adult life in voluntary servitude to a 'tyrannical lady' called Mrs Moore, until in 1950 Mrs Moore 'fortunately went mad'. He dislikes weakness, and is especially tough on self-regard, though willing to admit that these moral faults do not necessarily make for bad writing. It was 'a condition' of Evelyn Waugh's 'greatness as a writer that he does not appear to have realised what an intolerable person he was.' On the other hand, E.M. Forster moaned about his terrible experiences at public school and wished he hadn't been educated with the sons of gentlemen, so Carey speculates as to what might have happened if the novelist had gone to school with the child-

ren of decent bread-earners: 'Workers' children would probably have torn him to pieces.' Moreover, since it appears that Forster was thirty before he discovered what men and women do when they copulate, it would 'perhaps . . . have been better for the novels if he had never found out about sex at all'. Auden's knowledge of the workers was limited to a jaunt with the Gresham School Sociological Society to a boot factory in Norwich: yet he was clever enough to write some good poems.

Carey naturally isn't a canon-snob, and will take on Agatha Christie's autobiography ('like being hit over the head with a net curtain') or James Fox's White Mischief ('these sinister humanoids'). At a different level, and at greater length, there is a hatchet job on the Leavises, and especially on Fiction and the Reading Public. This is a piece of real weight, though he uses it to express his loathing for 'evaluation' (what do reviewers have to do with that?); and about the only thing he finds satisfactory in the book is evidence that Modernism, with its 'antagonism to common humanity', is loathsome. He holds this view strongly, as we've seen, and it accounts for his view of Lowell ('irresponsible obscurity') as well as for his praise of Dirk Bogarde ('irresistible'), Edward Blishen ('lose no time in starting' to read him), D.J. Enright ('a champion of ordinary existence against the whimsies of the over-educated') and Craig Raine ('thank goodness, a far cry from The Waste Land, and the indictment of earthly existence as foul and absurd, which has been a sacred tenet of Modernism').

Plain men cannot write plain prose in the manner of Orwell or Carey: to do it you must be over-educated (just as you must, by the standards here proposed, be over-educated to be an Oxford professor). To write as well as Carey or Raban you don't have to be a don, but you must, in one way or another, be unplain. These are, whether by don or nondon, irresistible collections.

here is enough forensic evidence ly-I ing around to construct any number of theories, from either point of view. Was it, or was it not, Lord Lucan who murdered the nanny Sandra Rivett? In the 13 years since she was found in the US mailbag at 46 Lower Belgrave Street in London there has been no new evidence. Patrick Marnham's only novelty is the evidence from Taki, the Spectator gossipcolumnist, to the effect that he knew Lucky Lucan had a powerboat and had made dummy runs with an eight-stone sack to the coast. That fits with Lucan's remarks to Greville Howard some weeks before the murder that he planned to drop his wife's body into the Solent. As for the Lucan 'set', once so besieged and worried for its survival, this has long since been amalgamated into the Thatcher revolution. It's a pity that neither of these books has a history of the store of rumour that grew up around the affair-the brutal witch-hunting stories that passed as truth, and are secure in the popular culture. They told us something of our rather nasty ways of dealing with the unexplained or inexplicable. It was indeed that line of venom which led me to ask about Lucan's wife Veronica. These inquiries led in turn to a fierce reaction from the Lucan supporters, and to the hounding of Dominick Elwes. 'They simply hadn't realised what an unsympathetic appearance they gave

to the rest of the world,' writes Marnham.

Lucky's Dip **James Fox**

Trail of Havoc: In the Steps of Lord Lucan by Patrick Marnham. Viking, 204 pp., £10.95, 15 October, 0 670 81391 5

Lucan: Not Guilty by Sally Moore. Sidgwick, 271 pp., £12.95, 15 October, 0 283 99536 X

Sally Moore began her book in 1975, had a manuscript ready by 1980 and has been struggling for publication ever since. Hers is a crusade to exonerate Lucan, with the help of his family, and with the piling-on of a mass of detail, as if the sheer weight of her protestations would convince the world that John, as she calls him, was not guilty. It doesn't work, even though one agrees that the coroner's verdict naming Lucan as the murderer was unfairly reached, and it must have been a heartbreaking task. Marnham's book is more reflective and very much better-written. I began to wonder why he had applied his considerable talents to this subject with the trail so cold and no particular revelations to make. Obsession must be the answer, and indeed the puzzle will probably keep the story, and rumours, alive for ever. But only half the book

is about the Lucan affair. He gives a summary of the available evidence and of the background, with his own speculations added. His main contention, carefully contrived to suggest that Lucan hired an assassin, comes badly unstuck, it seems to me, over an extraordinary mistake of geography.

