Mouse Singer'.

The feeling that it is wrong to be righted by women as a dinghy is righted, on capsizing, by galley slaves. And the counterfeeling that it is pointless to kick against the pricks, because I, too, must orbit the phallogocentric planet.

The Cherub Company's 'Trial' — splendid translation to drama. Masks like Brecht (inspired by Grosz), excellent puppet-like movement of the secondary characters (all the court officials). Sense of mounting tension, persecution neurosis, guilt complexes, collaboration in self-destruction. Dust from the law books, which are in fact soft SM books. The obscene gesture of the lawyer, in response to K's outraged speech to the court — pushing his finger frantically in and out of the ring formed by his forefinger & thumb. The snake-like, pious swaying of the chaplain in the cathedral. K climbing the stairs, his slightly negroid features flared with fear as he stepped on the spot, craning and straining from floor to floor, where the same questions were put in the same words to the same actors through the same absurdly small doorway. Fraulein B's breasts. K's

condemnation of us, the audience, as we sat helplessly mocking him at the initial interrogation.

It was 'The Trial' scrubbed of its subtle shadings and painted with a thick white mask, shadows blacked in with boot polish. But the stylised, tribal movements of this figure, the ghost of Antonin Artaud flitting about it animatedly, made the book its own.

Wednesday August 20th

The ghost of Antonin Artaud not only animated 'Marat / Sade', this evening's play, but leapt over the rows of chairs and trampled on the audience with its boots on. For me, the ending was a revelation — Sade marching over as the last of us gazed like geese from between the pillars of the Art School sculpture hall, shouting 'Get out of this asylum, you aren't wanted here!' The white-haired couple who lamented the fact that they hadn't clapped such a 'nice performance'. The old man's mock indignation when an actor called him a 'washerwoman'. The thrill of *real* conflict, as actors leapt onto the backs of spectators or started to rub their groins into the astonished laps of the seated. The din of their chants — 'Revolution, copulation...' The fake members of the audience, who rushed onstage when bourgeois morality was offended, calling for the houselights. Sade's conclusion — 'I can find no solution to these questions. We have simply tried to overturn some conventional precepts.' — but then these sentiments, so facile when spoken, are actually put into action, and the play shudders and smashes its very framework, including the audience in its wreckage. This is perhaps the only way to prevent the easy sealing that applause and the bow, complete with bashful smiles, allow in the audience's minds. It is real, *real!* The inmates are led struggling away through one door, and the audience is chased out through another. Neither of us has the monopoly on 'the world'. The questions concern us both.

The rounded dark girl — black lips, hair which spilled over her face in wisps and tails, narrow eyes of the darkest black which sparkled wickedly, shapeless pajamas. Flung herself about the stage with a kind of frenzied calm.

Sexuality in relation to others is a stranger to me. To imagine that people have touched and continue to touch, that the press of their warm flesh has generated all humanity, is an exciting comfort.

When it comes, let it be unselfconscious, joyous, abandoned!

Friday August 22nd

Yesterday...

The Rats

I stood between the mirrored walls of Valentino's to see some young Edinburgh groups assembled in honour of F. Sinatra — Fire Engines, Josef K, Associates, Scars. Men in dark suits, black ties, commanded me:

— Take your ticket to the box, son!

— Could you not sit on the steps, please? Could you *not* sit on the steps, please!

I perched on a low wall, leaning from behind on a safety rail. Some other young people did likewise: a young girl sat so close that when she dipped to perform the manoeuvre of orientation, her soft hip grazed mine, my hard slender hip.

I singled out, single, a girl in a proletarian plain dress appropriate to 1964, a fake twinset, highly disordered chopped hair caught behind in a wispy rat's tail, and high, painted black brows. She was active and delicate, a sharp slip of a thing, moving nonetheless with a grace, a captivating precision. Little black satirical, sartorial boots.

When, at one, I became audience to the streets alone, a small grey rat took fright at my passing, and scuttled without imagination the length of a fence.

'Spring Awakening' yesterday afternoon — the urge to laugh and have done with it. For the sake of the others present; I am never embarrassed for myself. But it is also the others who forbid the laugh. Some girls there let slip trivial therapeutic giggles, with which I once involuntarily declared my solidarity.

Today...

'There are arcades in the room where he sleeps. When evening comes the crowd gathers there with a hum. When the heat has been torrid at noon, it comes there panting, seeking the cool. But he sleeps, he sleeps, he sleeps.' De Chirico.

James McBride was present at breakfast, Adrian Bowman at supper, Meg Letham and Chris Garner shortly afterwards. What could they give me but long distance alarm calls? Taut, I began to reverberate with laughter on such pretexts as this misunderstanding:

Father: I was on Mull to fish, and now I've returned I can write a striking article about it.

Chris: A striking novel?

A new genre: the fishing novel.

This exchange occurred as I was swallowing some coffee. In the explosion of my amusement I was not sure that the dose of coffee I'd inhaled wouldn't be fatal. The possibility only made me laugh more.

Saturday August 23rd

Anticipations, which have been happening all this week: interrelations between my life and art performances, burst into dream-to-life exchange. I was in France with Babis and co. When I awoke I reflected that I could've stayed with them another week, that I was trifling with B's friendship, that everything I'd done in France had been reluctant, grudging. Downstairs, later, a letter awaited from Venice.

The taut boredom, a uniform, suffocating fabric, which clothed the day, was picked up and waved like a flag by the films I saw at 9, Super 8 New York Punk movies by Vivienne Dix. Just as I had listened to pop, changed radio stations interminably, stroked the cat, ironed my clothes, so the void girls and boys of these little, messy films behaved too. Suitably exaggerated, prolonged, coloured in pinks and greens, cluttered with the flotsam and jetsam of American junk culture excess, of course.

Horrible, horrible American mentality.

'There will be no steerage on spaceships departing the earth...'

Sunday August 24th

What if Raskolnikov had no idea, or rather, had as many ideas as there were minutes in his subterranean life, was hoping that some day they might add up to one complete idea, but was meanwhile holding his peace...?

Conversation with Mother, Mark & Emma about sex, family relations, character, principles, experience. Useful, warm, therapeutic.

Sometimes it seems that a break with introspection would be healthy. Very occasionally it seems it would be possible.

There's simple pleasure in shuffling words, making dramatic gestures, pursuing the endless and useless. I'll defy any dog-collared finger-wagger, outside or in, who condemns it.

Monday August 25th

Lukacs' 'Writer & Critic' (bought on the strength of his essay on Dostoyevsky), Joseph Beuys' rather cluttered and incomprehensible exhibition at Riddles Court, 'Justocoeur', a terrible, void, capitalist film, 'My Brother Federico', an

entertaining peep into Lorca's world, Cage's piano tending to tranquility, Eno in the fourth world, Jan Steele. The big, secure family house still for my pastel shades of tint.

Wednesday August 27th

Tuesday's 'Exterieur Nuit', with the beautiful taxi driver who fucked in her back seat and walked with her slender frame and big boots, family encouragements, sent me today packing after women, who provided brief flurries of fear and anticipation, slow disillusionment, gradual self-dislike.

Names: Melvyn Bragg, Bernard Levin, Ariana Stassinopoulos, Beryl Bainbridge, Penelope Lively, John Wells, Elizabeth Smart, Gore Vidal, Anthony Burgess — all and more materialised corporeally beneath the chandeliers, between the mirrors, before the sycophantic bourgeoisie at the Assembly Rooms. Impressions: disillusionment at 'the great', too slick or egocentric for my liking, yet open to trivial degradations like the nonsensical, apposite ranting of a puritan clergyman — 'Do you know the hard facts of life, never mind all this talk of fornication? Women in this city must get up at 5 in the morning, a bus to Aberdeen took 14 hours, and that's against the law!'

Wozzeck — poor (Lyceum — Canadian drama version). Amidst rows of empty red plush, I was surrounded by a pocket of people, behind and beside, who breathed on me and prevented welcome relaxation. Somerville, directly at my back, failed to acknowledge me, I him. Ahead, the dizzy drop to the stalls. 'Every man his own abyss,' said Wozzeck.

At the Traverse Bar I watched people from inconspicuous vantages, at a disadvantage, at a loss, drinking myself invisible. Unable to be. Nearby, even celebrity Billy Connolly was occasionally neglected, allowed to slip unmoored over the carpet, liner without tugs. And I, dinghy without oars, I.

Saturday August 30th

The whole city was a theatre. He was the only one not acting. Or perhaps the only actor. Or perhaps possessor of absolutely no such distinctions. For when he attempted to impose such differences, water began to clog the vessel of his construction.

The Shakespeare variety hall street theatre he encountered was an interval amidst the merciless performance.

Kantor's 'Wielopole, Wielopole' slipped into motion before he arrived at its closed tent-flap, and he was only just able to leap aboard its convoluted rotations.

It broke into him midway, not vice versa.

The sirens were already in their seats, without messages for his starving ears, his already-surrendered soul. They refused him custody, although his petition had not been drafted.

The handle of the door, the only one, was on the outside, and he was inside.

Sometimes it was his desire to open, sometimes to close, the door.

It flapped in the wind.

'I tried to take control, but I couldn't be as truthful as random circumstance,' he is reported to have said.

Sunday August 31st

Getting up for another day, without reason.

Cocteau's 'Enfants Terribles', Cavafy's poems, Coppola's 'Conversation'. Joy Division, solitary walks.

'Lions of Fars' exhibition at Chambers St. museum: simple, magical beauty, reaffirmed the validity of pure expression. The power of ritual, of tradition (the simple embellishment and development of that which has gone before).

At last I was able to resist the mainstream pull; the urge to sit, as it were, before a lighted, locked shop, to gaze at what I couldn't have. I sit now in content seclusion, 'out of it'.

My political feelings are aesthetics in disguise — the wish to see things ordered beautifully, in just proportions. I have never positively believed in overviews, rather in some moral imperative which proposed their necessity. Now that imperative seems ridiculously, impossibly stern: even the most admirable — the great writers, politicians of the left, mystics, women, artists, must close themselves to certain areas of experience in order to attain others fully. Crossing the line means a departure as well as an arrival. Up to now I have believed Borges' paradox, which demonstrates the logical impossibility of walking a foot — for one must first step across half that, and before *that*, half the distance again, and so on, infinitely. Shut your eyes, kick out, step!

This walk — passed: the speakers at the RSA corner, preaching gospel truth, & socialism. A street artist nearby prettified customers. All of them made me uneasy, ashamed for them. Then the tiger rug exhibition — reaffirmation. Who cares that the bourgeois loved it? It saved me.

Monday September 1st

Dream of an institutional life in which coercion is the harsh norm.

'Lions of Fars' lunchtime talk, encounters with vague acquaintances, glimpses of vaguely attractive women.

Walking, walking. Destinations present themselves to my open indifference, beneath which there is really a devious but benign purpose. Mine?

I passed Mr & Mrs Kantor on George Street; arm in arm, as if returning to the George Hotel from some inconsequential shopping expedition. Tadeusz returned my impressed glance, as though saying: 'Thank you for seeing the remarkable greatness in this small, black-overcoated figure.' He looked rather like a Napoleon who had found himself in Moscow without his army, completely anonymous on the streets: dignified, shy, almost pleading to be recognised, heady with surprise that he is not.

Tuesday September 2nd

I collect Beckett's 'Company' from the bookshop, I read on in 'Les Enfants Terribles', I rediscover a TLS article on Jean Renoir, I read Peter Harcourt's account of Bergman. Film attracts me — it can capture light, that fascinating quality only alluded to in prose. Next year at Aberdeen I'll join Phoenix television if any creative work is possible.

Last Thursday's Scottish Opera performance of *Wozzeck*, after which I met Uncle John, walking out behind Anthony Burgess, was full of great planes of white light, jets of the stuff shooting eerily from the wings across the rough planks of the stage, flapping across crumpled, flag-like sheets, stabbing through the cruel mesh of the mad doctor's electrical cage, then bursting in flashes of charge through *Wozzeck's* body. All around the great plain square acting area there stood stark trees of light, thin black strands on which illuminating heads were mounted. The drowning scene, right at the back, amidst dim, rolling trains of linen. Picking, wrenching wooden stakes which stretched in narrow peninsulas across the stage. The diagonal conformation of washing lines. The dormitory, with its deathly fluorescent lights hanging to cast their jaundice over the brown blankets and light grey sheets. The frantic overhead fans, inanimacy possessed of life, whirling above the barber scene.

Yesterday night, an Italian solo actress performed 'Gottagini', an insubstantial experiment. A spinning top occupied the stage alone from time to time, at regular intervals the girl leapt over a vaulting horse. Her erotic relations with it and other objects: the lot of woman to be subject, in her passivity, to objects,

despite theirs. Her haughty, playful eye. Her terrible English. Her throat, which made me see what Kafka was so preoccupied with in, say 'Descriptions' or 'The Trial' (Fraulein Burstner).

If, because one lives in a country which businessmen claim to control, one feels it necessary to refer to business in art, isn't one simply submitting to the economic determinism which art alone can transcend? The trouble is that, in the case of business, to ignore it would be to condone it — its undeniable influence would simply surround the work like an unmentioned gilt frame. But, of course, to attack business is to confine oneself to its level, and oneself exercise *its* control on artistic freedom.

Thursday September 4th

Wednesday 3 September: International Photography Exhibition. Comment in visitors' book: 'Cosiness and familiarity alienate. The picturesque is political.' To Heriot Watt theatre to see 'Kafka's Last Request', nicely choreographed diary entries. The despair a little unremittant, thus superficial. Books about Bergman. Articles about Beckett. In the evening, Pinter's 'Caretaker': amusing. Late night, a programme about the stock exchange, depressing. Interrelations between all these stimulæ.

Some pitiful writing, in which I took no pleasure: 'The Lodgers'. I cannot find a voice which doesn't breathe boredom, whisper from a great distance as if its messages were best lost. No joy from this captive freedom, no pleasure in creation because I lack the necessary external counterpoint, whether it be a piece of writing (Cocteau nearly served as the axe to break the ice, until the aloofness of his tone froze his poetry) or any sort of event worthy of the name. Plays 'sweep around me like dead leaves', records chunter: bridges over sand, which may be quick or desert.

Douglas Ashmeade asked me about the Aberdeen girls at my phenomenally early breakfast this morning — I had to explain that, being the 'compleat asectic', I didn't know any. Why do I accept this so resignedly? What happened to prevent

contact, why did I conspire with it? And what if it would have happened anyway, and my help just a consolation to convince me that I was in control? What if it wasn't even a happening, just a dumb void which I never lifted a finger to fill?

My imagination may have been blunted by disillusionment, but I seldom wish for companionship. I walk, irritated by some small event, or by the constant itch in my anus, and thank God that my depression is not mirrored back at me by some disconcerted walker at my side.

Another distortion: it is always *I* who am the mirror. Irritation simply steams me over, makes me opaque, an object. Then we are two objects — but this ideal equality somehow never succeeds: either I cast too feeble a light, unpractised in being, or the other, unable to invert, reflects no better than a dirty shop window.

Friday September 5th

Me and myself, we came down from the heights of Queen's Park arm in arm, reconciled.

Previously we had been ignoring each other, clothing our irritation with the notion that our purposelessness concealed fate's hand: that is was *this* car's use to be passing just when I wanted to cross this road, and that it had been travelling inevitably, stopping and starting unflustered, to execute this mission to perfection. Or that the Calton Studios happened to fall on my route at exactly 7.30pm because here was a film which would change my life (actually, the film was 'Heart Beat', and it started at 8.30pm).

But: in the folds and hard crevices of the uplands a change was effected. The track-like helplessness prevailing on the streets was left at ground level, and as I stood, prone in dinful wind, back to a slab of stone, looking towards the west's cacophony of orange and grey, the racing air stripped me of the indignity of the city art existence, cleansed me of the oil which, regardless of my disgust, eases my resistance to the great mechanical people-processor. From a different dimension, one can love a city; its clustering rooftops are touchingly garrulous,

so one forgets the indifference of the inhabitants one to the other; its lights are so dim, clinging in chains, that they might be a child's decorations.

You are open to such charms because all around, in the soft, feminine grass in which your head is planted, the transparently musical wind snaking over the ground, the Grecian mottling of rocky hillsides, and the comfortingly incomprehensible endlessness of the sky, enigmatic blue — in all these the eternal is imprinted on the tip of your tongue, and the sight of a train sewing through the city, or the distant music of the Tattoo, must mingle impossibly with this other dimension.

This juxtaposition seems to me the essence of all I want art to express. Art must take things out of context; put a banal business conversation in a great, dark cathedral where strange, sad figures fill the aisles to listen, and so on. It is the intersection of death and life. Klee: 'Imagine you are dead, and permitted one brief visit to earth. All you can see is a single lamppost, and an old dog lifting its leg against it. You are so moved that you can't help sobbing.'

If you were to see other lampposts, the effect would be shattered. Returning from Queen's Park, I & I felt anxieties remount at each stop, though internally we were strengthened: we paused at the Demarco Gallery to read 'Creativity is at stake'. Contemplating the theatrically lit edifices, we assented that much good can be achieved by working within capitalism, Babylon, without the intrusion of money as prime mover. But at Jenners window our hopes sank as we looked obliquely through the glass at the deathly, aggressive mannequin snarling out from her blaze of white light, with the fatal equation: 'Festival time is spending time — look good, feel good'. The air is thick with such predatory equations down on the streets; they settle on you and lay eggs under your skin. Finally you are not a human irritated by insects, but an insect irritated by humanity.

Inner reconciliation is not enough. Being made one means being made lonely. Discord, unhappiness, are essential comforts for those who walk alone. Although one tries to sate oneself, satisfy if not create appetites, and becomes content only momentarily with, say, a record, before one must also, simultaneously, be eating,

and then, simultaneously, watching television, and then, on top of that, drunk, and so on. . . . despite all this, the important thing is to stay hungry spiritually, to *use* monolithic circumstance, even if it looks like Fate with a very big F, as the distant but different constant against which one can *be*, and realise oneself. Like Fassbinder's 'Effi Briest' configuration, the diagonal three is the necessary prerequisite to art: the first to see both second, self, and third; expedient circumstance (society, authority, nature, etc). Fassbinder's camera, of course, was not a fourth figure, but an extension of the first; creative self-consciousness.

