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**PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION**

It was with great sadness that ISIS and the OUPS were forced to take a joint decision to cancel the long-awaited photographic competition. The response was too poor to warrant the trip for our illustrious panel of judges: Miss Koo Stark, Mr Richard Young and Mr Chris Jennings. That said, however, the entries which were submitted were of a very high quality. We have accordingly decided to award the two vouchers so kindly donated by Jessops of Leicester Ltd, to the most outstanding entries in the colour and black-and-white sections (no colour slides were received).

The prize-winners are: Chris Donoghue of Walton

**THANK YOU**

The Editors wish to thank all our Staff - contributors, photographers, illustrators and those who helped with distribution. A special thank you to Andrew, Stephen, Jo and Edward at Daily Infor..

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The Editors welcome comment on any Isis article.

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We're nothing to gain by being secretive. We show our recruitment hand openly, explain our selection criteria in some detail in our graduate brochure. Our only aim is to judge whether you'll suit both the training and the firm. Yours, too, no doubt.
On 6th November, a public meeting was held in the Town Hall to discuss the proposed lighting facilities for the Quayside area. The forty or so in attendance were chiefly conservationists, many of whom were associated with the Town Hall representation, or the campaign for lighting the quay.

The questionaire, aimed at University of Oxford graduates over those who have taken or are asked for the next five years, demonstrated the effectiveness of lighting the High, and the actual positioning of the lights was found to be among the most effective illuminating design of light, currently on trial, run to All Souls’ College. The County Council has now made available for permanent installation.

In a meeting somewhat bogged down by jargon and technical safety, particularly of women pedestrians. The conservationist faction was clearly conscious of this factor. A course and unconvincing design of light is one way of describing a racket, but Mr. F. R. G. Braon (Merton) was speaking of the "basic globe and bracket" design of light, currently on trial run, as preferred to All Souls’ College. The County Council has now made available for permanent installation.

Against the position of the meeting was in favour of the Windore lantern design and street furniture instead of free-standing lights. Helen Whitaker reiterated the need for giving priority to the derelict areas of the recent summit in Geneva. Britain is part of a joint European and World Federation for demonstrating the feasibility of fusion as an energy source. The Joint European Torus, or JET, as it is more colloquially known, is based at Culham Laboratory near Oxford since 1972, and it is the largest fusion experimental site in the world.

With continuing worries over the long-term safety of nuclear fusion, research is currently being carried out into the possibility of using nuclear fusion as a means of providing a safer and practically inexhaustible source of energy. Fusion, as opposed to fission (which is the process currently used in nuclear power stations), occurs naturally in the sun and involves the joining of two atomic nuclei to form a heavier one, releasing energy. The Torus refers to the toroidal shaped chamber used to try to force the atoms of deuterium and tritium together. They naturally repel each other, but the temperatures inside the chamber has to be raised to 100 million degrees centigrade for them to join. The Tokamak, as this type of fusion experiment is called, is the world’s largest. Essentially the work at JET is still at a very early stage, and the main purpose of the project is not only to achieve fusion reactions in the laboratory, but also to examine the possibilities of converting fusion reactions into electrical power. It is expected that the generating system will eventually be released from the fusion reaction to raise steam and equip generating plant in the conventional way.

The paper press has long hailed fusion as the panacea to the world’s energy problems. Certainly, the reality of fusion is a little difficult. Radiactive waste created will take the form of contaminated parts of the generating system that have become too radioactive to remain functional, and which need to be stored for 100 years at most before being recycled. It is too early to say whether or not fusion will be a cheap source of energy. The engineering and scientific problems are immense and the economic proof of the technology proves not to be an economic means of generating power.

A continuous fusion energy source would make power generation feasible should, according to some, be achieved by the end of this decade. The experiments at JET are not without problems, but if fusion is shown to work it may answer the energy needs of the world.

Alain Harris
STUDENT POLL

Prince Charles will be gratified to learn that Oxford students have named him their favourite member of the Royal Family according to a survey of Oxford students conducted by Frank I. Luntz & Associates for ISIS Magazine. Only 19% of those surveyed would vote to abolish the monarchy if a national referendum were held. But what is good news for the Royals is bad news for Margaret Thatcher. The Tories are currently a weak third to the Alliance and Labour in Oxford, and Margaret Thatcher has fallen behind Neil Kinnock and David Owen in an imaginary election for Prime Minister.

In every demographic subgroup (sex, nationality, school background, undergrad or graduate status, party loyalty) there was a strong majority for those votes for the Queen Mother, who came in a third overall. The Welsh Corgis managed only five votes.

Support for the Prime Minister and the Conservative Party continues to drop at Oxford. For the first time since ISIS began polling in late 1984, Margaret Thatcher has fallen behind Neil Kinnock in a hypothetical race for Prime Minister among the four party leaders. Although Mrs Thatcher's percentage has remained constant, Mr Kinnock has gained 8% since March and is presently more popular than both Mrs Thatcher and Dr Owen (who himself has lost 5% since the last ISIS poll). But despite Mr Kinnock's strong showing, the Alliance continues to lead among those surveyed and is apparently picking up support from former disaffected Tories as well.

American political policy also makes a poor showing in Oxford. Almost half of those surveyed believe that the Reagan Administration has strengthened NATO and more Oxford students would blame the United States than the Soviet Union for the failure to reach an arms control agreement. Nevertheless, students went five times as likely to blame the United States for arms control failures than the University students as a whole, while Tories went twice as likely to blame the Soviets.

Oxford students show a very positive overall attitude toward the University, but almost half of them feel that their fellows are too politically apathetic and 10% of those surveyed were so apathetic that they had not bothered to vote in the election. Surprisingly, one-third of Oxford students have the lowest opinion of any demographic subgroup and are most critical of the perceived apathy at this University.