His second part is a description of the battle between Private Eye and the financier Jimmy Goldsmith from January 1976 to May 1977. The Eye had been investigating possible links between Wilson and the KGB, using material leaked to them by MI5-the first evidence of that MI5 subversion of the Wilson Government dealt with by famous Peter Wright, Lady Falkender and Wilson had urged Goldsmith to sue-Marnham had unwittingly libelled him by saying he was at John Aspinall's lunch to decide what to do if Lucky turned up. And so on. Goldsmith is discredited, loses a peerage, fails to buy a newspaper, starts his own Now! and loses £6 million. Meanwhile the Wilson Honours List glows with crooks- targets of the MI5 leaks.

It is a story of Venetian complexity, as Marnham says, and is now largely forgotten, and one must say that the links between the two sagas are somewhat subjective, whatever Marnham's dexterity with linking sentences-'the Shade of Lord Lucan was still rattling its chains.' Marnham is himself a link between the Lucan and Goldsmith stories, because he wrote the libel in Private Eye. The same detective, Roy Ranson, investigated the Lucan affair and the case of Wilson's missing tax papers-which coincided with the MI5 campaign against him. To more than one of a number of matters we can apply Marnham's words: 'Time and again a blow intended for one head cracked another. It was as though they were all aimed by a man wielding a bludgeon in the dark.' Sandra Rivett died instead of Lady Lucan; Dominick Elwes was the scapegoat for the anger his friends felt at my description of their world in the Sunday Times Magazine and at the photographs which accompanied it. 'By an extra twist of fate Lord Lucan's disappearance had led to one of his friends'-Goldsmith-'playing a starring role in an Honours List which effectively heralded the end of the socialist government.'

For some reason, my own reporting on Lucan's unvaried diet, the smoked salmon and lamb cutlets-en gelée in the summer-stuck in the imagination. Marnham calculates: 'If Lord Lucan ate four lamb cutlets a day, for four days a week, for 40 weeks a year for 11 years, and if there are seven cutlets in a sheep, then he would by the end have dispatched 1006 sheep.' Even Lucan's friends were struck by his rigidity in this matter. Sally Moore mentions it, even though she sees me as the enemy of her new friends, but she expands the menu to include soup, rare steak, a series of desserts. 'He chose cheese to follow if there was a good Brie or Camembert and he would finish the meal with a glass of vintage port, Croft '60, a chilled Framboises [sic] or a Mirabelle - which is a French liqueur with the flavour of plum.' This was still lunch. There's no telling what he had for dinner. But clearly I started something.

The Foodies have come since then, and smoked salmon and cutlets are now served up together as 'Surf and Turf', which jolts us back to Lucan's fate. Which of the elements conceals him? Or is he on the run? I go for the surf, believing Lucan to have died by water soon after his disappearance.

Sally Moore has an intriguing curriculum vitae. She 'made international news at 15 by rewriting a 400-year-old Church of England service into modern language for teenagers. At 20 she joined the Daily Mirror in London, where she launched the influential Shopping Clock prices survey and ran consumer watchdog campaigns exposing fiddles. At the Daily Star, she initiated better links with Buckingham Palace to try and make Fleet Street's reporting of the Royal Family more factual.' That might have stood her in good stead with the Lucan family, with all of whom she is on Christian-name terms. They have certainly spent many hours together. Of Bill Shand Kydd, Lucan's brother-in-law, she writes: 'In truth,' he had 'actually inherited £500,000 from the family wallpaper fortune. But his money was only part of his appeal. Bill combined an aggressive macho personality with a forthright manner and a high-voltage sexual magnetism which could have powered the national grid.' Sandra Rivett, she says, was 'described by friends as a vivacious red head who always liked a laugh'. Lucan was 'tall, dark and handsome, he had perfect manners, and he was known to his family and friends for his gentleness, kindness and generosity.' I wonder if she has heard Lucan's voice on the tapes he made while he was winding up Veronica, and shouting angrily: 'You have behaved disgracefully. Finish!") 'As a sportsman-racing powerboats, water skiing, bobsledding for Britain, competing on the Cresta Run-he was very dashing and brave. He drove at 'terrifying speeds', played for high stakes, etc. Ms Moore is Lucan's champion. The result is 260 pages of massive and obsessive research which amounts to little beyond detail for the aficionados. Describing the scene of the murder, she writes: 'Where the children had stood around their father at weekends in happier days singing "Onward Christian Soldiers", "Baa Baa Black Sheep" and "John Brown's body lies a mould'ring in the grave"-there were now ominous pools of blood.' And she will grasp at anything to try and make things look better for John. The Coroner had asked: 'Would an instinctive reaction' - on Lucan's part - 'be to do what the barman did when he at once phoned the police and the ambulance?' 'But the barman didn't

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instantly phone the police,' writes Ms Moore. 'He laid her down on a bench and covered her with an overcoat, and then he rang for helpjust as John planned to do before Veronica ran off.' Oh yes?