Saturday September 6th

Today's heights were provided by Joseph Beuys, who lectured for five hours on the ideas of the Free International University, which aims to transform society, or help society transform itself, by 'social sculpture'. Ricky Demarco interrupted regularly with bulletins about Jimmy Boyle, heartfelt appeals in the name of 'this thing we call justice', 'the dignity of the individual', and 'freedom'. A telegram was read out, stories were enacted — the first meeting between Boyle & Beuys: Boyle said 'I am the coyote', and wrung Beuys' wrist — Demarco did likewise. Everybody who knows him hugs Beuys and kisses him. His round-spectacled friend of whom Demarco is obviously searingly jealous. His little still-life of chalk and glass of water, his only sustenance, since he is fasting as a protest on the Boyle decision. His *weltanschauung* is extremely optimistic, moral. His individualistic clothes and gaunt, clownish face pinpoint him between ascetic saviour and circus entertainer. He talks with quiet conviction in confusingly imprecise English. A disciple, Gary, from Lucas Aerospace, keeps making pompous speeches of support: 'Yes, at Lucas Aerospace we workers have even discovered an interest in the aesthetic. I consider myself an artist.' This enlightenment seems too good to be true. Yet the questioner who asserts the primacy of economic success and the one who reminds us of the irrational & destructive urges in the human soul seem equally naive, and worse, acquiescent.

Sawdust, into which people dropped their cigarette ash. Beuys' hoof-like black boots, multi-pocketed shooting waistcoat, trilby hat. From his waistcoat pockets stick many pieces of paper, making it look like a soft filing cabinet with the

drawers left open. His board diagrams are serpentine, drawn with exquisite care, but incomprehensibly complex and unschematic. All around cameras click, the video screams, and a film camera occasionally clatters. Most of the audience is about my age, dirty chic, solemn.

Now the festival is over (fireworks, spattering the sky from the castle, have confirmed it) I must immediately switch to a positive project of my own. I have begun planning an extended piece, loosely similar to Camus' 'Outsider', describing five days, and five dreams (the dub version of the days) in the life of an unemployed school-leaver who lives alone at Tollcross. The wrestle is to keep myself from being alienated from the thing long enough to produce something worth my tenacity. And the greatest alienating force is the risk of making the writing a simple reflection of my sorry spiritual state, an unnecessary mirror, just as a friend serves to objectify one's grievances, and so double their weight.

Sunday September 7th

I hope today has been the lull before the storm: I gathered books without reading them, collected the night's dreams on paper, and talking pleasantly with Mother & Mark. Vague inputs, unplanned: a programme about a Nigerian travelling theatre, a study of Giorgio de Chirico, short wave radio.

Doubts about the usefulness of the novel still endanger my embarkation — the only constant is the period I intend to sit in the bright basement of the Central Library, without other distractions.

Monday & Tuesday, September 8th and 9th

Writing. Great satisfaction. I begin each day by reaching out for a pen to note the quickly embarking dreams; a good discipline for tethering the subconscious, dropping the idea nets.

At the Central Library I sit amongst old men. Roof-lines intersect with rain & sun outside, and the castle appears grey like a strumped-up brewery in the upper window.

Thursday September 11th

Nothing written today: I finished the first chapter at one this morning (last night), and promised myself a free morning (this morning). This was spent reading a long and good (intelligent, sympathetic) interview with David Bowie in NME.

The leisure began to disintegrate towards limbo, however, during the afternoon. I made a journey to George Square, where I got a pass for the library until the end of the summer. Couldn't start there immediately only because of hunger, so returned home to eat, and lost an afternoon. Sense of deliberate unravelling, which could also apply to the novel: it must be in a constant state of entanglement in order to continue, and the danger is of failing to have enough loose ends to tie, to balance the new divergent strands appearing. Worry also that it is, as Kierkegaard puts it, 'making difficult' rather than simple. Answer: a balance must be struck between simplicity for aesthetic & cognitive reasons and complexity for verisimilitude. It's not the *same* complexity as life's that one reproduces, but complexity as a principle borrowed from life & applied to one's own simplifications.

Purposeless degradation which might, after all, have its uses.

Gide's Journals.

Friday September 12th

Wind turns trees to dervishes. I am stricken with a kind of flirtatious blindness, whitening out areas of my vision. I rush to buy carrots. They only make me feel sick. I recover after lunch in Martins, but the morning has been wasted in poring

over encyclopaedias and running around the library aisles, trapped in tunnel vision.

Book on Balinese drama, then Artaud (as usual, one has to read some American's commentary, as 'The Theatre & Its Double' is out). Plans for Chapter 2.

Home, chained to the radio to collect two tracks from 'Scary Monsters' — disappointing.

Supper conversation — Father constructs the ring of a comparison between sports writing and fiction, round the lanes of which we plod with mind-corroding pedantry. He engineers the same hostility with Mother, asking for whom she's been trying on nighties. In both cases, he 'diplomatically' resolves the conversation (ending it as he began it, on his own terms) by saying to me 'I tell everyone you're writing, I'm very proud of it,' and to Mother, 'Yes, that lace is nice stuff'. Mother, joining in briefly, suggests that I don't have the 'extra' which makes a celebrated novelist like Gide: some shocking unconventionality, dominance of personality. I answer, as usual, in reference to Gide, since this is the frame she has put on the question, but the criticism later annoys me. Firstly, she doesn't know me, and does me the same injustice that others do when they take moody silence for a constant, a natural face, relating to stable character traits rather than external pressures, usually clumsy and blind ones, upon the psyche. I am not dominant or challenging because such traits are an act of faith in, firstly, one's own superiority, and secondly, the susceptibility of others to this enlightenment, and thirdly, the usefulness of spending one's time 'teaching' in this egotistical way.

It's a problem, and the cause is the same as the outcome: I remain where I can have complete control without having to construct excuses for my egotism. Because the ego is an imperialist, it means that if he is restricted within his own frontiers, he plays self-defeating games in which he ravages and redevelops areas of his own land, simply in order to see some progress. He has to cut his column from beneath his feet in order to feel the exhilaration of re-erection (pun intended). The seductive, competitive world beyond, where success, although

real, would also be in the hands of others, and so not strictly *his* success, but humanity's, this world seems to trivialise all his ambitions. It wants to take them, and if not, to march its troops into his capital and topple his column. He forestalls this invasion by making public the pitiful rubble he periodically reduces his achievements to. And so on.

This deception, really protection, combines with its real damage to make him really vulnerable to the whims of neighbouring states, even though they consistently underestimate him. If they sent a handful of men to capture his mighty capital, might not the Imperial Guards, amazed at such bizarre behaviour, let the enemy flag be hoisted over the palace?

If only a rival could be found really worthy of his competition, even invasion. It would first have to seem impossible. Until this happens, though, he is at risk from bands of brigands, even children playing at soldiers. Perhaps these infiltrations, however, are really the work of his ideal rival, who beats him at his own game by playing a *different* game! By slipping in under the fence, or penetrating the woman from the folds of her skirts rather than by flirtatious propositioning.

I've got to escape this place, where silence is taken for triviality, and threatens to be *made* triviality. We all have reasons for being who and what we are, but when we try to reconcile our immense differences, our compromises degrade everyone involved.

I ache to have trivia crushed out of me, but not by the trivial.

Saturday September 13th

Walks: to Granton's littered, grim estates, to the South Side at night.

Law. Anti-dhurma.

Hindu chapter.

On Rose Street a drunk smashed my umbrella with his fist.

On the radio, Lady Stansgate.

Sunday September 14th

Finished Chapter 2 — pleased with it. Need fuller commitment, though, to make the work more than just interesting.

Monday September 15th

Notes for Chapter 3 sketched, but I was distracted from the novel by Bowie's 'Scary Monsters', out today. It disappointed me at first, seemed too American, but I began to forgive it when it asserted itself enough to be judged on its terms, not mine. Just the most dangerous kind of distraction, one which overpowers!

Walk in the rain to university library, which was shut for the bank holiday. From George Square I watched two figures poised on the edge of Salisbury Crags — I waited, half expecting at least one of them to leap off. But two real people (I say 'real' because it seemed that the first couple was Paul & Ben, acting out Chapter Six) approached, and I had to move forward, to precipitate and terminate our passing.

Wednesday September 17th

In the library today I read about Balinese art, and bits of early Artaud ('The Spurt of Blood' etc). I began Ch. 4 of my novel, rather dreamily. I was really preoccupied with the view from the 3rd floor over the Meadows to the Pentlands, where light made the undulations radiate softly through the atmosphere. Charged, light clouds flew past their distant cousins, miles higher, which streaked delicately, becoming a parody of prison bars. On the horizon, great cumulus masses ranged gigantically, infinitely bright and shadowed. In the centre of the sky, between the treetops and a dark diagonal of the storey above, a small patch

of rainbow hung like God's eye. I could see the ultraviolet in it, beyond the red. Ranged round, the Marchmont military roofing, New Englandish spires, dunderheaded red sandstone institutions with their paternal proportions. But mainly, the light. Outside, on the Meadows path, I looked south to see the confusion of black trunks against the brilliant green ground, all this a chink beneath the shadow of foliage.

Tarkovsky's 'Mirror' at the Film Theatre. Some absolutely incredible imagery, very simple and instantly effective: the mysterious force of wind, eroding water cascading into a room, bringing down patches of plaster, a cabin made a beacon with orange fire, Moscow corridors, Moscow flats with bare boards and hallucinations, birds, being executed by a squeamish, relishing woman or being thrown up from the hand of a sick man. Sheets, blowing in slow motion. Shaven children. A cabin room with yellow summer slatting it, and a lamp burning in the corner which one could almost smell, books (Da Vinci) open on the sills, pine all around. And so on. The emotions were more difficult for me, being all about the continuity of blood through generations, despairing nostalgia for childhood, and general tearful wonder at things people usually sleepwalk through. Nonetheless, it succeeded, without a linear plot, in involving me very pleasantly, very actively, in its success, which was considerable. The women were burning, not so much sensually as spiritually, throughout. Tiny sound effects: grating sounds, the groan of a faulty shower, hinges. Decay and history.

Perhaps the phallic principle, of Shiva-like dominance, spawning new forms, asserting oneself shamelessly, is not quite so heinous as I think. Perhaps I should cease to repress it, and *socialise* the aggressions I have previously earthed in shameful privacy. Why pretend to be restrained, reasonable, considerate, when these other urges, to dictate rather than transcribe, form rather than conform, would probably be *more* socially acceptable, ironically?

But dominance becomes a blindness, and in its socially acceptable form is a useless compromise — it is a muscle working for the body that controls it. Even gods must stay apart, for their strength comes from opposition, not collaboration. Without sin, there would be no need for God.

As I was thinking this, walking past St Giles, I admired the reticence of the stones which preserved the complete peace inside — it seemed like a good religious principle: to resound, to shout, is to mingle your voice with thousands of others, mostly banal. So when the clock chimed I was disappointed, it seemed like an empty, phallic crow (cock?), and the building lost its dignity and became a trivial thing, astride the city's spine as if it wanted to ride it like a bucking bronco. In these cases the pinching-strap and the rider are one and the same force; it is the wind which makes the man pull his coat tighter, for all its rage: only the sun's serenity can make him want to remove it.

Friday September 19th

Tarkovsky's 'Mirror' again. As all art, it makes us self-conscious about life, and see objectively what we live as subjects. But this objectivity is far from cold, and Tarkovsky fills his film with tears, as though to reflect the tears we shed to see ourselves from this dark limbo of the cinema. What the reflection does is to impose an order on simple, unselfconscious moments of life, so that we see the fabric instead of just the eye of the needle which pulls us blindly through life. The whole effect is one of dramatic irony, and it kindles the sort of delicious sadness which God must feel, watching quietly from an eventless eternity. In 'Mirror', this central connection between art and life merges, like two identical shadows, with the idea of fate, of things being essentially beyond people's knowledge and control, of patterns repeating unnoticed. So the woman, asked if she would like a boy or a girl, just turns away and sobs, smiling, because the question is absurdly human, ineffectual — such regenerations are not planned, but happen according to unknowable rules; the suggestion is that to realise this is to accept life, and thus become one with the forests, which watch from their darkness, and the mirrors, which gaze from their revelatory inversion, the winds and waters which before have seemed to intrude, but now resume their elemental significance, with fire, which is shown burning a mirror, as if to say that once this wiser self-consciousness is achieved, it is the end of all self-consciousness.

This shadow, fate's, merges with the second: art's. For art is the construction of inevitabilities for a thematic purpose, it is a maker of patterns which must be invested with necessity, and in this is a kind of model of fate. It is fitting that it should therefore act as a kind of window, the window of faith that is the mirror, on fate.

If one lacks faith, one says: 'But isn't this fate only the generalisation of art to life, and isn't the divine force it suggests only the artist's idealisation of his role to the degree of a God?'

To forestall such reservations, magic must be invoked. That's why the film begins with the scene of the hypnotist who cures the boy, in a television programme. It is the removal of the tension of self-consciousness, which art does, it is this removal by trust in a person with special, magical powers, like the artist, and it is the higher level of self-consciousness which observation of this operation brings.

So art says 'Commit yourself to my teaching, be emotional, involve your whole experience and history, but let a part of yourself sit back and observe, so that it sees not just the magic of the catharsis, but also the similar but greater magic of life, fate, God, whatever.

Of course, if our faith in this lesson were complete, there would be no need for further art. Luckily life erodes the order of this vision, and art's magic is called on again to restore it.

This is the same function as religion's. But with religion, life's complexity and refusal to fit dogma detracts from the claims made for cosmic order. This draws people closer to religion only because they are insecure, and want reassurance — this is unsatisfactory because cosmic order should not depend on human interpretation. The same anxiety is good for art, because people come back to it knowing that in essence it is a human activity which only conjures an illusion of cosmic order: ultimately, it has no responsibility, it doesn't have to promise a day of judgment.

So it pleases people when art is complex and pessimistic, but not when life is these things, since art uses these qualities to disguise the artificiality of its imposition of order — it seems less like fantasy, wish-fulfillment, if it is as cruel and (apparently) senseless as life, and its creation of sense is all the more valid, all the more able to attach itself to real life.

In Camus' 'Misunderstanding', which I saw at the Traverse last night, this is carried too far: the tragedy is so complete, the despair so unremitting, that, instead of saying 'Yes, life has this bleakness,' one recoils: 'No, life is not so desperate, this is art, and so artifice' — and the spell is broken, the play useless.

This is the only realism I approve — the realism of the pattern of emotions and significances that the magic (which cannot function if *surface* realism is reproduced) evokes.

Mother & Father stop talking when I come into the room because they think I analyse everything as 'dialogue', that is, from the cold, somewhat inhuman limbo of art. 'You're getting some good dialogue today,' Father says to me. 'I'm not,' I say, and Mother says, 'No, we stop talking when you come into the room.' But this isn't why I said I wasn't getting dialogue; it was because I was listening, not from the enclosure of art, or as a subject in the heat of life, but a vacuum in between, where I could meet the demands of both (or neither). So when I said 'Your dialogue is Pinteresque,' it was not a call from the predatory art enclosure, from which I swept my net around life, but an attempt to jump into life itself with a concession to Father's conception of me as wholly *outside* life. The comment came from my 'art world', but as soon as it was uttered it lost any claim on its origin, which watched my embarrassment at having had to construct the appearance of a compromise between two worlds which cannot meet.

Father concludes everything discussed in his presence with his judgment — 'That's interesting': already the subject is at a distance from him, viewed in its entirety, sealed, cold. He fails to look inside himself for an intuitive response which could lead to a constructive reply — he trusts some notion of an objective order of things more than himself. I say this because I'm aware of doing this too

— it's a device to protect oneself, keep oneself out of the conversation. Perhaps I am more open, however, in that I keep the echoes of the conversation, and later can have it to myself to play with: behind the shield is not a sword but a camera.

Nonetheless, I should really have both; I mean, one should participate with spontaneity and involvement, and still retain the echoes afterwards — better echoes, in three dimensions instead of two, filled out with the colour of emotion, thus real.

But this argument requires a self-conscious effort to be unselfconscious. How is it possible?

But you assume yourself to be a single whole: it is possible to let emotion lead you unselfconsciously into life, while the analyst squats still in limbo, taking notes. In this sense, life commands the same magic as you were just suggesting was art's property. Be open to it!

Disconcerted to realise that my novel is influenced by Enid Blyton, and that its socialist sympathies are just the reverse side of my childhood fascist organisations (L.E.H. — Law Enforcement Helpers in the Doune Gardens) which were also influenced by her.

Interest in Cocteau, Dostoyevsky & Tarkovsky, all broadly rightists, today — it seems to be part of the nature of (elitist, fate-obsessed, traditional even if avant-garde) art that even a socialist admires and copies these atypical conservatives.

The Night of 22nd-23rd September

Blaming myself for drifting between the electric switch ons and offs which swung me aimlessly through the day, I crushed a few luxurious tears out of myself in the dark.

Some events: I bought 'Pindrop', a gloomy, exciting record by The Passage. I met Graham, with Mother in Elders pub on Rose Street. He seemed small and

wizened, like a wise monkey, not as intimidating as I'd expected. Later Mother told me that he'd been struck dumb for five minutes after I'd left, astonished at my mildness after the 'absolutism' Mother conveys in all her reports of me.

The only thing worse than crying at a void is not crying at it, and the calm of the early morning (1.30am) is the only time such a fuzzy non-being can be clear enough for a proper reaction. It needs stage effects for its prompting catharsis; the hiss of rain on the skylight, reckless and unheard, and the paleness of colourless night in the house.

To cut through the peripheral, the interim, the temporary, the easy and the soft, to cones, bones, fears, is essential.

There is no isolation. Even other selves (tonight the one that went, without me, to art college to do industrial design came back and monopolised my time) have a claim on me, and real others are no less tyrannical for being absent, not yet known, or lost.

Love is the desirable intensity of complete existence, a state in which one can at last become something, deliciously tangible, finally able to act without translation. It can threaten ghastly standardisation, but can also be a realisation of a dazzlingly exotic self.

Living, walking, being as a ghost, a life known only to me, and then hardly defined enough to be a serious possession, nothing worth holding onto.

Being able to feel a miserable impotence, an emotional atrophy, as if I lack eyes to see or weep, no, just sheer emotional incapacity, disharmony with the intellect, which says 'You're pitiable' but has its diagnosis unconfirmed by the gut, and so fails to prescribe the cure which the gut secretly longs for.

Bought Brecht's Diaries 1920-22. At my age he had already fathered a child. His adolescent obsession with a girl called Bi, real name Paula. Friends were thick

around him, he could afford to be cool and changeable because the support of somebody was certain, even if the precise body changed.

Only with eyes like these diaries do I see what a wasteland I live in, what a waste.

God, these literary constructions. Stupid starry-eyed pomposity, archaic syntax, stilted for token fractured 80s authenticity. Reverence for what? Fear of extremes? Fear of predatory normality. Lack of trust in my own differentiation. From what? Past self? Family? Half-known friends?

There was a big make-up party. Everybody made up everybody else's faces. Wax marks, powder marks, the warmth of their skin inspired them as they shaded and matched, arched and chalked each other. But one hid in a cupboard, dark, and dabbed desperately, puzzling over techniques, applying himself with superhuman effort, yet unable to put together a real face, let alone a pretty mask. He lacked the spell another's flesh casts.