Finally, returning to the question of favourite members of the Royal Family, I conclude with a representative sample of amusing responses. It was said of Prince Charles that 'He's taste - and a good sense of humour, too.' The Queen was preferred - 'Because I don't much like the others.' Of the Queen Mother - 'She reminds me of my grandmother.' Of Prince William - 'He doesn't give speeches.' Of Prince Andrew - 'Because I fancy him.' and of Lady Di - because - 'She's so sexy.'

Frank I. Luntz

GUFF AT THE TOP

Summit meetings are a spectator sport, and nobody expects them to be more than as exciting in showmanship. At Geneva, the only uncertainty was whether Gorbachev would play to an audience. Everybody knew that this is the only thing that Reagan is good at, but, since Gorbachev took over from Chernyshev, the media have only been able to speculate on the showmanship ability of the present incumbent. This kind of ultimate entertainment for the benefit of news reporters is the purpose of summit meetings.

Gorbachev rightly stated that he and Ronnie are jointly responsible for the future of the world, but if he expects us to believe that we can all feel safer as a result of the meeting he is sadly mistaken. What is perhaps most striking in the poll taken by Frank F. Luntz & Associates is that a majority of students feel that the superpowers are equally at fault for failing to arrive at any solutions. In the immediate context of Geneva, what is clearest is that even if Reagan's mind isn't in particularly good shape - as Gorbachev reportedly confided in an aside - the mind is dead set upon SDI. Reagan's offer to share 'SDI' must be interpreted as a bad joke, for what it betrays is not a desire for global safety, but the intention of bankrupting the Soviet Union. Notwithstanding the good humour which prevailed at the 'Brelase summit', Reagan still believes that the NSR is an evil empire that must be smashed. And whether the two leaders do meet again soon or not, as long as SDI remains at the top of the American defence agenda, it is inconceivable that any agreement is attainable. It might be argued that summit meetings are simply symbolic in that regardless of what they never provide. But the question prompted by Reagan's insinuance is precisely what they really don't want. Even the Geneva has symbolized in the primacy of showmanship.

Allegra Mostyn-Owen

LETTER FROM HARVARD

Arriving at Harvard - the other Cambridge - only two months after I had gone down from Oxford, it was the difference between the two cities and their towns that had made an impact on me, not the similarities. No doubt this was partly the shock of becoming a graduate student. But there is a vibrancy about this place which contrasts so markedly with the Eighties cynicism that seems to pervade the old country. Harvard seems to be open to new ideas and disciplines in a way that British universities are not. It is significant that at the Divinity School where I enrolled, about half of the tutors are women, and the School is a regular hotbed for theological, Feminist Theology and Liberation Ethics - all areas which are out of bounds in England. Others who were at Oxford as undergraduates and have come to the Kennedy School of Government also feel that they would not be able to do much of what they are doing here: they are learning the art of government as a profession.

This sense of vibrancy comes across in people's commitment to their work. Students who wish to be academicians throw themselves into their reading and research and participate in argument and discussion with enthusiasm. And here at the Divinity School, those who want to be priests and ministers are genuinely enthusiastic about the work they do as hospital or prison chaplains or in parishes, and they believe that religion really does have something to do with changing society for the better - religion is not just for the Church itself. Similarly, personal and political action is not the only motive for those who are at the Kennedy School of Government and will be striving for political posts: people have a sense that they can do something to improve things. The biggest undergraduate association is that which coordinates public service like tutoring High School children and working in shelters for the homeless. There is an awareness that beyond the easy life on the Harvard campus, the nearby city of Boston - just a short ride away on the subway - has some of the worst racial tensions of any major city in the States.

All of this seems a far cry from the stereotyped image of Harvard as another elitist 'ivory tower'. Undoubtedly, some of that stereotyping is valid. There are plenty of wealthy students here. - Masters' men, Masters' sherry and waiters are all part of the tradition, as are Finals clubs - all-male fraternity members are taught to do the things which they are doing here: they are learning the Church herself.

of Government and will be partly the shock of becoming a graduate student. But there is one horror about coming to the world is to be merchant bankers.

Undergraduates can get a raw deal here, often being taught to do their work without understanding, or even several of them, to get the latter's degree. In any event, the students, so the only time they get to see their tutor is when he or she is at the University in the middle of the day, and they usually have their tutorials with teaching assistants who are graduate students. Their advisers might be graduate students too - and some feel that because of this they have had little guidance, or even been advised, about what courses they take to get to which tutor they should major in. In contrast, Harvard is renowned as a university where you can get as much as the norm in the States (and therefore less lonely) than in England. The standard of teaching is high; you can choose what courses to take (a great luxury) and participate in classes in any of the other graduate schools or faculties, so work here can be as general or as specific as you wish. The workload can be heavy, as it is usual to take four or five courses a term, but once papers have been written, and end-of-term exams completed, that's in - no Fear of Finals, none of the horror of School.

But there is one horror about coming to the States and that is the jargon. If one more person asks me to 'facilitate' a seminar discussion, I might just refuse, on the grounds that I don't understand what they are talking about.

Jane Shaw went down from Regent's Park College last summer and is now preparing a Master's degree in Theology at the Harvard Divinity School.
A way to get a feeling for the political climate in Guatemala is to visit the University of San Carlos in the capital. Imagine the Bodleian covered with spray-painted slogans like 'Stop the Fascist Terror!' next to half-burned posters showing torturing victims and armed students in ski masks, murals painted in the "disappeared" classification. Add to this tank battles in Radial Square and death squads roaming college corridors at night, and you may get the picture. The student and only sector of the population to have maintained outspoken opposition to the regime throughout the term of the last five years, are the only ones who have remained in the country club just then, while the most cheerful and optimistic friends tell a much rosier tale.

