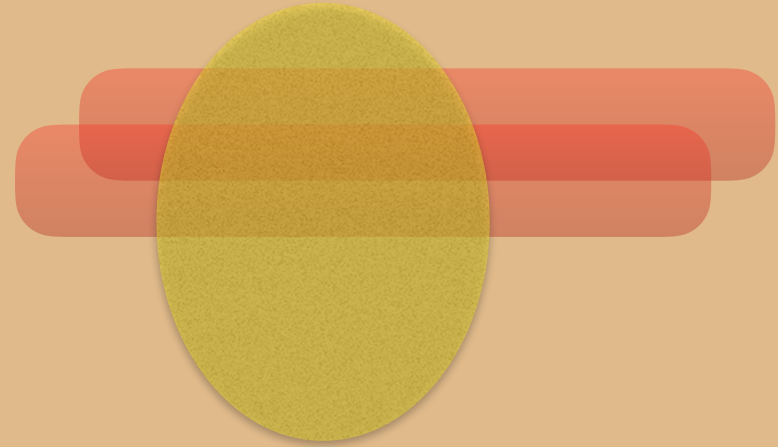


Here at the chilly cusp of neoliberalism we find the artist who will later become known as Momus. He's an Edinburgh youth turning 19 and studying Literature, Psychology and Sociology at Aberdeen University. His father runs a successful language college, his mother works for a religious publishing company. Young Nick – a virgin who models his love life, rather unwisely, on the epistolary affairs of Franz Kafka – has fallen hopelessly in love with a student at the Glasgow School of Art. His world is defined by Paula, David Bowie, his twitchy halls neighbour Byron, German writers, art, existentialism, Schoenberg and postpunk guitar groups. He reviews bands for the student paper, types short stories and – faithfully every night – tells his black Letts diary about his day.



Momus Black Letts Diary 1979

1979

January

Monday

1

And so into the bigger, better diary of 1979; more a nightly essay than a pale skeleton of dull cares and affairs – yes, objectivity is obsolete, and from here on the expressionistic eye of existential truth will expose excitingly my existence!

Or, on a less pretentious note, a diary which talks about fewer events in more space. Five years of rigorous training have been but a dry run; the goods is here!

And after those wild exclamations of intent, today. Outside the snow lies packed on the ground, none has fallen since 1978, but car travel is imprudent if not impossible. Father spent much of the day on his back with a cold, feeling that he should be at Young Street, but instead watching T.V. and having Emma rub his back. The air was less suffocating today. Mother's mood improved, so it was merely boring, not unbearable. I read a few lines of Kafka, but lassitude won the day.

The outside world intruded a couple of welcome times; before I was up a Mrs. Nielson from No. 13 came in – sounded loud and snooty. Nick Sherrit phoned, inviting us to a party at his colonies residence; the prospect seemed at first attractive, but nobody actually went.

I recorded Peel's top 10 while T.V. churned junk films. The family pottered variously. I retired at one, full of tepid white Hironnelle plonk. Never mind; this time next week I'll be home from home!

1979

January

Tuesday

2

With Father back at the office today, the house was taken to pieces and reassembled under the guise of Spring (!) Cleaning; the painted room, parents' bedroom and breakfast room were mercilessly gutted of signs of habitation and rendered sterile.

I, meanwhile, strolled uptown, walking along George St. to Queensferry St., Stafford St., Grassmarket, Cowgate, and High Street. My tour of the old town opened my eyes to the sad state of repair of some potentially charmingly decadent buildings down the hill from High Street. My interest in 19th Century Edinburgh was strengthened by the Stills exhibition of photos by George Washington Wilson; stereo prints of Scots scenes of the 1860s. Particularly interesting were views of Princes Street; men in top-hats, ladies in long black dresses, hotels, clubs, cabinet-makers. Very picturesque.

Quite a lot of people were about on the streets, though only a handful of shops were open. Cars were having terrible problems; an old Morris Minor had to turn round at the top of Dublin Street because it couldn't move through the lights!

Mother actually relaxed with us in the sitting-room much of the evening, while I taped Costello's new album from the Peel show. We looked through the old diary, Mark quizzing me on dates, etc, til one a.m., then retired after locking the cats in the kitchen together.

1979

January

3

Wednesday

The regular tap-tap of melting roof-ice as it dripped into my room drew me from oblivion to the lethargy of a lie-in. Emma, from what I hear, visited her paramour, Jonathan. Meanwhile, I went uptown with a fiver, but was embarrassed when I tried to buy a packet of tissues and thought I'd left the money at home. I had intended to have a haircut, but Rod must, as I remarked to Mother, be on holiday in Portobello.

I walked down Heriot Row and via Charlotte Square to Rae Mac then the music shop on Stafford Street, buying a plectrum for 10p. Arrived later at Cockburn Street, thinking I would buy a hat further on at the South Bridge Oxfam Shop if they had one, but not sure if I'd dare to wear a hat if I had one... when I was luckily waylaid by Cockburn St. Market, where I bought a Magazine/Devoto mirror-badge as a token mark of exhibitionism. Cut to N. in St. James Centre looking smug, and fade...

The house was deserted at around six. Father and Mother went to the Simms' for drinks, and were presented with a brass cartridge case from W.W.1. Avoiding death duties? Mark and Emma skated on the iced-over cobbles. I did so too, briefly, but kept sinking into softer areas.

John Thomson phoned, inviting me to a snooker afternoon tomorrow; Mark'll come too. Hope he's not offended by my lack of contact lately.

Scrabble from 11.15 to 12.15 – I won by 50 points; had consistently good letters.

1979

January

4

Thursday

Henry King woke me with his usual nuzzling routine; hanging over my neck, biting the tips of my fingers, smothering me with his bottom.

I strolled to Rod's, where he and his very gay friend were 'warming the place up', and arranged an appointment at 1. Rod cut, his friend washed and dried. A v. amusing phone-conversation occurred; Rod's friend punctuated the conversation with 'Oh my God's and 'Oh, I've got quite a story for you...'s. 'Was it John?' asked Rod. 'No, it was Gary,' sang his sidekick.

Mark and I walked to John's house by way of King's the Hairdresser (for Gents), where I bought a tub of Brycream for my fringe. At the Thomson house we played darts and snooker. I was fairly quiet, letting Mark do the socialising. Nothing ever changes in the Thomson household, it's quite depressing or reassuring, depending on one's mood.

We walked home, helping a feckless OAP in a Mini on Castle St. to mount the hill, and watching several idiot drivers giving the term 'ice follies' a meaning in the motoring world. The others had eaten without us.

We later took the kitten to the gardens, where it wandered quite boldly.

A decadent (after German cinema, c. 1920) production of 'Macbeth' was ditched by Father in favour of Scrabble. I won, and watched the play in between shots. Read Tintin over hot chocolate before retiring with the more subtle attractions of Kafka's letters.

1979

January

Friday

5

Father and Mark went shooting, Mark later talking about the massive amounts of alcohol that the 'guns' consumed.

Meanwhile, Mother and I went to the A1 Cash & Carry and bought the deep-freeze things that Mother hadn't wanted to buy in front of John (the E.L.F. driver), for our own personal use.

When Mother had gone out to pay £1000 (on the company cheque-book) for her China holiday, I opened the door to an enormous dresser from Heidi's, to rout the smaller one downstairs to Mrs. Kiso and inhabit a large proportion of the breakfast-room wall. Mother and I lifted it into the breakfast-room, but it took Father, Mark and me to lift the huge top section onto the bottom.

I felt muzzy and feverish for much of the day, worse towards the end. I put off going to collect the cross-country skis for our Norwegian holiday until Mark arrived home, and we went up together in biting East wind.

Colin Stuart's party was still on, though, and John Thomson changed his original intention to drive me only from his house, and obligingly came to pick me up at Drummond Pl. after a snack dinner. The party was held in Puckle's stifling Cramond front room. Johnny Glen, the Brown twins, and Stuart Junior were there too. We had a jam session on Colin's bass guitar and John's rhythm. I perked up at the rendition of Beatles' Classics, but later, after finding myself shivering in the warm room, we left at 11.30. John gave the Browns a lift. I dropped into bed while the others taped the Woody Allen-scripted 'Pussycat'.

1979

January

Saturday

6

Henry awoke me, but I lay in, dreaming of a holiday in Egypt, until about one o'clock. My cold, or whatever, was improved. I walked up to the bus-station and St. James Centre, buying an NME and reading it on a seat between rushing lines of sale-shoppers. I still have an irresistible fascination for the music papers, though I often despise their continual hypocrisy; praising a band one week, criticising the next. It's all part of that dancing serpent, Fashion, I suppose.

Mark, Father and Mother mentioned testing their cross-country skis somewhere – I don't know if they did, but they certainly did go to the Bairds' house for drinks. I watched a videotape of 'What's New Pussycat?', not enjoying it much. I think good comedy should have firm roots in real life, and even be a little tragic. And this film relied on attitudes to sex that are very two-dimensional both to men and women, and very 'sixties' – 'Aren't we liberated and promiscuous these days?!' Woody Allen saved it from being trash.

Emma had Joanna in, staying the night. Mark went to the Shepleys' to babysit, earning the paltry fee of £1. Father and Mother went I don't know where for drinks (supper?), remarking on a boy with smart boots and saying 'They were a drunken crowd!'. I had a quiet night in, watching a good play about a girl brainwashed by a religious sect. Parkinson followed.

1979

January

Sunday

7

After grapefruit-juice and bread, I set to packing my belongings for my return to Aberdeen. I listened to tapes at the same time. Mark helped me search for my guitar-case – I'm taking my guitar, not my stereo. (Keep music live?)

We had thick soup (made from macaroni, rather yeachy) and mince, potatoes, courgettes, and celery for lunch. I felt full.

I drove Mother to the station in the Volvo, where we were to meet Alison Rutherford. I manoeuvred around some very disorganised traffic, and we went home because there was no Aberdeen train announced at that time on the Arrivals board. While I took Joanna home, Mother, after consulting a timetable, took the MG to Waverley and found Alison. I arrived home on their tail in the Volvo. Father then drove me to the station, with £30 in my pocket. The Aberdeen train was like a troop-train – I sat in the corridor, near the door. The light was too dim to read Kafka by for any length of time. The other occupants were at first pleasant university types, but around Montrose we picked up some incomprehensible louts and a very poor looking family; 4 kids & pregnant mother. After a long, cold wait for a taxi, got to Hillhead, to find a letter from Paula Sarria waiting; illiterate, busy, but real; made me happy. I ate a revoltingly greasy meal, talked with (or listened to the eternal talking of) Byron Acton, then wrote a perhaps-too-involved prac-crit of a poem, 'The Old Couple'.

1979

January

Monday

8

My cough woke me, I got up at 9 and had a boiled egg, roll and tea for breakfast. Listened to 'Armed Forces' then walked to King's. I picked up my grant – £267, then went to see my replacement director of studies, Dr. Hamilton. He told me, in his pleasant, sunlit office (why do Geography rooms always have such a nice atmosphere?) that I could give up Linguistics – thank goodness. The official papers were signed, the deed done. Next year, Art History. I handed my prac-crit. in to Paul Schlicke.

Dr. Hook introduced us to medieval poetry in Eng. Lit.; Scotland circa 1480s-1500s. I went to the library, having sneakily discovered Mel's address on her psychology exam paper, and looked at Sturminster Newton in Dorset on the map. Looks idyllic. I walked up the road to the King St. chemist for throat lozenges. Sat near the car-park behind the ag building (that was before English, though). I ate a good meal of mince, peas and chips in the ag. building, reading Kafka on the pine table. After browsing around the bookshop I caught the bus home, and read the Henryson poem for English (aloud, in my idea of middle Scots).

I ate with Byron, and after coffee returned to my room and wrote to Paula, talking about theories of Art, Kafka, sonnets, and schizophrenia. A rather good letter, I think. I really enjoyed writing it. Posted it, then bought some crisps – Gammon flavour. I keep burping and tasting them.

1979

January

Tuesday

9

My alarm failed to go off because one of the buttons was depressed. I lay in until about 11.30 then ate toast and drank tea before walking with Byron to King's. I was v. slightly late for English; more about Henryson. I took the Guardian to the Ag. building and had soup, yoghurt, juice and, later, an apple. Felt very full. My face should have glowed red in Psychology – Mrs. Frazer discussed the exam results. Afterwards I went to see my Linguistics tutor, Mr. Parkinson. I apologised for the essay. 'Er... it was... interesting,' he said, uncomfortably. As we parted (for good, thank goodness) he said 'You can always look at the books in the library about Sociolinguistics.' 'O.K.' I said, then ran away.

In Bisset's I bought a reduced-price Perigrine called 'Art and its Objects'. I walked off to the West at the Southern end of Seaton Park, surveying the cold landscape of muted green and grey under the sky with its small shot of orange, then traversed the Park by the riverside and scrambled up the wooded bank to reach Hillhead. There, I read some of my new book, but wandered at difficult parts. Read 'Letters to Felice' instead; it's more satisfying than the Philosophy of Aesthetics.

Ate with Byron. Still not in an outgoing mood (me, that is. Byron is always). Saw Dick at coffee. Byron spent much time in my room, listening to tapes. I was listless, did little work – must change. Saw a doc on Helmut Newton. Read Kafka's 'The Judgement' – magnificent.

1979

January

Wednesday

10

A second white landscape greeted us this morning – snow a couple of inches thick was added to almost continuously all day. I finished Henryson. Got my practical criticism back at Paul's tutorial; A-. We talked about 'Testament of Cresseid'.

I took the bus to Gaudie (it got stuck on the hill, needed grit to move) and talked to Louise Tait in the new editor's office before the meeting began. I was commissioned to cover 'The Shapiroos' gig tomorrow, before leaving the meeting early for my dental appointment.

Lowering myself into the chair, I was asked 'When was your last visit to the dentist?' When I replied 'Two years ago, I'm afraid,' I was rewarded with having my hair pulled; a good-humoured dentist, this one. My big cavity was filled, and I had an X-Ray taken. He did say my top teeth were in good nick, though. Two appointments follow in February.

Forgot to say earlier, lunched on excellent, tender steak (braised) and chips in the Agriculture building. Caught the bus home (paying 10p) and, with gum frozen, lurked in room (listening to Low, "Heroes", Stage) until suppertime. Ate with Byron, Steve, Dick & friend. Likewise coffee – too long in front of jukebox.

Wrote a short story, inevitably Kafkaesque, called 'The Bridge', about 'Christopher and Laura' (guess who) and their strange adventure.

Took my clothes to the launderette (sublime to ridiculous).

1979

January

Thursday

11

Our Psychology Practical today was the first of two demonstrative sessions on which no lab reports are written. The subject was optical illusions; colour addition, subtraction, stereoscopic viewing, etc. Very interesting, I entered an ASC (Altered State of Consciousness), being bathed in the comforting mix of unassailable knowledge and mild entertainment. Dr. Hook expounded further on Henryson, then I read the Guardian over lunch.

Psychology: Dr. Symons gave an inconclusive, annoyingly vague, but interesting lecture introducing the subject of awareness.

I walked home through Seaton Park, the snow is still on the ground, ice-solid and battered like a mountain range. I read several of Kafka's short stories in my room – one about a professional faster, about country children, etc. Drifted into listening to music, then broke for a meal, eating with Byron. We had our coffee in the main room, then I left. Most of the rest of the early evening was spent having a political / ideological talk with Bill; the role of government, Capitalism v. Communism, patriotism, freedom. Very interesting; there's nothing like arguing to tell yourself what you believe.

I took the bus downtown, and, after some searching, found my Shapiro's gig at Fusion. Nice decor, happy crowd who didn't clap the bands. Dull, MOR music. Met the plump girl from my English tutorial. Left early, walking home.

1979

January

Friday

12

I lay in then bought an orange and a New Musical Express for breakfast. Walked, with no time to spare, through the park to my English lecture. Professor Rutherford gave, in ringing, self-assured tones, a lecture on attitudes to poetry (Aristotle, Fry, etc.) with reference to epic poetry; the poetry of national pride, embodying the aspirations of all patriotic men. I consequently dislike the epic style more than ever.

I ate a rather stodgy meal after queuing for ten minutes, then went to the Phoenix T.V. control room to watch Phoenix news. Interesting comments of staff ('Oh no, that's never happened before,' as we see a hand putting the next photograph in place on an easel). Afterwards, our first lecture in social psychology. A dour Cockney, slightly Caine-ish, but very funny in an almost unintentional way, gave it; we laughed at his exaggeration of our stereotyping (English/Scots, male/female, racial). Made my way back through the frozen park at 3.00.

Byron tied flies, and we listened to The Clash before supper. Coffee was listless as ever, although I made a remark about patting Bob Harris' bald head which seemed funny at the time. Afterwards we listened to Siouxi and the Banshees. I taped it, and played guitar with it. Byron gave me some of his sweet white wine. Later, Henry came, and we refilled our mugs with wine and sat in Byron's room. I was silent, they talked about minerology and Byron lectured on wine. I, alone, felt v. romantic towards Paula, but somehow exorcised my feelings in a piece about turning our backs on society. Read Kafka's 'Wedding Preparations', liked particularly 'Jackals and Arabs'.

1979

January

Saturday

13

I lay in until 11, then went to the shop for a yoghurt and an orange which I ate for breakfast. Then I went out into the sunshine and boarded the downtown-bound bus. After changing to a bus without a useless, frozen engine, we were on the way. I went to Boots for Bic razors and Elnet hairspray, then visited just about every bookshop in Aberdeen, trying to find Kafka's 'Metamorphosis and Other Stories'. I ended halfway up Holborn Street, unsuccessful, and caught the No. 1 bus.

Got off at King's and went into the library, looking first in the catalogues then browsing for perhaps an hour in the Kafka section (mostly in German; commentaries, no actual prose). I walked home and had Buitoni Ratatouille for belated lunch. Read 'Letters to Felice' until supper with Byron, Steve & co. After coffee we had a game of table football upstairs, Steve & I teaming up. Steve confessed to a certain legal misdemeanour which I will only imply here – he later showed me some material evidence of it; brown, like Knorr chicken cubes.

Byron, Mary and I went to the Capitol for our Elvis Costello concert. John Cooper-Clarke was flat without his music, Richard Hell flat punk a la New York, and Costello – magnificent. I let go entirely, dancing in the seat-space, moving into the aisle, and, at the end of the encore, running down to the front. Later we went to the Union disco, and I danced with Mary briefly. Byron meanwhile tried to get on with his flame, Sue, with only moderate success.

1979

January

Sunday

14

I had lunch with Byron, and at coffee afterwards we talked about love-bonds, vaguely. Our conclusion was that often one pins one's own hang-ups (hanging pin-ups is another question entirely) onto the object of one's affections, instead of looking completely at her, and letting it start there.

Afterwards I organised notes, throwing Linguistics notes out and buying a separate folder for Psychology. In a mood of energy, I tidied my cupboard and drawers, then settled down with Earl Grey tea to Arnold's 'Soreb and Rustum'. I hate the morals it preaches (i.e. bravery = willingness to kill, or die in the attempt) and much of the trappings of epic, but odd sentences, although obvious and indulgent, struck me for the atmosphere they invoked.

Supper, and coffee. Played music then sprinted for the bus to the Union to see 'Prime Cut' with Lee Marvin and Gene Hackman. A film with apparent good / bad morality, although on inspection both sides are equally bad, though unintentionally so. The hero killed several men, then proved his humanity by refusing to finish a man he'd wounded. Sissy Spacek was monstrously naive & stereotyped. Anyway, it really depressed me, and I arrived home feeling sick with most of humanity. Soon cheered up with the hum of activity around the flat, though. Talked to Byron about collages, etc. Bill revealed a straight-laced religious streak, then made popcorn. Sublime to tasty.

1979

January

Monday

15

I went on the bus to Gaudie; no-one was in, but I later saw John at the bus stop, and he did get my piece. I bought a Pentel in Sime Malloch and then hung about until the art gallery opened. Looked at their exhibition of Braque – one or two nice ones, but he's not an artist that I greatly admire. Perhaps I just don't understand him. Anyway, I had coffee and a scone then left.

The S.F. lecturer strikes again! English was Sorah & Rustom, Mr. Spiller being categoric and absentminded ('24 is half of 12')(and)('Doing for each country what Homer did for Greece and Virgil did for England.') Pumpkin-head! (Big and full of pulp.)

I bought The Listener and read it upstairs in the Taylor building. To get an idea of the course, I looked at the Art History noticeboard.

Psychology was really interesting – about consciousness. The graffiti may say that Dr. Symons is boring, but as long as he has enough facts to sustain him, he's a very good, human, lecturer, in my humble opinion.

I plucked my guitar and generally wasted time until supper. I couldn't eat the meat on my plate. Later, obsessed by this, today's theme, I wrote a short story called 'Conversations with Cattle'. Kafka-influenced, I suppose; the calves eat the man.

On T.V. a depressing documentary about Lartigue & a Jewish photographer. Afterwards, I showed my story to Byron & Steve. Almost nil reaction; I am crushed. They seem to think I'm mad, and humour me. Maybe I am mad. I could do with a Max Brod, but don't deserve one.

1979

January

Tuesday

16

While I sat in my room and read 'Felice' the cleaners, Jessie and friend, discussed the possibility of a strike in their Trade Union.

The ice lies in lumps on the grass, polished and lethal. Arriving half an hour before my English lecture at King's, I went into Bisset's and bought a copy of 'The Trial' by Kafka. I read it avidly through the day, about sixty pages to date.

Meanwhile, lectures. Mr. Spiller concluded his spiel on Arnold, thank God. Lunch was fish, which is OK to eat, morally. Psychology concerned awareness. Me, I felt slightly vulnerable today, don't know why.

When I arrived home, a parcel awaited me containing my cherished white shirt and uncherished lab manual. I shall have to buy 'Paradise Lost'. Mark included a brief note in the package. I wrote and posted a letter in return. Then I read 'The Trial' for a long spell.

Ate with Byron, he seemed to need to talk about his relationships. Later, in my room, some interesting revelations. Steve joined us, then his friend Dick. The company then split. Byron and I went to see the first of 'a major new series' by David Attenborough. Informative, but visually unsettling – no reference, just meaningless shapes.

I went over to see Whistletest, but it was revoltingly dated and Heavy Metalish.

1979

January

Wednesday

17

I leapt out of bed, threw my linen out of the door, and arrived at breakfast in time to get some food for a change. My day changed gear in the later morning, when I sat in my room reading Kafka.

My English tutorial was rather embarrassing, starting with a comment on my tie and white shirt: 'Whose funeral are you going to, Nick?' to which I replied 'My own.' Anyway, my comments on Sohrab and Rustum were more perceptive than anyone else's, and 'Paul' kept saying 'As Nick said...' This made me very self-conscious and embarrassed, so, after borrowing Kafka's 'Metamorphosis' I ran away and kicked bits of ice to relieve the pressure. I went home for lunch, buying a tin of spaghetti and an orange. These I ate in my room with Mr. Kafka.

Spent the afternoon with guitar and tapes and fig rolls. Then, disgusted by my indulgence, recorded some Psychology. Read Gaudie – the new layout is A-1! John, who I met on the bus this morning, had, however, cut the last sentence from my Shapiros piece.

After supper & 'caffeinated water' with Byron, I walked to the Arts Lecture Theatre to see 'Dr. Strangelove' – slightly disturbing, about nuclear war. Not as funny as described. Afterwards, went with Byron 'down the bar', to pose with dry martini by the jukebox. We chatted about women (as usual) back at the flat, then I went to see Arena Cinema about Robert Altman, while Byron occupied my room, reading 'Pride & Prejudice'.

1979

January

Thursday

18

Kafka's 'Trial' came with me to the Psychology building, where I sat alone in the lab until the class began to assemble. Today's demonstrations were vaguely interesting, mostly involving sitting in the dark watching rotating spirals bathed in red or green light, or winking lights jumping back and forth.

Andrew Hook gave a well-balanced lecture on 'Paradise Lost', talking about the objections to the poem by Leavis & Eliot.

I ate, with 'The Trial' as scenery, sitting next to three Spaniards who added local colour to the dull farming crowd of the Agri building. Afterwards, I assumed a new position on the left of the lecture theatre, and listened to Dr. Symons' ramblings. A well-timed rendezvous with the bus took me home in good time for a long afternoon with Franz K. and his alter ego Joseph K. – today they have been in trouble at the bank, thinking for far too long about the Advocate's briefing.

I joined Byron as usual for our meal, and Dick, Steve & co. arrived too. Some embarrassing fingers were pointed at Mel for my benefit, but, although I am not blind to her charms, I avert my eyes from the Pavlovian stimulus.

While Byron visited Sue, his far-from-zesty flame, I mused on my standing with Fraulein Garcia Sarria. I may write her a letter, but must first reply to the epistle W. Currie sent me this morning.

Now, where did I leave Herr K.? Ah yes, at the Court Artist's...

1979

January

Friday

19

Purely in the interests of research into dreams, which I now record in a little book, I rolled over after silencing my alarm and slept until 11.15. I went with Byron to Jaws, a tacky but loveable restaurant in a community centre, for lunch; soup and pizza, for which I shared a fork with Byron, as a clean one wasn't available. There and all over the centre of town we kept meeting people Byron knows, mostly girls. At Slaughter, where Byron eventually bought a pair of PVC trousers, we were turned away twice; once by lunch break and then by the assistant's discovery that she had the wrong key (it was her first day).

At T.O. Record Shop we looked at badges. In a Union Street shoe shop we surprised the flat 54 girls. Caroline was particularly kind, and noticed me, laughingly addressing words which applied to Byron, to me. We ended up in the Art Gallery coffee-shop, after surveying the paintings, amongst gossiping elderly ladies and the compulsory girl with whom Byron had a greeting acquaintance. The Rectorial Installation, of course, was the reason for the holiday.

I listened to music in my room after supper, slightly depressed. Then Byron suggested that we go to the Welly Boot for a drink, so we did, before he went to a party at Fairfield House, and I to the Union. The Bowles Brothers concert was cancelled, so I went home with Steve, Dick & Malcolm. We played six games of table football, then they all went to a dope session while I hallucinated with Kafka. When Steve returned, we discussed the leaf, me suggesting that I should, some time, partake.

1979

January

Saturday

20

A lie-in morning again. For breakfast I bought a yoghurt and an apple pie from the cafe. I borrowed 'Paradise Lost' from Bill and got to page 2 before abandoning ship in favour of Kafka. Restless, I took a walk down to Bridge o' Don and then up to the top of Balgownie Hill, past unimaginative terraces of council houses and over a cold expanse of high park. I took refuge in a cabin-type grocery shop and bought two tins of Bolognese Sauce to justify the visit, then returned with mud on my shoes and cold ears. I made a decent lunch of macaroni Bolognese (no mean feat considering there is only one saucepan), which I ate while reading 'The Trial'. I finished the book in the late afternoon, much bemused by the meaning of it and slightly sad at Joseph K.'s death.

Byron returned, and I was immediately back in the land of the living. Supper, with coffee in the dining-hall, then to the flat. At 9 Byron, Steve & I went to watch 'The Italian Job' on T.V. — my fifth time!

Reading 'Metamorphosis', I let Kraftwerk battle with Darryl & Oates and Roxy on Steve's record player. While Byron and Steve and I were in the kitchen, making collages, Bill returned from skating with a girl from my English lecture. She hung about briefly and is now with him in his room, silent behind locked door. I must confess that I like her, but I'm sure she's in good hands with Bill. Sigh...

Oh, forgot to mention a five-minute power-cut at about 7; disappointment when lights relit!

1979

January

Sunday

21

I exceeded myself (but not Steve) this morning by getting up at about 12.30. Glimpsed Bill's paramour in the kitchen, then went down to the Central building for lunch, alone. Went to the shop and bought (instead of bread) oatcakes and cheese. Then listened to music, while Steve played that infernal record of his for the billionth time.

I started writing the story I conceived a couple of nights ago, about a newspaper editor, then went off to see two real newspaper editors, John & Louise, down at Gallowgate. We looked at George Street plans and discussed things that could be improved in the layout of the paper. John left, then I left Louise on her own soon after, and hung around in the Union for half an hour, waiting for the next bus. I read Z magazine on the way home; all films on in Aberdeen are absolute trash. I ate tea alone after meeting Steve coming out.

Back at the flat, wrote my story in earnest until midnight, with slight distraction when Byron brought six loud guests into his room (I responded by tying a scarf around my ears). My story is okay so far (10 pages), but has too much plot for its own good.

1979

January

Monday

22

And finally the industrial disputes crisis forces its way into my very life, out of the newspapers. The N.U.P.E. one-day strike caused breakfast to be a slap-dash camping meal; we even had to wash our own cutlery. At the Hillhead gates the pickets gathered merrily round their brazier singing revolutionary songs and stopping the buses.

I went downtown and withdrew £15, then did another search for Kafka's 'The Castle'. Visited the record shop, asking about badges (I intend to wear K.'s portrait on my lapel). Bought a NME, then returned to King's. Again strikes affected life, but this time in a good way; as the Lecture Theatre P.A. wasn't working, we all crowded down to the front in both English & Psychology (Captain Hook on Milton – 'Today I'll talk about Satan, tomorrow about HELL!' – and PsychoSymons on Learning.) In between, I lunched at Agref, after rendezvousing with Acton for the repayment of debts (his). In Bisset's I bought a book on Kaffy, by Erich Heller. Read it after walking home, and had a further go at Metamorphosis.

Supper was equally makeshift; paper plates, cold meat, gluey mash, etc. At about 9 I made myself some Macaroni Bolognese in the flat. Byron and I went to see Arena, about Poly Styrene. Very naive and childish, quite charming. While Steve 'n' Dick rolled Rizzlas, we had a talk in the kitchen about Python. Mostly, though, the day's subject for me was alienation, conflict, and so on. Jotted some of these thoughts, but my story hasn't moved any further yet.

1979

January

Tuesday

23

I lay in late, accidentally. In the sunshine, I caught the 20 to High Street and hung about before English, copying a picture of Kafka from a library book and blacking-in the background. Captain Hook's lecture was, as advertised, on Hell; not so good today. Lunch was light (so soon after breakfast); soup, yoghurt, juice. Psychology, and Dr. Frazer told us about lots of yummy experiments concerned with keeping animals in the dark for months, and amusingly confused chicks and children. Although I didn't realise it, I was sitting next to Louise Tait during the lecture.

She later joined me waiting for the bus on King Street, and we had a discussion there and on the bus, until I got off at The Other Record Shop. I had the Kafka badge made for a mere 25p – at that price I shall certainly have other badges made – and asked about the new Eno album. Then I went along to Aberdeen's version of Fortnum & Mason and bought some Assam tea bags and a duff tube of Primula. After buying a bulb at Woolies, I went to the Union, met and went home with Graham Hood.

Ate without Acton; catering is back to normal now. Back at the flat, I vaguely flirted with Psychology then got out my story, begun Sunday, and more or less finished it, though some polishing remains to be done. Byron, dressed in his PVC trousers, came in for a while, then I was left in peace to write until about 1am. There is a slight change in the ending from my original intention – reason prevails now, and misunderstanding is bewailed.

1979

January

Wednesday

24

Jessie's Hoover was droning nearby when I awoke, having forgotten my dream. Toast & Assam for breakfast, then I walked, no, took the bus to my English tutorial: My least favourite poem, 'Paradise Lost' was made more sympathetic by Paul, after he had enthused about 'Superman'. I went to Bissets and bought a paperback dictionary for £1.25 then lunched on Scotch Broth and yoghurt.

At Gaudie, Leslie Forsyth told me that the Shapiros had read my last review and had not been amused, and were 'looking for me'. Help! Luckily the article was not signed. I was commissioned to do a resume of the Cine Soc. Western and AntiWestern season.

I went to Sime Malloch afterwards, buying an expensive sheet of Letraset for badge slogans, then caught the bus back. Byron dressed up in PVC, leather, and my shades for a party tonight. I dined with Steve & the gang, then Byron joined us for coffee. I tried to find a typewriter for my story, but the library hasn't yet been open.

The Cine Soc film was Bergman's 'Wild Strawberries'. I sat with Mary and her friend, Brigid. Afterwards I bought them drinks in the Macher, while Guy Peplow & co. played the nearby fruit machine. We then went to Brigid's room in Dunbar Hall, meeting a flatmate of hers while she fetched a porter to open her door, the keys of which she's lost. We discussed, among other things, Sue, Wombats & Owls. I walked home with Mary, talking about my story. Bill came into my room, and we talked about my his musical past in the U.S. of A. Then Byron returned and described his doings at the party he had been at.

1979

January

Thursday

25

I caught the tail end of breakfast, then went by bus to my Psychology Practical – the year's most interesting, about Personality. We did a version of the Eysenck Introversion / Extraversion test; on a scale (Intro. - Extra.) of 0-48, I scored 16, Gordon 15, and lots of people were up in the 30s and 40s. It turned out that intros. and extras. grouped together, separately, if you see what I mean; each to his own. The spiral test we did later, however, seemed to make me out a restless extravert, W.G.B. still an introvert.

Andy Hook's lecture on Pope and Mock Heroic was a model of excellence, as they say, though I did hear people calling it boring. He made very clear the Conservatism of the 18th Century.

A hearty lunch in Agribuilding, amongst farmers, then to Psychology, most of which I spent reading the letter the girl in front of me was writing. Spoke to Louise Tait before the lecture. Feeling cheerful, I walked home and started writing to Paula on Letraset-headed paper. My letter stretched over two hours and seven pages, and I'll also send her my story when it's typed. And all because the lady doesn't love.

Ate with B., S., D. & M. then searched in vain for a typewriter. I listened to John Peel after reading from Kafka's 'Dog' story (and sleeping for about 1 hr.). Then at 11.30 I started my Gaudie piece on the Cinesoc Western & Antiwestern week, entitled 'Welcome to the Western Week'. Quite a good article, I think: brief general comment then resumé.

1979

January

Friday

26

After breakfast I took the bus to Gaudie and occupied the old editor's room where I used the old typewriter to write my story out neatly, fighting the disadvantages of unfixed margins and one hindering stop, midline. I was unsuccessful in buying paper, but ended up borrowing some from the S.P.S. secretary. Went back to King's in time to see the Spiller v. Hewison debate on 'Paradise Lost', which Bill changed into one on Mozart / Beethoven. Spiller proved his intellectual vacancy, talking about the pointlessness of all but aesthetics. I ate beside a loud Canadian agriculturalist with coloured sidekicks.

I decided to cut Psychology and return to my labours in the interests of art. I finished and went to the Union Office for photocopies at 4p each of... I've concluded after much calculation that I was undercharged by the secretary. Anyway, I then went to the Post Office and sent Paula her seven-page letter and a copy of 'Profile'.

Back home, I had a relaxed evening; Talking Heads and Wire. Supper with Steve & co., joined by Bill later, who started an ideological discussion which was continued far into Saturday in my room.

I am now in the kitchen, it's 2.43a.m., Bill is fixing his bike gears – 'Goddam Cock-sucker' – aided by Steve.

1979

January

Saturday

27

My clock displayed 1.45 when I woke up, and I knew it couldn't be a.m. because I was wide awake then, and that was last night. So I showered then went for lunch at the Snack Bar, reading the 'Telegraph'. There was snow during the night, so a nice fresh covering of about an inch is lying. But when I went downtown it was a different story – nasty slush gave me cold feet. I went, rather aimlessly, to the Other Record Shop, where I enquired after Eno's 'After the Heat' but bought, I'm glad to say, nothing.

Byron was away at Aviemore, and the two Grahams are also elsewhere, so the flat was very quiet. I listened to music, read Kafka's 'In the Penal Colony' and attempted Pope's 'Rape of the Lock', but didn't have the necessary perseverance.

I ate with Bill then returned to my room, where I hung around until 9.45 when I went across to the ITV lounge to see a crazy Alan Bennett play – it was very funny. Then I had a quiet evening after turning down an invitation from Steve to go to a party with him. At midnight I took my washing to the launderette.

Bill returned from his party, at which he won a bottle of wine for dancing, and told me all about it. It's 2.10a.m.; I shall have to break this stay-up habit, but the flat only comes alive at about 2!

1979

January

Sunday

28

Another shamefaced case of disgrace: got up after 12. So lunch was my breakfast, and a jolly big breakfast it was too.

Byron returned from Aviemore, with much description of drunken orgies in which true Scotsmen in kilts did handstands before assembled company, and couples disrobed behind curtains.

Then Bill and I had a talk in his room, with Dry Martini and ice, shortcake and Radio 3. In these pleasant circumstances we discussed a holiday in Dusseldorf and Berlin from April 1st until the 13th or so, after Bill has made his cycling tour of Belgium and Holland. We also discussed FM radio, Ku Klux Klan, and other things, until I broke away to get on, ostensibly, with work, but I couldn't organise my brain in a manner conducive to it.

The usual pie, beans and chips Sunday supper, then yoghurt in the coffee room with St. & DK. There followed a telephone call home, in which I briefly told Father about my proposed Berlin, Dusseldorf holiday. He gave it the thumbs up. Also spoke to Mother and Mark, engaging in philosophical arguments with both, and Emma.

A l-o-n-g evening, short on work, though not for lack of sitting at my desk with pen in hand. Finally gave in to accompanying Eno on guitar.

1979

January

Monday

29

I had imagined a very hectic morning buying lab-book etc., but as it turned out it was quite efficient. A flat breakfast, then to King's. Very wet weather. Bought my Baberton B515 then went to the library to write my lab report. Not brilliant, but respectable. I even had time to stroll over to the New Library to look, with the librarian's assistance, at a map of Glasgow, to see Queen Mary Avenue.

In English I sat with Sarah, expecting Bill to join us. He didn't, though, and sat at the back. I ate Scotch broth and yoghurt in Agri, then went to the King Street bus stop. There I met Judy Leslie. Sat with her on the bus. She was going to a driving lesson. She seemed slightly reproachful about not having 'seen' me about.

I tried for Kafka at the College bookshop on Holborn St.; no luck. Withdrew £15, browsed in T.O. Record S., then went to the Art Gallery. There saw an interesting exhibition (Alan Rob and friend) and some good prints.

Back home, I ate with Dick & Malcolm, then we joined Bull for coffee. He told a joke about car-brakes which was quite funny. Afterwards he gave me complete freedom with Sarah, disowning rights to her (she only slept in his room, not with him). What she says is another matter, of course!

I got virtually the last seat for Monty Python. Funniest bit was Lord Mayor visiting Funeral Parlour. The rest of the evening I read and enjoyed Pope, making witty notes of my reactions. Byron returned from the library, we had a brief conference in the kitchen.

1979

January

Tuesday

30

After breakfast I spent a leisurely morning listening to Eno & Sides 2 of Low & "Heroes", while ostensibly reading Pope's 'Rape of the Lock', though I actually read only about twenty lines. Jessie's Hoover jarred, but a couple of cups of Assam made me feel mellow, to counter the tenseness I felt about making an impression on Sarah.

A little snow fell, but the morning was then sunny and very pleasant. I nodded to Sarah in the lobby but the tall American girl sat between us in the lecture theatre, so we didn't speak at all. My tenseness lingered, despite its redundancy. A good lunch, however, dispelled it; stewed steak – excellent, with soft potatoes. And Sarah is much too old for me anyway... Bill, meanwhile, is chasing the mouse in my English tutorial, 'Trishia. God knows why!

Psychology ended with Mme. Frazer shooting the death-ray glare at Nicky Campbell & co. for talking. She's a very choleric woman. I strode home via Seaton (my gesture towards fitness) and bought 3 yoghurts in the shop before switching on the music to while away valuable hours.

Ate with Byron; he's pretty silent just now. The evening was spent in meditation – I planned a story taking place on 'Pauline' (guess who)'s stair. Dick came round, we talked about this and joints til Steve came back, then I tested D. for Intro./Extraversion. It's getting popular – I should charge!

An argument with Bill; whether the details of a simile can refer directly to the idea in the text, and also whether epic simile is the same as modern simile, only more detailed. I say they can and it is. 'Sohrab & Rustum' was the source.

1979

January

Wednesday

31

Bundled my linen out of the door then went for my shower. Breakfast was paltry – no ‘main course’. I finished off Pope’s ‘Rape of the Lock’, and then walked to High Street. I looked at the Art Books in Bissets then met Bill before going into my tutorial. Paul was in a fairly good mood, and Fatty was absent, so there was breathing-space. (Nasty!) I enjoyed myself.

I hopped on the bus for 9½p, and went for lunch at the Union ref. – terrible. I met John D., and rashly said I would review the Troggs, then had to go to the Gaudie office to explain that I would be in Edinburgh that night. Then I went to T.O.R.S. and had my ‘I’m a Man of no Mean Mien’ badge made. Bought ‘Granite City 4’ and browsed around jazz & instrumental records for ages without buying anything.

Back ‘ome, I put on Eno & Talking Heads before supper with Byron. ‘Den, I took my story, ‘Profile’, round to Mary, and arranged to meet her on the 7 o’clock bus for the Cine Soc. I forgot to pay for the bus, so busy was I looking for Mary. But she and Bridgid didn’t arrive until fifteen minutes into the film, Joyce’s ‘Ulysses’. Lots of verbal obscenity and touching insight into certain human predicaments. I talked with Mary about holidays, mostly during our long wait for the bus. Got Gaudie on return; my piece quite prominent. Byron letrasetted a ‘Do the Strand’ badge while I read Gaudie. Read over tomorrow’s Psych class experiments in bed.

1979

February

Thursday

1

I felt perversely morose this morning, perhaps because of a dream I cannot remember. Anyway, I was thinking about Paula much of the time, and beginning to enjoy my melancholia, for it was a beautiful, if cold, morning. I walked through Seaton Park to my Psychology Practical. Sat in A.L.T. lobby for some time, then to Lab Class. I was Subject and Gordon Experimenter for a series of tests of short term memory.

Rutherford delivered a solid lecture on Wordsworth’s life & times – quite enjoyable. Then I lunched on Spaghetti Bolognese. I returned to the ALT for a long spell of watching people coming and going; Caroline (9.9) came with some fellow Xtians to set up the ‘Who’s Jesus?’ bookstall. This must have set me in a Philosophical state of mind, as later is revealed. Symons was exceedingly dull in Psychology – his Humanitarianism, which I so much admired at start, is becoming like a caricature. I walked home, receiving a pinch and a punch for the first of the month when I caught myself on the barbed-wire fence at Hillhead and fell on a patch of ice!

After supper with Byron, I fell to reading Kafka. Presently I began Philosophising and wrote down my views on religion – existentialist God... This gelled into a letter to Gaudie, which I delivered by hand to John Drummond. It is ambiguous, lighthearted and obscure. The whole flat assembled in the kitchen and a really good argument ensued, on Religion, Absolute Truth, and Individual v. Society. Byron left after a while, Bill didn’t get involved, but Steve, Graham and I went on until 12.15. Existentialism ruled OK.

1979

February

2

Friday

Too late for breakfast, I had a yoghurt and toast then spent some time listening to the Heads before starting work on my lab report. I took some care over it, then took it with me to King's for my English lecture – Prof. Rutherford on Pastoral poetry. I was too busy thinking about Religion to pay close attention though. Before the lecture I had a conversation with Christian Union people about the emotional content of belief, etc. – a reiteration of last night's kitchen debate.

Lunched at the Central ref. after completing my lab report in the library (with an absurd suggestion about conducting an experiment with the Subject upside-down!), then spoke to Bill and Trishia outside Psychology. Sat with 'Trishia (no great thrill) during Social Psych., which was concerned with Conformity. (Interesting slip; 'Women are more interested in social standing than in men'). I stood in the bus queue for a few minutes then walked home. Packed very little then caught the bus, feeling happy, and made my way to the station. The train journey was spent beside the buffet in a hot, smoky atmosphere near soldiers on leave. The light was not bright, but I read 'Letters to Felice'. Mother met me at the station and drove me home. There I met Alison, and talked about her father & her course. Got entangled in several arguments. When Mark came home, had one with him over 'Cogito ergo sum'. Later, when Father returned from Glasgow, discussed with him whether there is Absolute Truth, and whether C.E.S. [cogito ergo sum] is tautology. Saw Freudian French Film.

1979

February

3

Saturday

Mother flung wide the curtains at 11 o'clock, awakening me from a sleep made necessary by the attentions of the kitten last night. Mark was at school, Emma visiting a dramatically-minded friend who lives in Fettes (and with whom she & some other girls swam in the Fettes pool!). Mark's lunch coincided with my breakfast. Father was away shooting. I walked uptown to The Edinburgh Bookshop and Virgin, where I bought the Pere Ubu 'Datapanik' EP, and Menzies, where I bought Kafka's 'Castle'. This almost brokified me (for ready cash, anyway).

While Mark and Alison watched England v. Scotland rugger, I listened to and recorded music, then retired to the breakfast room to read the new adventures of K.. Alison came down after the match (a draw) and we had a long talk about literature, with uncomfortable pauses while we both read. I wasn't happy with the conversation – she did most of the talking; we never really became spontaneous and felt. (?!)

Father returned during dinner (delicious fish and saucy potatoes) and we had some stumbling, inadequate family unity.

I spent much time poring over maps of Europe.

T.V. intervened. I watched '2 Ronnies' while recording Wire, then went back to Kafka during S.&H. [Starsky & Hutch]. Then Father, Mother and I talked about Wordsworth, then Art's purposes generally. Father was unwilling to argue for 'sport'; here endeth a previously infallible point of communication? Parkinson then fragments of a Czech film.

1979

February

Sunday

4

Powerful dreams kept me asleep until elevenish, when I joined Alison and co. at the breakfast-table to pore over the Observer (pretty poor). Father typed his habitual Sunday fishing article, then we all went to the car for a traditional Sunday drive to Dirleton.

Having decided on the beach instead of the castle, we disembarked in the car park to find Sandy Marr & kids – he seemed rather undemonstrative. Met his wife later. He spoke of terrible weather on the rig. Alison, Mark and I strode out along the beach, then we all grouped together and photographs were taken. We scabbled over the rocks and made our way back to the car, pausing only for a long-jump contest on the sand. Mark took the Volvo round the field once, then I took over and drove home in dazzling sunlight, passing the ruins of Portobello Power Station.

And then the sustained lethargy of Sunday afternoon. We hung about the breakfast room, then went upstairs, and TV was perpetrated. I read Kafka, Jung and Oxford Companion to Music. At 5 I went along to McOnomy to look at the tape & record decks, but on my return Father conceded the Akai to me. He and Mother went for dinner to the Bairds' – a dull evening, apparently. I put pies in the oven for our dinner here, then listened to Heads and "Heroes" and read about Schoenberg. Mark fell into a morosely lethargic state, Emma tidied manically. On TV were Film '79 and South Bank (on RSC). Father gave me £25 on his return.

1979

February

Monday

5

The horrendous climax of a nightmare (described elsewhere) awoke me in the painted room. I ate breakfast and had words with Mother and Alison before lifting my hugely heavy suitcase into the Volvo. Father dropped me at the Station. Our train was transferred to Platform 19.

I had a table to myself. Armed with 'The Castle', I read little of it but spent much time resting my head on my arms and contemplating the proverbial navel. I wrestled with my burden and finally got a (Volvo) taxi to Hillhead. I spent much time setting up the stereo and putting my room in order. I'd decided to skip lectures. I made Macaroni in delicious Tomato Sauce for lunch, then caught the bus to Town and went to Bruce Miller's where I ordered 'Pierrot Lunaire' by Schoenberg. I bought a lead and later an adapter then returned as far as Bisset's to buy the Fontana Modern Master on Schoenberg.

Miles of music all afternoon. Bill then Byron then Steve came into my room. McMaster has opted out of Berlin for our holiday.

Ate, then read my Kafka & Schoenberg books. After a while I was able to get into W'Worth's 'Michael' and read it at one sitting. Took Byron's and my own clothes to the launderette. Then wrote a poem and did Expressionist doodles.

1979

February

6

Tuesday

I had lots of slices of toast and yoghurt for breakfast. Music interrupted Jessie's Hoovering. Then I walked down for my English lecture. I had to borrow a pen to write notes on the introductory Burns lecture, delivered by a Mr. Crawford.

Afterwards I retired to the library, where I glanced through German magazines then looked at Philosophy journals! Mme. Frazer's Psychology passed drearily. To increase individual v. societal tension, I took no notes but read 'The Castle' instead. Afterwards I ran for the bus and went downtown. There I meandered aimlessly about, looking in bookshops for a map of Europe and spending much time over Art Books in one shop. Bought a toothbrush & paste, glanced into TORS, bought this pen, then returned.

A stomach upset made me reluctant to eat dinner, but I went over late and enjoyed it, alone.

Lots of music during the evening, without much intellectual or spiritual stimulus. Byron asked me to come out for a drink, but I foolishly refused. Instead, I read about 30 pages of Kafka and listened to Kraftwerk. As a result I feel guilty, listless, etc. Ate lots too – Macaroni, bread, Cuppa Soup... filling a spiritual gap with physical food.

1979

February

7

Wednesday

I spent most of the morning in bed, then breakfasted, checked my pigeonhole for the letter I am beginning to give up hoping for, and walked briskly to my English tutorial.

'Michael' was today's topic. I had not thought carefully enough about the poem to contribute anything wildly helpful, but Paul & I did have an interesting aside about categorisation (should be descriptive, not prescriptive). Paul called Gordon mysteriously aside afterwards.

I ate a snack lunch at the Union then hung around Gaudie until people began to fill the office, leaving with my brief to review the Ivor Cutler concert on Saturday. Rather aimlessly I walked up Schoolhill and on to 'Happy Trails', where I browsed through records. Then I circled around some very dreich streets around George Street in the damp snow. Looked into Arnott's. A depressing excursion. Caught the 20 home on High Street, numb with cold.

'Gaudie' was out; my letter in pride of place. I went for supper with Byron; our lack of communication was marked. Spent the early evening trying desperately to trammel my mind on Psychology. It wandered to Erich Heller's 'Kafka', though.

I caught the 2 bus to the Odeon and there saw 'The Duellists'. It was very pretty, like an ad for Martell Brandy, quite touching, but had a great hollow centre. There was no new Truth in it, no unnameable emotional empathy. Good entertainment, though. Bus home, and thoughts of Miss G.S.

1979

February

Thursday

8

Without showering, I ate a rhubarb yoghurt and an orange and walked to my Psych. tutorial. Gordon was E. and I was S., trying to remember long lists of numbers. Afterwards we went to have our photographs taken for Psychology stimulæ in experiments. We went one by one into the room, wearing ridiculous green overalls.

English was dull as Burns-water again; not so much Rabbie as the lecturer, though. Lunched with Erich Heller's juicy philosophy of life, then repaired to Psych. My mind wandered a great deal to philosophical matters (that sounds like a contradiction in terms!), and I was, as they say, dead to the world. I chose my waiting-room in the form of the Taylor building seats, and spent an hour and a half watching people come and go (including a mop-top alcoholic-depressive-intellectual-weed), before going for my dental appointment.

Painless jag, cringe-making drilling and soothing filling. I rewarded myself for the experience later in Bisset's by buying 'Expressionism' (£2.50, Thames & Hudson). Walked home and had an indulgent, frozen-jawed evening leafing through this art-book and imbibing Strongbow.

Broke this session at 10.40 to watch Omnibus on Lillian Hellman. Rather sad, but excellent T.V. – I don't respect her very much, but she's a very good, honest portrayal of futility despite achievement.

1979

February

Friday

9

Down at the Dentist's at eleven o'clock I had 3, yes 3 anaesthetic jags and a slightly traumatic drill session, followed by a cleaning. But mes dents have now a clean bill of health & a clean smell of breath. The frozen jaw, right up to my left ear, lingered until about 3.45, and made lunch very unpleasant, with a tongue that felt like a sensitive wad of cotton wool.

Burns in English – or rather Scots; a stirring tape was played of 'Love & Freedom' (you know, the most famous one, very bawdy). I'm sure Mr. Crawford had to brush away several tears.

Aforementioned lunch in Cent.ref.caf then, no, before that I had taken the bus downtown and got Schoenberg's 'Pierrot Lunaire'. Putting it on Steve's deck on my return from SocialPsych, I was rather disappointed – very waily, not v. emotive for me (Expressionism is in the eye of the beholder, I guess).

Zo... Zupper with Zimon and zen to work on the allegory I conceived last night and synopted during lectures today. It went well, 9 pages so far, about six more to come, I think. It's better than the last one...

And onto Friday night frivolities at the Union. I followed Mr Acton around, then we went up to the Hall (after I had had a long chat with Tina, mostly silence, but goodnatured). After Fingerprintz, Lene Lovich was inspiring, maternal, ironic, and damn good fun. S. & I caught the bus home, making comments on its passengers, then went to Flat 54 where we had a raucous time (I successfully impersonated a fly on the wall), Andy tickling Caroline (or was it wee Jan?) and everyone being generally bawdy & cheerful. Acton seemed rather neurotic and out of things.

1979

February

Saturday

10

Byron awoke me from a dream (recorded in my little book), and I ate breakfast of bacon and greasy chips at lunchtime, over in the Central ref.

I caught the bus downtown and went along to the Other Record Shop, where I bought Eno's 'After the Heat' and the Lene Lovich single for Byron, then went and bought a bottle of Grand Vin for the Flat 54 party.

Returned on the no. 2 bus, then taped my album on Steve's deck when the people staying in his room came along. I wrote a little more of my story, but did no work, despite the abundance I should be doing. S&I had supper, and then (good grief, already?) I went to the Union and hung around the main hall. At 8.35 IVOR CUTLER came on, and for the next hour and a half amused us all greatly from his stage at the side of the hall. It was well worth sitting on the floor for, the only trouble is what to write in Gaudie about him?

Byron and I prepared for then went to the Flat 54 party at about 11. My wine was quickly consumed. I hung around the kitchen, drinking all sorts of potent concoctions, then circulated and talked to Malcolm, Caroline ('Hello, Goodbye'), Mary, etc., and, later, fabricated much insanity with Mark (present last night in 54). Callum was openly bisexual, and we all had a great time. I left, aged 19, at twenty to four. Then Byron & I had a lengthy post mortem of the party in our kitchen.

(P.S. – After Ivor Cutler, met Jenny Brown, former monitor.)

1979

February

Sunday

11

I dreamt of last night's party all night (I think), and then got up at midday.

I lunched with Byron, then returned to my room after coffee. I spent a long time writing and rewriting my review of Ivor Cutler last night (entitled 'Priceless Cutlery'), while listening to Brian Eno tapes. Displeased by the poor quality of 'After the Heat', I gave it and a tape to Graham to take to his friend Simon to re-record.

Tea was the usual Sunday affair of pie, beans and chips, which I ate with Byron. Then I sang my lungs out to 'Stay' and 'Young Americans' before catching the bus to the Union for 'American Graffiti'. An entertaining enough film, I suffered a bit from dislike of the culture it depicts, but Richard Dreyfuss was good. I bought a Generation X ticket in the shop afterwards. Felt very unconfident afterwards, or perhaps it was more a feeling of valuelessness.

Simon came round (Graham's Simon) and I went with him & G. to his room in Keith House to hear the trouble with my record. I shall take it back tomorrow; it's badly cut. S.'s friend John called in. I ate biscuits, conversed poorly.

Returned, and spent over two hours and much effort over my lab report, so that I have tomorrow morning clear.

1979

February

Monday

12

I had breakfast in the ref. for the first time in weeks. Byron joined me there. Then I wrapped up 'After the Heat' and went on the bus downtown. I walked up to Schoolhill and went to International Stationers, deciding to spend my £30 birthday money (and then some) on a typewriter. I looked at an S.C.M. Courier, then bought it; £49.95, nice styling.

Leaving the typewriter in the shop, I went to deposit my cheques at the bank, then went to The Other Record Shop, where I was given a new copy of the Eno album. Bought tea in Chivas, picked up the SCM and went home. There I typed the first couple of pages of my new story, 'A Fish out of Water' as a test. Went to King's. A new man lectured fairly well on Keats. After an Agribuilding lunch, I went to the library and scribbled thoughts on my essay, due Friday. I sat with (well, beside) Ronnie Brown during a boring PsychoSymons. Walked home and listened to lots of music.

Tea with Byron, just after 5, then punk anthems. Bill & Byron had a mock-row, Byron coming off much the worse.

He and I then bussed down to the Union to see a female Dramsoc production of Sylvia Plath's '3 Women' (with Kate Symington acting!) and then an awful play 'Fish something something' which went on too long. We had a drink in the dungeon during the interval. I rushed home to see 'Tonight', which had a studio interview with David Bowie & a clip from 'Gigolo'; funny, unassuming guy, likeable.

1979

February

Tuesday

13

My traditional orange & black cherry yoghurt breakfast was celebrated this morning, then I walked diagonally through Seaton Park. In Bisset's I bought a couple of Tipp-ex packets, then went to Dr. Gilmore's second Keats lecture, in which he enthused about 'The Eve of St. Agnes'. My concentration was very low, so I waited in the nippy cold for the bus and went home, planning to work on my essay.

Instead, a letter from Paula was waiting for me in my pigeonhole – I could have summersaulted up the path to my room for joy! The letter was short and gloomy, but really enjoyable. I spent several hours writing a reply, a good one, I think, then posted it with an 11p stamp (coloured vibrant red). Lunch (before I wrote the letter) was in the cafe.