To be lop-sided, for instance here: I know, sociologically and psychologically, that these feelings are characteristic of adolescence, socialisation, inner city isolation, et cetera, yet I can't escape them just by knowing this. I have to live through them with the taunts of the tutored loftyhead ringing in my ears.

Atrophy: wasting away of an organ or part, or a failure to grow to a normal size as the result of disease, esp. through lack of use.

A trophy: (2) a memento of success, esp. one taken in war or hunting.

Tuesday September 23rd

Quiet despair was dulled by a walk and finally annulled by the writing of Ch. 5 this evening.

Walk notes: Weed streaks the river, lank and rotting perceptibly. The walls are black with damp, and at their edges are things you would rather forget, if you

could decide what they are. You pass warehouses where the people mostly are, and machinery cries as it bites wood and stone, guided by flesh hands.

You reach a wide flat space filled with the drone of a steaming brick mill. You continue, you see a notice in large letters — ‘Make racing pay, bet with Gray!’ The DNA coils of coloured lights snaked lampposts. Wide steps. And there is the stadium, with muddy grass around the outside, modest stands, low fences, rows of impressive white lights which strangely face the wrong way, but might have engines to turn them round (probably a sacred operation, awesome to watch); a narrow track with impressively tight curves at either end, and at the centre an immaculate green with old cloth advertisements and a flower-bed arranged on it. But most impressive, and slightly sinister, is the massive, blank power station at the far end, with its fuming chimney and anonymously classical proportions in black & white metal. Without the eyes of windows, it nonetheless watches.

As you at last turn to leave, the p.a. rings into life and a woman’s voice says something indecipherable. It can only be to you, there is no-one else in the arena. ‘Get out!’ it may be saying, or even ‘Come back again!’

A pair of new trousers and Brecht’s diaries also helped me today. Brecht is as crude as Burns — he has an obsessively physical vocabulary which is refreshing. An enviable trust in nature as counter-balance to man’s ambition and vanity. Blood, guts, lungs, semen, and lust for life.

Thursday September 26th

I gather parables at George Square, harvest the fat corn tops of Hindu legend for chapter 6, where they will be allowed to squat righteously and suffocatingly over Aesop’s ‘Metamorphosis’. As I sit there I look up at Salisbury Crags as the Balinese look at Gunung Agung, mountain of ‘manic’ powers, embodiment of the great god Siwa himself.

Siwa transforms himself into a giant erect penis which is also a pillar of fire with a demon’s mask. His rebellious offspring cannot imagine him in this guise,

whether with weapons or in the form of beasts. The bird can’t reach the top of him, nor the boar the bottom. The boar proceeds, perhaps out of frustration, to rape an earth goddess, a subordinate of his mother.

One can only respect a god who acknowledges the necessity of evil, and its emancipation from himself. Creation is a continual act of negotiation, and destruction is integral in it. Hindu man is not the spineless sinner a Christian takes himself for, but an anxious and sensitive middle-man between the divine and the demonic, which join seamlessly behind his back, between his legs, all around him. So alert must he be in calibrating the forces in which he is wrapped that even the position of his head on the pillow at night is crucial. *That* is religion.

Babis is coming on Tuesday — I look forward to it with whoops and whistles. Until he arrives, though, I continue with Brecht, who teaches me a great deal. The perfect antithesis and complement of Kafka, less like me than K, so a greater challenge, so, perhaps, a more important model. He seems to grasp life firmly, whereas for me it passes like a vision of shapes in heat haze — his real achievement, though, is that he manages this by being as great a dreamer as any underground man with no other consolations.

Friday September 27th

Ch. 6 finished, a little too dense and intellectual, but nice atmosphere. In John’s car to Gamekeeper’s Road for a talk / music session. Painless. I don’t much like myself at these meetings: I seem vain yet shy, both creative and destructive, the best musician and the worst, friendly yet aloof, awkward and smooth, cautious and risqué, dominant and passive, worldly and naive. The sum sin of these is unpredictability, in the eyes of the others, so I am treated with cautious respect. With individuals it is much better — spoke to Andrew (?) Brown in the car coming back about my novel, Kafka (his style in German, reputation of ‘depth’), and Ibsen.

As I pass her door at 1am I hear Emma shouting in her sleep: 'God, Nicola, I have to go home!' She then stumbles onto the landing as I am turning the light on. 'What time is it?' she asks. 'One o'clock.' 'In the morning?' Her face is puffy, eyes and mouth cracks.

Saturday September 27th

They assigned everything a function, they made and erected a landscape of clumsily interlocking tools, each with its single, obvious use, then they walked amongst it all, and saw that it worked. Things dug up and uprooted entered at one side, mashed and spent they churned out of the other. On bright days their metal token sparkled between their fingers. On brights days too great formless clouds scuttled across the unreachable part of their machine, its open top, which pleased them but also made them uneasy, for they wanted to clasp at the light and vapour and wire it up to regulators, have it how they wanted it, hot, cold, running. The light too worried them, because its shadows confused the proportions of their architecture, and, although they did not notice why, it made them sense disorder.

Grips of past like sudden braking, past Doppler screams, snatch me in the streets. One moment I am delighting in a new close between Cowgate and High Street (bars on windows, squat black buildings, mesh, cobbles, hardness of sun and shadow, a bewildered coated woman clutching the wall), the next, passing through a snatch of bourgeois conversation ('we've got peas and broccoli') within a stone's throw of the Scott monument, the mothball smell of the affluent, affable dead residents impinges, pungent, and the pavement sucks at my soles, and my soul is tethered to stones.

Marion Thomson's messy colour-boards at the 369 Gallery: at first look hasty, pasty, intimidatingly physical. Then the power of the colour, which clamp down blocks of wood beneath, arguing amongst themselves or threateningly compact, or glowing, powerfully lyrical, this power pins you in front of the constructions, and you turn away with a respect the other items in the show, with their subtle, even apologetic, idiosyncrasies, have failed to kindle.

Quarto: shipments of alien 'English Empiricist' criticism from the South. Here we understand metaphor, symbolism, and the uncompromising extremity of the European and Russian consciousness much better. The English bluff plain man is bloated with the acid of fear, which must be diluted with gallons of the water of complacency. Amongst the infinite tangle of tightropes, we dance until we drop to the next to intersect our chaotic fall to the ground where each wire is finally moored — but the English Empiricist plummets down a single rope, struggling desperately to master the appearance of balance, sure as he is that, once balanced, he will put the ground safely below him instead of ahead, careering closer...

Sunday September 28th

Each Victorian detached mausoleum stands in its own plot of autumnal acid decay, the concrete band which segment them, named after dead men or built-on places, could be paths for visitors with wreaths and wrinkled noses.

The corpulent, complacent, pasty-faced British live in mortal fear of humanity, they cover it up with suspicion, aggression, coercive curiosity, silence, politeness.

The exception to this is certain of the working class, which, like the hungry everywhere, loves man by knowing his frailty. It makes me happy when the impersonality of a street is broken by two young girls who say, as they pass me, 'Hey, poofy!' Who cares if it's a misguided insult, a judgment, or an incitement to graphic denial, it's a confirmation of what is common rather than the fear of difference a *real* insult of this sort, perhaps lodged deep in the minds of men with furled umbrellas and nervous glances, would betray.

My novel is about to descend, repeating in haunting metamorphosis the events of the first six chapters. Ch. 6, half-way, is called 'The Summit'. Its motif of the corkscrew path up then down the hillside is the masterplan of the book.

I write a chapter, relax, become alienated from the novel, find it distasteful and above me, become guilty about neglecting it, then suddenly receive the fresh ideas and excitement which lead me to the next chapter. This takes about three days.

Plans for DIScourse. We'll random sample, ask people for extensive free association answers to existential questions which, at first sight, appear to warrant only 'hard facts' like 'I'm here to get a degree'.

Monday to Wednesday September 29th to October 1st

Last two days with Babis & Catherine. We walk in the sunny, gusty city, all over, and I compare it unconsciously with Nice, or as I imagine they see it. We sit for half an hour in the Princes St. Clydesdale Bank, watched impassively by cameras and tellers, as people file in and out with automatic normality. Closes; high, grim, quaint buildings.

I am so light-hearted with B&C that I look at a girl beneath the student centre dome and cannot believe in her serious expression.

The library.

Everywhere helpful passers-by and petty officials explain this and that to Babis.

Light — the ultra-violet of the view over the Meadows & Pentlands from floor 5 of the library, the leaf and astragal orchestrated shimmer on furniture at breakfast.

Thursday October 2nd

I am infected with blockage and dullage of tubes and cavities of the head — Emma's tonsillitis, perhaps. With Babis I mooch about, up to no good. We drop photocopied money on the pavement and watch people failing to see it. Ian Fyfe picks the first note up only because it is highly conspicuous and his wife has probably seen us planting it. The second note (a garish £10) is spotted by a

toddler, whose mother takes it, then gives it back to the child when she realises it's fake. I am nervous and remorseful as I sit aloft watching with Babis, Catherine & Emma. On pretexts I stay away.

Like Father, B plays me classical music which means little to me. Like Father, he tries to win me to his side with an enthusiasm about things which are of concern to him alone. And as with Father, I sit with the headphones on while he watches TV.

I have to be attentive and appreciative and compliant. I do this half-heartedly, and am guilty of dishonesty. Why don't I simply assert my side? Because I am keeping at a safe distance, I know that his energy is greater than mine, so I try to make passivity my strength. But passivity is very demanding, since it involves deceit. To relax, to breathe, to think my own thoughts, I retreat further and further into passivity, no longer acting, and the relationship is harmed. Occasional attempts to show the artificiality of being myself on the outside. Dominance is vulgar & insensitive, and competition is distasteful.

Film: 'Moscow Distrusts Tears' — not 'arty', something between a comedy & a tear-jerker, like American & French films, everything it showed was surprisingly western-looking, its messages were mildly liberal reformist tending towards wet conservative. It was moving and entertaining, humane, touching. Yet very much a formula film, 'Mossexport', as much propaganda as US films, but with a bigger heart and better eye for existential detail.

My jacket is expensive but too big and shapeless. I wear denim, though I hate it. My spectacles look incongruous and harsh. My hair is lank and strandy. Corners point out all over me. I am awkward. In the dark I pass by the Little Lyceum to glance at the girl in the box office (short dark hair, silver round glasses, white Shetland jersey, friendly air) — a boy stands at the window talking to her, and from the street it seems he might be kissing her — but I can't tell. Later I pass a drunk girl who looks back at me, then, when I'm alongside, takes out a cigarette, as if hoping that I'll offer her a flame. Everywhere smart couples and sailors extravagant with cheerful lust. And I come back to myself from a film, single, and

return to this house full of couples (Father - Mother, Babis - Catherine, Mark - Gillian).

B & I improvised two pieces of highly jarring and psychopathic music. Each negates the talents of the other, and our successes come only by chance; when we are either playing without compromise to the other's contribution, or listening to this contribution alone.

Friday October 3rd

There's no avenue where the direction seems comfortingly necessary and immutable, where you can walk between the ancient trees knowing that truth has been confirmed in sum by countless generations, stretching behind and ahead like wide, flat flagstones. One can no longer even betray such an illusion by knocking holes in the cardboard facades of the great institutions which line this avenue, for everyone knows of their flimsiness, and the greatest effort is not to challenge but to believe. Even personal relationships are difficult; the talk of the walkers wobbles like a bicycle on ice, it too has lost faith in the perspective of the avenue and slithers this way and that, no longer a means of getting from one's own environment to someone else's, but a desperate, clownish demonstration of the need to relate, which starves itself in proportion to the urgency with which it eats.

Photographs of myself, fatigued and viral, visits to galleries and shops where I am regarded as a heel, most of all by myself. And because of inexperience, incompetence, insecurity, bad luck and lack of opportunity, I have no relationships, which might offset these stupid street impressions. My skill at self-regulation is thus overtaxed, and has to break a few ribs to keep the heart going.

Perhaps life begins at 40, and this is only the waiting room.

Kertesz exhibition, TLS, glossy fashion magazines, the heightened sense of self and style gained by rising from the silt. Alone with Eno's airport music, lamps bending to fabric, glass, metal, plants, some television pictures without sound.

Muffled by this fever, and the drugs administered, as if by an old camel coat. Delight at the ordinary. Anal retentiveness!

Bresson's 'Notes on Cinematography' chide me for synthesising several arts (partic. primitive theatre) in another, my novel. Brecht's diaries are astonished at my lack of vitality — I even write in libraries, unlike BB, who composed amongst chestnuts and by the banks of rivers.

Monday October 6th

Yesterday I unpacked my belongings at my Hector Boece room and joined Babis & Catherine to explore Aberdeen as we had explored Rome & Vence. The Overseas Students lounge was ours, we watched the streets and the lit Marishall labs from its turret, documentaries on its television. When we pushed through the packed red lounge it was a living waxworks, a different air, another time.

With Catherine returning late, I listened to all Europe's radio stations. Falling asleep, at the twilight stage, she understood the English better, she said.

But today in Edinburgh the interlude North was forgotten. Jenners — the back stairs with sober dark-stain panelling. A comfortable radio play with monochrome 'colourful' characters: The Artist, The Admiral, The Vicar, The Gay Publisher, and at the centre, a sturdy stage manageress of a character who lets these costumes flap in her breeze.

The train north, arrived just as I reached the platform without having consulted any timetable. And Aberdeen *was* Aberdeen — the dourness of bus-stops, where I waited last year to visit Joy & co. or looked up at the trickled-up ink streak of the Marishall tower. The students remind me of their hostility — in groups, they ignore individuals and jeer nervously at other groups in between conversations about football, money, girls... scattered with TV catchphrases.

His face was like the business end of a cumulus cloud.

In the dark behind the launderette I passed fat Joanna, who said 'Hello Nick!' 'Hello.' 'Who's that fucker?' said the short boy beside her, stopping and smacking his fist in his palm. 'Ignore him, he's drunk,' Joanna called as I looked back.

Tuesday October 7th

Resolutions — to seek constructive crisis here. To use my distinctive thought patterns in conversation rather than sheltering behind the neutral, the banal. To be brave or frightened enough to feel warmth for someone. Not to disdain social sexuality. To wear my spectacles, and see people. To call people by their names. To set my sensitivity to work instead of letting it embarrass me by showing itself.

In other words to be like the judo wrestler who uses all his skill to help the attack of his partner, who rolls with him across the mat, an equal.

The light here is superb. Just now the river is like a chasm to the sun, and its light reaches me through the leaves and is projected in a square on the back wall, a frantic kinetic mural of shimmer, wind and water and sun. The radio is played Spanish tambour and guitar, which also flutters playfully through the air.

I visited Byron, round in inner Hector Boece Court. Jeff & Mark were there too — in much the same rooms as last year. Minimal change. Same collages in same positions.

All the old constants in town — record shop, art gallery, Boomtown Books... A strange mixture of comfort and repulsion on seeing them all similar yet slightly changed.

Wednesday October 8th

Places push themselves knowingly beneath my feet. Aesthetically pleasing girls elicit illicit responses, no, lies, I react just as I'm supposed to, I yearn and look furtively along the bus queue or across the supper tables while they pretend to act naturally. 'With someone so goddam pretty', I think to myself, 'I wouldn't

expect sex — it would be enough just to be allowed to look at her as long as I wanted.' Then I imagine her sneer as she feels herself rising up beyond me, no longer able to be a person, now an object.

I drew several masks from the catalogue of a Marishall exhibition with pastels on black paper. Then, on the last sheet, drew myself — an unsettling caricature with an enormously long, bony, pretty and evil face. Technique surprisingly effective: it looks horrible, like the sort of thing in hairdressers' windows twenty years ago, yet the effects of light, skin tone, detail, are good. It took me a couple of hours, stuck to the wall beside the mirror (it's backwards) — the clouds of fine dust gave me a headache.

In small social contacts I always forget to ask the other about *his* holiday, course, and so on. His question to me takes me by surprise, I haven't prepared an answer as he has, and so set to work improvising on sparse memories. When I pull out some worthwhile angle, I'm so pleased that I want to end the conversation on this high note.

I still think to say more things than I dare. With next-door-neighbour James, a joke about Onen (Onan!), with Edmund the comment 'You look thinner, better, different, like Woody Allen...' — both censored and replaced with the nearest coherently dull line. It is always immediate impressions which suffer; spontaneity.

Thursday October 9th

Societies morning — pushing past people, sitting with Babis at the Overseas Students table, overlooking the Gaysoc stall & Jewish Students stall. At both, attractive girls. The sland-eyed, fascinating twins came in and hovered around Gaysoc. The more aloof one drew gloves on and off. I joined Left Alliance, CND, Phoenix TV, Film & Cine societies, then later Overseas Students Association.

Ships in the dark.

Overseas Students lounge with Babis & Marxism Today.

The reception at the Station Hotel — high ranking academics made awkward conversation with students before sealing off in units of their own kind. Then speeches, then music, then a disco, the academics having flown. I talked to an ex-sociology social worker, who said some very sympathetic things with passion; a Californian whose ignorance of my invisibility and easy powers of conversation blinded me to the professionalism of her talk; Florence, a warm Sierra Leonian who was a St Margaret's ('Newington'). Surprising refs. — the sociologist knew Angus Dunn, Florence knew Eric Holst-Roness.

The headlights seen through the bus window, slow — the disco light tube — passing me; static. Hated commitment to self, only support nonetheless.

The sinister still life in the hotel functions room: a large withered flower display at centre, flanked symmetrically with closed-form chairs, squat, converging on a table, completely covered with felt. On either side, elevated bits of stage, each with a pool of light aimed at its centre. The self-conscious propriety of it.

Friday October 10th

Productivity is all-important. Poverty of imagination is the result of lifelessness, the wilful anaesthetising of response.

I carried half the library's Brecht translations home under my arm. He is a great source of excitement, hope, inspiration. This is the beginning of a new period.

The moment — hopes are nothing more than fuel for the flames which are already licking out greedily.

Saturday October 11th

Starving with hunger, I reached the Cashline machine with a volume of Brecht's poetry under my arm and discovered that I'd forgotten my number — alienation

from the machine had made me lose the key to the money that was to have bought me lunch. I had to draw a keyboard in my notebook and press its paper buttons, return, try again, even walk to the further machine to get the number wrong again, and to have my card taken away. No lunch. Not even enough money to take the bus back to Hillhead. No cheque book.

In the library I read about Godard's films. Took the book (Roud) out. I'd like to direct with Phoenix.

Babis & Catherine visited me at 9.45pm. I was shy, stuttered from time to time. What a life, what isolation! How afraid we Scots are of each other!

I wrote down some ideas on the university's bureaucratic mode of social relations for possible translation to video — realised that abstraction, although a useful first organisation of ideas, is useless on its own, just the illusion of creation — everything must be translated into the concrete or it is worthless. Brecht teaches this.

Glimpsed the merest possibility of losing control after forgetting my bank number. These little absent-mindednesses add up — failing to recognise people, grinning to myself on the street, absorption in bizarre projects which melt away in daylight, solitude.