I was not disappointed by my expectations of the American lifestyle, which I expected to learn about from the "Boy's Life" magazine. We rented a car only to drive around in a highland part of the country, between Tequicagua and Managua. The view looked right out on to the ruins, and the clerk, a teenage girl with a Chile-T-shirt wearing an Ortega speech on TV, told us that there was no toilet paper left and that she couldn't get any more due to the shortages.

We managed to secure an improvement the next day in a small hotel down the street. We were so bored that we decided to meet some women. We were given a big kick by the strange combination of Cooperatives and young Russian engineers who played chess, drank vodka and listened to Michael Jackson tapes. After a few hours, the night-man would invite us to join him in listening to contra radio broadcasts on the short-wave as he bitched about how the Sandinistas had dickep up the economy.

We spent the next two hours pressured by self-assertive Party leaders (plantation owners from the provinces) and several Russian engineers who played chess, drank vodka and listened to Michael Jackson tapes. After a few hours, the night-man would invite us to join him in listening to contra radio broadcasts on the short-wave as he bitched about how the Sandinistas had dickep up the economy.

The black market currency exchange in Nicaragua is the colón in the cities, and the dollar in the countryside. We spent several days researching the buying power of the dollar to see if we could get $1 to $2 to 400 colónsad (rather than the official rate of 1.8) we had more money than we knew what to do with. The problem is that there are almost no consumer goods available in Nicaragua, unless you are a party member entitled to shop at the 'dollar store' which is filled with the latest Japanese technology. One can only take so many revolutionaries books, posters, T-shirts, records, etc. (I now have several different translations of "Who Will Write Our Songs" and "Machete Song")

We rented a car only to find that, worse than the fact that you can hardly find gas and no new auto parts, the streets in Managua have no names. Hence, directions are given in an incomprehensible code, usually something like 'Go up the pine tree and then down that road until you pass the hot milk', and you can't miss it.

The local population was that all the bourgeois steak-houses had survived the revolution, and we were able to eat like Texas cattle ranchers twice a day. Unfortunately, even a McDonald's in Managua, albeit one which serves you grey soy-burgers on white buns in a brown paper bag, with a rusty deep-dish pizza-pan filled with stale feta and flat Cola. At least they still have the picture of Ronald McDonald.

I suppose a good place to find the mood of the other side of life in Nicaragua is to visit the Herba Bueno Libro Café, a Sandinista newspaper office, filled with the smell of herbal teas to the internationalists who hang out there singing songs of the revolution before they head back to their 'dollar store' night rooms at the Hotel Intercontinental. They enjoy an enjoyable sociopathic thing to do in Managua is to go into Liberty Café and see if Reagan should give more aid to the contras, just for the hell of it, in order to see what sort of a reaction you can elicit. Usually a very nasty one from the foreigners, and a much more serious one from the uppermost students think it's really funny and buy you a round of drinks.

I never told my folks that I got shot at for the first time in Nicaragua, when a couple of border guards who evidently didn't like our Hope was shot at us. We were so bored that we walked 7 km no-man's-land loose a few rounds over our heads to shut up to see. So what? I made it back alive, and we were pretty sure the mosquitoes were happy too, especially since the toilets have rings and covers, and you don't even need to supply your own paper.

Christopher T. Brown
1977: The year of tiaras and torn T-shirts, the Union Jack hats and the Union Jack in flames. 'God Save the Queen' at No. 1 (or No. 2, as the BBC would have it) in Jubilee week - a piece of stage management that caution and cynicism would make impossible to repeat in 1985.

1985: The Queen's image wavers on, and it's the punks who are nostalgic. The movie keeps moving as planned: the Royal Family, with New Improved Di, are doing very nicely, thank you.

Strangely, the modernisation of the Royal Family (no Star Trek job, but enough to win over hearts of a whole new generation of lost souls eager for role models) has been accomplished by the new conservatism. It's taken two centuries of capitalism to finally drag the Royals out of their feudal enclave; the new, naked, unashamed, private enterprise Britain needs them (to legitimise itself) more then they need it. Yet the Royal Family's impeccable conditioning must prevent them from recognising themselves as shot-gun brides in this unholy marriage. It is rare enough for anyone to acknowledge that they are a TOTAL historical anachronism and a UNIVERSAL spectacular diversion from true life.

The official functions and duties of the Royal Family are irrelevant compared to the true function of their existence (namely, what they symbolise). A quick poll revealed that none of my household could remember exactly what their official functions are! Their individual vices and virtues and our personal preferences are not the issue; to have opinions at all about Princess Margaret's smoking habits or Princess Di's shoulder pads (neither woman is known to me personally) is to participate in the mass charade, the delusion that they are essentially different from the rest of us. (If we were not Royal, we were more than Royal).

The question is not whether the perceived otherness of the Royals - their embodiment (sanctioned by God, no less - or Henry VIII's versional values) of traditional values - serves the interests of the status quo, but of which status quo? Fittingly, the latest development has been The Royal As Pop Stars, that is, reselling well worn ideas (in Diana's case everything from seamed stockings to the nuclear Family) under the guise of youth, glamour, and (would we ever have believed this ten years ago, after Princess Anne's attempts to wear a mini-skirt) FASHION. The parallel with showbiz (which is far more recent metaphor) can be extended to the older Royals too. Princess Margaret as the faded starlet after the audience has departed and the bouquets have waned: 'A lonely woman sits watching "Dynasty". There is a tray in her lap. She is eating macaroni cheese. There is a hefty scotch on the small table to her right. She signs it regularly... She is bored. (And according to The Mirror, 28/10/85, she is Princess Margaret.)

