

UK DIARY - 2007

Gracie Allen and Josephine Baker report from the Spit Lit Festival of Women's Writing London 2007

Dear GGOT diary,

The London tour was my favorite so far! It was my first time in London, and I think we were all a little nervous in the beginning. We just didn't know how a British audience would respond.

On our first day of rehearsing, Gracie and I had a hard time finding the rehearsal space. We pretty much walked in circles, searching for this place that was tucked away in a corner somewhere. Finally we found it, and our rehearsal went well. In the middle of it, two women showed up for interviews. I've always had a hard time with interviews. Jumping out there with quick responses just doesn't work for me. But, I guess I had a breakthrough because I felt totally comfortable answering any question that I could. It was great getting my voice and opinion out there.

The second rehearsal was a tech, and was on the same day as our performance. We had the best crew anyone could ask for. They were so into us and our message. They got us, you know? My apprehension began to fade. Things were beginning to look up!

At the time of our performance, we were all so nervous. We played games, and sang songs, and danced around in the dressing room to get our mind off of the stress. Then it was time. We set ourselves onstage and went for it. We gave them a great show. You could feel our energy in the air. They loved us! We got so much positive response. The audience was so verbal and responsive. Honestly, it was a little hard to concentrate at times. It was so funny. Whenever we portrayed someone who they hated, they hissed! Hilarious! But honestly, at times we were a little thrown off. When we asked what the biggest obstacle to feminism is, someone yelled out "Penis!" That was pretty funny. All in all, it was great. After the show, we held a Q & A, and one woman told me how much she loved Obama, and that she would vote for him in a heartbeat. I really loved that.

When the show closed, I just wandered London, getting to know the city. It was magical. I met wonderful people, and saw amazing things. I went to tons of theater. I spent most of my trip alone, but it didn't even matter. I knew that I would make friends along the way. Thus far, London was one of the best things I've ever done. I can't wait to experience my next overseas tour.

Love,
Josephine

Dear Diary,

Well, 3 intrepid explores left the old U.S. of A to the U.K. for our performance at The Spit Lit Festival in London. Aphra Ben, Josephine Baker and me, Gracie Allen.

The flight was great, we all go our own rows and stretched out. In between naps, I go over my lines and look at the new material written just for London. I think it is going to be good, but people keep warning us that the British are a "reserved audience". So we will see.

The first thing I notice different as the flight attendance (all male in the back of the plain? hum?) push the drink cart down the isle is that they call it a trolley. I love that and giggle everytime they go by. More things should be called trolleys.

At some point I fall asleep and wake up to "Good morning, here's your breakfast" and we are

almost there!

We arrive safely, only get hassled a little bit by customs and go to our places to recover from jet lag.

Goodnight Diary, Goodnight Gracie.

Dear Diary,

After much sigh seeing we go to the Whitechapple district and Brick lane for rehearsal. Several reporters come to visit with us and we see the great article about us that was in the London Times and it turns out, we were also mentioned in Time Out London.

The reports are nice and watch some of rehearsal, they don't laugh much. Maybe the audience will be reserved!!!

But will they still like it???

Met Lizz and Maggie, the Spit Lit Festival producers. They are delightful and funny. See feminists are funny!!

England seems to have a lot of progressive ideas about women's rights and gay marriage, which is refreshing. But I have notice some discrimination towards different ethnicities, including a few unfriendly American comments that were followed up with "I don't mean to discriminate". Which I find usually means they did. I guess every country has something to work on.

What a busy day, must remember to have a proper meal tomorrow.

Goodnight Diary, goodnight Gracie.

Dear Diary,

The day is half way done. The tube took forever to get to Spittlefield today. But when we arrive we find the new theatre is wonderful. It is cool to think we will be the first to perform here since the renovations.

The tech crew is wonderful and very supportive, after each run they give us a hearty round of applause. What a great tradition. We should do that in America.

We have another interview, and some one wants to film us for a documentary. Yikes, what a busy day. Had a cheese sandwich. Josephine had a really bad sandwich and will probably be sick the rest of the day.

The dress run went pretty well. Starting to feel a little more confident. Having a bit of a rest, line run, snack. Will write when it is over.

WOW!!!! It was terrific. Over 200 people came to the show, we had to hold curtain for over 10 min. to accommodate everyone!!! And they laughed, cheered, sang and participated. No reserve British audience here!!! They loved all the parts we wrote for them. They hissed and booed Bush and Margaret Thatcher like it was an old time Melodrama.

We had a lot of British people in the audience, but also a lot of visitors. After the show I meet women from Spain, Denmark, Holland and Chicago. The ladies from Chicago saw us in Time Out London and thought it would be funny to see an American group while vacationing in England. They loved it and said they enjoyed the politics and my George W. made them cry. (I'll assume with laughter).