Living amongst chairs, tables, walls most of the time, you take on their characteristics. I spend my time at discos like one chair stacked on top of another. Furniture seems to me wise and observant.

To be spoken to is such a surprise it's disconcerting — this person isn't normal, you think suspiciously!

Act, accept its implications!

Sunday October 12th

Stop these exhortations, they have no effect but to exorcise guilt.

With Babis & Catherine to the Overseas Students' meeting. It serves an administrative *and* social purpose, but alienation from the first excludes me from the second.

It is possible for the turgid to serve the imaginative, but for the imaginative to lighten the turgid — I can't accept. People's personalities, their humour, are prime. It's ultimately deadening when these are harnessed to the demands of bureaucratic machinery. Admittedly all this organisation has a socially useful aim — of raising money for 'social events'. But if you have to have these mockeries of social gathering in order to construct the tinselly facades of 'proper' ones, surely the division of labour has you pinched between its jaws?

This meeting, ostensibly one of community decision, really curled itself around the ideas and ego of one person, the chairman, Babis. All this administration of a group future during a present in which the group is forced into the useless state of a single entity, all individual qualities submerged except those of the 'selfless' chairman. It strips people and covers them up at the same time, it's vandalism against humanity.

Me as furniture again.

I cringe before those I imagine to represent 'my' culture — UK culture, because their hostility overlaps, synchs, with my inward-directed hostility. It's easy to react humbly, to throw ego away, when what is really needed is to be strong enough to push the hostility away, to separate the inner and outer enemy, and see it as an unfortunate (but not insurmountable) characteristic of the individual, the watcher. Perhaps one can feel sympathy for him, and be positive enough to dispel his hostility entirely. That's the only way out.

Tuesday October 14th

Soon winter

Will make leaves myths
And the sun which lives
Beyond the white smoke and
The river
Will skeletonise
The shifting masses on my wall.

So now I note
With precision and astonishment
Seaton's Eden carnival
For the leaving gifts
Are being given
And wind
Is arranging the flowers
Against a wall.

Brecht and the sunlit serenity of this room have led me to poetry, which I now see not as formal indulgence, but elegance and economy. My vision, my habitual voices, are very relieved, not because they can now perfume themselves and wear florid cuffs, but because they don't have to rely on that scornful, awkward and long-winded interpreter — his manner made them think twice about saying anything at all — any more.

Sociology is directly relevant to almost everything important, and English offers accounts of puritanism and (separately) throws Pound at me as a foil to the excellent Brecht (both are vaguely Confucian, but Brecht sprinkles it with irony and so steps a great distance forward).

Letter to Elspeth Davie — humble; not to flatter her but declare sympathy.

Wednesday October 15th

The inside of my head feels like the suspension of an American car. Flu is brewing.

A talk with a 'Campus Crusader for Christ' in the Central Ref — he became a Christian after reading Sartre's 'Nausea'.

Derrida's 'Writing & Difference' is in the space (Dewey no. 1949, date of the first English translation of 'Nausea') I have been automatically, vainly checking for a year.

I stumble across the edition of Sight & Sound I was chasing around Edinburgh for — in McHardy's. 'Oh my God,' shouts the saleslady when she sees the price (85p) atop the austere black and white cover.

Saturday October 18th

Most of the last couple of days spent in bed.

Today the weather confirms the Scottish romantic love of change: it rains, then the sun, very low and white, blazes from the roads so that the bus-driver has to squint, and his face in the mirror is like a satellite picture of rocky desert. Then sleet falls; I hurry back into the bus. Before the journey ends sun has returned. Later I look up from my work, cutting up posters, to see the year's first snow against the green leaves. Now the river is sparkling with sunshine beyond leaves which tinsellate in wind and water, which drops like sparks.

I put up radical posters, and on a band of paper running the length of two walls, these lines of Brecht's:

Canalising a river
Grafting a fruit tree
Educating a person
Transforming a state
These are instances of fruitful criticism
And at the same time
Instances of art.

This prefigures Beuys and has many implications I'll have to think about between the cracks of coughs.

Sunday October 19th

The landscape is cold, one can't enjoy it. I walked out one tree-lined, glaring avenue, saw the city from a great distance, and walked back to it down another. Met only three English punks. The girl said to me 'All right, love?' 'Fine thanks!' 'That's all right then,' said her friend, a boy.

Everything in my dreams, between midnight and midday, was very sweet. I was looking for Paula, but other girls were around: it was an art school. You could see Edinburgh, distinct and far south, with sunny fields, haystacks, firs in between.

But the wakening landscape is dead — one can't write and live the script as in dreams. I get lost in the crowd. I can look but not be. I don't know who to blame, I can find no-one to like. There is no-one like me, not even remotely, it seems.

The girl in a long coat with spectacles was talking to one friend at a bus stop. When she got on, she sat down with another, approaching her like a ticket inspector. With her very basic formula of 'the nice' she compiles vast amounts of information about people, which she circulates judiciously. Its purpose is not knowledge but control.

There are whole groups of these girls around: they are conservative, compliant, conformist, mother-oriented. I doubt whether one of them has seen me — what lies outside their own limited world is invisible. They represent the least attractive possible femininity — practical beings, unimaginative, highly socialised and socialising. No aesthetic sense, plodding intellect (they work hard).

The statistics about Arts — creative — intelligent girls are not confirmed by my experience of them, my lack of experience of them.

I have to go to Grays to see attractive girls. Even there there are only about 5.

When I was offered a choice at a toyshop I never found anything to my taste, and came away sulking. To develop a passion for something (always slowly) was a great relief.

I shall never fall into the service of capitalism. I am here (not just university) to be educated indefinitely, to understand, and to apply that understanding. For me there is no division of labour: no experience is without bearing on future acts. One learns from the crossed line as much as from the didactic speaker. There is no such thing as leisure if it is not something always present, a condition for work. Learning, being open, makes one changeable, never predictable, and so never able to be oppressed. One must welcome change in others too: for me, the greatest deadener of friendships is the development of predictability. Familiarity breeds contempt.

One is born on a side, with interests. One can declare them or change them. To change is to take issue against a system imposed from beyond. Attack this system where its corners intersect with your flesh.

Scrutinise behaviour, play with its construction, test new combinations of old elements, bring new acts into the repertoire.

Make what you are best at, for purposes you approve. Use only what this requires. Don't let success narrow your explorations of method. But don't be afraid to spend time learning one method in particular — the others will not suffer.

Compare what seems disparate. Progress towards unity knowing it is unreachable. Cherish the complex.

Since we all live in the same world, some destruction must precede construction. This can be achieved at the level called personal — it is a matter of leaving behind old habits of life in the knowledge that new ones are possible.

The old has lessons the issue of which it fears.

Tuesday October 21st

Sociology lectures try to convince me that California is the natural model for life in all capitalist zones — I gaze with relief at the autumnal damp, in which the leaves are the brightest element.

Brecht continues to educate my morals. Today, the Messingkauf Dialogues. He has a *weltanschauung*, something which sociology is missing just now. It lacks alienation from its subject.

Letter from Mark — Father won't allow money to be mentioned in the house. The food cupboards are emptying. I'm well shot of it.

Babis continues to lack imagination, that is, he fails to see life from the point of view of the person he's talking to. He sleeps during lectures because he just can't listen, is incapable of distinguishing inward activity from passivity.

Yesterday night I saw his slides, met Fiona, motherly warden, his secret passion. Wrote some poems on his typewriter. Communication breaks down without any crisis. This is bad. You soon give up tightrope-walking if you find it's impossible to fall off.

EA Chronicle. Being wrong can only be detected by conscientious construction of a world picture. The materials are everything you experience — everything. You act on this work in progress which is without end. Seek unpleasant experience, incongruous experience, the irrelevant — without them you will only make an excuse for your mistakes, a blueprint for false consciousness.

Thursday October 23rd

Collage on my wall reads:

We digest
Only as well
As we communicate.

— amidst telephones and Alka Seltzer.

Yellow and orange leaves, black mud, white mist, red berries, tungsten yellow interiors.

Babis is on the front page of Gaudie, smiling out at everybody with the words 'Gross Irresponsibility' in headline below.

Sunday

Three cities in as many days. Travel is alternately tiring and exciting. It is existentially the most efficient life, if things happen at the stops.

Glasgow, Saturday: the march, my people streamed alongside traffic by police and press, ignored by the majority, the shoppers and pavement ghosts. Shouted: One-two-three-four, we don't want a nuclear war, five-six-seven-eight, we don't want to radiate. I was principally with them in rhythm, which animated me. I darted back and forwards, in and out of the file, framing photographs from aesthetic angles, not agit-photo, but an un-alienated subjectivity. Glasgow: sunshine, smoke, tattering buildings, sharp shadows, crowds, heart. Capitalism looks shamefaced amidst such flitters. The people work: amongst gantries they grind down their bones and evaporate their flesh to feed the capitalist juggernaut, but they spit right up its backside, which is right up their back street.

It was sheer cowardice not to come here to study. I *need* reality if I'm going to have anything to do with fantasy.

Grandpa Currie lay wandered and bewildered in his hospital bed at Ayr. He recognised me, but mistook Marcus for 'Billy'. 'They're a hardy race of folk in Aberdeen,' he told me. When the nurse joked about drinking, he told her very seriously: 'I'll never be an alcoholic... I don't...' Father said they were giving him a form of heroin as a painkiller: he was high. His hip has a pin in it. At Molly's John, Father and the Bowmans considered employing a full-time nurse... 'until his money runs out, then we'll split it three ways.' It seems that Grandpa Currie has lived longer than anyone calculated. No-one is more aware of this than he: 'Don't bother yourself to come down to visit me...'

John is separating from Barbara. The arrangement, amicable from separate flats, is like Father & Mother's plan. The nuclear age.

Hearing The Beatles' 'Revolver' again.

Monday October 27th

My silly Monday confidence empties: there are two glasses, and the emptiness of one drains the fullness of the other. Flux.

Ideas will bed themselves down (today this: that the first to do or see something is a genius, the second — the one who agrees — a fool: an old idea which seems central to keeping ideas alive, thus the words outside this bracket) but one must feed them black coffee and shake their shoulder blades, and keep generating others with the head.

Cooper's 'Death of the Family'. Gives me confidence. Criticism is only valid if it looks at everything available. Ideas are useless if they don't clarify life — make simple. No, *light* complexity, not recreate it.

Intellectualism as frightened, aggressive weapon: squatting and shitting on one's intellectual competitors by looking narrower, chiselling models finer. (Poetry seminar.)

Abstraction is the view from high towers not built (Babel).

I don't want to communicate yet. Will I, and why? Because I can do nothing else (no reason)?

The academic literary vultures mistake questions for answers. This is so that they can justify themselves dialectically by posing questions. Answers are inadmissible on both sides.

What frightens me is not people but their fear of people. Mine included.

Everybody in the seminar room was afraid. The speaker was nervous, although his control of the situation reassured him. The host, who sat beside him, was grinning with the terror of scrutiny of one who, passive, faces a crowd and reacts. The questioners betrayed anxiety in their voices. The clever ones were afraid of seeming too clever. The stupid ones were afraid of seeming too stupid. Where was the sadistic god who put them through this ordeal? Was it built into the blackboards and chairs, the platform and floor? No, because I came when the room was dark, and was not afraid. It was everybody's fear that everybody feared. And also perhaps the possibility that this fear was not sufficient to maintain the consensus, perpetuate the hegemony of obedient speaker over obedient listeners — this possibility made them afraid, smoothing itself away as acid might dissolve acid.

Thursday October 30th

David Cooper, as well as filling me with confidence and hope and determinism, makes me angry at the world as it is and doesn't have to be. Angry that there are so few forms and so many people. Forms of behaviour, creation, action, vision. Behaviour which is determined by self-consciousness — other-self consciousness, determined by fear. Sociology lectures, harping on Goffman's determinist Symbolic Interactionism, compound the bitterness. I curdle, I agitate. Shake well!

Otherise, I sing. I hide, I flow. Before others, I coagulate. Clots! Clots! Clots!

Thoughts of dead theorists, like meat carcasses hung skewered with a line of argument, and presented to aged, sated, coagulated tutor-professors to pretend to eat like shish-kebabs. My thoughts are me, they live still, in motion, in emotion.

My 'Cave' script finished, in the hand of Graeme, patriarchal video entrepreneur-entertainer.

Friday October 31st

New Society, Art Monthly, Artaud's 'Theatre & Its Double', Beckett biography (browsed not bought), lots of zany sane-extremist publications in the public library, a seat on David Cooper's high stools.

Apart from these people, other less definite encounters: the red-head girl in English; her name is something like Leni or Pepi. A law person at Queen's Terrace, who arbitrated between me and his dictaphone. Father, on the art gallery telephone, letting figures induce guilt, expelling the retained (ie unbouncing my halls cheque). A girl with a Paula scent, an immaculate white jersey and a pony tail who sat next to me on the 2 bus. Another girl, bourgeois and young but not necessarily student, who sat opposite and let our eyes meet. These f(r)ictions, dream touches, happen because, for a few hours, I leave the institution. I don't know who they are, where they're coming from or going to. In transit, we fill a survey form with these details, but twist the paper into an inward curl of privacy. A girl sitting like Buddha on the table at the back of the BBC2 lounge after the man walks away to close Poliakoff's 'Train' and I walk conversely away, no longer watching but watched. A girl pacing the launderette perimeter, either taunting or oblivious, my body tells me the former, my mind keeps its peace but believes the latter. A collage on my door bleats a wobbly 'Hello' to flatmates.

Loneliness, anxiety and sluggish despair are precarious. Otherwise I wouldn't tolerate them.

Passing a young tree, I watched it flay like romantic ecstasy, and said: but it's not a consciousness, it's dance not a signal — whereupon it integrated both these things in its wild whip, and I stared at it passing me beside the path. Up at a stairs window a head and shoulders was watching me watching the tree: seen, it backed away, and I passed a Pakistani on the stairs, and wore a smile of one seen being.

Dear God,

as I hope you can see from the above — I mean my text, not your haven, heaven — I have had some worthwhile experiences today, not even all accounted for, most slip through, thank You. I have also maintained a constantly cutting and witty inner dialogue, and, although disliking much of your world and envying your distance from it, I have had little glimpses of something completely different and magical, probably old timber drifting up from the flotsam of my childhood, God. And I have not succumbed to the scratching of some such word as 'lonely' on the slide at which you and I now peer down the celestial microscope, because You and I and the culture down there between glass and glass confer, Self without end, Amen.

Saturday November 1st

At university there is no dialogue. Dialogue means stating a position which another modifies by stating, and modifying, his position. If one side wants to change the other without changing itself in response to that other, it is either futility or terrorism. Essays may reply to lecture, but lectures never reply to essays. Tutorial points are either assimilated or rejected by the departmental creed, or the tutor's version of same. The division of teacher and pupil must be dissolved. Otherwise there will be no difference between teachers and pupils: both will be students of law.

The bored, complacent scream of one who misses what he doesn't know and doesn't know what he's missing.

When depressed, in need of self-justification, I go to the Psychology department of the library and take down a book about Creativity. Effortless conformism.

I read 'Nausea' and nod wearily. Its realism is almost unbearable.

Sunday November 2nd

Many, many merciless and fillable hours to contend with. Things to do, but unfulfilling, impersonal, ultimately conformist and deadening things. I leave them to drift closer to their deadlines (as my hand opens from its clutch the life-line stretches optimistically up my arm; hours, days, months, years, decades).

When I leave the flat I pass the unruly young tree, losing its leaves, then the windows of the flats opposite. They are like the windows of a bus: at each sits a passenger, desk in front, some work ranged on it, half attended. They can't see how they mimic the occupants of windows on either side, but each sees me and I see all, pitched up on their turgid goods train, journeying at 1 mile an hour thousands of miles across deserts or prairies to a great big stock bin, all for the good of society, all for goods, like metal things trundling in blind unison towards Babylon.

Then I pass the telephone box. There is always a girl standing against the concrete wall. I have to pass between her and the new but archaic yellow telephone box. She is usually attractive, a possible saviour, a possible disciple, or a friend. She usually watches me longer than I dare watch her as we pass. Approval, disapproval, vacancy: it's impossible to say. I have spoken to no-one since Thursday.

Collage: right-angle screaming women peep out from a large office chair on which are arranged sharp shards of car crash, in blue on its yellow upholstery. The spider-like legs of this chair dangle over a kitchen scene below: a housewife stands distraught between two dark windows. In one are diagonal aircraft dials. In the other, also diagonal, threatening intersection at the housewife, another

piece of the fractured car plummets. And to the right, a toddler sits on some hi-fi equipment, with headphones and a video camera, pointing as if directing or observing the disassembled, dissembled scene before him.

When there is a famine, wheat costs more. Only the well can obtain medicine. Presents are showered on 'the man who has everything'. The great curse of the needy is that they lose the ability to want.

Monday November 3rd

On Monday, like it or not, I get happy. I break out, break in simultaneously, establish a schedule at the same time as I'm breaking one, conform and rebel. I sit in the south room of the Ref. Cafe in swimming sunshine. Queueing, I glimpse, through the serving area, a perspective of sun, green and trees. Later I go there, reading Eliot stretched in my Pekin coat on the ground. The New Library Psychology room provides me with readings: fantasy and schizophrenia (if David Cooper didn't assure me that normality was more of a disease than schizophrenia, I'd say I was one of the sick) and yet more about creativity. Then a two-hour Eliot tutorial — at first we allow our passivity to stoke the enthusiasm of the tutor, and he is alone with his subject. Then we wrest the subject from him, and speak of our philosophical reservations about Eliot. The black girl, Gage, attracts me — I ask her to elucidate something she says to me just so that I can continue to look in her eyes. I am wired with adrenalin, my head rattles like a projector, and when pieces of film come its way it grabs them and makes brilliant-seeming images, although it jumps with excitement, and I stutter.

So that symptom of schizophrenia — undue expectations of social relationships — is not so futile — satisfaction comes to those who despair then have their hopes raised again.

Back with Babis in Dunbar. He subdued my high spirits a bit with his insensitivity, self-centredness, lack of commitment to ideals... but he is human, and I need that. I went to supper with him, watched him eat. Florence came up, another attractive black girl. Completely angstless. Her mood as fizzy-fuzzy as her

hair at the front. Her black eyes. Prettier than Gage, but less intelligent. But quick, bright, alive, *good*: generous, not crabby.

How austere this environment is! I need a commune, a kibbutz. A mental community of the Steiner variety. A compound for illegal immigrants. Anything but this weather house in which one person's emergence swings another firmly inside the cottage.

Byron told me that his flat was rowdy these days: he and Mark had recently ended up, dressed in rubber suits, facing each other in the running shower, drinking tea. They had also filled the girls opposite's kettle with Squeezy.

