

PEOPLE ARE TALKING ABOUT

TELEVISION

**DADDY'S
LITTLE GIRL**
EMILY BLUNT
AS NATASHA
IN *GIDEON'S
DAUGHTER*.



much, stayed out too late, and liked nothing more than to sing jazz tunes, is made human by a strange and wonderful performance by an actress called Lucy Cohu. Miss Cohu, shot in extreme, unflattering close-up, dressed in terrible bunchy dresses, with a strange upper lip and bad posture, manages despite all that to evoke the wistful quality of Audrey

Hepburn in *Roman Holiday*. Toby Stephens brings the right coloring and a wary languor to her lover and husband Antony Armstrong-Jones, known in *Vogue* circles as Tony Snowdon. Directed by Simon Celan Jones, *The Queen's Sister* is a rough, compelling little film that slashes and jabs at the confines of biography, as she must have kicked and elbowed

at the confines of her real life.

Also on the BBC is Stephen Poliakoff's **Gideon's Daughter**, his second tender elegy this year to the ambitions of Britain in the 1990s. Poliakoff, who used royal settings and lavish production values in the beautiful *The Lost Prince*, may have become attached to telling a story with the merest wisp of narrative thrust and a great many extras in rather good rooms. Last month his *Friends and Crocodiles* charted the rise and fall of an entrepreneur and his ambitious secretary; this month, *Gideon's Daughter* tells the tale of a political PR and his sulky daughter. Bill Nighy is Gideon, and the beautiful Emily Blunt is his daughter, Natasha. Nighy has played a version of this man before, in HBO's *The Girl in the Café*—the stiff careerist changed by the free spirit. The free spirit this time is Stella, a woman who has lost her son. Once you surrender to Poliakoff's strangely

diffuse awareness, you are in Gideon's world. Miranda Richardson gives one of the great performances as Stella, who wears clashing colors, cleans out guinea-pig cages for therapy, and tells the truth. And the great underlying theme, the compelling and impossible love between father and daughter, carries the film safely to its end.

On PBS, Ric Burns's documentary **Eugene O'Neill** airs March 27 in the *American Experience* series. A soaring and dark telling of the life of the man who kept looking at himself in mirrors to make sure he was still there, the film gives us Vanessa Redgrave, Jason Robards, Al Pacino, Christopher Plummer, among others, explaining O'Neill or speaking his lines. A rather wordier piece than Burns's usual oeuvre, it has some nice phrases, some awful truths, and is the kind of film you will want to keep and play again for anyone who has ever contemplated taking on the terrifying mandate of the artist. □