This brings us - inevitably - to the media. It is impossible to state definitively whether TV and the tabloids made the 'new', saucy, sour-royals, or vice versa, but Fleet Street's influence in perpetuating the spectacle of the Royal Family cannot be overestimated. It is in the tabloids that the old guard and the showbiz fringe of Royalty contrast most strangely - unsurprisingly, since the old and new 'Royals' are largely press pigeonholing devices. Without the media, the Royal Family would have no updated image - indeed, they would have no image at all. And, as an institution/personage, they could not exist in a twentieth century, they would have no meaning without the image.

Thus, we are exhibiting a facet of the Royal Family, the Royal Family are only one part of the entire arsenal of opiate propaganda by the media. And, as a number of novelists have pointed out, their lives are cheaper and less painful than heroin - but no less addictive for that.

'Stick the "Royal Family" in your eye. The "Royal Family" will REMOVE all aspects of incompetent governments and industrial decay from your daily newspaper. Will also get married and produce babies. Guaranteed free from homosexuality and ethnic minorities.' (Caption depicted on a recent satirical postcard.)

Of course, it is widely recognised that disproportionate coverage of (even the most trivial) news concerning the Royal Family has the effect of relegating more serious and vital issues to a mere footnote. Even genuine news involving the Royal Family (such as the Princess Michael in Nazi Father Shock, Horror Probe Scandal) is given such overblown prominence that it becomes impossible to accurately gauge its importance. This is particularly true of television coverage.

Indeed, it is symptomatic of the tendency of television as a whole to reduce all experiences and events to an undifferentiated blur, in which spark powders and nuclear holocaust are indistinguishable. This is one of TV's most frightening characteristics. To bombard us with incoherent images is to blunt our judgement and batter us into passivity. Who made you a moron...? TV's controllers are surely barely aware of the magnitude of this psychic attack - or indeed that it is an attack.

It must now seem that the role of the Royal Family in shaping our consciousness, our attitudes and values regarding ourselves, others and institutions, is insignificant compared to larger control and subjugation mechanisms. Yet they are a cog without which the State in the form we now understand it cannot function. If the Royal Family were abolished tomorrow (a fantasy, but not a powerless one) Britain would still be a divided society but not a bored one. Such a change would be submissive because we would all be forced to abandon the entrenched patterns imposed by redundant tradition. For us to be forced to think autonomously would shake the world - where there's no mercy, there's no fear... The Royal Family alone are not the cause of our material and spiritual poverty, but they are the lynchpin of certain key attitudes. Our acceptance of the status of any celebrities diversifies energy (emotional and physical) away from our own lives. The stars are above us; they glitter, and they are unknown to us. They are showered in mystery and glamour. For another human being to be a star, our own lives, by implication, must be dull, mundane, earth-bound. This is assumed to be my natural state, but sometimes I forget my position; and since I am far from unique in this, a device must exist to guarantee my safeness, my obedience, my docility as a person.

Do I threaten? Then I must be tamed. The Royal Family are my zoo-keepers pura excellence, but they differ from mere celebrities in this function in an important respect. We are 'beneath' stars only because they were luckier than us; but our subjugation to the Royal Family is sanctioned by Church and State. Hence their elevation above us in 'natural' - it is signed, sealed and delivered, with the approval of secular and holy powers.

We love our Queen. GOD SAYS.

Thus our diversion from our own state of being, from becoming truly human ourselves rather than partially (in)human through identification with the qualities of others, is far from casual. The Royal Family provides a compendious spectacular slide show which we are expected to constantly emulate but can never see. The Observer Magazine tells us that Princess Diana is the woman every man wants - hence a dream is fabricated that is NOT OURS, and that (male or female) we can never make real. Countless other newspapers simultaneously decline her uniqueness and her ordinariness. This is yet another falsification influencing our conception of woman, as if any woman not with one 'O' royal can catch a prince - and as if she should WANT TO.

While we dream our lives to be expropriated in the name of Queen and Country (or Conservatism), in the name of values of tradition and of the family that we may aspire to but can never achieve, most of us will continue to believe that we need the Royal Family as a diversion, that their wealth enriches us all and the pedestal on which they stand elevates us all. The Royal Family themselves must be deceived and limited by the very spectacle of which they are part. Where the Queen visits, the safest of eccentrics is swept out of her path; roads are painted black and grass is sprayed green. They must be protected from reality and from risk, taking even more than the rest of us. For us to step out of line is to risk 'morose' irritation; for the members of the Royal Family to do so could be lethal.

The Royal Family as an institution have become nothing more than the lumpen dead-weight of centuries of redundant tradition. They are exploited to death in order to maintain a status quo that supports some financial and material interests but does nothing for any human ones. While this spectacle continues to exert power over us (and indeed over the future) can only be an endless repetition of the past. As Johnny said: There is no future in England's dreaming.

Claire Monk
TINA BROWN

Tina Brown is the Oxford graduate least likely to receive an invitation to the Queen's garden party. Her article on Chuck and Di, as they are known in America, appeared in the October 1977 issue of Vanity Fair magazine and caused more outrage than almost any other Royal piece. When it came out, several English newspapers who wouldn't dare print anything half as interesting themselves faked self-righteous indignation, and seized the chance to quote huge chunks in their news columns. Unsurprisingly, the Prince and Princess of Wales even appeared on television to reassure their subjects that they never spends hours cut off alone dancing to Dire Straits and Wham! on her Sony Walkman, and that he is not a 'sissy' whose style is in touch with his uncle's old nanga boards.