The only people I spoke to yesterday were the girls in the flat opposite ours — I was borrowing a tin-opener. All their doors were open, they were together in the kitchen, eating. They giggled while I opened my tin ('It doesn't work very well' 'Maybe that depends on who's using it, Eileen!'). 'Enjoy it,' they called after me. I re-entered our crypt. On our side we don't even say hello to each other when we meet in the bathroom.

I've decided on it: I'm in love with Florence! It's a matter of vibes. Once I was walking down the avenue which led to High Street. Suddenly, without reason, I thought to myself: 'My, what a bad mood you're in! You must pull yourself out of it. What if you were to meet a good, warm person like Florence, with that down-hanging face of yours?' And then, a few feet further on, I met Florence, and was able to be, if not buoyant, at least afloat. Lots of other little meetings bear out her goodness: I feel like the gods in Brecht's 'Good Person of Szechuan', who have at last discovered the person who makes the world worth preserving.

Of course, there must be no exclusivity in our relationship. I will be very frank. 'I have chosen you — of course, it's another matter whether you'll agree — to have adventures with,' I'll say. 'Life has so many possibilities that to see only a few makes one dizzy.' Then I'll suggest some projects. We could arrange to meet on sunny days, and catch a bus at random. We'd sit on the top deck, at the front. We'd tell each other about our lives and thoughts as we steered through who

knows what streets. Or our little fling could be sexual: a happy crash course in touching. Or we could tell each other only our most gloomy thoughts — those too depressing to let fly in everyday conversation, those to do with ‘organisation’ and coping with the obstacle race of here and now. Or we could just work quietly together in the evenings, murmuring, asking questions about spelling, geography, ‘would you pass that pencil. . .’ Or all these and more.

She’d keep her real affections, perhaps, for people her own colour, with her own social experience level, as Paula did, flirting with Spaniards. But I demand no reduction of her world: I replace no-one for her, I prevent nothing. Our projects are optional as well as essential, we take nothing for granted, we delight in everything.

Delight. Well-being. Myths which say ‘Please Touch’.

It’s evening. Winter has arrived. For once my digestion is good. Adrenalin is firing me up. I could do anything. I need someone, I need myself. I have fallen in love with a black girl. A good person.

She’s my intuition. Paula was a painter, Florence is the third world in my heart. She is not a symbol, not *just* a symbol: symbols are in the head. Tomorrow I will find and tell her — at moments like this one doesn’t waver, one doesn’t retain and enclose. One explodes with puppy excitement.

Despair is a nice place to visit (its waters, though sulphurous, are excellent for the health) but I don’t want to live there.

Tuesday November 4th

Buffeted by horribly conventional love ballads and indiscriminate use of that normative form letter emotional tag, I nonetheless made my way to Dunbar, to negotiate with Babis then Florence. But Babis wasn’t in, and I don’t know Florence’s room number. I went to the Central Ref. Nobody. I visited the New Library, looking in the periodicals room and peering through the windows of

each floor door. Nobody. I sat on a block of white concrete outside. I went to a biochemistry lecture at the Arts Lecture Theatre, taking notes about scientists and reading Herbert. Then returned to the Central Ref. Babis was there, with the emigré group. They hardly noticed my arrival. Babis complained that he was dying of flu. He came and sat beside me. ‘Does Florence come here?’ I asked. ‘Yes, some days.’ Then I said ‘So, you were thrown out of your bed this morning by cleaning ladies?’ ‘Sort of. . .’ A little while later he started telling the whole group a funny story. ‘I woke up this morning in Florence’s room. . .’ General innuendo. ‘Yes, I went there last night and slept there. . . and X. came in, he opened the door and then saw me, said “Oh, it’s like that, is it?” then dropped all his books and papers!’ General laughter. Comments about Florence, some boasts from the ginger SCM boy (who blocked me out of conversation with ‘the radical Christian girl’ last term) about him and Florence, which I only half heard. Everything became repugnant to me. Babis went away for a while to see someone. I sat there with two girls, the Greek (who hasn’t acknowledged me since agreeing, at the Station Hotel, that Scots were afraid of each other), and a little SCM faction. Then I snatched up my books and left.

Read a fascinating case history from the Social Psychology section — Hilary Sullivan, a Marxist American in 1947. Then took Sartre’s ‘Being and Nothingness’ from King’s. After Herbert, I will devote myself to this: authentic education.

Florence: postponed, relegated to reluctant status as schizophrenic fantasy until despised fate advances our intimacy and understanding. Fuck fate!

Half facts, overhearings, fears, self-destructiveness: just spiders’ webs which can be pushed away with a decisive action of the hand. But what revulsion to touch that web, that network of jealousies and aggressions! I’m too short-sighted (after reading too many books on the subject) to see the existential reality which might lie beyond that ‘shiny’ tangle, I just don’t know, I can only imagine, which leaves me on the wrong side, arms helplessly at my sides.

Thursday November 6th

Yesterday evening I was at the art school with Graham, Keith and Dave. Being with others is an intoxication which softens the contours of everything. We went around the large, empty studios, planning how to use a quantity of film in the Bolex we've been lent. Then crossed the road to a brightly lit bar full of art students. Dave talked absurdly long, interrupting everyone. His petty manager's manner: boasting of his toughness in the office, proclaiming 'Oh, I'm an anarchist, really'. He called a cab, but took the bus with us — the first time he'd been on an Aberdeen bus. Said 20 times 'Give us a bell, Nick,' and gave me phone numbers for his hotel and work. Keith, whose paintings I admired, was friendly. Said I should come down to Grays to 'talk painting' with him. Graham was his usual invaluable, straight, friendly self: organising cameras, editors, details, general plans. He likes a UK documentary-maker called McKenzie.

Tonight I saw Fellini's '8½' at the Art Gallery. A dizzy carnival of a film. Hilarious and infectiously energetic. The lack of direction gives each scene the certainty of an artistic vision: a selected memory, a dream, a wish, a fear. Art's intoxication, against which life — objects, conversations — are brutally sober, without significance, without warmth, conclusion. Guido's wife Luisa was like Paula. Whom I still love, if that's the word for a sickness with all other women.

Florence was an attempt at electro-convulsive treatment (self-administered). I got the wires connected to me but then couldn't move to the electric switch.

I'm pale and frail, she's dark and generous. It was an attempt to dissolve myself in strangeness. But nothing and no-one is strange enough.

Anxiety sapped me today: I had to read out my Herbert essay. Towards the end of the performance I grew confident, but by that time my stomach had been sizzling for hours, and I was done for.

My stillness might become unbreakable by being bearable. How can the oyster be made to welcome sand, by keeping open a chink?

Friday November 7th

This is the principle that guides my education: I don't stay long with anything, I never let it exert its spell completely over me. I don't read books consecutively, but take a piece from one, keep it in mind, read a piece from another, compare them with each other, with things people have recently said to me, or things in this diary, or sights on the street, in films, on TV, in magazines. One only learns by the relations between things. One only understands one's own life by seeing a powerful film then returning to oneself (8½). If one lets things segregate themselves, begin and end definitively and conclusively, or even compares things of roughly the same position in culture, in society, in history, then one passes through a crowd of 'reasonable individuals' without seeing the significant expressions of love, hate, understanding, indifference in their eyes as they look around between sentences.

To answer: 'What is this?' you choose something which it is not. Then you explain why not. In this way you define three things: the subject of the question, the antithesis you have chosen, and your way of seeing. This triangle, with its three negative angles, should be large enough to provide some useful contours for de / inscribing the wider culture of which one is, and is not, a part.

Sunday November 9th

With Graham, Keith and the rest of the team I helped shoot off some very old film stock in Fittie and the Market. In the morning (Saturday) we organised spy / thriller sequences (meeting a man with a briefcase, chasing a pedestrian in a car) and visual tricks. In the afternoon we simply followed people around as they shopped. I felt that too little attention was being given to ideas, so we had an inspirational session between 4 and 5 in the Art Gallery coffee shop. The lights were dim. At the next table sat the girl who performed 'Glasgow Ribbons' in the Machar '79 show, alone. She looked melancholy. Fine dark hair, attractive round face with slightly protuberant teeth. Will I meet her again? Meanwhile we 7 sat around, developing ideas about tower block life (Keith's preoccupation, subject of his quite impressive paintings). I suggested the interplay of three levels: our subjective, expressionistic interpretation of the block (dancers on the roof,

separated by sheets; a studio-set to illustrate confinement, using streamers for 3D bars, etc.), 'objective' views of the place and people, and official views (interview with social worker). There is to be an actor too, an incongruous, white paper-suited figure who is subjected to stylised assaults and alienations.

In the evening, I joined Keith and Graham at both their houses to develop ideas and socialise. Keith's room a tacky but pleasant rectangle in a condemned terrace full of Africans and Orientals. Comsat Angels on record player. Laughing at our fears, hallucinations and dreams. K & G are from Edinburgh, and know most of the films, plays and painters I like. We get on well. Both went to Broughton. Both are painters, but Graham is less committed: he's recently switched from graphics. They admit to being on the conventional side of art school (their normality stigmatises them!).

Today: the ambiguity of catharsis: you're mining into the volcano and extracting the lava so that the city down below will not be buried by eruption — but at the same time, your shafts make a permanent link between the boiling depths and the vulnerable surface.

Bad art is narcissistic and short-sighted: it sees only in terms of art. Therefore it employs catharsis. Good art doesn't defuse passion, but constructs entrances and exits for it: the access to frustrations caused by the aesthetic poverty of the world beyond art. To dispel something created by one activity in another draws one apart: to be encouraged to direct one's own response to the world back into the world by something in but not of it draws one together. Art, to use a railway metaphor, is a revolving points, not a maintenance shed where steam is let off: although its options are limited by reality, it has the powers of movement, of flexibility, of demonstrating choice and showing the relationships between things. Therefore it puts people above mechanical determinism; in charge rather than in the charge of...

The world is always trying to ghettoise the aesthetic sensibility which exists (if only potentially) in everyone: it gets isolated safely in art, in religion, in political action of the narrowest kind. This is entirely contradictory. Aesthetics are about

relations, not isolation. The movement of art is towards the wholeness of man's vision of himself / herself in the world. Man must not be subjected to constant change between one ghettoised self / activity and another, but must fling the flagstones of his own path (or the rails of his own track) down before him in the direction that he chooses: he must neither be borne along with the stream nor be tugged this way and that in crossing it — he must, in co-operation with others, churn up the slime of the still pond (foetid, unchallenged tradition) so that he makes currents, feels and allows other currents, understands water, and lets all of these bear directly on each other. Art, like a good host, introduces the hydrologist to the oarsman. It shows people how little they know their mirror-images.

Infinite dialectics, set in motion like a chain reaction. The links liberate.

Monday November 10th

A despondent day, I sat with the OSA people awhile, acted the tourist at a Chemistry lecture where Florence was — turned out to be, visited the museum of stuffed animals in the concrete (streaky) Biology building.

Then, at 6, an upturn: after listening to Eno & Budd and gazing into a candle flame for half-an-hour, I turned on the news to hear that Michael Foot had become new leader of the Labour party. Hope! He's anti-nuclear, anti-Lords, literary and intelligent. A compromise between Benn and capitalism, he will at least implement civilised socialism.

How people become other people: I have picked up certain habits of Paula's: sitting in the front row of cinemas, wedging my knees against the seat ahead in buses, relying on my intuition, identifying with art students... My anima was able to clothe itself in these borrowings.

Florence is not the symbol I called Florence last week. Despite her colour, she is less of an outsider than me.

I am wasting away here: too much repetition, too little stimulus. Perhaps socialisation consists as much in preventing activity as ordaining it — I am unable to identify myself with the course (rags which wouldn't even make gloves, let alone a suit to wear) or shake it off enough to commit myself to my own writing. A split is forced.

Schizophrenia is a general condition from which I am exempt in this respect: that intellectual responses are out of touch with emotional ones. Can my resistance be broken? Today I feel and hear the hammer blows ringing out.

Tuesday November 11th

After I had bought and concealed in my sleeve a 'Men Only', my guilt suddenly tripped me up and I fell defenceless (my arm appropriately rigid, and anchored in my pocket) to a wet, sandy, hard pavement. From then on my shameful journey home matched content with form: obscene dirt was smudged in huge patches all over my clothes.

On the outward journey, before this impulse purchase (directed, as usual, by dream: I was in a bath with a high mess of blown-up plastic limbs — we took no more advantage of each other than a little illicit suggestiveness), I had been planning a story: middle-aged woman, vaguely feminist, browses in left-wing bookshop, but thinks of working-class man she has met instead of noting titles. Then she meets this man, and the titles come between them. She dispels titles and accepts man's uncerebral approaches.

I must be dense in my prose — my visual form of writing, which converts subtle feelings into objects and sights, should allow the colour and shape of words to sit equally in it, give access to complexity of levels of knowing the world which, for instance, this diary can summon.

Isolation + inertia = no life

Thursday November 13th

The Group and I visited blocks of flats yesterday evening. We inspected views, found the dark place at the top of the stairs where you can hear the lift mechanisms, and watched cars endlessly circling the toy roundabout. Then, back at Graham's flat, in his little pictureless room, we 'went out before coming down' — thought aloud about our social theme, remembered stories about confrontations between our schools on Rockheid Path, went from housing to the housed.

In the mornings I strike out from the little academic island in which friends can isolate one. I measure the white, low sunshine of the wet shiny ground and watch sea gulls' throats when they yell. I visit coffee rooms with huge murals of oil refineries and working-class smokers, and end up, elitist, in the Art Gallery, whose high white rooms make me feel at home, whose acoustics (fountain, respectful visitors, attendants and commissionaires who peal words and hammer things together) are a delight, and whose high frieze is like the one, much more ancient, in the Palazzo Spada on Via Giulia, under which torches burn and John Cage's music moves, delicate and hard.

Rain gets in my hair. The day, dead cold, excavates moisture from the pores of my face. A gap between passers-by closes as I head into it.

Actually living *somewhere* is hard work. You have to keep turning away then suddenly whirling back to it (I turned today to Camus' 'The Rebel' and a train journey travelogue about India with an obnoxious Englishman and a clever editor).

Spreading blue cheese on toast suddenly reminded me of a sight of an ice cellar — the ice looked like marble. It was down a well in some ancient castle or monument. St Andrews? I was less than 5, much impressed.

I cut advertisement headlines from Radio Times which said 'Liven up your life without leaving your living room. . . Home is where your bright safe misery is. Only your pain can save this stately home. There's no alternative. There's no

escape. There's no excuse. Home sweep electric home. Issued by the Home Office.' All on a plan of Hillhead, with two sketches of detached villas, a tower block, and an electronic home security device. I took two photocopies and posted one on the Central Building main noticeboard.

One day I will go to India and watch trains and buses come and go as I watched a green plant waving underneath a harsh, colourless fluorescent streetlight at 8 o'clock in front of King's.

Friday November 14th

The lines forming between my nostrils and the corners of my mouth are deeper than the dimple creases beyond.

It rained coldly and persistently. I walked all over the city, happy enough. Passing the Grand Central Cinema, I saw feminist Sophia Young licking a label to stick on the porn posters outside — 'This degrades women, films, and three-colour printing' or something — but when she saw me passing she lost courage. I later saw her in the Union: DM boots, socks worn outside pink combat trousers, a long plain white coat diagonally bisected by a thin strap, and her boyish face and cropped hair. Very attractive; a mass of anger and tension.

I drank some tea. The sky was clear now. I walked south through Seaton Park sensing both future and past, synthesising them in a fiction which seemed generated by the bright-windowed tower blocks in the distance and a dream I once had of a room in the top of a thin, high tower, where I watched and understood things. In the story, this committed isolation is the lot of a revolutionary, childlike group like les Chinois of Godard.

Approach a nostalgic little idea like this and it dissolves.

The Leveller and John Cage's 'Silence'.

The pretty American boy in the launderette, looking so lean and hungry. He was writing in red ink on lined paper, sitting on the floor near the dark window, below the contraceptive machine. A bottle of white wine was beside him — he would uncork and drink from it. When a friend came in, he offered him some, saying 'Would you like a glass of water?'

Late afternoon: I traipsed round campus with Babis, achieving no satisfactory communication. He works at relationships only as Narcissus polishes a mirror which constantly threatens to steam over. At heart he is a protestant accountant. My only concession to that vice is the habit of keeping a diary.

Saturday November 15th

A day in a lecture theatre in the Physics building. 'The Rise and Fall of Expressionism'. Graham, Keith and Durian Doric. A gallop through the Blue Rider, Brucke, and peripheral streams of expressionism, an hour devoted to Paula Modersohn-Becker, then a screening of 'The Cabinet of Dr Caligari'. In between, we explored the long, low basement of the Physics block, entering a dark lecture theatre and discovering the lights, trying to adapt trollies for use as film dollies so that we could film up and down corridors. Lunch in the Senior Common Room — remark by me about circuses being unpopular in Scotland: 'We have funerals instead' — came in a little flurry of inspiration. When we climbed the precarious spiral staircase outside the Chemistry block, we looked at the overlapping line of tower blocks to the east and the lit stadium lights south of them — I gave a precis of my 'Stadium Lights'. Durian was strangely characterless and submissive — he wants to join the film group; I don't like the idea, he is a shallow bourgeois aesthete without any imagination.

The film: by no means silent. The projector clattered (clicked) and its engine alternated between two pitches a mournful semitone apart. Very faint but insistent was a high, smooth, flute-like harmonic above this base. The piece went on and on. Sometimes laughter joined in like a chorus. The pictures were interesting, but the stylisation was just silly, the strangeness of fashion rather than deep imagination or disturbance. Nonetheless a heavy, subterranean feeling

of ritual set in as the pictures flickered and people struck poses between the Gothic narrative cards.

Walking up Don Street. Orange light on untidy, spent grass on my right: close blades moved back, distant ones seemed to be following me on up the hill. My shoe struck a sticking-up cobble. The 'pock' sound reverberated from the wall holding in the earth and grass.

My mind is embers: I have to blow inwards to keep the glow. Talk leaves me fading in the dark.

Sunday November 16th

But you forget that other people can blow that spark by talking to you. The video group is the unit I wrote about last year, that impossible group of ideal friends. We look around the Art Gallery, sit in the cafe until it is dark outside and all the other tables are empty, and discuss ideas for a video to be made in the basement of the Physics building before Christmas. Then we walk up George Street. We pass a hairdressers: the alarm bell rings inside. 'Somebody's stealing haircuts,' I say. Graham, at another point, says 'The art school's got a Pre-Raph.' 'They won it at a pre-raffle,' I say. But these jokes are my most self-conscious moments, when other people's laughter brings me back to myself. It's better to look in a common direction, like the window of a shop selling chintzy oils and frames. We always stop to explore things, as if we can possess them by seeing them. Two towerblocks stretch over some futuristic terrace houses. We walk through. Some boys are playing a bent tube like a trumpet. We enter an enclosure full of drying whirligigs like blown-up umbrellas. One is mangled. In the distance is a third towerblock and the moon. Everything fascinates us, we are a committee of poets. The boys drop their piece of tube, it goes 'Clang!' 'Clang!' 'Clang!' Somebody points it out for soundtrack material. We descend to the underpass. Keith says 'This is the heart of the whole complex.' 'A heart without blood,' I say. 'Imagine a flood of blood coursing through here,' says Graham. 'God, how grotesque!' 'That's the central nightmare image in *The Shining*: a lift which opens and

releases a surge of blood.' And so we hammer together a landscape and walk in it.