Unable to work on my essay, I typed my 'Fish out of Water' story before and after supper with Byron. I spent about twenty minutes waiting for a telephone then spoke to Father about Bowie interview etc., Mark about Lovich and Cutler, and Emma about Paula. I finished 'Fish' and read it over; it isn't bad at all. Read 'Profile' – so-so, don't like the atmosphere.

Read Keats' 'Eve' and half listened to John Peel, but no Roxy Music. Byron was disgusted by OGWT. Gaudie came out – 'Bicarb' misprinted in my Cutler review as 'Ricard'! Gnng!

1979

February

Wednesday

14

The breakfast bacon tasted suspiciously like human flesh, so I flung it away in disgust. No Valentine cards awaited me, I'm pleased to say. Those who did get them were mostly the victims of practical jokes – real lovers wouldn't be caught dead sending 'em.

Keats' 'Eve of St. A.' was great fun at Paul's tutorial – we divided into the Romeo Porphyro and Peeping Porphyro factions, Paul pronouncing neither and both groups right at the end, and thus giving Johnny Keats the benefit of both doubts.

I caught the townbound 20 afterwards and had a private interview with John; next week I'm reviewing Generation X and Eno's 'After the Heat'. And those naughty Shapiros are still after me – they should be rehearsing instead.

I went to les magazines – Boots first. To combat my body's deterioration I bought Optrex, and linctus for the affliction that's had me coughing cats and dogs all term. Then to the station, where I whimsically had photos taken. Home via Pentangle, a temporary refuge from the merciless cold.

Still no Valentines, thank goodness... I think. Supper with S., then records, then groundwork for my essay. I did a washing at the Launderette, eating a second dinner 'cos I was starving (must be the effects of that human bacon). I then took over an hour to read under 500 words of Psychology lab-book, my thoughts straying ever to my suffering art school girl.

1979

February

Thursday

15

At 8.38 I jumped out of bed, pulled on my clothes without showering, and, having missed the King's bus, walked very briskly. I found I had time to buy and read an NME (article on Simple Minds), and then sat in the empty lab some time til I realised it began (as always) at 10a.m., not 9! I had breakfast in the Snack Bar, listening to Bowie's 'Can You Hear Me?'.

I was E. in a series of experiments like last week's, only, for Gordon, more difficult. In the interval between this & English I went to the library and located the Arnold section. After Keats 3, I had lunch beside some conferencees in the Agricafe and returned to the library. There I immersed myself in Preface & Crits. of Arnold, being a bad boy by ignoring my Psychology lecture (the second missed this week, I'm afraid). My knowledge of Arnold's theories was greatly increased, but I'm afraid it may dominate my essay. When I returned home in the cold, cold air, I cloistered myself in with two packets of biscuits and began to type...

A rough & half a smooth copy of my completed copy later, I broke to record Roxy's 'Trash' on Peel, then went to see an excellent film on Rene Magritte in Omnibus. Saw Byron Ragless, getting from him my Eno album & tape, then played Roxy to Byron Acton before completing my clean draft essay. I don't think it's very good, probably B+ for plagiarism.

1979

February

Friday

16

Until 11.30 I dreamt of driving the Volvo on a family holiday in Europe, then I quickly washed and dressed and walked to King's. English was Wordsworth; introductory. I then ran hungrily for lunch, sitting at the unofficially designated Staff table. Afterwards I have Paul Schlicke my English essay and then bought a 'Listener' and a huge, pithy orange at McHardy's Post Office. I ate them at the Taylor 'bridge' chairs (actually I didn't eat the Listener!). Social Psych was spent mostly reading the Listener, then I walked home feeling elated.

I listened to 'After the Heat' and read my 'Expressionism' book (mostly about Kirchner today), glad to be free of immediate work. Suppered with Byron, not very hungry after consuming lots of yoghurt. Spent the evening in a gradually diminishing state of pleasure (boredom and guilt for not working began to intrude), then a political candidate paid me a call.

I reread Paula's letter a couple of times, then went for a walk round the boundaries of halls in the lightly falling snow, ending in the Snack Bar.

At 10.30 went to see 'Love in the Afternoon', a fairly good French moral tale, though hardly qualifying for the 'adult' label the BBC gave it! More powdery snow is falling...

1979

February

Saturday

17

Toast, Early Grey tea, Swiss Cheese, and a Jaffa Orange comprised breakfast. At 11ish I knocked on Byron's door, reminding him about our proposed art gallery visit. We caught the bus, then went for lunch to Jaws. I had peppery potato soup & salad, then spilt a pot of peppermint tea, causing a table of ethnics to turn around from their wholemeal hamburgers or whatever. Byron & I then visited Oddbins, where we browsed. I bought a half-bottle of Liebfraumilch.

At the art gallery we drank fig coffee and saw a children's exhibition. After browsing around the shop for a while I looked round the 'Aberdeen Sketch Club' show; there were one or two really good pieces, one litho, costing £10, called 'Skylight' I could almost have bought (if I had £10 to spare). Byron & I parted; I went to Bisset's & bought 'Metamorphosis' then home.

I wrote my 'After the Heat' review. Supper as usual, then I read Kafka's story 'The Burrow'. Bored, I gouged the cork out of my wine bottle with Bill's screwdriver and proceeded to inebriate myself.

At 11 I went to the Union and walked into the Generation X set; exciting atmosphere, poor music. On the bus back I spoke to Jan Newell, standing by the exit door.

Wrote my piece (two drafts) on my return; a mixed review.

1979

February

Sunday

18

Though I dressed and showered with some haste, I missed lunch, so I happily made myself macaroni and tomato sauce in the kitchen.

I had a quiet, solitary afternoon in which I read to the unsatisfactory end of Kafka's 'The Burrow', and then I turned to the end of 'Letters to Felice', at first hoping for some reference to the story, but then getting caught up in the letters. They were fairly tragic in mood, and got me thinking about my own life, my inexperience, immaturity, etc. I wrote three pages of thinly-disguised self-thought posing as the dilemma of a Law Student, then went with Byron to supper. When I returned I began a thankyou letter plus to Granny, breaking off to catch the bus to the Union. Due to snow, the film was cancelled, so I bussed straight home again. I sat, by the way, with Judy Leslie on the way down. I finished my letter to Granny, telling her about Paula.

At about 10.30 Byron & I went down to Hillhead Bar; very hot and crowded. I spoke to nobody but enjoyed the atmosphere. Hated my Pernod and Orange, though!

Back in my room I listened to music and flirted with my lab report for Psych. Did expt. 1, then threw it in. Ironed a few clothes and did exercises; a new kick, muscle-building!

1979

February

Monday

19

Fish fingers and beans comprised b'fast, and accompanying it were a cheque-card & a postcard from Mother in Hong Kong, posted a week ago.

I hopped on the town-bound bus, handed my two contributions to John Drummond at Gaudie, then went for money to the Cashline machine. I wandered about, looking into Woolworth's and Arnott's, but feeling rather depressed in the grey cold and wet. To save 10p (my money is running low), I walked to King's up King St., finding it more tiring than I'd expected. I went into the library, and after leafing through a book of Macke paintings, wrote the last of my lab report.

I went to see Paul Schlicke, and there got my essay back – C+! – and had a talk about it; I didn't give Arnold enough credit, and was misled by my theories, as I'd anticipated. Disappointing, but a justified mark. English was on 'Maud'. Lunch as usual, then I spent much time looking at the syllabuses for Eng. 1, 2 & 3, & Hons., wondering about my choice of course. Psychology was vaguely diverting; Mel lay asleep at the back, rather daringly! Home, read some of 'Great Wall of China' and rested.

After supper with S., saw the News (for China-Vietnam war scam) and, later, the Kenny Everett Video Show. Spent the rest of the evening reading 'Maud', and quite enjoying it! Perhaps a bit overblown, but well expressed.

1979

February

Tuesday

20

Helicopters awoke me!

The new regime continues... BREAKFAST! Also mail; another postcard from Mother, predating yesterday's, from Bangkok this time, a bank statement, and a Frantic catalogue, in which I located Brian Eno's elusive 'Music for Airports', which I'll order.

Bus to King's as usual, just in time for the second Tennyson lecture, given extra meaning by the fact that I'd read most of the poem! Lunch at the Agri. building, then to Bisset's, to look at Philosophy books. At the library I searched further for Schopenhauer and Nietzsche and Freud, locating none of them. I was fairly antagonistic towards Mrs. Frazer, lecturing on visual illusions and unable to draw even the simplest figures, still wrapping her tortuous scientific jargon around perfectly manifest concepts.

Bus home (it's too cold to walk) and a restful afternoon, almost falling asleep at one point. I ate alone, able to listen to people's conversations. Afterwards, having read Kafka's 'Meditations' all day, I felt the need to write a short, monochromatic story about the dinner queue.

Listened to too much music, phoned home (Father promised money... yummy!) then read the rest of 'Maud'. Caught the end of a programme on Tom Robinson (yuk!) and then the beginning of Whistletest (Joe Jackson; diverting), before sharing tea & recollections with Byron, then playing Wire's 'Heartbeat'.

1979

February

Wednesday

21

Visiting Bisset's before my tutorial, I discovered and rapidly bought Franz Kafka's 'Diaries'. Read snippets throughout the day. This, my own diary, is, by comparison, hopelessly inadequate; preserving the days colourless in cold-storage for future reminiscences, when their repetition and shallowness will make them useless. I may open another one for the annotation of thoughts and feelings...

We discussed the exam in Eng. Tut., Paul reading out previous years' questions.

Then queued beside Louise Tait, sharing her conversation with another man/boy (what do I call myself?), then, going to Jaws for lunch, stood in the queue near her as she talked to a different boy/man. A brief encounter with a blonde girl in the queue; a pleasing break from the stony isolation of public behaviour. Good food, like tramps', but, to the mind anyway, satisfying.

Usual reticence with John D. in paper office. His 'enthusiastic friendliness' now just annoys me; it only covers an arrogance not justified in anyone. Assigned Friday's band.

After supper, proposed to Byron that we see 'Superman'. We did. I squirmed and grinned, finding it sniggerishly funny, boring, dangerous, ironic, unpleasant and touching by turn, often simultaneously. My opinion of humanity, having seen its ultimate hero, was severely diminished for a while.

Read Gaudie while flat talked politics. Abandoned lab-book unread for Schoenberg & Kafka.

1979

February

Thursday

22

Inner and outer weather were at odds; I was tormented by sore eyes, headache and cold symptoms, while outside the weather was really splendid; sunny and warm.

Not having read the Lab Report made Psych. Practical a tedious affair, pressing buttons when lights or numbers appeared. I was pretty hungry at the end, so I went to the Snack Bar for a cheese roll and an orange. Steve was there, trying to convince me that I should vote. I refused.

Alison R.'s Irishman was our lecturer for the Intro. to Yeats. Much common ground with last year's schoolwork, but interesting. Afterwards caught the bus, spending my last 10p on the ticket to town, to withdraw £15 on the money Father has hopefully put into my Edinburgh account. Then to T.O.R.S., enquiring about Eno. In Tesco bought Edam cheese, apple juice and two juicy Jaffas. I took them to a quiet, sunny street corner and there had a Spring picnic lunch, reading NME.

Back home I crawled, fully clothed, into bed and slept for an hour and a half. Rather groggily went alone for tea. I wrote my knocking story ('Two Dialogues'), conceived last night, until 9.45, then went to see a BBC 2 architecture prog. A bit of 'Omnibus' (Bainbridge black humour) then 'The Guardian', then back to the flat, bubbling over with happiness and energy. Spoke to Byron, unable to keep a straight face. Crowded kitchen. Graham H. read my story, saying 'Good... novel...'

1979

February

Friday

23

I went to the Snack Bar for breakfast, reading over the Insurance Policy which arrived for me. Then, running for the bus across slimy mud, I fell flat on my back, to the amusement of the passengers, and hurt my left wrist quite badly. I staggered back to the flat, not realising that my specs were still lying in the mud. Felt weak and unfortunately missed a crucial Yeats lecture. I had a Snack Bar lunch then walked in the Spring sunshine to Psychology, buying Yeats' poems in B.'s. Sociopsych. was really interesting and funny: about media violence.

Walked home and spent the afternoon with music, Kafka's diaries, and my own short stories. Graham H. & Steve took most of these away to read, to my delight.

Ate with the 25s. Read more K. & marked the Radio Times. Watched the ITN news at 10 for China scam; not helpful. 'Any Questions' predicts 20th Century's direst hour in the near future, to do with the Middle East.

I caught the 10.45 Union bus and sat through a very boring set of 'Mowgli & the Donuts'. The Valves were fairly good, like Rezillos only much inferior.

Wrote a reasonable review on return.

1979

February

Saturday

24

I met Byron at breakfast and ate greaseburger and tomato.

Later he (Byron, not the greaseburger) accompanied me into town and we walked along Union Street, past the queue of library book buyers at the hall. We went into the obligatory Other Record Shop, where Byron finally bought Roxy Music's 'Trash'. Then we split, me going to Chivas, where I mistakenly bought packet tea instead of bags. Bought 'Car' in Menzies. At Crawfords I got some warm, deliciously-scented bread.

Back home, I had a slice of bread and a cup of tea for lunch, then lots of Strongbow. It may have been this, combined with a headache, cold, cough, grogginess, apathy and a sore wrist, that made me go to sleep for the rest of the afternoon. I thought about my relationship with Paula, deciding that no conclusions could yet be reached (is this my philosophy of life?).

Rather unwillingly I ate the evening meal, then returned to listen to 'Any Questions' & 'Critics' Forum'.

I took some washing to the launderette and while it was on watched a film of a Hemingway short story. Pretty good. Read the papers, rearranged my lecture notes, read a little Yeats, then opened 'Expressionism' and took it to bed early (that means 11.30).

1979

February

Sunday

25

This page gapes wide and blank before me like all the work I still have to do. I'm abandoning my lab report to write this.

It was a sunny day to begin with, but clouded over and chilled later. After lunch I decided to go for a walk. I went round the path by the River Don, crossed the bridge and went to the top of the hill, to the cluster of Beech trees which top the view from my window. Ever in search of countryside, I crossed very muddy ground and threaded my way through housing estates in various stages of completion before leaving the road and walking along a track beside a wood.

That was the country part, for at the end of the track was another housing estate, then two industrial estates. By now I was very cold and tired, so it was a relief to look down a side street and see Hillhead quite nearby.

Symptoms today were earache, a pain in the liver and one in the throat, as well as all the usual ones. The wrist is healing, though.

After supper I worked a bit at my lab report, but, because I don't understand it, had to procrastinate.

Talked to Byron in kitchen for some time, about schooldays, drugs, acquaintances, etc.

1979

February

Monday

26

My brain must have been as scattered as seeds this Spring morning, for I got on the bus without my Gaudie contribution. I walked home from King's then caught the bus, with it, in time to catch John. I got a Cashline statement telling me my new fortune is £2, then went to the SRC to research holiday work in France. Then I left the addresses I'd copied out in the office. Oh, before that I completed my lab report in the Neil lounge; a very crumby write-up.

English was excellent, the last on Yeats. After it Mel W. hovered behind me. I went to eat, then, in the library, read the New Yorker (Diane Keaton). I sat, at the beginning of Psych., in the same place as English, beside a bag. Mel W. came and took it away when she saw that I was sitting there! An old skeleton turns in its grave.

I walked home and rested in my now habitual 'Siesta'. I was afflicted by the collywobbles, on top of the symptoms aforementioned. I felt pretty gloomy, and the weather obligingly turned wet, which made me feel better.

As did Kenny Everett & John Cleese, the latter's 'Fawlty Towers' being the funniest thing I've ever seen on TV, ending with J.C. leapfrogging over the floor in front of the Psychiatrist.

Read Joyce's 'Portrait' and spoke to the 25s. Bats or Owls are screeching outside.

1979

February

Tuesday

27

A completely unfounded hope of a letter from P. fired me this morning. Of course, nothing was there. I lashed out 10p on the bus ride to High Street, and went to English. A Dr. Hewitt gave very ham, impassioned renditions of snippets of Classic Drama: an entertaining wet, like a highbrow Larry Grayson.

Trying to break the regime of habit, I went to the Central Ref Caf, only to see why I chose the Agri. building to eat. The place was packed, people passed round leaflets, there was a noisy hustings going on (everyone promoting themselves, doing their opponents down), and the food was cardboard, soaked in repulsive grease.

I thought about getting a driving job in the holidays.

Holding a door for Mel W. prompted 'Thanks', but I cursed myself for not doing it better, and walked out of Psychology despairing of myself.

A quiet afternoon with loud music. Supper. Then to the Union to see Stoppard's 'Travesties', fairly interesting, Steve throwing a chair onto the stage, X Bones being prompted, but some boring or trite bits. And from seeing Joyce played onstage I returned to read him, a moving section of 'Portrait' (Girl on beach = symbol of Daedalus' own quest, not priesthood). Old Bowie footage of tour on Whistletest, also boring 'Red Noise'.

1979

February

Wednesday

28

A really beautiful morning. I walked through the trees above the river to my tutorial. We discussed Maud again, covering some useful points but not all. I lunched in the Ref. Caf. then went to see the film of 'Oedipus the King' starring Christopher Plummer; it was filmed at Epidavros, and was very good; I became pretty involved with it. I went to Bissets afterwards and spent my last 65p on the Penguin copy of the play.

Downtown, I discovered that my account is in the red £13! Penniless, I had to walk home, though the weather made it pleasant. Passed 'herds' of Starlings (as Acton says).

I began to read the books I took out from the New Library at lunchtime on my arrival home – Freud's case-histories are fascinating.

I phoned home, reminding Father of his pledge. He said he'd been going round with my bank a/c no. wondering whose it was! He promises me £10 in the post. I shall go home on Friday in time to see Mother, home from China.

Spent the evening with Freud & Joyce to the soundtrack (courtesy Byron & Graham) of the Stranglers & the Bee Gees. Saw Arena Cinema and returned, much fraught with the thought of how to impress P. next holidays. Contemplating myself in the mirror, I concluded it well nigh impossible.

1979

March

Thursday

1

Heavens! Another sunny morning! I got Father's fivers (3) in the post, as well as a cheque book from the bank.

I went to my lab class, getting a poor E grade for my last write-up. Gordon was a bit more forthcoming than usual, if only with chiding questions. After the lab (which consisted of seeing letters on a tachistoscope) I went to McHardy's for a MM, with an article on Roxy Music which I read in the seedy cafe next door.

We saw some slides in English, which was about Greek amphitheatres. Dr. Hewitt was as amusing as yesterday, pointing out in one slide 'That man in the front, you can see his buskins... oh, no, you can't see his buskins,' without explaining what 'buskins' were.

I went downtown afterwards, in TORS buying Bowie's long-promised (my... 'sed) 'Young Americans'. I didn't vote.

Returned home. Ate alone soon after 5. Bought a revolting pork sausage. Wrote a page of story (about an old man), and read K.'s diaries, then saw a repeat of Omnibus' film on two French artists living in London (very moving ending), but didn't do the lab report I should've.

Interesting conversation with Byron about relationships – some embarrassment, but some real communication.

1979

March

Friday

2

The weather was quite shockingly mild and humid this sunny morning. I was disappointed to find no letter for me. I walked to English (detailed study of Oedipus Rex), then walked back again for another macaroni lunch at the flat, annoyed by Graham B.'s silent presence amidst the very loud vacancy of Radio 1. Deciding to catch the 2.35 train, I missed Social Psychology (despite its being the most interesting lecture) and caught the bus to catch the train. (That wriggled & jiggled inside.)

Sat with a student from the college, who did Community Studies. We talked about the practicality of our courses, our aims in the future, and theories of child-conditioning – the sort of conversation I would like to have with lots of 'strangers', but I never seem to be able to start them. Read Joyce.

Edinburgh v. windy, clouded over. I met Rod, making an appointment for 10.30a.m. Mother was just at the front door when I arrived home. Inside, she told me about her China trip, and the troop movements of the war, in Nankin, etc. I tried on a Chinese coat she gave me; quite impressive.

The cats were an annoyance during the quiet evening; mysterious poops kept appearing. I listened to music, gave up on the Polish 'Story of a Sin'. Felt the house very dead, lacking company. (Mark skiing, Alison at home, Emma babysitting.)

1979

March

Saturday

3

To my surprise I woke up in Edinburgh. It was 8.30, and I had time to walk uptown and buy the new Magazine single & listen to it a couple of times before going to Rod's for my haircut. I spent ages waiting, and the cut wasn't finished 'til 11.30. I then sprinted home and joined Father & Mother in the Volvo.

We drove to Glasgow in very high winds. I had a sherry at Granny's, and, when the others went out for lunch, I caught the 2 bus to George Sq., on my way to find Paula. In Menzies I bought a Glasgow street plan, and, racing through crowded pedestrian precincts, orienteered my way across the Clyde. Caught the 37 and was soon at Paula's door. She was v. surprised, seemed quite pleased to see me. We went out shopping at her local food shops, buying things for dinner; cold meat, salad, pastries, etc. Sat in her room, talking, looking at sketches, listening to music, drinking coffee. Then we ate our cold dinner. I phoned home, explaining I'd take the train home. We talked more, about art school, relationships, death, creative work, etc., then at 9ish Paula put on her Basque outfit and we went out, catching the bus to the centre of town.

We had a couple of drinks with some people P. knows at art school; Alistair (?) & girlfriend. I was a bit out of the conversation, though most of it (Sandy's incompetence etc.) wasn't new to me. We then went, discussing art, bohemianism, etc. to a fancy-decor pub where we ate peanuts. Paula then came with me to the station, and we said goodbye hurriedly on the platform. 10.30 train home. A wonderful day.

1979

March

4

Sunday

The family lay in quite late; for Mother it was still late evening or something. Father began typing ESL material, and was thus 'unavailable' for the morning. I sat with the Sunday papers, bored.

I put on my Chinese coat and went out for a walk in the wind. At the top of the castle it began to lash with rain; a good track-test for the coat, which stood up well. I was absorbed by yesterday's events, which have only made things clear, and thus more and less satisfactory. No conclusions of import. Felt a loneliness, or emptiness, which was almost a physical feeling in the stomach.

A slide show passed the afternoon. I drove Father to Young St. briefly, where we collected some slides. Looked at Rome, Florence, graduation, Edinburgh old & new, etc. I went to McOnomy (this was actually much earlier) for a TDK tape, recored Y. Americans.

I spent lots of time letting my attention wander from my lab report. Work helped my Sunday blues a little.

Alison X, a Drummond Pl. Chinese student, came to dinner. 'Nice' young spinster, dull. Mark arrived home, tired, from Aviemore. Then Alison R. came home from Aberdeen. She spoke about her family & dog – she can do this sort of thing well without effort. It isn't real communication, though.

I finally abandoned Psych., after reasonable progress, at midnight.

1979

March

5

Monday

Mother ran me up to the station, failing to mention or notice that her article was printed by the Scotsman. I caught the train just in time, and spent the journey opposite a dough-faced girl, writing my Psychology lab report in jiggly letters. Read some Joyce too, but felt annoyed by it – Philosophy of Aesthetics.

In Aberdeen I walked through the sunny streets and caught the bus to English. Felt happy to be amongst my peers again. Dr. Hewitt's English was intolerably slow, and at 1.00 o'clock I rushed home through the park to get the letter I knew was waiting. Much repetition of Saturday's talk, some rather admonitory remarks on art theory, but wonderful nonetheless. I ate ravioli & an orange for lunch. Ran to Psycho.

Afterwards, I spent half an hour talking to Graham, then attempted to start my revision of KCL. It progressed v. slowly. Ate with Byron, each of us communicating much news but S. hardly seeming to listen.

More Psych., interrupted by very frequent thoughts, tending toward the hopeless & negative (pointlessly), of Paula. I caught the end of Kenny Everett for light relief, and at 9 saw Fawltly Towers; this week it seemed tragic, true and farcical, often embarrassing. Resumed work, as before, grinding slowly to a halt at 11.30. At least it tires me enough for a good sleep. I just hope my dreams are more positive than my waking thoughts.

1979

March

Tuesday

6

What a ghastly day – the rain poured down and my left temple felt as though it had a cloud of mist in it – damp & sore. I went to English: the first lecture on Dr. Faustus. Breaking the cheap habit of going home at lunchtime, I ate in the Agri. Then I lazily read Joyce in the Lecture Theatre lobby before the last Psychology lecture. Before English, I now remember, I handed in my accommodation form and sat in my room, listening to music. Talked to Graham, I think.

Ate with Byron, then had a long evening in which I read only about 3 pages of Psychology, giving it up to write a long letter to Paula. It started well, but by Page 6 was slightly doubtful, and by 11 o'clock and page 10 it was unsendable, with silly arguments about Bisto packets etc.

I feel guilty and sad and depressed and bored and lonely and tired and self-pitying, so I shall go to bed.

1979

March

Wednesday

7

Sunny weather did a bit to help matters this morning. I listened to music and talked to Byron at breakfast, reading National Student. I wasn't able to read all the Yeats poems I should've, so my English tutorial was patchy. Afterwards I spoke to Paul Schlicke about my problems, he told me about the structure of courses and brought home to me the importance of Psychology. Other problems faded when spoken, like mist. My cold appears to have gone.

I ate spaghetti for lunch, with Byron. At 3.30 went to a Psychology experiment. In a small room I watched a video of a girl reading, then was asked questions on the text, the furniture & arrangement of the room, and the girl's attractiveness. This is secret, so as not to influence other subjects!

Decided against going downtown, and returned. Had supper with Byron then got down to a fairly good evening's revision of Psychology, breaking it to go to the Snack Bar for a Turkish Delight. I then watched MASH with S. before returning to work, distracted by the John Peel Show, which I recorded sections of, hoping for a snatch of Roxy or Magazine. Neither appeared.

A decided improvement on yesterday (I am desperately filling this space to prove it) although no advancement has taken place – it was really just losing my guilt in work that did it. Rereading Paula's letter complete with maps of Italy helped too – she'll be happy, it would be selfish of me not to share that. (And other humble, dreamy-eyed sentiments.)

1979

March

Thursday

8

I've just been reading lots of these diary entries, so now this one takes its place uncomfortably beside them, incestuous and distant.

This morning I went down to my only lecture, English, at 12. More on Dr. Faustus, more unhearable tape-recordings of Richard Burton playing the part.

Went to the bank, bought Roxy's 'Manifesto' and went to the bus station for Byron.

I won't bother describing the rest; nothing interesting happened, and I can't remember most of it anyway. I'm now pissed off with myself because I can't revise. This evening I read Kafka's diary, watched 'Film 79' and read this diary instead of working. And I'm still thinking all the time about Paula. Oh, that reminds me, I phoned the art school in Glasgow, to find, to my dismay, that Paula leaves for Italy only one day after the end of her term. I may visit her in Glasgow before then. Am kicking myself for not having her phone number. I tried asking directory enquiries, but they need a name.

Steve meanwhile entertained his new girlfriend. I remained remote.

Now I'm remorseful about work, full of sweet biscuits, and so feeling like a gorged pig. I was happy earlier on, though, when I thought about Paula's warm nature, and somehow felt confident in myself being worthy of her.

1979

March

Friday

9

Breakfast at a table on my own, then a relaxed morning recording Psychology tapes.

I then walked in beautiful sunshine past the manure-spreading operations in Seaton Park to the last lecture of the Spring Term, on the Elizabethan Theatre. A fairly good film was shown at the end of Henry V being performed in the Globe theatre.

Walked home and bought sauce in the shop for a spaghetti lunch, which I enjoyed to the soundtrack of 'Talking Heads 77'.

The afternoon was spent with equal doses of Psychology and music. I ate with Steve and Byron, then coffeed with them too.

A similar evening, in which I spent too much time reading Freud's theories of aesthetics, which are not, strictly speaking, Psychology.

At 11 or so I went to see a romance film on BBC 1, with Peter Finch & Jane Fonda, set in Greece. It was terribly badly scripted, and I had to leave because of cigarette smoke.

I began a letter to Paula, which I wrote until 3. I shall now post it (at 3.30) along with Tuesday's letter. It is introverted but fairly pleasant. Certainly isn't meelymouthed, but I don't think it's irresponsible.

1979

March

Saturday

10

I lay in for a couple of hours to compensate for last night's letter-writing.

I made spaghetti bolognese for lunch and listened to 'Manifesto' with it. Spent the following hours recording and listening to passages from KCL on conditioning – some revision, but it should have been much more. Byron spent the day at the New Library. When he returned I went to supper, he arrived later and I joined him & Steve with a cup of coffee.

Leaving the flat, I walked down to the river and sat watching a couple of swans plunging their necks down into the water, like white, floating dinosaurs.

The rest of the evening was spent in my room, though not revising much. Instead I read Kafka's letters to Felice. But earlier I did finish Joyce's 'Portrait of a Young Man'. I read some of 'Heart of Darkness' as well. Spent much (too much) time being distracted by that old, old music to which I'm tempted to dance. Recorded shrieks outside, paced the corridor, listened to Lou Reed, spoke to Byron who then did his usual of sitting in my room with a magazine, silently ignoring the music on my deck and being a sack of potatoes.

I want to get these exams over with, and get on with getting on with Paula.

1979

March

Sunday

11

A long lie-in, then lunch for breakfast, with Byron & Steve. During the afternoon I revised and listened to music. Read 'Poynton' and 'Heart of Darkness'. Arranged to walk to the exam with Bill tomorrow. There's really not much more to say about the day, so I shall finish and go to bed, it's 12.50.

1979

March

Monday

12

I was surprised to find that the sun shone at the ungodly hour of 8 as I went for breakfast. I walked to the English exam with Bill, discussing Joyce and other texts. Paul Schlicke sat invigilating, annoying Gordon for the way he read. I answered a question on Joyce, about the difference between psychological case histories and art; good, I think, one on Tennyson's Maud; fair, and the general question on responses to literature – emotional or rational; vague, not bad.

It was furiously windy outside, but I made my way merrily home, and ate my usual Italian lunch. Unfortunately the holiday spirit lasted too long, and I never really got down to proper Psych. revision. Bill, leaving for Paris tomorrow, didn't help with his levity. Byron was away fishing. I ate supper at 5 and intended to start revising. Kafka sidetracked me, however, with his diaries.

When Byron returned he found a note on the door signed 'Sue Berry', but going over to see her, he realised that she hadn't written it, which caused him some embarrassment, and Steve much amusement. I played far too much music during the evening. Spoke to Acton in the kitchen, then visited Gordon, then did a washing in the launderette.

Byron, feeling the strain I should be feeling at not revising, is just ripping things off his wall.

1979

March

Tuesday

13

After breakfast I spent some time ironing clothes, then put them on. Perhaps to forestall Psych. revision, I set to clearing my room, putting everything precariously into the wardrobe. Soon the room was stark and bare, and I had nothing to do but read snippets of Freud's case histories. I made myself S. Bolognese for lunch again, then left for my exam at 2.

Heavy hail beat down on me as I walked through old Aberdeen. I returned my Freud books to the New Library and bought the Fontanan Modern Master 'Jung'.

Psych. was fairly easy – 40 multiple choice questions. People with loud shoes walked out before they should've.

I left the flat in high spirits and took the bus to the station. On the 4.38 Edinburgh train I sat opposite an old man whose lips moved silently and rapidly. I read a couple of sentences of 'Jung', but thought most of the time about marriage, living abroad, having children, etc. The scenery was pleasant; sun and glorious clouds, then an orange moon.

I surprised the family at dinner. Mother, Alison & I went to Young Street for the screen, and we spent the evening watching Mother's China slides; many were dark or poorly composed, but they were interesting.

I listened lethargically to Peel, watching a T.V. debate with David Frost. At 11.30 took the screen in the car back to Young Street.

1979

March

Wednesday

14

Mother rushed about visiting Haddington twice. I spoke briefly to Helen Duncan on the phone. Visited the gardens to collect the kitten, but it had returned on its own. I went to Virgin & Bruce's records, asking about Magazine.

After reading 'Lynx' I walked to the National Gallery to see 'New Acquisitions', and heard two commissionaires describing an unsigned poster as 'unanimous'. From there to the Fruitmarket Gallery, hoping to see less stuffy works. A silly exhibition, 'Recovery of Dissolved Substances', all residues and salt textures. At Stills I saw photos by Weegee. I asked in 'Silver Star' about employment as a sales-person, then went to the Job Centre to look at temps. Nothing short enough for Easter.

I took the MG to the garage for petrol, listening to Roxy Music. Emma was taken home from school early with a fever – I took her snacks, listened to records, and read about San Gimignano. At about 4 I phoned Mr. Garcia-Sarria and elicited Paula's phone number & the fact that she's coming home next weekend.

After dinner I phoned Paula in Glasgow, arranging that she should phone me back on Saturday. We talked about David Hockney, art school, jobs... Father got furious at my using the phone so long.

Mark returned from (CCF?) skiing at Hillend. We watched a programme about climbing the mountain K2. I saw Arena Cinema.

1979

March

Thursday

15

After a very restless night on my soft mattress, I responded to a summons from the office: Nora, Janet & Wendy were missing. The last two were there when I arrived at 10.30.

I did my age-old messenger-boy duties; went to the bank, to the accountants, to Munchaway, entered names in the Registration book, made photocopies. In Charlotte Square I passed Martin Davidson, called out 'Hello'. He looked at me and walked past without a word. My reaction was a grin, but beneath my thoughts of it reflecting more on him than me, I worried, and felt I should prove myself tougher than people thought.

After work I tried on jeans in Rose Street and bought a pair after going to the bank for money from Cashline, operating in burps. Large flocks (sorry to be perverse, but the 'ake' of flakes is too sharp, they were soft blobs – flocks is softer) of snow fell; a couple of minutes were enough to be totally spotted polar leopard-wise.

Mark home from school, Emma trying on dresses, me washing jeans... Some friction with Father, giggles at my description of people with no brains who rise, past 'O'-levels, to get jobs in the Civil Service & drive cars, only to be killed by crashing. An absurd story, but gripping. I read Kafka's diaries, but couldn't sit with Alison while she read 'Jackie', and had to pace the room and talk to the cats.

A programme about a stained-glass artist, music by Bowie & Kraftwerk, then religious stuff. 'Reflections' & a Salvation Army doc. I'm in a pseud mood, though it's real. Convoluted thoughts.

1979

March

16

Friday

I was slightly late for work; 9.05 instead of 8.45. I helped Tim Blakey lift shelves, filing-cabinets, etc., went to get copies of keys, made coffee, bought lunch – usual stuff. Janet stayed out for lunch a long time, so I went to John's after 3 without my salary.

There I listened to Pachelbel & Jethro Tull, and we talked about Law, boating holiday and played Snooker. I spoke to Jock & Sheelagh too; what fun. Ran home in the freezing cold. Dinner was late, makeshift, and Mark was away skiing, Alison in Aberdeen.

Father and Mother went off to a party at the McLennan's. Emma & I watched TV. I had the collywobbles, and had an Alka Seltzer then a hot foam bath.

Much junk on TV, little directed thought in my mind, in contrast to last night's incredible mental feats (after I wrote the diary).

1979

March

17

Saturday

Father spent much of the day at Young St. working (I must send the letter he gave me!). Emma and I didn't want to go to Stirling with Mother, so she came uptown with us and bought me a jersey on the Aitken Niven account. We then went to Austin Reed and looked disenchantedly at 'Cue' clothes. Emma was bought a pair of brown Kickers on Rose St.

I went home, ate lunch, and hung around for ages in the breakfast room, waiting for Paula's phoned call. Eventually I called her, just before 5. I arranged to pick her up at 7.30.

Father & Mother went off to Alan Ashmeade's 21st in Helensburgh. Mark returned from his 'skiing' trip, having had to turn back for snow. We played music. Watched a terrible cop show on TV, then I went in the MG to collect Paula. We drove in dry snow to Hendersons where we sat for a couple of hours with vegetable dishes and fruit cocktails & red wine. Paula spoke incessantly, me hardly at all, though not for lack of wanting or trying. She then came to the Currie household and had coffee before watching slides of Italy & China. She looked at Emma's Spanish homework. Then I drove her home and went up to her flat. We had ice cream then went into the study and watched the late movie and talked. I wasn't very happy with this – there is a huge communication gulf between us, partly because Paula isn't interested in me, and talks on about things to which I can only nod or grin in reply.

I left at 2.45 (3.45 BST), after slightly awkward goodbyes... promises of postcards etc. British Summer Time amidst drifts of snow.

1979

March

Sunday

18

I was tired and listless most of the day. Walked to Waterloo Place with Father's letter and bought an Observer on the way back. Mark rushed to Loretto, missed a rugby team photo but was in the skiing one.

After a pizza lunch I left the house and caught the first bus on York Place. It happened to be the 11 and as I sat at the front of the top deck it took me in the snow and sun to Fairmilehead. Fairly entertaining for 20p. Walking home down Broughton Street, I gave a beggarwoman 20p for 'her child, not herself'. My head was fairly vacuous.

Mother complained about ill health, Emma tidied her room and pleaded with anyone who would listen to come and see it. Father has gone to Helmsdale.

A long evening of TV and snack-eating. Film '79.

To P.; when I write to you I can't see you, but when I'm with you I can't see me.

1979

March

Monday

19

For breakfast I drank only milk before walking to Young Street. I bought a New Statesman & a Lynx on the way. It was biting cold. I felt empty and tired, despairing at the fallibility and hollowness of people, including myself.

I sat in the sunlit library entering names in the register. Went to the bank, depositing £4400 in W.B. Currie Ed. Services and £10 in N.J. Currie Private a/c. Visited Grays'. Bought a sheet of paper for Tim, who spent lunchtime with a female applicant for a job with ELF. I sat in the hall, listening to Janet. Went home at 2.30.

Listened to Schoenberg. Alison came in and Emma followed. Mother went to a nursery and bought plants (not children).

We had mince & potatoes for supper. I started Herman Hesse's 'Steppenwolf', quite good. Earlier I had gone for a walk down to Fettes Row and back. Pleasant evening sunshine, but I'm still in an emotional vacuum.

Mother wasn't on 'Panorama'. Fawlty Towers reasonably funny. Emma had a 'party' in her room. I was self-conscious and giggled, then went away to drink sherry & Cinzano.

Devoid of will, I let TV dominate me, and ate snacks until full.

1979

March

Tuesday

20

I took Hesse's 'Steppenwolf' to work and read it in glimpses.

The principal events of the day were: a journey in TIm's Rover to Stevenson College, getting lost on the way and having trouble starting the car to get back; eating lunch at the Farmhouse on Rose Street, and almost being unable to pay for it; collecting 112 single pound notes from the bank. I spoke to Nora for a while about University.

Emma is in bed with Tonsilitis. Mother, although sick too, has decided that nothing can be allowed to make her miss her first day of work tomorrow. I bought a bottle of red wine at Howgate. Disappointing taste. Alison arrived back. Mother bought Mark a new ski jacket at Blues. I felt unwilling to communicate, and went quietly mad.

After dinner I went out and walked to the Edin. Film Theatre's new Lothian Road cinema to see 'The All-Around Reduced Personality', a film about a woman photographer. Good realism and interesting shots of Berlin, though in black & white. Walking back, I passed a wildly dazed and reeling drunk on Nelson St.

Had a very pleasant evening alone with George Baird's awful short stories, Eno, and Earl Grey tea.

1979

March

Wednesday

21

Today's main feature was the snow. Already well-established at breakfast time, it didn't stop until about 5pm. I walked to work with Mother – it is her first day at St. A.'s. [the Saint Andrew Press].

I spent several hours in the library, sticking labels on the spines of books. Spoke to an intelligent Vietnamese.

Nora bought me lunch. I went home at 2.10. Alison & Emma were in. Mark returned from an attempted ski-trip with Fred Bell & another Loretto cronie – rather an objectionable buffoon.

I walked up to CRH and bought chemicals and paper. At home developed two films – the first for months.

Hung around after dinner, imprisoned and dissatisfied. Phoned John, arranging to see him Friday, 8.00, to see 'Mean Streets'. Paced in sitting room, exchanging sparse words with Alison, who replied at great length.

Decided to go to bed early, probably with the effect of red wine. Mark & co. are next door in the sitting room, being self-assured and sociable and trivially organising their leisure.

1979

March

Thursday

22

On my way to work I met Annie K., hurrying to school. I bought 'Car' at Menzies, passing road-blocks and policemen. At 11 I took 4 students to Stevenson College to get Cambridge application forms signed and paid. I bought lunch for Nora, and in the afternoon hung around waiting for Janet to go for booze for this evening, unnecessarily.

At home I was restless so I went to Thin's and after much browsing in the Art department bought a poster o Van Gogh's chair and a book of Paul Klee's words.

After peeling potatoes for dinner I went to Young Street and began to organise the 'Scottish Evening'. Drank lots of cheap white wine and sat in front of the crowd and the dancers, operating the tape recorder. Spoke to Gabriella Blakey, and was perplexed by Abdul's girlfriend, only realising later that she reminded me of a girl in my ex-Linguistics tutorial.

1979

March

Friday

23

Ice and sun, glitter and beam, lit the day. At the office things were fairly hectic. I went to Thin's in the Rover and raided two departments for copies of 'Northanger Abbey' and the Pelican History of English Literature. The traffic was terrible, parking places few. Lunch was a huge order at Munchaway; I forgot some of it, gave only approximate change. Did photocopying with Kate (?), aged 9. After a final trip to M-away, I took my money to the bank, bought NME & collected my trousers from Quickwork.

I went round to Cockburn St. and looked at shoes. I met 'Trishia from my Eng. tutorial in the Army & Navy stores in the Arcade. Tried on a pair of DMs. Went to the Waverley Steps branch, which phone Tollcross to reserve a pair for me.

Emma made dinner. Alison, Mother, Mark & I discussed etiquette & manners, and religious belief. Then I walked to John Thomson's house. We couldn't get into 'Mean Streets', so we went to the Cameo, then the Caley, where we saw the awful 'Assault on Precinct 13'. A combination of unjustified violence and 'traditional' American values; yeuch!

I went back to John's afterwards, and sat in the sitting room. Mrs. Thomseon amused us, talking about being publically humiliated & about people dying of cancer etc., and reading from Mrs. Beaton. Felt oppressed as the evening wore on. Left after 12. Thought of the Life v. Death forces.

1979

March

Saturday

24

I arrived at breakfast at about 10.45 then walked up to catch the 11 bus for Tollcross. There I bought my Doc Martens shoes and walked down to Hamblin on Queensferry St. to have my glasses fixed. In the hall of 2 Alva St. I put my shoes on. They bite into my ankles and are, until they soften, pretty uncomfortable. The family reaction was bewilderment!

Mark watched TV sports programmes. I listened to Heads. At the Health food shop I bought assorted dried fruit, which I ate with a glass of red wine for lunch. George Baird came to talk to Mother. Ruth Shepley later came too, and Christopher & Paul visited me, Paul jumping on top of Chris as he tried to watch educational TV.

I phoned Paula in Glasgow, talking about very little for 10 mins.; art school, my shoes (she approves), Klee (in which I suggested that literature has to be more figurative than art) and Italy, of course. She comes back on the 8th of April! (Edin. on 9th.)

Restless after dinner, giggling a lot, but really bored, I went out on a walk which passed Raeburn Place, the Grassmarket and St. A.'s Square. In my new shoes too!

Mother went to Ruth's, I watched TV aimlessly, then had a late bath.

1979

March

Sunday

25

Mother and Emma went in the MG to Glasgow to visit Granny, taking Henry King and his litter-tray with them.

I went out, wearing my new shoes, on a walk in the humid, grey morning. It wasn't cold, and in my heavy coat I soon became hot. I went through the St. James Centre and down, via Holyrude Palace, to Queen's Park. There, as it began to rain, I climbed a steep bit of hill, resting when I became quickly weak and shaky. After sitting with my collar over my head in the drizzle, I crossed the top and walked down past the road to Meadowbank. There, tired and lightheaded with hunger, I bought a dirty, stale pie and a cooking apple (also dirty) for lunch, as well as a Yorkie. I made my way homewards, pausing outside Chatham's.

I spent several hours listening to Eno albums in the afternoon. Father was back, showing us a multi-pocketed waistcoat.

Mother & Emma returned, as did Alison, who was fairly silent.

In the evening I listened to 'Young Americans' and sang along, then had a discussion with Mark about art and the emotional content of inspiration (subconscious even), probably inspired by reading Gombrich. Unsatisfactory; I couldn't express myself.

Read a little of 'Steppenwolf' – couldn't understand it. Later wrote a short piece – my style seems appallingly narrow, subject boring. I am unhappy with my mind tonight.

1979

March

Monday

26

More white nuisance, snow, covered the pavements. I was listless; annoyed by having to run for the bell or make the coffee. I drove Tim's car to Oddbins amongst busy traffic, afterwards forced to crawl round and round the streets looking for a parking space. Went to the Post Office twice with a parcel for Denmark. Wrapped it twice too. Finally, after posting it on Frederick Street, I was free of the weight of another day's work, and walked home in my heavy coat and workers' cap, looking like a refugee from the '30s.

I put up the posters I'd bought at the Charlotte Square Gallery – they don't stand out in the painted room, but they're something contemporary to look at. Then I walked to Phoenix Record Shop on the High St. & bought an old Bowie single from 1965 – Davy Jones & the Lower 3rd.

Mark & I then went up to the Central Library, where I repaired to the Fine Art section, taking out books on Klee & Expressionism.

Mother complained, though not too bitterly, about having to make dinner. After the meal Mark, Alison and I talked about school dances. We watched Fawlty Towers then had a 'family evening' in the sitting room, Emma reading aloud from 'Wind in the Willows' and Father reading Vogue, me 'listening' to Discreet Music and reading 'German Expressionism'.

A good Arena doc. on a Deep South family & their documentation by two 'artists'. I wondered how to organise more diverse, multi-media art in my own right.

1979

March

Tuesday

27

The drizzling snow once again marred the morning. I drove the Rover to Meg's and collected boxes of books from her new shop. Made copies, did more library labelling, went for lunch. In the afternoon I typed two letters from Wendy's dictaphone – both about fishing. On Rose Street I met Donald Graham and saw Dave Currie, who chose to ignore me. Nicholson & friend chided me for ignoring them on George Street! The sunshine seemed to have brought out the Academicals.

Back home I listened to 'After the Heat' & 'Low' & "Heroes" before helping Mark to carry a new pine wardrobe upstairs to Emma's room – the Heidi's van strikes again. Read some of Satre's play 'In Camera'. At dinner I charged Father with improper practices, and he said I shouldn't compartmentalise; it was about shooting / fishing letters on office time. As usual the matter fizzled out; provocative versus belligerently evasive, without conclusion except for family friction.

I went to the Film Theatre to see 'Germany in Autumn', a bitty & political film about the mood of W. Germany last year. Fairly entertaining, though I only understood bits of it.

The city was pleasantly quiet – Princes St. closed to traffic, drunks and mutterers, the castle floating in the still air in bright light.

Simple Minds on O.G.W.T. Read about Klee.

1979

March

Wednesday

28

No snow today, though it did rain. A fairly easy day at the office. Janet showed me how to use the franking machine and I took parcels to the Post Office on Frederick Street. Returning via Bruce's, I bought the new Magazine album, costing £4.35. Drank lots of coffee, dropped a glob of soup on the pavement, filled meters. Labelled in the library.

I left soon after two and rushed home to listen to 'Secondhand Daylight'. Mother required me to run her up to the office in the MG. I drove like a demon, then visited Campbell Robb Harper on Albany Street. Listened again to my new 'disk'. Vanya was in, giggling with Emma. When Mother returned there was a row about driving her home – Mother's temper and extremism annoyed me.

After dinner we had an interesting argument (Father, Mother, Alison – about 10 words – and me) about bringing children to work, sincerity, and Kate Lawrence. I was quite articulate.

I spent the evening looking at paintings by Paul Klee, reading their commentaries, and taking notes.

The government 'fell' on confidence vote.

I wrote a couple of short prose pieces, in dramatic understatement – diverting.

Last night a touching dream about visiting Paula in an open, industrial Glasgow – Mark with her when I return the second time, me hurt by their conspiratorial 'innocence'.

1979

March

Wednesday

29

Recklessly I lay in, and felt as if I were filled with poisonous malice and fatigue in equal measure. Soon after arriving at Young Street I walked back home to get 'Ulysses' for Kate L. After a very small breakfast (eaten mostly on the street) I bought snacks, and, when lunchtime came, lots of rolls, buns etc.

Visited the bank and Rose Street, and after looking at books in Aitken Dott saw Callum Campbell on George Street. Went to the accountant's. By the afternoon I was uplifted, quite happy.

Back home I set up my cramped darkroom in the loo and printed on flimsy paper my latest negatives – a couple of fair ones of the family, but not a very satisfying session – much murk, much work.

Mother complained of the stress of work, but Emma made the dinner.

Afterwards I walked out to the Little Lyceum where, for 60p, I saw the excellent stage version of 'Crime and Punishment' – very good set, excellent acting, good music FX & lighting – a very exciting experience. Jimmy Bowman was there, but we didn't communicate beyond nods. I shall see the play again next week.

Back home Mrs. Kiso & the girls were in, being charming. I ironed clothes.

1979

March

Friday

30

Bill drove Jo & me to work then went to Haddington. I read NME by the door much of the day. Went in Tim's car to Thin's, where I visited the Art Dept. Also stopped in Cockburn Street. Drove the Volvo home for Father, ate cereal for lunch and returned to work with Mark. I sat in Janet's office talking and joking pleasantly. She went out twice, which meant that I had to stay in until 3.15. Then there was a mad rush to the nearest bank, where Father and I deposited cheques.

I took Emma in the MG to St. George's, where she got keys from the janitor and picked up some books. Very heavy traffic, fumes, etc. Listened to Magazine then took Emma to ballet. Turned the wrong way up a one-way street on the way back. I picked her up in the Volvo, listening to a programme on modern architecture. A Conservation man visited, Mother likes him.

She & Father went out for dinner, we had macaroni. I decided not to go to Nick Sherrit's party, and wrote a beginning to a story, rather Steppenwolfish. I had a bath, watching T.V., then recorded short-wave 'music' (as Kraftwerk has it) on the radio.

Other details: spoke to Gabi before she left, entered names in enquiries book, spoke to Bahraini Consul, etc. 'Menage a tetes' joke. Janet's description of playing pool at her local. Had watch-battery replaced.

1979

March

Saturday

31

Through my closed curtains pierced the shrill of sirens – a top flat on London Street was ablaze. I dressed hurriedly and joined the rubbernecks, clicking away with the Pentax. A disaster is the only time you meet your neighbours. The flat was gutted, the roof fell in, the fire-engines were there all day.

Later I took my Magazine album back to Bruce's and had it changed. Learned in EBM that my watch is broken, so I took it to McOnomy to be fixed. There I also bought a tape on which I put 'Secondhand Daylight'.

I walked with Father up the hill to the St. James Centre. We looked at jackets for me, but didn't buy one. In Lewis', Father looked at heaters & irons, but (a Currie characteristic, this) bought nothing. He did, however, get me an olive-green pullover, and himself a red tie. We went to the HMV record shop and got £10-worth of records – Schoenberg for me, 'Facade' & a boring one (Mozart, Wagner, etc).

I drove the car to the Little Lyceum and bought four tickets for 'Crime & Punishment', listening to Magazine and speeding.

Pizzas for dinner, the family (minus Mark, who left for Austria this morning) then went au theatre. Response to my favourite play was not very good.

Father read NME.

I wrote a couple of lines of 'Saul'.

1979

April

Wednesday

1

While I slept, Joanna Prosser & Emma made preparations for Emma's 14th birthday party this evening. I dreamt about being encaged in a sphere, and taking shelter in a cellar from Napalm gas. Father and his wife (my Mother) went in the car to Broughton, where they looked at paintings and Father imagined himself Squire of the Estate.

Meanwhile I read the Telegraph for want of better, and flipped through the trashy 'German Expressionism' book. I walked up to the Cashline machine & overdraw a further £5. Returned via the St. J. Centre & Broughton Street, where I bought Emma a packet of oatcakes for her birthday (she wanted Oat Crunchies, actually)! Listened to records.

Emma's guests began to arrive after 7. I looked in the Scotsman and was reminded of the puppet-show I'd intended to see, so I went out in the beautiful, sunny evening to the Stockbridge Workshop. The show was very good; expert handling, sense of tradition, very funny. A German from Stuttgart.

Returned and sat with white wine in breakfast room. Film '79 & Fife on T.V.

Earlier, an interesting conversation about being ill-at-ease-at-home and about future life as a 'bum' or running ELF (EEK!).

Q. Are we 'rich'?

A. Enough for it to be, for me, a corrupting force.

1979

April

Thursday

2

Getting up at the usual time, I consequently slept in. At Young Street I looked through applications for work this summer, including one from Ana G-S. I bought shoe accessories; insoles and heel supports, at Robertson's on Castle Street. Went to Mother's office at St. A. Press. Slightly seedy, with a window facing onto a blank tile wall. I bought the lunch and, before, having been to CRH on Albany Street and booked for 3p.m. at Rod's, phoned him to change my cut appointment to 2. I went (after trying to help Emma combat her boredom) and had a fairly good cut, then went to the station in the Volvo. There, after much waiting, I met a Brasillian, Dr. Arajo, whom I took to Stanley Street, Portobello; a place I have taken another student. On the radio on the way, bagpipes & S. American 'swing'. I returned, listening to 'Secondhand Daylight'.

After dinner (before it Father and I had a discussion about the National Health Service & Socialism) we decided to go to 'That Obscure Object of Desire' – or rather Mother and Alison came with me to see it. A very entertaining, though painful, film – I felt some deja-vu in the plot of a man pursuing a proud, insincere Spanish girl, though the similarities are slender.

On TV, Sham 69 & 'Light of Experience'. I tired of... well, everything. I hope sleep cures my ennui.

1979

April

3

Tuesday

7.45 – the earliest I've got up for a long time. Work was unhurried, entered enquiries from students in the book, went to Lieshman Hughes, that sort of thing. Took £26,600 to the bank... the usual dull tasks! I went to Waverley Station and whimsically had a photo taken (a profile, holding up a previous strip of photos), but they took so long (over 15 mins.) that I gave up before they were delivered. Put a slide in to CRH. Bought lunch at Pepper's (a roll) and in the afternoon I walked to 'Maurice's' (the accountants), deep in thought about Paula, caused by a dream I had last night, which I wrote down on Father's typewriter.

Home, then to the library, where I spent almost an hour in the Fine Art section and some time in the General and Fiction sections before leaving empty-handed, too bored with other people's thoughts or my own thoughts to let them into my brain. At Phoenix I bought Eno's 'Music for Airports' for £2.99. Rather disappointing, excellent cover.

'Curry breed' joke at Health food shop. Alison talked at me. Fire engines. Father had British Council guests in; they went for dinner to Vino's. I watched the adorable Diana Quick on 'Call My Bluff' then had a bath.

Whistletest. (Earlier Attenborough monkeys on 'Life on Earth'.) Emotionally and physically in a limbo.

1979

April

4

Wednesday

I acted chauffeur to Father & Mother before going to an address beyond the Meadows (via Lauderdale Street) to collect the British Council couple. Their talk (principally Miss East's) was annoyingly vacuous on the way to Young St.

In the late morning I went to Waverley and queued for at least thirty minutes for a timetable. The couple behind talking about the Lake District, their easy manner. In the door of the East Princes St. branch of Menzies found myself looking for a second into the brown eyes of a girl I mistook for Paula – immediate gut reaction.

In the afternoon I typed a letter to Byron, from whom I received a letter this morning. Described the events of the evening of March 17th to him.

I left at 2.15, leaving piles of work for tomorrow. Browsed in E. Bookshop, eventually buying Hermann Hesse's short stories. I read 'Augustus' on my return; not my kind of story, a bit moralistic & simplistic, but with the style and charm of a fairy tale. Worlds apart from Steppenwolf... or is it? Eno transformed the sitting room into a peaceful airport.

The Parents out for dinner to the Simms. Alison, Emma & I had pizzas for dinner. 'The Long Search', then the excellent 'Facade', then a nocturnal walk (Cashline, Regent Terr., Leith Walk) wearing Father's wool / leather hat. Wrote a rather fantastical, boneless piece in the sitting room.

1979

April

5

Thursday

The two postcards from Italy that arrived this morning were for Alison, not me. I read Penguin Quotations at the door of Young Street, then entered names in the Enqs. book. Janet sent me once more for her fags & rag. Father went to Glasgow, and I took over his office ('mock principal') and listened to 'Secondhand Daylight'. Put a mere £9400 in the bank today, a whole bundle of cheques. Visited the accountants, stopping at the Arts Council in Charlotte Square to get a Cartier Bresson catalogue.

During the afternoon I went briefly to 'Underneath the Arches' and looked at secondhand clothes. Nothing irresistible.

A long period of music in the sitting room ('Limbo') then took the car to Meg's to load books for tomorrow's trip to Haddington. After supper went with F. & M. to the A1 C&C. We loaded up two trollies ('You're terribly helpless, Nicholas') then returned, leaving the Hadd. stuff in the car. I went up and posted my letter to Byron Acton (may not reach him) after completing it on the typewriter. Bought 'Sounds' at Waverley. Spent an hour reading it in the breakfast room, sipping Earl Grey.

After looking at St. A. press bump I retired with Kafka's diaries, writing a short thought about my 'RELATIONSHIP'.

How I saw a motorcyclist fall off through the sitting room window. Father found him to be drunk, sent him home on foot. He soon stole back for his motorbike, though.