Everyone thanked us. Lots of people were surprised to hear about the "conscious clause" in UK pharmacist code that allows them to refuse women birth control pills. I think we might have inspired some women to take a stand about that. I hope so.

Well, the work is done, time to enjoy England. I love their voices, their turn of phrase, their chips, crisps and tea. I look forward to indulging in all these and take in the great history of this country.

Goodnight Diary, Goodnight Gracie

Julia Child's Diary for Guerrilla Girls On Tour's trip to The 1st Womens Arts International Festival in Kendal, Cumbria, UK 2007

5-3-07
Dear Deezers,

This is my first time in the lush countryland of our dear friends to the East, Britain. GREAT Britain. Aphra thinks Frazier is brilliant. That's one new thing I learned about my collaborator today. Now she's taking it back, "Well, maybe that's an exaggeration. I think Nathan Lane is brilliant."

Today, I played Steve Martin's role in the film, Planes, Trains, and Automobiles. And Aphra, Dorothy and Coco played John Candy's role. Boy, the hijinx that ensued! Mostly we tried not to fall asleep while driving on the wrong side of the road "north on M6 towards Birmingham." That's Birmingham, pronounced Burr (like the prickly brown balls in the woods) -Ming (like the dynasty)- mmmmm (like yummy). Not to be confused with Birmingham, Alabama, pronounced Burrrr (like travelin' up to yankee country)- Men (like the people with penises)- Ham (we're talkin' honeybaked.) We met our landlords, and they and their four boys were all charming. I have been invited to jump on their trampoline. But I think they regretted the invitation after they realized how excited I was. There's no safety net, they told me. A couple of times.

It's green, green, green in Kendal. And very sheepy. And I've been up for hours. So I'm very sleepy. Happy to be sleepy in sheepy Kendal.

Sheepishly,
Julia Child
PS- Tomorrow night's dinner: Rack of Lamb

5-4-07

Dear Deezers.
Opening ceremonies have exhausted me. No surprise there. On the food table, there were sautéed onions rolled into pickled herring skin. That's the only dish I didn't eat. Now that I'm dead, I don't have to pretend to love every dish, or to be zealous about the local delectations that aren't local to France or Pasadena!

Inspiring talks by Linda and Sam, festival artistic directors and Pam Johnson, scholar/artist. The festival is about the specific kind of work that is generated by the diverse but unique experience(s) of being a woman. Pam Johnson wants you to be the moon and me to be a snake and for you to shine down on me, so I can shine too. That way, everybody's shinin'!

Julia Child

5-5-07

Dear Deezers,

Tomorrow we cook on the AGA! What an absolute delight to be able to cook with a contraption that retains heat in such an efficient and delicious manner. Aphra Behn and I are going to whip up a delicious chocolate soufflé for Cheryl Crawford's arrival!

Tonight, we saw a performance called "The Bitches Ball" in which a poverty-stricken actress/writer gets mixed up in a whole mess of powdered wigs, debauchery, moral crises regarding sex and money, prostitution, cookies, and the theft of the very thing that kept her pen and heart moving, her delicious little soul. Penny Dreadful was the name of the company responsible for the eye-candy.

I SAY WE HAVE THEM OVER FOR A DINNER PARTY!

We rehearsed with some talented students from the Brewery Arts Center Youth Theatre troupe. They certainly do know how to whip up some hearty wit in a pinch, with more than a dash of critical community commentary. Beatrix Potter and William Wordsworth jokes abound!

Pleased to be working with such a lively crew,

Julia Child

5-6-07

Dear Deezers,

Today we ate fried foods at a local pub. Our first Fish n' Chips outing! I was being friendly to the fish, as there are a lot of animals in this show, and so I ordered a veggie burger. Which happened to be deep fried, in, I'm sure, the exact same batter as my friends, the (once) live fish. Normally I'm a lover of the seafood, and not just any kind of lover, the kind of lover that eats you alive! But everybody knows that about me, Julia Child. I suppose. I'm a TV personality, you can't hide your raw, unbridled sexuality from anyone. Not the press. Not the competing chefs. Not the other dead celebrities in the afterlife.

Anyways, a lot of Beatrix Potter's friends are in this show. They all happen to be animals. Fictional characters, actually. Well, fictional characters of her invention, to be perfectly accurate. A toad. A goose. A rabbit. A squirrel. A trout. I'd like to batter them in bread crumbs and throw them in the deep fryer! I'd like to baste them in Dijon mustard and peppercorns! But I won't. because they are my co-performers. And it would disrupt the unity of the cast. Which is why I ordered a veggie burger at the pub. You don't eat other members of your ensemble. Or their friends. Or progeny.