On the bus back I am handed a questionnaire: 'Purpose of visit: Work / Education / Social / Other.' I tick 'Other', but it has been all four, all the infinity of selves in committed co-operation.

After seeing Golding (overblown, parochial, anachronistic) on South Bank Show I came out behind Nicky Campbell. He asked how and what I was doing. I described Phoenix. We were moving across muddy grass. 'We also want to do something more dramatic, more ambitious, based around a tower block,' I said. He was moving towards Carnegie Court. He didn't look at me. I veered off towards Hector Boece. We said nothing.

Feeling of breakage, with the implied rebonding to emphasise it. Yet there was no original connection with these people.

Horribleness of the 'Storyteller' role, ancient as the hills, corpulent, self-satisfied, skillful... This line that 'there has always been the urge...' 'people will always want...' — the phallicism of the masturbator.

Golding's resorting to absolutes, modified by modesty: 'almost infinite', 'almost incomprehensible', etc... always standing on the brink of ineffable things, making grand actorish gestures towards them, but making clear that you can't speak for or of them, that really you have both feet in the human camp, so that your exaggeration of man's universal evil is really a kind of self-glorification.

A 'storyteller' is what you finally have to label yourself when you realise that you must account for an asocial activity in social terms. The gown stinks of neglect, it's obviously worn only before tribunals and courts.

Art seems asocial because the artist can't imagine that the concern for the unity of his own experience could be shared by others. If he could and did imagine this, he wouldn't think of himself as an artist.

People turn to art for a tight, unifying grasp of life. If you offer them disunity, they will thank you for showing them that order there is in their own lives. If you give them order, they will be grateful for the sense of escape you offer. If you can somehow unify a disorder in didactic terms which demand to be applied to the reader's life, you may be able to bring about major changes in a few people. Then you will want most to hide behind your 'storyteller' cloak.

Perhaps people buy the books which promise to confirm their choice of charges already decided upon — they are at best catalysts, at worst empty congratulations. The trick may be to disguise a catalyst as a congratulation.

But all this is too schematic, too scheming. All I can do is follow my unease, cast its tracks in plaster then bronze.

Monday November 17th

I looked again at some social security cheques I'd considered trifling when they arrived a couple of weeks ago and discovered that they add up to £100! I'm going to buy some soft contact lenses, and see the world!

McDiarmid tutorial: Lenin, Kafka, Robbe-Grillet.

Phoned home: Mark's coming up this weekend.

I can be content alone.

Wednesday November 19th

A video group meeting at the art school — turned into a social gathering. Only at the end did debate about our piece, to take place at the weekend in a long, confined corridor at the art school, happen. Smoke, Dave's wagging tongue, storms of laughter, name and place-dropping... Keith, who has feelings which express themselves in a quiet doubt, is the most promising member. Dave is a

good-natured embarrassment. Graham has authority but little obsessional interest in expressing something.

Stepped with Keith onto the art school roof — a row of lights like a runway activated by the glass door. Fluorescent blocks of skylight, side views of the school's lit halls and corridors, and a fountain and pool, ruffling in wind.

Finished, earlier, my Dryden essay with the suggestion that Brecht would've chosen Alexas as the hero of *his* 'All For Love': 'the character who does for gender what Galileo did for Ptolemaic astronomy'.

How, from a bus at night, you see for a moment a great glass window with a smoky plain bar inside, replaced the next instant by a window-display of owls.

Thursday November 20th

How your heart makes you shudder with percussion.

How little academic meetings confirm Beuys' words: 'In places like a university, where everyone speaks so rationally, it is necessary for a kind of enchanter to appear.'

How your voice skates on laughter when you read out your Dryden essay, and the tutor corrects the skid with a supportive little chuckle of his own.

How it pleases you to flap your dishevelled hair and red tie in the faces of bluff capitalist graduate siphoners at a careers (careering) exhibition.

My video idea for the corridor:

X. lives in this confined, pipe-clad corridor (actually a hollow spine of the art school). Screens, at first a great distance apart, define his space. At the centre he sits in his chair, with a small table. On the table: a glass with toothbrushes, a knife and fork, a radio, a roll of loo paper. A knock comes at one of the screens. A

hand comes round it, offering a postcard. We see the front: an exotic landscape. On the back it says: everything is ready. Please come at once. X. throws the card away. Sits. The screens draw closer. A friend knocks and enters. Greetings. They sit down. Can think of nothing to say. Silence. Friend leaves. Leave-taking: 'We must meet again.' 'We must.' Screens move closer. Two detectives burst in. Plain clothes. They throw a stream of questions at X, never pausing to allow him to answer. They they leave with threats: 'Stay here, we'll be back.' Screens move closer. X starts cleaning his teeth. Shot from outside — screens snap together, table collapses, arms and legs protrude from inside. Toothbrushes slide over the floor. Close-up of paste, clutched in X's hand — squirts out.

Coming up the stairs from supper, I was called by a close group round a ticket table. I made an ironical stopping motion. A girl in a red jersey rushed up to me and linked arms with me, pulling me over to the table. 'Come along to the Big Brother 1984 Run Rig, you must, *I'll* be your partner...'. 'What, why, when, where?' I said, hands still in my pockets. They all spoke at once, I studied the poster. 'Sorry, I'm expecting someone on Saturday, I can't come,' I said. 'Take two tickets!' offered an arm. 'Sorry,' I said, walking away, still struggling to realise that a touch had happened.

It's typical of my complacency that I simply write this incident in the diary in my self-pitying way, and go back to my 'bright safe misery' — studying luminances on dark streets, inclining away from people. It's too narrow, altogether too easy and static.

Saturday November 22nd

Yesterday evening: 'The Elephant Man' at the ABC (a great big floss womb which tries to suffocate you with meaninglessness). Smoke, the sound of gas and machines, institutions, bourgeois v. working-classes, etiquette, nightmare. I smelt the pages of Proust throughout. Heavy strangeness mixed incongruously with too-familiar actors and social attitudes: but the camera always told you more than the script was willing to, and moments of clumsiness were made up for by black magic: the elephant man's hair (like Lewis Carroll's), billowing muslin curtains,

the glittery panto / play, mixture of childish naivete and brutality, industrial nightmare, circus seediness...

Afterwards a drink with Graham and his very dim girlfriend (ex-Grays, jewellery maker). Very little said. I refuse to accept such seeming differences between people which make communication impossible. Only being in the presence of different people's silence makes me really lonely.

Today at Grays in hot, bright corridors and stairwells and patios outside, Graham, Keith, Durian & I made video sequences. Constructive practise. We converted the monumental plain rectangles, indoors and out, into jiggling shades of blue and grey. We laughed and bubbled with playful enthusiasm. Lunch at Jaws, Dave's film at Keith's.

Four hours yesterday with Babis. Queuing in the bank, trailing in the crowds and rain on Union Street, eating popcorn and nostalgic Greek food (sent out in an enormous cardboard box by his father). He invites me to Rome this winter: very tempting. My state grant (pennies from heaven) of £100 will cover it.

Sunday November 23rd

Mark comes and says 'I wouldn't like to spend four years of my life here'. I agree. He also says 'Perhaps I've changed, but I don't like it in Nick (Gardiner)'s room when people are always dropping in for a 'sosh'. He would like to go to London, or do something like journalism at Napier.

Although my left ear is glued deaf with wax, I'm able to hear the earnest conversation of two boys next to me at lunch. One concludes: 'Whenever you get a boy-girl relationship, there's sure to be that element of aggression which is the result of sex, no matter what kind of relationship it is...' He had had a long-drawn-out and oscillating scene with a girl last night.

Last night I flipped through Rilke's 'Sonnets to Orpheus' and MW stations. Great commitment and ingenuity is required for the passing of time.

Contentedness and inertia are simply lack of imagination. That's why they are the necessary background for writing.

I need more faith in myself. I am not as guilty as I felt throughout my dreams last night — I'm innocent enough to think myself uniquely lazy, lusty, antisocial, cold, depressed, warm, happy...

I met Angus & Joy at Jaws yesterday. Spoke to them only as they were serving me. Angus said 'I'll come over and speak to you when it's quieter' — but it was only 12.30, and it doesn't get quiet til 3. I made excuses to him as I left — had to wait for a minute or so while he continued to serve customers, as if giving me the chance to leave on the sly. These figures from the past reappeared in my dream as Wass Armstrong, who came over to where I was standing and asked, over a wall that separated me from a rugby pitch, how old I was, then what I was doing. 'I'm director of the art gallery at the castle!' I said. 'Oh, the Such-and-such (official castle museum),' he said. 'No, the one down the street from the Esplanade: it's a private gallery, catering for modern art and youth culture.' 'Oh,' he said, disapprovingly, and turned away. The youth culture gallery represents the video group, whom I introduced shyly to Angus & Joy; they responded by asking how my writing was going. My post in the dream as director was guilt-ridden — I had only applied for the chance to prey on the gallery girls.

I'm guilty because I live alone. I'm guilty because, when I'm with other people, I compete (although condemning competition), I assert my superiority and dominate (although condemning inequality), or I contribute nothing.

The dream gallery was a cross between a boarding school, a punk rehearsal room, and a Beuys installation. Front rooms were like a TV studio, back rooms like caves (or the basement of Norway House). The castle was so close because I remembered the supporting film with 'The Elephant Man': an appalling, fascist study of the military vices associated with Edinburgh Castle. It's understandable that the EA (Wass, rugby) should be on *that* side, their military museum rather than my progressive gallery, but it is odd that the Creative Writing group should

be there too (I'm sure the connection is valid). I agree that literature is more bourgeois than video, but I didn't know my subconscious felt the same way.

The artist casts his net in such a way that he captures and reconciles himself and the world. The 'storyteller' casts his net in such a way that he thinks he is capturing only the world, but is actually capturing only himself.

(After reading Cage's 'Silence'): my mistake has been thinking of a (non) time in which life would cease and art would start. In fact no such outside exists. Guilt has been trying to chase me altogether from life, and I have been banging my head on a wall which does not exist. Isolation and inertia does not equal no life. This diary is the literature I keep promising myself. Realising this opens it to flaws — the flaw of closedness is its greatest. Closedness, however, is necessary for intensity. But intensity discards and shuns what is an essential part of itself, just as government shuns the personal.

Of course, intensity is *one* with boredom. They are, however, two ingredients side by side: they must still be stirred. To say art must do this is also to say that life *does* it.

A writing project: one chooses one's environment and sets up there. One takes notes, sticking to only one rule: that there should be no consistency in one's recording. (The environment must be different from the one the writer is used to. It must change him: in other words, he must abandon preconceptions and be a part of it. His abandoned preconceptions will also be a part of it — the project will define these above all.)

This is something to be undertaken seriously in Rome.

Better idea: the point is not to make the times when one is self-conscious *more* self-conscious, so that one struggles to spread this like a vast mirror all around oneself — instead one must set out simply to live, then, from a different (ah, but where does the gap come — gaps are what I'm abolishing)...

..one must set out simply to live, and let some arbitrary event (for instance whenever a particular bird is heard, or whenever you see a parked blue Alfa Romeo) set in motion a certain time (eg 4'33") of *unchanged* observation — in other words, everything continues as before, but is introduced, via pen and paper, to the future.

Is art brackets in an unpunctured sentence? It is book-ends forced into a Borgesian infinite library?

No. It is brackets round a speaking tongue, book-ends worn as the spectacles of a short-sighted browser.

Is life an unpunctured sentence? Is it an infinite library?

No. It is book-ends round brackets.

No. It is brack-ends round bookets.

No. It is endets round brackbooks.

On.

Project: the point is to go into the environment with no idea, and come out with one. Several times. That is, to go in with no method, and to learn one. As long as it is the same environment (that means: you fail to search anew for its essential character) the method must be altered each time it is entered (writing, photography, music, conversation, engineering, architecture...). If the environment is seen to change, or changed, old methods may be used again.

Kurosawa v. Cage: why is it that an artist's representation of violence and destruction is seen as profound insight into the human spirit, and another artist's fascination with colour, sound, shape, mass and so on seen as something exclusive and individualistic? Because it seems necessary to generalise something so unrepresentative of life as the moment of death, violent passions, cruelty and to naturalise the view of the generator of these images to show that 'the individual' can speak 'for' a society rather than (dictatorially) *to* it... and it seems (to the reactionary) necessary to mythologise the presenter of something so

unindividualistic as pleasing sense data, to emphasise the extraordinary in the ordinary, to keep 'art' from the control of the people.

Monday November 24th

On the bus to Peterhead, for some reason, were several mad people. Regular passengers knew and spoke to them. Behind me was a small woman with a Pekinese face who kept twisting around in her seat, uttering animal cries which were indecipherable but made all her friends laugh. The only phrase I could make out was 'You're daft!' She said this several times to people round about.

A madman wearing a green plastic coat and thick NHS spectacles grabbed The Sun from the man in front, who didn't even turn round. He peered closely at it, moving his face in jerks from one area of the page to another. On one page covered with cartoons he studied certain points carefully, and spent some time contemplating the word 'FUN' written vertically down the page. Then he returned the paper to its owner, shaking him by the shoulder — he still didn't look round.

The man who stole my car pleaded guilty, so we were all sent home without seeing him, this man who had found 70 crimes to commit.

In the witness' waiting-room, filled with Readers' Digest and nervous indigestion, I read Rilke; soothingly serious.

Composed a facetious 'Eulogy to J.F. Mendl' on my return: 'When Mendl was alive, and quacked / Both addled eggs and minds he cracked: / He batted well, for cricket mattered / Beat the boys, but now he's battered. / Though sometimes grisly, Goose had taste — / Has fowl been cooked in his own baste? / Does he who hissed of school and state / Now lie in it — (a fitting fate)? / He ripped our lines from times convicted — / The bucket got them: now he's kicked it. / ... / Now we with whom he dealt and joked / Lament, because the goose has cooked, / Bow to shells and bear cold showers / For Quack's flown north from

earthly powers.' Though black, it would be sentimental if the guy were actually dead! But I wrote it because Mark said he saw him, in a brand new Maxi.

Last night, standing between severe buildings, I was ashamed to be staring at the moon, which cast a perfect circumference in thin cloud.

Tuesday November 25th

I collect quotations for an essay on Rilke to contain nothing else. Snow accumulates on the hard ground with a hissing sound. Within minutes the grey night grass is mottled with white. The window has my portrait at its edge as I watch the snow in the lamp outside: I look intense, leaning forward slightly, my hand cups my green pen against my blue jersey with its folds of black.

Babis and I are walking along the English department corridor. He is chuntering about mispronunciation of names, as if establishing *our* superiority over those who call Freud 'Frayood' (a favourite example of his). But this elitism bores me, and the element of flattery repulses me, so I change tack and suggest 'Sigmund Fraud' — a pun, not an example of ignorance. I glance at a door on the left — Willy McIlvanney's room — as I say this.

Later, when writing a note about Rilke (who refused to be psychoanalysed by Freud), I illustrate 'the whole *fraud* of criticism: the poking through bars at captured specimens with separating, standard-issue sticks.' Fishing for this image, my mind is in the corridors of the English department, and the cage (covered with one of Rilke's symbolic carpets) is behind the door on the left, which I have never opened.

Rilke shows how inexcusably domestic most language is. Perhaps love of a medium is best manifested in its fullest orchestration rather than Cagean appreciation of its raw state.

Cage has nothing to say and says it. Rilke has something, has to say, has words with which to say, and says it.

When I thought I disliked all poetry, it was because I imagined it all had the density and intensity which I now find in Rilke. When, coming into contact with more poetry, I found that this wasn't the case, I was disappointed. Now that I have discovered this quality which I once fought shy of, I have fallen in love with it, in my relief that it exists at all.

Thursday November 26th

Herzog's 'Aguirre, Wrath of God'. Last night 'Padre Padrone'. An 'essay' without narrative on Rilke. Social empty meetings with Durian, Keith, Graham.

I cannot make my life serious enough. And I feel I shouldn't be trying, coming to myself harshly between bouts of 'enjoyment', retreating in lightly-touched indifference from the centre where it should always be happening. It? Ideas and pictures.

This in-betweenness is the fault. Instead of transcending the work / leisure dichotomy, the self gasps between.

I need to stop looking only at art in those heightened moments which do come. Just continue to live, don't look within or ahead. Bring the tool to bear on the material, not the process of shaping. Otherwise you're no more than a worthless aesthete.

How seeing their representations in films one, for a while afterwards, looks wistfully at women. And then remembers one's general distance, general disappointment, with them. The ridiculous need one has to love and be loved by everyone or no-one. If one person fails to respond, one can look no-one innocently, welcomingly in the face.

Snow under lamps, descending on branches. A statue wet with rain, stoic. The bogus, cool immortality of the gallery war memorial; the marble rings hollow if you tap it with a coin. Bourgeois progressives and foreigners queue here for the

film, equally alien in this part of the world. In such circumstances one finds oneself fascinated by a middle-aged woman with straight-cut blonde hair and liberal chic clothes, simply because she seems out of place in Aberdeen, and so delicate and strange. The wrinkles at the corners of her eyes are a playful metonym of the local womens'. If you knew her, would she grow transparent, and draw all experience's lines together into a single, worn pattern, and that not her own, but the property of her class, her age, her sex?

And even if you know people to be tangled and dark inside, however standard and translucent they try to appear, is there any way of persevering in your belief until you reach the thicket by sheer obstinacy?

The irresistible easy remark, the self-sabotage of seriousness, block this path.

One such (the only one that pleased me with K & D this evening, which nonetheless did no good): Dizzy Gillespie's dog 'must have given him some of his best licks!'

But by being clever, as if to make the best of superficiality, one merely shows one has missed the point of small talk: healing.

Ideal being-with-others: like being alone, only closer to oneself, more happily confined, less lonely.

Strange that it is guilt — the feeling that one does not live with enough intensity — which appropriates experience: doesn't so much mythologise as realise it. But joy and participation aren't retentive enough — the hand flings instead of cupping.

Friday November 28th

A surprise behind the curtains: snow over everything. So much for Sight.

A syringing at the doctor's: extraordinary, ringing clarity in my left ear. So much for Sound.

Sight and Sound: saw and heard the group's art school videos at Phoenix. Me in them: ugly, awkward, fleetingly caught, yet still stupidly intruding.