1979

April

6

Friday

My working day began and ended with intolerable waiting, caused by Janet. When she came in I could leave for Haddington in the Volvo. The tape recorder 'ate' & broke my Magazine tape. At Templedean I unloaded the Cash & Carry stuff and spoke to Eric & Helen. Drove home after a cup of greasy coffee.

Went to Dickson's Travel, where I saw Alison, then bought (and dropped) lunch. The day ended hanging on while Janet prepared stuff for the accountants. I took books to Mother's office & browsed in Willet's before going to Maurice's, and finally home.

I had a siesta then spoke to Alison. Then the Duncans arrived; Anne & Hazel, Julie was out with boyfriend (!) Edmund – they came in later. Anne was, understandably, concerned about Tom, who has disappeared. Father's comments seemed tactless to me. After the main course of supper in the dining room – 10 people (Meg came round too) – I drove Julie & Malcolm to 'Crime & Punishment'. Was slightly drunk.

Long conversation, mostly concerning student days, in the dining room. I was mostly silent.

We toured the basement flat, then watched 'The Ruling Class' upstairs – I found it disappointing a second time, a bit disturbing.

1979

April

7

Saturday

Calculation and intuition lead me downstairs at 8.45 where I got Paula's postcard; revolting picture, headed 'Helo Uncle Peter'. Is it a joke, or has the real Uncle Peter got a postcard headed 'My Darling Nicholas'? Some hope.

I went to a couple of Leith Walk shops, the St. James Centre (crowded), McOnomy (2 cassettes) and Ricci (£69 jacket – didn't buy, needless to say). Bought a red tie in 'Night & Day' for £2 – not very nice. At home I recorded four records and drank Martini to dispell the gloom of the shitty drizzle and greyness. Spoke to Hazel & Julie Duncan, being particularly awkward with Julie, for some reason. She's so bloody sure of herself, despite her coy modesty.

I went up to Menzies, meeting Nooby Loudon on the way. We talked about University & mutual acquaintances. Bought a jotter then went to Chambers St. Museum and sat in the main hall, writing a description of it. Good practice. Got soaked on way home, but was quite happy and fulfilled.

Listened silently & cynically to the conversation of les adultes.

Dinner, then congregation in the sitting room, where we looked at Mother's jewellery and put it on the cats. I was sleepy and lay all over the floor, chairs, etc.

And so to bed, and resolutions to be less starry-eyed and more physical with Paula.

1979

April

9

Sunday

Some of the company went to church. After the usual silent breakfast with Alison (like a joke bad marriage) reading the Sunday Telegraph (yeuch) I went to the Botanic Gardens. Went round the hot houses, sat in the rock garden, slightly nonplussed by the memories of boarding house Sundays. Saw the scant modern art in the gallery and walked home via Rockheid Path.

Washed and ironed clothes, wrote precis of stories, listened to music, talking to Anne Duncan... etc.

After dinner... well, not much. Watched the South Bank Show, Russell Harty (a creep of le premier ordre) and 'If...' – disturbing, absurd, powerful.

So, another nonevent Sunday. I did phone Glasgow during the afternoon, but Paula wasn't there. Mark phoned from London, saying he'd be home tomorrow at 5.

1979

April

Monday

9

Father and I drove to Young Street amidst the Sunday atmosphere of a public holiday. Few students arrived, but Nora was back. At 10.15 I drove Tim to his house to help him start the Rover. We pushed it down Dalkeith Road, but to no avail. Finally Tim got some jump leads and a cooperative Rover owner, and it started. At lunchtime Ana G.-S. came for lunch with Janet – she hadn't seen Paula these holidays, so I knew more about her movements. We had a liquid lunch in Peppers (I had previously bought cheeseburgers in B.'eaters), talking about the womens' personal relationships. We parted, and I told Ana to warn Paula of my phonecall.

I left work at 2.15 and went to John Thomson's house. Gordon Boyd was there. Later John & I had tea then played Snooker, each winning one game. I was able to discuss Paula a bit with him, he felt obliged to tell me about a girl living on Scotland Street!

It poured as I walked home. Mark was home, with all his skiing women. I had a Cinzano then phoned Paula, being slightly bitter and brash and dominant – immediately regretted it. Tomorrow we meet at Paddy's Bar, 7.15, then see Bunuel's 'Tristana'.

I was ultrasensitive yet reckless over dinner, making risqué jokes. We played Scrabble in the evening... I won. Listened to Facade and Trans-Europe Express.

1979

April

Tuesday

10

The day began badly – ghastly grey weather and an attack of the collywobbles which had me in agony on the loo for over half an hour. I then went to lie in Janet's room – she was very unsympathetic. Father sent me home, Tim drove me. In the car I felt lousy.

After a couple of hours in bed I was hungry, and got up for an alkaline lunch. Afterwards I had a bath, and my self-confidence began to return. Listened to records. Paula phoned in the late afternoon, saying that Ana & Harry were seeing 'Tristana' too, so we would forget Paddy's and have a foursome.

Dinner was at the dining-room table. I was quiet as usual. I left, dressed in pleats, DMs, Peking coat and brolly, at 8. Met the Sarrias and friend at the Film Theatre, and, after slightly distant conversation, saw 'Tristana' – very different from 'Obscure Object'. As we came out we met Caroline Brant. We then went to a pub next door to Harveys and had two very long rounds. Then, mercifully, we parted company, and Paula and I walked through the mist to Dr. Place. We sat over coffee in the breakfast room, being visited by Emma, Alison, Mark and Mother. Paula talked about the stars, saying she thought there was a 'universal link' between us, as a Virgo & Aquarius. She also talked about Italy, mostly complaint, apparently much justified. We arranged tentatively to meet on Friday morning, then I scrounged the car-keys from Father, who was half-asleep in bed, it being one o'clock.

And outside Paula's house, that milestone The First Kiss – just a peck on her narrow, dry lips, but I am still aglow!

1979

April

11

Wednesday

Although my nausea returned in a mild form after breakfast, the day was very happy as I thought of last night. Not even the rain could diminish it.

The day was quite slow at work. I went to the Post Office, then got some China blow-ups of Mother's from CRH, taking them to her at St. A. Press. After going to the accountant I visited her again.

When I arrived home I took Mrs. Strang & McMillan up to the bus station, bundled in the MG, then gave Mother a lift to work. Mark went on for ages about driving the car, now he's 17. Eventually Father arrived home, and I played driving instructor to Mark's learner. He's really not bad at all, fails to look in the mirror enough, though.

After dinner all but Alison & I went out to a 'party' at the Cash & Carry. Later, on T.V., a play about joining an RC order.

Family impressions of Paula; Mark is not attracted to her, Mother thinks she has a lovely face.

Meanwhile I am making plans and resolutions for Friday.

1979

April

12

Thursday

Sunshine! A quiet work-day, my last. I collected Janet's fags, made coffee, went for the lunch, and so on. Janet wrote me a cheque for £16, and I took it to the bank, via Boots, where I bought Optrex. At home, Mark was lounging, moaning from time to time 'I want to go for a drive!'

I listened to 'Young Americans', then indulged Mark when Father came home. We went up the Mound and, inevitably with me giving directions, past Lauderdale Street. Eventually we returned for dinner. Mark's main faults were hill-starts and steering. I parked it.

After dinner, at 8ish, I phoned Paula, sneakily taping it. A long, low-key call, dealing with nothing out of the ordinary; it didn't need to. Tomorrow we meet at the Fruitmarket Gallery at one, and perhaps go somewhere else for lunch. Paula says she has the whole afternoon free.

Listened to my tape afterwards, then watched a programme about the Holy Shroud before going in the Volvo to collect Julie & Hazel from the disco. Hazel dragged me onto the floor. Later I met 'Smokie' Steve Douglas, and had a few words about Focus.

1979

April

Friday

13

A really beautiful day. I spent much time bathing etc, and ironing my clothes before putting them on. At about 11.45 I collected my watch from McOnomy. Later went out to the bank and CRH for the print of a slide, then to the Fruitmarket Gallery to meet Paula.

She arrived from upstairs, and soon we went for lunch in the coffeeshop – tomato salad. Lack of good communication. We went upstairs to see Magritte's photographs, interrupted by loud Philistines. Then we walked into Princes St. Gardens and sat for about an hour on one of the benches, talking about The Shroud, Skye... Finally, as we got up, I told her I wanted to touch her, and she said she didn't want a sexual relationship. We bought ice-creams and walked along Princes Street talking about the relationship. At last we reached Lauderdale Street and sat in the sunny sitting room drinking coffee then orange juice, talking.

I lost the will to talk much and retreated into myself. Paula played madrigal, ragtime and blues records. We talked a little about 'us' again, then, at 7, I left, without kissing her.

Alone, I felt the effect of what she'd said. A beautiful evening. I climbed Calton Hill and sat crying as the sun set – a terrible cliché. Felt very bitter, torn between wanting to try again and trying to imagine forgetting her. Spoke to nobody at home, went to bed early, brooding. May call her tomorrow.

1979

April

Saturday

14

Father awoke me saying 'Get up and do some work'. The house was busy, I was glum. Soon I escaped, walking up the Mound to Bauermeister's, where I bought Brecht's 'Good Person of Szechwan' because I'd seen it in P.'s bookcase. Then I went to the Meadows, my intended destination, and sat reading it in the sunshine, hoping absurdly to see Paula. Went for a drink and passed P.'s street – and there she was.

We went to a couple of shops together, meeting Lillian at the chemist's. I was silent. Then we went back to her flat and sat in the kitchen. After some heavy hints, I was on the point of leaving, then sat down again, trying to show how ridiculous it all was. We discussed the relationship in remote terms, but well, though Paula said it wasn't a thing she liked talking about. The conversation became relaxed, and soon we were talking about art as though nothing had happened, though I had earlier been close to breaking down. Paula ate lots of biscuits, we drank tea, and so on. At a pause in the conversation, as I felt the old tension returning, I decided to make a quick getaway, and dashed out with a very brief goodbye, so as to preserve the 'normality'; Paula even said she'd forgotten our earlier talk!

Tried to be positive, but still great sadness inside me. Played the piano, worked for Mother, met Granny, visited the Duncans. I went for a supervisory drive with Mark – a very calm, beautiful evening.

Guests filled the house for a China evening. I anaesthetised my mind with pulp TV, hating it, but unable to face my emotions otherwise.

1979

April

Sunday

15

I joined Mark at the breakfast table to read 'The Observer'. Recorded some music and began packing. After lunch Father, confirming his indulgent mood towards me, showed me old jackets of his which I could wear. None was appropriate, but the gesture was touching. There were two phonecalls from the Gatwick customs.

The family went out, I was left alone. I sang along very emotionally to 'Young Americans'. I think it helped to purge some of my very strong feelings.

I was driven to the station by Mark. I was very early for the train, but it meant that I got a place in a non-smoking compartment near the front. Sat with a hippy & girlfriend who read a trash Western and the Guinness Book of Records. Later a group of 3 came on and flirted and teased amongst themselves. I read a little of 'The Good Person of Szechwan', but towards the end of the journey, thinking about Paula, I had to struggle to control myself. Self-pity, confusion, obsession.

Selfishly grabbed a taxi and reached Hillhead. I immediately set to making my cell into a room. Met (shook hands with) Bill, talked to Graham Hood. Ate chips while watching Film '79 about child stars.

Went to bed early, feeling dislocated and emotionally raw.

1979

April

Monday

16

I walked to the Regent Walk office and handed in my letter of award, saw my Psych. results (9/18, I think) then caught the bus downtown. Bought paper & A4 (short story size) envelopes in the Union shop. Everything else was shut, but on the off-chance I went to the Art Gallery and found it open – and the David Hockney prints still on show! An excellent exhibition, though viewing it alone was not ideal (and you know what would've been!).

English was the Irishman, talking quite well about 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', but the old Rutherford impersonation is wearing very thin. I rushed 'home' afterwards and made macaroni Bolognese after buying £3.50 worth of groceries at the shop. Read a snippet of 'The Trial'.

Then Psychology; at last, PERSONALITY! The lecturer (complete with Dutch (?) accent) is rather too scientific for my tastes, but it can't dull the fascination the subject has for me. (I for it?)

Feeling insecure and at a loose end during the afternoon, I ate lots of sweet things. Began a letter to Paula, but abandoned it because it would've been no fun for her to read, and just stirred me up.

I suppered silently with Byron & Steve, who talked constantly about vacuous subjects.

Read KK&L's chapter on personality, very slowly because I can't concentrate, but it kept my mind off other things.

Watch TV; rubbishy film with Caine in it, 'The Light of Experience' & 'Parkinson Highlights' – all rubbish. At least they make me feel superior!

1979

April

Tuesday

17

In Bisset's I purchased the Penguin Shakespeare 'Midsummer Night's Dream', taking it to the library to read. There, in the cool draft of open windows, I spent the morning. Read about half the play by 12, despite lapses in concentration. Another pleasant English lecture.

Another macaroni in bland sauce, complete with Kafka to aid digestion.

In Psych. I sat nearby Allan Robb, who made cynical, distracting remarks about the lecturer (his accent mainly).

I spent yet more money in the shop, this time on those luxuries, bread and butter. Read W. Shakespeare much of the afternoon and early evening. Sent a letter asking about a grape-picking job this coming summer.

I ate alone, joined later by Malcolm, with whom I had a few words. Stared at the other people around and found them excessively uninteresting looking.

I finished the play at 9ish and went to watch 'Call My Bluff' on TV.

Thought about short story plots later on. Difficult.

1979

April

Wednesday

18

I sat with Byron and Callum at breakfast reading 'The Scotsman'. Thereafter I had a free morning in which to read cuttings of Kafka. I left at 11.15, collected my grant cheque, then went to my English tutorial. Paul rambled on about the exam to come, then we discussed 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', rationalising it usefully. Afterwards Paul surprised me by asking me 'What went wrong?' a propos my exam results; an A- and two Bs! At least he has confidence in me.

I caught the bus to Marishall, passing Jack Burt silently – a schoolboy gesture so ridiculous that I pulled a face at him. Wrote a note to Alex, the new editor of Gaudie, asking to review Magazine. Then I bought a Martin's takeaway lunch and ate it on George Street, outside the closed Bruce Miller's.

Returned to King's in time to see a very 60s version of 'Midsummer Night's...' directed by Peter Hall. Entertaining, but does not warrant my stamp of approval.

Had an interesting talk with Acton about the need for women, and his personal malaise. Tea was revolting stodge, and I ate lots of snacks to comfort me. At 7.25 'The Long Search', on Muslims, was very calming. A Muslim sat beside me, blissfully joining in with quotations of the Koran.

Read about Klee, personality in KCL, then wrote a couple of pages of a rather silly story which ruined my peaceful mood and trivialised me.

1979

April

Thursday

19

Owing, I think, to Steve's BeeGees record keeping me awake last night, I slept in. Arrived with an empty stomach 15 minutes late for the first Summer (the drizzle denies it) Lab Class; demonstrations of sound phenomena. Reminiscent of school Physics, nothing to do with personality and suchlike. Before English I bought a Prize bar & a New Society at the P.O. A poor lecture from Watson on the nature of comedy: an excuse for him to show off & tell jokes.

Home for the usual lunch, then to Pysch. A new lecturer who I had to draw as he sat solidly on a table, swinging his legs. Interesting stuff on Freud & sex, putting us all in our places.

Then downtown on a very crowded bus. Mrs. Brander must be in Majorca, or Oban; no reply to my knocks. I spent money in Tesco on luxuries, looking into Bruce Miller's, then walked along to Chivas for tea and tomato sauce. On the bus home I wished I were at university in London... in some ways.

Brown sauce leaked in my bag!

I had supper after the queues diminished, then wasted time lying about watching people leaving in pajamas from the pajama party. Then read the first two chapters of Franz Kafka's 'America', enjoying them immensely. Mention of Miro on Kaleidoscope. Drank Earl Grey, ate dates.

Watched 'Grapevine' about community photography. Felt happy, though alone, but able to be so.

1979

April

Friday

20

A fresh, bright morning. I walked to lectures early, buying 'King Lear' in Bisset's. I sat doing Klee doodles before the drained MacRobert pond, then went to hear Andrew Hook lecture very dryly & academically on the nature of tragedy.

Acton was in the flat at lunchtime. I had an altercation with Graham B. about cooker schedules, then ate my ever-tasty macaroni Bolognese.

Psychology. Betty Frazer talked about Ping & Pong concepts, and perception > image > idea. Quite entertaining.

I went downtown and bought an Ordnance Survey map of Aberdeen area for tomorrow's proposed journey. Also bought a slide film and went to the bus station.

Arrived back at Hillhead before supper. Took a couple of pictures of Byron in my room. Read the music papers, which announce Bowie's new album 'The Lodger'.

After eating I went out to enjoy the evening. Scrambled round the river, then, seeing far off lights, made for them. It was the funfair. I spent £1 on slot machines etc., the atmosphere was very amusing. I wandered back to the Union, and sat reading 'America' as I waited for the bus.

A discussion is still going on in the kitchen – Acton's verbosity increases with his insecurity, and he has just lost Sue Berry to Pascale. It will be a long, long night.

1979

April

Saturday

21

After breakfast I took the bus to Littlejohn Street then went to the bus station. Sat around reading 'America' til 10.10, when I boarded the Bachory bus. The pleasant driver put me down right outside Crathes Castle.

There I spent three or so hours. The castle was shut, but after visiting the shop & talking with the 'lady' behind the counter, I followed two nature trails, taking pictures of myself and the countryside (often having to wait for a cloud to pass away). Very pleasant weather.

I then walked to Banchory (about 2 miles) along the bank of the Dee. Exhausted, I collapsed and read more Kafka.

The town was cosy and quite pleasant, with a fair a few shops. I sat on a wall for about an hour before a bus came, dreaming of other countries.

At supper Gordon Boyd joined me! We talked about being interested in everything. I rested in my room, listening to Low etc.

I went to the Union at 9.15. There I met Byron, wearing his mascara, and we had a drink in the Dungeon before running upstairs to see the last half of the Simple Minds set: fairly good. Then Magazine; Howard Devoto a peculiar little man, but he smiles. Songs rather indistinct, but very powerful... excellent gig.

A lift home from Alistair.

1979

April

Sunday

22

My curtains stayed drawn until 11.15. Then I went for lunch with Byron.

Intending to read 'King Lear', I instead ate many cream crackers. I wrote a fair review of last night's bands, then, determined to eliminate the distractions of my room, slipped Lear into my pocket and walked to King's Library. Alas, more distraction in the fascinating form of Paul Klee's Diaries, which I read (his accounts of childhood sparked my own memories) for an hour or so then took out, my first loan this year!

And supper with Acton too, after meeting him in Seaton Park. I was in a good mood, so we got on well. Talked about music and usual subjects, but they were less uninspiring than usual.

Despite the drizzle I walked to the Onion (Union) to see Bertolucci's 'Last Tango in Paris'. I dislike both Brando & Schneider, but the message of the film – the failure of an alternative to the usual loneliness, misunderstanding of sexual (love) relationships – was well-presented and interesting. The sex was not beautiful, neither was Paris. But on reflection they had no right to be, given the meaning.

Walked home, glad to be alone to think, and to be independent of buses.

Read Klee and took a photograph of myself. Felt close to Paula in a sensible, calm, though no less tender way. Friends? I wonder...

1979

April

Monday

23

Baird blared Radio One at 8.30, annoying me but getting me up. A brochure awaited with info about grape-picking – I shall go to Champagne, I think. After breakfast I caught the bus to Gaudie, where I handed my copy on Magazine to Alex. Then I browsed in several shops before & after visiting the Art Gallery. A poor photo exhibition. Looked in art magazines like 'Domus'.

To English. Bought 'Car' & read about the Stratos before spending half an hour in the company of Herr Doktro Rutherford, who talked about future courses and exams. Then home for lunch, much engrossed in the thrill of creating a new story, conceived last night.

Another interesting Sexchology, about Phallic, Anal & Oedipal stages.

A long afternoon with cream crackers and Klee. Then, after supper with B.A., the Kenny Ev. Video Show. Bowie appeared near the end, and I recorded his new single 'Boys Keep Swinging'; ironic and Germanic, camp sentimentality.

A rather wasted evening, reading only a small swatch of 'King Lear' and listening for 'Boys' on Peel.

Then, at 10.55, Hitchcock's 'The Birds' on T.V. – some striking scenes, but improbable and tedious.

1979

April

Tuesday

24

I lay in bed until after 10, didn't get up to feed the swine. Then I took my grant form to McHenry's and posted it to Papa, before rendezvousing with Andrew Hook for a lecture on King Lear. I sat next to a blonde who rather distracted me.

Back to the flat for lunch. I then made the naughty decision to play hooky from Psych. lecture in order to write the story that has been flying about my mind for the last two days. So I bought a bottle of Strongbow for inspiration, and started work behind closed curtains.

Ate with Acton, reading 'Campus', and hobnobbed with Campus salesgirls. Then, after playing 'Boys Keep Swinging', went back to Munich 1912, Kurt & Maria. The story became happier (probably as I became drunker), but its message, despite my calling it a fairy tale, is quite serious. Finished it at 11 o'clock, very happy with it. Still rough about the edges, but I can't be bothered changing it.

Watched Iggy Pop on OGWT.

1979

April

Wednesday

25

This morning I didn't get up until 11. Again I had breakfast in the snack bar reading the Herald. Then to my tutorial. Not having read King Lear, I nonetheless made some valuable comments (more than anyone else present) – I know it well enough for this. Afterwards I caught the bus (standing next to me was a Charities collector with a stake through his chest and a bloody shirt) to Gaudie... well, first to Mrs. Brander, the alteress: my trousers will be ready next Thursday at 3. Then to the record shop, before leaving a message with Angela Bolt about the Undertones piece I can't write.

Then to the A.L.T. where I groped my way in complete darkness to watch Albee's 'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?' with Burton & Taylor. Excellent, though I missed much of the dialogue. Re-entering the daylight, felt almost high before I adjusted to reality once more.

Gave Acton a copy of my story to read. Bill later read it. I spent the evening with Paul Klee's Tunisian holiday: enchanting, and music.

Bought Bill's smart American suitcase for £8.

The Long Search on TV. Felt very queasy for a spell.

1979

April

Thursday

26

Almost sick with tiredness, I dragged myself up and to breakfast. Soon recovered. Bought an NME & read about Howard Devoto before my lab class. Delighted in wearing my bright red tie, only to be upstaged by Nicky Campbell, who wore everything black; tie, shirt, the lot. Experiments in Psych. were listening demonstrations; fascinating clicks and, for me, easy exercise transcribing simultaneous digits in both ears: my score was very different from all the others, better! Maybe I am different without having to underline the fact.

English, the dry, academic Hook on Lear. Good, basic lecturing, though not the stuff of entertainment.

I lunched in the Cent. Ref. Café for a change, reading my music papers & Gaudie.

After Arnold in Psych. (showed slides, one of which was a very suggestive Rorschach ink-blot!), I spent the afternoon listening, mostly, to Magazine.

Phoned Paula... well, first of all waited downstairs in the Central Bldg., and Mel W. held the door of the booth for me – ironic significance – but I didn't have P.'s number. Later, when I got her, it was 'Yes', she was going home, but 'No', she could not see me: typing is her excuse.

Instead of doing my lab report I talked to Acton. We went down to the bar, I drank Advocaat & Cider. Afterwards a discussion of relationships (avec les filles) in the kitchen.

1979

April

Friday

27

I had intended to spend the morning on my lab report, but again was corrupted by music, etc. I managed to write only half a side before walking, bow tie on my neck.

English was Mr. Watson on Johnson's Volpone. Then home for lunch – very tasty sauce – and on to Psychology, held in New King's. A new lecturer, (introduced by Symons), who talked about child development then showed a hilarious video programme.

Back at the flat I packed hastily, caught the bus with an insufficient fare, then realised that I didn't have my railcard and walked back in the rain. When I finally caught the bus I was organised, though late. Cheque for halls, cheque for the train.

On the train I occupied a 1st Class compartment, read Klee's diaries.

In Edinburgh I withdrew £5, then returned home. Only Mark & Emma were in. We had dinner in the sitting room. I then walked to Young Street for copies, but neither copier worked. On the way home I saw a black shirt in L'Homme, but no Bowie single.

TV evening. Bath.

1979

April

Saturday

28

On this sunny morning I walked to Rose Street and bought Bowie's 'Boys' single, decided against a black shirt, and returned home to play my record. Later I went round several clothes shops looking at jackets, but not one met my standards of individuality, style or price. Then I went to McOnomy and bought a tape for 'Manifesto'. Mark saw the charities parade in Princes Street. Emma and Joanna were in – I tried to ignore them.

I thought about going to Tom Buchan's first play, but decided against it because it is Glaswegian & obscene, probably 'socially conscious'. I wheeled the moped to West Pier and bought a spark plug, but the beast still refused to start. As I pedalled it furiously, Janet passed, wrapped around a male. She didn't notice me (helmeted & goggled), but perhaps he explains her absence from work recently (as Max reported to me yesterday)!

Emma made a greasy, proletarian dinner, then we watched slides from the archives of Currie history, developing a giggly mood. Many jokes centred on Emma's bags beneath her eyes. Then TV got its foothold once more, and Roald Dahl's trash was aired.

I read Klee's diaries. I wonder if Paula is typing every minute of the day? Oh, best forget her...

1979

April

Sunday

29

There were dreams (and lying in until after 12 gave plenty of opportunity!), but I can't remember them. The first event of the day was the search for an Observer. Lateness and huge demand ensured that I eventually had to compromise and buy the Telegraph, that execrable rag. Anyway, it made up by having an article on the captivating Diana Quick.

After an extended breakfast, an extended session in front of the record player. I ate bread for dinner, then Mark and I walked to the Cameo, umbrellas wrenched about by the wind, to see Woody Allen's 'Interiors'. My verdict is: a black and black (caricatured, simple) film, enjoyable despite being tragic, yet not gripping emotionally. One attractive actress, playing Joey. Cold as ice, generally, and deliberately so.

Some good arts TV — Bragg interviewing Catch-22 Heller (not impressive) then Barry Norman on women in films. Mark fell asleep before the TV Fatherlike.

I stayed up, alone, (well, with Henry in a destructive mood) buzzing pleasantly with adrenalin (probably the Earl Grey tea and much art consumption).

Why are Sundays always a creative day for me? Perhaps, as Heller put it, boredom is a creative key. Anyway, today's theme is the fascination of women (personified by Miss Quick); do we really want to demystify them by 'understanding' them?

1979

April

Monday

30

I was alone in the house during the morning. I walked to Charlotte Square to the Hockney exhibition. On the way I saw the Volvo near Charlotte Square. Nora was bringing it back from the garage. She handed it over to me. I parked it while I looked round the Arts Council Gallery, but Hockney is at the Fruitmarket. I went out to the Meadowbank Burmah Station for £2 worth of petrol then went to Market Street and looked round the Hockney exhibition — not captivating at all this time. Also looked round Ricci (very expensive jackets, certainly good, but not *that* wonderful) and Cockburn Street.

Later I went to Thin's and discovered, after futile browsing in the Art section, a newly published set of Kafka short stories which I haven't yet read, 'Description of a Struggle'! Excellent, superlative beyond description. Began the title story as soon as I got home.

Mark & Emma came home. We had a ghastly grease-drenched dinner before the Video Show, then I decided we should meet Father & Mother at the airport, returning from Paris. Mark drove, we killed time at the airport, met them, I drove home, dropping myself at Tiffany's to see Iggy Pop.

After I'd watched the punk / youth freak show with interest, Iggy came on. Quite impressive, exudes evil. A bomb scare half way through made me uneasy, but all was well.

1979

May

Tuesday

1

My Edinburgh weekend came to an end. I had a glass of milk for lunch then Father gave me a lift to St. Andrew's Square, from where I walked to the train. Sat in a hot quiet compartment and read Kafka's stories or rested. Hunger consumed me, but I bought a health loaf in Aberdeen and consumed it all during English lecture, which was about Ibsen's 'Hedda Gabler'. A routine macaroni lunch. Outside hail and snow seemed to fall from blue sky. I walked with Acton to Psych., Betty Frazer was as annoying as ever.

Back home, I read more of that genius Kafka, and began Hedda in earnest. Drank several Dashing Earl Greys before supper, which was with Byron again. He talks of dull events through a blacked dhose.

The sun shone into my room. I thought about my writing, tormenting myself for plots etc., considered a novel... then went to see an ITV play about naive Liverpool girls – left after 10 minutes; poor. Then devoted my evening to Ibsen. The plot gave me difficulty at first, and my attention wandered extensively, but towards 11 o'clock it began to grip.

Byron & I went to see Whistletest, but it was that prime bore & creep Johnny Winters. Byron made an embarrassingly conspicuous exit with me, laughing loudly just outside the lounge and shouting 'Boredom' loudly. I could do nothing but play along.

1979

May

Wednesday

2

Clean sheets, Corn Flakes and a boiled egg, another morning.

I finished 'Hedda Gabler' and walked to the tutorial on it. There we had an enjoyable analysis of the play. Paul disagreed with me on a couple of points, though he gave me the benefit of the doubt. I am surprised that he can be unsure!

Then to Gaudie where I was commissioned to cover the Ruby Ball on Friday, despite it being a folk band. Spoke very briefly (was briefly briefed by) Alex and Angela.

In Bisset's I bought an anthology called 'The Existential Imagination', fiction snippets to titillate my philosophical mind. Listened to music and read this book during the afternoon.

I was pleased to dine alone, having a typical imaginary non-verbal relationship with a girl who sat nearby.

I saw the start of the last episode of Ronald Ayre's 'Long Search', on Jews, with ridiculous adornments, all symbolic. Then walked in delightful sunshine to see Wim Wenders' 'Kings of the Road' – a film which seemed at first too epic, disjointed and buddy-buddy for my taste, but grew on me. A good discussion about women – 'I feel most lonely when I am inside a woman – I don't believe a man and woman can ever become one, though I'd like to.'

1979

May

Thursday

3

I breakfasted then walked to King's, not buying an NME. Lab Psych. was very spiky and statistical; tests of alphabetical sequences. I felt quite sure of myself – why shouldn't I have? No, I noted that because today I felt in general aggressive, happy, etc. I am only introspecting because Acton has been doing just that in my room. Back to the day.

Hedda again in English, a really thumping good lecture. I ate in the Agricultural building, then walked to Seaton Primary School and VOTED. Liberal, of course. Just now I am listening to the election results, and it sounds very much as if Margaret is our new PM. Oh well, at least she'll shut up now she's got what she wanted.

Back to the day: Psych. was a court Psychologist giving a fairly interesting lecture with anecdotes such as; a mayor arrested for indecency in a public lav., who claimed it was just his pink scarf the waiting policemen saw... and a thief of phallic-shaped objects who did it because his penis had three holes!

Oh, an afternoon of the most idle pleasure. After supper read Kafka's 'Blumfeld, An Elderly Bachelor', which began brilliantly but went on too long on an apparently unrelated tack.

A talk with Byron. Established: 1. it is part of his identity to have problems, even when none exist. 2. he is jealous of successful males. 3. he needs, but doesn't get, approval and sympathy. My remedy assumes my character... it is this: 'Life is too important to have problems. Brush them off.' Including girls.

1979

May

Friday

4

Chocolate and an orange semi-comprised breakfast. Subsequently one stumbled to the CBD of this urban area and collected one's altered cords, infiltrated with unfiltered cigarette smoke.

Shops, shops – but I don't see anything that I want. Buy dried fruit and the ghastly 'Record Mirror' which has a review of 'Lodger', and fab pic of Dave.

Eat.

Watch video films in NK6 of children answering problems and so on, some gen-u-i-nely funny bits.

A sunny afternoon is filled with music. So it goes.

Eat.

Dress up in cream-coloured clothes and walk to the Onion. There to lounge (watching the fascinating, attractive and repulsive Paul Spero come and go) in the lounge, sprawl in the hall, cine view in the dining room: the Marx brothers.

The bands are all boring as dentist's drills.

I whine.

The society embitters me – where are my people? I close.

I refuse coffee with Acton's friends.

1979

May

5

Saturday

Byron hammered on my door to get me up, for today we were going to Inverurie. I ate breakfast, then together we set off. Before catching the bus we had time to look round a Union Street bookshop. On board I navigated. There were some fishing acquaintances of Byron's on the bus too. Byron read a fishing magazine.

We walked through Inverurie, laughing at the natives, and then along the banks of the Don. Byron watched the fish. It rained. Then, at my suggestion, we walked up a nearby hill, talking of the effects of the countryside on our psyches, through a rook-filled wood, and sat behind a stone wall beside a burn. At the top of the hill was a deciduous and a pine wood. We sat in the sun looking at the view, descending when rain dimmed it. Back down by the river I lay and read Kafka while Byron wandered further upstream. We then returned to Inver. and caught the bus.

Supper. Read 'Letters to Felice', very powerful effect (June / July 1913), and 'Diaries'. Then I wrote a piece about Paul Spero: 'Along the corridor, to and fro', before typing my review of last night's bands.

I listened to Magazine and read Sounds (a terrible paper) at my desk. Byron read it over my shoulder, breathing on me. He went to bed at 11 and complained when I played music & Graham played his guitar! Church tomorrow?

1979

May

6

Sunday

No, not church today, for the simple reason that my clock pronounced 11.20 when I opened my eyes. Imagine breaking a date with God! Tsk, tsk!

So instead I wrote some fiction which smacked of fact – an interview between a careers officer and Philip, who expressed views identical to my own. The piece is nothing special, but falls in with my resolution to write something every day. Meanwhile, as I walked to Gaudie with my band piece, a much grander project was being conceived, entailing the taking of notes against the walls of buildings and on the bus. It's about a boy's rite of initiation, or vain search for it. I handed my piece to Alex, who seemed uninterested in its idiosyncracies. Snacked at the Union then bussed home, to closet myself with 'The Existential Imagination' – the Kafkaesque 'Bound Man' and difficult, depressing 'Suicides'. Then read Kafka's 'Bucket Rider' – he is a wonderful, wonderful man – just thought I'd say that.

Ate hard on 5. Cesare Pavese seems to have depressed me, and this was greatly aggravated by Fawltly Towers, the dead man episode, because two people nearby smoked constantly, causing me to cough for hours afterwards. Upon my return I immediately made an antismoking badge.

Hong Kong art (or lack of it) was the South Bank Show's subject. I shared the lounge with Orientals.

Byron is with me now, picking skin from his toes, as we listen to the first session Roxy Music ever made, and eating it (the skin)!

1979

May

7

Monday

I can't remember what I did this morning – if I read Chekhov, it was very slowly; all these Russian characters are hard to follow! English, Mr. Watson on the play, whetted my appetite considerably.

Macaroni satisfied more basic appetites over lunch-hour, then I was entertained by Arnold Bursill, who talked about mental illnesses. 'One in 15 of you,' he said darkly, 'will spend time in a mental institution at some point in your life.' Then he told us about ECT and brain surgery, enough to make anyone steer well clear of loony bins!

In a philosophic mood, I scribbled thoughts in my little yellow book and felt happy for no better reason than the life-giving presence of Spring. Couldn't write well, though. Read 'Cherry Orchard'.

Supper alone, eavesdropping – I prefer this to being with Byron. I then phoned Mark, offering him a Roxy ticket for Wednesday night. Couldn't reach Paula to do likewise. Byron occupied my room, playing Roxy to Alastair on my deck. I don't complain.

Some excellent TV: Horizon showed a Psychologist after my own heart, Liam Hudson, challenging the Statistical / Scientific approach, talking of Convergent v. Divergent types: very amusing to see his justified rudeness, his terseness.

Later, Peter Fiddick on alarming TV developments; audience participation. Then, the German news.

1979

May

8

Tuesday

I walked down to King's early (soon after breakfast) this morning, browsing round Bisset's & McHardy's before eating a snack in the playing fields behind the library. Then, with an hour before English, I walked across the golf courses to the sea & segmented beach, and sat between waves breaking on two slightly different levels. Intermittent sun. On the way back I went up one of the tower blocks, but couldn't find a window.

Another excellent Watson lecture, on Chekhov. Another delicious macaroni lunch (who says familiarity breeds contempt?), then an awful psychology lecture on shipping & engineering! Tell me about people, people!

Again felt elated in the afternoon, but soon settled down with Kafka, my best friend. After supper, reunited with Byron, (oh, at breakfast I sat with Byron Ragless & Debbie X.!) I phoned Mark with Roxy details, then Paula too. All went well, both will be there.

I read more Chekhov, then walked some of the way to the Arts Centre, munching at a Granny Smith. There I fell for an artistic-looking girl in the bar, only to find her ugly (but cute!) onstage (complete with Glasgow accident) in the arts show, Machar '79. Terrible, gooey, soft poetry, all very warm and jolly, but not ART.

Afterwards, I finally made reasonable contact with Guy Peplow in the Snack Bar, at least until his friends came along.

Talked to Byron about Christianity, girls & sex. Read an arrogant Xian leaflet.

1979

May

9

Wednesday

I sat in my room reading 'The Cherry Orchard' after breakfast, finishing the play at 10.30. Construction of paths outside. Again I looked around Bisset's, this time buying the Modern Master on Beckett. Then to Paul's tutorial.

We talked about Chekhov, commenting on the lack on unambiguous characters & ideas, contrasted with Ibsen. Then we got onto the question of why it's called comedy, and there followed a discussion, lasting until 1.10, about the Absurd and the intent of authors who see life as futile & negative. Next week: Godot!

Then downtown to drop a note at Gaudie, withdraw £20, & lunch (fruit salad) at Crawford's. Byron met me a la gare, and we took the 2.35 Edinburgh train. Drummond Place was beautiful in the evening sun. Mother drove us (Mark, Byron & me) to the station. Paula was waiting for us at 7 in Glasgow. We walked to a wholefood restaurant she knew, eating baked potatoes. Then into the Apollo.

Giving up The Tourists, Paula & I went to a nearby bar (over 21s, but a sympathetic woman) and had a drink. Then back, to witness ROXY MUSIC LIVE. Very enjoyable. Mark was far behind us, Paula seemed tired, but came alive later.

Afterwards, ice-creams on the street. After seeing Mark off home, we walked to the attractive Central Station. Paula gave me a kiss and a hug, promised to write first, then took a Blue Train home.

Byron and I had an almost interminable journey home. Shared a carriage, after changing at Perth, with a boy whose feet reeked incredibly. Arrived at dawn (4).

1979

May

10

Thursday

Despite having had only four hours of sleep, I breakfasted as normal, then decided to miss my two-hour lab-class and English lecture (on Miller's 'Salesman') in favour of bed. Got up a second time at midday, made macaroni / tomato sauce, then to Bisset's, bought 'Waiting for Godot', and attended Psych., about Adler, with whom I don't really accord.

Before supper, read a little Beckett. After it, I went by bus to the Arts Centre, thinking a mime show, the Bending Body Co., was there: it's next week. Instead I looked at the 45 local artists exhibition at the Art Gallery until 8, good stuff by a handful of them. And home in the rain.

Byron worked conscientiously. Just as I was about to do likewise, some Scripture Union people got me, and in the kitchen we had a very long debate, latterly between Bill and me. I was nervous, but held my atheist ground. The usual inconclusive end; I say there's a conclusive end, they say there's an afterlife (well, it was really more about the question of faith, and the different levels of real life and spiritual conviction).

On TV, an Omnibus docum. on political cartoonists. Steadman's intensity, & the stupid arrogance of artist / politicians.

I felt insecure, uncertain. Listened to Eno, playing guitar. Copied in last night's diary.

1979

May

11

Friday

I joined Callum and Byron at the breakfast table. The weather was sunny and humid-warm. Bought, perhaps for the last time, NME, then sat through a lecture on 'Death of a Salesman'. Lunch. Psychology – the Friday Video show, packed with laughs as young boys performed the tests set them.

Then the long afternoon passed in musical coverings. 'Godot' had its time too. Likewise after supper, though this time I needed an outlet, and sang along with "Heroes" (sides 2 and 1). On my way (on foot) down to the Onion I met Acton. I also bought some crisps in the Macher. The moon loomed bright, not quite full, but bright (how's that for poetry?).

Mark Perry's 'Good Missionaries' were discordant, unpopular, unpleasant, brave. The Pop Group were similar, but the vocalist was striking, about 7 feet tall. Very unsettling 'music'. I walked home, exhausted.

Incidents: on the way to the Union, sat on a wall to write some thought down. Some boys in a car asked me what I was doing. I explained, then asked them what they were doing, then said it was just as strange, and left.

Coming out of the Union past midnight, two white gulls flew silently to the top of the Gothic tower of Marishall in the moonlight. Eerie mist low over Seaton Park.

Earlier, laboriously typed Byron's essay – pages & pages still to go.

1979

May

12

Saturday

My breakfast was my macaroni lunch. Then, after a musical interlude, I took the Fontana 'Beckett' and the play 'Godot' to King's and lay in the sun on the lawn before the chapel. The clock struck two and three before I left, having read to the end of the first act of 'Godot'. I had also eaten a bar of chocolate.

The sun was so warm that I sat down in Seaton Park too, overlooking a sea of daffodils (to be lyrical for a spell).

(Prosaic): Back home I typed another six pages of Byron's essay, getting into the rhythm of the machine, quite glad that I had an excuse not to be available for social intercourse. (I say, not *that* prosaic!) Afterwards I wrote my Missionaries / Pop Group review, quite good.

I took my 'Existential Imagination' across to the snack bar, ate some yoghurt, watched the news, then joined up with Nicky Campbell, Paul Dickie & co. – Nicky's advice was 'come out of your closet'.

I forgot to mention my impulse-buying trip downtown, where I bought Prokoviev / Bowie's 'Peter & the Wolf' for £4 I can't afford.

Byron's big event was Roxy Music on ITV at 11.15. Like a football match, being there is great, but on TV it's a much better view. Byron was unbearably enthusiastic.

1979

May

13

Sunday

My intention to go to church was again defeated by the hand of sleep – I lay in, dreaming of a revolution at Hillhead (the sun shone at midnight too) and other peculiar subjects. I set to Byron's essay, finishing it towards four. Outside, in the brightness and heat, people lay on the grass and played loud music from cassettes.

At 4.30 I walked through the crowded Seaton, sporting my sunglasses, down to the Gaudie office. There Alex suggested that I should be next term's Editor. It's a proposition that tempts me considerably. Took the bus home.

Byron, with whom I ate, was feeling queasy, so he went off to find some antacid tablets after supper. I meanwhile saw our Volvo outside the Central bldg., and Father beside it! He's going to Aboyne to fish for three days. He came over to my room and had some tea, then spoke to Byron Acton, who was lying in bed.

Then I drove Father through Old Aberdeen to Poldino's, which was shut, then Dickens', which wasn't. There we had a meal (plain salad & white wine for me), then Father drove me home. We talked about God, Beckett, Paula, 'n' stuff.

I had a dull evening in, sorting through past Gaudies, starting a letter to Paula, chasing a wasp away, and seeing Billy Connolly on TV. Then read 'Letters to Felice'.

1979

May

14

Monday

It was another balmy day. I settled down in my room to read Psychology (for the first time in I don't know when) and succeeded in doing almost four pages... but my application failed and I went downtown instead. There I looked around the Market, buying shoe accessories, then walked to Chivas for a couple of boxes of Earl Grey.

No, English. The first lecture – very good, by Watson – on Godard. Unfortunately I had neither pen nor paper, so I couldn't take notes.

I beat Baird to the stove, and had an over-salty lunch (you can see I have far less dread of habit than Beckett, who calls it 'that deadener'. I can live with it, and ideally vary my life in other respects in order to make it tolerable). Psychology was about Psychoses & Neuroses; Bursill's European pronunciation of Psych. jargon making him a caricature shrink.

Browsed in Bisset's (mostly looking at Paladin books – some very interesting fiction etc.) then spent the afternoon finishing Godot, reading 'Beckett', then reading a Proust story: 'Filial... Parricide'.

Towards 9, Byron & I left for Callum's party at Fusion, me in a red pajama top. C.'s parents (inc. dominating Mother!) were there, but left early. I was v. antisocial, and fell with some homosexuals for a while. Played fruit machine on my own, winning £2.50. Taxi home, relieved.

1979

May

15

Tuesday

The Summer continues. Still no mail for me, it seems to be a conspiracy. I ate a light breakfast, but nonetheless was attacked in the stomach regions by biological hoardes. After reading in my room I went to English, another smackeroo on Beckett. Outside the theatre girls were baring their legs, glancing around with hostile, challenging eyes to see if any male dared look.

After sitting on the loo (where my stomach waged Waterloo), I went to the daffodil hill in Seaton Park and sat on a gnarled trunk. Then amongst the daffs, sketching nubiles and the view, undeniably pretty.

Psychology was industrial again – that awful bore of a lecturer was severely distracted when a party of three tried to leave halfway through. As usual they couldn't open the door, and had to sit down again; like slapping your master's face and finding yourself handcuffed to him. Giggles not released by the lecturer, who continued with much stammering. Outside, I avoided Mary in McHardy's, then sat on a wall with Byron, discussing the passing women.

Ate alone, spent the evening with the short stories of Hesse, Kafka & the Existentialists, notably Beckett's 'Expelled'. 'Call My Bluff' was hilarious. A restless, bored and bleak evening. I had intended writing, but need a definite plot and well-worked ideas, which can only be thought out on the pillow.

1979

May

16

Wednesday

At last the weather was honest for a change – it poured. I put on royal blue coat and worker's cap and set off, map in pocket. Went West from Old Aberdeen. The scenery was fairly ghastly, but would have been worse in sunshine; at least it was unambiguous.

The rain kept up, so I sheltered in an enormous Norco store. Piles of dull goods; surplus quantity, lack of variety. Bought a tin of cider and sat on someone's granite windowledge, a strange drop-out actor. Saw a milk-bottling factory & a bakery, both through windows. Returned to King's in time for tutorial on Godot. Fair, not as good as lectures. At the end Paul ignored me – it is our last tutorial. Hint of merit certificate.

Bus to Gaudie, lunch first (chocolate peanuts) in Union TV lounge, alone. Sat quietly in office with Alex & a staff member. I am always the silent point of the triangle. Possibility of editorship faded as I faded into the wall, into oblivion, unacknowledged.

Business in town, band dates etc. Back home, relieved the pressure of noise, wet, etc. with a dark room & relaxation to Eno's Pachelbel. Solitary mood continues.

Eating alone, was approached by Allan, a stranger, yet with a familiarity I cannot explain. Literary, serious talk about Hesse, Lawrence, Steinbeck, Kafka, (first 3 his, K. mine, of course).

Ayres on 'Long Search' arrogant, C. of E. & schoolmasterly: Zen & Japan. Fun ritual in kitchen with Byron & Graham round a 'maypole' (broomstick and tape). Kafka's Letters etc.

1979

May

Thursday

17

As if it had been waiting for me to give up hope, my box of slides arrived this morning. After breakfast I looked at them – very good, one good one of me at the foot of the steps.

Down at King's I collected my second-class merit certificate; I am 14th out of 189, just missed first-class merit. Read Gaudie until English: a general survey of approaches to literature by Watson, and award to 1st class meriters – mostly females, short, plump, shy, or mature students, but then I'm just jealous.

I had my habitual lunch then stayed put, listening to music instead of going to psychology. Then I dictated onto tape a story, making it up as I went... It is ridiculously mystical & romantic, about a woodcutter. But an interesting exercise in composition without writing.

At supper I talked to Guy Peploe, then joined Byron for coffee. At last my moody, depressed state is over; I came out of myself.

At 7.00 I went to the Arts Centre, where Graham Valentine's Bending Body Theatre performed mime. Funny, embarrassing, bizarre. At the interval I met Angela Bolt, who said I should review it. I fancy one of the actresses, Frieda Munro. Amusing battle of gigantic phalluses.

Back home, wrote the review. In the kitchen was our Xtian Union friend, a wet from Oxford. Later we performed our totem rite in the kitchen & generally pissed about: most enjoyable & life-asserting.

1979

May

Friday

18

I went downtown after toast & peanuts breakfast. Handed my copy in to Gaudie and then went to Queen Street to try on berets. At last found one which fitted, 95p. Then I put my Crathes slide in for enprints at Elena Mae, before buying an NME in Menzies. Home on the 2 bus, chat with Jessie, rest, then lunch.

I am still not coming to grips with Psychology. Again I began two chapters, but didn't get any further than the first page or so. In contrast, I read lots of Herman Hesse's 'Strange News from Another Star': apart from its drastic oversimplification and silly idealism, it's enjoyable. Listened to Schoenberg.

Ate alone. Then, on Round Table, I recorded 'D.J.', another track from 'Lodger', the new Bowie album. It's excellent. Byron was annoying, barging in unasked. I chased him out. Later he brought some wine, so I repented and shared it with him. Luckily our mutual friend Allan came along and occupied his attention.

I went to the Union. Nothing was happening, so I went window-shopping in Union Street. The bands were dull, I was tired. Wore my beret. Spoke to no-one, but not worried.

1979

May

19

Saturday

I missed breakfast, so I read the papers in the snack bar. I bought an MM for its quotation of Bowie, describing his tracks on 'Lodger'. I spent the morning listening to music, mostly Eno. Then took the 2 bus from K. St. to the end of Union Street.

The route to Hamilton Place was very pleasant, sunny, tree-lined, if a little bourgeois and dull. The Rutherfords live in a granite terrace-house. I was introduced to the family & Janet, a fellow Esslement resident; trivial little girl doing Forestry. The conversation was not very captivating, dominated by John, a wonderful, respectable boy doing Law at Edinburgh. Into Status Quo. Andrew R. didn't say much, but when he did, was as pedantic and shy as ever, despite precise, noble tones. But I like him. Me, I was quiet, causing the hostess to ask me obvious questions. Good lunch. Awkwardness in leaving – I really wanted to stay, but seemed expected to go.

Outside, an Orange march. Awful-looking people with banners and bands. I went into the bookshop & got a book of excellent woodcuts by Valloton for £2.95.

Read this, with great excitement & delight in art & movements, on my return. At supper I sat with Gordon; slightly less strained than usual. During the evening I flitted about in KCL revision, then read periodicals & drank hot chocolate. Church tomorrow, maybe the Machar Cathedral.

1979

May

20

Sunday

At ten o'clock I managed to get some Weetabix in the dining hall. I walked through Seaton Park to the St. Machar Cathedral, stepping from brilliant spring sunshine into 14th century granite gloom. The service was extended for Heritage Thanksgiving or something, and included communion – I passed the cup & plate quickly on. The situation was particularly stressful for some reason; it was so absurd and other-worldly. The minister was either a good actor or a peculiarly excitable anachronism, with Victorian speech. Glad to get away. Lunch alone, feeling sapped after the adrenal buzz.

I walked down to Gaudie and dropped my copy off anonymously: I wrote it this morning, it's telegraphic, alienated. Bussed back. Spent the afternoon idly, counting down to 7.00. I did some Psych., listened to tapes too, looking for blank space. With Byron I ate supper then took my place at the radio. David Bowie hosted two hours of his favourite music. I taped most of it. Only one new track from his 'Lodger' album, 'Yassassin', good.

Psychology had its share, broken by a pizza snack in the S. Bar & later, 'The Paperback Programme' on BBC 1. Some funny bits. Afterwards a patronising but interesting programme about drink. I hardly qualify as a drinker, being anti-social and so on.

1979

May

Monday

21

How it ran and poured! I spent the morning with KCL in emotion & motivation chapters which probably won't be examined. Lunch was a welcome break. Then I started to read 'Oedipus Rex', and daydreamed about Athens & Montreal. Some exercise seemed in line, so I headed for Bisset's. Looked round the graveyard of St. Machar in the newly-arrived sunshine. In the bookshop I invested 10p in a shopsoiled workbook based on KCL – questions on the text, but no answers provided, unfortunately.

I ate supper with Acton then returned to very ineffective revision of KCL, spent too much time drawing on the cover of my workbook. This revision is not good at all. Tomorrow it'll be different.

Listened to Tom McGrath's 'The Hardman' on the radio, then went over to BBC 2 to see some of a programme on male / female differences. Funny lines; e.g. comparing testicles to 'a handful of macaroni'. Then back to hear Peel. He played only one 'Lodger' track, 'African Night Flight', without even announcing title – he's a swine, he ruined my whole evening's revision. Never again. The track's interesting, not all that likeable.

Mid-afternoon, showered and washed clothes at the launderette.

1979

May

Tuesday

22

I spent the morning reading KCL summaries and glossaries onto tape, ignoring Jessie's Hoover outside, until I had a neatly-labelled series of cassettes containing all the psychology I need to know (I hope). I then proceeded to play them back, using the pause button constantly, then answer questions on the unit from the workbook I bought yesterday. Lunch in between. A good day's revision. Finished at 4 the 3 units intended, then listened to music.

After supper I went to a phonebox and called Paula in Glasgow. We talked about her plans to go to Oxford next year, summer jobs, and the length of our respective terms. She said I could visit her ('if you want to') in Edinburgh in two weeks. Then we were cut off while she was mid-sentence. I had no more money.

So I returned to my room, made timeless by evening sun, and listened to Schoenberg & slow Eno. I had intended to read 'Maud' but didn't. Looked out Paula's old letters – these quickly dispelled my romantic feelings. But still restless, I went to Seaton Park. Stood on somebody's garden wall and was shouted off it. Walked down High St., meeting a pissed-off Byron. Got as far as the bus station, then caught a 2 back to see John Hurt in a TV adaptation of 'Crime & Punishment' – excellent.

Byron & I then discussed our early sexual encounters (no big deal) and present attitudes – B. hinted at vaguely homosexual feelings.

1979

May

23

Wednesday

The precipitous cloud-cover was so low that the helicopters virtually skimmed the roofs trying to clear it. I dutifully crammed the next three units of KCL, though my attention was not very concentrated where it should've been. I read The Guardian, with an article about Alberto Moravia. The paper's style is a bit facetious, trying to be oh so free.

Lunch as per norm, in the afternoon I went by bus to King's library and returned 'Klee's Diaries' before spending ages squatting in the Kafka section, reading a critique of Kafka criticism – a major subject. This academic work is like a wedge between K. and me, but it is nonetheless fascinating. Walked back, eating a Grannysmith.

After reading a notice which revealed that next year I'll be in the same room unless I make a deliberate change, I looked around Esslemont for suitable alternatives. 103 is certainly well-situated, but is another year with 4 of the same people (inc. Acton) wise?

Began to reread 'Heart of Darkness' – very good, appreciate it much more than the first time. The evening was sunny and quiet, very pleasant working atmosphere.

I looked in on TV briefly, but soon returned to Conrad. Byron came back at 11.00 and called me out with the usual 'Fancy a cuppa tea, Nick?' I was reluctant, but complied. Refused to join in the totem ritual, though.

1979

May

24

Thursday

I ascended from bed, ate breakfast, and took my place by the taperecorder. Sun shone. I walked down to King's at 11ish and bought a copy of NME. On the damp grass by Regent Walk I read the fairly good 'Lodger' review. Spent about an hour in this way, then returned to Psych. I made lunch, actually communicating with Graham Baird (two sentences perhaps) about Bowie.

In the afternoon I took 'Heart of Darkness' out to the wooded slope just behind the Hillhead car park and lay in the sun, reading a little of it. The wind was cold though, and I soon moved back indoors. Outside maintenance machines made a racket and the girls from a nearby flat squawked and flaunted themselves on the lawn; all distractions. I worked reasonably well, though.

When Byron came home I rushed onboard the 20 and made a flying visit to The Other Record Shop. 'Lodger' is not yet in. No photos back either.

Ate alone, to be joined by Bill & Jeff. Bill's girlfriend Laura is coming from the U.S. soon!

Waiting during the beautiful evening for a phone, then called Mark & Emma in Edinburgh, discussing my return.

On TV at 10, an Omnibus about Lotte Lenya, star of Brecht / Weill operas & wife of Weill. Touching moments, usual reminiscences.

I was a bit frustrated at not finishing Conrad, but was preoccupied with my own ideas for a play in which the hero alone is aware of the audience.

1979

May

25

Friday

On a sune Fryda I ayt brekfist then repaired to my room with revision. Well, entertainment really, in the form of Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness', which I finished. Then I took my droning Psychology tapes out to nature, the same slope as yesterday. They talked to me about perception, but fell mostly on deaf inner ears.

Ate late, then continued my sketchy intellechy diet until, restless and testy, unable no longer to prolong the cram, took myself on foot towards the inside of everything downtown. Passing some small boys with a blaring radio, I boldly turned the volume down, only to trip over a cobblestone soon afterwards, to their amusement.

I caught a 1 bus to TORS, but the Lodger has not yet arrived in that room.

On the way home passed a bloody-nosed drunk lying on the pavement. Luckily someone else got to him before me, or I could have been obliged to reveal my sketchy knowledge of Samaritan.

Ate with Gaudie, Byron, Guy & Robin. Then a musical, sunny / misty evening, followed by uncommitted attention to 'Maud'. Rather frustrated, I took to doodling artily / messily with ink.

When Byron came in we had water-fights, push-penny, and music.

Thick mist outside. Thick mind inside.

1979

May

26

Saturday

This Saturday followed the pattern of the past week. After breakfast I tore through Tennyson's 'Maud', quite enjoying it (with ideological reservations, of course). Then I did some distracted Psychology.

I broke for lunch. Snap!