Ravenously,

Julia Child

5-7-07

Dear Deezers,

I'M SORRY, BEATRIX, I ATE SALMON! But I had to be polite to Aphra Behn. Manners can be so delicious sometimes. Salmon and paprika cinnamon veggies. Avacado-Bean-Sprout-Mushroom-Cherry-Tomato-Green-Pepper-Cucumber-Watercress-Salad. Cous Cous. Tonight was an AGA night. We cooked in retro-style, and by "we," I do mean Aphra Behn. It was a long day of rehearsals with GGOT Brewery Youth Theatre, and a feast followed by earl grey tea and digestives was in order. But it seemed like everything we did today required a tea and crumpets break. Tea-time is my favorite part about England. Mostly because the food is rather bland and fried here. But, no matter. The Brits specialize in ritual. In events. In teatime.

And the pastries are awfully evolved.

I was informed that none of the countries in the United Kingdom like each other. The Scots

hate the Brits. The Brits hate the Scots. And nobody pays attention to Whales. That explains the dozens of "I'm begging you, please start your business in Whales" advertisements on the personal on-demand LCD TV screens we watched on the airplane. I wanted to make a joke about the Scottish elections. About how the ballots were destroyed and mixed up. But we thought it was too confusing to make a joke about Scotland in England. It would seem too prejudiced in context. I don't think we were equipped to have to explain that one. So interesting. The nuances of identity politics from place to place.

The girls are brilliant. More and more brilliant by the day. The show is transforming itself into a whole with all the new site-specific material and the inclusion of the girls. We're all very excited about one another.

Supportively,
Julia Child

5-8-08
Dear Deezer,

We ran through the show in-full today four times. Phschew. We. Are. Tired. Which is why we are very excited for our day off tomorrow. Our plan is to take a steamboat around one of the lakes here in the Lake District. Go to Beatrix Potter's house. Have a lovely tea-time lunch. The one thing I'm desperate to do is to surf the web non-stop for about ten hours. Myspace. Google. Mac Mail. Hostelworld.com. my accommodations for post-cumbria need to be settled.

We went out to dinner with Sam, the International Women's Art Festival's Co-artistic director. We talked about 9-11. 7-7. New Orleans. Vowels in a Charleston accent. Consonants in a Michigan accent. And Coco Chanel's family history of illegitimacy. They were all the illegitimate children of British aristocracy. How glamorous!

Shellfish Kabobs, Greek Salad, Thunder and Lightning ice cream sundae, Mediterranean cous cous, pesto splatters, merlot, and, of course, earl grey tea. Mmmm.

Full and tired,
Julia Child

5-9-07
Dear Deezer,

Today was our day off. We toured the Lake District in our Peugot. Our Poo-Joe. Which was quickly renamed "The Puke Train" as we were driving up and down, back and forth through, slate-covered, sheep-saturated, stone-fence-lined green mountains. Three dead women artists in the back-seat of a hot car equals car sickness. Thank BuhJeezus the Lake District is so stunning. So gorgeous. And so worth every ticket for a ride on the Puke Train.

We went to Beatrix Potter's studio cottage. I had a long chat with a tour-guide there who told me all about how forward-thinking Beatrix was. What a picky entrepreneur she was, in addition to being a writer and a scientist. She didn't marry until she was 48. She was very reverent of her long-earned freedoms as an adult, and wasn't anxious to give them over to marriage. Her childhood in London was a chaperoned one at every moment. But her parents let her run about in the Lake District, which is why she loved it so, and associated it with freedom. The kind of freedom that inspired her to be such a forward thinking, independent, cleverly picky entrepreneur.

We ate gingerbread cookies in Grassmeere, and had tea and ice cream. We sang childhood Catholic hymnal songs all the way to Ullsfelt or something to inquire about a steamboat ride. We didn't end up taking it. But what I did take was a picture.

Click,
Julia Child

5-10-07

Dear Deezers,

Today we had a technical rehearsal. For most of the day. Cue to cue. Slide to slide. Prop to Prop. Hop on Pop. We also filmed for a short that a brilliant filmmaker from London is making of us. Her name is Luana De Pasquel. Lots of domestic shenanigans. The guerrillas (gorillas) en mask were cleaning house. Mill cottage. Our quaint estate.

But, I have to say, the highlight of the day was seeing Patti Smith on stage in a Knights-ofcolumbus-hall-like cafeteria-ish space. Very intimate. She was wearing a floral print turtle neck, ill-fitting jeans, and stunted cowboy boots and she was BRILLIANT. She sounded gorgeous and raunchy and open-woundish. Aphra and I went while Coco and Dorothy regained energy, strength and composure at the Brewery Arts Center pub. Although a pint is nice, Patti Smith is what gets me drunk.

Thank God I wasn't driving!