Thought: I do not deserve to mingle with the people I pass, they are best spared my unenlightened condescension.

Symbol: in the middle of the world of slush, a locked tennis court, with whose pristine whiteness one could identify, but not sympathise.

Saturday November 29th

I arrived with the Bolex under my coat and Durian at my side in a large, snow-filled park.

Our film: Durian wore a grotesque red Indian mask, a trilby hat, long dark overcoat and pointed shoes. He shuffled along the side of a flower bed, around a granite fountain, up to a bench, where he sat down and struck a match. It was snowing. He moved to a gloomy shelter and took a roll out of a packet. Tried to eat it, but couldn't fit it through his slot mouth. Ripped it in rage and threw it away. Then lit another match and burned the packet and rolls. Opened a Ladybird book, 'Telling the Time'. Read 'They were getting hungry.' 'They watched television.' He burned the book, holding it open as it flamed. Stamped it into the ground. Wandered across snow through rhododendrons. Lit another match amidst bushes and applied it to: his own mask. Final shot: camera peers thought mask from the back.

Sunday November 30th

Anger at the traits and institutions of Englishness — church, media, bourgeois aesthetics, humour. Their misanthropic complacency, their class-bound

mentality, their fear, and thus ridicule, of anything different. Their spiritual apathy. Their political apathy. Their existential droop.

I can only sympathise with foreigners, angry workers, alienated musicians, revolutionaries.

The African Basongyes and Flatheads have art — it is firmly *in* their lives — but no language of aesthetics. For them, art has no special relation to beauty; it is ‘bibuwa’ — inherently good within itself, just as a tree, for instance, is ‘bibuwa’.

With Babis and Catherine: the light, soothing calm that derives from being in the presence of people miraculously different from oneself, and relating simply with them. It is a dissolution of ego. I cannot experience it with British people because there is a ground of similarity between us, which, with its chess-board legislation, scrubs the contours of our *true* differences soft. This calm settles after even a few words with Kwai Meng, the Singapore flat member, no matter how meaningless. The feeling derives from a powerlessness to change or be changed by the person, and also from the forgivingness of different cultures. But it is not lack of responsibility: precisely because no *cultural* common standard mediates our responses to each other, we must find a *personal* mode of relation. That’s why it’s so important to be, to make it obvious that you are, more than just a microcosm of the cultural attitudes the other expects to find. In the same way, when one travels and discovers, by meeting people and seeing places, how culturally bound one is, it is vital that one should not retreat into a comfortable stereotype, or, worse, exaggerated affection for one’s origins and desire to return to them, but, instead, put aside the self one has recognised, which is different from the foreignness all around, and discover what is left. It may be a small part, but it is not an individualistic residue, more a personal generality which can be developed in the engaged solitude of contact with different others. In this way one soothes oneself into a distinct, selfless being.

The difference between being with a Kwai Meng and being with a John Thomson is that with KM one can relax one’s — *I* can relax *my* desire to control being changed, because with KM I am flowing outward from my cultural origins, and

with JT I am flowing confiningly towards them. So, yes, one is being changed and changing, and it is true change, that which alters rather than simply readjusts, normalises, returns to some assumed ‘balance’.

Note: every time the notion of *balance* is encountered, the notion of *tension* is to be substituted.

A good society would have no norms, stereotypes, or ideals: citizens could look at each other as ends in themselves rather than symbols of particular values — as things rather than words. To reach this state, however, each citizen must be fully aware of the existing claims made on him by central mythology, so that he knows which part of himself to destroy. The only way to gain this insight is by comparison: contact with foreigners, study (subjective study) of anthropology, history, sociology — any strange world into which one can insert and discover the strangeness of the self, and open introspection — the recording of dreams, writing of poetry, diaries, etc which pursue the vast and invaluable inner strangeness which makes one a self rather than a citizen.

To get from the personal strangeness of the self to the distant strangeness of the universe, to unify them, one must cross the barrier of the social. To do this, one takes the most potent stay of the social, language, and turns it against its owners (that is, a part of everybody, including oneself) — so that a finite and self-defining system is forced to acknowledge the infinite and indefinable on either side of it.

Tuesday December 2nd

I track Anthropology down and record its lairs and traits. I will attend lectures and films.

I examine and read about African art and artists. Also the teaching and work of Joseph Beuys:

'The founders of the school (Free International School for Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research) look for creative stimulation from foreigners working here. This is not to say that it is a prerequisite that we learn from them or that they learn from us. Their cultural traditions and way of life call forth an exchange of creativity that must go beyond preoccupation with varying art forms to a comparison of the structures, formulations and verbal expressions of the material pillars of social life: law, economics, science, religion, and then move on to the investigation or exploration of the "creativity of the democratic".'

I was standing inside the flat door waiting for the rain to stop. Blackbirds preyed on worms, and the grass bobbed violently, trembled as if from the roots.

I was coming through a glazed door out of the Central Building. The sun was shining. The air made me think 'life is good'.

I was passing some workmen loading a lorry. They mentioned the driver and swore (not at me) as I ducked below their chute. It was raining, I hurried along their sidestreets.

I was looking at some Polish records which sold at 49p each. A banal song of Eliot's 'Mr Mephistopheles' came over the speakers loudly. I looked around. When I asked at the counter for Third World music, saying 'Such a thing must exist,' the assistant gave me the catalogue like a challenge. I found what I wanted under 'Africa'.

I was at the counter in the library. Three boys loudly surrounded a female fellow economics student, joking in public school jargon, arranging meetings, clamouring to touch the girl. When they patronised her and the assistant, saying, 'What do you say to the nice man who's found the book for you?' both she and the old man were apparently delighted.

I was at the King's northbound bus stop in darkness. I admired the black chimney gables against the black sky because I could sense their difference

without being able to distinguish their boundaries. I also admired the ghostly green foliage which streamed like unnoticed theatre under the white streetlamp.

Yesterday: the Rilke tutorial in which the silent majority turned our enthusiasm into fraudulence.

I wrote full notes towards a piece concerning suicide by inhaling the smoke of blankets sent by a guilty oppressor. Some 'common-sense' and simplification is required — or should that be left to a potential reader? No, one should encourage them to expand towards themselves, not converge towards one's own tyrannical idea.

A concern: is reading (and certainly most of my reading is my own) active enough? Might it not form itself into the habit of active intaking rather than its end, productive output?

Wednesday December 4th

Met Willy McIlvanney. His stress on experience: we approach things with a conceptual framework, and this causes us to miss things. A novel must contain things irrelevant to its theme. But what if, like Cage, one's concept *is* openness to the random and irrelevant, that is, calling nothing irrelevant? This is the ultimate concept. It encompasses all phenomena, but with the necessary boundary of the artist's persona. This becomes the theme: one is the regal creator, and everything one touches turns to art.

It depresses me to see my life charted between two films: 'Steppenwolf' and 'Strangeways'. The first shows the isolation of a self which blames itself for its Apollo & Dionysus, then proceeds through its fantasies to a social outlet for them. The second, a documentary about the prison, shows me my 8x12 room, my segregation from women, my existence delegated to the ethos of an institution.

I see myself as an artist, I try to reap the benefits of solitude and can never get enough of it, never progress far enough out along the spiritual peninsula to find complete disconnection from trivial distractions — and at the same time don't know what the spirit *is*, what the body *is*, what it's like to love and be loved, whether I am not just destroying my chances of attaining understanding by holding back from other people, whether my skeptical flirtation with intellect and growing commitment to intuition should lead me where I would have gone anyway had I just relaxed... into the anonymous heart of the crowd.

I read my novel today. It had a queasy, outrageous cleverness in it, but flew away into its own belly, where it became its own comfortable foetus and threatened to miscarry. Or to be born over and over into nothing but a succession of wombs within wombs, like Russian dolls.

But really it's an awful position: to be drawn by opposite currents whose sources, and so reality, are distant and invisible — to be swept by the traffic on carriageways bound for cities which seem mere myths. Only their polarity seems real, and in fact submission to one or the other might be the only way to discover that they are one and the same...

And so on. You're sitting under a five-branched tree, Nicholas, telling yourself stories to explain why you refuse to walk to another, close life.

But with walking... well, there's no show, no drama. You might even have the disappointment of failing to hear a single laugh at the immemorial, immutable obviousness of the action, or a jeer at your humiliated submission to it. Wouldn't those signs suggest, after all, that someone was watching, had noticed that you were not content to accept the necessary laws, and secretly shared your hope?

But what is it that reveals your fictions for what they are? Other fictions! Is it surprising that you're addicted?

Freud says that one can never give anything up, only substitute for it. What would rise out of this habitual diary, this Crossroads of the soul, if I terminated it? Real art? A work of life?

Friday December 5th

With Babis yesterday at an SCM meeting: 'Crime & Punishment', with the rector of Edinburgh university. He made a surprisingly sympathetic case, underlining the need for spiritual as well as material revolution, and reaction against the moribund degradation of capitalism.

Back to Dunbar. Interesting conversation with B, leading from our divergent Marxisms (he doesn't believe in any sort of spirituality, distrusts anyone proletarian, is impressed by the economics of the student loans system...). On the morals of sexuality & relationships — he is flirting with a Bavarian Catholic Conservative girl because he would find it exciting to degrade her (and himself). He has no scruples about upsetting Catherine (who has come to Scotland and is learning English entirely on his account). He asked 'How come you don't have a girlfriend?' My reasons (dislike of triviality & pretence, my isolation, need for intense commitment or none at all) didn't convince me even as I was saying the words. The question grated pleasantly under my skin for the rest of the evening. Florence joined us in the white, echoey pantry, flitting about at once chirpy and fed up. B had said that she was 'looking for a guy' just now. I folded up and just watched her blurry form without my spectacles. She said she had come to an Arts lecture (return visit for my call on Chemistry). But she's a Christian, she's extraverted, a scientist, marked off by her colour but heavily socialised, popular —

Another Willy McIlvanney meeting. We were in a bare attic room which reminded me of The Trial's law offices — I said so before McI arrived, and when he started discussing 'The Trial' (how it had no immediate relation to reality and yet said crucial things) there was amusement which he must've found odd. We talked about levels of relationship with people, about being allowed the distance of

alienation (and thus generating one's own emotion), about wholeness and the differing yet overlapping demands of art and life...

Just as I was despairing at the passivity of Babis' Central Ref. social group, along came Neil Harrison, almost certain to be the next editor of Gaudie. He's a tension-seeker, obviously a journalist to the roots ('I'm apolitical, you have to see both sides of every argument'). Asked me to write for the paper next term. Long conversation which boosted my confidence.

Sticking my head out of hot, noisy rooms and feeling affinity with the open night silence.

You are washing a cup under a tap. It arches and gushes at your command. Does it inspire confidence — you are the master, it the uncomplaining slave — or do you realise your dependence on, and negligible stature in, the social grid?

Strange encounter with a round-spectacled boy at supper — he came and sat opposite me as if to look forlornly up at a lit window beyond, then soon began conversation — food, a house in the country he hoped soon to move to, the English course he's doing, his thoughts about writing, the songs he's written (using lines from Anthony & Cleopatra) with a close friend called Paul, and then, incomprehensibly, his emotional tangles... but because I was slightly blank when he confided these, he came to himself and left.

Two fish in an ocean glimpse each other mid-leap, then land miles apart.

Sunday December 7th

Despondent weekend confined in my room, character and thoughts ebbing away into a lopsided wretchedness. But, using this state as their home ground, some diversions clocked in their full value. Instead of reading 'Gulliver's Travels' (which I find as tediously whimsical as it is charming — its satire and formulaic imaginativeness undermine any redemptive strangeness it might have had) I go through Rilke's letters to 'Herr Kappus', the 'young poet'. These are

packed with demanding, astonishingly valid thoughts and insights — an ideal for living. The great challenge is to set them to negotiation with late twentieth century conditions. Spiritual values are at least constant, whatever material changes may happen, but the less opportunity they are given to be developed, the more desperately they are needed — what Rilke says is now even *more* important because it is less realisable.

Being alone reduces my self-esteem to self-destructive levels — this only has uses if I have some reforming, improving source wound up and at hand (like Rilke). 'Those modes of socialisation or resocialisation that we think of as most extreme and that have as their goal not a mere change in the skill level or the attitude of the person being socialised but rather a thorough reconstruction of his personality typically involve an *individual* and *disjunctive* pattern... such destructive conditions are necessary before new patterns can be established.' ('Socialisation After Childhood') But diversions into other people's lives (even the peripheries) can serve the same purpose, as long as I take note of the relationships of each world / state to another: I sit in the OSA lounge and Florence talks to a black friend called Nelson — in a way she would never talk to Babis or me; Byron comes round and tells me about his fear of leaving Aberdeen... in neither case am I really involved in the other person's world, but somehow both restore my faith in the value of my own route, without giving me any sense of superiority: just difference and good adaptation to what I have and expect and cannot foresee.

The Renaissance Man ideal is no good: if I try to give each urge, each vision, its appropriate form I'll just end up trying to compete with nature, which is futile. Cesare Pavese says 'One must look for one thing only, to find many.' It is equally true that when one has found these many things, one must not follow them on their own merits, but stick faithfully with the unifying passage by which one arrived at them. The passage is nothing but an empty corridor along which one can stalk, and lead other people. It has small, square windows all along it, some low, some high, which look out on an incredible variety of scenes. You may be tempted to flit from one window to the next, admiring Hong Kong harbour through one, a yellowly lit tube station through another, a group of musicians

through the next, each scene erasing the other from your mind, each making you forget or resent the fact that you are confined, with your occasional guests, to this corridor. You have missed the whole point, you have overlooked the insignificant little piano stool which is your only furniture. Wheel it around, see how the seat winds up and down to whatever height you want. See how it turns dizzily, even when you're sitting on it. Experiment: you'll find that every possible position gives you a different series of perspectives through the windows — if you spin while you sit, you can see a shifting, circling progression of views. Soon you begin to find that the views can be related to each other; by careful positioning and adjustment of this modest stool you can engineer definite, meaningful selections from the bewildering battery of views. So that, next time a visitor arrives, don't just point out the tautologous merits of each vista; seat him on the stool (if necessary giving him a leg up) and give him a whirl through your most effective, carefully-organised sequence. He may be giddied and bewildered, but soon he will recognise the irresistible logic of his dreams, which you have freed from their familiarity as his own, inexplicable property.

Above all, it is the familiarity of ourselves and the familiarity of the world which makes our moments of unease in it so inexplicable. We need to be shown the hidden but unrestricted strangeness common to both self and world in order to understand our uncertainty and begin to accept the appropriateness of our being here. This insight is gained by the difficult and subtle process of relation — at first we just make tentative links between what happens to fall side by side in our lives. Then we organise, responding to hunches and experimentation, so that the relations have something of ourselves as well as something of their own, that is, the qualities of objects being related. If this sympathy between the objects related and the intuitions of the relater is seen and approved and appreciated by, first, the organiser (relater), then others less concerned with the process, but willing to be open to it, so that they suddenly feel less alien to themselves and the world, it has all been worthwhile.

What if others have constructed concrete relations of this kind, and forced people to accept them (money = happiness, for example) — isn't it one's duty also to smash these false equations?

Our strength on the side of strangeness is this: that when the housewife is told by the advertisement that she's a Hovis mum, or when her family tells her that they are hers, she agrees, but is aware (in the way that, smiling, some of the origins of the smile in fear remain at the back of one's mind) that the greater, indefinite and infinite part of herself is *not* these things, and that her family, deep down, doesn't trust its own affirmation, and that advertisements are made by people who have more faith in the messages of aggression and incomprehension tapped out by their nervous system than the purring commands their business demands of them.

It's not that everybody is secretly a fraud — it's just that all social beings are made to affirm some aspects of themselves, which is seen as an abandonment or negation of others. But nothing essentially human can be abandoned, and the idea that opposites exclude is, as Kafka says, a lie.

So art, the organisation and unification of strangenesses, shows that fraudulence is really honest, and puts man at ease amongst all the other conflicting honesties of the universe.

So what I am saying is this: I refuse to be confined. I will only accept confinement which exists to make this point. My very affirmation must build itself on negation in order to feel secure.

Tuesday December 9th

The smoothness of sadness, suckling self with self, like rubbing cheeks, brush brush, one against the other, the self-same, simple as weeping and smiling at once.

Preparations for Durian and Nona's party: thoughts about whether I'd get my contact lenses in time (I didn't), a special hand-washing of clothes last night, under-bedcover fantasies this morning, a midday visit to the hotel where it was held, a visit to Keith (who, feverish, didn't come)...

Actuality of Durian and Nona's party: I was the second guest to arrive, although I thought I'd delayed enough (reading a much more important Joseph Beuys interview), talked to Durian, assuming some lies in tone which seemed (and perhaps it was fatal, fatal) necessary, stripping away emotions, doubts, thoughts — all that is best in me, then spoke to Nona, the same, although I learnt some things, and was happy enough to have all her attention, or as much as I could have in a dark basement full of chintz and loud music and as much substance and tyrannous reality as cigarette smoke, and then in came a group of girls including the attractive Jewish / Italian twins who peer through slit-narrowed eyes and may be lesbian, and the more attractive one seemed to be called Paula, and acted as if I wasn't there, which made me like her more, and Kate Symington arrived and acted as if I wasn't there, and was the other Paula's representative, and I sat in my seat drinking vodka and lime with lots of ice, listening to music and a stupid DJ, and I counted the corners on a crumpled napkin (there were 20 outwards and 19 inwards, or was it vice versa?) and studied a birthday card which said 'Save the Whales' on the back, and on the front had a picture of a cartoon whale surfing on a wave which was the shape of another whale (so I thought) so it looked as if it was mating, and I went over and examined some posters which said 'Nona S. nominated Miss Universe' and 'Wanted: Durian Doric — Reward \$35,000', and people I knew, EA people, public school people, kept filing in and past and around and dancing in the dance cubicle and drinking, where I stood, beside the bar — but before that Durian had come up and said 'How're you doing, because you're just sitting...' and I said, perhaps it was wrong, but it was too late by then to tell any acceptable truth, acceptable I mean in that place and its decor's orders, the environment's command — they forbade me myself, so I said, as if replying for all the others, 'Oh, okay,' and he sat for a while but couldn't do any more either, and left, and some time after, I decided to walk down the length of the room, and as I was passing the cloak hatch, had the courage to swerve over and take my coat and leave.

And because of the snap, because matter could not seal off the fluid life of the event, I kept it on the yellow and beautiful streets, so that it was my possession, even although I was only formalising and confirming what they had told me, only

mimicking their reluctance to change or be changed, because neither they nor I was introduced to anything new, we just had our positions reinforced, our little scenes re-enacted.

Just a punishment, nothing more, to see people who don't see me because the distance between us is more than it seems. But a reward to stop and hear the wind in a tree, not large, which stands on Don Street and hangs onto its dead, rattling leaves.