There are two crucial factors in the Lucan case, one psychological and one factual, against which all speculation must be measured. Lucan's last letters and conversations asserted that on the night of Rivett's murder, he was taking his habitual walk, his usual check past 46 Lower Belgrave Street, near his bachelor flat, when he saw through the basement window a man attacking his wife and went in, using his key, to intervene. Moore reproduces the relevant letter-to Bill Shand Kydd -and it's worth reproducing here:

The most ghastly circumstances arose tonight which I briefly described to my mother when I interrupted the fight at Lower Belgrave St and the man left. Veronica accused me of having hired him. I took her upstairs and sent Frances up to bed and tried to clean her up. She lay doggo for a bit and when I was in the bathroom left the house. The circumstantial evidence is strong in that V will say it was all my doing. I will also lie doggo for a bit but I am only concerned for the children. If you can manage it I want them to live with you - Coutts (trustees) St Martin's Lane (Mr Wall) will handle school fees. V has demonstrated her hatred for me in the past and would do anything to see me accused. For George + Frances to go through life knowing their father had stood in the dock for attempted murder would be too much. When they are old enough to understand explain to them the dream of paranoia, and look after them.

So Lucan is signing off. There was another letter, to Michael Stoop, who had lent him the car, which said: 'I have had a traumatic night of unbelievable coincidence. However I won't bore you with anything.'

This was the only evidence of the 'intruder' that the family and Ms Moore cling to. Lucan, as we know, was no great brain, but it might have occurred to him to show some interest in 'the man' who was struggling with his wife, to express some hope that the Police might apprehend him in the next few days, or to add some detail about the incredible circumstances-anything to prove his innocence and keep in touch with his children. It needed only a couple of words. But he can't tell the story. A 'large' man is all we have for description from the legally adept Mrs Maxwell Scott, the last person to whom Lucan spoke that night. Nor in her many interviews with the Police and others has Mrs Maxwell Scott given any further details, even though she was with Lucan for two hours or so. She even used Lucan's flat description 'then the man ran off.

This is the first factor and it's quite damning. Lucan's lack of curiosity fits in with Marnham's suggestion that Lucan had hired the intruder. The second factor is the bludgeon found in the boot of his borrowed car at Newhaven the next morning - a piece of lead piping bound in tape, similar to the one found soaked in blood at Lower Belgrave Street.

Sally Moore has a serious problem with these two factors. On the first she says nothing, or suggests nothing more than that the letters convince her of Lucan's innocence. Indeed, they were the starting-point of her crusade. As for the bludgeon, she has suggested, on the slenderest evidence, that a policeman planted it-a policeman who, two years before, had alarmed Veronica Lucan after she had confided to him that she kept her jewels in the safe: he would have mingled with the inspectors after he'd killed Sandra Rivett. She quotes former detective Roy Ranson as saying that a truncheon could have been the weapon and a policeman could have done the murder: but such a character was never one of Ranson's suspects and one imagines that Ms Moore has hardened up what seems to have been hours of musing with Ranson into unfairly selected quotes.

In Henry V when the messenger enters and tells the Lord Constable, 'The English lie within 1500 paces of your tents,' he asks: 'Who hath measured the ground?' The notorious problem with forensic evidence, cold on the page or presented to a jury, is that it can be used to mislead. Blood, for example, has ways of transferring itself from place to place and from one person to another. It's difficult to visualise the quantities involved here. There was a great deal of it at Lower Belgrave Street-in pools, fine sprays, splashes and trickles, up and down the stairs, on carpets, towels and clothes. You can construct many theories that would immediately dissolve if you could go back and look at the site, or put yourself back into the confusion of the early part of the investigation. Times, too, are always unreliable. Both Marnham and Moore take it as bedrock fact that Lucan passed the door of the Claremont Club at the time given by the doorman-8.45. But ten minutes' earlier or later would have wobbled their theories, which for different reasons exonerate Lucan from the act of murder. After all their research they disagree, for example, on whether the back door into the garden was bolted when the police arrived. It's rather important, since blood was found on the leaves there. Marnham says it was bolted, and has to find a way for it to be unlocked and locked again. Moore and a police officer say it was unlocked. The carefully-constructed theories fail to take into account the large Police presence before the detectives arrived, all the men tramping about, wanting a look at the body - and the dogs. Moore says there were no dogs: Ranson, who had the job of clearing the officers out before they destroyed the evidence, remembers that there were dogs, and remembers that officers had searched the garden before he arrived, no doubt taking some blood with them.