[Julia Child](#)

5-11-07

Dear Deezers,

Today we performed. A show at British tea-time. 1:00pm. A show at American dinner-time. 7:00pm. We did a full dress rehearsal of the show at 10:00am, then the afternoon performance. Then, I spent my break in the green room with festival volunteers and organizers, with Davinia, with Tricia, talking about the way UK Politics work. As a system. I was very confused by Blair's resignation.

To participate in choosing a party leader, you have to have a subscription to the party. And that costs money. A different amount of money for every party. Ever party runs differently. Some parties allow its party subscribers to elect their leader, some are on a seniority system, and some _____. Don't know. Everyone gets a vote, but not everyone is a member of a party, and, apparently, you vote for parties and not people when it coems to things like prime minister elections. I'm hoping to get more of a tutorial this afternoon. I'm in love with learning about politics here, mostly from watching clips of parliament sessions on BBC at 2:00 in the morning in the Mill Cottage, AGA-heated kitchen. Everyone is hilarious! Everyone is a show(wo)man! And they all adore getting reamed and taking each other out intellectually. It's such presentational theatre. It's so much smarter than the way American politics is conducted. As performance, that is.

Anyways, our final performance went smashingly well. Our audience was LIVE LIVE LIVE! The Brewery Youth Theatre Guerrilla Girls on Tour were brilliant. They are all so charming. We had them over for a cast party afterwards, and tried to play a very Cumbrian drinking game. A woman walked up onto stage while we were performing and threw our own fliers onto the stage. She had written a web address on the backs in massive capital bubble letters. Mothersforjustice.com We haven't visited this site yet. Some people, Aphra and myself, think it's anti-choice propaganda. Some people, Sam, the artistic director of the festival, think that it has something to do with Fathersforjustice.com, which is about custody rights. We shall see! I'll let you know tomorrow. In sum, the woman was crazy and interruptive, and it was quite the surprise.

Mouth agape,

[Julia Child](#)

5-12-07

Dear Deezers,

Our last day in Kendal.
Woe is me.

I will miss all of our new friends. It was such a treat to do a residency because of how intimate we became with the space of the festival and the people involved. The Brewery Arts Center is a meeting grounds for the whole community, and we saw the same people every day, over and over, and I felt like like I lived there! After 9 days!

We were speaking in a panel discussion today about the state of the arts for women in NYC. We got very off-topic, but it was an amazing discussion. The diversity of age in the audience was refreshing. We talked about the idea of networking. About the language of networking. What that means. A woman in the audience criticized the word because she thought it was too masculine. But I think the problem lies in her decision that the idea of masculine belongs only to men. Networking is a tool, as is masculinity. Masculinity is a tool that men use! Femininity is a tool men use as well. Those terms are very vague, so I'm actually not saying much right now, but that's because these 16 hour banana-eating, sexism-crushing days can whisk your powdery brain into pudding.

Speaking of banana-eating, we also filmed some more for a short we're making with Lunayoyo, our videographer. I had to cram two bananas in my mouth in 20 seconds and swallow. My throat hurt for a couple hours after that, but it was worth it. When we chased sheep through three different meadows was where it got really rewarding though. Man, I love being a guerrilla girl.

he party's over,

[Julia Child](#)

[Dorothy Parker's Diary for Guerrilla Girls On Tour's trip to The 1st Womens Arts International Festival in Kendal, Cumbria, UK 2007](#)

Wednesday, May 2, 2007 (around 10pm)

Dear Constant Reader,

Well, Aphra Behn, Julia Child, Coco Chanel and I, Dorothy Parker, are on the plane about to leave JFK for London, where we will rent a car and drive to the Lake District, Kendal in Cumbria. It's in the northern part of England, a couple of hours south of Scotland. We will be staying in a cottage. My British friend, Paul, says, "It's so beautiful, you'll go mad!" and, "You'll never see so many sheep in your life." Can't wait to see it. The plane just took off, and the pilot just finished his lengthy announcement explaining why we were delayed, etc.

Time for some more script studying.

Thursday, May 3 (jet-lagged)

Dear Constant Reader,

Today, Coco Chanel, Aphra Behn, Julia Child and I arrived in the UK. We flew into London Heathrow and hopped into our stylish black Peugeot with Aphra and Coco taking turns driving and Julia and I navigating. Aphra and Coco each experienced minor panic attacks at driving on the left side of the road, but they forged ahead with steely determination. (Still, if you want to see Aphra flinch, just whisper, "Roundabout").