I didn't cry, but let emotion tingle virginally over my scalp and back, consoling myself with the thought that empty couplebonds were a sadder state of relations than such full uncoupling.

Thursday December 11th

Redemption day! Sun, which divides sky, god-plane, in two, made its great brightness over all earthly things. And I, with my little slivers of polymacon, like the two halves of a fragile soap-bubble, applied to my eyes, saw everything smiling dense between its edges, and birds were tweeting ornaments, and clouds were streaked still defiantly undefined, and it was all quite fine.

'Forgive us our transgressions': Nona was standing at the High Street bus stop, and I, mistaking her for not her, was called short by her henna'd voice. Instead of pious, hurt retribution, she asked me for change, gave me her room number, and told me to come some time.

And then I went to an Anthropology film. Anthropology class is full of girls (whom I can now see, and feel fit to be seen for something like myself by). The one who sat next to me has a delicate face and looks like Shelley Duval, the bush baby. The film, 'Masai Women', was excellent and fascinating. The new bride is insulted by all her co-wives as she arrives at the village of her husband. 'Hyenas will crunch your bones tonight,' they shriek, 'your husband only has one cow, and that has rabies!' 'He doesn't have any cows, only pumpkins!' 'Look at her teeth!' and so on. The song of the wife, who has no freedom except that of

disobeying her husband and taking a lover from among the warriors, who stalk or pogo at their leisure in the bush: the old women drone on either side, she looks seriously and beautifully into the twilight and sings quick, high phrases: 'My lover has beautiful hair, he doesn't lash about in bed but murmurs softly to me until morning...' The warriors returning from the river, with lions' manes and ostrich feathers, chalked like zebras, naked, some in trances, returning to the women. The layers and layers of bright beads worn by everyone, blue and red, white, green, pink...

Graceful, bony limbs seen through ochre cottons. Pendulous brown uncovered breasts. The peremptory cries of the women to God (rain-cumulus spirit, heavenly giver of birth) — 'These things are what we Masai women require, God, hear us!' The final shot of the woman with a bundle of sticks on her back: she slows, then suddenly, with a haughty shrug, casts them off her, straightening her long body.

My African record came today: music from Ghana. It is exhilarating, very varied, and from the motionless, screwed-together speakers sounds like an amplified dream the soul has of its own, happy expression, with, over, in among, *of* people.

A tortuous Phoenix studio session in which Graham and I had to fill empty seats with our bodies and the air with out claps on cue. A gardener, dull and pleasant enough, was interviewed, hiding his palpitations from the ferocious and bland attentions of machines, disciplined manoeuvres, schedules, and an audience lashing with claustrophobia, afraid, inside its impassivity, of its fragile passivity.

Studio television is a kind of factory fascism.

Graham asks me to contact him & Keith in Edinburgh over Christmas.

Note concerning space: a point as simple as it is important is that the first step towards realisation of a promise (in my case writing) is the preparation of a space. The space into which this line is jutting just now is exemplary: unintimidating, not coercive, without pro- or prescriptions, plain and many-

potentialized, drawing timid thoughts onto it as if out from its depths to its surface. A *room* like this is also necessary. My present room is too much a room for reading, for sleeping, for hiding. I picture the purposive, chaotic workshop atelier of Joseph Beuys, a room in which every movement must inevitably bring one to a new, special and extraordinary substance or tool or material. Perhaps with writing, however, this room has to be entirely in the head.

Friday December 12th

For they will grey and crumble, who, like smokeless, shortening cigarettes, diminish into extinction failing to tint the air whose oxygen they discover igniting them.

Bought some prose by Bruno Schulz.

With McIlvanney and the group, beat around Hemingway's ring with over-ornate cloaks.

Saturday December 13th

In my dream I seated myself — with a friend — in a compartment (plane, train?) which, to confirm my unease, was numbered 13.

Animal people in ersatz uniforms (football supporters) estranged me from the streets. A huddle of them swung a rolled poster in my path and hit me across the ear with it.

In the library I found and read some Steiner (Berlin lectures) — slightly ridiculous, over-confident, but full of redeeming virtues and the greatest quality a teacher can have, the power of fascination: the healing displacement of the pupil's ego.

Read more Schulz. Have I written so little recently out of fear of this rather glittery mode of relishing one's own neurosis, that is, making it visible,

prettifying it, making it loveable? I want to stretch and loose myself, not squirt ink like a self-disgusted octopus trying to hide.

I was at my favourite metaphysical bus stop. Some girls came out of the library and stood nearby, out of range of most of the streetlamp's light. They spoke about how badly they were sleeping. The thundering of a jet began to roll across the sky like something malign pressing down on us, shutting off the sky and all comforting small sounds. They spoke about their tea, and named ingredients. I was irritated, not by them, but at the way in which a great, stupidly-unleashed fear (the jet noise; fear of nuclear war, the anxiety of the isolated) forces people to clutch the most banal comforts, this sealing off access to their own personal fears. Because if they had continued to talk about sleeping badly ('I'm worried about myself') they would have begun the cure of more lasting discalibrations than hunger.

The less one works, the harder work becomes.

The attraction of Steiner: that no longer is one ashamed of one's soul as if it were a province of strange weeds which have eluded cultivation.

But if, in an inquisitive, acquisitive frame of mind one starts toying with the idea of having a real soul, is it not, without a belief in eternal life, like being a goldfish who is provided with strands of moss in the bottom of his bowl, so that he can dart in its shadows and think of glassless ocean?

Monday December 15th

Things look much more possible now I can see their details and respond. For example: a bus is coming up Don Street in the dark. I am on the pavement, safely out of the way. But a girl in a furry coat is stranded on the road by a huge puddle. 'Oh God,' she says. I smile. This gives her the confidence to run up to me and ask if I will walk with her down the pavement, to save her from lurking attackers. We talk — she is 'of my class', quite attractively neurotic. I begin to

tremble, and like it. We part at Dunbar — she is going to an organ recital at the cathedral. I am visiting Babis.

His mother is visiting. Catherine is there. We bus to the station, see his mother off. She kisses me on both cheeks, says 'I *won't* see you, Nicholas!' 'Oh, next year,' I reply. Back at Dunbar, to Florence's room. She is in pajamas, wears a t-shirt saying 'Kiss a non-smoker, taste the difference'.

We talk about a flat for ourselves next year. I disrupt any serious routes in the conversation with jokes, I fiddle with her beady atomic models. B breaks them by trying to build an impossible tower. F talks about bottoms — she is a connoisseur, likes big, firm ones. Approves of fat people: both her parents are fat. In all senses, she is too robust for me.

Today: my head poked out of the top of my coat like an egg from a cup, and was coldly wetted. Bus stations, lost property office (lost notebook — still lost), a tunnel-like Martins back shop with greasy coffee, gallery (Flash Art, Domus)...

A paper installation on my wall. Took about 4 hours, built up in modular fashion with rectangles of white paper, first a regular layer — ground — then sweeping, irregular figures — three of them, two consorting, pointing inwards, the third, back to them, gazing out. Green-rimmed, feline eyes on scribbly black heads. Like Masai cormorants, Egyptian idols posing as Olympic divers, like 'Three Women's schizophrenic pool figures.

Schulz, Swift, Kafka's diary.

No, this diary is not by any means the writing I've been promising myself. Just a distraction, a foot in the door. Which otherwise I would step through.

Insufficient responsibility: I assert that my degree doesn't matter, that I'm entirely in charge of my own education, yet I allow a piece of work for *them* (the Swift essay) monopolise me and put all my own concerns temporarily in limbo. I submit, not willing to make my stance total. I compromise because I don't have

enough faith in my independent judgment. For how can one have complete confidence when one is teaching oneself, and never taught enough to drop the pupil in oneself? Only the pretence of university teachers to have reached the end of education seems to validate their theft of the pupil's responsibility for his own development. Outside the institution, this pose of absolutism is seen for what it is: expediency. Not for nothing is an educational package called a 'discipline'. What one really learns at university is the hidden compromise necessary between education and society. This in only an unwieldy opposition because university keeps its distance from society. University is the responsibility-stripping arbiter between self and society. It lures you out of back streets and promises to put you back on boulevards. But, so that you don't know the route, it blindfolds you.

So what am I doing in this total institution, this corrupt elevator, when all I really need is a good library and city streets?

It may be that I need the comforting shadows of somebody else's purpose as much as the food and room I get here.

Why I read: to make contact with other individuals at the most profound level.

Why I do not yet (seriously) write: because it seems possible that, in the right circumstances, such contact could happen directly, face to face.

What I await: disillusionment.

Monday December 22nd

Being expelled by the lack of relationship in the very direction which is reserved as the only certain reward of relationship. An inevitable falling short, every step towards 'it' (experience) really two steps away. So writing is not consolation for being 'dead in one's own lifetime', but for achieving the best, the most simple comforts in life's desirable limitation.

At the entrance to the bookshop, a spot protected from the rain, I found myself coming round Paula's face as one rotates a bronze head. Then I was afraid, and walked quickly away: thoughts (and I had been thinking about her) of this intensity usually present themselves sideways, and dissolve when looked at directly. But she only became more real. Later I came back with some words ready, but, although I searched the area, I couldn't find her.

It's possible that Rilke was right about unrequited love — it is the best kind. Habit soon takes back the great enlargement of soul that infatuation gives.

Plan to carry this sketch book always, to drop things into it like conkers into a leather pouch, fresh, before too much polishing has given them their museum hardness.

This is my all-important space. To *write* a book in a waiting-room, instead of reading one. The book is the same as 1980's Diaries, but the difference is radical: it's not a parlour display case of selected souvenirs, more a space suit, a life-support system, a way for the soul to breathe the clear air of its own homeland.

A crowd of people were walking along the beach. The stones, the sky, the sea, were all grey. It seemed the walkers were there for no other reason than to appraise each others' clothes. One of them shuffled along dejectedly, looking at no-one, studying the ground. His strange appearance aroused comment and ridicule amongst the passers-by. 'Why is he wearing that tray round his waist, and those bottles he's balancing, what are they for — look, they're smoking!' And in their curiosity they ignored him. But he had not noticed: he squatted and picked up a pebble, as if he'd been combing the beach for this one alone. He placed it on his tray, he let a trickle of liquid cross its grey surface. Like a fruit the stone fell open, colours spilled across the beach.

The meek will never inherit the earth — they will continue to be taken advantage of, dispossessed. And yet it seems to the insatiable proprietors that the meek have secret deeds of possession, assets more valuable than anything yet stripped. How else could they look at the world with such contented expressions, the sort

of expression the landlord assumes only when inspecting vast new estates? The meek know that to have nothing is to need nothing, and needing nothing one has everything because one has oneself, and nothing can (and will) take oneself from oneself.

Actually, everything is trying to take oneself from oneself. Self-possession is a matter, not of battling with the claims, but of becoming, oneself, a single undemanding claim: to advertise autonomy by showing how much it is possible to receive of the world without asking any more of the world than oneself.

These thoughts come when I block my ears with my thumbs. If the world weren't forever forcing its 'gifts' (in this case the jabber of TV) on us, perhaps we would be drawn out into its silences like pioneers, like missionaries who are happy to convert only themselves.

But already, at the very beginning, I sound conclusions like great, confirming bells: they set a few resonances in the air and dissipate them. My aim this time is to let things accumulate haphazardly like leaves falling from a tree, which, left to themselves, make humus out of which new, young trees spring up.

Pressed between pages of a book, leaves are nothing but lonely skeletons.

The lies and self-deceptions built up until finally he believed himself quite innocent.

She is everything. That's why I walked past.

Tuesday December 23rd

An old man sectioned by the astragals of his Leith Walk window. He frames himself dolefully, arms so compact with his body that they are like long, drooping shoulders, like an organic straight-jacket. The sun strikes him. He looks around despite himself.

An ornate Victorian street clock on a post. Of its four faces (pointing east, south, west, north) three indicate a quarter past three and the fourth says four o'clock. Thus it approaches the human: none of the times is right, but by mixing comfortable consensus with deviant prophecy it allows itself a space and a direction.

Fruitmarket Christmas exhibition: take away its grinding idea and at once it is something real and worthwhile — a bizarre collection of objects, sounds, structures, passages. The familiar paintings, documents, animals, organic materials, suddenly cluster mysteriously like lost things, every shape and form is provisional. A piece of industrial machinery, a fibreglass tombstone, stuffed cattle and crows, pasty-looking mannequins with horrible sharp-spun, glistening wigs, disembodied voices and musics issuing from hidden corners, lights in eternal fixed colour sequences, white feathers clustering everywhere like clinging memory. Nothing is reasonable, nothing is meaningful, the idea has evaporated in strong sun and now, as in darkness, everything is strangely equal.

Thursday December 25th

Scaffold shadow — adequacy.

The bull-baiting of a family holiday: the Father ordains from within a flailing of mocking sheets.

I walk around the city — a tour of mutual possession which is certainly aesthetic and perhaps erotic: monuments rearing, ornate railing, gaunt or mellow lighting. A relation with the other lonely or grouped bored figures in this scape: an interplay of careful acknowledging and ignoring, a safe minority equality (for we have this in common — that neither of us is watching James Bond or JR, pictures in locked TV shops). A girl on Princes Street becomes a focus, walking quickly ahead, wearing a split skirt — the streets are an erotic labyrinth for five minutes. Then back to the evenly lit, heated, entertained home, where I find a sad corner in Ari Up's voice through the headphones, singing about some place where relationships form and lapse, where girls choose between verbs: conform —

create / rebel, where everything is a matter of the heart and decisions bring tangible consequences.

And I walk and walk (away and back), think and think (speculate and confirm), loose myself in melancholy, find content empty but easy, and mourn the death of things I haven't yet known; a smug and unproductive sorrow.

Friday December 26th

On the route to the Borders, patterned hillsides. Trees (small, pine) are events in segmented sequences. Everything white. Father 'read' the road, listening to the tire noise. The phallic principle of possession: 'We're going to shoot that wood, that hill.' ('There, see the great bloodstain!') The way of the world in microcosm: in a huge expanse of peace, the phallic league sees only the laird's house and the little blood bladders, fish and small animals, beckoning to be riddled satisfactorily with shot.

A small house, passed on the way: wooden, painted white with details in red, rectangular. Outside, cages for birds, skirt-shaped, like skeletal circus tents. Inside, everything is of dark stained wood, delicate, lightened only when the sun comes through the clean astragals and touches the ancient faded red parts in the carpet's pattern. The hermit birdkeeper reads yellowing periodicals and regularly flings grain through the steel mesh of the garden cages. One day enflamed with loneliness, he gathers the birds in his wide-stretched arms and brings them into his cabin. Cooing, they roost on the rims of cupboards, lengths of rail. The hermit birdkeeper, waning between his white sheets, is comforted by the sight of the fowl, as they jab their beaks at dust in his patterned carpet.

Saturday December 27th

Orange sparks on matt black chimney bricks.

Last night, the sky like a planetarium: Father pointed out the 'Lady's Hand Mirror' configuration to the girls: Africans call it the Penis.

The hunting party arrived. Apart from Douglas Ashmeade, they are all ex- or serving army, RAF, tax accountants, guided missile systems designers, nuclear power station PRs, etc — absolutely the worst. They talk about 'The Peasants' and 'Wogs' and say of democracy: 'It's really all about convincing people to accept things they're going to get anyway.' Douglas gave me a touching little spiel about compromising — 'you'll move to the right, there's no point in alienating yourself from society so much that you become eccentric...' and the tax accountant (ex-army) said 'Marx said a lot of sensible things... I think everybody should be a socialist at the age of 21.' But when we had all drunk champagne and port (1961), eaten, played charades, told dirty jokes and hiccupped together, one could not dislike any of them, and suddenly all their pathos seeped out and dissolved the clots of evil which had seemed to mark them. What criteria can and should one use to continue hating these ageing schoolboys?

Sunday 28th December

I don't realise how much harm living in the family environment does me. No responsibility = no creativity.

Birch tree under a sodium light with stars between its branches: they can make a more realistic scene in a caravan showroom.

Monday December 29th

She discovered some coloured balls linked together — old chemistry models. She dropped them into her bag. Later, at the flat, she fixed them to the wall.

I can't work in this house where everyone else is telling the world about their day, getting on each other's nerves, being familiar, being retributive, watching TV; it seems to me they're all in a kind of repressed despair, and that I, being the negative member of any set, must live out that despair. In fact I could, in different circumstances, be working contentedly. All I need is a small flat somewhere slightly unfamiliar, a psychologically supportive but autonomous friend

(autonomy is enough, an autonomy she's willing to share), a part-time job which makes *no* demands on my creative ability (not hard to find, this sort of job), access to books (rare ones). I need a city I can walk in (safely, not too cold), some privacy, some quiet. Above all, I need to be free of institutional demands and schedules.

I need habits to negotiate between me and the world, some people not far from my own level of creativity and intelligence. I need seriousness but not despair; responsibility, self-discipline.

Living in someone else's property. According with — or rebelling against — someone else's norms.

Walk: BUTTERCUP DAIRY
COMPANY LIMITED
'In all Labour there is Profit'

Tuesday December 30th

He was embarrassed by his facility. When he had a strong thought, an astonishing gust of wind tilted down the street.

A land where birds sing at night.

Slogan stencil for use on TV appliances: 'Now even our dreaming must be done for us.'

Wednesday December 31st

How easily someone else's whistling and coughing and talking can dominate me, fill me with the negatives of resentment and self-distaste.

The aggression of the hounded turns on those who have backed away from the hounds. The chain reaction of pressure. The only escape is complete isolation.

There is no such thing. Only the possibility that small quantities of the poison might be distilled into something safe, even something sweet. Like all experiments, this requires controlled (and somewhat sterile) conditions.

It's impossible to like people with whom one is bound in a power relationship. Dependency, subordination, domination, erase any human feelings of love. Duty, guilt, fear, resentment take over. This is also true: the man without any links with the world loves every part of it. Perhaps this is why God left.

In that dark year even the world had forgotten the way of the world. Events occurred which astonished their very directors. People danced in their sleep and the birds sang at night. 'It's our dreams,' one man cried, 'our dreams have escaped our heads!' And with wide eyes he pointed upwards, as if the canopy of a great umbrella were stretching above; a new, fraudulent sky.

If I turn out to be a nasty piece of work, it'll at least be all my own work. I'm a little firestorm of autonomy.

I throw myself into what separates me from my absolute aims, as a moth throws itself into flame.

The more you struggle to escape death, the nearer you get to it. Death is in the rush-hour traffic, the disco. The place of life is slow contemplation, dream in which the heart slows and one is lost, quite lost, to the world.

The dead frequent track meets, auctions, they breathe over copulating couples, they catch buses and lean over the shoulders of young typists taking snacks. But they shun the lonely: the masturbator, the poet, the depressed man walking his dog on the high parkland.

Personality fades on death. The dead are a crowd. They prefer advertisements to novels.

Momus

Journal 1980: Somewhere there are people like me

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