Tina Brown's articles have always been unfair. It is one of the reasons why they are so good. Janet Street-Porter looks like a traffic light and talks like a tannoy; Jerry Hall, close-up, the reasons why they are so good. Janet has 's naggle teeth, size nine feet and a face that would win the magazine in America is a completely different job. It's look like the before picture in an advertisement for cosmetic

But it would be a mistake to assume that Tina Brown's is a success story. She feels like Lilliput in comparison. The sheer scale of the offices are in the swanky Conde-Nast building in Madison Avenue, her desk is the size of a ping-pong table, and her salary is rumoured to be some $100,000 a year. Nine years ago she was an undergraduate at St Anne's, 'as drunk and lazy as everyone else. So drunken in fact that one summer I had to wear a hat the entire time, even to tutorials.' Hundreds of Oxford hacks are still toiling in provincial newrooms. So why did Tina Brown succeed? 'Maybe', she says softly, 'I've got the killer instinct.' This seemed absurdly funny at the time because Tina Brown could not look less like a killer. To be bluntly sexist about it, she is determined and ambitious.

But it's rather picturesque: the status reading has gone up and down, and the articles from this period are hilarious. 'I've not proved sufficient incentive to advertisers, the October issue only has 60 pages (half the size of The Tatler), and may be losing as much as $7 million a year. Miss Brown appears unconcerned about the rumours it may shut down altogether. I'm going to stay here until we're really fat and prosperous with 400 pages and half a million readers.

It is only a matter of time', she says firmly. And after that? Tm Tall (Taller), fat and prosperous with a cost of $15 million, it had failed to attract readers and advertisers and reputedly Conde-Nast had already lost their entire investment. 'But we're over the worst', smiles Miss Brown.

'We can only get better. I can tell how well I'm doing because, in America, they give you an instant status reading. In the

The final issue of this term's ISIS sees the publication of two poems by Christopher Logue and one by Charles Lefthwich (St John's).

LUCKY DUST
Music by Sally Groves

Read my Milton on a Greyhound bus.
Booted to the Limbo City, Tennessee.
"Praise the way that lady does her eyes," said the angel Gabriel to me.
Upown squeaky traffic just but dunk.
Bought a double bed for 50c.
"Paradise obtained by lucky draw," said the face that filled the room's TV.
"Help me," is close by.
"Save me," far away.
Fly today.

Midnight flacker preaching to the blind:
"GOD IS LOVE, AND LOVE WILL MAKE YOU FREE" Inter-city moonshine. Careless love.
Time, like sleep, shall turn your face from me.
"Help me," is close by.
"Save me," far away.
Fly today.

Pearly skyslide beaming in two heads.
"Pick your friends, and check your key." China faces beg each others eyes
"Turn this moment to eternity."
Christopher Logue

OPEN
for Jane to Riele

For a little time now there have been pricklings Of resistance under the reposed golden mask Of winter hills: the livellable, Shyly partly content sheltered In that august coffin.

Then it rained two days without pause
And this morning the sky opened its silver case
And there was a Dog's ring.
On to the sea of land.

At once there were green strips coursing.
Young animals, up the hills.
The way trees had round succulent tongues out tasting, Ruddy, lined cavalier, the cliff, wore cockades from a green lady.
And two birds, struck blind by their new match, were panticking around my bed.
The earth, open now after the rain, Risen green, glitters Everywhere engaged.

Charles Lefthwich
GERMAN ART IN THE 20TH CENTURY
Royal Academy until 22nd December

The century of turbulent political upheaval in Germany is dramatically documented in this mammoth exhibition. In gallery after gallery, new approaches to painting reveal a tradition not only to political events but to existing conventions in art. By means of violent colours and strokes, Kischner and Mesner re-define the alienation of urban blight in Berlin which is one of the pervasive motifs running through the exhibition.

Nolde, with childlike directness, paints as if he had only one fat, floppy brush and so, liberated from the task of reproducing objects, has big fan 'expressing' his raging paganism with the brush he uses as weapon against the Christian world. His are teutonic trumfets par excellence.

Max Beckmann's work is among the most heroic in the exhibition. His later, war period paintings are Goya-esque in their clinical, almost photographic sort to attack the bourgeois, almost sacrilegious, with colour and strokes. Even the worst of these works are perhaps more interesting as socio-political commentaries than as art qua art.

Many of the exhibits might be better labelled 'Abstract Expressionism', as the specifically artistic concern for form is often sacrificed to subject matter; the overriding purpose is to expose and attack political atrocities. If the periodicity of political oppression and its manifestations in art are indeed the theme of the exhibition (which is divided up into distinct political, rather than artistic, periods), it is a shame that too many of the paintings are crude paraphrases of the period's events. The overall atmosphere is hardly encouraging; local bands can attract reasonably sized appreciative audiences by playing in pubs in and around the city, but for any band which wants to break away from the local scene that is apparently 'going nowhere', life can be hard.

Most of the bands which play locally are not made up of students. The lack of a central University venue, and the complete absence anywhere to rehearse, mean that far fewer student rock bands get off the ground than in any average university city elsewhere in the country. There is also a lack of communication between the local bands and the students who might form a large part of their audience, if only they existed. Without a main University hall, the best venue available at the moment is the Jericho Tavern on Walton Street. There, Johnny Hinks runs the Avocado Club on Monday nights, which has built up a solid core of regular performers and punters. But, as Richard Ramage of the group Here Comes Everybody explained, the Jericho scene tends to cater for a local audience without really having the impetus to give anyone a bigger break. 'Nobody's had a break, and the Avocado Club does not exist in order to shoot people to stardom; it is unlikely that any record company will ever focus attention on Oxford rock at all.