We drove past field after field of gorgeous yellow flowers of undetermined origin and knew we were in the Lake District when we were surrounded by nothing but lush, rolling green hills dotted with cottages and sheep. It is breathtakingly beautiful here. Squeals of delight ensued upon arrival at adorable Mill Cottage where we are ensconced for the next 10 days. We had a lovely political discussion with our charming host, Logan, who seemed pleasantly surprised that we are all in agreement over the idiocy of "W", or "he whose name shall not be spoken", as I like to refer to the chimp in chief. Blair has made himself quite unpopular by following the madness of King George, as well, and Logan's wife Jeannie informed us that local elections were today and that, for the first time ever, this area would be represented by the liberal democratic party and not the conservatives. (Britain's third party being Blair's labor party.)

This is viewed as a sign of how fed up the British people are with the state of things--the Iraq war in particular--a sign not unlike our own recent elections where the democrats gained control of both the House and the Senate. Logan hoped Barak Obama would have a chance in the Presidential Election and said that, if he were elected, it would certainly change the world's view of America. Need I mention that it's currently not a favorable one? I and my cohorts made our own personal strides towards changing the world's image of Americans by letting our host and his family know just how strongly many of us fell about the ditch W has driven us into. Changing the world's image of us one town at a time--

In Solidarity,
Dorothy Parker

Friday, May 4, 2007 10:30pm

Dear Constant Reader,

It's the end of a long and eventful day for the GGOT. Despite my professed desire for a bit of a lie-in today, I woke up at 5:30am to the sounds of nature.....very loud nature..... chirping, tweeting, all sorts of foreign noises to this city girl's ear. Funny how I can sleep through sirens, traffic, etc., at home, but give me some tweeting birds, and I'm up like a shot.

I studied my script for a bit, then ventured down to make some coffee with the french press which actually turned out quite well, to my surprise. I met up with Aphra after a while, and we ventured out for a hike on Garnet Bridge Road which we climbed all the way to the top, breathtaking views of rolling green hills, sheep and cows and lovely yellow flowers everywhere. A funny moment came when we saw a truck coming down the rather narrow road towards us. We stopped off to one side and the driver pulled to a stop, smiled at us, and said in a thick Cumbrian accent, "Ah don't usually hit people on Friday. Thursday's a different story."

This afternoon, we all ventured into town to check our emails at the library and then off to meet our students who are participating in our show. (We discovered beforehand, much to my dismay, that all the pubs had closed for lunch at 2:30.)

The students are 7 fabulous bright creative young women who pitched us a couple of ideas for topics they'd like to address: 1) Beatrix Potter and the "twee" image of the area (twee meaning cutesy or precious), and 2) the friction between the young people and the older members of the community. We all took turns reading aloud "The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin", and discussing ways to use Potter's characters to address these issues. Potter and Wordsworth may make appearances in the show, too. Apparently, there is a rapping squirrel character, M. C. Nuts (I kid you not) who raps Wordsworth's daffodil poem---a bright idea of the tourism honchos here. Lots of ideas floating in the ether--can't wait to see how they'll manifest themselves.

Tonight we all attended the opening night gala and had wine, cheese, quiche, etc. and then went to see Marianne Faithful perform. Much to our surprise and delight, we found ourselves seated next to Gwen Murfin, the next mayor of Kendal. We chatted with her, took pictures together, (which we hope turned out), and, after the show, she said, "Remember, although there's a lot of water between us, we're always together." A banner day for quotes from the lovely denizens of the Lake District.

Saturday, May 5, 2007

Dear Constant Reader,

(Sunday morning) Catching up on yesterday. It was another chock-full day for GGOT. We stopped off at Brewery Arts Center first to check e-mail in the artists' green room area and enjoyed a nice chat with Mike and Tricia. Mike and I got into a discussion about cider, beer, etc., and he told me that Newcastle Brown is called "Loopy Juice" because there are so many

people who end up in the loony bin from drinking too much of it. Who knew? I am convinced that we are getting a very watered down version in the States.

Then, it was off to rehearsal in one of our many spaces, this one a school gymnasium. After several hours on our own, we were joined by the girls and Trish, who provided cake, tea, and coffee---although I fear our tea break was a bit late by British standards (6pm)--I'm sure they wondered what was wrong with us, not taking tea earlier. Hard work figuring out their segment of the show, but at the end of the day, it had started to take shape. They are all tremendously funny and personable. I had a chat during tea with Sammy and Morag (a Scottish name) about their visits to the States. They've both been several times, and Sammy's family is currently planning a trip to--you guessed it---Disney World. They said their parents loved going to the States because, "It's so cheap!".....Lucky them. Did I mention it's \$2.00 to every 1 pound here? Ouch!