I resumed Psych., but girls in summer dresses, sunshine, and Byron Acton got the better of me, and lack of exercise completed the adverse atmosphere. So I feverishly threw out lots of NMEs and other wastepaper, and Byron read them. He's rather morose at present. I too fell prey to the fascination of old documents – Grandpa Currie's faded echo of my letter to him, Mother's aggressive, chatty pep talk, etc. Took down a lot of wall posters etc.

Then quieted down and eased myself back into work by recording the personality chapters of KCL over Schoenberg.

I ate independently. Had a very happy spell listening to Eno's 'Before & After Science' in the cool of the evening. Phoned Mother in Edinburgh; phoning again on Monday at 6.30.

We had hi-jinks on Bill's AUCC bike – first I then Byron rode it past the window while Graham H. poured water down from the kitchen. Byron got drenched and dropped the bike, mildly buckling the wheel. I later read KCL out of (self) interest, personality, intelligence, etc. Looked around the TV lounges briefly.

Byron took some of my clothes to the laundry. Further watery from close on midnight.

1979

May

27

Sunday

It was a bleak, rainy day until about 7, when the sky cleared and it stayed light until 10.30. My revision was centred on Ibsen's Hedda Gabler, because there are two essays on drama & only one on the other forms. And it's a play I appreciate, though don't greatly like. I had a toast & cheese breakfast latish in the flat, after which 'Sunday dinner' was superfluous. But I ate every bit nonetheless.

Then, bloated, I sat with Chekhov and Godot for the afternoon. The usual restlessness. Byron & I rather desperately clowned during tea, pouring water everywhere etc. In the interests of my mental health I went out for a ride on Bill's bike in the evening, to a golf-house by the shore and back. Saw a rabbit. Big deal.

The evening was not very productive, but Godot was soothing, Beckett's style is concise perfection. I then gave my emotions some exercise too by listening to 'Heroes'.

At 10.20 I abandoned work the The South Bank Show, with scam on the unpleasantly sexist artist Allen Jones & the Rough Trade label and bands – in principle I approve of expression for the angry, untalented w.-class youth... but... it ain't me. So I'm privileged.

Tomorrow's privilege is a degree exam. 6 hours of English lit. I became counter-productively adrenal-excited, and all the worries I never usually have occurred – ow, I exaggerate, I'm only slightly concerned that I haven't full enough knowledge of the texts I'll pass. That's all that matters.

1979

May

28

Monday

At seven thirty the sun, a luminous circle, was already high in the air.

I took a rain-spattered bus to King's and sat in the men's changing-room of the Butchart Hall, talking in clipped phrases to Gordon. The exam went fairly well; a question on a Hardy poem, 'Waterloo', then one on 'Heart of Darkness' and 'Confessions of a Justified Sinner' and one on 'Maud'. I botched some of the quotations, but they're OK. I walked home for lunch: a new development in Bolognese sauce, not good.

Lay reading Chekhov, as much for entertainment as revision. Back at the hall, a further three hours. A general question on the nature of art, then two drama questions, one about Godot, one about Chekhov and Ibsen, a comparison. Certainly pass standard.

The sun was shining again, and I was dangerously relieved and elated to have the exam behind me – dangerously because I was unable to work at Psych. Ate, reading 'Northern Light'. Not a spark of real originality in it.

A wasted evening. I couldn't concentrate on Psychology tapes, so I went to read The Guardian, then to the ITV lounge to see a bit of 'The Great Gatsby'. A bit sickening.

I read, with great pleasure, stories from Kafka's 'Description of a Struggle'.

1979

May

Tuesday

29

The breakfast serving-bay was closed when I reached the hall. I bought rolls and yoghurt in the shop and ate them in my room. Unable to apply my mind to Psychology tapes, I turned, as last night, to Kafka. Jesse tinkered outside. For lunch I made hasty pasta in peeled tomato sauce – very unappetising fare. Cut my hair. Then I walked towards the Butchart Games Hall. It was a beautiful afternoon. But inside, with four empty exam booklets and several psychology questions from which to pick, my mind was on other things. I think I did fairly well; I certainly represented my knowledge of the subject, whether that means I've passed or not I don't know.

After this I took the bus swiftly downtown and visited The Other Record Shop. I didn't even say a word – the man behind the counter handed me 'Lodger'. I rushed back on the 5.30 bus, bolted supper, then hung around waiting for Steve to give me access to his deck. Made 2 journeys to Byron Ragless' room, but to no avail. Finally heard the album on Steve's deck – bad sound quality. After a few listens it has grown considerably on me.

On TV (yes, TV) I watched Crime & Punishment: because of the dim colour and the subject, depressing. Then an ITV documentary 'Inside Europe' on Italy's terrorism. It arouses political interest in me, though not without the framework of human involvement. Talked to Byron. Bill was back, with the famous Laura.

1979

May

Wednesday

30

At breakfast Allan Robb, Mel Wollen & I formed a triangle, distant but mutually aware. In the morning I dismantled my room, filling plastic bags with its contents. The stereo deck was the last thing to go, and was unhitched hot from long use when Mother drove the Volvo into the bus-turning circle at about 1. My waiting was over, Byron, Mother & I loaded the stuff into the car, and Hillhead slipped away into the heat, to remain there for four months. I filled out a card in the SRC building for exam results, dropped Mother at Bisset's, then we left via the harbour, forgetting lunch.

We drove to a large, impressive ruined castle set upon crags amidst sea and gulls. Archaic atmosphere. Then the drive to Edinburgh – it went quite well, despite heavy winds and sluggish acceleration. Rain only began at Edinburgh.

I listened to 'Lodger', talked to Emma, and set up my old room. Mark arrived home from skiing, listened to some of 'Lodger'. Father got back from an ASA meeting and came up to my room, with his drink, to talk.

Then a habitual Currie evening, Father unselectively watching TV, me listening to headphones (Bryan Ferry's 'Let's Stick Together' – good Roxy covers), Mother pottering, etc.

Read Moravia's 'Back to the Sea'.

1979

May

31

Thursday

Alone in the house, I got up at 11 or after, ate a little, then went to the incredibly normal, habitual shops – The Edinburgh Bookshop was the first. Here I browsed amongst the Pelicans, looking for a potted guide to modern European politics, not finding anything suitable. I bought a collection of Strindberg's plays. I looked round record-shops, checking out the new decor in Bruce's. Browsed in the Job Centre.

Home. Then to Russ Andrews' Hi-Fi shop, searching unsuccessfully for Kurt Weill / B. Brecht collaborations. But I did pick up a new giveaway arts magazine, 'Insight'. In preparation to visit them, I took some past Gaudies along to Young Street to copy my reviews. Talked to Janet. I always feel as though I'm not there when I talk to her.

There was an unpleasant smell in the air, sharp, acidic, as I walked along Melville Street to Palmerston Place to visit 'Insight'. Talked to a gormless student about Gaudie, filled in a questionnaire, then was escorted into the office of Stuart Montgomery, advertising manager / PR man. He was very friendly, talked on and on about journalism, other publications... The job would be unpaid, though. No great commitment on either side.

Later I supervised Mark to the Odeon to buy Ian Dury tickets. Played 'Lodger' in car.

Phoned Paula after dinner. Arranged to phone her next week and possibly go to Glasgow to see her.

Read Strindberg, NME.

1979

June

1

Friday

The pattern of ennui continued. After eating I played 'Lodger'. Mark came home for his half term and we sat about the sitting room listening to tapes of Bowie's 'Star Special' while preparing macaroni lunch.

Then I went out into the summery warmth to Thin's via Cockburn Street, where I bought the new Devo single. At the bookshop I put Freud's 'Interpretation of Dreams' on the account. Then returned home, jacket over shoulder. I discovered that I have but £3.75 left in the bank, and perhaps the same in my pocket.

I spent the afternoon with Freud & Camus.

Supper, estrangement from family, especially Father, not just because of Freud either!

We all went to the Meadows Fair, an abysmal little fun camp temming with Edinburgh people – a few Accies, New Collegiates, and George Baird. We presently drove to the latter's house and conversed over white wine. I didn't, though – a relief and an annoyance, ideally I'd like to talk freely one moment then crawl around playing with the cat, absolved from all social obligations, the next.

Home. Freud.

1979

June

2

Saturday

I lay inert during the morning, uncertain of my plans for the day. Then I decided to go with Mother to Glasgow. I phoned Paula first, warning her of my imminent arrival, then joined Mutti in the MiG. On the motorway we talked about Father, about men's relationships with women (centuries of subjection) and so on.

I was dropped on Great Western Road and took the bus to Renfrew Street. The city was warm, sunny, full of footballers, and somehow quite European, like Rome with its river. I ate in a milk bar by the Clyde then walked past the Gorbals, finally reaching Queen's Park after asking 3 people.

Paula was in, now in the large room of the flat. We spent hours spring-cleaning her room, dusting, hoovering, moving furniture... Drank coffee, talked, listening to 'Lodger'. I went for cider & lager to the off-license, and Paula washed clothes in the machine. On empty stomachs we got quite tipsy. After supper – pasta, various pepper, tomato & garlic additives, bread and paté – we went to the ice-cream shop and took double tubs into Queen's Park.

We walked to the top & round, looking at the red & blue clouds, until the park ranger told us it was shut. Returned to the flat, realised the time, then rushed to the overground metro station. There we talked until the train came. Durex joke.

I shared a no-smoking compartment to Edinburgh with some holidaymakers just back from Transylvania: Dracula's castle was closed for cleaning, they complained. Blood everywhere? They smoked. Junk TV then bed.

1979

June

3

Sunday

When I got up and showed myself downstairs, Mother seemed surprised, saying 'Oh, you got back then?' Unfortunately I did. I spent the morning in silence, mostly drifting about the house. Read an article about John Hurt. At lunch we were talking about the derivations of words – I asked about 'Platonic'.

I took the worn stylus – jumping all over 'Lodger' – to McOnomy to find a replacement, but they didn't have one. It was at least a breath of fresh air, a change of scene. I became very lethargic during the afternoon. I wrote a little, but couldn't stick with it and gave up as soon as I began to make the piece trivial or verbose or whatever. I spent a lot of time later charting from the diary my interactions with P., then pasting them together in a long strip with red patches. Diverting.

Ruth Shepley was in, talking about teaching, cheap paperbacks, plans. Again I was mostly silent. Father & Mark spent lots of time (earlier actually) poring over the moped. I don't think they fixed it. We had a TV dinner – the 'Crime & Punishment' rerun. Outside mist grew thick.

Bed. Read Camus to complement the diet of 'Observer' junk.

1979

June

4

Monday

To my surprise, a £90 cheque awaited me at breakfast – from the SED, supplementary students' allowances. It made my day. I rushed uptown, browsing for a shirt. Bought a 'France-Soir' paper for fun, walked to Ricci (hideously expensive) and back, and bought a peach-coloured shirt in L'Homme for £12. The town was full of Germans, Spaniards etc. Mark was up when I got back. Presently I went out again, to the library, where I took out a book on European politics, one on Kafka, and a Beckett play, 'All That Fall'. Later I bought a book of Ionesco plays in Bauermeister's, 'Rhinoceros' etc.

Sitting with Mark I felt buoyant and 'restless', and this developed into a giggly mood.

Looked over my sparse creative output, reading snippets to Mark as he fiddled with my typewriter. Bought Earl Grey tea. My shirt is disappointingly large. Gratifying glances on the street.

Mother showed a Mrs Wood round the flat, to embarrassingly (mock) enthusiastic praise. Father was in fair fettle, trying on suits of the '60s. I asked for £5. London plan is off – Father going by sleeper, because of petrol shortage.

After dinner, read Beckett in my room, read an article on teeth, Kafka book, thought casually about my relationship. There is, as ever, no straight resolution, just vague resolves to act boldly next time.

1979

June

5

Tuesday

Mark's last day of half term. I walked up to the bank, meeting James Fife twice. I withdrew £10. My letter of award for next term has arrived. I went to Boots for a couple of toothbrushes, Dotty's for a Pentel, and decided not to buy underwear in A+N. When I got home I took 'Lodger' along to Russ Andrews Hi-Fi for a cleaning, but the crackle is still there.

Hung about with Mark, then, when Emma came home she and I walked up to the St. James Centre, she to look at sandals, I to browse in the HMV shop for Weill & Obscure records, finding neither.

Witticisms and laughter at dinner, not because family tensions were gone, but because they became hilarious. Then I went back to my sunny room and read avidly a new find, a book on Theatre of the Absurd by Martin Esslin.

'Crime & Punishment' at 9 – Hurt excellent as usual, but the sub-plot rather overdone, and some of the action unconvincing or trite. Can the story stand on its own, or does it serve the ideas at the expense of credulity?

I drove Mother to the station – she's off to London – then sat before the TV, watching Whistletest etc. Father fished.

1979

June

6

Wednesday

After a very restless four hours' sleep I thankfully got up, ate, and walked up to Thin's. I had to hang around until it opened, then I went up to the University section and bought (didn't charge) Beckett's trilogy in Paladin. Home. The 'ladies' came.

I then went out again, to the Fruitmarket Gallery (good paintings by Mark Russell) & the Ricky Demarco Gallery. Then I bought a baked potato & cheddar, which I ate in a modern High Street courtyard. At the Other Record Shop I was so impressed with the live John Cooper Clarke record that I bought it.

After listening to it at home, I walked up to Bruce's, asking about tickets. Earlier I had met Nigel Barry, with 'Dots' Waterman & D.W. Currie sitting at an outside table at Leerie Lamplighters on Dublin Street.

I had no dinner per se, but finished reading Camus' 'Outsider' – good end. On George Street I had a long conversation with an Austrian Moonie, we talked about existentialist literature & the importance of the family.

I went to see Robert Altman's 'A Wedding' at the Cameo. Smokers all around me made me furious. The film, though I didn't much like it, was masterly.

Father returned from London.

1979

June

7

Thursday

I kept curtains between me and the drizzle until 11 or so. Then I bought NME for my breakfast entertainment. Father left £10 for me to buy groceries, so this I did, after taking clothes to and from Quickwork. Then I changed into blazer and pleats and DMs, erected an umbrella, and went to vote. Liberal, European elections.

In the afternoon I walked uptown, passing my Austrian friend, who was hard at work converting a skeptical Scot ('I don't think about it very much'), and bought underwear at Aitken + Niven – four pairs of black socks, four of red pants.

Back home, looked through old Gaudies, reading up on the Moonies.

When Father came home he prodded us all into making dinner. My contribution was a green salad.

After the meal I listened to Ian Dury's 'D.I.Y.' – not very exciting, but 'nice'.

I went out for a walk because the evening had cleared up – through Stockbridge to Raeburn Place, over to Queensferry Road, then along a footpath by the Water of Leith which I've never been on. It came out at Bell's Brae. Saw a Karmann Ghia. Had a nosebleed in the Dean Village, which forced me to absorb the 'spirit of place'. Along the Doune-side path in growing gloom, then home, in a pleasantly estranged / renewed state of mind. On TV: Linton Kwesi Johnson and a comparison of Colonsay & a Norwegian town. Then read Esslin on the Absurdists: Beckett.

1979

June

Friday

8

I walked up to Thin's and looked around the Pelican section, booklist in hand. Eventually, though, I bought only one of the books recommended – L. Lerner's 'Shakespeare's Tragedies' – and something for myself: 'Modernism', a guide to European literature.

I lunched at the Fruitmarket Gallery on potato salad and orange juice, reading my book.

Mother returned from London, her sleeper four hours late. She went for lunch with Father: 'He's having a romance with me!'

I spent the afternoon reading and talking to the cats. Bought bread & potatoes, tidied – a real housewife.

We discussed literature & TV over dinner – or rather I did. Father told me to 'belt up' when I attacked 'Are You Being Served'.

I phoned Paula in Edinburgh and talked about various unimportant things; she won't see me this weekend but is phoning on Thursday after a dentist's appointment.

Later I phoned John Thomson, who has exams on Mon., Tues., and Wed. I'm to phone him on Thursday too.

We had a pleasant, relaxed evening in the sitting room, Eno playing, TV off. Henry broke a glass and his dish.

1979

June

Saturday

9

A phonecall got me out of bed – just a fishing friend of Father's. Midmorning I decided to suggest looking at cars for Mother; Father was the only reluctant one, naturally: he must pay! Anyway, we all piled into the Volvo and drove to an Alfa Romeo garage at Haymarket. Mother liked the Sprint, but its insurance rating forbids young drivers. At the Bells Brae VW garage, however, Mother was brought round to acceptance of the Golf after seeing a dark green automatic GLS. We almost ordered it, but would prefer a manual. So we then went to Meadowbank & Wilson's, where they could only promise to try for a manual on a swap basis.

Mother & Emma were dropped downtown and we went home.

In the afternoon I went to the shops and wandered around listlessly, browsing in Menzies listening to snippets of conversation (a couple of deaf & dumbs were conversing with their fingers). I came home with a Gang of Four single & a blank tape.

Sat amidst the family with headphones on, taping Schoenberg.

We ate macaroni because Father & Mother had a dinner date or party. Then we played Masterpiece, with records in the background.

I watched TV, unusually.

This was, I think, a day of leisure.

1979

June

10

Sunday

James Fife was moved to say of the weather: 'This is the only summer we'll get!'

I used the day little, though. Lay in a long time, then took the MG, with Mark, to Canonmills then Meadowbank, where I filled it with petrol. We bought a Motor magazine at the station, then drove to Young Street.

Here we helped Father (that means standing around most of the time, awaiting instructions): we set up a reception desk in the hall and improved the 'garden'. Mark and I took our leave before 4.

On TV – The South Bank Show, with John Hurt. We ate downstairs.

Mother cleared out Mark's cupboard, which meant my looking through old letters, photographs & tapes – not a pleasant occupation, but irresistible & fascinating.

We ate Father's charcoal meat down in the basement with red wine.

Henry King shat on a bed: talk of getting rid of him.

I lounged before TV; good stuff, though: 'Crime & Punishment' and Robert Altman's 'Long Goodbye' – a pleasant film, one of the few to make California look attractive.

1979

June

11

Monday

I was able to see most of the morning because Father gave me the Volvo, at 9, to take to Murrayfield for servicing. Only a slight haziness marred the sunshine. I took the bus back in to Princes St. and called in at Elena Mae then Virgin Records, where I bought Robert Fripp's 'Exposure'.

Playing it at home disappointed me rather; it is split between King Crimson & Eno styles. The latter I like a lot, the former not at all. Good use of taped conversation.

I spent the day eating dried apricots and reading 'Modernism'. In the afternoon I wrote a couple of pages about a character who knows he is a fiction, and read some Beckett. Then towards 5 I again received the call, this time to pick the Volvo up. I went to Young Street first and hovered about for ages while Father wrapped up business. Janet attractive as ever. At last we were away. Father followed me home in the MG, making me drive self-consciously.

Father & Mother went to Helen Duncan for dinner. We kids (I was one once more) kicked a football about on the pavement & in the gardens while the cats gambolled nearby. My thoughts became childish, autistic, humorous, creative. Debasement etc., but a useful valve.

TV. 'Heute Direkt' & Anna Raeburn making an ass (a very beautiful ass) of herself on a terribly coy, embarrassed TV show about Sex (capital S?!).

1979

June

12

Tuesday

The cat lay with me, affectionate and aggressive by turns (he almost bit into my arm!). Then I was alone in the house again. I went out on a walk to Tollcross & back, browsing in several bookshops, but buying nothing. The air was heavy and insidiously hot, over 18C.

Mother came home for lunch. I drove her back to the office in the MG.

I washed, dried & ironed my clothes, tidied the house.

When Mother returned from work I wrote an ad for a St. Andrew Press book, 'The Strath', to appear in the Ross-shire Journal. Drove it to Waterloo Place for rapid dispatch. Douglas Ashmeade came. Father went fishing. Over dinner, Douglas argued the case for a knowledge of biology in philosophers. Then I had to leave for Ann Street to babysit for the Shepleys. A friend of theirs sat with me for a while, watching Rhoda. I didn't see the kids.

Watched TV all evening, was paid £2, got a lift home. Am tired: 1.45am.

1979

June

13

Wednesday

Douglas Ashmeade came into my room and talked to me about cars – but I failed to understand his message in my drowsiness. It was about parking tickets. Walked to the office, buying a blue tie on the way: £2.50. Then I took the Volvo to the Canonmills carwash and thence to Edinburgh airport where I met Peter O'Connell from the Shuttle. Drove him to Denzlers, then myself home. I was reading Modernism while the women cleaned, when John Thomson arrived. We talked, went to buy bread, talked, then I drove him home after running the 'ladies' up the hill.

During the afternoon I read about Berlin, Prague & Kafka in my book, lying in bed. Decided to go to London next week. Then ran to Rod's to make a cup-app't. for 5 tomorrow, and to Bruce's for a Human League ticket for 9 tomorrow.

Chauffeured Bill 'n' Peter home. Latter embarrassingly affectionate to Emma, with predictable results – she becomes unbearably chirpy, demands attention. Some interesting conversation about individuality v. group – Peter strong supporter of latter. Jane Austen fan!

A gaggle of bourgeois dilettantes oohed & ahhed at the house. They called my books 'heavy', recommended psychoanalysis (as a career, not treatment!). Gay little man talked about the piano.

Pleasant evening in the sitting room. I read 'Modern Quotations', talking only rarely.

1979

June

Thursday

14

The carpet-layers filled the house with the clamour of the hammer and the whine of the drill, fitting the brown stair-carpet. I took the MG to Belford Road to ask about the Golf – they said a tax cover note was needed. This I obtained at the bank after calling in at Young Street, then at St. Andrews Sq. being misdirected. I took this to the garage.

Picked up pictures (£85 worth) from Torrance Gallery. Read NME over a staggered snack lunch.

I walked to the bus & train stations to get timetables for my trip to London next week. Saw D. Lindsay.

Then at 4.30 went to pick up the Golf, leaving the MG. The automatic is pleasant to drive. Mark, Emma & I went out for a run, picking Mother up from work – she preferred to be driven, a bad sign.

Mark & I went to the Haggertys' to help with a sofa.

I drove the Volvo to Belmont for petrol.

Then I walked to the Astoria. Sat, drink in hand, watching the crowd until the Human League came on – a very impressive audio-visual presentation, also depressing – cataclysmic world-view.

1979

June

Friday

15

A girl / boy team worked on the carpet for much of the day, severing the telephone cord in the process and 'killing' the phone. I phoned John, breakfasted, then walked to Belford Road to return the keys of the MG.

Then I called upon John. We sat around in his room, then walked up to the Student Centre for a salad lunch. Then we went to the Union on Chambers St., played a few coin machines, and then crossed the road to the Museum. We looked round the Ecology & Mineral sections.

Then home to John's, and Snooker. We played two games, both of which John won.

Back home, I phoned Paula from the basement, a long call in which we discussed grants and arranged to meet tomorrow at the art school dip. show.

Mark made dinner.

A TV evening, with a little culture in the form of Schopenhauer info.

1979

June

16

Saturday

Mother phoned the Giles' and caused a panic, but was only worried because our phone had 'rung' without being answered. I walked to Henni's & the health foodie for bread & a Guardian, then went to the VW centre with the MG booklet, but still no log. Came back in crowds & heat via Virgin, buying Wire's excellent 'Question of Degree'. Withdrew £50 from the bank for London.

Ate husks of bread for lunch then walked through the Grassmarket to the Art College. There I met Paula. The exhibition doesn't start until Tuesday, but we sneaked round what was left unlocked, differing on most assessments. Then we bought ice creams and sat in the Meadows. Nearby was an inflated rubber structure, a 'Cathedral of the Senses', pneumatic sculpture. Inside, dressed in white overalls, we bounced against fat luminous pillars then sat at the edge and watched dancers striking poses.

Back at Paula's, we drank coffee and sat in the sunny sitting room with ambient flamenco, talking in a low-key way. Then we went for more tea or coffee & biscuits and sat in the kitchen, talking about dreams, television 'n' stuff. Despite such a pleasant day, goodbyes were as tense as ever, Paula shielding herself with cigarette and door. Outside, divine evening.

Diana Quick on TV sparked a debate with Mark – I say she's perfection embodied in a woman.

Mother arrived home close on midnight. We had a giggly chat round the kitchen table, with Noilly Prat and a Cosmopolitan quiz.

1979

June

17

Sunday

Father rushed off to Young Street and Mark pestered for a shot in the Golf. Our first trip in the car was to Mr. Finlayson's house at the South of the city, where we returned his suitcase and gave a wee giftie to his wife. I bought an Observer & read an anti-smoking article and a review of a Camus biography. The next trip in the car was taking Emma to an audition-organisation near St. George's. We circled the area, then returned home.

The whole family then climbed into the Golf and Mark drove us to George Square and then North to Arboretum Road, where we stopped for ice creams.

'Lunch' was at 5ish. I had great trouble getting over a modest request for money – £20 for my London holiday – but finally Father agreed, provided I scrub out the basement at Young Street. This I did, driving the Golf there through deserted streets in the evening sunshine. I mopped and swept, sloshing the water around generously to give Father his £20-worth. Bought a rail ticket to Euson (return) for £19.85.

Father & Mother went out for dinner. I watched TV, complaining at its banality, and moved the Golf into 3 different parking spaces, finally outside the house.

Ironed and packed lightly.

1979

June

Monday

18

After little sleep I dragged myself out of bed. Walked up to Princes St. and waited in rapidly growing heat for Elena Mae to open. I had to leave before it did, but visited Quickwork on the way home. At 10 I had an appointment with Rod, who claimed to be half-paralysed and so charged me only £1.50 for the cut.

Caught my Euston train at 10.52. Swish air-conditioned carriages, but several annoying factors forced me to change seats several times; changing direction of travel at Carstairs, a noisy bore, cigarette smoke, a hot carriage... Eventually I sat opposite a Pakistani computer freak. Read a few pages of 'The Castle'. Outside the day was a furnace. Carlisle, Preston, Crewe, Lancaster... we reached Euston at 5.40. I walked to King's Cross with a new map, then read 'Time Out' on the 6.35 St. Neots train. I had had sandwiches in the station.

The hazy English countryside trundled by. I then walked, stranger in a strange town, jacket over arm, bag in hand, through St. Neots, finally reaching the Actons'. I asked Mrs Acton where The Paddock was, she replied 'You're here!' in a puzzled tone.

We had supper. I ate only chicken sandwiches, drank lots of wine.

Byron, Mme A. & I talked all evening about manners, heredity / environment, 'distinction' and democracy.

1979

June

Tuesday

19

Yoghurt and toast were handed me for breakfast, then I was driven in Mr. Acton's Chrysler to the station. There I sat in the heat eavesdropping on dull commuters. In London I got a timetable then set out for the Tate on foot, observing the city; some very Victorian grandeur; Whitehall as the hub of the 'Empire' etc. Intense heat. At the gallery I went round the vast modern collection (i.e. 20th century), rather bewildered by the variety. Nothing now stands out – it's a blur. I bought Paula postcards fondly then browsed round the shop before eating a good light lunch downstairs in the dark café.

Then I navigated my way to the King's Road after checking out Sloane Square and buying a ticket (the last at £1.50) for 'Happy Days'. K.R. was reminiscent of the '60s, lots of beautiful, egotistical-looking people, shops culminating in Seditious – vastly anti-climactic, like Aberdeen's Slaughter but with a completely plain front. I took the tube to Notting Hill Gate and caught Herzog's 'Nosferatu – the Vampire'; rather disappointing, straightforward, bitty plot.

Back to Sloane Square and a Wimpy-type plate of spaghetti on King's Road before seeing 'Happy Days'. A small theatre, I sat in the 'slippings' next to a Greek woman (from Psychiko!) who took pictures (to the annoyance of the management) and misunderstood resolutely the play's meaning, saying it filled her with hope.

Trains, trains, then a taxi, and back to The Paddock, tired.

1979

June

20

Wednesday

Hello again diary, I'm tired limp, so I'll stick to bare essentials: I walked to the station, again in heat you could've cut with a knife. Changed at Hitchin. First stop was the Goethe Gallery, where the exhibition (Dieter Hacker) 'Stupid Pictures' was mildly entertaining and cynical.

From there I went to Harrod's, where I wandered through its vastness too intimidated to buy... except to browse in the book dep't. I ate lunch in a Hamburger City joint (tomato soup & omelette) then made my way to the Scala cinema, where I saw Fellini's 'Casanova'. Donald Sutherland superb, script fairly poor, sets and atmosphere splendid, epic.

Bought an NME and read it in the shadow of the G.P.O. tower in the shady heat of the afternoon. Then took the tube to Waterloo, and made my way to the Hayward Gallery. Before I'd seen a corner of 'Three Perspectives on Modern Photography' there was an announcement of a public lecture. This was interesting, though biased to the left wing and rather serious, in verbiage if not ideology. Outside once more, I went to the National Theatre, bought Beckett's 'Endgame' at the bookshop, and ate a meat salad and wine supper upstairs in the Cottleston buffet, overlooking the Thames with sinking sun.

Walking back to KC through Soho, was approached by a pimp. Refused to 'keep a young girl in work'.

The tiring odyssey home.

1979

June

21

Thursday

Trekking to the station. Read Kafka's 'Castle' on the platform, in the train, and at several intermediate points, during the day, before the return. My first visit was to Carnaby Street, so I tubed to Oxford Circus and walked through Soho. The actual street was scrap from the '60s, awful 'swinging London' stuff still. On Leicester Square I was accosted by a record-seller (on behalf of some children's concern) who used very stock yet cunning methods (I was fooled because I didn't expect anything so underhand as being given £3 change from £5 after offering £1). Annoyed by this rip-off, I made for the calmer atmosphere of the Tate, where I ate a cold lunch, drank coffee, read Kafka.

Then to Fulham East, where, at 4.00, I saw Chabrol's (Huppert's) 'Violette Nozriere', a very well-made but depressing film about the French murderess.

Then I went to the Roundhouse and asked about 'The Lady from the Sea' (Ibsen); it finishes too late...

I walked down Chalk Farm Road to Euston Station, where I browsed in Menzies and ate a fish supper. Then to King's Cross to kill time before catching the earlier St. Neots train.

Thoughts of Paula, ultimately defeatist. Spoke to Byron, who had cut his hand while working at the bar. Our trip together tomorrow is off.

1979

June

22

Friday

I caught the 10.08 London train. I read Kafka again on the train, and arrived in London unsure of the day's events. I decided to visit the City, so tubed there. Wandered round about St. Paul's, stumbling on an opening of a Naive Art exhibition at the Guildhall; a clergyman trying to persuade businessmen to invest in this most safe kind of art for their office lobbies. I ate lunch at a very pleasant health food restaurant with a view, past a modern plaza of St. Paul's. Sunny weather, but not hot. I sat in a square where secretaries disrobed and tanned themselves and pinstriped men watched. Struck up a conversation (a pontification with me the victim) with an oldish man about Kafka – he knew far less than me, but insisted on being 'instructive'. He advised me to visit Bloomsbury for a 2nd-hand, unexpurgated edition of 'The Castle', so I did, but couldn't find any bookshops so instead wandered through Soho.

Then the rush got to me and I retreated to familiar ground and shuttled between Euston & King's Cross. A buffet supper.

Caught the 7.08 back, reading Kafka all the way, even on the street.

Watched TV, listened to the wisdom of Mrs. Acton, then Monty Python came on the tube and we laughed embarrassedly at it, Byron arriving halfway. When the film finished he beat up his mother, playfully...

1979

June

23

Saturday

Mrs Acton served me (hand and mouth) a huge breakfast, then Mr. A. drove me to the station, annoyingly tuning the radio then retuning when something interesting came on. He gave me £1 before saying goodbye.

Read Kafka on the train to London. At King's Cross I went to a delicatessen then joined the queue for the 12.00 Edinburgh train. This arrived at Berwick in the rain, where we were herded onto buses and driven to Dunbar, then back onto the train. The 125 was refrigerated rather than air conditioned. I had to put on my filthy white corduroy jacket, and felt unattractive, wishing to sink out of sight. Read K. and brooded gloomily.

On arriving home I rushed upstairs and had a bath. Afterwards drove in the Golf to St. John's (Emma's confirmation rehearsal) and to Young Street (typewriter ribbon). After supper we went back to Young St. and picked Emma up. A Greek urinologist was in.

I phoned the Actons. Read my pass-card for Psychology with relief. Settled into the carefree luxury of living at home. On TV the adorable Diana Quick melted me.

1979

June

24

Sunday

I lazily read the Observer at breakfast, then Mark and I went in the Golf to a place near St. George's, and back. Emma, Pater and Mater went to Broughton for the morning. For Emma, a blessed event this afternoon – her confirmation. I stayed at home, the others were bored watching it.

I read Martin Esslin's 'Absurd' book. Did some clothes washing & ironing. At 11.00a.m. I phoned Paula, she (rather than I) talked about her past and coming week. I am to visit her tomorrow at 8.30.

I typed out Kafka's 'In the Gallery' and drew Kirchner's circus painting beneath it. Tried some very spontaneous, uncommitted prose; it was as bad as one would expect.

TV: 'M', Fritz Lang, 1930. Left before the end.

1979

June

25

Monday

Today I started work for ELF by taking the Golf to Waverley and meeting a couple of Arabs, taking them to George Square, returning to the station to search unsuccessfully for a third, returning to the office, letrasetting...

I lunched at home, in the afternoon returned to my letrasetting work, took a teacher home, visited the Tourist Board twice – all in the Golf. I managed to find 3 jammed meters, quite an achievement.

After work I drove up to the library, taking out 2 books on Kafka and one Adamov play.

Emma made a scene about Spanish: a confidence crisis about her own abilities.

After supper and junk TV, at 8.10 I took the car up the Lauderdale Street and saw Paula. At first we hung about in her room, unloading her trunk of books and papers. Then, after coffee in the kitchen, I persuaded her to come out for a drive. We went to Portobello, then back through Musselburgh and countryside. We then had more tea, and settled in the study, where P. showed me her folios at last – four of them. My criticisms were often greeted with scorn, but what I liked I may get once she has organised the drawings. Discussing art mostly, and Paula in particular, we stayed up until 2.45a.m., when I left with an uninspiring kiss at the door. Nonetheless a friendly evening, necessary human contact.

1979

June

26

Tuesday

I set out into the day, jacketless, in the car. Later in the morning I took it home, putting the Volvo in its parking place in a very difficult operation. Visited George Square, took Jean Wright to Meg's bookshop, had lunch at the office then took Mother home in the car, went to the bank, lettrasetted, went to the accountant's hours after I should have... another working day.

Father left for a fishing holiday – a day – in a temper because he couldn't find his sleeping bag. I drove a Yemeni student to Duddingston Crescent. Emma later called upon me to take her to an audition-lesson. I collected her later with Mark. A visit was made to the Cash & Carry, I didn't go.

Instead lay (stricken by last night's late bed no doubt) on the sofa and brooded, more with emotions than thoughts. Growing emotional dependence on P.L.G.S. again – its motions resemble a dignified jack-in-the-box.

Later I read Kafka's 'Castle' & criticism of it, very thorough and good, by Richard Sheppard. V. tired.

1979

June

27

Wednesday

Groggy all day, I took the car in to work and at 10.15 went to Haddington with Cathleen Wright in the passenger seat. It was a tres belle jour, with sunshine etc. At Templedean Hall Helen showed me her new front office. Returning, we took the back road (over the hill): very picturesque. Nonetheless, we hardly talked.

I made myself useless during the day, lunching at home then sitting in the library at Young Street, reading the fascinating 'On Kafka's Castle'. I did however visit the Auditor & cash a cheque for Nora, on which mission I also collected my photos from Elena Mae – very disappointing copies.

At around 3.30 I strolled home, and fell, exhausted, onto the sofa where I slept for about 45 minutes. When I awoke I was severely disoriented, thinking tomorrow had come (of course it never does!). The further adventures of K.

At supper Mother and Emma got stressed-up about E.'s poor academic performance, Mother shouting, washing her hands of it, and rushing upstairs, and Emma sobbing and being self-effacing.

I had an exhilarating evening in my room accompanying Bowie tapes. Some conversation in the sitting room, Mother placated.

1979

June

28

Thursday

Father drove the Golf in, and I walked along by George Street to work. Main event of the day was a journey to Haddington (after taking Kathleen to George Square again). On the way there (by the North Berwick road) I hit and killed a small bird which flew out in front of me.

At T.H. I had coffee and read Punch, then conversed with the Italian cook and her 19 year-old granddaughter, still without a boyfriend. Drove home fast on almost empty roads. Much hanging around during the afternoon. I took Janet to the bank, took photocopies.

When I arrived home at 4ish I phoned Paula and arranged to lunch with her tomorrow at the Farmhouse. A brief call; she seemed to want to get back to the tennis on TV.

I toyed with the idea of going to see a film, but instead stayed in, listening to records and reading on in 'The Castle'. Father commissioned me to take pictures with the Pentax of the Chinese in Haddington tomorrow (count the prepositions!).

1979

June

29

Friday

Dawned the day that was going to be so perfect. I took the car to Meadowbank and put £8-worth of petrol into it, then went to Young Street. One by one the new monitors arrived: all but Mark, Caroline and Ana. The meeting was at 10. Afterwards I took Paula to George Square. She told me that she was not feeling sociable and wanted to call off lunch – a pretty miserable thing to do. I felt very hurt for the rest of the day by the implications.

I rearranged a classroom and did various other things until lunch – alone at home. Afterwards I drove out to Granton and sat in the car on the pier gloomily. Looked round a 'Trendsetter' hypermarket. Back at Young Street, the Templedean Hall photo session was called off because Friday afternoons are free for the Chinese. Stripped of these two events the day was normal, only worse because of dashed expectations. A staff wine buffet – I drank in silence. Some demanding collating to be done in the late afternoon.

I bought Siouxi's 'Playground Twist'. After dinner I went out on foot, climbing the Castle rock at the South-West side and sitting reading 'The Castle', its pages orange in the setting sun. Earlier I had perused Eliot's 'Wasteland' and some Auden.

When I returned from my broody, alienated walk the Lethams were in. I swigged a bottle of white wine then read 'On Kafka's Castle' in bed.

1979

June

30

Saturday

At 9.30 I was at Young Street, where the French Canadian course (around 28 people) was received. I phoned for 14 taxis; two were subsequently cancelled. Coffee was handed round. I was kissed by the co-ordinator, who was here last year. On the way home I bought 'Chelsea Girl' – the Simple Minds single. After lunch – well, at 12.15 – we went in the Golf to Thin's. I bought Beckett's 'Watt' and a Kafka commentaries book.

Then Mark and I went to pick Emma up from her audition at Bruntsfield school. We wandered around the school – Mark disliked the atmosphere. Then we went to Arboretum Road and entered the Academy grounds. I saw the Rector and several familiar masters. Mark met Eric Govan, Boyd, Russell. We drove home with stirred memories.

Rita Lockhart is staying with us. She, the co-ordinator (Doreen?) and a French Canadian couple sat in the sitting room talking of, to me, dull subjects.

John Lydon on Jukebox Jury.

After dinner Mark and I went out in the Volvo, in the last slanting rays of the sun, to Hillend and 8 miles beyond. On our return we passed the eccentric Giles Telfer, and gave him a lift home.

I wrote a few lines of reasonable, though cold and sterile, prose. Shall rewrite tomorrow very differently and continue.

1979

July

1

Sunday

The adults spent much of the day at Jock (the peg) McKinnon's house. For me it was an idle day: I hate being idle, but I am unable to 'work' unless something is of pressing importance.

Some mislaid French-Canadian suitcases were returned by a black-suited chauffeur in a white Mercedes. Mark and I subsequently took them to Carlyle Halls of Residence in the Golf, listening to the Simple Minds single on the way.

At home again, I ate some cold rice pudding which made me feel decidedly sick, so I lay down in my room listening to music by Siouxsie & co. on tape. Played piano and guitar. Read the diary.

Mark made supper. I read Kafka's story 'Memories of the Kalda Railway' – enjoyed it. Mark & I went to Young Street with Father to fetch the Summer School sign. At home we put edgings on it then took it to 55 George Sq. and mounted it on the railings. Pristine, it awaits the vandal's spray can.

I walked along to Young Street for my NME. As I entered I heard a man's voice and a dog's snort; thinking burglars were at work, I sneaked about the street outside until out came... Nick Sherrit and a ghastly mongrel called Ziggy.

At home I read the ideological fable / facts of The Pop Group, which stimulated my own musings about justification in the world and 'political' awareness – is it a right to be allowed to ignore politics, or a duty to question it?

1979

July

Monday

2

Father left me a typewritten note of instructions. The Chinese photographs had low priority, and as it turned out there was no time. Instead I ran students and stationery up to George Square, bought books in Thin's, carried the weighty photocopier upstairs, and spent most of my time in the driving seat of the Golf. I gave Caroline a lift to the Tourist Information office and the Post Office – she's more attractive than last year, has split with Steve.

At 12.30 I met Paula outside the refectory. She had already eaten lunch. We sat quietly for fifteen minutes or so, I played pinball, then the others arrived. Caroline, Gillian and I sat together. Gillian was silent until I asked her about her university course (Persian) and home, etc. Fairly dull, quiet girl. Later she and I sat together at coffee, talking inconsequentially, and Paula & Caroline did likewise. While recognising the need to give each monitor equal attention, I feel cut up about not being with Paula alone while she's there. I feel, though I may be wrong, that this pressure comes from her. I left to buy files in the Union shop. Sat in the car at the station reading 'Car' until the new course left on the coach. Then gave Nora a lift back to Young Street and went home myself.

Played my singles, made a fairly good (though inevitably black) collage. Doreen stayed for dinner – the adults were drunk, giggly. On TV, John Currie & the Scottish Chamber O. in Aix.

1979

July

Tuesday

3

With the car I took Mother to work. Then I had spare time 'til 11 and the car at my disposal. I went to Bruce's and bought the Simple Minds album, reduced to £2.99. Later I went to Cockburn Street and bought a sheened jacket for £10.65, an import from the States. Then I joined Gillian for coffee. We spoke timidly to the students, dryly informing them of what was happening.

Next stop lunch. We monitors sat together, Paula too this time. There was talk of a trip in a sailing boat, but the owner didn't show up as he had promised David. I was relieved. Instead we went to the Botanics on the 27 bus, about seven or eight students to six monitors. I sat next to Paula on the bus. When we reached the gardens it was sunny and very warm. We looked around the gallery, Paula and I separating and spending more time than the others, esp. at the postcard rack. Then, lying on the grass outside, I clammed up because I felt ignored by Paula. This silence perpetuated itself, and Paula's clowning with the others made me silently desolate. The situation was redeemed when I offered her a lift to Menzies, as we walked up Dundas St. The tall monitor came too, but I dropped her on Rose St. We were to meet the others in the The Three Tuns pub, but they weren't there, so Paula and I sat downstairs in the quiet lounge where they played slow music. We had some fairly deep, though impersonal, talk, me in ecstasies of adoration. Then I drove her home.

Father fishing. I consumed Stravinsky's 'Rite', wrote a short piece about P. and read about K.

1979

July

4

Wednesday

For a long time I lay in bed, unwilling to get up. When I did I had a long breakfast (reading an article on Roy Lichtenstein) which gave me indigestion. I walked to Night & Day where I tried on a pair of trousers, and Ricci, where I did likewise. Then, after a look round Bauermeister's, I went for lunch. Caroline & Gillian joined me. C. had to give me an Alka Seltzer; I could hardly eat my lunch for stomach upset. Paula joined us at coffee. We all went to the Royal Mile, hoping to see the Queen, but discovered that we had missed her, so we bussed to Bruntsfield Links to putt. We split into two groups: David & Caroline in charge of the extraverts, Christina, Paula & I the introverts. (Jose, Jesus, and the French / Swiss woman). Paula did very badly, taking six shots where others took three. The other team pissed off for drinks at a pub, while we persisted, scoring. Afterwards Paula went home instead of coming with us for ice-creams (her insulin level didn't allow it). Jesus told us about his past as 3rd, 2nd & 1st Mate on a Liberian / American ship, and as an Economic journalist. I bussed home.

Mark & I drove Emma to St. George's to see 'The Boyfriend'. When we collected her we met Nicky Campbell & Allan Robb, who exposed himself to me when I asked for a flash of his T-shirt. Mark & I discussed into-extraversion – I tested him and found him to be more extravert.

Father, Mother, Emma & I played the Biography game in the late evening, then I read 'The Terror of Art', a U.S. book on Kafka; diverting.

1979

July

5

Thursday

At 10 I leapt out of bed and at 11 was at coffee, expecting to see Paula there. Instead only David came. I talked to the Yemenis for the first time. Until lunch I sat with Ana in the office, listening to her plans to go to Egypt then going to Clerk Street to buy turpentine for her. I ate lunch with Christina, who is 20 today.

Paula & I sat together at coffee afterwards, but communicated little or not at all.

We walked to the Museum of Childhood, I walked with a Yemeni who was skipping classes. In the museum I floated close to Paula but didn't throw myself in with her, giving her the chance to decide. Afterwards she helped Jose to phone home from a phonebox. I waited outside. We walked to John Lewis, still chilly. After parting, I ran back and re-met her, and we walked to Young Street to collect expenses – on George Street I began talking about the fact that we weren't talking, and a candid discussion followed, off and on, in Janet's office. P. admitted to 'trying to turn her back on the problem', said this had been wrong and unbearable, said she had been thinking about it a lot... We discovered that Ana has expenses, so we walked to the High Street via Menzies, still talking emotionally. Then we went into a pub and became much more amiable as the air was cleared. I showed her the piece I wrote on Tues. We discussed Beckett, Kafka, then Us again. Then P. magnanimously suggested that we could mend out differences... We took the bus back to Young St. (she'd left her wallpaper there) then parted on excellent terms.

I arrived home at 8.15 or so, dined. On TV, Spanish documentary & Mary Whitehouse.

1979

July

6

Friday

I drove the VW to Young Street and collected the pay strips and cheques for George Square and Haddington. I visited Ana with the former, then returned to Young St. for petrol money: only then was I able to leave for Haddington. The N. Berwick road was quiet both ways, the countryside idyllic in haze and sun. Helen Duncan introduced me to the Chinese class, and I took about ten pictures while they sat in silence, piously. Then I snapped in the language lab and the library before taking my leave. At the Student Centre I returned 20 files. I met Paula as we claimed expenses from Ana. We lunched with the group, sitting next to Jose, whose English is virtually non-existent. Paula became the interpreter of his views on Spain: underdeveloped.

I drove the Pharoese couple to a Stafford Street music shop, where they bought a wah-wah pedal for their son, and Lizars, before letting them pay me into the Georgian House. We all split into three groups, Paula, Jose and the German woman (and two Yemenis) in mine. The visit ended with the slide-show. I took Paula and Jose in the car to Marks & Spencer.

Took the FP4 film to Hamilton Tait, where it will take 10 days, though the 'deadline' is Wednesday!

I spent the evening reading papers, listening to 'Synod' and 'Any Questions', reading Beckett's 'Embers' and watching 'Stalag 17' on TV for the second time.

Parents at Nora's.

1979

July

7

Saturday

The day lit my room for five hours before I pulled myself out of bed. The hours lay unscheduled ahead. After breakfast I walked without aim to George Street, where I called in at the Edinburgh Bookshop, then to Menzies. There I ordered 'Parables and Paradoxes' by Kafka, an American book which I hope contains his aphorisms. I came home with J.P. Sartre's 'Nausea' and The Penguin Book of Modern Poetry. These I flipped through. Granny was in the breakfast room, showing round photographs of her Canada trip and hinting that she may emigrate – Father's encouragement sounded like a Mother-in-Law joke.

I drove Emma to her sports, then returned to lunch and joined Mark to see the Wimbledon men's final. When Father joined us with his unbearable, noisy enthusiasm, I was distracted and annoyed, so I quietly left and continued watching in my room. The adults then left for E.'s sports day.

I walked in the slanting sun to Young Street, where I read The Listener and university prospectuses for a couple of hours, quite content to be alone, deciding to do Philosophy instead of History of Art next year.

Dinner, a visit to Nora for the fish-kettle, TV, a little Kafka, a little Sartre, much emptiness.

1979

July

Sunday

8

The aBowmanable relatives were due today, so Mother & Emma set to museumifying the house, making it unfit in its perfection for human habitation. I bought lettuce at the Pakistani shop, and supervised and returned from a trip to Loretto, where Mark rendezvoused with the Bell's HPE, therefrom to be taken to their estate for trail-bike riding.

Meanwhile the Bowmans arrived in the driech drizzle. We sat in the sitting room, and I became tense at having to suppress my embarrassed laughter. Mother didn't help by playing the aristocrat in her thigh-split dress, leaning along the mantelpiece. We ate lunch around the dining-room table. J. is more eccentric than ever, a pinched face, permanently embarrassedly red, poking out from shoulder-length hair, on a head six feet from the ground. He never talks.

There was a guided tour of the house, though Father left out my room – typical of his attitude to me. Some funny descriptions of W.C.'s obsessions; heating & locks. Father took the B.s to Templedean. I meanwhile read Satre's 'Nausea'. When the Bowmans returned we ate cake round the kitchen table while Ronnie told us about his car radiator troubles. A quick visit to the basement then goodbyes.

The sun came out, gloriously. I wrote a couple of prose pieces, one fairly good, called 'An Official Visit'. Hippy then / now documentary, Truffault film.

In morning I discovered little substance in my horoscope forecasts comparing them with diary entries.

1979

July

Monday

9

I answered the door to an express letter delivery; this got me up. Mark, who has a day off before starting at John Lewis, joined me at breakfast, resentful of my easy hours. I left the house at 12 and walked along Princes Street, across North Bridge, to Thin's, where I saw nothing interesting. At George Square I visited Ana, but really had nothing to say. Lunched between Gillian & Christina. Paula was upstairs; at coffee I sat with her. We looked at Jesus' article, P. translated for Jose as usual. He set us the cannibals - boat - river quiz.

While David & Caroline & co. went to play pool, the rest of us walked down to the National Gallery. Paula, Luigi & I walked together. The gallery was dull for me – I looked at a few paintings with Paula, but this has proved to be an unharmonious occupation, so we split and remet outside, where we sat on the steps together. Paula caught the bus home, promising to join me at coffee tomorrow. I joined Christina & Gillian at the Cairn Bakery for coffee – pretty dull.

Home, then to the library, in an enjoyably tense and uncertain mood. I took out Janouch's 'Conversations with Kafka'.

At dinner Father pronounced me in a 'difficult and maudlin mood'. We named 10 U.S. states each. Emma showed us the hamster she's in charge of for the summer; it's very old.

I wrote the beginnings of two prose pieces; I want to do something of this sort every night.

On TV, 'Heute Direct' and 'A Question of Sex'.

1979

July

10

Tuesday

I ironed my trousers with Bowie music from 1967 playing its accompaniment, then went in the car to George Square. Paula was not there, but David was. I spoke to most of the students, on official business only. I filled the Golf with Jet petrol, having to pay by cheque, visited Young Street and the bank, then returned home.

I lunched alone for a change, then played a game of pinball before joining Paula in the coffee room. We talked alone for about ten minutes, then the others arrived. En masse, we talked to the Wax Museum, me with Silvie, the French lady. I stuck with Paula in the museum. Afterwards I suggested we walk to Drummond Place where I could give her the box file I got for Christmas. When we got there I couldn't find the file, but Paula looked at the pictures on the wall, drank coffee, looked through a photo album, was shown the hamster by Emma (who very annoyingly followed us about)...

Father & Mother returned from work, and at 6.15 I drove Paula home. We looked for Ana in the ice cream shop, but it is her day off. As usual, awkward goodbyes on the pavement, no kiss; my fault. Afterwards I was remorseful and broody. Ate dinner and then escaped into the sunny evening. I took a 23 bus to the Pentlands and walked to Craiglockhart Hill. I lay in the grass and sang, feeling much better. Made my way home via Morningside Road.

With Father away fishing, the house was quiet. I read Janouch.

1979

July

11

Wednesday

The telephone awoke me, I breakfasted with the cats then walked to Thin's. There I bought a poster by Van Gogh (a favourite of Kafka's, cafe at night) and a book of Gogol's short stories, 'Diary of a Madman' and others. I looked at the exhibition of Dundee artists in the Talbot Rice arts centre, finding it entertaining enough. Then I hastened to the Student Centre.

I met Paula outside, she was carrying a huge Daler bag with card inside. We carried this by turns all day. I bought crisps and apple juice in our coffee place, and we talked until the others came. Then we went to Clerk Street for the bus to Craigmillar, Paula fetching Luigi and Brigid, an attachment of his. I sped round Craigmillar Castle alone then joined Paula, who was lying almost asleep on the grass. We lay together until 4, then took the bus home.

After dinner the others went to an Alan Ayckbourn play with Karen Huggins. I stayed at home to watch Roy Lichtenstein. Unfortunately John Thomson phoned bang in the middle of it, telling me all about his job and Ireland. I explained the situation, and called off with the promise of a meeting on Sunday.

Spent much time with Janouch and Kafka's diaries. The evening was sunny – I went for a walk to St. Steven Street and Rose Street. A girl who could not contain her laughter, and pub music everywhere. Paula is always with me.

Waves of pure happiness.

1979

July

12

Thursday

I lay stiffly in bed until 10.30, breakfasted, then walked to Ana's George Square office, where the monitors discussed bus tours and decided to take a 25-seater to Traquair House. I met Paula briefly outside, then went into the gardens to read my NME while graduates had their pictures taken all around. I bolted lunch then joined Paula upstairs. I felt slightly uncomfortable and unable to talk about inconsequentialities. We went all together to the Scott Monument, where we sat on the grass talking. Christina showed pictures around. Then we made the ascent, Jose, Paula and I together. We only went to the second stage. Back on the ground, we went for ice creams, P. & I, then returned to the flock. After Paula had a long argument in Spanish with Jose, turning her back on me, we went together to Menzies, where Paula got postcards and a lighter replacement. A 'talk' began on the stairs, when I said I'd join her at coffee 'If you want me to...' (this annoyed Paula considerably). After straightening our glum faces to meet Christina, we adjourned to the Farmhouse over coffee. There we talked until past six o'clock. As usual, an improvement not in standing but understanding. Good parting, though it's still stalemate. I must bear the pain, must act unnaturally. Still, good resolutions.

After supper at home, the whole family went for a walk in the evening sunshine along the Cramond promenade. A drink in the pub there.

Some writing, Kafka's diaries.

1979

July

13

Friday

I caught the 23 to George Square, where there was nobody to inform of the trip to the museum this afternoon, because David & co. are going to Inverness. Paula and I went for our salaries to Ana's office.

Between 11.30 and 1 I browsed in Bauermeister Paperbacks, almost buying Ionesco's memoirs. I also looked round their record and university sections, where I saw Kafka's 'Parables & Paradoxes'. I bought the Picador trans. of 'The Trial'.

Lunched beside Gillian. Then when nobody came at coffee, Paula and I stayed behind a little longer while she smoked and I drank tea, then we visited our respective banks, a fruit shop, and then headed towards the St. James Centre, talking about our formative years. In John Lewis Paula looked at curtain material but couldn't decide on any, bought wall-smoother. We met Mark in a staff cubby-hole, then went for ice cream (both having caramel and peach) before visiting Marks & Spencer's and Boots for various foods. We talked outside Boots then parted.

I bought Iggy Pop's 'New Values' for £2.99.

Colin Stewart phoned, we (the 'Lads'!) meet for drinks tomorrow at 7, just like last year. I read the diary, struck by the sameness of events, though I hardly remember last year.

The French girl came at 10.30. I wrote a short piece, 'A Birth'. We all watched a film: 'Comedy of Terrors'. I felt embarrassment, laughed at the wrong bits etc. Read over my literary fragments until 2.a.m. On the whole quite pleased, encouraged.

1979

July

14

Saturday

I lay in bed with an aching back and languid limbs until 12.30. Then, after a prolonged breakfast, I walked, with unpleasant indigestion, to McOnomy, where I bought three C60 tapes. Onto these I put Iggy Pop's 'New Values' and the Simple Minds album. By this time it was 4 o'clock. I took the bus to Lady Lawson Street and traded 'Lodger', 'Ha-Ha-Ha', 'John Cooper-Clarke' and 'Exposure' for £5, which I spent at Phoenix on the tape of Lodger. I listened to this.

I dug Bertrand Russell's 'History of Western Philosophy' out of the library in the dining-room and read snippets from it.

Then, without eating dinner, I left the house at 6.20 and walked to the Rose St. pedestrian precinct, ate a roll and tomato soup, and continued to the Beer 'n' Byte on Shandwick Place. Johnny Glen arrived first, then Colin Stewart. The Brown twins came next, and we went inside. John Thomson joined us twenty minutes later. We talked about much the same things as ever: many school reminiscences which have faded in my memory. I kept fairly silent. We bought food in Beefeaters and went into the park, watching the hordes queuing for the Munich beer – inside masses chanted Scottish patriotic songs. Then to the Victoria & Albert. There we met Mark, out with two Lorettonians. He and I left together at 11ish.

I read some of Beckett's 'Watt'; very funny.

1979

July

15

Sunday

The Observer over breakfast, the house deserted because all but Mark & I were at Ayr visiting the Lockharts, the sky overcast, the record player over-employed, food taken irregularly and often... an archetypal Sunday.

I made only one soujourn into the open air, to the Pakistani shop (though it was closed) and back. This at 8.