The impetus to move onwards has come from the bands themselves. Here Comes Everybody definitely has higher ambitions. They take their melodic, Byrds-influenced music to as many venues as possible, just to get audiences accustomed to them and build up some kind of name. They hope soon to use one of the eight-track recording studios around Oxford. With a good demo tape, Recording locally has proved a great bonus for another local group, the Supers. They have made over five hundred copies of a cassette album they made a couple of years ago. But, for a group like Shake Appeal, whose members are either unemployed or doing part-time work, there is very little possibility of finding enough money to undertake an adventurous scheme for breaking out of the local circuit. Eight-track studios cost a great deal of money to use; Shake Appeal will have no P.A. of their own and no transport to move their equipment. In other words, it is a case of move or die where they can reach more people and attract the attention of potential backers. But there are so many groups which have moved to London from places like Oxford and have been swallowed up in the mainstream. There is someone in Oxford to promote local groups. There are currently a couple of small record companies in and around the city, but the amount they can do is severely limited. Two years ago, the Waterfall Records put together a compilation of Oxford groups on an LP called 'The First Cut', and most of those groups have since fallen apart. It is time for another Oxford compilation of the more recently formed bands. If the groups have the chemistry and the experience, they may well enough records to consider releasing and if the distribution is effective, we might see some of these bands getting lucky.

The music from this concert is as exciting as its title is curio.

'Peace', 'Old Folks'), The former begins with the bassist conducting a prolonged conversation of single notes with the guitar and on occasion piano, which is steadily undermined by ripples on the saxophone which lead on to the frantic main theme. 'Old Folks', Peter King's solo sax takes centre stage as he develops a depth of expression that is unique to jazz. His sensitive improvisation is followed by a very lyrical saxophone solo which underlines the sharpness of the piano, and the concert finishes with the drum-oriented 'Gingerbread Boy'.

The generally good quality of the recording is marred only by the reproduction of the bass, whose reverberations often sound more as if Green is tuning the guitar than playing it. Overall there is a strong sense of a live performance, at least enough to recommend jazz enthusiasts to add this to their collection.

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BACH AND LLOYD WEBBER

Pro Oxford Musica, Sunday 10 November

To have such a programme of music on Remembrance Sunday, in the shadow of the cathedral, was a truly moving thing. The two Cantatas by Bach, and Andrew Lloyd Webber’s Requiem Mass -commemorate the dead.

Both Cantatas (106) were written for funeral services; the most moving was the second (no. 106), contrasting Day of Wrath and Transformation. The choirs were precisely sung, and the organ preludes made an unforgettable afterglow. The Lloyd Webber touched of calypso rhythm and congo drums reared its head unexpectedly. The rest of the work was characterised by quick changes in tempo and volume, often accompanied by a strident drum beat - particularly in the Dies Irae and Libera Me.

This is a very testing piece of music for the soloists. The soprano (Christian Collier) struggled with many entrances on high notes, with the French horn, excelled in the Hosanna chorus, but the boy soprano, Alexander L’Estrange, provided the most consistent voice - and sang the last Perpetua Chorus beautifully.

The Requiem was received enthusiastically by Oxford; it is definitely a work designed - experienced 'in the rather than via recordings, and the overall impression is of a forceful, exciting and original work. Anna Horneburgh

SIOUXSIE AND THE BANSHEES

Oxford Playhouse, Saturday 9 November

I must confess to having lost track of the Banshees’ musical exploits over the past five years. Having once known the dance of highly primordial period of the ‘Hn Hand’ era, I did not know what to expect from the two ‘skeletons’ who escorted a hobbling Sioxsie to her stool in the centre of the Apollo stage. From here, she was apparently to sit and preach her gospel of death, sin, obsession and desire, despite the handicap of a recently damaged knee.

What we were given was a thrilling stage-lighting and display inextricably entwined with some swirling, charging and hypnotic music. The Banshees deliberately distracted themselves from their audience. ‘Dazzle’, ‘Cascade’, ‘Melt’, ‘Nightshift’ - all songs were announced. No verbal discourse between songs needed, and none given.

Visually, the band remain little changed. It seems not to matter who happens to be playing the guitar - currently it is the highly polished John Carruthers. Tall, dark and immobile, he produces all the right noises when playing audience favourites such as ‘Knights’ and ‘Happy House’. The set played in Oxford was not as current as might have been expected; offerings from as far back as 1978 were received as happy ‘feelies’ ‘Cities in Dust’. This was a pleasing approach from a band which still managed to create a sense of occasion.

Perched on her stool or standing straight-legged, rays of coloured light seemingly emanating from her person, Sioxsie still plays the ice-cream queen. Of course, we know she’s not like that really; it’s just that the Banshees have created a legend for themselves - a worshipful figurehead presiding over a veritable army of adoringly compelling noise. Oxford Apollo paid due homage.

Phil Dawson

MACBETH

Newman Rooms, Fifth Week

Here was ‘Macbeth’ with a difference. Gone is the blasted heath and its sinister brothel and the witches gobbled and crawled, falling about with laughter at the mere mention of Macbeth.

For Alex (Harris’s) production one had to abandon rapidly any pre-conceived ideas about the play. Whether - according to Andrew Molligan's interpretations or not, the result was most convincing, and there was not a dull moment in the evening - not even the interval announcement!