Marnham comes badly unstuck in the garden, an example of armchair detective work failing for lack of gumshoe observation. His theory of Lucan and his hired killer depends on their both going back and forth between 46 Lower Belgrave Street and the other Lucan residence at 5 Eaton Row, across the garden, rented to Greville Howard, who was at the theatre that night. From there Lucan could observe the goings-on in the house, make a telephone call to book a table, drive to the Claremont to establish his alibi, re-enter the main house to find the mess, and from there the hired killer would have made his escape. If Marnham had measured the ground he would have discovered that the two houses are not back-to-back: the mews house is some distance away and 46 Lower Belgrave Street, which his mapmaker calls Lower Belgrave Road, is divided from the property at the rear by a 12-foot wall, topped by a six-foot trellis, covered with roses and brambles.

Otherwise his theory is interesting, and believable, and not entirely demolished by this mistake. It is based on the feeling that Lucan was not a bludgeoner; that his alibi was genuine and that the hit-man or the deputy the hit-man hired bungled the job by using a bludgeon. Lucan arrived to find him attacking his wife, who mistook them in the dark. The body, as Lucan told Greville Howard, would be dumped in the Solent sometime over the weekend, having been stored in the safe. Veronica would be thought to have simply wandered away-a symptom of her mental condition. In his hurry to get out of the house, Lucan picked up the unused bludgeon, but left the murder weapon. It's all quite possible and would fit some of Ms Moore's speculations too. But there are many imponderables. Part of the Lucan defence, suggested in his letter, is that Veronica Lucan had accused Lucan in the past of planning to hire her killer-further evidence of her paranoia and madness. But

one fascinating detail buried like a needle in Ms Moore's haystack is Elwes's report of Veronica's first words to him from her hospital bed: 'Now who's mad then? Now who's the one with paranoia?'

The version of Veronica Lucan, around whom Ms Moore snarls, is one she has neither wavered from nor embellished, although the tabloids have done some embellishing for her. It convinced me when I spoke to her. The detail was right, the words she attributed to Lucan and her account of her own performance-the crucial moment when she shouted at him, as he lunged for her throat, 'Don't you dare touch my pearls'-were persuasive. She maintained her story then, under considerable pressure, and all through the years of breakdowns, and has courageously reaffirmed itmost recently after the appearance of these books. 'And if he was the attacker,' asks Sally Moore, 'why hadn't he killed her and what on earth was he doing helping her upstairs?' But I can quite believe in the conversation between them, after Lucan's rage had subsided, when he was in a sense at her mercy, and at the end of the road. I can believe her saying, as she apparently told the Express, 'Oh dear, what shall we do with the body?' and Lucan repeating: 'I must make a decision.' I can imagine Veronica offering to help, and can even imagine some tenderness between them. They stopped fighting, I presume, because Lucan just couldn't bear it any more and was frightened the children would appear.

Looking back at the notes I made, I see that Elwes and Lucan's other close friend Charles Benson emphasised Lucan's heavy drinking at the time, and his dark, brooding mood, and signs of instability. Drink might easily have made Lucan lose control with the bludgeon, having perhaps first attacked Sandra Rivett with his gloved hands. Elwes told me that he had said to Lucan just before the event: 'You're not the first person to be divorced; nor the first to have a wife who is erratic and strange. You can't go on living this nightmare. You've got to brace up and be a man, and when they're grown up you'll have the children around. You can't go on bending everyone's ear with this problem. I thought I'd got through to him.' Perhaps he had.

Marnham is fair and accurate in his reporting of the Elwes tragedy, in his descriptions of the 'schoolboy level of cruelty' with which Elwes's friends drove him to suicide, never bothering to check their unfounded allegations against him. 'For the friends of John Lucan', Marnham writes, the inquest, which cited Lucan as the murderer, 'was a rearguard action which ended in defeat. The verdict could not have been worse and they were presented to the public as heartless, selfish, idle people who put their friend's family name above normal human decency. Aspinall's phrase for individual members of the common people, "elements of the urban biomass" was taken up and used against him.' He's good on the archaic, Noel Cowardish 'stilted, correct' syntax of Lucan's family and friends, displayed at the inquest. The language of Michael Stoop, for example: 'I imagine through good manners he did not want to deprive me of my better car.' But he says little about that extraordinary marriage or about Veronica Lucan's obsessive attitude towards the aristocracy-an English middle-class phenomenon turned up in her case several degrees - and her fear that her coronet would 'slip off her head', in her 'miniature castle in Belgravia'.

As for Lucan, I am certain that he got as far as Newhaven, and parked his car in that street, which is more than the Police knew at the time. For that reason, I'm sure he met his death, one way or another, by water. I talked about this to Keith Simpson, the Home Office pathologist, who was convinced that Lucan had walked into the sea-a very common form of suicide, according to Simpson. In Newhaven harbour, Simpson told me-and also below the salt line in the Thames - a crab exists that will settle in large numbers on your corpse and consume your flesh within two or three days. But if Lucan does reappear, claiming amnesia, his clothes not available for testing, his alibi holding, he will probably get off the murder charge. So what can he be waiting for?