Mark and I lay on the stairs playing tunes on Alixe's xylophone and guessing the titles.

At dinner I forewent the meat, ox-tail. Drank some wine however.

Important television; consciousness-raising instead of diminishing – 'Chronicle' on the seven crises of the world, a gloomy programme, rather melodramatic, but illustrating the very basic injustices of the world. This clicked because I had been reading Schopenhauer (Russell's account) and describing a rather imperfect Utopia to Mark earlier.

Also 'The Editors' on terrorist screening; a good studio debate. Father commented on facial expression and appearance rather than content. I criticised this because it is, as Paula points out, a fault of mine too.

Alixé asked to go on a walk at 11.30! Her request was refused, naturally.

I read Alvarez on Beckett.

1979

July

16

Monday

The weather-pattern conformed to this; rain until about 6, then welcome evening sunshine. I spent the morning touring the clothes shops, ending up, inevitably, at the Ricci sale, where I bought a pair of 'Sam Pearson Irridescent Rust trousers' for £21 reduced from £31. Mark and I took the bus to the Student Centre, under a broolly walking in the rain. Inside, we had a couple of games of amusement then met the other monitors for lunch. Paula was upstairs at coffee until Jose called her away to help him make a phonecall. The bus for Traquair arrived at 2. Ana transmitted orders from WBC that only four monitors should go; Caroline, Paula and I were withdrawn. Mark went on his own; in at the deep end.

Paula & I talked briefly then she went home to her wall-papering, I to my writing. This I did behind closed curtains between 3 and 6. What took shape was a story of a prisoner, Hall, released but unable to live in the world because he does not have the resources he thinks he has, being innocent of the profitable crime he has come to believe himself, out of expediency, to have committed. Six pages, unfinished.

Read about Beckett, watched a little TV ('A Question of Sex', embarrassingly presented, hilarious).

And now (12.50) the house is filled with the urgent voices of sleepers, talking.

Over dinner, discussion of buying a croft.

1979

July

17

Tuesday

I spent more of the morning than I had intended in bed, dreaming of a house under siege. The rain fell long and heavily outside, so by the time Mark and I had walked to George Square – on the way I described my story – putting was out of the question. Instead a trip to the museum was proposed. During lunch I went to the nearby university bookshop, browsing without specific purpose. Then, after sitting opposite Paula without a word to her, I left, deciding to deliver ELF leaflets.

At Menzies I cancelled my order. From Mother I took the Golf keys, but the car wouldn't start (it was in 'drive', it transpired) so I took the Volvo instead; visited the tourist information centre, Bauermeister (for Kafka's 'Parables'), George Sq. (delivering copy paper), Hamilton Tait (Chinese photo contact prints) and the airport (leaflets). All this was done to the music of 'Lodger' and 'New Values' and an aggressive resentment arising from neutral vibes from P., who has never made a single positive move towards me, big or small.

But alone with Kafka's Parables at home, and later Gogol's 'The Nose' story in my evening sunlit room, all was well, and I needed nothing more, except perhaps the inspiration to complete my own story, though I have been shaping it subtly in my mind.

Some appalling BBC Scotland spy shit on TV; stereotyped cliché and brutal violence, suspenseful only because one wanted to see how the script built on its own awfulness.

'The Animal in the Synagogue' in bed.

1979

July

18

Wednesday

Alixé and I left the house at 9.20 and walked to George Square, stopping at the bank and the library. We met Ana and the Yemenis and presents boarded the ridiculous little bus (without, apparently, suspension of any kind) which took us to Abbotsford. The Yemenis played monotonous middle-Eastern music and Alixé and I talked casually.

Abbotsford was freezing. The guide was a confident Englishwoman. Interesting Napoloenic trinkeys etc. Alixé was impressed.

Next stop Melrose. The Yemenis chose an awful little cafe, where they had chips and little else. I sat with two men, the sharp-faced one and the plump, grumpy one. Amusing hamburger incident, because the cafe had 'only one fish'. Nobody cared to see the abbey, but when we reached Dryborough, and the sun was out, and the grounds were beautiful, they changed their minds. We sat between a small, dark pinewood and the rushes by the river.

During the trip home I felt very drowsy. Alixé meanwhile was fascinated to hear stories about a Yemeni girl's six 'mothers' and about the wearing of veils, etc.

A and I walked home in wind and sun.

I giggled at home, watched '7 Artists', read 'The Castle', then took our basement lodger (French Canadian) to the Avis car hire depot and back.

Then sipping at a Strongbow, I completed the story begun on Monday, calling it 'The Innocent'. It is quite comic, slightly obscure, not very true, but promising, I think.

1979

July

19

Thursday

I spent the wet morning typing 'The Innocent' on the IBM, interrupted briefly by my chauffeuring appointment with Norman. I revisited Young Street at 12 and took copies of the story, one of which Mark read, criticising the story's incredibility.

We drove up to George Square in the Golf. I was a bit jumpy and exciteable. After lunch I met Paula at the stairs, and exchanged 'presents': my story for her book of Camus stories. We sat together at coffee, then set out for the Talbot Rice Arts Centre to see the Dundee Artists exhibition. The others left quite soon, and Paula and I were left alone to move round at our own pace. P. was in a carefree mood (though not exuberant), but her jaw ached. I gave her a lift to Habitat and Studio 1; ostensibly she was looking for rugs, but in Studio 1 she spent ages collecting postcards; eventually she bought £1.86-worth. After returning to Habitat, we drove to her house and I went in for coffee (my complaint of Tuesday suitably rebuffed!). I sat by her table in a green deck-chair, watching her catalogue postcards. Art was the main subject of conversation, as usual, but accord kept it low-key. I didn't leave 'til 7.15 or so, then toured the outskirts for petrol, eventually buying £2-worth on Milton Road or thereabouts.

Supper: Mother praised the style of my story but wasn't sure about plot and structure. Father criticised the slackness of the monitors.

Read 'Interpretations of Kafka'.

1979

July

20

Friday

A telephone engineer arrived at 10, together we looked at the wiring. Then I had to go to Young Street for George Square deliveries: Nora was unprepared, so I went to coffee (Caroline was there too), delivered some things, then returned for some certificates and repeated the journey. I put my pay into the bank, gave Aitken & Niven my trousers (altered by August 3 for £2.70) and returned to George Square, all in the Golf. In the time before lunch I visited the Buccleuch Pl. Thin's, asking about Brod's biography of Kafka. They directed me to the main branch, where I ordered it and bought for £5 a Kafka 'omnibus' edition.

I could only just afford lunch after this, and Paula had to pay me back my 50p before I could buy coffee. We organised three car-loads to the Dean Village, and the German couple went by bicycle. There we walked to the restored house near Stockbridge and had coffee and apfel strudel. I sat squeezed into a corner of the table behind Paula. On the way back I talked to the Berliner, a video-maker, about his life & purposes; he has made films with the feminist whose film I saw at the EFT (March 20th)! Interesting.

I drove Paula and Jesus (she flirted with him unselfconsciously) to Princes Street. There was a suggestion that P. & I should go to the Munich beer-tent, but in the event it didn't happen.

I phoned John and read 'The Castle' all evening. Alixe struggled unsuccessfully with my story.

An empty house, Father & Mark fishing. Feelings of insecurity: Mother is now typing, at 12.24.

1979

July

21

Saturday

With the weekend Scotsman I sat at breakfast (peach and rolls), alone in the house as Mother & Emma were at Habitat and Alixe was at Holyrude Palace. I listened to Lodger & Bowie's 'Star Special'. Then I put up an umbrella and strolled to the Fruitmarket Gallery in the rain. The new French art exhibition was unimpressive but for a Utopian city model with extraordinary condensed lighting. I met Gabriella Blakey with her two little daughters, and exchanged uninteresting information with her. Didn't speak to Tim. Upstairs in the Printmakers Workshop I bought a signed print (Rite of Spring) for 50p, finding it slightly pornographic when I got it home.

I spent the afternoon feeling cold and reading 'The Castle'. At dinner I was dour, and no vital juices seemed to animate me.

At 9.45 I took the Golf to Waverley, looked at the magazine rack, then drove to John Thomson's. We hovered around then drove to Clerk Street. At last we found 'The Gold Tankard' and Colin, girlfriend (as I'd expected), and Andrew Brown. I was asked to draw John, so I caricatured him as of old, not badly, but I gave him a rhinoceros horn!

At 'Moonraker'. Some familiar faces in the audience, ex-EA. The film exemplified all the worst excesses of capitalism, but the ridiculousness of all that happened helped, and the special FX were, as usual, superb. In the car home, John & I argued; he pro, me contra, the film. I'm just afraid that it shapes people's aspirations in a harmful direction.

1979

July

22

Sunday

There was great commotion as Mother and the girls made to leave on a visit to Fife; I decided not to go after saying I would, and abuse was heaped upon me. So I was relieved to see the back of them and sit alone with 'The Castle' in the breakfast room. But very soon Father and Mark arrived home with bags full of scaly victims from the river.

I read Strindberg's 'The Father' much of the day, admiring his snappy plot development. Father read my story and commented: the plot is not strong (it transpired he had not grasped its implications) but it has echoes of Kafka & Bergman and is promising... I sat writhing with a mixture of pleasure and embarrassment as he passed judgement, laughing (me, not him).

Father prepared dinner (trout) and was anxious when the others didn't return (they'd gone to see the Duncans at St. Andrew's) until about 8.

I listened to 'New Values' and 'Lodger' then joined a teenage discussion in the breakfast room; some good laughs, such as describing Emma's 'bags' to Alixe as 'excessances' – which she took as meaning an extra arm or something, and we took her to task for 'excrement'.

Then we turned on Wim Wenders' 'The American Friend', a gripping, understated 'heroic' (sparse dialogue, friendship, craftsmanship values) film with disturbing realism – the sober details of another life are disorienting. I returned to my life at 1.00 a.m. gratefully.

1979

July

23

Monday

This morning's ELF duties began at 9 when I had to go to the station to meet six Omanis from Falkirk. I stood by the news-stall, admiring a tanned Italian / American girl and watching the Scots stream off the trains, but there was no sign of Omanis, so I left at 9.35. On my way home I browsed in the HMV record shop and selected, while 'Two Ronnies' comedy played over the speakers, Stravinsky's 'Petrouchka' for only £1.85.

I played this at home, leafing through the abdominal section of 'Dictionary of Symptoms'.

Mark was too late for coffee, so I drove the Golf alone. Paula was loquacious towards me. We saw Ana for expenses and were redirected to Young Street. There we got and cashed a cheque for £50 before stopping off at the National Gallery, where Paula looked at postcards. I bumped the car's bumpers twice, without issue. Mark, however, reprimanded me for leaving the car open then demanded a lift.

Long lunch queues. David had disreputable friends with him.

At 2.00 we boarded a bus bound for Falkland Palace. Mark & Christina were ejected. Paula & I sat together and talked: Paula shrieked when she saw somebody she thought she recognised on the street!

The guide was amusing at Falkland: 'Observe her, the eyes of this dog follow you along as you go!' We had only just time for coffee before returning. Paula slept, I brooded.

After dinner we youngsters went for a run in the Golf. I read diary entries. We visited Loretto, St. George's, and other exciting landmarks. Some funny happenings. I browsed through old school books later. 'Heute Direkt'.

1979

July

Tuesday

24

Mark woke me up just in time to drive up to coffee, where I breakfasted on strawberry tart. Gerd was there. I talked to Paula too, then we had our monitor meeting in Ana's office: when Mark and I hung around afterwards Ana said 'Are you waiting for Godot?' Very appropriate.

Mark & I went home before lunch. I read aloud snippets from Kafka ('Parables...') while 'Music for Films' played. At lunch – we walked there, meeting Paula on the way – I ate alone with the aforementioned book. Then Paula, Mark & I sat together at coffee. P. then went outside for fresh air, so Mark & I wasted money on coin machines.

We all walked to the Fruitmarket Gallery. I browsed through their posters, and bought two. Then, after I had tried to walk round with Paula without sufficient encouragement, we adjourned to the coffee room. Paula joined us later (much).

When we arrived home I took the Golf out – no, first I looked at shirts and trousers in Night & Day (nice Hooter trousers) – took the Golf to Drummond Street and looked in Arena at shirts. A very talkative salesman made me try 3 on, I bought a white checked button-down.

Listened to 'Petrouchka' and tidied my room. Put up new posters, took down old.

Had a bath at 9.30. Finished Strindberg's 'The Father'. Drank pints of milk. Before bed, exercised the hamster in the bathroom.

1979

July

Wednesday

25

Mark & I drove in rain to coffee, where we sat with the others in a corner booth. Then to Ana's daily session: nobody was able to decide what to do.

The women were in at home, sterilising. Mark & I left for lunch early, using our extra time by playing on the Superbeetle & Space coin machines like a couple of kids. Japanese cameramen filmed.

After lunch we decided to go to 'The Deerhunter' at the ABC. Paula, Mark & I sat in the very front row. The film was a great beast, epic in issues and dimensions, too massive for subtlety, too self-assured for niggling criticisms. Some tense moments.

Afterwards we ran Paula home, stopping to let her buy cigarettes. She said 'I'll talk to you tomorrow' as she went, apologising for her dreamy silence after the film.

I had 'words' with Mother (as usual the issue was my contribution to the family routine) before supper; only 'children' in the house because Ma & Pa went to a reception. Then I ran Mark, Alixe & Emma to the Odeon to see 'Moonraker'. Alone in the house, I abandoned myself to TV. Later, found 'A Man & A Woman' dreary and unrealistic.

The others returned. Bed. Thoughts: remorse that things are not otherwise with P., mingled with realisation that they could not be and relief that they are not. But between these points my constant crossings are upsetting.

Victor Pasmore arrogant.

1979

July

26

Thursday

I walked to Night & Day and bought a pair of Hooper green 'combat' trousers for £16. I had only time to put them on at home before jumping into the Golf, jacketless, and driving alone to coffee – Mark was already there. I sat fairly quietly beside Paula, then, after Ana's meeting dispersed quickly, Mark & I returned to the car. We passed Paula on the way, so I hailed her saying 'Hey dollface, going our way?' She was, to the library.

We walked to lunch, after eating pizzas while reading in the NME about Talking Heads. I skipped the queue and the meal, instead buying very sugary things in the Union shop and eating them beneath the perspex dome. I spent the next forty minutes in Better Books, where I browsed through reductions and bought Borges' 'Ficciones'.

The Camera Obscura was off, so we walked instead to Greyfriars Churchyard. Paula & Jose probably went to the C.O. because they had been so engrossed in a Spanish conversation that nobody had told them of the change. The others coffeed on Victoria Street. I walked home, feeling gloomy and worn by indeterminate cares.

At supper, or after, we all gathered round and played 'Consequences' (Father was away fishing) about Clive Rawlins. I giggled hysterically. Later I retired and read Ionesco's 'Rhinoceros'. Alixe, who leaves tomorrow, asked me the difference between Temptation and Desire.

1979

July

27

Friday

Father phoned, asking me to drive an economist to a lecture at the Chaplaincy Centre at 11. This I did, calling first at Young Street. The lecturer's name was Mr. Baird; he spoke to me about translation, and later persuaded Father to buy a French villa!

I missed coffee, but attended the monitor meeting. Paula wasn't there because she slept in. I then went to the bank and Young Street in the car, returning with supplies to George Square. There I met Paula. As I sat near her on the steps of 55, she blatantly handed Jesus, who leaves tomorrow, a love poem of some sort. I was very hurt. Bought a New Edinburgh Review after lunch and spilled coffee on it. As we walked out of the Student Centre Paula said she sensed my bad vibes and would not tolerate another 'Farmhouse'. I told her to forget it, then went with David, Mark & Arno to the Student Union to play pool while the others, including P., walked down the Royal Mile.

Mark & I left at 3.30. From home I set out on a very necessary solitary walk down Leith Walk, eventually all over Restalrig – Portobello area, and finally home, after trying unsuccessfully to find John's timber-yard. Father arrived then went fishing. After dinner, still in need of escape, I went to the Traverse and saw 'Bandits', a working-class murder story cum social commentary: gripping climax when all is revealed. The desired effect on me was temporarily achieved. But later, futile, angry thoughts returned.

1979

July

28

Saturday

I got up to an empty house. Mother & Emma had gone to Glasgow to see Granny. Without breakfasting, I walked to Rose Street and Princes Street. On the former I bought a roll and a pastry for breakfast, on the latter I sat at a bench and watched the shoppers file past... until rain forced me inside Menzies and Boots. I also looked at the books in Aitken Dott. Then I walked up the Mound and to the Student Centre (locked) then the music section of Bauermeister's until it closed.

At home I ate a little, then took Mark's bike out, cycling up Dublin Street to the Meadows then making large circles around the Marchmont area, though never actually entering Lauderdale Street. In the quiet streets of Morningside where the houses stand in their gardens like mausoleums I sheltered from the torrential rain. Heavy scent on the air, warm and wet. I filled the bike tires, looked into the Nearly-New shop, made a couple of final circles, then returned home.

Read about Squeeze in the NME then, after swigging some Martini, phoned Paula, asking her out to 'Newsfront' tonight. She refused, saying she was sewing a dress for a party tomorrow. The call was friendly though. Upset, I went out for a walk. On Dundas St. I had a conversation with a drunken man, mostly unintelligible, about privilege, serving one's country; his name was Caplan.

Pizza dinner alone, then to 'Newsfront'. An excellent, human film, giving insights into the lives of its characters (in a newsreel company, 1950s) but also into one's own, with gratitude (as the drunkard had also done). Blessings counted.

1979

July

29

Sunday

'Petrouchka' in the bath, The Observer at the breakfast table, afterwards the New Edinburgh Review by the open window... a quiet, mild Sunday which helped to wash over the sores I spent the last two days soothing with indulgent melancholy. There was a phonecall from Insight magazine, from Robert Sanders, asking me to cover some of the musical events of the festival. I agreed, though there was a slightly strained atmosphere to the call as I re-established that there was to be no pay involved.

I listened to old singles then became gripped by a cleaning fury: I washed clothes then listened to the tape of 'Hamlet' while ironing them. Then I changed the sheets on my bed (to white) and removed the carpet and swept the floor. The others were out, Father and Mark at Young Street and Mother & Emma at Habitat and the gardening centre.

After a bottle of white wine (a glass-size bottle) I began to feel quite content, and at dinner, with Bordeaux plied on me, I resumed diplomatic relations (slowly) with the family. Read Brod's doggishly devoted, sentimental biography of Kafka. He demeans him by consistent overestimation, allowing for no faults.

On TV, a very good drama ('Screenplay' series) about the humiliation of the Germans who negotiated the peace terms of 1918 in Napoleon III's railway carriage. It gave me an appetite for modern history.

Looked at school books, laid out tomorrow's clothes.

1979

July

30

Monday

I drove the car to Y. Street where I found four or five Spaniards waiting to be transported to George Square – some followed behind in their car. Then, after another such operation, it was coffee time. I rather apprehensively followed Paula out onto the veranda, where Luigi was saying his goodbyes.

Mark drove home, but I immediately left again and walked to Bauermeister Music, where I ordered Cage's electronic music, and Greyfriars, where I browsed through 2nd-hand LPs. Then at 12.30 I went and sat in Ana's office, reading the Insight textbook. Ana worked quietly. When I went downstairs, Paula was there with Gillian. She haggled with an oldish Spaniard about babysitting money. Later this led to an argument with Jose, who called her 'Scottish' for asking for overtime pay. She spoke Spanish incessantly to two S. American friends of Ana's, then held the group up while she helped Jose make a phonecall, a routine he still hasn't learned. At the castle she infuriated me by talking exclusively to him in Spanish. But I stuck to it and at last he left – for good. P. said 'I'll miss him, he's a good laugh'. I would willingly have pushed him over the parapet.

Paula left us. I spoke to Gillian. Then, home, with a snack on the make, I received The Call: Nora commanded me to drive a Mexican chemical analyst to Haddington. This I did, giving Janet a lift. The roads were grey. I stuck to 56mph whenever possible.

Dinner. Ian Dury at 9 in the Odeon. Good entertainment, perhaps trying too hard to be just that. Felt content with my life, despite everything, or perhaps because of...

1979

July

31

Tuesday

Starting at 9.20, I spent an hour and a half invigilating in the basement of George Square, reading the Observer supplement article about the red berets of the N.Y. subway. Then I escorted some of the students to coffee. I drove to Young St. for some invoices and copy-paper, but was too early and had to return after coffee, giving Mark a lift. I didn't speak to Paula, but after parking the car I looked into Better Books for her; she wasn't there, but I soon came across her in the Student Centre, and last week's 7-Artists artist: nothing heavy. Then we went, on my suggestion, to the Better Books sale. Paula spent £5.50 eventually: I bought Beckett's 'More Pricks Than Kicks', we looked at Indian erotic art pictures, several books. By 1.50 we were back with the crowd. We split up into four cars and drove to Cramond. There we walked by the Almond, less than ten students and almost as many monitors. I walked mainly with Caroline and Paula. We had the regulation ice cream. I spoke not a word to anybody of a foreign description. I returned by way of Inverleith with a Spanish girl, Mark, Christina & Paula. Dropped them all off, finally P. at her house.

Home. Later, while the others went to the cash & carry, I returned Janouch to the library and borrowed 'Letters to Milena'.

Slight insanity in the evening. TV: 'Licking Hitler'.

Note: If I were to quit monitoring, P. says she agrees it would be better, still seeing her in evenings.

Mark's report dire.

1979

August

Wednesday

1

Before she left, Mother read the riot act about various dull matters. Mark & I weren't up until 9.30. Me first. I drove the car to Young Street then went out to a filling station near the zoo. Returning on the Western Approach Road, I saw the Castle black and gothic in the morning sun. Coffee, spoke to Gerd. Then to Young Street again: the bank for £60 petty cash and Aitken & Niven, where my irridescent are not yet ready. Then, leaving the VW at home, I walked to lunch with Mark. As I walked down I glimpsed Paula sitting alone, so when I had bolted my risotto I joined her out on the veranda where she was reading a book on Op Art. We spoke about three words in 45 minutes. I told myself that I was happy to sit by her in silence, so I suppose I was.

Only four students wanted to go to Calton Hill, so Paula & I dropped out. We went our separate ways, I to Bauermeister's. There I came across a book of Pirandello's short stories, a great find. His 'A Day Goes By' is uncannily like 'The Innocent'. At home I read this book until 4.30, when I set out for Palmerston Place. At the Insight office I met Robert Sanders, and American-Scot with a slightly shy air. He talked to me for some time, outlining the (wide) options. I'll attend a layout session on Tuesday at 7.

After a Chinese takeaway supper, bought by Mark & me on Broughton Street, Mother and I sat and talked very drearily on feminism and literature. I spent the rest of the evening drawing the Glasgow property for Father (for £10). It progressed well, and when I finished – Stravinsky was playing on the tape deck – I felt it an achievement.

1979

August

Thursday

2

Dragged groggy from bed, I had five minutes to throw on some clothes and down a smattering of breakfast. At coffee Gerd spoke to Paula about going to Glasgow tomorrow, this idea was furthered at the meeting afterwards until at lunch it gelled.

Meanwhile I had to report to Young Street for the usual duties, taking things back and forward. Before lunch Mark & I spent money on video games, then I came upon Paula, who seemed to expect me to sit with her, though she later asked why I didn't go to lunch. We talked about Insight & art in general. Then at 2 we went into 56 George Square, joining a group that was to view Gerd's video-tapes. We were led along warren-like corridors to the basement of the Appleton Tower – some men were working in a rubble-filled room nearby – where we sat in a cold, sterile classroom with the monitor. The first tape, about a march, was disappointing: messy, slow, apparently aimless. But the second, comparing the media's representation with the facts and examining the distortion imposed by the authorities, was better. A fairy story ended it. I was starving and freezing. We went to the Mortar pub. Spoke to a peculiar man, friendly but cagey, about Kafka and a school he plans to set up at Pencaitland. Gerd put 7 records on the jukebox and talked about the ills of W. Germany today with gloomy gusto. I ran Paula home.

After dinner I read NME and then Pirandello.

1979

August

Friday

3

Father, mysteriously in the house at 10 o'clock, roared me awake from the hall. I had been having a dream in which, pursued, I had turned into James Bond and escaped by means of absurd weapons. Coffee, Young Street, Aitken & Niven, lunch, coin machines... then a trip (through the Old College, site of a projected story) to Thin's in search of 'Modern Music' (T.&H.). Paula left for the Glasgow Mackintosh tour, promising to get Gerd's address for me.

At 2 we split monitors and students into 3 groups and drove in our cars to Hillend. Mark, Arno, and other French students skied. Meanwhile we others sat at the top of the hill. I read 'What's On' and looked through the telescope (after numerous Dalkeith girls had shrieked 'There's ma hoose!' endlessly). Coming down again I sat with a delicious Iranian girl, Lemis. We had coffee outside the chalet, plagued by flies and shit. Gillian silent, Christina bonhomie-ing. I drove back, dropping the girls at Princes St. and pausing at the Edin. Bookshop before buying 'Modern Music' at Bauermeister's for £2.95, cleaning my wallet of contents once more.

But I read the book avidly at home. Father & Mother went out to Cousteau's with the Marrs. Mark & Emma fooled vacantly, so I went out, filled with macaroni, on Mark's bike. I cycled round the Western General & Fettes, then returned home with cold ears.

Emma was scared by a horror film about a blue, dismembered head. I read about Bergman's 'Persona'.

1979

August

Saturday

4

Bath, breakfast. Two cups of tea, sinus feelings in nose and teeth. Strode to Rose Street with effortless energy and pure pleasure which soon turned to weariness. Reaching Rae Mac, I discovered in the record section Stockhausen's 'Kontakte' (1959) so I took the bus to the 24-hour Cashline machine and back and bought it. I walked home along Heriot Row, standing timeless in the hazy sun. Listened to the record, ate snacks, then compiled from various brochures and articles a list of Festival events I'm willing and able to review for 'Insight'. This complete, I cycled to Young Street and copied it, also taking the opportunity of reimbursing myself £6 petrol money.

I tidied the kitchen & breakfast room because I could no longer stand the mess. Then I played my Stockhausen again, this time aloud – it had to compete with the childish shrieks of Mark and Emma, who played cards and accused each other of cheating.

At 8.05, in my sunlit room, I switched on the TV to 'Hitler – A Film From Germany'; a poetic, unrealistic but powerful view of the dictator, and his representation of the darker side of every man (and other such guilty cliches of self-chastisement).

Read 'Radio Times' for too much time, then Brod's Kafka biography for more: a process of demystification, not altogether welcome.

1979

August

5

Sunday

As Nicholas Currie awoke one morning from long dreams he found himself transformed into a gigantic materialist. No sooner had he digested both the Sunday papers and a breakfast sprinkled with sharp, sweet grapes than he was impatiently making ready to visit the city's two open shops, this being a Sunday. Menzies, the first, was full of tourists. Nicholas arrogantly made his way to the Fine Art section, where he read about G. de Chirico and other artists; not much materialism here, you may say. But when he parked his car and entered Habitat, Nicholas knew that he must possess something before the day was done. The carpets were unsuitable, but a matt black dome clamp lamp seized his frivolous fancy. Providence dealt her hand when he returned with Mark, however, to find that the lamp cost £35. But not to be quashed (an action which always worsens the effects of any original sin), Nicholas's urge to possess was satiated by the purchase of Mark's £10 book token for £7.25, this having the double advantage of being acceptable to the canny Scot (being a bargain) and the intellectual in him.

Later, monk-like devotion to his Father's architectural drawing proved far from illuminating to Nicholas, though progress was made. It was a welcome relief to be employed as chauffeur to the Thomsons at 8 o'clock, bringing them to the party. From this event Nicholas & John hid, secreting themselves in a small room with music and television. They talked with Mark and Emma (about James Bond and muscles) then observed the hamsters before Nicholas drove the Thomsons home. Then, at last, Nicholas leapt to his bed and stretched his young body.

1979

August

6

Monday

Half-asleep, I heard Mark and Emma leaving early in the morning to seek their fortunes in Dedham for the week. Slothfully I lay in bed, even watching some colour TV, until it was time to drive to coffee. At Ana's meeting I was handed some envelopes to take to Young Street. I spoke afterwards to Paula, looking taller and attractive in jeans and thick cardigan. On the way to Young Street I collected the tape of John Cage's electronic music. This I immediately played on my return home, while stuffing myself with bread and cheese. It is interesting, not very accessible, certainly nothing like 'Low'. I walked to lunch – though today, as the bus was leaving at 1.15, there was no meal. Instead I sat on the steps of 55 in the squally rain. Paula joined me until the weather became too wet. At last the bus came. Paula didn't sit beside but opposite me, stretching her legs over the seat as if to prevent me from joining her. The Spanish man for whom she babysat was, however, allowed to join her. This upset me, and what John calls 'Keatsian melancholy' indulged itself all the way to Traquair.

There I was alone, seeing Paula hardly at all in the house. At last I sat with Caroline at the cafe, feeding the pea hen and spaniel which scuttled about; lapdogs both. As I was leaving an RAF jet split the sky terrifyingly, like the end of the world. Lay at the back of the bus, tired. Back in Edinburgh I looked round bookshops near to 5.30, seeing nothing on which to spend my £10 book token.

At dinner with Ma & Pa I was quiet and read the catalogue of new books published. Later I finished the Glasgow property drawing. Father offered £20! Tom Keating on TV. Dull sadness.

1979

August

Tuesday

7

It annoyed me to see the time on my clock as 10.15 when I opened my eyes – this meant that the morning in Bauermeister's had passed me by, slyly without my notice. I started the Golf with rain pouring thunderously over the bodywork – this kept up until lunchtime, causing putting to be cancelled once more. It was so dull that I kept the car lights on. The rain and greyness was peculiarly satisfying, like a welcome catharsis.

No Paula at coffee, she instead awaited us at the meeting, where there was no Ana. She phoned us later and asked me to come to Young Street. First, however, I went to B.'s bookshop, walking some of the way with Paula. Compiled a list. Then fetched Ana. Re-met Paula in the university shop, speaking to her suddenly from behind, scaring her. Then I went back to Bauer's and bought two paperbacks; Strindberg's 'Inferno' and Boll's short stories. At coffee we decided to go to the Richard Demarco gallery, P. & I. Dominique, the French shrink, was the only student to accompany us. I drove them. We found the Demarco show shut, mysteriously, so, after picking up a few leaflets (Paula wanted to steal a magazine), we drove off to the Talbooth Art Centre, where there was an enjoyable exhibition of puppets. Afterwards we bought ice creams at Fonzarella's; P. had a triple cone, I had grapefruit and rum flavour. Paula had a minor tantrum when she collected her shoes, resoled, on the way home.

At 7 I went to Insight, where Barry (talented, vain, aggressive designer) lectured to Jim & Steve (ghastly fellows) ('good lads') and me on the tricks of lay out / paste-up. Robert commissioned me to review the Kandinsky show – before it opens! On TV later 'Abigail's Party'. Read some Boll.

1979

August

Wednesday

8

I breakfasted with Father & Mother then rode in the car with them to Young Street. There I hung about, meek and annoyed, until 9.30, when I took my £20 drawing fee from petty cash even before Janet arrived. Father, aiming to put my 'free morning' to good use with extra work, gave me some letrasetting to do, but, after buying a piece of card for it, I announced that I would do the work in the evening, and left. Feelings of freedom on the street. I went to Russ Andrews record shop then to Rae Mac in the car, there buying some orchestrated Satie. It evokes distances, enhanced the sensuality I felt all day, originating in a dream in which I lay in a large bed watching a moon-like TV screen above, when I was joined by a quiet, feminine girl I had until then taken for granted; I unselfconsciously fell to kissing her shoulders, then to lovemaking. Later stroking hair...

Anyway, after coffee I gave David a lift to Tollcross, Paula to George Street. I returned the car, listened to Satie (the women added to the ambience, obliquely), then walked in the sunshine to lunch: crisps in the coffee bar. Paula read me some excerpts from an art review. I mused. When no students wanted to come with us anywhere we all parted. At Bauermeister's I chose an American Existentialism anthology (with European contents) to use up my credit further. At home, read Sartre's 'The Wall' from this.

Pizzas for dinner. F. & M. went to look at paintings at the Colquhoun. I played 'Low' and 'Airports' and drifted about the house, intoxicated. Later, in the light of the full moon (as bright as day!) I let the hamster free (earlier it had escaped to the breakfast room). Finished 'The Castle'.

1979

August

Thursday

9

Though the air was cool outside, sun shone on the city and the tourists smiled. At coffee I read NME then left it at Ana's office. I walked down the Royal Mile to Cockburn Street, pausing to look at some uninteresting paintings at the 369 Gallery. In Hot Licks record shop I bought Michael Nyman's 'Decay Music' for £2.45. At home I listened to this (bells and languid piano chords) until it was time to walk to post-lunch coffee. I sat beside Paula, but we hardly spoke – I am withdrawing, forming a new notion of her, probably no truer than my former idealisation, but, in the circumstances, more practical. No students – well, the two Spaniards alone – wanted to come to the Scott Monument, so I unscrupulously walked free at 2.15. I went to the music library, taking out a book of Stravinsky's Memoirs and Nyman's 'Experimental Music'. I also spent about an hour in the Fine Art section, studying Emil Nolde's paintings but leaving at last emptyhanded.

At home I read some more W.H. Auden and listened once more to Nyman. Then Mother and Father returned from work, switched on TV, and talked. After dinner – 'Are you still a vegetarian, Nicholas?' – we went to the Cash & Carry, Father driving in the back seat, me in the front.

Ghastly advertising programme, then junk TV and magazines. Released the hamsters. Removed a moth, half-dead after a paw from Sukey.

1979

August

Friday

10

Duties this morning saw me out of bed by ten and into the Golf. Young Street with C.&C. deliveries, the Sloan Service reception, and a car radio shop on Morrison Street – after this round I was unhappy with being a materialist (other reasons stressed me; 'extravert' clothes – red tie etc. – and sloppy steering which almost caused a collision with somebody's bumper) and a car driver, so I left the vehicle at home at lunch. At the monitor meeting earlier (I had missed coffee while getting the pay cheques) Paula had been feeling sick. She thus wasn't at coffee or on the projected activity, swimming. I ate downstairs for a change, with Caroline. Afterwards, Christina celebrated her last day of monitoring by squirting people with a rubber Mars bar with phallic connotations. Again we had nobody interested in our outing, so we parted on the steps. Gillian and I walked to Princes Street together, talking about her boyfriend who is a travel agent.

I phoned Better Bikes and arranged for the moped to be fixed next Friday.

Mother phoned to say that she & Father were going out to some function straight from work, so I was to 'do my own thing'. I had two bags of crisps for dinner, then read the Penguin 'Creativity' and Kafka's splendid, sad letters to Milena, listening to Schoenberg & Satie.

Later listened to Ferry's solo albums, tipsily appreciative of their energy.

1979

August

Saturday

11

A card from Thin's announced the arrival of Brod's biography of Kafka, providing me with something to do on this day which lies blank like all the others (though some pretend otherwise). I walked through the crowded streets, returning by the St. James Centre, buying a blank tape. My head echoed with inconsequential music, as always, preventing any profound thought. Happiness stands in the way of wisdom... At home I acquired some of this by reading Brod's biography, though most of the valuable insights seem to slip into the book accidentally, against B's will. Ruth Baird painted Mother, mirror-pose assumed. Father was annoyed when I said this, and we were both asked to leave. Recorded Satie & Nyman.

At 5 Mother gave me a lift to Lady Lawson Street where I sold the Simple Minds album to a customer who outbid the shop, offering £1.50. In search of Roxy's 'For Your Pleasure' I walked to Greyfriars Market. Was accosted by a group of Dickensian urchins, asking with alcohol-heavy breath for money for tea. Finally, at Phoenix, I bought a Steele / Cage record on Eno's 'Obscure' label. Dislike it.

Went for a short cycle on Duff's uncomfortable Peugeot. Pleasant dusk. Otherwise consumed by inertia, futility; Waiting for Godot. Read 'Modern Music' & Strindberg, ate snacks, played piano. Father feels old and grumpy, Mother has a tedious book to read for S.A.P.

1979

August

Friday

12

At 2.30a.m. I woke to a ghastly smell of cats – so I opened my window wide. As a consequence I re-awoke at 8.30 with a pain in the back of my neck which lingered all day. Also a fever and deafness in my left ear. Feeling awful, I lay in bed, reading 'Letters to Milena'. Then I had another bath because I was being bitten mercilessly by a flea. I phoned Insight, calling off my production work this evening. Mother upbraided me about this, and I felt guilty, particularly when my symptoms cleared up a bit. Read the Observer, listened to Eno...

Because I got up early, the day seemed long, and there were moments both when I felt wretched and listless and when I felt happy. The latter happened when I sat down to write the first prose in weeks, a three-page story called 'Resignation' about a life-dilemma. The style is heavy-leaden, but a few observations are good. 'Chains' theme.

I walked to McOnomy. The air was damp and warm. Somebody had spilled white paint over the cobbles, uncannily like the stain of four years ago, in almost the same place.

It rained. John phoned, with proposals of tennis. At 8.15 I drove to the station, went for a drive to kill time, then, back at the station, met Mark & Emma from the King's X 125.

Father & Mother were out at the Shepleys. We played records then watched 'Psycho' – very impressive, except for climax and epilogue, which lacked subtlety. Emma was suitably disturbed, turning on lights and hugging the cat.

1979

August

Monday

13

Father entered Mark's room and mine to taunt us abruptly out of our sleep – it was 8.30. After driving Mark to George Square I reported to Young Street, where I was kept hanging about pointlessly as always. Soon I drove to George Square again, then back, then back again – every journey without practical issue, for there were no stragglers. At 11 there was coffee. I spoke to Gillian. Monitor meeting, journey to Young Street. Then, at B.meister's, I bought Ionesco's 'Present Past' memoirs, leaving me with £1.75 of my £10. I drove the car to George Square and sat overlooking the gardens; by now it was sunny. Ionesco and the sunshine made me see things in a fresh light – a dog running around the gardens, the square's buildings. As I went for lunch I noticed Paula on the steps of 55 alone. Didn't approach her. After the meal I went to the perspex dome. There, while reading 'Present Past', I saw John Thomson, and met him in the Union shop. He was looking for a quartz clock. We went to the Student Centre, John decided not to lunch there because of the crowds.

We all went to the castle, me parking the VW in the Grassmarket. Some interesting new students, from France, Naples, Vienna. Later the Camera Obscura. Dim picture, sing-song guide. A few words with Paula then home. Mark drunk, childish. We ate dinner (I had meat for the first time in a week) before the TV.

At 7.30 I went in pouring rain to Insight. Spent until 12 pasting up (laboriously, not accurately enough for Stuart). Other staff lark disconcertingly but expect me to cope with the work.

1979

August

Tuesday

14

Mark bathed. I bathed. Mark & I drove to George Square. I ate pie. Mark played Pool with Arno. We took the car to Bell's Brae VW for its service. Walking back to the Student Centre took us half an hour at least, for we stopped in several shops – clothes, mainly – on the way. I ate mince for lunch; the taste clogged my mouth for hours afterwards – old habits die hard. Mark 'n' Arno rushed off again to play cue 'n' balls, so I spent 45 minutes in Baeurmeister's choosing the last book of my book token. Eventually, in the Open University section, I picked Pirandello's 'Six Characters in Search of an Author' and also a collection of modern writers' essays on fiction. With Mark & Arno to the Degas exhibition – Mark betrayed his philistinism and raced round, lapping us. Arno showed a bourgeois appreciation, we noted that only one canvas was housed in France. Afterwards, joined by Gillian, we walked to Nicky Tam's tavern (all red plush and darkness). Gillian & I drank white wine, she actually spoke quite a lot, became momentarily attractive. But the level of conversation remained the lightest. Mark and I collected the Golf, paying £8.26 of our own money. At Young Street the car smoked.

At supper Father again threatened to charge me rent, said it was time I left. In the sky a rainbow, a thunderclap, tumultuous rain.

To Insight. Hours of sitting unemployed. Then worked on three ads, which I did fairly well by eye. Collected copy from Atholl Place. Left at 12.30. They will stay until 4.

1979

August

Wednesday

15

Wednesday August 15th. Mark and I went to George Square... etc. I sat beside Paula silently, sadly. She almost fell asleep. Home. The women tidied. I read interviews with authors. Then Mark and I, in silly mood, walked to lunch. We met Paula on the Mound as we watched the reaction to the one o'clock gun. Our silence was maintained, though side by side. While Mark went to play pool, I went to the museum, hunting for postcards. I finally chose one of the cutaway dinosaur for a badge, which I made for 10p. We were to play tennis at the Meadows, but instead Arno, Mark and I walked homewards ('chez nous'), clowning. We bought more cartes postales at the Nat. Gallery. Mark moaned that Mother had taken the car to work. I cut Raeburn postcard to absurd proportions. After dinner Mark suggested a driving lesson in the Volvo, so I accompanied him. We found ourselves in Leith, driving around the docks. Mark wasn't being serious. We arrived home by 8.30, and I watched the 6th 'Seven Artists' programme – rather dull, kinetic anti-art. Afterwards I read my 'bootleg' Bowie book – horribly alienating. I listened to music and read 'Modernism'. Earlier, I made a trip uptown (this was at 5ish) and bought paper, a typewriter ribbon and a pen. I wrote a side of short (five lines average) prose pieces of epic-surrealist bent.

Fits of giggles with Mark about Taif's 'Ooooooy!' sound. Read a fraction of Pirandello and the Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought.

1979

August

Thursday

16

I got up thinking it was Friday, and was all ready to push the moped to Better Bikes when I saw the date on the newspaper. So instead I walked to George Street, buying a Musical Express, to collect the VW keys. I was glad to be up. I had to hang around the office for some time, then Mother took me to the reception desk where a petty commissionaire informed us 'I was going to ask for his identification'. I drove the Golf to Young Street, collected some invoices, and went to the monitors meeting. Mark was meanwhile still in bed. When we set off for lunch, I made an appointment at Rod's. Read the review of Talking Heads' 'Fear of Music'. We had our badges (Raeburn and Kafka) pressed, then went to the Teviot Row lunch area. The food was awful. I spent 50p on slot machines. We met the others on the steps and selected three to join us in the car. Parking on Young Street, we nodded to Ruth and Ana as we passed. At the Georgian House we made our way through the dragon-guarded rooms. The others (inc. Paula, who I successfully avoided) came later. Mark and I left at 3.30.

At Rod's: delicious scalp massage, Rod's description of his European holiday (the only thing he liked about Paris was fashion-models being photographed on the street), a parting-less cut. Mother hates it. After dinner (mince, eaten squeamishly) I walked to the bus station and had photos taken – jeering girls asked if I was a soldier.

Listened to records (Magazine, Heads, "Heroes") and felt quite high. Read Freud's 'Dreaming' at the same time. The bathroom smelt of Paula; this provoked some sweet sadness.

1979

August

Friday

17

The sky was grey / white. Rain fell persistently. My dream was about lunch with Paula, a robber-ridden Rockheid Path, and two deaths at a public school: this recorded because of interest in Freud's dream book. At Young Street we put the moped into the Volvo and took it to Better Bikes. A later phonecall told us that making it MOT-worthy would cost £20. We crashed in on the monitor meeting, suggesting activities for next week. Then the car had to be returned home. Umbrellas up, bellies full of cheese, we walked to the Student Centre. I went with the Glasgow group: we had intended to visit the Charles Rennie Mackintosh art school but took too long buying the tickets – it was partly Paula's fault – and so instead the group went for lunch on Hill Street. I slunk away without a word on Princes Street, moody, unable to tolerate my silence, juxtaposed with P.'s unconcerned abandonment to the moment. I went to the Kandinsky press showing – although I was press card-less and had been beaten to it by Robert Saunders, I was allowed in, given a press kit, and listened to the ego-exercise of a man called Stein (of What's On; dominant, eye-patched). The organisers, drunk, giggled into the P.A. system and whispered about me ('Who's that? Is he genuine press?').

At home I read the catalogue then indulged in melancholy and 'Letters to Milena'.

After dinner I drove alone to the Little Lyceum to see 'Cold Storage', a New York philosophic comedy; lightweight, humanist existentialism, not very funny, but with some touching pathos.

1979

August

Saturday

18

In unrelenting rain and mist Mark and I set out for Ellen Ford, where Mark is to stay overnight with the Bells. I listened to music on the way, buying new batteries in Musselburgh. At the Lammermuirs the mist was cotton-wool thick, opening briefly in front of the car and closing immediately behind. But towards Cranshaws, lo & behold, sunshine! Returning alone, I re-entered the clouds and was once more swallowed up in the rains and vapours.

I walked to the Fringe Box Office, but decided to check film tie-ins before buying tickets. In Night and Day I bought a grey/blue loose-knit jersey for £15. Father bought a kilt. I took the car to High Street after laborious but pleasant planning of festival events. I spent £10 on Fringe tickets, then went to the Filmhouse box office and spent another £10 on film tickets. Parked the car in the concrete car-park at Castle Terrace and visited the International Exhibition of Photography. Somehow it disappointed, there was no spirit of risk or adventure about it, the catalogue and layout, even the pictures were very much like last year's.

At home I felt out of tune with the family's superficial domesticity, listened to Stockhausen as an antidote. Stuck my Fringe tickets onto paper, tidied my room (domesticity), read Ionesco etc.

Late, read Pirandello's excellent 'Six Characters in Search of an Author' – it is so much home to me that I read it as if I had written it, even to the point of feeling embarrassed at certain passages which are not quite right.

1979

August

Sunday

19

On the breakfast table lay the Observer. Reluctantly I opened it. An hour later I stepped outside. I looked at my watch; perhaps I would be late for 'Krapp's Last Tape'. At Grindlay Street. No, I was not late. In the hall: Krapp eating bananas, noisily drinking wine – I struggled so hard to suppress laughter that I sweated all over. The actual tape of the title was inaudible. In the sunshine once more, down the Royal Mile amongst tourists; a visit to Phoenix Records, to Bucephalus' statue, a peek into the Fruitmarket Gallery (closed). Home.

More Observer, more food. Escape to the car, travel to Inverleith Row, park. Visit the Modern Gallery's exhibition of Lehmbrock sculpture – beautiful stark, pure. Girls to make you forget real girls. Spent £2 on the catalogue to get to the heart of the matter as only words can take me. On the Row, saw David (?) Brown, eager friendliness on my part met slight embarrassment on his. I cruised to Kinnear Road.

Equipped with money for petrol, left to collect Mark from the Bells'. Spirits revived, I sang. Contrived to sing also as Mark drove home, but spontaneity cloyed in company.

At home, violent party preparations were in progress, soon guests filled the house. With Mark I fabricated mad hilarity, fooling on the street, defacing wittily magazines, laughing loud.

Wrote Kandinsky review well. Read (earlier) Pirandello, (later) Grimm and Kafka's superb 'Description of a Struggle' (again).

1979

August

Monday

20

Scene: On the bus. Reads Kafka's 'The Giant Mole', looks up to see, to his annoyance, that a grand detour is taking place. Also gathers from the gossiping passengers that there has been an accident behind which causes the driver to talk with the police. With a mental shrug he goes back to his book.

Scene: Monitor meeting. He turns down Paula's suggestion that he go to Glasgow with her group. He feels leaden. Shrugs it away again.

Scene: On the street, rain. Leaves Gillian and Caroline and enters museum. Finds a hard wooden bench in the high, remote fossil hall – just below the skylight, from far below come the cries of unruly children – and sits reading Kafka.

Scene: Crawfords basement, High Street. Eats stale roll, listens to empty conversation. Feels misanthropic.

Scene: Coffee bar, Student Centre. 'I feel sneaky, but if there's only one student... well, I'll see you.'

Scene: Scotsman Steps art. From a pile of s–t he chooses some outstanding fruit paintings. Makes enquiries. Visits Fruitmarket Gallery. Is left cold by Polish exhibits. Upstairs enjoys textless newspaper pages.

Scene: Home. Mark. Leaves to tour every record shop in the city. At last buys XTC album in Phoenix, elsewhere sold out. Enjoys.

Scene: Drives blond Brazilian with masculine air and firm handshake to East Lothian. First visits wrong house, a grand mansion.

Scene: Front row of Caley cinema. Enters the life of a pudgy transvestite in Fassbinder's '13 Moons'. Enjoys fantastic atmosphere.

Scene: Assembly Hall, exterior, night. Ten black limousines.

1979

August

Tuesday

21

Everyone must work. I pulled myself out of bed ten minutes before mine was due to begin, and arrived at the Student Centre in the car at 11.05. I sat by Gillian. Nearby Paula gabbled in Spanish, I tried (quite successfully) to blank her out of my mind. Meeting. Rain like a waterfall changed our minds for us: Cramond – out. International Photography – in. Home in the car, XTC on the tapedeck.

I picked a bowl of fruit and cream for lunch and sat with C. & G. Caroline gave me a Film Festival poster. Upstairs afterwards I felt 'vibes' from Gillian as we sat talking about her Persian work. Walking to St. Cuthbert's David & I fell in and discussed universities and acquaintances. Quizzed on my friends, I said 'I don't really have any' in an unconcerned way. David laughed the way people do when they're embarrassed. The exhibition was hackneyed a second time. I put a comment in the visitors' book to the effect. Walked with Gillian. Met Ruth.

With Mark I went to Insight, gave Robert my Kandinsky copy, talked about my Fringe selection to him.

Finished 'Giant Mole' and began my own 'The Night Watchman'. At 7 I interrupted this to run to Henderson Row to see Pinter's 'Landscape' and 'Monologue' – fairly good, though not outstanding. In the cheese-roll shop I bought some apple pies.

Completed my story. Both Mother and Mark liked it – that makes three of us! No, it is really a stylistic exercise, rather romantic and wordy.

1979

August

Wednesday

22

Rapidly our house changed hands: I moved out and two cleaning ladies and two window cleaners moved in. I drove to coffee. Afterwards I collected my library books from home, meeting a bucket-brandishing stranger in my room, and returned them, paying a 10p fine. Then I parked outside the Traverse and went in to see photographs by Nobby Clarke. For this I had to join the theatre as a one-year member, but this only cost £4. The exhibition, of famous people and events, of Paris and drama, were excellent, easily worth more than any number of international 'pictorial' exhibits. I sat in the pleasant pine coffee house and had a cheese and onion roll and a cup of cold milk.

After a brief visit to the univ. bookshop, I joined the others at coffee. We (Caroline, Gillian, Paula, about five students and I) walked to the Sherrif Court. After some hassle with the door man we got into the main part of Court 3, where boys were being questioned about a fight which took place last year on East London Street. A borstal tough perjured himself, but with insufficient evidence, no sentence was reached. We left at about 3. I walked to Princes St. with Gillian, then home, empty now Mark has hitched to Reading. I read four chapters of 'The Captive Summer', set in Drummond Place, horribly trite.

At Calton Studios. 'Hurricane': stroboscopic studio stuff, suggestive, erotic, hypnotic, fascinating. The director was there, but I declined to meet him afterwards.

At 10.30, Kafka's 'Penal Settlement' near Thin's. Smooth performance, disgracefully underattended. Chorus and overdramatics spoiled it.

1979

August

Thursday

23

I stepped outside brandishing car keys, to find – no car. At Monitors meeting, monitors met. I stayed behind, Paula too. We talked about that safe subject, art. Amicably. Spent the next hour with Ana reading NME and Festival Times. We talked quite pleasantly. Then I advertised 'Miss Julie' in the hall – about five students showed interest. After lunch (a collection of stodgy veg.) a group of us went to the Pleasance theatre (not Paula). We had a snack. An ethereally beautiful girl, almost transparent, sat nearby. From the terrace, a new view of Queen's Park, in sunshine. The play was excellently performed, raised some interesting points which I have yet to reflect on, but must. Long applause.

To Better Bikes, salesman ridiculed the £20 moped estimate, took me for a Law student (probably because of my tie and umbrella).

When Mother arrived home, I took the car to Young St. and thence to Haddington, delivering & picking up. Drove fast in sunshine, strong light on the road, sharp-lit clouds.

Rita & Jamaican doctor friend were in. With me they spoke about Fringe and film. Then at 7 I left for 'Godot'. Met John outside, we walked the block. The play: dull, over-ornate church setting, but good acting. At interval met the literate Yemeni, we discussed the play. John: proud of new digital clock, badly dressed, going to Shakespeare. Conservative. Home on the 19 bus.

Interesting talk with Rita & co. I confessed in personal terms my literary preferences in a way I can't before the family alone. Father pompously displayed the thinness of his knowledge of Beckett. A rather dusty atmosphere – the two old widows, Beckett, quiet house.

1979

August

Friday

24

Father ordered me to take a black tie to Mother's office and collect some things from Young Street, so these things I did. I visited the bank, then gave Ana a lift from 21 to 55. Paula was annoying at the monitor meeting, shouting out her view of things ('I don't care what you do next week cos I won't be here: up ELF!') incessantly. I joked quite well. Home once again, I read 'Krapp's Last Tape' and listened to a tape I made on my 18th birthday, then added some thoughts from the present: interesting indulgence (memorable equinox). At 2.15 I met Ana again. She told me that tickets for Byrone de Beauvoir couldn't be got, so I zoomed in the car to the Grassmarket to catch Paula and the 3 students. The students dispersed, P. came in the car. We picked up Ana and drove to Princes Street. The dreaded long goodbye didn't happen – I don't know if I'm relieved or upset.

Home. Weary. Listened to 'Another Green World' and 'Science', finally becoming quite spiritually impassioned – I lit a candle on the mantelpiece. Then cooled down with Lionel Trilling, whose ideas I mistrust. Gave Emma a lift to rehearsal.

At 6.30, walked in sunshine to Calton Studios, there saw a weedy, sentimental / surrealist UK film, followed by the splendid 'Story of Night' – grainy b/w shots of cityscape with mechanical drone or eerie music soundtrack, wonderfully alienated. Mystery isn't faraway – it's all around! A formative experience, I think. Home. Bus. At Bruntsfield I saw a rather poor, populist play about and called Conrad. Emphasised what I dislike about him, ham actors. I ate almond slices, writhed.

1979

August

Saturday

25

Alone I ate breakfast, alone I walked to John Menzies, first visiting Alan Davie's 'Magic Pictures' exhibition (interesting, don't like technique much). I revelled in this solitariness, but all day felt aggressive towards the crowd. In Menzies I saw a book of short stories. Unable to pay for it, I walked to Cashline for money, returned, then asked if it could be reduced because of shop-soiling. I was told to return. Outside, my thoughts tended to the profound because I'd been reading Kafka's diaries. I had lunch above Austin Reed, prawn bread and liebfraumilch. Then, eating a very leaky orange, hurried up to High Street to see Cambridge Mumpers' 'Artaud at Rodez'; quite splendid, in the same vein as 'Conrad' but immeasurably better in technique, subject, production. Well written, well acted... some token bourgeoisie-baiting, but really an entertainment for all middle-class art aspirers, or consumers. But less so than most other plays. Bought my book for a mere £1.50 (from £3.25)! Read it at home, not very impressed by stories I saw. Talked with Mother. In the car revisited Cashline then at Virgin asked about the import of 'Fear of Music' – but the British one is out in two days for £1 less...

Mother / Emma / me triangle at dinner; pizza. I gave the others & Meg a lift to the Assembly Hall. Later I drove myself to the Caley to see the Wim Wenders-style 'Radio On'; had all the ingredients of a film I might have made myself a couple of years ago, but failed to grip me. Saw Caroline 'n' Jeff. The Bairds moved in downstairs. On TV, Quatermass.

1979

August

Sunday

26

It was Mother's turn to bark up the stairs 'Are you up yet...?' My languid bath annoyed her, she wanted me to help her carry the beds downstairs. This I did (to the basement). Then Father claimed me, and we drove to the airport, I in the Golf, he in the Volvo. I arrived first, and waited for him. We discovered that the time given was actually London departure time, so we had to wait about an hour. We sat reading the Telegraph. Then, meeting the students (Afghanistan seed technologists), we met other couriers from the German consulate, with cars and hotel bookings. We divided the students between us – I got two – and set out, at separate intervals, for Royal Terrace. A plush hotel. I drove home. Had intended to see McGrath's 'Animal', but of course was too late. I did clothes washing and ironing, then wrote a tiny fragment and read Kafka's biography.

Dinner – chicken. Into the Golf alone, to St. Patrick Sq., park (on double yellows...), enter Odeon cinema. See Paula in lobby, selling tickets. Pass by her at thirty centimeters, she doesn't see me. The film: a study of adolescent animals; sub-human and yet I could see myself in them. Quite enjoyable, though a glorification of the despised 'group-consciousness' ('Quadrophenia'). Outside, a parking ticket taped to the windscreen somehow compounded an emptiness caused by seeing but failing to join Paula. Gloom.

Mother's 'vast' sadness. In the dark I played spooky piano then listened to 'Another Green World' until Mother knocked on the door and complained. Spent two hours on a piece 'The Projectionist', a fanciful philosophical story rather bare of action.