Whilst the ‘set’ speeches were effectively understated - Macbeth (Alex Hardy) half-laughing as he called for darkness and Lady Macbeth (Vicki Worsley) serious but he no means fiend-like in her invocation to the evil spirits - the more minor roles were equally successful where the lesser and relatively banned production, with Wes Williams’ Duncan the most memorable that I have seen. The murder of Lady Macduff (Catherine Levi) and her family was one of the most chilling scenes, almost overshadowed by her gratious in violence as the murderers lay back in armchairs, smiling calmly, waiting for their turn to rape her. James Brown’s Macduff was actually quite, left sobbing on the floor after the news, whilst a very public-school Macbeth (Freddie Baxt) strode off at the end of a far from boring England scene. All the potentially, unexciting moments were well handled: rumours about Malcolm and Donalbain were played and played from the darkness as the brothers parted in the gloom.

This is not to say that the major roles were inconsiderable, though Banquo, played by Peter Wingfield, and some mocking, graceful cheerfulness in the banquet scene, was rather too much on the stage. But the Macbeths, for once, human. From the perfect wife and hostess, Lady Macbeth was reduced to stumbling about, scaring off her friends with her hands to remove the bloodstains, and her husband, from a friendly chimp with a sense of humour, became a lonely, apathetic figure, staring without a trace of self-pity without which he had lived long enough. By the end of the play, peace seemed so desirable that Malcolm did not come across as the Hamlet-like Macduff was a relief for everyone, and the final procession with lanterns the only possible ending.

Helena Hird

SOFT WHITE KIDS IN LEATHER

Lindsey Rooms, Fourth Week

‘Soft White Kids in Leather’ was about the 1960s: it had nothing to offer Oxford in the 1980s. Set in a room in New York, and exploring the neuroses of a group of ‘beautiful people’, the play was ideally staged in the Lindsey Rooms. In this small venue, the audience could and should have felt like silent guests at the party. But the lack of intensity in the interaction of the players precluded the experience.

Dela (Sue Woodhead) was supposed to have ended a relationship with Dean the artist (Andy Peters) in favour of the idealistic young hippy Andrews (played by Jon Prestwich). An eternal triangle indeed - yet one was not convinced of the redeeming feature of the production. Robert Harrop worked hard, but his part as the Machiavellian Alba (Hosseyn Amini) who views of his childhood friend, the Marquis of Posa, provocatively laughter!

Soft White Kids in Leather’ tried to be more than a parody of the Warhol film. But the Sixties and its victims lost their shock value a long time ago. The play would have been more entertaining as a psychological farce.

Jessica Douglas

DON CARLOS

by Schiller

The Playhouse, Sixth Week

Don Carlos, heir to the Spanish throne, loves his stepmother, Elizabeth of Valois, and his personal rebellion against his unloving father leads him to espouse the political views of his childhood friend, the Margrins of Posa, who is opposed to the King’s repressive policies in Flanders. The prince’s attempt at military rebellion is thwarted by the machinations of the Grand Inquisitor, the Duke of Alba, and he is sentenced to death. Schiller uses the struggle between Philip II and his son to exemplify the conflict between reason, passion, political pragmatism and youthful idealism, the severity of orthodox religion and a faith in humanity and nature.

Fiona Tomkinson

Kate Fernwick and Kate Pickford as Queen Elizabeth and Princess Eboli

The treatment of eternal psychological and ideological problems demands that 'Don Carlos' be directed skilfully if it is to appeal to a modern audience. Unfortunately, the OUDS centenary production seems to have been prone to mishap. Three actors walked out at almost the last minute, one to direct the rival production of ‘Peer Gynt’. The production relied on the sentimentally sensational qualities of the plot and failed to interpret them imaginatively.

The cast was incapable of maintaining an intensely tragic atmosphere - indeed, the assassination of the Marquis of Posa provoked laughter! Sun Kid-Worthington’s Don Carlos was underplayed as an effete aristocrat rather than a champion of civil liberties; one could not help acquiescing in his father’s view of him as a weak and hysterical young man unfit for any position of responsibility. Richard Weisz as the Marquis of Posa was diﬀerent rather than prophetically inspired, and the scenes involving exchanges between these two characters were the worst in the play: a disgusting display of millah sentimentality which left the audience wincing or sniggering.

The costumes, described on the programme as a creative response to a historical play, looked like something improvised for a fancy dress party. The crude symbolism of putting Posa, the advocate of religious toleration and advanced political views, in modern dress was doubly unfortunate, since it was rather the Machiavellian Alba (Hosein Amini) who aroused a sense of complicity in the audience - possibly because his cynical manoeuvres corresponded more closely to twentieth century political practice than the idealism of the Marquis. Be that as it may, Amini’s performance was one of the redeeming features of the production. Robert Harrop also gave a convincing portrayal of Philip II struggling to endure self-imposed isolation.

I cannot say that I left the theatre emotionally drained by all the play’s ‘Sturm und Drang’, ‘Don Carlos’ was a thunderstorm which broke with a whimper, not a bang.
FILMS

Polished and well produced, 'Cocoon' documents the by-now rather familiar theme 'Aliens meet Men', and though beset by some annoyingly familiar sci-fi clichés gets away with them by its unusually human characterization. Surprisingly for the genre, there's only one real ten-year-old in sight. The aliens are friendly and compassionate, almost to the point of absurdity.

The film's only real hero has his boat hived out by what turn out to be very alien aliens in rubber suit costumes, searching for colleagues left behind in the collapse of Atlantis. Three OAPs have unwittingly stumbled into a life-force-induced swimming pool, used to re-energize the colony. The old folks run back to their retirement home and, predictably, they are not believed. With an immersion in the waters of life, their ill-health creeps back and, in desperation, they return to ask the aliens a favour.

Sex interest is provided by the gorgeous Tabahle Welch (daughter of Raquel), who has alien intercourse with the hero in a way that can only be described as illuminating. His comment, delivered in cryptic phrases 'If this is foreplay, I'm a dead man - ought to go down in the list of great one-liners alongside Groucho's 'So she's a dog.' Further comic relief is provided by the gang of three OAPs, who recover their youthful vigour and virility, much to our amusement and the envy of the young.