After rehearsal, we beat a trail quickly to the venue where "Penny Dreadful" was performing for their 8pm show. Coco was a ball of nerves after her day of driving---she can't wait for Cheryl Crawford to get here to pass off her driving duties. I told Aphra I was willing to drive. Guess she's as yet unaware of my nerves of steel. (Ha! ha!) Anyhow, Penny Dreadful was amazing. It was a troupe of 4W, 1M, and they did a piece about Mary Robinson, an actual historical figure (1757-1800). She was an English poet, novelist and actress known for her role as Perdita in "A Winter's Tale". The young prince of Wales (later King George IV of Great Britain) noticed her during a performance and they had an affair. When it ended, she supported herself via an annuity from the crown---that same year, at 26, Mary suffered a mysterious illness that left her partially paralyzed---speculation is that it was a streptococcal infection resulting from a miscarriage which gave her rheumatic fever and left her disabled for the rest of her life. From the late 1780's, Mary was called, "The English Sappho", and became distinguished for her poetry. She also wrote 6 best selling novels, 2 plays, a feminist treatise, and an autobiographical manuscript which she never finished. Like her contemporary, Mary Wollstonecraft, she championed the Rights of Women and was an ardent supporter of the French Revolution. This production was called, "The Bitches Ball". Penny Dreadful's style is that of physical comedy, elements of commedia del arte within. They are fabulous and their website is www.pennydreadfultheatre.com

They are an extremely talented bunch, and I would love to collaborate with them. After the show, Aphra and I stuck around and met Sarah Ratheram and congratulated her and invited her to our performances, but, unfortunately, they'll be gone by then. I told Aphra I'd love for them to come to NY and collaborate with us. Aphra took pity on Coco and drove us home (nary a streetlamp in sight).

Sunday, May 6, 2007 12:44am

Dear Constant Reader,

It's the end of another busy day. It started in the usual fashion with us checking email at Brewery Arts. Then Coco and I found pay phones to call and check in with our respective significant others. We discovered that our phone cards weren't worth nearly as much time as we'd thought--10 pounds was only worth 42 minutes and 5 pounds about half of that. Ouch. Again. Ever so weary of our ploughman's type lunches, we opted to eat in a pub--our first venture into one since our arrival--yet we were in the middle of a rehearsal day, so no beer for us---oh, cruel world. Another good rehearsal with our girls who seemed quite excited about the cast party we've decided to have at Mill Cottage. All work and no play makes for one (or more) cranky gorillas. Cheryl Crawford joined us today, having been on multiple modes of transit to reach us. We delighted in initiating her into some of the odd facts of living in Longsleddale, which is, technically, where our cottage is....we think. I instructed her in the AGA, as today was my day to stoke it. It's a ritual that must be done twice a day and involves turning a gear with a poker to release ashes, scooping them out and depositing them into a can outside, then refilling the stove with coal. Starting to feel oh so little house on the prairie, a feeling that continued as Julia and I washed our clothes and hung them on the drying rack that is lowered in from the kitchen ceiling. Coco and I got our first taste of pub cider as we coerced the girls into eating out. The place had a bizarre American theme complete with red,

white and blue balloons, flags, steer skulls and Superman walking about..... I kid you not, dear reader, and I'd only had one glass of cider.

Monday, May 7, 2007 8:15pm

Dear Constant Reader,

Home from rehearsal. Aphra, Cheryl and Julia are busy making dinner on the AGA. I contributed some wine. Great strides today in rehearsal with the girls. They are getting more and more comfortable with us and their personalities and various talents are really shining now. Sophie is quite funny as the Queen, although she feels that the "posh" accent is "a bit of rubbish". Morag is also very funny with her voice and demeanor for Toad, as is Rachel for Mrs. Tiggy Winkle. Sarah just got her role of Chauvanisto today, so I am looking forward to seeing what she does with it. Chloe is earnest and charming as Beatrix Potter, as is Davinia as Wordsworth, and they play well off of each other. Sammy is a very cute Peter Rabbit. We decided that Rachel would deliver the "Royal Mail" for that bit, and what do you know, but Morag's family runs a post office, so she can get us an official mail bag. The girls got to see more of our part of the show today and seemed to quite enjoy rocking out with their vaginas out---hey, what's not to like? They also got a kick out of seeing the Blair and Thatcher masks today. I think they are really starting to feel like they are a part of the show.

I enjoyed shopping a bit on my lunch break today, buying some Kendal Mints to give as presents. Kendal Mint Cake is something that the locals eat when they go walking, etc. It's basically like a York peppermint patty, but with a less creamy texture and a more intense mint flavor. It is the candy that is taken to Mount Everest by climbers.

Logan, our host, did a very funny thing this morning. As we were getting in the car to set our for the YWCA where we're rehearsing, he handed Aphra a steering wheel so she could feel like she was driving (in the front left side). What a character! We all had a good laugh.

Tuesday, May 8, 2007 (well, actually Wednesday, 12:48am)

Dear Constant Reader,

Fried, I am, like an egg. We ran through the show 4 times today. It is coming along nicely. Had a delicious lunch of cheddar cheese and chutney toasted sandwich, tomato soup, and Earl Grey tea at the Quaker Meeting House where we were rehearsing today.