1979

August

Monday

27

Erotic dreams; purposes blocked regularly. Wish fulfillment, Mr. Freud? In the car to Virgin, where I purchase 'Fear of Music' for £4. To coffee. For a change I do my duty, tell students what's happening. Only three monitors now, I am left Caroline & Gillian, an arrangement which suits me well! Home for lunch, eat cheese, listen to Heads, then walk to apres-midi cafe. The German sympathises with us for having to take the Greek / Viennese woman to Bonnard – I quite like her, despite her arrogance and short temper. Walking to the RSA we see on van hoardings 'Mountbatten killed'. Inside the RSA: the others go straight to Bonnard, I am captivated by the exhibition of members' work. Some is awful, but a few are really enlightening, a couple of abstract and one large, sharp picture of a man pausing in a corridor to peep into a bathroom: witty reflection of viewer. Bonnard's words are more interesting than the sketches – naive, humorous travel scenes.

I drove to the station but failed to find Granny – Mother did later. Meanwhile I had an appointment with Strindberg off Ferry Road. But Edinburgh Theatre Arts ruined The Father, hamming ridiculously. Forgoing free coffee, I sneaked out (they'd locked the door!) in the interval. Home. A curry dinner with G'mother. Then Emma arrived with her Director and Vanya. He talked uncertainly about his set-up with typical show-biz sentimentality and ebulliance; I found it wearing and crossed swords with Mother who reproached Father for his lack of energy. I made an enemy of all by condemning the over-emotive press coverage of Mountbatten's death, saying that he had only been born for me today.

Read Borges, my own fiction, 'The Novel Today'. Heads album excellent.

1979

August

Tuesday

28

The house filled with a sickly smell, the walls turned a putrid shade of pale green; the painter was in. I was in sole possession of the Golf for the day. Read 'Festival Times' with C.&G. over coffee, with Ana changed the schedule, then drove off. How many times I went up and down I don't know. Certainly I visited Virgin, Bauermeister, Better Bikes (this later, I think)... and home, where I drank tea and read. At 2 I rushed into the Student Centre and told C.&G. I wouldn't be coming with them because I had to help Mark (German student) move accommodation. He was thrown out after telling his l'lady (recently widowed, neurotic) what he thought of her unfriendliness. He complained to me while we were in his room, I was afraid she'd hear. At E. Suffolk Halls, however, he became appeased.

Better Bikes, home, then Randolph Crescent to see 'Vincent Van Gogh – The Lark and the Crow' in the French Institute. A good one-man show, with slides and flute music. Overacted, but necessarily so to continue the 'tortured artist' tradition.

Forgot: earlier I saw Robert at Insight. He said my Kandinsky piece is in Friday's edition. Still no Ingleston tickets.

At 7.30 on Chambers St.: 'Play Strindberg'. A good hall. The play absurdist and comical, hardly Strindberg at all. Amusing series of insults and plot twists, at every crisis the characters changed masks, making mockery of the dramatic architecture.

Mark, returned, to Tom McArthur's with Father. Others to Young St. I played Talking Heads aloud, sang alouder. Then sat with the others in the sitting-room, TV on, reading papers. Mark listened to the Heads.

1979

August

Wednesday

29

Again shouted awake. Mr. Galloway painted just outside my door, I could hear every brushstroke. I fetched him some paint from Howe Street. Then away to Young St. – Father in 'new' office (hessian and wood), Janet circulating smoke with the electric fan. Missed coffee but saw Ana before collecting some books from the basement of the Hume tower – the G. Square complex was very attractive & noble; something Ancient Greek about the modern buildings. Back home Mark was willingly subjected to Talking Heads. Then we got into the Golf (complete with 'Lodger' and 'Fear of Music' tapes and player), stopped at Young St. for pay cheques and instructions, then embarked for Haddington. Betty, Craig. No Helen. Mark drove to her house, we glimpsed the Wolseley in the drive. Home via windy roads, I screamed along with the JVC.

To Thin's with Mark. Looked at English Lit. section, bought a selection of Absurd drama. Then drove Emma and Vanya to rehearsal and Granny to the station to see her off. Bought chocolate, at home ate mouthfuls washed down with PLJ listening to Cage's piano music. A C. of S. minister called, a friend of Mother's. We discussed The Church, Existentialism. A gentle 'revolutionary', dissatisfied with C. of S. Suede shoes, blue pullover over dog-collar.

Donald Henson came in. My impression – that he is not intelligent, though perhaps wily in business. But his straightforward, pompous air only just covers a vulnerability. He seemed baffled by my idealism, with Father exaggerated. 'Lucky Peter's Journey' – Strindberg for kids, performed by kids. Left early. Fooled with Mark. False alarm visit to Cameo at 11, hoping to see 'Manhattan'.

1979

August

Thursday

30

Mist created a visible atmosphere, pale sun warmed the air – somehow the effect was of an Italian morning. Gillian said it was forecast to reach 70F. It didn't, but I felt very hot. Instead of ice-skating we considered joining the group going to 'The Threepenny Opera', but nobody (of the monitors) did, eventually, go. I drove the car up and down between George Square and Young Street, queuing for ages in the bank (observing the people; a tiny girl who made mockery of the dour queue by rushing all over the floor with delight), stood before Janet as she prepared my next duty, crosslegged on the floor. Read NME. I left the car at home at lunchtime. Visited the postcard sections of the Mound galleries, arrived at the Student Centre, sat silently with Gillian, played bad table football with some unknown Arabs, then split.

Viewed the complex, bright, puzzling but fascinating prints of Paolozzi at the Talbot Rice gallery. A stampede of schoolchildren interrupted the calm (I am fascinated by the Old College atmosphere) then left. When I stepped outside, my vision was adjusted pleasantly. Visited Thin's reductions section, buying 'On Kafka', a book of criticism. Then bought, on impulse, a yellow shirt at Ricci.

Emma's friends. Jokes over dinner, filling Father's absence. Drove Mother to the Usher Hall (at the same concert, she was avoiding the Bairds). I went to the Filmhouse. Caroline tore my ticket; we talked awhile. I read 'Letter to his Father'. The film: Bunuel's ancient 'Land Without Bread' and excellent 20s documentary (silent) on Berlin, Mamon, an urban blueprint for the future more desperate than glamorous.

Read Brod's biography of K.; his last years. Finished it.

1979

August

Friday

31

A thick mist mystified the city, and damp swirled. Mark gone shootin'. Me, I walked to coffee an' Ana an' then spent the lunch period looking at books in Bauermeister's. With the other monitors discussed ideas for next week, said goodbye to Ana & Gillian. Bought a New Edinburgh Review & Festival Times. The usual lunchtime silence with Gillian & Caroline. Nobody, of course, wanted to come to Nancy Cole's play, and we split, briefly bidding Gillian farewell. I walked to the National Gallery, looked at exhibits without great interest. Then to Hot Licks to browse, home, into the car and to Insight. Waited for the new editor to arrive, was non-communicative and read the ghastly 'Sounds'. Finally couldn't wait any longer and returned home. Angela Coulter and Bill Angel were peculiarly vivacious and high-spirited in a peculiarly aged way; wrinkled students. I found them disturbing. Read about Italian painting, stroked Sukey.

No dinner. Intending to go to 'Spring Awakening' by Wedekind, I couldn't find Hill Place, so instead went to Insight, snatched a copy, and left. Drove aimlessly, bored, lustful. Arrived home as the others were going out. Alone in the house, ate bread and watched TV until Mark arrived home. Saw News '39 and a German film about a Silesian boy in '39. Drank cider.

Read 'On Kafka'. Rather empty. (Me, not the book.)

1979

September

Saturday

1

Angela C. sat at the breakfast table with Mother when I arrived downstairs, so I had to eat chunks of bread in front of them. Still not very easy in A.'s presence – she ignores and interrupts one, a sure sign of age. I walked alone to the bank and the bus station. The air was warm and damp, I carried my Peking coat. Watched the Rock Festival kids assemble – rather depressing louts. Finally at Ingliston, sat near the front. Unpleasant to be in the crowd; I later took up a position (with a better view) at the side / front, able to watch the band and the crowd. Met with Mark & co. but didn't sit with them long. Ate lunch in the Crawford's building. Undertones uninspiring, though the crowd responded. I moved to the other side. While Squeeze were on, I star-spotted (or hack-spotted). From NME I saw Paul Morley (stood beside him much of the time; a hamster in sharp clothes) and glimpsed Julie Burchill, C.S. Murray & Penny Smith. At last Talking Heads came on. I moved to the centre. David Byrne thin, remote, intense. The band excellent – I was much excited, as was the whole showground. Left alone afterwards, reading the News on the bus. Empty house. I wrote four lines of prose then set off on foot for the Cameo to see 'Manhattan'. Good to be alone in the streets at night, also sad. The film: life-affirming, sentimental, old-fashioned, pleasant. Recalled the 'adolescent' discussions & relations generally between Paula and me. But outside again I fought off the film's spell with more uncertain, realistic thoughts of my own. Nonetheless, excellent entertainment. Alone again at home, read New Yorker magazine.

1979

September

Sunday

2

Father, who has missed the third deadline on his Guinness book, worked frantically at the typewriter... for £10,000 you ought to sweat a little! I read the Observer with the usual distaste, except for the Arts reviews, referring for a change to shows on my doorstep. Then I set to shuffling the furniture in my room: the wardrobe and desk changed places, as did bookcase and bed. I much prefer the result – more apparent space, more variation in its use. I wrote a couple of lines of a story about two children before Mark called me to the Volvo to supervise his driving. He is not confident, says he can't drive without 'panache' as the H. Code asks. My depression lifted considerably round about Oxbgangs – in the sunshine it was beautiful, I said I'd like to live there. Home via George Square.

I finished my story, unusually written straight onto the typewriter. 3 pages about the naive, unimaginative viewpoint of kids contrasted with the guilt-ridden, naive authoritarianism of their mother – zany, humorous, not profound. Wine at dinner. Emma's sudden, proclaimed 'maturity'. Fun made of my vegetarianism.

Walking to Heriot Watt Union, I met John Thomson & a female guest of the house. Brief words. Then saw Brecht's 'Drums in the Night'. An angry play, I was alienated by the characters, thinking the plot tiresome. But, despite not understanding it, I was forced to think by the play. Political justification: for me, impossible – I am a Have and can do nothing, nor will.

Browsed for hours through the Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought: much freer reading than a book, for one can choose one's direction and depth the whole time. Circles.

1979

September

Monday

3

Mark's last-minute Mull preparations got me up at 8ish. The early morning sun was unfamiliar, pleasant. At breakfast I read 'Modernism'. I walked to Cockburn Street, met John Thomson again. We talked about Law and Contracts, cars, etc. I then visited the Demarco Gallery, seeing exhibits which rejected 'Documentation' and advocated 'Living Archives'. This from 1967. Then to coffee. No Caroline; I spoke to the students as a result. Back to Demarco. Liked 'environment' exhibits, esp. when words are involved. Overheard conversations. At Bauermeister, the Drama and Lit. sections as usual. Met nobody I knew after lunch, so I went out. Visited St. Giles and Cockburn Street, heard Gary Numan's 'Pleasure Principle' in Hot Licks. Earlier, sitting at the top of the Scotsman steps with a cup of soup, had been approached by an unsteady old woman. She turned and left after looking at me.

Home. Read. Mother & Emma to the Cash & Carry. Attempts by the Angels to lure Mother to the Tilted Wig. I listened to 'Diamond Dogs' & 'Secondhand Daylight'. Made myself macaroni Bolognese (ghastly bits of meat in it!) for a quick supper, then launched off in the Golf for Drummond Street.

An appalling school hall, spotty university company (just graduated from street theatre), awful play (Stephen McNally wrote & acted) about mortality, followed by the better 'Woyczek', still abysmally presented. I left at 9.30 (the end) with relief. Spent the evening recording bits of John Peel. The 'boxer' hamster escaped. Mark failed to rendezvous with his Mull hosts.

1979

September

4

Tuesday

I dreamt for a long time about orange alien matter which transformed people one by one. Father left for somewhere or other: he'll be away for a few days.

I walked to the Henderson Gallery to see the Glasgow Group exhibition. Didn't see Paula's name in the book – wrote under 'comments': 'mostly old hat'. Then to lunch. Chewed on dried fruit and watched the antics of Italian students – beautiful, happy. No ELF students appeared, so I disappeared. Looked at the excellent Finnish Art Nouveau show in the museum: impressive architecture and mythological pictures. On the street, hated the Scots. Arrived home in time to help Mother load her things into the car to leave for a few days on the West Coast.

Listened to records. Read Borges. Read Sylvia Plath's letters home. Bought chocolate from Henniker's.

Then at 6, at the YMCA, I saw a one-man performance of Hugo's 'Last Day of a Condemned Man'. Very good indeed – not actorish, consequently much more powerful. Good sound FX. Outside, the relief of being alive, alone, in sunshine.

The whole evening alone stripped the novelty from solitude. I listened to a Woolf story on the radio, ate, listened to more radio (Kaleidoscope, ITV2 debate), even watched some abominable TV. Found the hamster in the breakfast room. Told the Bairds (they'd asked). Read 'On Kafka'. Emma came in at 10.30. Loneliness? Thought of Paula, the drawings she promised me.

1979

September

5

Wednesday

The women. They filled the breakfast room with smoke, so breakfast was brief. Walked, past 11, to Frederick Street. The Banshees' 'Join Hands' was in Virgin, so I bought it and spent time listening to it, then later recording it.

Tom McArthur appeared at 1.30... but before that I had walked, in a rather misanthropic mood, to the Odeon for an XTC ticket (£2.50). In the Audi with Tom, leaving the country tomorrow, to Avis, then alone with the car. Rattles, soft clutch, but fair once adjusted to. I went to Young Street for petrol money, then drove from Belmont Burma to the Fringe Office to pick up a programme; I've lost the old one. Also to Thin's, where I bought 'A Nietzsche Reader' and Camus' 'Selected Notebooks'. Further scheduled passivity.

Drove Emma to her rehearsal. Then bought myself a ticket for 'Flying Blind' tonight in the Little Lyceum.

The play. Rather populist in approach, comedy to win us over, nudity to give us something to look at (the impression of our money's worth) and a thumbnail sketch, in didactic shades, of the Irish situation. My first live nudity. Not a turn-on. Fair entertainment.

Back home, had a late macaroni dinner alone, exercised the hamsters, read bits of John Fowles.

1979

September

6

Thursday

Last night I couldn't sleep for eternal emotional examination of the Paula Perplex (and the heat, and the wine I'd drunk), so this morning my eyes were tired as soon as they opened. Unfortunate, because I had to drive to Glasgow. I took the Audi to Young Street, loaded the duplicator, stencil and stationery, and left, with tapes playing. The car handled well on the motorway; it was easy to cruise at 85 without the appearance of effort. For a while I lost my way in Glasgow, but eventually I reached Bowmont House – I recognised it by its picture. I met Louis – a girl – lugged the stuff in, then hit town, a free man.

Looked round newsagents etc. downtown then parked the car in the NCP car park and went to Crawford's for lunch. Ate a brown cheese roll and leek soup and watched the customers through a plate of glass. Then I took a look round a nearby bookshop before paying £1.30 for a ticket for 'Mondo Erotico' and 'Daughter of Emmanuelle'. The first was inoffensive but unexciting, went on far too long; the second was really a second-rate love-story / Oedipal tragedy with a few sex scenes. Not very moving. It was a relief to step into a real street in a real, uncontrived life.

Drove very fast home. Hung about watching TV, then washed clothes, bathed, visited Waverley Station to buy a Festival Times. Read this with dinner – macaroni. Mother phoned. Awful monarchist, sententious documentary on Edinburgh. Solitude.

1979

September

7

Friday

'11.59' said my clock smugly as I opened my eyes from varied, adventure-packed dreams. I bought rolls and tea, ate, climbed into the car, and bought an NME & petrol. I went to the Student Centre to see if Caroline was there (it was 1.45 by now); she wasn't, but she later turned up at Young Street, claiming to have been in every day. I too visited Young Street, picking up my pay cheque the second time. I sat for some time behind the University Library, reading NME in the car; right beside the cinema I should have been in at 2.00 – but I went home and listened to tapes before checking the ticket. I arrived at the cinema at 3.15, in time to see the final three quarters of 'Belle du Jour'. I remember it from TV; a 'nice' film, some funny Surrealism, nothing particularly striking. A pleasant cinema, though. I'd half hoped to see Paula there. She wasn't. I drove round about Lauderdale Street, didn't see a sign of her.

Listened to Talking Heads. John phoned, announcing his arrival, between revues, at 9.30. I spent the evening writing to Paula. A letter which outlines quite honestly my present feelings, describes the events around the 'separation', looks hopefully to the future. I was moved by it, as Paula will be if she has an ounce of feeling. She, however, must act now, an uncompromising demand on my part.

John came at 10, after I'd posted the letter. We talked, while I ate macaroni, about girls, Ireland, plays. I gave him a lift to St. Mary St. Talked about loneliness, agreed to meet on Sunday. I feel lighthearted now I've spoken my mind to P.

1979

September

Saturday

8

Dreams cut through by a phonecall. Toured the newsagents for a Guardian, without success. Took the car to Thin's, which was shut. Edinburgh was crawling and wet.

I decided to go on a 'run' to the country. Took a map. Destination: the Moorfoot Hills. Stopped at a cul-de-sac one-track road. Young pines, river, woodpigeons. Was going to take a pee when I heard the voices of fishermen, and changed my mind. Various small roads. Music: "Heroes", Banshees... Weather remained dreich.

Back home. A ring at the door: Mark, back from Mull. We hung about the breakfast room, ate macaroni. I read the 'News', ate little bits of Prize bar.

Supervisory drive with Mark, ecstatic about the car. Music: Banshees & Heads. Skirted all over the edges of town. M. rendezvoused with Duff, Emma & I drove home.

I spent the evening reading Boll stories, admiring his atmospherics. Then at 10 I walked out towards the Traverse. Passed a party who shrieked at a nude male stripper. While waiting for tickets for 'Talk About It' a man offered me one of his, so I bought it; otherwise it's likely I wouldn't have got in. The play was not impressive, but the feeling of togetherness counted more — the exotic people were fascinating to watch; the audience was less so than the people in the bar. At midnight fireworks popped invisibly above and a wild crowd passed outside, whooping and playing trumpets & drums. Then, outside, I mingled with the dour, working class tattoo crowd before turning my back on the castle, the floodlights of which seemed to depart into the clouds like the essence of the Festival.

1979

September

Sunday

9

I spent the morning in bed. In dreams Paula became affectionate and compliant only to turn into a cat. Church bells.

Emma and Vanya demanded to be driven to rehearsal. Mark drove.

Grumpy, I listened to hundreds of old singles. Father and Mark pressurised me to take Mark for a driving supervision. This I did after I had spent a couple of hours (which I filled reading a precis of arguments for the existence of God, all of which had as many holes as Swiss cheese) waiting for John Thomson. He phoned to call off, having been detained at a long lunch date. So out we went in the car, all over. Listened to Forth 40, recorded an ad for Emma's play and Gary Numan's 'Cars'.

Back home, I filled my belly with biscuits and cheese then went out into the cool, sunny evening, hoping to catch some rhetoric at Speaker's Corner. Nobody was there. I walked down the High Street, taking a festival poster with the name Currie in the 'Lists of Artists'. Cockburn Street, the station. Felt international, happy.

Back home, watched some TV ('Avanti' was on) then sat at the breakfast room table with Mark, writing captions to magazine and newspaper pictures and showing him my Geography text from the 5ths at E.A. when I'd done likewise. Giggles. Music. This occupation is a form of absurdist fiction, satirical too, and is as satisfying to do, if there is an appreciative audience (like Mark) at hand.

1979

September

Monday

10

Dreamt about being pursued and kissing Felice Bauer (much improved on her pictures). I bought and read the Guardian, then turned to a Scotsman article on Ricky Demarco. This made me decide to visit his Polish exhibition, the Canongate overspill section. The only trouble was I couldn't find it, instead looking into a bookshop and a closed gallery in Heriot Watt (I didn't even know the University was there before stumbling upon it!). To the library. The inevitable book on Kafka, and two (one introducing, the other presenting) about German Literature (20th C.). I was tired enough by walking to be able to dip into these at home without feeling restless. Bought fruit at Broughton Street. Ate an acidic cooking apple. Mother returned from the West, talking about ancestors.

Mark and I went to Henderson's to buy a Vegetable Curry dinner, take-away, for supper.

Afterwards we went for a drive. This time I directed. Passed warehouses, reached the Braid Hills and returned circuitously. We went along Lauderdale Street; I saw nothing.

Forgot: met Nooby, Johnny Glen and Gillian waiting for their resits on Chambers St. Later saw Graham Hall with an attractive girl.

Evening: read 'Kafka', listened to Peel, played piano and guitar, and read a couple of Paula's old letters (I'm expecting a new one any day – tomorrow, the anniversary of our first proper meeting, would be apt). They made me regret having been so ardent in my letter of Friday; she does not come over well on paper; I do, but not in life.

1979

September

Tuesday

11

Emma and Vanya asked for a lift to the Lyceum. On the way, in the Golf, I bumped a woman's R5 when she braked suddenly; she advised me to anticipate. Returning, I witnessed a lorry squeezing and hitting a car (another elderly lady) while cornering on Morrison Street. I drove to a Southside garage and spent 50p on a car wash.

Set out on foot for Young Street after spending some time drawing in the breakfast room. Janet, from whom I wanted to claim petrol expenses, was out, so I went to Menzies for a Guardian and ate lunch (it was 3.30pm) in the Farmhouse. Then back to Young Street. In the library I sat reading 'What's On', surrounded by far-eastern students who talked together in a delightfully relaxed, harmonious way that soothed me.

Then I walked to the Art College and paid 40p to enter an exhibition of ballet costumes called 'Parade'. The superb lighting and setting stole the show: a felt-lined corridor with prospect of a colourful dancer slide-display (colour overlays of changing poses) led into a dark hall with dim bulbs all round and music, in time with which the spotlights faded up and down on specific exhibits. I lingered. Also mirrored cases which became transparent. Before, I'd been assaulted (mock-sexually) by Allan Robb, in an outrageous mood. Also met a Brown twin.

Mother read this diary. Meg asked me to mind her bookshop on Friday. Mark and I took the Volvo to the car wash.

I read Nietzsche & modern German prose.

1979

September

Wednesday

12

The house became a machine zone as the two women swept all before them, ruthlessly eradicating dirt. I read the Glasgow Herald then stepped into the shiny Golf and took my trousers and jacket to the cleaners. Then I visited Thin's and bought (or put on the account) the new Collins Dictionary. At home I delved into this acquisition. One entry is Boll, Heinrich. In his company I spent the early afternoon, reading several stories but principally the splendid 'In the Valley of the Thundering Hooves'. Superb style, great description and atmosphere and emotional depth – pleasantly free from contrivance. I bought bread in the Delicatessen and ate, at 3, after running the ladies to the bus and Mother to the office, a macaroni lunch. Emma and Vanya were in, being noisy, playing games. Later I went out in the Golf. Sunshine and high wind. I drove to Musselburgh, entering Loretto, which was deserted. Then home from the south of Edinburgh, following a Danish Golf.

When Mark arrived home I was required to go with him in the Audi to Young Street. I was tired, my eyes itched. On TV, Open University programmes about Ruskin & Morris & Marx.

Read 'Time' article about Magritte then went out for a walk. Ferocious wind. I visited the station, Cockburn St., Frederick St., peering in record shop windows. Sense of solitude, not entirely unpleasant.

Read bits of a Graham Greene article in the New Yorker. Fed the hamsters.

1979

September

Thursday

13

At Dundas Street I bought NME and MM. News: Siouxi and Severin split from the other B.S. I spent most of the early afternoon absorbing such candyfloss. Listened to 'Lodger' then wrote a few lines about a nocturnal walk – these were interrupted – hey, I'm forgetting the Day! I dusted my camera down and walked to C.R.H. where I bought an FP4 film. Then I walked along Princes Street – the sun was very bright, the light very sharp – and took pictures of shop windows from the inside, with shoppers as a background. I continued along Shandwick Place, then came back along Alva Street and Queensferry Street, visiting Rae Mac and Young & Saunders. In Frazer's I bought a Guardian, which I read near a tree in Princes Street Gardens. Still wind about.

On George St. I spotted Nicky C. & Allan R. I hid in Waterstone's 'til they'd gone. But as I went into J.W. Ireland they saw me and followed me in, helping me to buy a tin of Napolitan sauce. They left soon, though, and I returned home to make lunch. Emma & Vanya were in.

Young Street called, asking me to take pay cheques to Haddington. I sat in Nora's office quietly while Ruth & Janet & Nora chatted. We discussed my trip north on Sunday, then I left. Drove fast, enjoyed the Golf. In Haddington I bought a chocolate bar, before returning on the coast road.

Meg showed me round her shop and gave me the key. I supervised the hamsters' exercise. Then I read 'The Radicalisation of Space in Kafka', an interesting, difficult essay which made a lot of a little in a very learned way – it aroused my dormant intellectual passion.

1979

September

Friday

14

Up early, the house freshly empty, sunshine in the breakfast room. I read the Guardian. When I stepped outside I met the cold air and realised that Summer had gone without ever coming. Walked to E. Bookshop, browsed through Pelicans before leaving for Menzies, dissatisfied. There I bought 'Existentialism' (Macquarrie) and a copy of 'Now!', a Conservative news weekly with a very depressing feature on UK youth; staid, conventional.

I opened 'The Bookcellar' at 10.30, and very soon it was filled with customers. Throughout the day there was an average of one customer every ten minutes (at a wild guess). One book-seller bought a Dickens set for £23. I read 'Now!' and 'Existentialism'. Closed the shop between 1 & 2 and ate macaroni Napolitan at home. Listened to 'Lodger' and Heads. Back at Meg's, read Borges (a couple of stories; funny, fascinating) and received two visits from Meg herself, the first time with boxes of books. With only a break to buy an Aero and an Evening News, I minded shop until 5.30.

At home I found a curt letter from Paula waiting. The last communication, without analysis or explanation, perhaps mercifully. My inevitable sadness was tempered by relief at reaching an unambiguous dead end.

Father, Mother & I dined out at the Honeyflower on Hanover Street. Afterwards checked out cinemas, but found nothing worthwhile.

I voraciously read 'Existentialism' all evening; my disparate, lazy ideas are here sewn together, allowing me to step up to reach for others.

1979

September

Saturday

15

Arriving downstairs for breakfast, I was met with instructions: fill the cars with petrol and oil, take a suit to the cleaners (this I neglected to do) and buy the bread. These I did; I took the Audi to Leith Walk then to the car wash to be cleaned. On the way back I stopped at Thin's and put Borges' 'Labyrinths' collection on the account. At home I read several of these: fascinating and complex, a dusty, curious world unfolds, or rather its folds are illuminated. Lunch was late and consisted, as usual, of macaroni. It was then the turn of the Golf for filling, this time near Comet. Afterwards I drove to the crowded St. James Centre and saw a buckled, belted cotton jacket for £20 – I bought it with Father's money. Cashline informed me that this was the sum total of my savings, but my life is financed just now from other sources than my own savings.

Listened to "Heroes" then drove Emma and Vanya to their matinee.

Granny arrived. We ate dinner out of packets then drove to the Lyceum. The evening was clear, as the day had been. We sat close to the Bairds. 'The Children's Crusade' was professionally produced, less well acted, but enjoyable: a combination of comic and moralistic, also quite contemporary in idiom. Outside we heard the cast's cheers coming from the dressing room on their last night as actors & actresses.

I played tapes, lamented the passivity of TV, listened to Siouxi then watched half of a bastardisation of 'The Picture of Dorian Gray'.

1979

September

Saturday

16

Granny & Mother sat smoking in the breakfast room, engrossed in family / ancestry talk. I ironed shirts and played records then took the Volvo to Waverley station to meet Papa from the Leeds train. It was delayed, so I read an architecture article in The Listener. When he arrived, we drove home and almost immediately set off for Young Street to meet the teachers bound for the north. Soon after 2p.m. the teachers and I left in the Audi & the Golf.

It rained and the wipers were useless. Drove at 85 in high wind. Then, on small roads, sunshine broke through. Bare rock protruded through the vegetation, slopes became sharp. Many trees. We stopped in Pitlochry, walked up and down the main street and finally decided that nowhere was suitable for a snack. Shortly afterwards we stopped at a hotel and ate white bread sandwiches and tea in an anonymous, dingy lounge. Pushed on. I played 'Lodger' and 'Discreet Music'. Bill's conversation was interesting, arts-oriented. Elizabeth back-seat-drove and showed her vacuity of mind. At last we arrived at the Brigadier's hotel; he immediately prescribed a dram in a business-like tone – I hastily left.

Reach Nairn in the dark and booked into the mausoleum-like Highland Hotel. Then walked down to a Chinese restaurant for a plain, expensive meal. Depressing, back-end-of-beyond atmosphere. This I combatted in the evening by reading New Society, going for a spin, then watching Ken Russell's 'Savage Messiah' on TV.

1979

September

Monday

17

I breakfasted alone in the Highland Hotel's TV lounge – scrambled eggs, sewage-flavoured tea, toast – then left Nairn hastily. The sun broke through as I approached Inverness.

I parked the car in a multi-storey park and entered Inverness' few but busy streets; it's quite pleasant, full of tourists. Visited the Art Gallery, which was exhibiting Paul Strand's Hebridean photographs, and cartoon strips of 'Oor Wullie'. The latter I ignored, reading instead 'Creative Camera', 'Crafts' and 'Art Monthly'. Then I fetched the car, bought some lunch supplies in a supermarket, and hit the S.W Fort William road.

Parked in a layby by Loch Ness and soaked in its prehistoric grandeur; sea-like waves, banks dropping uncompromisingly from cliffs and sparse trees straight down into the fault.

The weather worsened until, past Fort William, what little scenery could be seen was mournfully drowned; trees submerged, rivers bursting their banks, sheep stranded. I picked up two hitchhikers who'd cut short a mountaineering holiday. We listened to tapes, arrived at last in Stirling, where I dropped them. It was then just a matter of following the M8 to Edinburgh, and my jaunt was definitively over.

At dinner we argued about killing for one's country – Father said he believed in it, to an extent. Mother and I said we would never do it, though the tanks were rolling up Princes Street.

Awful TV: degenerate sci-fi Western, U.S.-dominated moralistic Film '79 and manipulative Concorde documentary.

1979

September

Tuesday

18

Bought a Guardian and rolls. Languid, pleasant breakfast in sunshine before approaching the day's duty: I phoned Young Street and went along there to receive instructions about the transportation of photocopiers – but a delay procrastinated the matter. All I thus had to do was take some C.&C. supplies to Templedean Hall in the Volvo. I listened to Talking Heads on the way. Gave a Jewish N.Y. man a lift, talked about galleries.

At Haddington Helen Duncan showed me the Wolseley and gave me documents and keys for it, all in her motherly manner. I zipped home and waited around for the Haddington bus. Fred Bell and Mark showed themselves briefly, skipping school. I read Borges' stories from 'Personal Anthology'.

I caught the bus at 3.30. Planning a story: at Musselburgh the inspiration accompanied an idea about serving as a duty for ideals which exist nowhere in the real world. By Haddington I'd invented hate-filled characters known as 'Niners', dedicatedly against imaginary 'Sixers', (really the Niners' alter egos). When I collected the car this trail of thought was interrupted by the sheer joy of getting used to the peculiar vehicle with its enormous controls and imprecise handling. It's quite likeable and pleasantly unassuming. Mark had a shot, didn't like it much.

I drove round about the place, after dinner taking Mark & Emma to Kinneir Road, joking hilariously all the way. 'Rhoda' reassuring on TV. Spent the later hours working out my 6s and 7s story in great excitement. I began it, not altogether happy with the old-fashioned tone or slavish rigidity of time-treatment.

1979

September

Wednesday

19

I spent some time during the morning playing with Henry King amongst the bed clothes, then I was called to the front door to admit the window cleaners. I dressed, ate, then went to my little car and drove to Market Street, looking for pet food. Browsed in Hot Licks, and the beautiful-smelling Wholefood shop (it makes one's bowels move!) before driving to Raeburn Place and buying hamster food and strawberry juice in Woolworth there. Also browsed in G.I. Records. I arrived home to find traffic wardens taking notes about the Audi; I was obliged to park both cars on the other side of the road, far away, with tickets.

My feelings of boredom during the afternoon were channelled in two directions; anguished improvisation on the piano and rewriting of the beginning of my Reigara story, this time onto the typewriter. I did these intermittently. The piano was poor, but my story is assuming a voice and direction well.

The dinner bell rang as I listened to 'Cars'. John Thomson had phoned earlier, asking for a lift to Colin Stuart's house. After dinner I showed Mother what there is of my story: she found the University Professor / gardener joke funny; so, consequently, did I. Left at 7.45 for John's. He talked about London, I felt a bit guilty about having a car. At Puckle's; we first sat around talking – my slight nervousness transformed every joke into a hilarity. Then we took up our instruments and played. I improvised with cassette and mic. When I borrowed Johnny's treble or Colin's bass, the results were gratifying. We went through the Beatles songbook, then left at 12.45, noisily. A pleasant, friendly evening.

1979

September

Thursday

20

Young Street calling: To Haddington with you, before lunchtime! In the two hours free to me I bought NME, read it, and ate breakfast. Then had to wait at No. 21 while Ruth and Susan collated & copied documents for me to carry to Templedean. Then I was off in my Wolseley, more enjoyable as I get to know it better; a gem.

Talked to Helen Duncan: she asked me to take her to Italy then, when I told her I don't eat meat, said she hoped I wasn't going to talk to flowers!

Home by Drem. Young Street for petrol money, then lunch at Drummond Place, while XTC played upstairs.

Spent the afternoon profitably before the typewriter, writing another page-and-a-half of my story until my excitement became counter-productive (preventing clear thought) and the family made the house noisy. Father's back from London.

I slipped out at 7.55 and drove to the Odeon. Sat near the right-hand speakers through sets by Viva (textureless, arrogant), Yachts (impressive details but lacking cohesion or vision) and XTC (crude, savage elements ill-matched with whimsy; lack of melody, too loud, glamorous, very popular; two encores).

Read NME in the silent house, then looked at my story before joining Sukey in bed.

1979

September

Friday

21

Soon after breakfast I sat at my desk and finished my story; five pages of dense typescript, entitled 'The Mythologists'. It pleases me, though its style is perhaps too little life-derived, too literary.

After XTC, my right ear rang all day, and a slight, annoying deafness persisted. Played piano, listened to 'Fear of Music'.

I made macaroni for lunch. Read my story onto tape: it lasts 12 minutes. In the late afternoon I walked to the Ed. Bookshop and Menzies, buying a Spectator. Then, outside the 'Unified Family' premises, a stuttering Moonie stopped me: he was much less intelligent than they usually are, and didn't pay attention (to any reasonable degree) to my points. His friend agreed with my objections as often as his assertions. Some familiar faces passed by while we spoke; it must have been for about 15 or 20 minutes, and the wind was cold.

Mother read my story, but her response was cool, though quite encouraging: she criticises pace. Father, when he read it, talked about spelling and admitted to misunderstanding the only idea he commented on. I collected Emma from ballet in the car.

Read from 'Short Stories 3' and drove about, witnessing a collision, at about 8.30. Returned with low petrol supplies.

Read The Spectator, ate; journal is unpleasantly right-wing to the extent that this obscures more human considerations.

1979

September

Saturday

22

Father's shadow was cast on the early hours of the day – not an unpleasant intrusion, more unsettling. He and I went in the car to Stockbridge, where we bought several sale books at 50p each. Then we went to Ferry Road, looking for a car wash, but it was shut. Eventually, Father reluctantly followed my advice, and we used the South Side wash. I begged £10, a household debt. With this I later filled up my Wolseley and drove to Virgin Records, where I bought Wire's new album, '154'. I was much moved listening to it; it is quite superb, mysterious, atmospheric.

Drove to McOnomy and bought a BASF chrome tape (for which I only just had enough money) and taped the record.

John phoned, asking me over, after supper. I was quite merry because of wine and other things (music), so it was a pleasant call. Then Mother told me about David Hood's jobs and ancestors in general: the sort of conversation I find dull, because it is concerned with outward details only. Emma was out with director Gareth, Mark ruggerspectating.

Spent hours looking through my short story drawer, surprised at the quantity of fair material. Considered entering 'The Innocent' to the R3 competition.

Family atmosphere in the sitting room; parents keenly searched out literature texts which I'll need next year. Argued with Father about the value of money. Late, read Kafka's diaries, earlier, Pepys'.

1979

September

Sunday

23

The family assembled volubly in the sunshine-filled breakfast room, dispersed on my arrival. Read the papers. Then I offered Mark a driving lesson in the Volvo, taking my Wire 154 tape along. We went to Joppa and cruised around there, beautiful music wherever we went. Mark seemed nervous about his quickly-nearing test. Still the sun beat down.

Home. I then transferred to my car and travelled in a westerly direction until I reached John Thomson's house, where I parked and joined him in his room. We played Wire (he wasn't keen) and Jethro Tull (I wasn't keen), talked, then went out in the Wolseley. John drove, liked it. We went to Granton then bought cheesecake on Henderson Row (in the cheese roll shop) before returning home. Played the Thomsons' beautifully-toned piano for a while, then we took to Snooker. Of two games, John won both by a very narrow margin. We drank tea, ate biscuits. Then prepared dinner. Cauliflower and cheese.

I left towards 10. Arranged to meet him tomorrow to visit the law courts. At home I played music, studied lyric-sheets of 'Lodger' and '154'.

1979

September

Monday

24

Awoken by an electronic then human alarm, I arose at 8.30. Took a dose of '154' then hastened to St. Giles where I was to meet John Thomson. He was late – I visited Cashline and bought a Guardian. John didn't arrive until almost 11. We were unable to visit the main court (a sell-out attempted-murder) so visited the Sherrif Ct. instead. In Court I watched a steady procession of thieves, insurance-skippers, assaulters... until a recess gave us the opportunity of leaving.

Lunched at the Student Centre, familiar territory, then walked, by Cockburn Street (and Hot Licks) to Drummond Place. John played my guitar, we conversed in my room, then went downstairs for tea and biscuits. The table was then cleared for Push-Penny – I won fairly consistently (as I had done at Space Battles at the Univ. – but I'm not competitively oriented, so it doesn't matter). Then I drove him to Young St. (Ruth's attractiveness becomes more evident) and had the misfortune to be a godsend chauffeur for a plump, nervous El Salvador surgeon bound for Haddington. Communication was elementary; his English basic. Profuse, genuine thanks at the hotel.

Drove home. Smooched about the house 'til dinner. After this, played tapes in my room & read 'Existentialism' and University Prospectus, considering Sociology next year. Watched TV, read Diary.

1979

September

Tuesday

25

Breakfastless. Drove the Audi. To Wilson's. The air was warm and damp, some rain fell, and I walked circuitously back through town, pausing in the St. James Centre and reading the Guardian, then continuing home, then eating breakfast, which consisted mostly of Crawfords bread.

Visited, on foot, the library. Withdrew, on spec, a book about Durkheim, Pareto and Weber; Sociologists Ltd. – the others were about German Lit. ('Motives') and 2 plays by Martin Walser. Munched bread, read, pondered; time was squandered – successfully.

Visited, by car, Young Street but, in the absence of WBC, curtailed a state of hesitation by leaving.

Was visited while Wire played by WBC and big Nora, unloading Cash'n'Carry goodies. The latter asked for a lift to the hospital for, not the happy event ipso facto, but, quo vadis, a check-up, amen.

When Mark came marching home from school, no hurrah for the supervisory duty of driving-teaching. In silent mood, wholly abroad. Gentle fatigue made tree-lined, quiet suburban avenues pleasant and there almost seemed to be religion in the world. Then we had to collect Emma.

Dinner over. Phoned John, otherwise engaged. Motored to the Calton; 'Midnight Express', fully booked, left without me, and I it, to read, instead, at home, Sociology and various. Uplifting Rhoda on TV, tapes & radio. Time passed.

1979

September

Wednesday

26

Halford's: chose sundry car accessories, mostly for bodywork repair. Parked at home, began to rub rust and cracked paint from the car with sandpaper. Ian Fyfe sympathised (cars, after all, are almost as neutral a topic as the weather, though I did make a risky comparison between Fords & Renaults) and lent me an AA book. Spotted out some rust, much remains. Big macaroni attack satisfied, I drove the women up the hill, Mrs. M. to hospital to visit her Father, hearing the story (his 'spirit').

Home. Reading of my Sociology tome was interrupted by a call from a cassette-fitter I'd asked for an estimate from – he said £8.50 to convert my Wolseley to a travelling auditorium. Took the car round immediately to him (Drumbrae Drive). Left on foot, walked through Costorphine Woods, full of school children & zebras. Felt happy, contemplated on the necessity of illusion, glamour; their justification. Bus home, cup of tea, then to collect the car. Got off the bus too early, scrambled through gorse and dashed across golf-courses, amongst trees, round and round housing estates and fences before arriving, to discover that the work (well done) cost £16.97.

House quiet; family out in the Audi, Mark has his test tomorrow. Read Cosmopolitan. Went with Mark to pay the fitter. Then saw the bubbly 'Camerons' on TV (with Morag) before giving Mother a lift to the station – she is attending a London conference. Kafka's diaries; great affinity, little comprehension.

1979

September

Thursday

27

At 7.30 I washed and ate then joined Mark in the Audi, which we drove to Joppa. Read NME, giggled at my own jokes, felt nervous by imaginary infection (in sympathy). Sat in the hut while the test was conducted. Mark's face told me – he'd failed; because of gear and mirror faults. We discussed the test on the way home. Then hung around the house – I listened to 154 – until it was time for Mark to return to school. I waited in the car while he visited Aitken & Niven, watched Edinburgh people, found it disappointing. To Musselburgh. Back. Father dropped in then rushed off North, registering only irritation at Mark's failure.

On an impulse, I jumped into the car (it had to be moved; I got a ticket!) and drove to the summit of Calton Hill. There, ate crisps, listened to Talking Heads, read about Max Weber, stretched out on the back seat with the front seat tipped forward. Then I left the car and, for 22p, climbed the Nelson Memorial. The top was cold & windy, a good view. Sunshine. Wandered across to the wall of some private gardens, which I followed, considering jumping the fence – didn't, but the place is intriguing. Drove home. Played 'Young Americans'. Phoned John, while Henry sat on my back.

TOTP TV, macaroni, then to John's house and to the Cameo with him, to see 'Manhattan' again – very enjoyable, warm. Back to J.'s house, where an interesting 'problems' conversation developed, starting with the Us / Them schoolfriends attitude John has. Despite my pretensions of objectivity, valuable.

1979

September

Friday

28

Sky uninterruptedly blue, the morning still early. I drove both cars to the BBC car park, where they can avoid parking tickets. Then I walked to Cashline, withdrew £7, and made my way to High Street to pay my £6 fine. Walking down the Mile, I passed the Demarco Gallery and decided to check out their other section. Before reaching it (the place was closed anyway) I visited the Heriot Watt gallery, which showed textiles and sculptures – more notable, though, was the pleasant ambient flute music, echoing through the hall.

Hungry, I bought Napolitan at the Delicatessen and ate macaroni. Earlier, visiting the basement, had received the electricity man.

Spent hours during the afternoon typing 'The Mythologists' on the IBM – unexpectedly laborious, and the copy is a bit scored. My tired eyes were rested, along with my body, on the sitting-room sofa to the accompaniment of 'Discreet Music' – magical atmosphere, slipping away to another plane. Read large pieces of Kafka's diaries, sad and wise.

Father returned. I missed picking Emma up from ballet, went, fruitlessly, later. Listened to music. Bored (though otherwise content), I drove to the station & bought New Society. Spent evening reading it. Then saw a rather unpleasant chat show on TV; fast, facile, condescending, shallow, though amusing, often unintentionally.

1979

September

Saturday

29

'Petrouchka' on tape, me in bathwater. Dried, dressed and fed, entered my car and arrived at Thin's and the library. In the bookshop, glimpsed the pulsatingly full University section before making two selections from the Pelican shelves: 'Six European Directors' and 'Main Currents of Sociological Thought 2'... one business (projected), one pleasure. At home once again, nibbled bits of food and read a sentence here and there. Classic Summertime Blues symptoms ensued; disinclination to move, inertia nonetheless unbearable. Recorded and listened to tapes; put down Kraftwerk's 'Radioactivity'. After an excuse for lunch I reactivated the Wolseley and travelled to Ainslie Place, listening to Peter & the Wolf. Parked outside No. 6, then walked to the back of the Doune Gardens and stealthily entered. The place was empty but for squirrels and a solitary Colonel type terrier-walker. The strong (yet not quite as strong as expected) memories pressed nauseously on my throat. Afternoon sunshine, rich, decaying smell; a jungle of privilege. Jumped out into the Dean Village, and thence to the car, and thence home.

A vacuum, pleasant enough, but languid. I broke it (Duff and Mark broke in then left for a night out) by travelling across town in the Audi. Called in at the Film Theatre & the Traverse, but both shows were sold out.

Listened to foreign radio; W. German, USSR, E. German, French... all insincere, distorting. UK programmes (discussion, play) better. Father returned. Abstract artist, uncontrollable energy, intuitive, on TV. Piano.

1979

September

Sunday

30

Sleep perpetuated itself. Breakfast was at midday. Observer-reading interrupted by the return of church-goers, demanding that I should abandon my tea and buy bread – this being Father.

I fervently threw clothes into my suitcase and emptied my desk drawers, grateful to have some Sunday-filling occupation, and that a much-needed change was coming. I even loaded most of my stuff into the car and washed it with buckets of water (the car, not the luggage). Father then joined me, and decided that the front left tire was dangerously bald; he changed it. Also we fixed the rear brake light: the rift of the morning was healed in this shared interest in a neutral object.

Read through some glossy magazines Mother had brought from London while she & Emma congratulated each other on dress sense and flaunted exotic new clothes self-consciously.

Then searched for my Letter of Award only to find that it hasn't yet arrived. Father promises £100 cash 'for the time being'.

Civilised dinner, first for days.

Listened to records, watched TV in the hot sitting room, then was asked to deliver the Audi to Hazel Kerr. This I did, inspecting their basement flat. Then called in at John's house & sat drinking tea and talking to Shelagh, John & Jock, much about Ireland, nothing fascinating. John drove me home, paused at the door, where we spoke for a while.

1979

October

Monday

1

Black rings underlined my eyes, but a purposeful mood immediately took hold of me, unfortunately developing into a counter-productive nervousness and restlessness. Father had left a cheque for Halls £39 short; I filled the car with petrol and air (and water, after nearly scalding myself with steam) then drove to Young Street, thence to St. Andrew's Press with a chequebook for Mother to sign me the difference to make up my Hall fees.

At last I was ready to go. As I drove I played Talking Heads leaving Edinburgh, Kraftwerk ('Radioactivity') approaching Perth, 'Lodger' beyond, 'Manifesto' somewhere or other, and finally Heads' 'Cities' as I ecstatically entered Aberdeen. I'd eaten lunch in Stonehaven, a bland pizza in a granite row of houses, parked.

Rolled into Hillhead, met Byron, he helped me unload the car, then set to heaving furniture and unpacking. This finished, we ate – me vegetarian peanuts and mushrooms etc. Then, on Byron's suggestion, we drove to the Union. I was daunted by the new and familiar faces, the conditions hardly conducive to social intercourse... so I drove straight home. Turned to other friends, in print. Pirandello's excellent story, on which 'Right You Are...' was based. A TV interval (Oregon glorification) followed by extracts from Kierkegaard and Nietzsche – very stimulating. Talked to Byron over tea about courses and friends, in general, ideal terms, not specifically.

1979

October

Tuesday

2

Lost my place in the queue for showers, made breakfast at 9. There met Byron. Then had to hurry (by Wolseley) to King's to meet my advisor, Dr. Clapperton, at 9.50. He described me as (technically) 'a weak student' (with only two subjects), and objected when I accused the University of being inflexible. I couldn't decide on Ordinary or Hons., so I was sent away. I visited Paul Schlicke, who gave me about fifteen minutes of his time, explaining the advantages of Honours. Thus I was able to return to Clapperton with a decision, though it was not really mine.

Then drove downtown (lunchless) to the Art shop for coloured paper, tape, etc. to Chivas for tea, cheese & bread; and to the Market for a cheap mug. Returned, laden. Applied each product to its use; bread to mouth, for example.

Forgot, forgot: browsed longtemps in the Kafka library, withdrawing 2 volumes of letters. Also had a pic taken for my ID card.

Supper. Coffee. Read Kafka's letters to Brod etc, cut my own hair. The letters made me despair at my own lack of vitality & spirit & friends (Kafka had more at my age, though was not necessarily less lonely).

With Byron & Henry in the car to Penetration at Ruffles, stopping first for a drink at the Union. Callum's stories about hitting people with baseball bats. My lack of understanding of the drink / noise atmosphere; what is said that is so vehemently approved, in what secret lies their obvious affinity?

1979

October

Wednesday

3

While others potted about, I lay in bed until 10, fussed about clothes, took ages over a tiny breakfast, then at last stepped out below a low, leaden sky to drive to Marishall for societies morning.

There I mingled with a friendly crowd and herded past stalls, joining the Arts Society (run by Sarah, Bill's acquaintance) and the Cine Society (£3).

Then back to Halls, with Bowie on the deck. Lunch in Byron's company on macaroni, after which I made another journey, this time downtown... browsed in Menzies, Other Record Shop, and the Art Gallery, where I joined their film club for £1. Returned home tired, put Berio & Cage in the Akai, and fell asleep in their pleasantly unpredictable company.

Awoke, passing a stark vision of my own mortality on the way up, then went alone for supper. Overheard the dull conversation of two girls; their courses, their social lives.

Read from Kafka's letters; the 1907 letters & the 1923 conversation-slips. Played Byron music. Read with interest about Renoir & Bunuel in 'Six European Directors'.

Watched a fascinating 'Parkinson' programme with Posy Simmons, Malcolm Muggerige & Quentin Crisp; Posy was the most sympathetic, yet the men treated her with condescension; Muggerige clear-headed but hopelessly fixed on things Absolute & Divine. Crisp a mannequin, all affectation, an emotionless martyr to individualism, an eccentric shell. Afterwards, conversation with Byron about dancing, and then wrote a few parables.

1979

October

Thursday

4

It didn't rain but it poured, and how! I remained in bed til 12. Then: I made myself macaroni, I walked to the cafe, and there encountered Robert Mercer, long and gaunt, but with much of the Mercer obsequiousness intact, and 'Janus' Stark, enthusiastic about his lookalike John Hurt.

I had to register for Sociology at NK6: the car wouldn't start, and so I took the bus with Byron. The lecture didn't look very interesting as a group – superficial, Scottish girl were in the majority, but some gems may be hiding amongst the pebbles. (Some needles in the hay?)

Bus home too. Grant cheque arrived. Read NME. Byron barged wordlessly into my room and read it over my shoulder. I then put on Heads' 'Fear'. Thunder and lightning outside, and the constant rain. Supper.

The car started, so I drove downtown. It stalled twice; the first time, a reverse down the hill was enough to restart it; the second time a mechanic just happened to be walking past and, beneath the arch of Marishall, fixed it. At last I reached a multi-storey, and entered the Art Gallery. Bought 'Design'. Watched a slick gallery video, then at 7.30, 5 of ten amateur award-winning films – mostly trivial, the only one that stuck was 'Gott in Togo', a gory documentary about Voodoo and such awesome irrationality. Home in the interval. Read Design and Sociology handbook. The flat quiet.

1979

October

Friday

5

Unawares, I let my English Lit. registry slip past as I slept. I drove Byron, after breakfast, to King's, then collected my grant and visited the Sociology department. I found, on meeting Paul S. at the door of NK6, that I'd missed Eng. 3, so I went downtown in the hour before Eng. Lang. registration, parking the car in the Marishall multi-story car-park as I deposited my £400-odd in the bank. Again the day was dour, but my spirits were not dampened. I spent some time in the language registration contemplating the intelligent face of the combat-jacketed girl across the aisle – she was in Eng. Lit. last year. Looks sad and serious, her girlfriends are ugly.

Bought books on Sociology from Bisset's. Back at 103 I read bits of these, including 'Working for Ford'. Very interesting, bodes well for the course. Later talked with Byron (sho had earlier annoyed me by reading my 'New Society' while I was reading it) about Nuer and other primitive religions, and my Sixer / Niner ideas.

Supper. Saucerless coffee cups spilt. An evening with Franz's letters, up to the fateful 1912 meeting with Felice. Then music stirred my more emotive needs, and I sang with 'Lodger'. Lounged in Wavell hall, speaking to an Edinburgh negro, Stark, and a servitor and reading Christian propaganda – their attempts at gaining rational plausibility miss the point, merely tempting one to refute and feel smug; in fact, only the intuition can be relied upon for conviction. Ned Sherrin's show uneasy.

1979

October

Saturday

6

And still I stay immobile, horizontal, but still the grey skin beneath my eyes said 'Sleep more...!' After brunch, down to the car, slotted Schoenberg into the deck, and left for the Marishall NCP; sunshine elbowed its way into my affections. I tell a lie; I drove straight to the Airport, parked, looked about then went to the sea – the tasteless esplanade was dashed by a noble, white sea. As I stood before its sudden upward curtains of foam, I was soaked when I failed to jump in time. Bought petrol, changed my clothes at home, ate a meal, then drove to the NCP. On George Street I purchased sandpaper and then visited Miller's then took £5 from the bank before homing in once more on Hillhead. Ate with Byron.

Started 'Ane Satyre...' but couldn't find it in myself to finish it or even continue, so instead I wrote a pseudish letter to Gerd Conradt in Berlin, then, fiddling with the radio, overheard the Radio Moscow News and was moved to write a letter of complaint about unfair juxtapositions.

Then wrote a piece (after ironing my shirts, this after laundering them) called 'The Exceptional Exception' confusing the idea: 'The exception proves the rule'.

Byron came in to talk about the Union and bootlegs – my rather brittle intellectual mood chased him off.

1979

October

Sunday

7

My late morning sleep-ins become fatalistic, life-rejecting. Today it was breakfast as lunch. Alone. Then an impulse drove me to the car, equipped with 'Ane Satyre' and Schoenberg's music. I turned right, then reversed and turned left, and explored the small roads between Dyce and Aberdeen, in the direction of Banff. Eventually I stopped in a layby at the edge of a forest – the place is called Fowlershill, I think – and, after a brief and rather unpleasant walk in the woods (rubbish, decay, spiders) I sat in the car and read the Introduction to Lindsay's 'Satyre'. There was some sunshine in the account, but its Scottishness depressed me, as did the oldness of the book and of the lady writer's weltanschauung. So before I'd finished this (remember, the actual play is still to be begun!) I drove home.

Supper with Byron & AL, who wants out of Halls for irrational, obsessional reasons (if that isn't a contradiction). Byron played a live tape of Roxy Music, ecstatically.

I drove to the station, where I had four photos taken. Also to the back of the Capitol, whimsically hoping to hear Joy Division, who were performing inside.

Read, from several sources, documentation of Kafka's life, mainly 1912-13. Canetti too. Byron, the first-years and I made collages from the papers – mine sexually charged. Byron then gave one of the new boys advice (which could only possibly apply to himself) about work. I watched a programme about propaganda. Glimpsed Mel as I turned from gazing at the moon in softly fractured clouds.

1979

October

Monday

8

Up early, despite there being no English Lit. lecture today. In fact I missed my tutorial at 10, but so did Prof. Draper, so ca ne fait rien. I gave the Sociology department a couple of photos, then sat in the library and read Design and the New York Times (arts sections mainly). At 1 it was time for Language. Met Gordon Boyd and sat with him, behind Miss X, the attractive, honey-skinned, serious girl. She was wearing a slogan under her shirt which I tried in vain to decipher. Home for lunch, then a rush back in the car to make Sociology at 3 – a Socialist-oriented, deadpan lecturer delivered a nonetheless interesting lecture about a powerful, privileged mafia of industrialists in N.E. England.

Filled up the car with water, drove home. Read Ionesco's 'Amedee or How to Get Rid of It'; quite funny, 'Godot' rip-off. Then some of Kafka's Milena letters. Supper alone.

Spent the evening reading 'Everyman' – a good, simple morality play from the 15th C. Needing a break, I drove to the Union and bought some bicarb, played on the machines then returned.

Stomach pains set in, becoming bad during Horizon (on Aerodynamics). I sat on the loo next to the TV lounge for about half an hour, in great pain, shallow breathing, no strength.

It subsided enough for me to crawl into bed and undress. Then more, so I could exchange words with Byron and write this.

1979

October

Tuesday

9

Come, come, it's nearing 12, you must remember what this morning was like! It rained, but then was sunny. At one o'clock I visited the Arts Centre and had a conversation, argumentative, with an elderly communist about the GDR and the EEC and political theory. Lectures bracketed this argument. Lunch was eaten in halls before the first – it was macaroni. Last easily recordable event in the evening was the collection of my wallet from King's College library, where I'd left it. This I was informed of while Gordon Boyd was in, looking at my room, discussing notes, putting me on edge. Because before that I had spent over an hour in the library... good intentions, phonetics, but my clarity cruelly repaid by the dustbowl of irrelevance and tedium that is 'O'Connor'.

