

I sometimes have fears that my Health Club may not be very healthy after all. Since I started to swim there, one of my toenails has begun to look very odd. It has turned a bluish-yellow colour, and is developing a ridged effect that I think is new to me, though it is true that I see more of my toenails now that I swim more often. And I sometimes fancy I hear the words 'legionnaires' disease' hanging in the air, though I know they whisper only in my imagination. I mustn't get paranoid about it. It's very clean there, really. Spotlessly clean, expensively clean. A far cry from the chlorinated municipal pool we visited once a week from St Anne's. Schools, even quite good schools, didn't have their own pools in those days, as they do now.

I love my Health Club. It's saving my life. Isn't it? The water in the pool isn't chlorinated, it's ionized. I don't know what that means, but the result is that the water is pure and soft to the limbs, and odourless to the nostrils.

You do overhear some odd conversations there, though. I heard an alarming one this very evening.

I wasn't eavesdropping. There was no way I could avoid hearing it. We were all within a few feet of one another, in a small space, in varying stages of undress. I tried not to look at them, and I knew they weren't looking at me. Why should they? There is an etiquette. It's easy to avoid the eyes and bodies of others. But you can't help hearing what they say. Unless you've got your Sony Walkman plugged into your brain, or a mobile phone clamped to your ear. And I haven't got a mobile phone or a Sony Walkman yet. I don't think I want a mobile phone, but I'm thinking of getting a Sony Walkman. I never thought I'd even think of it. But then, so much of what I think of now would have been unthinkable to me ten years ago, five years ago. Some of it would have been unthinkable to anyone, I suppose. Some of the things

most people seem to have now hadn't even been invented ten years ago.

Actually, I'm not sure I mean 'Sony Walkman' – 'Sony Walkman' is just a phrase to me. I may mean something else. I haven't dared yet to ask what it is that I do mean. Perhaps I mean a 'headset'. Nor do I know what kind of shop I'd get this thing in, even if I knew what it was that I was getting. Out of my depth, that's what I am. Though the pool isn't very deep. *No diving. No children. No running. No outdoor shoes.* We keep the rules.

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