Tonight, Sam and Trish took us to a delicious dinner at the Brewery Arts Center. Lively political discussion with Sam ensued. He believes it is up to women to change the world, and he feels that it is a driving force behind this festival.

Tomorrow is our day off. The plan is to explore the Lakes, get gingerbread in Grasmere, see Beatrix Potter's home in Hawkshead, and take a steamboat ride.

Met our videographer today, Luanna Di Pasqual. She's charming and has lived in London for the past 8 years now.

Wednesday, May 9, 2007---Day Off

Dear Constant Reader,

Well, today was our day off during the festival. As agreed, we set out by 9:00 and headed for the car ferry which took us across Lake Windemere, England's largest lake. We headed for Beatrix Potter's home, Hill Top, and just beat the rush of tourists by getting there when they opened. It was a charming small, cozy cottage with breathtaking views of the rolling green hills dotted with sheep and beautifully landscaped grounds with many lovely kinds of flowers, including orange azaleas, which I'd never seen before. Beatrix also had a small vegetable garden out back which has been kept up. She left all of her land (she had several farms) to the National Trust for preservation. She was an eco-warrior, seriously into conservation of land and she helped to breed Herdwick sheep, whose numbers had dwindled before her intervention. She was also a scientist, but her discoveries were not taken seriously, as she

was a woman. Sigh.

Afterwards, we headed for Grasmere, famous for its gingerbread, which we sampled and found delicious. It is a secret recipe and had been around for 150 years. We also saw William Wordsworth's grave and passed his home of Dove Cottage. We had a lovely luncheon in Grasmere. It's a beautiful little town with a babbling brook running behind it.

Next, it was upwards into the Lake District to Ullswater. This was a beautiful, scenic drive through fields with sheep and slate, often steep and winding, and from the backseat, much like riding on a kiddie rollercoaster. The hump seat in the back seat was christened "the puke train" by Julia, although, thankfully, not literally. We arrived at Lake Ullswater, England's second largest lake. We had hoped to take a boat tour, but they lasted 2 hours, and there was still work to be done on the show. Perhaps next time. I bought a plush Cumbrian Red Squirrel, the proceeds of which go towards preserving and protecting them. We have become fascinated with the way some of the locals, Davinia in particular, say "squirrel". "Skwih-rill". Then it was back to Windemere for a bit of perusal and home to Kendal.

Julia spent the evening seeing a dance troupe from Brooklyn perform, Decadance. We are doing a panel discussion with them on Saturday.

Thursday, May 10, 2007

Dear Constant Reader,

End of another colossal day. Today was tech, and all that that implies, culminating with a run with the girls this evening. We are ready for an audience now, I feel. Two shows tomorrow, 1pm and 7pm. Ended up tonight at the Brewery Arts Center Vats Bar with a couple of pints (Cumberland Ale and Strongbow Cider) with Cheryl, Coco and Davinia, joined by Aphra who'd gone to see Patti Smith, with cameos by Luanna and Julia.

Have discovered that "Are you all right?" seems to be a phrase for "How's it going?" Was asked it several times by different people and was puzzled until I figured out it didn't have the same connotations as it does in the USA. It's a colloquialism.

We shot some footage around Mill Cottage today for promo purposes with Me, Julia, and Coco. Should be some fun, silly stuff.

Funny talking with Davinia at the pub tonight. Says she'll never live down playing Wordsworth---apparently, he had the reputation of being, shall we say, rather loose.....Coleridge and Byron and he did a good bit of partying, it seems.

Friday, May 11, 2007 (actually 9am on Saturday)

Dear Constant Reader,

Well, the big day has come and gone, and it was a great success. We started out with a run through with the girls with tech. The first audience for the 1pm show wasn't a huge one, but not tiny either---odd time for a show, after all. They got into the participation, though. The girls, Rachel in particular, said they'd never seen an audience behave that way (participating), and she and the girls were surprised and excited. The show went well and served as a good warm up to the biggie that night.

Between shows, Luanna, Cheryl, Coco and I went to eat at a pub, Ye Olde Fleece Inn, I believe. I had a lovely cheese and veg tart with chips (fries) and the odd, traditional, yet inexplicable accompaniment of English peas. Then Cheryl, Coco and I treated ourselves to a visit to the 1657 Chocolate House of Kendal where Coco and I had yummy and exotic hot chocolates--she opted for "The Highwayman"--one with caramel, and I went for "The Merry Monarch", one with cherries. Cheryl had a huge dish of ice cream with raspberry and white chocolate sauce served in a gorgeous frosted pink serving dish.