Took to browsing, leaving with some Kierkegaard and 'Theories of Modern Art' – which contains de Chirico. Other memories – met Angela Bolt, we decided not to speak to each other; I walked right behind her for some time. Two French girls spoke in delightful tones outside the Language Lab – I eavesdropped from the shadows. Connections: when I opened the diary I read July 13th (Friday), the day I first discovered de Chirico's magical pieces, and Alixe arrived; parallels with today. Intending to see a new arts programme, I went to the BBC 1 room. BBC 1 Scotland showed something appalling instead – I pelted helter skelter in a line across the lawn home. Oh, a lift to a first-year Sociology student from King's to Hillhead at 4 – mild-mannered, had transferred from Glasgow. I told him I wasn't sociable, he went off to look for a friend. I spent the evening with Surrealists et al.

1979

October

Wednesday

10

In the first morning hours I read the beginning of Beckett's 'Molloy', laughing out loud at several passages. Then it was time, alas, for English Lit. – well, in comparison with Beckett alas, but it was quite interesting: I sat next to Sarah (even talked to her!) and listened to a slightly effeminate lecturer talking about modes of presentation of medieval drama, then immediately had Language tutorial with a peculiar, wrinkled, grinning RP prof. who resembled Rex Harrison's Higgins at times. I was out of my depths in the grammar. Lunch: the cashier dropped a 10p in my soup. Then a ten-minute language-lab exercise before walking back to 103 (my residence). It was then I remembered the English plays, so I returned to NK1 to watch videos of 'Abraham & Isaac' and 'The York Crucifixion' – the primitive ethics of both disturbed me – violence, penance, utter faith.

Back to halls. Listened to music, Bowie's "Heroes", Lodger; Heads' 'Fear of Music', Bowie's 'Young Americans'. Became 'high' from singing and whistling with them. Then had a rather antisocial supper with B., reading Gaudie, annoyed when he read my copy, and so on.

Unable to start O'Connor, I instead became involved in the composition of 'Minutes': consciously unconscious-derived sentences of surrealist, absurdist bent (influenced by Beckett, de Chirico, and art notions generally). When Byron read these they were instantly trivialised – some were funny yet v. serious. Later taped O'Connor.

1979

October

Thursday

11

Sunshine, egg for breakfast, listening to Lodger in the car, driving to King's, attending Lit. sitting by Sarah, driving home, buying tomatoes, reading NME with macaroni, walking to King's, submitting to three timetabled hours – thus commenced the day. Language was dull and amusing, the Cavalier lecturer made too many assumptions about incorrect preconceptions he took us to have. Then followed Sociology tutorial: the tutor consigned his little girls to the room opposite then asked us about ourselves. Of me he asked least (he then declared a prejudice against Edinburgh), but I got my own back later by bringing up complex asides to his introductory talk (theories of the simultaneous reversal of oppressor / oppressed roles). The others were passive and quiet. Sociology lecture: sat near the front and entered better than before into the stories of industrial injustice. A very satisfying feeling of at last being told the truth about the foundations of the organised world. (Or, here, Capitalism, for the lecture was about Ford.)

Speeded home, where I read until supper, consumed alone. My mind was pleasantly awirr with multifarious ideas. At the meal, two young, loud Conservatives agreed with Hitler and invited each other on skiing holidays. I read in 'Dict. of Modern Thought' about Capitalism v. Communism, then had a good discussion with Byron (later Jeff too) about the future of the world & existing frameworks. Watched a docum. on Miami law. Read about Renoir, the director, then about the Clash in USA. Little univ. work.

1979

October

Friday

12

To my shame I neglected serious work today. Bought 'New Society' before English lecture – on 'Everyman' & '3 Estaits'. Walked home and read a new acquisition, 'Introduction to Social Psychology' (reduced in Bisset's) over lunch; pizza (kindly reheated by the staff). Then drove to University Road and sat for an hour in a horribly humid NK1 while The Cavalier made absurdly incongruous sentence examples on the blackboard. Nicky & Allan hitched a lift with me down King Street, then I returned to Halls. Read 'Psych.'

Feeling bored, I drove west, to the countryside around Kirkhill Forest. Drove down autumnal avenues with afternoon sun and 'Warszawa' on the deck... then mist descended, and the scene became mournful. Drove by a straight, quiet route into Aberdeen.

Supper alone. At 7.15 walked in the dark through Seaton Park to the Chaplaincy Centre, where I crowded into an upstairs room to hear a rhetorical, castigatory speech about the role of Christian students – committed, rather shallow. Then folk-singing – instigators were insufferably goody-goody & pious boys, but overall the effect moving. Prayers, then downstairs to coffee room. There I was soon engaged in conv. with 'Neil' from Ess't. 204: ministerial intentions. Then a clever and a dumb pair quizzed me on Existentialism – the intelligent one helping me considerably by understanding the reasonableness of it: defended his belief by the 'extra dimension' play. Back to his room for coffee with two unexceptional girls. Walked home with a middle-aged woman on my English course: depressed, told me about her problems (course, digs). Talk with Byron.

1979

October

Saturday

13

Lay well in... this meant breakfasting scantily on toast then eating macaroni quantifully and early for lunch. In between, I listened to 'Visage' (Berio) and tried to read Linguistics: eventually resorted to dictating it onto tape after lunch. Byron came in and read my Bluffers Guide to Modern Thought (Fontana Dict.). In the later afternoon I drove in the car to the Union – everywhere football supporters jammed the roads – where I bought a Standard C-90 tape for 35p! It works too!

Home. Supper alone. Then commenced a very languid evening with BBC2: first, Renoir's 'La Regle du Jeu' – a loud, rather shallow film, compared with the great claims made for it. Like Altman's 'Wedding'. Then, after I'd taken a walk round the Halls boundaries for exercise & activity, I returned to see Beckett's 'Happy Days' – much as it was at the Royal Court; the same performance, essentially. This was followed by Ingmar Bergman's 'Face to Face', part 2: more affecting than Beckett, but rather deadpan serious. I gladly joined the crowd in our flat kitchen, experiencing real life once more. After a while we began to collage (vb.) with such elements as fish, huge owl eyes, etc. I made tapes of the talk and laughter that accompanied this. After everybody else had gone to bed, I finished off my grotesque figure on the wall. Now it's 1.30a.m. A somewhat empty day.

1979

October

Sunday

14

Up, toast, music, conscience, uneasiness, resolution: I walked all the way to the Art Gallery, umbrella slung in pocket, scarf around neck. It closed, I walked to the Union. It too closed, I entered Radar's, amorphous hamburger-shake shack. There, amidst conversation spontaneously banal and the calculated mindlessness of Jimmy Savile (wall-mounted, wood-encased), I drank a vanilla milkshake. Then the Gallery was open, and I able to view 1) Finnish prints (some appealing, others cluttered and obscurely mythological) and 2) Gerd Winner's disappointing lithos of decaying buildings; not the sharp-edged prints I'd hoped for, but large sickly-coloured, rather cliched Industrial melancholia. Visited the gift shop, Union, bus stop. Drunk bingo-playing OAPs on the bus, semi-intelligible, having a good time. Rather sad for me, but not for them, so...

Halls. Futile attempts at work, ending when I read the diary, rested, read Franz Kafka's letters, even wrote myself (a poetic piece called 'Animation'). This last, by the way, stimulated by a reading of Beckett's weary 'Malone Dies'. Supper long ago, with Byron, next to a blonde Swiss girl, quite attractive. I feverishly completed my 'Fish at home' collage (complete with cooked humans).

Did a wash, did. Constant congregation of flat members in the kitchen (not deformed sex, but six, formed). Watched on TV: Glaswegian sermon (Christ: 'Ah's love, pall!') and fascinating 'Propaganda with Facts'. Tomorrow is timetabled. Will it work? Tune in... D. Telegraph article on Class.

1979

October

Monday

15

The mirror showed dark crescents below the eyes. Burnt beans for breakfast. Then... the order of schedule began: an hour of taping linguistics, half either side of my English tutorial with the leathery Prof. Draper (like Svedrighilov). I hadn't read any Marlowe, not having heard about it, so I spent much of the time looking down at the yellow beech leaves below, and a dying longlegs on the sill.

Other members: a Leyton Buzzard dramsocite, & Sandy, and two standard-issue girls. My silence depressed me a bit; bad first impressions. Back at 103, recorded more ghastly phonetics, then made macaroni with Kraftwerk on the deck and Freud open before me as I ate – pleasant. Ironed clothes. Dabbled with Sociology texts, but was unable to concentrate. I drove to the lecture at 3: fascinating, entitled 'A Nice Job in the Office'. I operated the projector. Home, languished, then drove impulsively to town, buying £4.50-worth of petrol. Then to the money dispenser, and a few record shops, checking prices of Gary Numan's 'Pleasure Principle'. Bought nought. Home.

After supper I drove to the library, where I spent an ascetic three hours reading 'Tamburlaine'. Big Jan opposite, in the Greek section. Still slow progress, but resolution against the mountain ahead...

On TV, a programme about diabetes: Paula, of course – her smell had been hanging about all day. 'Horizon' agitated me; the horrible precariousness of the body. A cold coming on, cold weather. Byron is finding other shoulders to lean on... a relief.

1979

October

Tuesday

16

Linguistics tapes put me to sleep after breakfast, but not until Jessie came. I guiltlessly drove to King's, where I attended English Lit. – today on Elizabethan theatre. Then downtown, cushioned and protected by my big coat, and bought an Alision loaf and a Guardian. Then to Halls, and an unashamed lunch with the paper – only bread to eat, however; penance?

Drove to Language, M. Trengrove said some interesting things (that means I was receptive after a decent night's sleep). Spent 2-3 at the English dept. noticeboards, and in the library reading a review of 'Apocalypse Now' in the N.Y. Review of Books. Sociology, as usual, was a very welcome tonic – today about two exploited groups of workers; migrants and women.

Walked home (hadn't driven earlier). Some hours with the newspaper etc. – then Byron came in. I felt caught and inevitably had to accompany him to supper – he had been particularly possessive with my paper and room earlier, taking them both over silently. Anyway, an awkward meal. I hurried off afterwards to the New Library. There I browsed longtemps in the Sociology shelves, before spending some time in Tamburlaine's bloody court. Then I drove the car to the station and a shop on George St., buying 'Club'. A little work done back at 103: Finished Tamburlaine, read a little Introduction, then listened to Kaleidoscope. Byron & co. are in the kitchen, including one of the girls from the flat opposite (horsey accent). I feel alienation. Listening to Wire. It's 11.45.

1979

October

Wednesday

17

Virus surfing further through me, ate alone, then drove – fie on automatic writing! – actually, I missed my English Lit. lecture because I was absorbed in The Guardian. I made the language tutorial easily, however, and shone unexpectedly in the phonetics exercise post-mortem. After this I studied the English department noticeboard. Drove, next, to the Marishall car park, looked into Bisset's, was disappointed, so walked to the Union St. bookshop by way of Halfords, where I bought anti-freeze. I returned to the car with a copy of Borges' 'Book of Sand' and nuts and an apple for lunch. These I consumed in the car in the K.C. car park.

And then it was two o'clock, and I was due at a meeting of the Creative Writing Group, Machar, perpetrators of 'Pieces of Dreams'. My Eng. Lit. lecturer organises it (Dr. Roberts). My impressions were neutral (immature first-years beside me, trivial 'mature' women in front... neutral as ever) until the 'Pieces of Dreams' video was run – an unmatchedly alienating experience, of which the main ingredients are sugar, cotton-wool, and shit! I exorcised my aggression after this by driving north fast – on the coast road about 10 miles, then back circuitously. Then sanded rust patches and painted the car body, also avoiding supper with Byron (indulgent introversion). This I successfully achieved, reading Borges and eavesdropping on my neighbours. Then off to the New Library, where I had a large, cool room to myself to read 'Tamburlaine 2'. Home, T.V.: Mash, Ripping Yarns, unfunny, Billy Connolly on Parkinson hilariously so, in parts.

1979

October

18

Thursday

Sunshine, Kodak-clear, all day. I ate breakfast and walked King's swards, where I discovered my Eng.Lit.lecture empty, void – the reasons soon apparent, unimportant technicality. Instead I bought and read MM & NME, The Guardian, and New Society, in a grey chair on 'the Bridge'. Then orange juice in the cafe, and English Language, not before looking at pictures in the library – of Vienna & Prague & Kafka & friends. After Language, the chance to speak! The Sociology tutorial was dominated by the American girl's complaints (she subscribes to capitalist values, has ancestors who worked for Ford). My views were labelled 'crude Marxist', but listened to. As usual the silent majority sat quiet. The lecture was diminished by the tutor's aspersions on 'Robert', but was interesting nonetheless. After it I did the second phonetics exercise in the lab – now using all the phonetics symbols, I think.

Home, and ate on the dot of 5, alone, having brazenly passed Byron et al at the flat. They, however, joined me at the meal. In the car I travelled, as is becoming my habit, to the New Library, there to read a few CDP pages, but to be sidetracked fatally by Jung on Literature and other Psychology books.

Returned, and wrote some short poetic prose pieces, not particularly profound, form dictated by form, unable to resume 'work'. Listened to a portrait of a street on the radio – depressing cameos.

1979

October

20

Saturday

I rematerialise from the early 17th century to write this, having just heard 'Dr. Faustus' (abridged) and 'Edward II' (in full) in the stereo room. The day... began with the taking of geometrical notes (quadrilaterally arranged) about Kyd's 'Spanish Tragedy'. Then into the car, in which I discovered myself travelling townwards. Parked near the R.C. cathedral & withdrew £5 from Cashline before meeting an Eastern (Hong Kong?) Moonie and discussing one's mission in life; she didn't understand my humanitarianism, but advised me to make my views known. She broke away first, perhaps scared by my accusations that she had given away her responsibility. So I looked into bookshops for Cosmopolitan, but eventually bought it where I'd seen it first, in McHardy's. It's for my Soci. assignment. Lunch (cheap) in refectory (King's), then Language – sat at the back, where I was able to watch in amazement as people walked to and fro before the cloisters, so indescribably real. The lecture, meanwhile, was about categorisations and rules. Absurd.

Collected Marlowe records. Home (by car, to my shame). Then perused Cosmo, pencilling cynical comments on it; the effect is that of Chaucer's Wife of Bath, not of 'liberation'. Ate late, alone, hearing discussions about skiing holidays.

Then... booked the listening room for 8, read Gaudie, then settled in the fluorescent light on tattered sofa chairs by rushing vent and listened to 'Dr. Faustus' – disappointing in abridged form. But 'Edward II' – almost 3 hours long – was very powerful, power being the operative word. The plot pushed ever onward into deeper human treachery.

Talk in kitchen, with tea, with Byron.

1979

October

Sunday

21

Bed retained me overly, but breakfast revived my lust for life, and I even made a vital decision – to walk to town instead of driving. Thru Seaton down King St., eventually to Jaws (after putting my head inside the Arts Centre). Onion soup, pizza, over £1! Then a meander along Union St.; final destination Watt & Grant book-floor. They have 3 Paladins! I browsed in the art section, looking at Magritte & Dali, also Steadman's 'Freud'. Indigestion made me feel weak & sick, took a 20 home, and lay in bed – even slept – while I recovered.

Byron arrived, I played music. Then we ate supper – together. I phoned home afterwards, talking with Father about language and with Mark about Talking Heads & Marxism.

By and by, 'Al' came along, and a conversation about Bowie bootlegs led to my playing him (& Byron, whose characteristic interruptions were quashed with a forthright 'SSSHH!') the 1976 interview and other snippets.

I spent a great deal of time making a collage – snippets divide the plane diagonally, deformed people cluster either side. A certain creative satisfaction, but guilt.

Early afternoon again; took photos of shadows etc. through kitchen window, read Kierkegaard.

Watched some of Parkinson with Rex Harrison, but actorish anecdotes were deadly dull. Back at the flat, alone in the kitchen, I was visited by the divine Hazel, who asked a few professionally sociable questions (about courses, the least personal subject) and left.

1979

October

Sunday

22

I was content to lie in 'til 12.30, then shower and lunch alone. Sun shone fiercely, but I closed the curtains, lit a bulb, and sat for most of the afternoon struggling with CDP (not successfully) and 'Tamburlaine' (much more sympathetic work). At the time of writing I am but 2 pages from the play's end, miraculously. At 4.30 a record player suddenly broke the studious calm, and my distraction led to a leap to the creative plane: I wrote some ideas on the typewriter, then transformed the first of these into a 'poem' called 'This Place', constructed around decreasingly absurd paradoxes. It also served to prevent Byron from demanding my presence for supper, and I ate the meal in peace later, able to overhear other people's accounts of the day (walking with boyfriends along the beach, etc.). And then to the car (which started without complaint) and to the Union to see two Werner Herzog films; 'La Soufriere' & 'Heart of Glass'. I was surprised by their sentimentality and Hesse-like romanticism, and not a little bored by the more ponderously mystical scores of 'Heart'. However, original, trance-like atmosphere, good music.

Read on in 'Tamburlaine'. On BBC1 the propaganda series reached post-war Labour gov't. 'information'; the regime which inspired '1984'.

Locked out of my room briefly, soon in. The night's dreams prompted some thought about companionship – the friends I imagine for myself are always just me in disguise, and I already have the original... but I ought to make moves towards others.

1979

October

22

Monday

Again the rituals of accommodation reasserted the myth of continuity – alarm, shower, teeth brushed, breakfast... but today all was overshadowed by the more powerful dream-world; Mark had died of some disease, and even when the dream was forgotten, the grief remained, I kept turning around to banish it for good, but always it lurked just out of reach. Anyway, I spent the early day at King's. Our discussion of Marlowe was distinguished by my comments, unlike last week! And then I went to the library, and looked at the music section. Reported for English Language, mistakenly. Instead, since there was nothing to do, I went to the Arts lecture theatre and attended an appalling Biology lecture about cell structure, delivered in impersonal dictation like an abstract, absolute creed. Dim lights, sickly microscopic slides. Cold. Afterwards I ate peanuts in Taylor for lunch, had to throw stale crisps away.

Unable to decide whether to attend Betty Frazer's Psych. 1 lecture, I incurred a dialogue with her and her displeasure when I hovered in the doorway. A clown, D. Oldman, for Sociology; appeared to bubble on infinity's edge. Refreshingly red. Bus home.

Meal, simultaneous with Byron, but alone. Then by car to the Health Centre (repayment of debt) and the Cashline machine. Then to King's Library with CDP, but was entirely sidetracked by literature, or criticism thereof: 'Sociology of Literature' led to books about the French nouveau roman, in particular Robbe-Grillet; my appetite whetted for his books.

Back home, read Borges and wrote a pseudo-philosophical 'Keep Out' notice for my food cupboard. Found a new Kafka story in 'Parables'! Incurably hungry.

1979

October

23

Tuesday

Hurry, mostly. Reached King's on foot with only a sandwich inside. A lecture on 'Jew of Malta', a visit to the library, on failing to find an English translation of any Robbe-Grillet novel. The same lack was in the library, but I found, on the very top shelf of the French section, a volume of Kafka's short stories including the aphorisms and other material unread. Then to the public library, a small place (temporarily) where I found all R.-G.'s novels cheaply bound but delightfully translated. Also the definitive 'Castle'. Back to King's. Language; Allophones and cetera, sitting next to a friendly Gordon.

Before this, lunch... L.C.D. Graham poured Radio 1 into the room, scoffed tinned food & read the tabloids. I fumed, not angry, but despairing. Sociology, at 3. The animate Oldman on the evolution of family life. I was distracted by the 'Paula smell' (what is it, I wonder?) and the frequent glances of the attractive girl next to me. Hope stirred, the cool facade was penetrated cruelly. I moped about the contact (albeit imaginary) until supper and after, pleasurable depths. 6-7, listened to record 1 of 'Richard II'. 7.30, at NK7 for the Arts Society meeting. Only communication was a joke about the postcards solemnly passed around; 'you must've been chewing a lot of bubble gum...' – fell flat. Then slides of nudes, superficial commentary by Sara and friend. Disappointing. Then I caught the end of Sandy Gall's lecture to the Arts Lecture Theatre – flat, depressing. Home, listened to a further few sides of 'Richard II'. Copied Kafka's aphorisms (favourite ones).

1979

October

Wednesday

24

Braving the wind-chill factor, I walked to English. Tamburlaine is revealed at last as someone, disgustingly enough, intended to be admirable. Home. Read the paper, listened to Act V of 'Richard II' in the stereo room. In the car, after macaroni, to King's, to discover the language lecture empty, and to remember that today was Wednesday! Home, where I worked on my Sociology essay, due tomorrow. Only when I looked up at my timetable did I realise that I'd missed my Eng. Lang. tutorial – a day of absent-mindedness. I remained closeted in my room until 6, when I went over for a late supper. Few people at tables, enormous queues. Earlier, had conceived a short story about a boring man whose unexceptional life is ridiculed by a string which hangs from the sky. And from the car I saw a red flare, suddenly, in the sky... I think.

I wrote my essay very slowly, distracted by trains of thought and reading passages from the CDP book to fuel the next paragraph. Then turned to Cosmopolitan, in preparation for the Soci. tutorial. In this read some very interesting articles – one about depression, many of the symptoms of which are those I exhibit frequently, though I wouldn't say I was depressed. A brief trip round the TV lounges. Read the Guardian. Ate toast, wordless with the others in the kitchen. Earlier had heard Byron with a boisterous girl next door. Abed. (Midafternoon met John Drummond who asked me to write for Gaudie.)

1979

October

Thursday

25

Luckily, I knew it was Thursday, and proceeded accordingly. The sky was low, the wind high. In English Tamburlaine was again the topic, and became even more the hero, to my disbelief.

A passing bus tempted me, and I returned to Hellhead to eat sandwiches in the cafe and read The Guardian. Then into the Wolseley and down to the Butchart car park with 'Lodger' filling the car and song filling my mouth. Sat in this way awhile in the car park, then entered NK1 to hear about John, who ate rich spice cake while Mary preferred shortbread. Ah, which reminds me; at 11 I'd joined O.D. Macrae-Gibson's Language tutorial to make up for missing yesterday's – in it were David (Steve's friend) and Adam, an ear-ringed Londoner. Back to 2 o'clock, and to Soci. tutorial. An interesting discussion about womens' magazines. I produced most of my Cosmo arguments well enough, and felt smug & superior. But Prof. Carter is more interested in dull students, as a sociologist. The lecture: Oldman's continued feminist pontification. Afterwards the Greek communist Caralampo fared badly trying to solicit class rep. volunteering – so I set the precedent by coming forward. It is an excuse to make contact with members of the lecture. Home.

At 5, drove in near zero visibility & traffic jams to Bisset's, where I bought 'Hamlet'. After supper, for which I accidentally joined Byron, I listened to the first tape of Hamlet, reading along simultaneously. Enjoyable – Hamlet the depressed man's hero. At 9, 'Fawlty Towers', the screen miles away. Then wrote some fair fiction before joining a discussion amongst the flat's Science students.

1979

October

Friday

26

It was cold, so my shower was short. And breakfast had been altogether missed. I caught the bus to King's, and fell in love with the back of the girl in front of me (fingerless gloves, short fair hair, Psychology student). Edward II lecture, then return on foot to Esslemont. Only toast for lunch, then awhile reading NME & New Society. Language becomes horribly quick and intricate, and I am hours behind in study. Anyway, I whiled away the rest of the afternoon at the Union Hosie room, where I listened to 'The Pleasure Principle', a rather samey album but with touches of irresistible neurosis & illusions of grandeur. Afterwards, to a quiet street near Union St. and a few fleeting visits to shops, buying only razor-blades. The city is unpleasant, not subtle, not warm; the people are stupid and frightened, there isn't even the glamour of impersonal vastness or wealth.

Speeded home, and lay on my bed wrapped in a scarf. Ate alone, avoiding the nearby Byron who had talked annoyingly loud & long about fishing to a friend. After supper I read Kierkegaard and listened to Mimaroglu, as much to blanket the flat sound as entertain. Then everything became quiet. I stayed in and prepared some short pieces for 'Open Space' magazine. Read Kafka's letters – 1917. Then struggled with a Phonemic linguistics exercise. Read that UFOs were reported over Scotland on Wed.; my red flare! Frightening. All Hillhead seems deserted. Alone. Read the appallingly illiterate Gaudie.

1979

October

Saturday

27

Bed & room cosseted me throughout the day, yet I didn't have the self-discipline (= self-denial) to do course work. Before breakfast was over the afternoon had begun. I can't recall the substance of the many hours of solitude, but interspersed in them was lunch (soapy macaroni), listening to Talking Heads & 'Lodger', and a long time reading Kafka material – letters, short prose, and documents in the little German book – comparing photos of Prague with a map of the city, reproductions of 'The Trial' manuscript with the printed translation, and so on. I had to look hard at myself in the mirror to reassume my identity – almost expecting to see K. there. And outside I passed Melinda Wollen, dressed in pink, who cried out 'Nick!' and headed for a distant figure. Byron promised wine with supper, telling me to wait until 6. Then he went alone, and I followed reluctantly, unbidden. But at the meal I sat with Geoff and Byron sat nearby, sharing out the bottle with sundry third-years.

And then the evening. I read a little Hamlet, which was good, but something forbade such passivity and commended other passivity – Robbe-Grillet's 'Voyeur', The Guardian, and the radio – Kaleidoscope weekly review, French & German stations. Meanwhile I drew in red and blue ink, producing an A4 drawing of 'Jumping Beans' on strong geometric planes. Over to see Parkinson's guests; not worth waiting for. Returning, met a girl & her terrier (illegal) on the stairs, she in her nightie. She asked me to help her with a Sociology summary; she'll call tomorrow.

1979

October

Sunday

28

Time tricked me; I got up at the reasonable hour of 10.30, and wandered over to the central building. Breakfast was still going! I ate, abandoning the meal I had prepared in the kitchenette. And the shop didn't open at 11. Byron enlightened me; B.S.T. is over, the hour has gone back. I spent the entire day in my room, breaking for meals. The morning passed with an article on the education of girls. All the time I was half expecting a visit from the Sociology girl across the hall; this put me on edge slightly, which probably made an otherwise monotonous day bearable; respite from loneliness was on its way, but the tension of social contact wasn't upon me just yet... only with such opposing forces would I happily stay immobile. Read my (this) diary too; the tumultuous events of March in particular. After lunch I organised my notes, and did some Linguistics work (lab exercise), the most pressing of my work backlog. Had a long conversation with Byron (and 'blunt' white wine) – he steered it into indifferent areas after some interesting beginnings. Supper alone.

Cut exotica (mostly landscapes this time) from *Cosmopolitan*, and arranged it inconclusively on a sheet of black paper. Then listened to a wonderfully heated debate on the radio about inheritance of wealth – Robin Cook's motion – that it shouldn't be – was defeated: disappointing. On TV, patronising, arch Norden. Then ecstasies of browsing in 'Modern Thought' – the New Left, Marcuse, Sociology, etc. Also delighted in bits of 'Existentialism'. On TV the excellent, frightening 'Propaganda with Facts' on representations of the USSR, 1940-48. Godot didn't come.

1979

October

Monday

29

The only interruption in the perfect blue sky was the dazzling sun, lighting Seaton Park's dew and sending up clouds of moisture. The American summarised Richard II with syncopated chewing gum percussion. My contributions were scant. I handed in my prose pieces to the English office. Then sat in the New Library, reading Marcuse on art and political weeklies; *Tribune* & a Conservative rag – the former infinitely more respectable. Explored the Physics block, empty but for a lab class and a lecture with only one student. Fascinating atmosphere. Mistakenly reported for Language, then read 'The Literary Review' in the Taylor building instead. After eating a bag of nuts & an apple for lunch, I was stricken by diarrhoea and spent some time in weak discomfort on the Art Dept. loo, with its anguished homosexual lonely hearts graffiti. Visited the language labs. Sociology at 3, preceded by a pleasant period on the grass outside, watching people come & go in the sunshine. The lecture was on Housework. Home.

Read on in the new translation of *The Trial*, Ch. 1. Ate supper alone, felt slighted when a girl chose not to sit next to me after putting down her tray. In the car, drove to King's. Read 'Hamlet' in the Periodicals room of the New Library, but was soon distracted by sexual urges, and returned home. Here I continued in Kafka, looked around the Central building, and began a letter home. Considered phoning Nightline to offer help, but chickened out. Joined the rest of the flat in conversation 'til 11.40. This helped isolation feelings.

1979

October

Tuesday

30

Yesterday was made up for; the term is 'squally', the reality is appalling. I had two eggs on the tail end of breakfast, then walked to English. Mr McDiarmid, a quiet man who revealed a sad wisdom, talked about order (or lack thereof) in Shakespeare, and in history generally. I like him. I ate a meal... in the cafe / ref., visited the Language Lab and the King's periodicals room (New Yorker), and loafed around until Language. Sat near to the attractive girl, who today seems fat & over-polite, lacking individuality. Sociology was about womens' sexual identity and sex in history. Afterwards a brief call of class reps; to meet in Karl Marx Lounge at 1 on Thursday. Dark was falling. My umbrella, having been written off, went happily back into shape, and I erected it. (Earlier, bought a book on 1950-1970 artists in Bisset's.) Met Gordon Boyd, we were offered a lift by Graham (?), industrialist's son with a new, fast Honda Accord. Played Magazine & Lodger at Byron's encouragement, then ate with him. Little said.

I spent much time drawing, interrupted by Gordon Boyd, who asked about essay titles... then the conversation moved to politics, and I asked him to justify his Conservatism. A long discussion ensued, in which he revealed a pessimistic view of humanity; my argument was impassioned and coherent, but succeeded only in making Gordon retreat, shaken. Read a little Hamlet in a workroom. Then visited a party in an Esslement girls' flat; fly on the wall. TV.

1979

October

Wednesday

31

Another McDiarmid lecture, settling more comfortably on specific analysis of Shakespeare's plays, but with his refreshing resigned concern to give these ideas a foundation. After the lecture I went to the library and read from the Beckett section the script of 'Film' (with the dumb director's anecdotes & B.'s notes) and other books by or on him, eventually taking out 'Four Novellas'. I only realised at 1, alone outside NK1, that today was Wednesday and that, once again, I'd missed my Language tutorial. I hovered outside O.D.M.-G.'s room, but he wasn't in, so I walked through Seaton Park in the sunshine, home. Macaroni lunch. I spent much of the afternoon drawing, systematically covering a side of A4 with slightly deranged imagery, then sticking it to the kitchen ceiling, where it can be admired from all sides, incurring a dizziness in the viewer which should heighten the effect. Byron returned noisily, but I didn't eat with him.

Read a little 'Hamlet' after supper, rather laboriously. Then at 7.15 I took the bus (for a change) to King's ('the girl' was on the bus), where I joined an enormous crowd in the Arts Lecture Theatre to see 'Picnic at Hanging Rock'. A rather pathetic and sentimental film, dull, banal script, cliched and retarded worldview. But the evening was worthwhile because of the people I was able to overhear and observe; Sara and friends in the (freezing) bus queue afterwards. Saddeningly friendless, unable to compromise myself sufficiently, unwilling to.

On TV, the odious Parkinson with Bernard Levin, a lively though slightly over-sure man; he made a moving speech about spiritual deadness & aliveness.

1979

November

Thursday

1

Breakfast was the chewing of two dry slices of bread, but the walk through Seaton Park reaffirmed the awakened state. Lit. passed, the greenboard was flecked with patches of green sunshine, the clocktower Venetian in yellow sunlight. Again I was adopted to the 11 o'clock Language tutorial, which passed pleasantly. Then queued in the Central Ref. by the windows, until served with a collection of flabby, evil-tasting vegetables for lunch. Afterwards, upstairs, to sit amongst cocktail wafflers, reading Hamlet. And at 1 o'clock to the Karl Marx lounge, words with Caralampo, and the rep. meeting. I was one of the four main speakers of ten present, despite having no complaints. Subsequently to Ian Carter's room, to receive my essay back; it was called 'rhetorical' and other fair things. I admitted I hadn't read all of the book.

I was walking home when I remembered the Sociology lecture – a little late, I sat behind Martha & Caralampo & read a girl's letter to her friend, describing her dilemma (a boy for the hols & a boy for term time... and they know each other!). Oldman's last lecture ended with a challenge – 'Why are you not going to act on what I've said?' Supper early alone, low sunshine on treetops. An evening with Hamlet: summarised the scenes and read on to within a few scenes of the end. Visited the snack bar a couple of times. Wrote bits of thought in my little notebook. Did a washing in the launderette. Ironed in the kitchen as Byron, Lep and Mark talked idly. At present feel resigned to the vacuum, to habit, to drudgery.

1979

November

Friday

2

I dreamt of a visit to New York; car, telephone box, girl. I lay in bed until midday, and had to wait for Jessie to finish cleaning outside before emerging. I ate macaroni, read New Society, then drove quickly to University Road and arrived slightly late for language. Having missed yesterday's lecture, I found the subject difficult and dull; meaningless arbitrary layer on layer. Doodled. Then I started my car and drove to Union Street. Withdrew £8 (leaving £90) and bought tea, chocolate and cheese spread in Chivas. Visited the record shop. Routines such as these.

Drove back to the university. Spent 40 mins. on lab exercise 4, R.P. and Scottish English transcriptions. Handed it in to O.D.M.-G. and bought a ticket from Dr. Roberts for 'Knuckle'. Visited Eileen Balfour's room in the Sociology department, chatting with her and selecting photocopies. Pleasant atmosphere; informal, intellectual. Drove home. Put anti-freeze in car, ignoring all draining and flushing instructions. Perhaps as a consequence, the car juddered and vibrated badly afterwards. I listened to Schoenberg and read NewSoc. then was called by Byron to eat supper. Rosy was with us. Byron spoke little to her. She seemed shy and upset that no-one had invited her out tonight. At 7 I drove the shuddering car to the Arts Centre or nearby, and saw David Hare's 'Knuckle'. The first half put me off; the characters were all too tough and know-all in a facile way. At the interval I observed the bar. The second half was, as I overheard someone saying, 'preachy', and all the better for it. Still too much detective-like action, but some good irony. Met Gordon, beat him home. Sat in the TV lounge (Central Bldg.) with 'F.Times' & 'Telegraph' and 'Imperial China' on TV. Mark & Lep played soothing guitar.

1979

November

Saturday

3

I shall be bald, not cryptic. I didn't get up 'til 1. O.K.?[?] (Projects self-disgust onto imaginary reader.) I devoted the day to music, mostly with Mark. He joined me as I was drinking breakfast Earl Grey, and conversation led to the playing of our respective music on tape; his with a fairly competent band, mine old solo. Then I played Lep's guitar, he played his, and vice versa. In my room and his. And penny whistles. I made lunch, macaroni, and gave him some. Later, I walked over to the pigeon-holes and there, as I'd anticipated, was my tape, Wire's 154, which I'd been yearning after. I played it to Mark, then Byron when he came in. We ate supper together (Byron & I) for the first time in days. Talked about Rosy (he's not interested) and his problem (never defined, always its own cause). I spoke (alone) to Rosy on the stairs. Played Wire more. Outside it was very warm & humid. Ali, the Bowie freak, came in, and read some of my stories while listening to 154. Noises of appreciation. The others left the flat, and I took to Beckett's novellas, read 'First Love', a fairly amusing story about a totally bored character, with great distaste for the world, at peace with it in consequence. Then I phoned home, speaking to Emma, Mark, Father, Mark and Mother. About the car, trip to London, etc. Long call. Visited Snack Bar, as is my habit, then read, in my room, an article, from New Statesman, for Sociology, about the relationship of social inequality to education. Difficult but interesting. Feel humble, boringly middle-class.

1979

November

Sunday

4

The sun shone quite startlingly bright on this typical Sunday. After toast and tea the first task was to fix the car: I called on Gordon, to borrow a tool. He gave me the keys to his Fiat. As it turned out, the problem was nothing more serious than a plug-cover adrift from its position. I returned the keys, through Gordon's window. Set to work on my 'Hamlet' essay, fired by G.'s example. Took notes, and read criticism; grasped the fundamental theme of the play for the first time. At 1 I crept down to lunch alone. Ice cream, chocolate sauce, grapefruit mixture is memorable. Spent the afternoon with 'Hamlet', with concessions to '154'. This led to 'Lodger' and 'Fear of Music', and I had entered a musical frame of spirit by supper-time, pacing up and down my room in dimming daylight. Then Byron called me, and entered my room to listen to tracks from Ziggy Stardust. We then had supper. He rather annoyingly kept asking questions about the record, trying to elicit agreement from me. I was more interested in the girls adjacent, who were venting self-righteous indignation. Back to my suspended cell, I tried unsuccessfully to enter the world of Social Inequality and Education. Lack of exercise was distracting me, so I decided to drive somewhere then walk in unfamiliar surroundings. However nowhere beckoned me from the car, and I passed through anonymously tree-lined bungalow streets until eventually I arrived at King's. In the New Library I was sidetracked by antique periodicals; Geographical Society, 1835, expeditions in the name of improvement of mankind. Also American Journal of Psychology, 1898; an article on Realism, criticising Idealism, and a fascinating Psychological survey of the ancient Greek philosophers. Home, read Jaspers and watched 'P.W. Facts'.

1979

November

Monday

5

A considerably busy day, self-started. First sun shone, then rain fell, then sun, then rain. I drove to the campus and sat in Prof. Draper's bright-lit room, discussing Henry IV. The fact that I hadn't read it didn't prevent me from making observations of a general nature. Afterwards I visited the vast Regent Walk office complex, asking in several places about lecture schedules. Eventually I was directed to the Departmental offices. First, Psychology. Obtained information on where, what and who. Then I wandered the Old King's corridors. Paused at a Systematic Theology noticeboard in the Divinity building. Investigated rooms beside and above the library, jotting details. Lurked outside NK6, listening to an English 1 lecture on 'Spoils of Poynton', sitting in the stained-glass-stained sunlight. Ate a snack lunch. Mistakenly attended Language. Visited the Taylor building, only after trying 3 or 4 times did I catch the Philosophy prof. in charge of a Special Discussion Class on Thursdays which I'll join. Mistakenly visited O.D.M.-G. to ask to change... to the 'tute' I'm already in! Then, after listening to Wire in the car in the rain, Sociology. First lecture about children. Ensuite... in the car to town, made an appt. for an eye test, bought a pen & coloured paper in Sime Malloch, drove home. Supper alone, coffee next door alone too. Flipped through 'Observer' & 'Telegraph' supplements, distastefully. Byron was being pumped of his 'problem' hangup by a pushy, unintelligent girl – I eavesdropped, fascinated, through the wall. Had phoned Mark, who passed his driving test today. Spent a couple of hours reading Westergard on education in a workroom; it gripped soon – Marxism as the civilised alternative. Watched Film '79 with Mark & Lep.

1979

November

Tuesday

6

If clouds were doubts, this would've been a day of considerable certainty. Nonetheless, the Seaton Park path was frost-covered. An appeal for solidarity behind foreign students lopped 15 mins. off McDiarmid's 'As You Like It' lecture. He boldly damned the Thatcher gov't. I spent the next hour in the library, reading McKenzie's 'Unbowed Head' – about Summerhill Academy, its humanitarianism moved me. Then to the ref. downstairs, where I joined Byron Acton & Simon Israel & friends and ate a light lunch by them. Walked with Byron to NK1, then sat at the front of Language with The Guardian, able to concentrate better on Trengrove's shadow, sharp on the board, than on his argument. Thence immediately to Classical Civilisation above the Literature lecture theatre (views of the tower and quadrangle below) where an immensely weedy scholar talked about the Aeneid. I read about Summerhill. Sociology benefitted greatly by the comparison – today it was a historical survey of education. Picked up photocopies then walked home through the still cold. Read the paper, then ate alone at 5.15, beside no-one in particular. After initial hesitation I walked to my car. It refused to start, so I pushed it to the hill again. On the way to the New Library, for this was my destination, I passed an accident at the mouth of Don St. – hysterical woman, glass, liquid on the road. Parked and entered the library, there warming gratefully. Browsed for some time in the Sociology section, switched to the Education section, selected finally 'Marxism & Education', a book which discusses well the links between existential thought and Marxism. Not very relevant to my essay, however, which I began at 10. Wrote the first paragraph, then left, joining the lib. Car wouldn't start, had to abandon it. Waited for the bus 40 mins. opposite King's Chapel. Home, conversed with M. & L. about missionary visitors I'd missed.

1979

November

Wednesday

7

Jessie unlocked my door and cracked my sleep. I caught the tail-end of breakfast. Et puis... walked, coated, to Lit. — McDiarmid becomes increasingly pessimistic and implicitly absolutist — he's dealing with the comedies. In Eng. Lang. 'tute' I managed to hold my own despite being lost in the subject. Spent the next hour in the cafe reading The Guardian by the window. Then left for the NK lecture-theatres, to see 'As You Like It'. Not where I thought it was, I thus missed the 'Save Foreign Students' march. Tried to start my car, no chance. Browsed in Bisset's, Marx's 'Capital' and the Modern Master on Popper — this I spent half an hour or more reading, attracted and repelled by his theories of objectivity and 'open state'. Met Byron. Later, returned home and consumed entries in the Fontana Dictionary of Mod. Thot. Read 'Marxism & Education'. Bowels turned pleurably. Ate a late dinner, and joined Gordon Boyd past 6 o'clock. Talked about McDiarmid, the RAF, and foreign students. With Byron in the kitchen earlier, had discussed Objective v. Subjective. I wrote some of my Soci. essay, then rushed to the bus and went to the Arts Lecture Theatre, where I saw 'The Lacemaker', a film about a cliched love affair between two victims of bourgeois stereotypes who couldn't see the real people underneath, and inevitably split. Reasonable, though facile. Walked home and finished my Sociology essay with an attack on the government. Saw 'Something Else' on TV with Byron, very pissed off. Siouxi was poor on the show. Talked with Byron afterwards, helping him less by analysis than presence.

1979

November

Thursday

8

No time for breakfast, only a snatched sandwich, eaten on the back seat of the top deck of the bus, on the way to High Street. English Lit. was a musical interlude, with Mr. Spiller as master of ceremonies. Philosophy Special Class happened in a little ground floor Taylor building room: it was a discussion of morality and Subjective v. Objective, Truth v. less absolute value. The most intelligent class-member had the disadvantage of being a Christian; his argument led invariably to God. I left, having made some contributions, yet feeling dissatisfied with myself — felt egotistical. Queued in the ref. and ate a stolid vegetable meal, reading The Guardian overseas pages closely. Language passed rather more intelligibly than of late, and the Sociology tutorial was enjoyably light: each of us described his / her schooling. The lecture which followed was more opaque than most; technicalities of state schooling legislation. I ventured over to my car in the cold, filling the battery with water to no avail; it remains immobile. Browsed in Bisset's in Sartre's work, caught the bus back. Ate bang on five, alone. Sat next to Colin, who talking in his sincerely patronising way to a negro. I phoned home, but Father asked to to call back. Felt unable to press on with Shakespeare, and instead developed a story, 'The Letter', from idea to completion, this at 11. It is rather flat and realistic in a superficial, bleak way. Has something... Phoned Father at 10, he advised me to get the car battery changed. Seemed gruff. Said that Overseas Student cuts will harm ELF. Some life in the flat at about 11.30. I feel uneasy.

1979

November

Friday

9

I took the soft option, and it was a mattress. English Lit. passed me by, I ate yoghurt and macaroni and listened to music; David Bowie. Put my Peking coat on over my Italian jacket and walked in crisp cold to the New Library. There I read Herbert Marcuse's aesthetic theories, taking the book out (pleasant Indian librarian). Then to King's Library, where I read the difficult, literary prose of Michel Foucault, Nietzsche fan. I had miscalculated the time and consequently missed English Language too... Home, a little music, some 'New Society', then the decision to go downtown to visit the bank, a necessity really, because I didn't have enough cash left to pay the full bus fare. It snowed and gusted on the ghastly grey streets. Cold bit my face. I visited the Art Gallery briefly, bought a typewriter ribbon. Then joined the long bus queue... and met Robert Mercer. He talked in his ingratiating way about his painting (stained glass window, album cover), and Colin, a very establishment figure now.

Listened to more music (XTC) then went for supper. Byron joined me presently, we talked about relationships. Then I phoned Nightline, volunteering my help to answer calls. This, ironically, as a solution to my problem of lack of human contact. Spent the evening reading Beckett, Pirandello, Kafka. False-started on Hamlet. Beckett's 'The Calmative' was particularly morose (very funny too), and I had to study myself in the mirror for a while to regain myself. On TV, the awful 'Friday Night...' had John Cleese and Michael Palin v. Muggeridge & Bishop of Southwark – a very tense, electric debate. Byron & OTC girl in kitchen.

1979

November

Saturday

10

Ice stood on all surfaces, all horizontal surfaces, all other horizontal surfaces. To sit in my room was cold, even to sit. Toast warmed me. I believe I visited Gordon briefly, no, that was yesterday, I saw him through my window, that's where I saw the ice too. Sometime late, but still early for me, I caught the bus. Melinda Wollen sat ahead. I was behind, always behind. I alighted, alit, by Bisset's, which, and I cursed to see it so, was shut. I bought a paper, I walked in the cold, the sun shone, that at least. And then another bus came and I sat in a similar seat, but Melinda Wollen was not there, so I read about Jean Rhys, in an interview she cried and told the interviewer to be happy, and he cried. I bought some Tippex, paper, then visited Boomtown bookshop, there to browse, revolutionary-like. I ordered 'The Aesthetic Dimension' by Marcuse. Did I eat lunch? I forget. Perhaps I forgot to. I spent many hermetic hours over my typewriter, and what emerged bore the stamp of a competent essay on Hamlet, though incomplete, nonetheless stirring, a rousing conjunction of clauses. Broke at 5, to eat, alone, in a crowd of football players, not playing at that moment. I believe Byron sat by, just out of the line of vision, so it seemed, then, Ali too. And then again I actualised intellect upon paper, and reached 1700 words, at a guesstimate. At 9 I went to BBC2 and saw 'Una Giornata Particolare' about Italy in Fascism, and Mel sat nearby, our legs assumed the same positions. The film, in faded colours, moved me, it's never too late to cry, at least not before... Then back at the flat with the cold & the window and a party, Byron in mascara, across the hall. Brigid, on Lep's arm, came and borrowed XTC, asked about Paula.

1979

November

Sunday

11

Rose in time for breakfast, and spent the morning putting the finishing touches to my essay; quite good, I predict a B. Lunch alone (breakfast had been with Byron), I looked out desperately for a member of Lit. 3, then passed 'the girl' (Joanna B. Murray) on the stairs without acting. In desperation caught the bus to King's Library to find 'As You Like It' – talked to Robert Mercer on the bus. The library was closed, so I ran back and searched Hillhead for Joanna, finding her quite soon in the Wavell TV lounge with friends. Barefacedly I asked to borrow her copy of the play – she took me to her room; first floor, unmade bed, Shakespeare poster, David Bowie pic (like mine last year) outside, huge alarm clock... and lent me play and her notes. Her manner is brusque and 'polite', but at least the ice is broken. Lacked concentration to read the play at first, being tense and self-congratulatory (for having broken reified social restrictions and affirmed free choice – with a valid excuse!). But soon weighed into it. Ate supper alone, glanced Joanna on leaving. The only break in reading was to listen to Siouxi & the Banshees, and to look into the launderette – predictably full. Also letrasetted a 'Right You Are (if you think so)' badge. But spent all evening in the forest of Arden, finishing the play around midnight. Took notes for my tutorial spiel, mainly from Joanna's.

Story theme: the 'necessity' of the intrusion of inanimate objects of attention in human relationships, the inflexibility of people's regard for social convention. And the possibility of slipping suddenly through, like K.'s Burgel interview.

1979

November

Monday

12

A gloss of cold powder sanctified the ground, the bus crept respectfully over it, and I was inside it, travelling to the Taylor building, where I delivered my lecturette, gleaned last night from Joanna's notes, whereafter we discussed the play, digressed and dispersed, and I visited Bisset's and espied Prof. Draper in negotiation with the staff, but didn't buy anything and presently visited my car, discovering it to have become a considerable hazard to other road-users, being parked opposite some new-dug roadworks – in response I hauled and heaved the vehicle into a nearby car park of military nissen character... and thence, my mind at rest, returned with only a slight aberation of purpose in the form of a visit to the language lab, returned, I say, to my lodging, telephoned a garage for advice, ate my customary macaroni lunch, and boarded another bus, though possibly the same as previously, in order to reach Schoolhill by 2 o'clock, this in order to keep an appointment with an affable young eye doctor, he to make up a lens prescription and temporarily confiscate my spectacles, so that when I visited the Art Gallery I had to peer closely at the large Canadian & British abstracts before registering a warm approbation, before flying through the dry ice streets in sun in haste in bus in time for Sociology forsooth for the accumulation of education theory, over, to walk briskly over to Hillhead, to overhear much music (low of volume), to overcome hunger with an early supper, to over-indulge in leisure pursuits as overcompensation for last night's overwork, to pore over Panorama while my washing tumbled over and over in spin tubs, to witness the flat's late-night over-exuberance, and to overload one sentence in the diary... over and out.

1979

November

Tuesday

13

Throbbled the alarm for a new day, I ate breakfast, scrambled egg, and commenced upon the walk through Seaton Park. There ahead was, lo, Joanna B. Murray, with friends at flanks, in conversation. I manoeuvred in, and walked awhile while they joked self-consciously amongst themselves, until the tree-lined avenue, where Joanna and I discussed, apart from the two, the other two, her job as lavatory attendant, postperson; together we bought the news, I The Guardian, to her disapproval, which caused some political talk, by which time we were in the lecture, an aberration on Dickens. I visited the language lab afterwards, did Ex. 5, and sat, next, in the centref. cafe next to Simon Israel & friends. I ate mandarins & egg roll, read the news. Language passed. I read Design in the library, then Sociology passed. Waiting for the bus, when passed by Gordon, of disapproving glance and long strides. Many stood on the bus; not I. Before long supper beckoned, and I responded with consumption. After, cut out articles and up-pasted them on black sheets, joined by the sacred Kafka picture. Set then to reading bits of Marcuse, Schopenhauer, and Kafka's 'Castle'. Kafka's other 'Castle' (delections, appendicised). And then I set to the production of literature, at first painful plans, diagrams, plot prognoses, abandoned then in favour of a flowing, Kafka/Beckett/Beckett-like piece called 'Sentence of the Corridor', with which I am well pleased. Byron was visited by Rosy and the probing friend, I joined them in B.'s room, joked and made pompous statements, trembled, showed one of them my story. Then sat alone with Byron awhile, listening to his social positions.

1979

November

Wednesday

14

Alarm bell sounds. Pause.

And so one could continue, wrapping comforting artifice around the bare events, legitimately too, for there are no bare events left but only impressions. And so one could go on.

I sat directly before Mr. McDiarmid, who finished his lecture with a warning, a resigned mention of the nuclear destruction impending, characteristic of the old, to link their end with the world's. In the linguistics tutorial an unignorable double entendre: 'The boys from up the road came in a great rush.' Handed my Corridor story to Graeme Roberts while he listened to somebody on the phone.

Sat laughing in the bus queue, boarded, disembarked, walked to the bank, where the C/line machine took the opportunity of my custom to withdraw its service, whereupon I was forced to the human contact of a teller. A visit to the record shop to have two badges made and enquire about The Human League's 'Reproduction', not in stock, whereupon I crawled from chain-store to chain-store, without finding the link, the record, but encountering the contemptuous facades of mass consumerism overmuch. Spent an enjoyable 45 minutes in Boomtown Books and finally selected, for £4.95, 'Essential Writings of the Frankfurt School'. Met Byron at the bus stop, he disembarking, me boarding.

Visited, at 4, by 'Kim', Nightline rep, who sat in my soft chair and talked rapidly and nervously about the work, organisation, training. I join in 2 weeks. After supper (talk with Ali), Woody Allen's 'All You Ever...' in a very crowded lecture theatre, alone, didn't laugh very much. Read 20 pages of Beckett's 'Unnameable' compulsively.

1979

November

Thursday

15

A sharp schedule cast its grid over the waking hours – beginning with a lit. lecture on the tragic hero, with some annoying comments about heroism in general. Philosophy special class took the subject of cultural relativism, a new boy sat in, an articulate Subjectivist, so he and I held the theatre. Next week, God.

I ate lunch then phoned garages, arranging to have my battery recharged tomorrow. Language explored deep structure, a more simple system than conventional grammar. The subject still staggers me in its irrelevance, however. Next, Soci. tutorial. Byron paused to talk to me in the corridor. Inside, Ian discussed my essay for longer than anyone else's, frequently diverging. Comment: 'Very Good'. Oldman's last lecture began peculiarly with a questionnaire on migraine, which he explained into opacity. The rest of the lecture was about school organisation. A class rep meeting afterwards, some ex-Ac. called out 'Currie' as he left.

I ate a meal in the refcaf, lots of dairy products, then spent an hour in the New Library, reading the New Left Review, an article about Soviet gov't. today. Then it was 5 o'clock, and I entered the Nat. Phil. lecture theatre, and sat with an audience of pensioners while 'F.C.Copleston' skimmed through Metaphysics in Western Philosophy, from the ancient Greeks to Jaspers. Dusty stuff, formal, not vital. Walked home, up Don St. Ate late, a second meal. Was visited in my room twice, by strangers. One; a misdirected mufti policeman, the other; a student asking questions about seatbelts. I read on in 'The Unnameable', shat, listened to R4 (bourgeois), watched some TV (fatuous), read Frankfurt Aesthetics.

1979

November

Friday

16

Gordon disturbed my breakfast, demanding that we take the battery to the garage earlier than planned. He marshalled me militarily – 'Quick as you can!' and drove his little white car noisily. The operation was completed in time for English, the only casualty my military strides, which had acid burn holes in them.

'Hamlet' was rather poorly discussed in English Lit. I adjourned to the ref. and read New Society and The Guardian while eating 3 tangerines. Picked up the Machar 79 poetry selection, to be discussed on Wednesday. My 'Corridor' piece was the only prose work in it, stood out quite well amidst schmaltzy poetry. I sat alone in NK1 before language, looking thru the window and writing a short piece on the wrapper for the 'Strikes' book I'd bought.

Was late for the video of 'Measure for Measure', so I didn't know exactly which play it was. Very good, if overstructured (unlikely coincidences, characters standing for moral views, etc.) play, modern in the manner of Durrenmatt. In the first half my bladder was very full. Relieved at the interval, I spent the remainder starving hungry. Bus home, straight down to eat, after a brief enquiry about battery polarity. Read unexceptional poetry over the meal.

I spent a quiet evening (apart from Low and 154's volume), bored, purposeless. Wrote a very flat little fragment of which the title, 'Archive Enigma', was the best aspect. Read Kafka's 1917 Letters to Friends... Late, read 'Counter-Info. Services' article on Wall's. Heard an appalling play on the radio about language colleges.

1979

November

Saturday

17

Broke my date with a mattress at 10.30, consumed toast, and boarded a bus. At Churchgate I resumed travel a peds and soon reached the 4 Ways garage, where I recovered my battery, charged for the tiny charge of 50p, hugging it through the squally grey streets, scarf flying into the acidic terminals, I was tested, but eventually I reached the blue gates. The car could not start; apparently the battery is still not powerful enough. After 45 minutes of cold tinkering I phoned Mother from the ref snack bar, having eaten a greasy meal there. Brief conversation. Walked home. Byron was in the kitchen. I shared his apfel strudel and conversation, then caught the bus downtown. Wandered from shop to shop; Other Records, Sime Malloch, Menzies, Miller's (West End) and a wholefood shop, where I made the only purchase; apple chutney (horrible) and some sachets of Hag.

Home once more, read a One World leaflet in its entirety, scribbling dissenting comments.

Ate supper with The Literary Review and E.A. Chronicle, enjoyable reading (at least the former). Then phoned home again, Father honoured me with his 'Nicholas voice' (Mark's phrase) and advised me to buy a new battery. Mother spoke about... what? Mark moaned that he didn't get to drive the car to school every day; he wants the Rover. We discussed Nicky Campbell.

I read some of the scholarly 'Strikes' (Ch. 5) and lots of periodicals (irrelevant to classes). Played music, wrote a poem, made a small collage for it. Took photos of kitchen wine ('64) assembly.

1979

November

Sunday

18

The sun shone and I slept in, deliberately. I listened to Stockhausen, ate toast, read the Chronicle, analysing it for Right-wing characteristics. It would have been quicker looking for the opposite; I could then have turned each page fruitlessly over and quickly discarded the organ. As it was I spent the whole morning in appalled fascination.

Lunch was a welcome interruption, well, first played 'Join Hands' while Byron hovered, then we closed our doors and I launched into the delightfully sane world of Sociology – finished the Wall's article and began 'Bad News for Trade Unionists', a fascinating, methodical and factual yet highly exciting revelation of the strings that pull the media – the notion of a 'free press' shrinks to absurdly reduced proportions when attached to present U.K. reality.

I began Theo Nichols' survey of industrial accidents but broke off at 6 to eat supper. Then Byron & I caught the bus to the Union, hoping to see 'Jubilee' and '3 Women' – only the latter was shown. But, even (or especially) a second time, it was extraordinarily powerful, the best U.S. film I've seen. Afterwards Byron & I drank cider in the bar, awkwardly.

On the bus we discussed alienation & bars. Drunk.

I wrote four rhyming lines & added a collage. On T.V. the propaganda documentary continues (with a new title) and is followed by an interview: Victor Matthews; capitalist, media manipulator extraordinaire, Tory, all-round bad egg.