The evening show was a blast. The audience was large and very into it. They were with us

from the get-go. a funny moment came when Julia unwittingly picked Davinia's Dad for the question from the audience. He didn't want to stand up and couldn't see to read the card, but his wife was into it and helped out and all was fine. Davinia said he told her later, "I wasn't going to stand up; I'd just sat down!", which we found pretty funny. Davinia still thinks he has no idea what the word "feminist" means. I told her to work on that. ; She got some great laughs with Wordsworth imitating the rapping squirrel, M.C. Nuts, especially when she said, "So, check it! Check it?" Very funny! In fact, the whole opening bit with her, Sophie/Queen, Chloe/Beatrix went quite well, hitting all the right comedic notes and starting us off with a bang.

A bizarre moment came early on, during Coco's intro, where a woman came in the side door near the stage, mumbled something--"mothers for justice", apparently, and threw a few papers on the floor of the stage. They turned out to be our 365 tasks to end discrimination/sexism flier, on the back of which, she'd scribbled her website. Didn't find out any of this until later---Julia and I thought maybe this was part of the show, some announcement by the Brewery or something, but then Sophie told me backstage that the technicians wanted to know if it was part of the show, and then I realized something weird was up. Trish told us later that she knew the woman and referred to her as "Mad Magda" and that she (Trish) flew after the house management who were chatting and having coffee and gave them what for letting the nutball get past them and put a guard at the door for the rest of the show. No more incidents.....yet, but it was weird.....not even sure what she stands for.....she's lucky she gave it to Coco and not me or Julia, though, as I think we'd have had her for lunch.

Sarah did a great job as Chauvanisto, and it was a great show with lots of support from the audience. We collected quite a few dirty socks to mail to President Bush. Go Kendal! There was much signing of posters and t-shirts after the show. Then we went to Mill Cottage for the cast party. On the way, we screeched to a halt as there was a lamb lost in the middle of the road. Coco and I got out of the car. I had no idea what to do, so I tried to get it to come to me-----what was I going to do? Put it in the car? Well, it almost came to me, but then got spooked. Coco then started herding it, running down the road and sort of barking while I stopped traffic and had cars go around. She finally herded it into a field where there was a break in the stone fence, and the car behind us burst into applause. It was, of course, the girls, who said that never happens, so of course it would while we were here.

The party was lovely, with much beer, cider, wine, cheese, crudites, crisps and dips, bread and nuts, dried fruit, biscuits, etc. Trish and Steve, Davinia, Chloe, Sophie, Morag and Rachel were all there. (Sammy and Sarah couldn't come, so we'd said our goodbyes at the theatre), and we were joined later by Sam and Cath. The girls left around the time they arrived, and Sam and Cath stayed and we gabbed until about 2:30am. The girls gifted us with some sweet cards and Peter Rabbit tins with candy. They are so charming and wonderful, and both sides agreed that our time together has been too short. We've got everyone's email addresses, so we all vowed to keep in touch. Hopefully, some of them will come to visit us in the States.

May 13, 2007 7:19am

Dear Constant Reader,

Well, here I am sitting alone in Mill Cottage. The rest of the GGOT left around 6am. I am going back by train, since there wasn't room in the car, and this seemed the best solution. Another adventure awaits. Cheryl and I have plans to meet up in London and do some sightseeing.

Yesterday we had the panel discussion with Decadance about women in the arts in NYC. It went very well. There were artists in attendance from Connecticut, a woman from Newcastle with "Hell's Belles Comedy Troupe"---she'd seen our show and took our info and wants to come to see us in NYC---a woman poet from the area who'd moved to London and moved back, an older man who said when he'd first heard about the festival, his first thought was, "Will I be able to go?"

By the way, overheard in a charity shop: 2 men: "Grumble, grumble, this festival, grumble, grumble. Next they should do a Cock Rock festival".

Some of the concerns at the discussion: one woman was a poet who worked with older female poets who were frustrated because all of the money/awards/grants are for women under 30--- that wasn't around when they were young, and now they feel left out and forgotten. The best part of the discussion was when the audience took it over and began a dialogue amongst themselves. That was success, I think. Oh yes, much was made of the term "networking", as apparently that's an unappealing phrase here, considered "so masculine and aggressive". We explained it's a necessary part of our business as artists. They call it "connecting" here. When the discussion in the audience started, I said to them, "Don't look now, but you are networking," which got a laugh.

In the evening, Aphra treated us to a lovely dinner at the tapas restaurant, Cortez. Steve and Trish joined us, and it was delightful. Sangria served with a sparkler and much delicious food to share.

All packed up now and waiting for the ride Trish has arranged to take me to the train station a bit out of town. It's been lovely, Mill Cottage, Kendal, Cumbria.

-Dorothy Parker