1979

November

Monday

19

The sunshine was attractive enough to photograph, before breakfast, to finish a film. Then I was on my way to English tutorial – my Hamlet essay gets, as I predicted, a B. But after making a long and abstract contribution to the Hamlet discussion, I clammed up, annoyed at Draper's school-masterly leading questions. Afterwards, tried the car then walked downtown, visited the opticians and had coffee in the Art Gallery after dropping my FP4 in at Dixons. The ethereal atmosphere of art magazines, elegant open spaces, objectification of intellect, seduced me pleasantly; I spent some time in the gallery. Then visited Boomtown Books, browsed, and left, to walk back to King's. The new man in Sociology is very traditionally academic, rather tense and brisk. Joanna sat in on this den of equality.

I disconnected the old battery and took it by bus to Tyre Services, where I bought (for £23) a new one, bussed back to the car, only to find it behaving exactly the same.

Again caught the bus to Marishall, and collected my spectacles from the optician; this cost £20-odd too. Still, wearing them was a revelation; unimaginable detail, surrealistic sharpness in everything. People spring up before me, instead of blurred shapes. I can tell if glances have been exchanged, not just speculate. Supper alone, looking.

Meaning to read Linguistics, I was unable to (tired after the restless nervousness of last night) and instead read Marcuse & Vote pleas. Watched an articulate old lady on 'Film '79'.

1979

November

Tuesday

20

I joined Joanna & friends for breakfast. Then walked through the brilliant sunshine of Seaton Park with Byron. Bought a paper and entered English. 'Hamlet'. I walked back to Hillhead, picked up notes, ate sandwich & nuts and boarded a bus back to King's. There I made my way to the Chem. Lecture Theatre, sat for a while beside a girl I fancy, then, in the Lecture theatre, listened to Prof. Symons on animal intelligence and behaviour. Like warm water, equally monotonous, but pleasant. Immediately to Language. Outside spoke to Joanna until her peer group wrenched her away. The lecture – yes it was a lecture. Next; the language lab, where I underwent a gruelling hour of non-stop transcription. For Sociology, a video tape was run of a programme on Ford, Dagenham – despite lousy technical quality, it communicated the ruthless atmosphere well. Brisk walk home, a sickly pink sunset behind me. Graham informed me that everybody was rushing out to take pictures of it! (Senate demonstration at 11.)

An hour of music, a meal alone, further restful activity, excursions into Kafka and Frankfurt School, a laundry, ironing, listened to and recorded the John Peel Show (especially PiL), managed to analyse syntactic ambiguity for tomorrow's 'tute'.

So passed the day. Now I shall add some contemplative remarks. Ideas: living in the present. Scribbled a Utopian outline in my notebook: rather naive, but it sparks interest in others' schemes. Emotion: bubbling melancholia – tears gather easily, usually on the subject of isolation. Also I find certain things highly absurd & laughable – Linguistics especially. General: 'Drifting into my solitude' – I must keep opening those closing doors all around me.

1979

November

Wednesday

21

Uniform rain fell. I threw up a broly and walked to Lit. wearing a blue tie. Sat at the front, reading the Pieces of Dreams group work. Had then the Language 'tute' – only 3 of us today, we disappointed O.D.M.-G. by displaying an ignorance of the routine tree analysis of structural ambiguity. I ate lunch in the ref., reading The Guardian. Took my free copy of the S. Times colour supp. to the Taylor building chairs, where I spent an hour flipping through great big colour photos of disasters and celebrities. Also looked at the clouds, with a bright sun behind.

At 2 o'clock I made my way to the Old Brewery, to F01. People arrived slowly for the Creative Writing Group meeting. We discussed each piece at great length, the author/ess had to read their pieces. I was a little nervous about the reading, but it passed quite well. Favourable comments: Graeme called it a 'tour de force', Ian 'couldn't fault it', he read me a poem by Edwin Muir to Kafka. Bernard, however, seemed disturbed by it. People left before the end of the meeting; the last poem was an appalling mini-epic, then we adjourned for a fortnight. It was 5.00.

I ate hungrily. Spent the evening making slow, rather incoherent progress with a Sociology essay on the media & industrial conflict. At 6, earlier, I attended a GM on the monopolisation of the TVs by football – they won. Late, watched Henry Kissinger on 'Parkinson' – unsettling to see world events so transcendently. Makes me doubt the ideologies of all politics.

1979

November

Thursday

22

Twice I called my alarm clock a tyrant, but I obeyed it nonetheless. At breakfast I met the red-haired girl at the coffee machine, she said hello, I didn't recognise her, she seemed hurt. Walked workwards with Byron. Jested slightly uneasily. Right, scheduled time: Creep of an Eng. Lit. lecturer, Fuller, wheedled through 'Anthony & Cleopatra'. I paid little attention, for I had espied on an envelope in the hands of the attractive girl in front marked 'Kate Symington (52 Powis Place)'. Spoke to her, having difficulty communicating. P.'s lack of communication with me. Good to make contact, sad to remember Paula. I wanted to cry during Philosophy class, but gradually fixed my attention on the question of God. Joke interruption at the end; suggested we sing hymns. Laughed rather hysterically at this alone in the ref. with NME, desperate humour. Phoned a garage, to no result, then attended language. Semiotics & Semantics – interesting. I was OK by Soci. tutorial – we flitted over many subjects; conformity to non-conformism, football as an opiate, etc. The lecture which followed was duller, though if I made the effort to concentrate, interesting points arose (Industrial Relations). Walked home. (Earlier: the antique loo in Elphinstone – steps down into eerie basement with mirrors.)

Ate. Then gave myself the evening for my own purposes. Wrote a short piece, 'Midday', watched the awful T.O.T.P. Then wrote another piece, a landscape called 'Viewers' – 'objective' mockery, alienation. Listened to the radio, recorded PiL's 'Poptones' from Peel. Byron noisily veiled his loneliness / insecurity with loud singing & shouts of 'Cup of tea, Lep?' – he never makes cups of tea when he offers. But he took a piece of my toast happily, expecting me to bring it to him. Read Marcuse on Technology.

1979

November

Friday

23

When I woke up, Byron & Rosy were talking next door. I made myself some toast, then gathered tools and made for Bedford Road, having set the morning aside for repair of the car. The air was cool, low sun beamed through mist most pleasantly. At my car, I tinkered hopelessly, then turned the battery around. Recruited the moral support of a nearby worker before turned the key – to find it started!

I drove (what a new experience) through the sunny streets to the Cashline machine, walking along the pleasant North Diamond Street & area. Withdrew £10, then visited a dramatic car wash on Riverside Drive – moved by a conveyor belt past strange robotic washers.

Returned to King's in time for Language, on dictionaries and their fallibility. It was only then that I decided to go home for the weekend.

Back at Hillhead, ate in the snack bar, packed, and eventually hit the road (after offering Roy a lift). Rain. Heavy stop-go traffic in Aberdeen. Then a patch of orange on the horizon, gradually drying and darkening, a little crescent slip of moon appeared, I travelled on South. Sang.

Edinburgh at 6.30. Alone in the house awhile, then all but Mark went to a Canonmills Chinese restaurant. Talk.

Sitting room conversation, reading, then the TV was lit, so I retreated downstairs. Mark came in from skiing, we talked about commitment. Emma joined us. I played PiL. Abed.

1979

November

Saturday

24

Familiar voices – literally – awoke me. I bought bread & a Guardian, breakfasted & read. Mother drove to the Cash & Carry, returned, and I sat in the Golf driving seat to drive to Thin's. We parked on Old College gravel. I selected 3 books in the shop: Beckett's 'Six Residues'; 'Class Inequality & Political Power' & the Signet 'Tempest'. Mother bought an enormous pile of books.

At home we discussed working-class opportunities – I managed to bring Mother round a little.

I went in my car to Lady Lawson Street to see if 'Bauhaus' was still on at the Art College – it wasn't. Parked near Night & Day and looked at trousers, account card in pocket. Nothing suitable presented itself.

Some time later I drove to Virgin & Bruce's, in the latter buying PiL's 'Metal Box' on cassette (£5.09). Impressive, inventive, arrogant.

Ate a pizza, to discover that the real meal was to follow. Mark went out to his party at Duff's with Fred (who'd been in). Some of them are sleeping in the basement tonight.

Listened to PiL, then, restless, went out for a walk. Points of travel: Tollcross, Lauderdale Street, George IV Bridge, home. Read Beckett's 'Abandoned Work'. Read New Society. Listened to PiL. Watched some TV, with the headphones on and without. Article on Anarchism.

Home atmosphere is close.

1979

November

Sunday

25

Voices sounded in the stairwell beyond my door, then were gone, whilst I fought lazily through the drowse to consciousness. I was alone in the house until about 5, the others were in Glasgow, or Duns. So what did I do? Well, ate a lot, read the awful Sunday papers, started 'The Tempest' but didn't get further than the first scene, listened to 'Metal Box' many times, and repeated most of these activities.

Article in Vogue Beauty (Narcissists only) about physique / personality types, cited Bowie and Beckett as representative of the 'Intrometric' type.

Father helped me with the car – well, he tinkered with it and couldn't fix the cassette player.

I drove to Ruth Shepley's to collect slides.

(This is all disjointed and disordered.)

We ate supper – spinach & rice for me – with wine & 'perry'.

Mark returned. Promptly fell asleep.

On TV: John Currie on 'The Spirit of Scotland' talked pompously about the Scottish malaise. I recorded it for Father, who caught the 10.20 London sleeper (Embassy visit).

Earlier I'd looked at old photos of the family & read diary entries. Played Emma's clarinet & piano.

1979

November

Monday

26

After words with Mother, I was left in the empty house. Ate, then went for my appointment at Rod's (as I had in dreams minutes before). The shop was cold. Rod was reluctant to cut as short as I asked (semi-crop), but I left looking very ascetic. Pottered in the house, then left, keyless (final). Drove to Ricci (after putting £100 in the bank), looking for a bright scarf. As it turned out, the trousers seduced me, especially some Italian padded (Chinese-style) grey ones, £20. These I bought, as well as a long bright blue scarf. Then, in the sunshine, moved on. Stopped for supplies of fuel & oil, then moved rapidly northward.

I stopped in Arbroath for lunch in a Lightbite. Walked up the rather pleasant little high street, visited Menzies.

Resumed the journey. Arrived in Aberdeen at 4, parked in the centre and collected my FP4 prints – phenomenally expensive at £4. Dropped in at Boomtown Books, they don't have the Marcuse I saw yesterday (well, Sat.) in Better Books.

I was queasy (food, travel) on arrival at Hillhead. Changed into my new clothes, ironed my hardly-worn yellow shirt and put it on. Byron looked at my photos, talked of this 'n' that.

Ate, despite warning signs – luckily unfulfilled, I filled up safely.

Read old diary entries, felt profoundly melancholic about Paula, though it could have been distress sublimated from elsewhere. Felt brittle. Unable to read 'The Tempest', I went over to Adam Smith, answered the phone, brought someone down to it, read Act 1 of 'The Tempest' in the workroom – magical, good play, pleasant. Watched some TV. Played 'Lodger'.

1979

November

Tuesday

27

A hearty Hillhead breakfast – porridge – commenced my sack-cloth & ashes regime. I abandoned 'Poptones' to lose my body heat in the wet foliage & peat outside. Lit. saw the welcome end of the Anthony & Cleo. lectures, which were too devotional. Between lectures today I read Beckett's 'The Lost Ones' in the library. Drank milk & ate tangerines while reading The Guardian – this was lunch. O.D. Macrae-Gibson, black-cloak, Germanic mythologies – this was Language?! I doodled a schematic drawing of the history (and future) of civilisation. Read on in 'The Lost Ones', ate confectionery, went for Soci. Behind me somebody smelt of feet and fags – I moved along a row, he moved along too. The lecture was on Management Philosophies. Black weather. The bus was overcrowded, I couldn't board it. Walked in the pouring dark rain, headache-engendering weather.

I ate alone, listening to a droll chap and dull girl talking about TV programmes.

Then I set off for the Nightline AGM – had to visit the Union & the SRC building before stumbling on Kim in the latter. The meeting began at 7.30 – dull & bureaucratic. In fact the members were surprisingly businesslike, not very warm and human, as I'd hoped. Mostly matriarchal.

I read the secret log book with great interest – calls of the last couple of years, inc. Byron's last June. Simon Israel works for N.'line. Left at 10.

Ate, socialised. Good flat atmosphere.

1979

November

Wednesday

28

11:53:09 – well, the morning was warm, almost summery, and I ate fishfingers, um... walked, yes, to Lit... um... on what? On... What? Oh, Spiller on scansion etc. – I was so tired I lay head-in-elbow. Then Lang. tutorial, O.D.M.-G. is shocked by our ignorance of grammatical terms. I am worried about work to be done for the exam! And... and walked home, sun shone, briefly, and I bought spaghetti hoops, ate 'em, and more, yes, and read about Jaime, an artist, conceptual, with agreeable ideas. And... yes, then to work on the Tempest, Shakespeare, good stuff, but slow, broken today by a trip in the car, with short piece by Currie called 'Midday' for Creative Writing Group, I slid under Graeme's door, saw the assembly awaiting 'Julius Caesar' in C11, didn't join, but chatted. (Ghastly expression.) And then an afternoon progressing painfully slowly in The Tempest, no storm in a tea-cup this. And... but... a meal at 5.30, observing, unobserved, as usual, and back to the desk, until an interruption, at 7.10, Ali & Byron, demanding a nodding acquaintance with the Heads, Talking Heads, on tape. I played 'em some, work abandoned. Then Lep and Brigid joined us as we made for my car, and I drove them and me to the Capitol, entered (important, that) and sat, I alone, listening to Kraftwerk. Then a 3-piece, 'Section 25' hit stage, loud, doomy, brief sparks of hope, on the whole, poor. Kraftwerk. Talking Heads: nervous, note-perfect, slow songs, then faster. I danced, helped initiate standing. Bad bad bouncers. Home. We boys walked busking into the girls' flat. I played guitar solo for some while, Byron closed the door. 12:04:06.

1979

November

Thursday

29

Porridge and sunshine began the morning well, but an oblique encounter with Gordon in Seaton Pk. depressed me – I said 'What a surprise!', he said nothing. This was exactly what everyone else I passed said to me, so I began to feel spurned. Draper on 'Macbeth' in Lit. was dull, too respectful & faithful to the text. For Philosophy Special Class, the subject was again God. My brain worked poorly, and anyway the Prof. quizzed the Xtians, not amorphous old me. The girl I fancy was there (Barbara?). I glanced at her but felt all the more hopeless because of the impossibility of contact, the futility of my rare desire. Saw her twice later, she showed no recognition. I ate fruit & read NME in the ref, and attended a schoolish Lang. lecture, 'Olde English'. Self-righteous pedantry. Lecturer quite a likeable buffoon. Soci. tutorial next: in F20, a strange guy asked us about our views of unions. I outlined an ascetic Utopia, pompously. The lecture, Trade Unionism. Rep meeting afterwards. Walked home. Felt psychologically harassed, worthless. Kafka's travel diaries, Italy & Paris, helped greatly. Ate. 'The Tempest' – finished Act 3, should've done more, but was subject to collage distraction. Read in The Times about a Spanish UFO sighting, joined Mark & Lep in the kitchen. Together with Byron, we went down to the bar, I had a dry martini. We stood quiet amongst the hilariously happy rabble. Byron sported in insidiously applied label proclaiming him 'Byron Rat'. Read Gaudie. Desire for human contact, imperfectly slated by bar-visit.

1979

November

Friday

30

I had the last bowlful of porridge, charged myself with energy but failed to use it, driving the car to Lit. and reading New Society instead of exercising my wrist in taking notes. Then I set off for the big city, visiting shoe shops for laces and heel grips, and bookshops for general stimulation. Then I ate a light, expensive lunch in the gallery coffee shop, reading 'Le Monde'.

Language; I positioned myself near the window, made my notes look like a newspaper layout, drew the lecturer. After, walked, stiff-kneed, to the car, and declutched energetically all the way home. The Tempest lay, officially sanctioned as the obvious work, on the desk before me, but, as always, other plans are most attractive in such circumstances, and I wrote a prose piece, a silly cautionary tale after Beckett, instead. Two pages.

PiL filled the space between the final sentence and supper, eaten with relish and good coffee. And then I really did read some of the play, but distractions played about me like moths.

I read about Ian Page in NME and decided to see the phenomenon in the flesh, so dressed up and drove down Unionwards.

For some time I wandered alone, unable to stay without appearing feckless in one place or another, finding all occupations quickly dulled. I watched the dancing in the disco. Joined Byron. We split when the band came on (preceded by 'Squire' in blazers) – Secret Affair. Hot, enthusiastic crowd, energetic, old-fashioned music. After, I assembled (passively) a crowd of lift-hitchers – eight in my Wolseley – and we formed a merry group. Looked into a Hillhead party, then sat in our own kitchen. Kirsti, & attractive short redhead girl.

1979

December

Saturday

1

The weather is still mild. I promised myself that I would live, eat & sleep 'The Tempest', but as it was a lot of time passed with music – PiL, Stage, Lodger, "Heroes", Heads, and so on. Around about the middle of the day I wrote a 12-line poem, slightly facetious, and vegetarianism (for the bathroom wall). My first meal of the day (elevenes) was a macaroni and casserole sauce & tomatoes. I also worked at my large black collage – more a collection of atmospheric, evocative snips & cuttings.

Nonetheless, I finished The Tempest close on suppertime, and not at the expense of a certain carefree state. Sang.

I joined Byron, Mark, Ali & Lep at the dinner-table, only realising on sitting down with them that they were drinking white wine – apparent ulterior motive (but so what?).

I read Kafka's letters to friends, up to November 1917 – thrilling, surprising reference to the last sentence of 'my Trial' – the intimacy of the letters makes me forget that he also wrote the Kafka novels.

At 7.15 I drove to the Arts Centre to see Henry Miller's 'Crucible'. Lots of familiar faces (Dramsoc) onstage: Nicky Campbell, the public school clique including Iain Glenn. And Chris Bones, and Kate Symington. The play, about the Salem witch-hunts, made its points easily and powerfully, the morality intricate but not subtle. Some moments, good communal atmosphere in the theatre. Drove home.

Aborted a washing for lack of change. Spoke to a glum Byron in the kitchen.

1979

December

Sunday

2

Leaning over the hatch I served myself porridge. Nodded to Joanna B. M. a couple of times during the day. It was, however, a day of boring, arduous writing – The Tempest essay, bad title, few ideas because little enthusiasm. Nonetheless, I finished the piece, 1800 words, by 8, and before that had an hour or two free to join the flatmates in the kitchen (Byron at first; he's quiet and demanding just now) and listen to music.

Meals punctuated the day, with little space between and little activity to make space for the next one. Indigestion problems, too much food.

Read more of Kafka's letters, and one to Felice of October 1917, which prompted me to flick through my diary entries concerning Paula – I was checking the possible effects sending her my Kurt & Maria story had had on her. But I had a spell of profound melancholy, a very fragile and enjoyable mood, thinking about her. Alternated between cynical dismissal of the whole charade and self-disgust, and the dull, reasonable thought that it was a valuable experience...

Listened to Eno. Later evening: TV – a programme about the deaths of Ivan Illych & Tolstoy, paralleled. Then over to the ITV lounge to see Melvyn B. interview Frances Coppola on the war-glorifying 'Apocalypse Now' – the reasonableness with which such a powerful, dangerous film can be justified, given cultural compensations. Then Hesse's 'Siddhartha' – absurdly idealistical mysticism, attractive veneer to trite ideology; I was equally drawn and repulsed.

1979

December

3

Monday

The invariable sunshine dazzled us during English tutorial, as we discussed 'Hamlet' once more. I bought a Guardian, reading it in the Taylor building then adjourning to the ref. There I was joined by Ali – we talked a little awkwardly, he read my paper. Language was a slide-show of 9th century artefacts, quite comfortable, amusing at times. I spent some time in the New Library reading John Ardagh's book 'The New French Revolution'; chapter on youth culture of the sixties. I had seen his very interesting 'A Tale of Eight Cities' Life in European Provincial Cities' this morning in Bisset's; its £8+ price forbade me from succumbing to the temptation of buying it. Sociology – on strikes, British Leyland's recent sacking of Derek Robertson.

Walked home, confident in my padded coat, happy because it's Monday, I suppose.

Before supper I drove to Boomtown books and collected Marcuse's 'The Aesthetic Dimension'. This I read at supper, along with a class rep letter with info on education cuts. Ali joined me then, too. Broke my Marcuse-reading at 8.30 for 'The Mighty Micro' on BBC2, a scary projection of the likely results of the computer revolution into the very close future. I had to consider it, atremble, for hours after. Clothes in the laundry, I spoke to Bob Mercer about it, chiding him for reading the Telegraph.

In the kitchen we discussed the future; technical & social & military possibilities. Byron joined later; we're still noisy at 12.40.

1979

December

4

Tuesday

Interesting dreams, prolonged until 10. Then I ate some breakfast at the snack bar, reading The Scotsman. Then, missing English Lit., I sat in my room playing PiL and Lodger.

The Language lecture was about 9th & 10th century courtly & literary history. I took no notes, felt languid & restless at the same time. Afterwards collected the new Creative Writing Group collection – my piece is atmospheric. The others – well, there are fewer this time. I bought a Guardian and two mandarins, and sat reading the paper in the Taylor building. Here I was joined by Joanna, who had received an A for her 'Hamlet' essay. We spoke a little about it, then fell to silence. Then it was time for Sociology, and I reluctantly left her. Took no notes during this lecture, on piece-rates, either, for I was deep in emotional indulgence.

Walked home, big-coated, in the fiercely gusty wind.

Sat in my room, rather sick of me and my aspirations. Read old stories. Ate supper alone, red rims on my eyes.

After the meal, jammed with Mark & Lep awhile, then played old tapes. Byron, Rosy & co. fooled about outside the door.

8 o'clock on... Nightline. Joined Jessica. A couple of Nightline business calls, then, at 12.16, my first real call: a Divinity student who'd missed work because of illness, worried about exams; parents said 'No degree, no marriage'. Lasted 'til 12.45. Nerves. Slept on the chairs in the cupboard.

1979

December

5

Wednesday

Jessica's knock awoke me at 8, I drove to Hillhead, ate with Robert Mercer. Then took off my crumpled clothes, showered, ironed new clothes and dressed. Walked to English Lit., meeting Joanna on the way, but unable to understand her chat with her friends, and unable to walk at their speed (slow) on the narrow pavement.

Lit. on 'Winter's Tale'. Language tutorial explained the mysteries of Proto-East-Oceanic; source of imaginary languages. Talk of the exam. Then to eat in the ref., reading the C.W.G.'s compositions for this afternoon's meeting.

In the library I read parts of Elias Canetti's 'Auto da Fe'. Queasy, sat in two loos in the Edward Wright building. The stomach discomfort lingered into the meeting, same place as the last one, but Graeme Roberts wasn't able to attend this time. Fewer works to discuss too. My 'Midday' was slightly embarrassingly praised. Paul (?) read an awful public school story (hero was an ace athlete etc.). Walked home.

PiL. Supper, joined Byron, who talked about Majorca. Wrote the start of a dialogue called 'Monologue' for the C.W.G.'s college show next week.

At the Arts Lecture Theatre I saw the superb French film 'Jonah, who will be 25 in the year 2000' – a view of a handful of people with 'revolutionary' yet warm & human ideals, pushing at established conventions.

With difficulty, finished my 'Monologue' with a rather obscure point about Subjectivity v. Objectivity; man v. law. Not really suitable for C.W.G.

1979

December

6

Thursday

The pressures of dreams gave way to – no surprise, just a return – Hillhead life, breakfast, music, the car to Lit. (The Tempest). 11: appointment with Ian Stephen in the Pavilion Cafe, a stark place, views over expanses of playing fields, reasonable fare, in-crowd. Ian called the 'Monologue' piece 'strong', but – and I agree – thought it unsuitable for the pub atmosphere of the performance. We parted cordially, and I drove downtown. Ate a Martins bland lunch with MM, poor article on PiL. After unsatisfactory browsing in Grant's bookshop and recordshop I hastened back for Language. I only remembered the Nightline meeting during the lecture – it was at 1 – and regretted missing it, for I passed the lecture drawing an Ernst / Kafka-like sketch of anguish, surrealistically embodied.

Sociology tutorial; essays back (mine, surprisingly, 'good'), we adjourned... to the Pavilion Cafe – if I hadn't been introduced to it this morning, I would've then. Rather redundant advice about the exam, didactically delivered. The lecture was interesting: dispelling the myth of the 'Free Market'.

Drive to the ghetto in a BMC car, afternoon relaxations, standing in the back of the supper queue, the cassette played 'Metal Box'. And some work – read 'Working for Ford', contorted in my seat, for most of the evening. Some TV (loathesome). Supper, by the way, was – unavoidably, annoyingly – with Acton. Loneliness is only countered by rigorous isolation of free will, leading to a distant appreciation of peers once more. Saw Joanna, remoteness (mine) cancelled any aspirations. Neurosis edges closer, but the cure, a change of scene, is hurrying to help.

1979

December

Friday

7

I effect another startling variation in the entry-opening format with this sentence. Now: breakfast, to Lit., another of Mr Spiller's musical interludes, with pleasant taped airs. I rested, head in crook of arm. Spent the inter-lecture hours reading *The Literary Review* in the Pavilion Cafe; an article by Malcolm Bradbury on Creative Writing Nowadays; rather simplistic, but informative, stimulating. Down to my right figures swan in the blue pool. I took the bus home and ate macaroni for lunch, then drove the car to – no, Language lecture came before this, then I drove the car to Tyre Services and had a new silencer / exhaust system fitted. While the work was being done, I explored George Street; thrift shops, seedy department stores, bowling alley – utter decadence – 'heart of the Granite City'! The car cost £25.30, and wasn't noticeably improved, except in appearance; shiny pipe.

Ate supper alone, end table.

Spent the evening in my room, listening to the radio: Radio 1 'Round Table' (recorded Bowie's 'John, I'm Only Dancing (Again)'), then more exotic fare: Radio Moscow, Radio Prague. Phoned Niteline, rad 'Morning Star'. Then listened to 'The World Tonight' on the new T.U. legislation. 'Weekending'. Some of 'Strikes', Ch. 5, but generally a shameless absence of revision.

Late evening, the ideologically dubious but hilarious satire 'The President's Analyst' – some superb surrealistic, psychotic imagery.

1979

December

Saturday

8

Just back from August: diary-browsing. Well, today was wet and mild, with showery intervals. I ate in the caf with the Guardian and the New Statesman.

I had thought of going for a walk, but the weather – as much its miserable appearance as anything – discouraged me. I faced the consequence of uneasiness; unhealthy sensation, mental and physical (but why distinguish?).

Listened to many records – or did I? Well, the hours passed pleasantly, anyway, fruitlessly. I spoke to no-one. Danced in my room.

Conscience-stricken, I recorded Chapter 5 of Hyman's 'Strikes'. This covered an hour and a half of old Psychology revision, in similarly deadpan style. Nonetheless, a gesture towards commitment to academic – oh fuck pompous sentences of this sort!

Supper. Overseas students conversed beside me, dull, but more in my speech mold than fellow Scots students (maybe it was their maturity!).

Dark room, 'Electronic Music' tape filled it with wild, fantastical shapes, also fighting back against the complacent mediocrity of the flat. (Forgot – earlier, a fire in Carnegie Court attracted 7 fire engines; cigarette in waste bin.) Byron's friend John was in, as noisy as Acton, the two of them sounded like the subject of primitive Anthropology. I read my old prose, not happy with any pre-Sept. stuff. On TV, a German film about bakery & bread, rather hung up on 'tradition'; images of staid, conservative Europe, no fervour, idealistic spirit. Parkinson dull. John et al in flat – knows Colin Mercer, 'B.O.F.'. Silences, Byron's indulgent verbal perpetual bowel motions.

1979

December

Sunday

9

I lay in bed for much of the morning. When I emerged from my room, I met people dressed in tuxedos – well, jackets and ties, anyway – so I did likewise, in time to join the party, the whole flat except Graeme, for lunch. We waited upstairs until the crowds had subsided, then sat around a bottle of Spanish red wine, eating the 'Christmas Dinner' provided.

I played music back in the flat, and Byron stood about silently in my room. We listened to John's arrival yesterday, and the collage conversations of October 13. Then I tried to work. Restlessness prevented me, so I went in the car to the Art Gallery. Here I sat in the coffee shop, reading Sociology notes. Some young children arrived with their shrewish, bourgeois mother and sat beside me, discussing 'Daddy'. When Daddy arrived, he turned out to be Dr. Andrew Hook! He placated his rather bitter wife, and humoured the children. I eavesdropped awhile, then left. Walked the dark, damp streets, from the Health Centre to Esslemont Avenue, getting mental stimulus & physical exercise.

Back at the flat. Ate supper with Byron, we discussed his attitudes to Christianity. Hazel & Fiona have been converting him. Then horseplay developed in the flat – people climbed the corridor walls, threw water, annoyed Jeff, who alone revised. I read New Lit. Review, glanced at 'Henry IV i' on TV. Late, saw 'Illusions of Reality' and an interview with a loathsome reactionary monetarist.

1979

December

Monday

10

At 8 o'clock I awoke, arose, showered and ate. At 9 o'clock I went back to sleep. Luckily, I reawoke at 9.40, and set out on foot for the Butchart Gym, where my Sociology exam was held. The walk prepared me for the exam, which consisted in answering three essay questions from a possible 14. 35 minutes each. A fair acquittal. First topic was: 'We're all equal now – Discuss.'

Walked away, lighthearted. Bought a Guardian, browsed in Bisset's. Walked – no, bussed home and bought spaghetti hoops & tomatoes. Carefree, ate lunch & read the paper, visited the snack bar to read Campus & The Times, both forces of the Right.

Booked the record room, and from 3 to 5 listened to the first half of 'The Winter's Tale' – enjoyable, although the idea that a baby of noble birth retains the aura of 'grace now equal with wond'ring' is suspect.

At hungrily on 5. Alone: Byron wings his way towards the blue Med.

In my bedroom, the closest I come to these climes is to read The Guardian supplement on Greece; enjoyable escapism. I lounge in my room, happy enough in my solitude. But take the decision to watch Panorama, on the forthcoming nuclear weapons decision in Vienna – and all the cares of the world are on my shoulders. I become angry at Pym, defence secretary, the Americans, the Russians, everybody, for being so utterly insane as to prefer the risk of annihilation to the toleration of a little shift in the political power structure. Read articles, listen to Radio Moscow (and John Peel) – impotent fury, fear.

1979

December

Tuesday

11

Impressions of the morning – wet and grey, as was the whole day. My bus arrived at the Brewery, and I entered Prof. Draper's room. Only one other student had remembered the changed day (or chosen to remember). We discussed 'The Tempest' & 'The Winter's Tale'. Afterwards – oh, my essay, returned, had scored B – after in Bisset's I browsed, meeting Andrew Hook in several aisles. My interest was predominantly political, so I went to the New Library and took out three books; one on political theories in the 20th C., one on Alienation and one of Propaganda. The latter two occupied me as I sat in my room, eating a replica of yesterday's lunch. The Alienation book is frighteningly 'my cup of tea' – at every sentence I register recognition and nod in self-sympathy. 'Propaganda' is a bitter, accusatory book; very refreshing, says things that only a sense of charity usually forbids one to use to describe modern society.

Supper alone. Continued reading. No, earlier, before supper, downtown to the bank – lots of traffic. Rain lashed the decidedly un-puritanical Xmas lights suspended above. A beautiful (W. Indian?) girl by the Cashline machine. Record shop. Home. Supper.

The evening spent in dim room, with spleen-filled book and bowel movements. Listened to a reactionary edition of Kaleidoscope, then joined an enjoyable table-tennis tournament in the kitchen. Played well, beating Mark & Lep, but not Graeme. On TV, Whistletest. Read the diary, linking handwriting change with the mid-July Paula crisis.

1979

December

Wednesday

12

Prodigiously tired, I stayed in bed til 1.15pm. Then, at the snack bar, brunch. Pizza and yoghurt with The Guardian.

The wind became gusty. In view of the Language exam tomorrow, I did absurdly little work. What instead? Music, Marcuse, the news, food. Oh, the shame! Shaved. Compiled a table of comparisons between P.E.O. and variant languages.

Ate supper and returned to my leisure activities – listening to the radio (still worried about the NATO missiles business) for some time. Tuned to Radio Moscow, I was surprised by one item in their news bulletin to the effect that the British government is testing germ warfare in Northern Ireland – the source given was The Times. I read copies of the paper for Tues. & today, but couldn't find a trace of such a story – can such a scurrilous piece of propaganda be real (ie really false)?

Did a laundry after reading The Scotsman in the Snack Bar. Joanna Murray arrived, and we had some conversation about the exam. Her washing machine didn't work, etc. She lives in Hampshire. A friend of hers lives in the flat which had the fire on Sunday.

Looked at pictures of Kafka. Bed at 12.36.

1979

December

Thursday

13

I was roused from my drowse by the stern rapping of Gordon Boyd at my door. Dressing-gowned, I admitted him. We discussed the Language exam (I have the wrong Hist. Lang. sheet), and various other topics. Quite friendly, after a long break in communications. I drove, after a hefty tinned brunch, to King's, collected the correct sheet, and sat studying it gloomily on the Taylor bridge. Then I visited O.D. Macrae-Gibson. He was annoyed that I hadn't come to this voluntary advisory session at 11, but when the others had gone he devoted 45 minutes of his time to prompting me through the exam sheet. Then, relieved, he went for lunch, and I returned to my post. I sat, inactive, until 1.50. Fergus, wasted-looking, came, declared that he wasn't going to the exam, and made off for the Machar. I hurried to Butchart and took my place at a desk. I took the exam very lightly – even buoyantly, guessing much, racing through it, though having no spare time at the end. For all that, it may even be a pass, who knows!

I sprinted home in the car at 4, then assembled idle pleasures; junk food, MM, music. Ate with Jeff. The evening was pleasureable. I watched TOTP (the least enjoyable event) then leisurelyly (?) stripped my room of its adornments while listening to Radio Moscow, Radio 4 (can't tell them apart) and, later, John Peel. Late, took clothes across to the dryers in the launderette, and then spent an hour ironing them. I now sit in the skeleton of Room 103, strewn with steamy, limp clothes.

1979

December

Friday

14

Natural daylight woke me. It was 10.30, and outside water dripped loudly. I bared my room of its last adornments then heaved my suitcase across to the snack bar. I read NME and ate a light meal, returned my keys to the authorities, and transported my case to my car.

'Sometimes I feel the need to move on, so I pack a bag and move on, move on...' sang David Bowie as I directed my car through the rain-darkened streets, which gave way to roads, which became even better-engineered as I progressed southward. Still fell the rain, though. Not until Perth did it lift, leaving an endearing pearly iridescence in the sky, and pillows of mist lying across the naturally romantic landscape. I decided that there is nothing so life-affirming & imagination-stimulating as being in transit.

But in their present state of imperfection, journeys end, and mine did so at 2.45 in a grey Drummond Place.

The house was empty, and I relaxed gratefully with good bread and French white wine, reading periodicals. Then John Thomson phoned, and we discussed archery, missiles, and arrangements for lunch tomorrow – he's coming round. Mark came in, we sat in the breakfast room, and a discussion developed; my ideal society and view of humanity v. his 'cynicism' and lack of conviction. Parents arrived. We ate supper (after Mark & I had gone for a drive in the Wolseley & Golf, and I'd played PiL), Mother read my English essays. I read Mark diary entries from November, played the piano, etc. Emma's at the Teenage Ball.

1979

December

Saturday

15

The doorbell rang and there was John Thomson. I asked him to wait in the sitting room while I rapidly changed into clothes. Ate breakfast with him. We talked in a superficial way on light topics of public concern. Wire & Public Image Ltd. played in the background. At 12.30 I made lunch – macaroni and sweet / sour sauce, disgusting. John liked it. Then we walked uptown.

Cold, clear sky, shoppers shopping. We visited Marks & Spencer, where I was seen by Kathleen Macfee (and ignored), then Menzies and the new W.H. Smith next door. Here I bought Bowie's 'John... (Again)'. I returned, having bought some writing paper in Waterstone's, to John's house with him. He showed me his bow (not thrilling), we drank tea and ate Mrs. T.'s home-baked biscuits (she asked 'How's Mummy?' and told me all about aubergines). Then we had a very long game of Scrabble. The board was filled only on the right side on an imaginary diagonal divide, very close. I won by about 3 points. Walked home.

With £10 of Father's I drove with Emma to Henderson's and bought £6.80-worth of vegetarian food. Fred Bell joined us at table to eat it. Mother didn't arrive back from St. A.'s until about 10. As usual I played the piano (instant aesthetic expression, though transient – the new reams of paper lie virgin) but was forced on a long walk to cure restlessness – past the new bank building (Dundas St.) up Inverleith Row, up Broughton St. to stations train & bus and back. The family (minus Mark, partying) played cards. The old grey hamster died. Emma will bury him!

1979

December

Sunday

16

This day shall stand as an example of the desperate aimlessness which must be nipped in the bud during a vacation period. Breakfast was at 1 o'clock, and already the others were well into the Sunday mentality – Mark totally apathetic. I refrained from reading the Sunday papergandas, and, while the others went to Habitat in the car, walked up to Princes Street – this must've been late, because it was dark by my return, but I'll report it now – I visited Smith's and Menzies – all full of goggling people, congesting the aisles between rows of cheap books of dubious moral virtue... fairly depressing consumerism. I bought (consumed) a blank cassette for the Peel session from PiL tomorrow.

At home, I felt the claustrophobia of being in a large house in which people moved freely from room to room: lack of privacy, lack of the feelings of solitude and independence which galvanise one into constructive action. I did write something, a centreless prose piece (unfinished) about the passing of time, and, much later, a piece of indignant rabble-rousing in the form of an agit-prop leaflet.

Lots of piano, some guitar. People (Father, Emma) came into my room to play the piano. Father refused to promise me £25 for my exhaust system – 'I'll think about it'. I looked at slides of Italy, and an old book of world geography; lots of escapist colour pictures. Bruce on 'Spirit of Scotland', then 'Illusions of Reality' as usual. Independent action is desperately called for.

1979

December

Monday

17

Nearly 10.30, I'm rising early. First thing to do is move the car before the wasps settle on it – so it is driven to the accommodating BBC car park. Next essential is food. This intaken, matters of less urgency call. To the library, to browse in sections HM and HX, Sociology and Socialism. Also Literature (French & German, Beckett & Kafka, former not a Frenchman, latter not a German) and Cinema: looked up 'The Lodger' in various indexes, finding that it was originally a silent Hitchcock movie. Checking my books out, I bumped into Quack Mendl, who awkwardly asked the standard impersonal questions. He looks well-preserved, even remembered my name and stereotypology (contributions to 'Miffi Mag'). Have segued into past tense, all well. Visited both book sections of Bauermeister's, bought a Guardian. Old habits, these. Visited Better Books, buying N.L.R. and P.S., an underground journal of peculiar fixations, rather into low key SM: articles on 'auto-surgery', they idolise Throbbing Gristle (the band).

Home. Alone, dark. Shops, for essentials. Played piano, useful outlet, some time. Must find something, someone new. Supper. The family quite convivial, clustered around wine. Some theological debate, sparked by the fatal accident befalling Emma's school-friend's family. Then television: Father & Mother out, I watched Horizon; delivering the same, imponderable message about our future world. You must become politically active, I can't become active, I'll become radioactive. Recorded a Skellern record for Mother, a gift from a secret admirer. Recorded PiL on Peel. Ean Begg on 'Light of Experience' hilarious.

1979

December

Tuesday

18

I bathed today shortly after nine, and the sun shone: a good, purposeful start. I bought 10 rolls and some milk, and then left the house after breakfast. I walked to the Fruitmarket Gallery, unimpressed, then climbed the stairs to the 54 Gallery, which had its usual good selection of prints and an interesting though hype-ridden show concerning the first year or so of a child's development & relation to parents – Motherhood becomes art. [Mary Kelly's Post-Partum Document.] Next stop was the Demarco Gallery, not impressive, washy Scottish oils. Then down to a close off the Canongate to see some rather poor Expressionist-style paintings. Back up High Street, I investigated the Other Record Shop's new premises, to find that Ali works there. A few words with him, then to the Student Centre. Crashed a lunar landing game several times, found the Talbot Rice Gallery closed, then looked into Better Books. Asking after 'Bananas' review, I was directed to the 'First of May' bookshop off High Street, a pleasant little den of subversion with a close (in the best sense) atmosphere. I spent £3.95 on 'Media, Politics & Culture'. Then strolled homeward, buying a flan for lunch in M&S.

I wrote a letter to somebody who wants 'Young Writers' for a new arts magazine; personal, idealistic, a bit naive in tone. Posted it.

Took Emma to ballet, returning via Laud. St. Collected her. Supper, with wine as usual. Felt destructive, as usual, Father responded aggressively, as usual. A peaceful evening with 'Alienation' (like 'Book of Symptoms', one assimilates the disease from its description), turning to necessary creative activity in guitar & piano. No writing – I can't.

1979

December

Wednesday

19

The women anaesthetised the breakfast room and operated their whining machines – I was barred. So I lay in bed until somewhere around 12. Then, stomach empty, I collected clothes from the dry-cleaners and returned, eventually eating (in antiseptic surroundings).

In order to fill the hours, I went to my car, belted up, and drove off. Filled up with Jet (more bank money) and parked in George Square from 2.30 to 3.30, visiting the Student Centre amusement room and watching others land the electronic space capsule before bringing it down a few times myself – actually achieved a couple of successful landings. Then I drove my car out west, through Penicuik and then south towards the Lammermuirs. Some low sun lit the moors, but the scenery wasn't very breathtaking, and the car was cold. I stopped in Bonnyrigg, a godforsaken little place – I walked the streets, filled with small, obscenity-spouting kids, bought chocolate & a paper, and returned to the car. Drove home, I lay down in my room for a long time, to dispel the cold and to satisfy the same urge to withdraw which had driven me away from the city in the car. I was quite glad that there was no call to dinner, because parents were out – I ate rice & sprouts then slipped out for a nocturnal walk – on Rose St. some Mod girls spoke to me. I walked south then back by George IV Bridge. A long walk. Mother had guests in – by playing Ivor Cutler she scared away all but Aileen Marr. Mikey came later. I listened to Peel. Father returned & dominated. I became giggly.

1979

December

Thursday

20

By 10 I had breakfasted, reading The Times – more appalling news about government measures floods in: I think I'll abandon my interest in politics, it causes only resentment & frustration.

As does lying about inactive all day. I played David Bowie records in the late morning: 'World of...', "Heroes", 'Lodger'.

At about midday I descended to the basement, where I lit a candle and sat at the pine table, glad of the solitude and trying to make use of it to form ideas about creative work, writing. These were very vague, and do not inspire me to the drudgery of actualisation. I am finding it impossible to start on any prose projects without some kind of stimulus, discipline.

Read Melody Maker at breakfast, not The Times. The observation about the news still stands. Mark was away watching a rugby match, Emma annoyed me by asking my opinion of things.

During the afternoon I abdicated completely, watching children's TV – Blue Peter, a George Formby film. T.O.T.P. with old Bowie film.

Parents out. They returned about 8. I went out for a nocturnal walk; Canonmills, towards Comet, McDonald Road, Leith Walk, north to the east end of Ferry Road, Goldenacre, and the bus back from Inverleith Row. Very long, very therapeutic. A Christmas tree in every window, silver tinsel.

Ate a meal at 10, 'anti-socially' in my room reading Franz Kafka's 1918 letters.

1979

December

Friday

21

The first week has been survived, the only cost some psychological bruises incurred by the savage ravages of large stretches of time, empty.

The morning was easily passed in bed. Then I made steps up the hill to the CBD, packed with shoppers, fumes, noise, commerce. Surprisingly – perhaps under the pressure of such unpleasant circumstances – I managed to buy 3 out of the 4 presents I must. Granny's £8 covered this: she finances Xmas for me with her present. In short: for Mark a blank cassette & ski socks, for Emma pencil crayons (rather nice) and for Mother a record token. Then, with copies of NME and New Society (25% more pages, double price) I beat a retreat and sipped tea in the breakfast room, reading them. Mark & Emma provided stereo quibbling, one at each ear.

By this time it was dark. I don't remember eating any meals, but I snacked nonstop. I listened to PiL & Wire then Stockhausen, reading Ellul's 'Propaganda'. Then rearranged my room, and read letters (mine) to Mark at Loretto (as boarder) in 1975. Depressing glimpse of 'how a life like mine is constituted' – and how I was. Mark & Emma went to the first half of a carol concert by John Currie, sitting beside Mrs. Thomson. F&M were out, I know not where: I haven't spoken to them for days.

I washed clothes and listened to the dull radio fare – the whole world is playing soft music, if one could summon the energy one would scream. Read 'Media' on television's partiality.

1979

December

Saturday

22

Shortest day, longer for me than some, began with a phonecall from Johnny Glen suggesting a musical rendezvous on Friday at his house. Welcome.

From then on it hung limp, like telegraph cable without supporting poles. Music was transmitted amply along this wire: Wire, Heads, Iggy Pop, with which I yelled, being virtually alone in the house.

Next thing I remember is sitting at the breakfast room table reading 'A Book of Men'; mostly 60s American descriptions of the wonderfulness of sex. Whereupon I decided to step out into the ice hollowcold air (dry cold) to look at other people (and perhaps be looked at too; I fancied my appearance today). It was dark. I started at the St. J. Centre, spending much time in John Lewis, in the curtain section and on the escalators. Then I walked down Princes Street, visiting large department stores. In Forsythe's I greeted Lillian, who disconnected only after the most dull questions, perhaps because of my depressed manner. I left and moved as though an honorary member of the walking dead, to the West End then back home. Thorough depression, I couldn't speak to anyone or tolerate myself, so, after cutting up some graph paper, I went to bed. Meagre supper, a Beatles film (horribly alien) then to the Shepleys to 'babysit'. Played a few counter games with Chris, watched TV (despite Paul's hyperactive interruptions) and then, upstairs, played puppets & toy robots with them. Drew Paul. Frank Sinatra film. £2 at 12.45.

1979

December

Sunday

23

Aaaaaargh! That over, the day: lunch followed on breakfast's heels like an obedient dog, I was stuffed like a pig. Long wastes of silence also occurred. But the event was the visit to Habitat with Father. I drove him in my car. We parked on Alva Street. In the shop we saw my lamp – industrial style. It turns out to be thoroughly impractical, taking awkward plugs & bulbs, and is only available in white, but nonetheless we took it. Browsed in the shop, then drove to George Street, reparked, and together walked down Rose Street and visited EBM. There Father bought Emma a calculator and enthused about £1300 Olivetti word processors. Then to W.H.Smith, where I bought a New Statesman.

Home. I read my NS – article on nuclear power, no, bombs, moving (towards defeatist hate) and one attacking Prince Charles (justified) on petty pretexts. I was silent & moody.

Supper. Listened to PiL while reading Ellul in the midst of the family, out of reach. Played the piano with some satisfaction. Wrote 3 pages of fiction: 'Asha'.

Then it was 11. On South Bank Show, Talking Heads – a splendid, evocative film, set in New York, their studio loft, made me pine for the art school dreamworld where there are friends and fulfilling creative activity.

1979

December

Saturday

24

This was a thoroughly bitty day, began as ever with a bath, ironed my yellow shirt, ate with The Times, bought a milk...

I remember playing rousing music, alone but for Mark in the house (parents had work as usual): Wire and 'Fear of Music', with which I sang loudly. I assembled my lamp, putting on adapter and bulb, trying it in my room: very masculine, technological appearance, I like it.

Then stepped outside, risking life & limb on the hilariously slippery steps & pavements. I walked to George Street, where I met Colin Stuart. We talked about music til his bus came, then I realised I'd left my wallet at home, so I returned. On my second trip uptown I toured several shops and eventually bought for Father a plastic cassette holder and a desk diary. By this time darkness was falling. I wrapped the presents in my room in graph paper, decorating it with savage bits & bobs beneath the tree. Meg came in. I put Stockhausen on the deck, Meg seemed interested, and there developed with Father a dispute about the nature of 'music'.

At supper Mother moped, and was encouraged by the concerned poking of Father. Afterwards I listened to international radio (Moscow, Voice of America, BBC World, Peel) while the others televised. At 11-something we all walked in the dry hoar to St. Giles, and sang our lungs out in the packed cathedral. Good atmosphere, carols around the tree outside afterwards, familiar faces. Sliding on the ice on returning. Yippee!

1979

December

Tuesday

25

Pressure to hurry through habit routines to reach the tree to rip the wraps on Christmas day in the morning. Not being the acquirer of objects but the subject of experience, I nonetheless relished my dome clamp lamp. Family members took turns to read from Emma's present to me – the Python papperbok... me last of all. I, however, contented myself with music: Pierrot Lunaire sung by Cleo Laine, Father's gift, then PiL, along with which I played on my newly restrung guitar, courtesy Mark. I ate breakfast late, large lunch late – this was, of course, an occasion: champagne preceeded it, wine accompanied it. Mother & Emma went to a Pisky carol service or somesuch.

Old diary entries were read. I listened to much music, and sat at my lamp-clamped desk reading Kafka's letters to Milena and Weltsch and Brod. Music.

At 11.30 Mark & I took the Golf out, delivering Christmas cards or invitations to three addresses. I played Mark 'The Passenger' and the rest of 'Lust for Life' as we drove and drove and drove all over the city tonight.

On returning we talked in the breakfast room about Gillian and Paula – a comparison of subjective impressions of each, a catalogue of half-lit experiences and coy illuminations. The effect was probably therapeutic, alleviating bottled-up depression (mine) and impatience (Mark's) by tapping the root.

1979

December

Saturday

26

Apparently there was an earth tremor – 5 on the Richter scale – 4a.m. I didn't notice, being asleep.

When I got up, well, I ate breakfast, I may have read something... discovered to my horror that Father had erased my PiL tape, and overdubbed my Nyman / Satie cassette with classical radio. This annoyed.

I spent much time before the sitting-room stereo, playing records and guitar. Other family members passed in and out, watching TV or shufflings books. Emma, meanwhile, occupied herself by painting the upstairs loo blue. I drew an airport abstract with her chalk pencils.

Searched for my diary – this one – only finding it at about 8.

Dull, dull day.

Byron Acton phoned after supper, talking at enormous length about his Spanish jaunt, indulging in minute details, running up a huge phone bill in St. Neots. I only uttered about a dozen words in 15 minutes.

Some TV and John Peel rounded off this day of marking time. I didn't even step outside. My brain is eroding.

Read NME. Woody Allen's 'Play It Again Sam' again.

1979

December

Thursday

27

The buzz of industry animated the house, women scurried and delegated. After reading about the tremor (more predicted) I was sent to Broughton Street for food.

Mark and I drove the Golf to South Bridge to visit Thin's. They didn't have 'Tale of 5 Cities'. In a nearby record shop I exchanged Mother's token for another Skellern record – back home this was recorded on my TDK tape!

Next job was to find small candles for Father's birthday cake – in my car I drove first to the Henderson Row delicatessen, then to St. Stephen Street. There, in a sixties boutique, I heard 'All You Need is Love' on the radio – nostalgia. Driving through Stockbridge, I was caught behind a stranded van. Pulling out to pass it, I bumped the rear corner, damaging my back nearside door – but not the van. I returned without the candles.

Some time I sat in my room... etc.

'Guests began to arrive' at 7 – Douglas Ashmeade, the McLennans, the Thomsons, Eileen Marr, Gilliesbaig McMillan, and so on. John came up to my room and talked. We played noughts and crosses, then Mark joined us and we spent hours with card games. Drank champagne & wine, ate buffet supper. Jolly sounds from downstairs, singing. The last guest left at about 2. Mark & I joked.

I read Monty Python until close to 3, alcohol relaxing me but prohibiting sleep. Earlier, some writing, less than a page!

1979

December

Friday

28

From bed, I heard Douglas Ashmeade's voice downstairs. When I reached the breakfast room table, however, all was quiet. The sun shone for the first time in days.

Mother suggested to Mark and me that we walk to the George Street bank, so this we did, rather self-consciously. There I received a cheque for £30 (enough to fill my overdraft). We parted at the Edinburgh Bookshop, where I entered and asked about the Ardagh book. They didn't have it. The same process was repeated in Menzies, Smith's, Bauermeister's, Better Books, University booksellers, and the Buccleuch Place Thin's. Nonetheless it was a useful pretext for exercise & purposeful activity. In a South Bridge stationery shop I bought next year's diary: large, plain paper, no headings. Like Winston in 1984.

I cooked macaroni Napolitan for Mark & myself, ate it with a programme about werewolves on the radio, white cloth on the table.

Upstairs, I occupied the sitting room, and filled its tidy, open space with the sound of Wire & Eno, prohibiting Emma from watching TV. Then Father stamped in and activated the news.

Before supper I drove westwards in my car, ringing John T.'s doorbell at 7.00. Kevin answered. By 8 John & I were at Johnny Glen's house. Colin S. was there, talked about Halpern, played ELO, dull. The Browns came late, bringing books about nuclear power. After long conversation and an appalling pizza each, we played music – the inevitable Beatles & 'Joseph', I played poor guitar. Then improvised reggae quite well. John, at first left out, joined in. Afterwards, conversation until 2. Then drove the Browns home and arranged to remeet Saturday here.

1979

December

29

Saturday

Father visited the rooms of Mark and me, asking if we would accompany him to Prestwick to visit the relatives. I declined, and shared the house only with Mother, who sat writing her secret fiction in the study. Listened to Any Questions, then walked to Bruce's and bought PiL's 'Death Disco' – disappointed me, when I discovered it was 2 tracks, renamed, from 'Metal Box'!

Listened to 'Secondhand Daylight', ate, lived for the moment, putting off any more purposeful activity for the duration of the next snack or record.

Then I drove about in my car; passed a car wash, deciding against the 50p cost, but didn't think twice about spending £4 on petrol. I drove to Leith, Canonmills, where I bought an Evening News, and home, fingers edging through numbness to frostbite.

On the radio, 'Critic's Forum' passed judgment on the Arts year. Mother scuffled nearby, cleaning the fireplace.

At 7, to the ABC to see Coppola's 'Apocalypse Now', from the front row. A dizzily spectacular, almost psychedelic film, absurdly over the top in parts, in the American tradition of bigger, bigger, bigger... Statement: that the superego is frail, the brute in man lurks tall. The easy co-existence of 'civilised' behaviour with base instinct.

Back home (in an icy car), ate soup, saw on TV 'Our Town', hailing back to N.A.L. [North American Literature] days, and a hypnotism special on Parkinson.

1979

December

30

Sunday

The boundaries of sleep are pushed progressively further and further apart – this morning to 1 o'clock.

At the 'breakfast' table I read small parts of The Observer, but was enough to distract me from Kafka's letters, which I had brought down deliberately to read. The parents were out to lunch, and I played music over the sitting room system, fitting bass guitar parts to the songs of the Heads, the Images, the Magazines. Mark came in and out.

My only excursion out of doors was to the Pakistani shop for a box of Earl Grey tea, cups of which I then consumed.

Made plans for a new style of diary writing next year.

At supper we argued about the relativity of Good & Evil, and I described 'Apocalypse Now'. Father was 'difficult'. Meaning of 'cynical' was also a bone of contention.

On the radio, a programme about advising, counselling, useful for Niteline. Also, simultaneously, an excellent life of Paul Klee on R3: music from Radiophonic Workshop splendid. I taped it.

Then spent the evening devising my own musical sequence – a song, 'Voices in the Air', materialised, metamorphosed through several versions, ending up as an electronic piece with voice & bass guitar, percussion and chording from SW radio, on the advice of Kraftwerk. On TV, the spooky 'Don't Look Now' by Nicholas Roeg.

1979

December

Monday

31

Wet hair on end, answered John Thomson on the phone – he suggested a meeting at 1.30 on Rose Street. My meal was no sooner over than the appointed hour, 1.30, saw me at Bruce's. John & I walked to the St. James Centre, to price electronic instruments. Horrible materialism relived. I persuaded John to come down to Drummond Place, and we sat awhile in my room. Mark arrived, and soon we were clustered over the engine of my car, which refused to start. On Nelson Street it finally co-operated, and John & I drove to Lyndoch Place. Then an archetypal afternoon chez J.E.G.T. – Shelagh's chat, the cats, tea. I made my apologies at or near 6, and drove home.

Then, parents away, I made several voyages to Young Street, fetching and supplementing recording equipment. I then spent a supperless evening recording and re-recording guitar arrangements blended with electronic bleeps, piano, and clarinet squeaks. 3 pieces arrived; 'Poptones' (a copy), 'Rock 'n' Roll' (a pastiche) and an original instrumental. Also adapted 'Voices'. Moved my equipment downstairs, and played my compositions to Mark & Nick Gardiner – no comment.

Nearing midnight, Nick, Mark & I rushed up in the freezing air to the Tron Kirk, where a huge, loud, drunk crowd cheered in 1980 – but that's another story, to be found in the next diary, more free, more profound... 1979 closes.

Momus
Black Letts Diary 1979
First published as an ebook 2016

©

Nicholas Currie

If you enjoyed this, consider
making a small donation via Paypal:
momasu@gmail.com

Share as you like, but don't alter.
Some names have been changed.
Design and transcription Momus.

www.imomus.com