Unfortunately, Ken Russell does not provide what you would call sex interest of a 'necessity' deals with a pool at which a leader dies a life as a whore (and sweeps a lot) and a rather nice gay facing the breakdown of his marriage to a high-sounding, middle-aged American (Anthony Perkins, a 'Psycho' renegade who wants to save her soul by killing with a huge vibrator). The moment he makes up in direction what you lack in dick, she tells him. Ballad

direction is interrupted once (and apparently pointless) to show a charity dream sequence, when a bride falls into a swimming pool carrying a bird cage and then turns into a skeleton. Russell explores the less bizarre kinds of sexual stereotypes in it and is apt to participa­
te, and ultimately reveals the true generosity and warmth of his soul when she is her bottom-bys, searching for the needs of a frustrated husband. The escapade of China Blue's 'her non de chambre' So it arises reveals chronic insecurity.

'You hold the safest place in the world: I ke anything, anyone... . The film's climax, well, one of the many) comes when Pervers but far enough from the final one, the one that will heal you for ever'. A consciousness-raising session tells us that 'it's OK to be scared, as long as you recog­

nise what you're scared of'.

The brightest new talent in American films, wrote one critic of Penelope Spheeris's 'Suburbia' which, it has to be said, is something of a companion to the 1967 American film industry today. It's easy to be negative about an idea like this, but there's a temptation to give it a go.

Following the likes of 'Rumblefish' and 'Over The Edge', this 'teenagers in revolt' movie concerns a group of punks who idolize the 'T.R. kids'. The rejected. There's Evan whose mother's an alcoholic, Jack whose father's a homosexual, not forgetting the good policeman and black Joe (who is white, incidentally). And these were the lucky ones; the rest didn't even have parents. The plot - somewhat predictable - is about Joe's attempt to get T.R. kids sitting around in their T.R. house walking in self-pity: 'Mum says I'm just a pain in the arse,' wails one of the twelve-year-olds, his light-eyed old punk as his bedmate is to be a 'rebel trend'. They're the products of America's suburbia, or, as their parents call it, suburbia.

Everything is a symptom of rejection: the Brett of suburban homes, the stories of wild dogs rejected by folk who no longer care for them, and the punk bands who sing such heart-rending numbers as 'Richard hung himself'. It's all too uncom­
vincing, hardly original, and not a patch on 'Rumblefish'. If it is a statement on society, then little empathy was possible for

these two-dimensional characters, and if it is meant to shock then it did, but not for the right reasons.

'My Beautiful Laundrette' is a film so sharp it nearly cuts itself. It advertises itself as just another street-wise and street­
creed movie with the odd sidekick at homosexuality and the National Front. What it really is about is Thackerian, materialism, racism, sexism, homosexuality, and the family. These are all smartly and slickly vetted in the gay. A young Pakistani whose father takes to his bed and the battle decides that further education is not for him and that it's hard cash and fast cars he's after. Through his family, whose connections and internal wranglings make The Godfather look like Andy Pardy, he is landed with a seedy laundrette in a down-and-out backstreet. The film concerns his miraculous turn-around of this hole with the help of his sympathetic, potting boyfriend Johnny. Ono and Johnny, the enterprising pair, turn the place into what looks like an up-market, more than a few bloody scraps, and over a million one-liners that illuminate the script like Blackpool fairy lights.

Like 'Boys from the Black Stuff', 'My Beautiful Laundrette' looks like it's heading for cult status: It's xooky, up-to-date, offbeat Channel 4 production that you shouldn't miss if you know what's good for you.

Of more explicitly political interest is the 'Official Version'. The 'Official Version' of this film's title refers to the myth that the affluent classes, unaffected by Argentina's military dictatorship, choose to believe despite the manifold indications that attacking them is possible and profitable. High school history teacher Alicia remains safely protected from the political machinations by an excellent door which her success in business - in a relationship with the close friend and classmate (Ana) takes the inside place. Ana recounts stories of torture and rape, and manages the possible disappearance of her daughter Gabby, who has been adopted by one of the 'families that don't ask questions'. Alicia later comes into contact with Gabby's origins, becoming aware of the world outside her dinner-party set for the first time. Her marriage and the 'official' illusion of her success comes under attack. Gabby is seen as a substantial enemy of Argentine's origins, antibiotic of unpleasant reality, accompanied by an innominate rendition of the recurrent song 'In the land of I don't remember'.

Norma Aleandro's stirring performance as Alicia well deserves the accolades. rewrite 'unless wanted. By the time Carnas this year, but here by is no means the film's only excel­lent interpretation. Luis Puenzo has created a haunting film that powers many thrilling questions about what happened during the years of 'the Proces', such as why it was ever allowed to go on.

Kate Davies

BEYOND POWER: WOMEN, MEN AND MORALES

FILMS

by Marilyn French

Jonathan Cape, £12.95

Beyond Power is, quite simply, too large and diverse to handle. At over 500 pages, with notes and index adding another 100, it weighs heavier (physically rather than intello­

tually) than Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. Inside this ex­
cellent doorstep, at least two coherent books are struggling to get out. While this makes the first dive of the author of 'The Women's Room' into feminist theory an admirably ambitious gamble, the exhaustiveness of her project is partly achieved at the expense of coherence - the sheer detail makes it difficult to see the wood for the trees.

On the whole the gamble succeeds - and when dealing with a project of this size and importance, it should be appreciated that even a partially successful attempt would be praiseworthy. The title is more of a problem than the book itself. It suggests a tightly argued feminist theory regarding power, and particularly the traditional domination of women by men under patriarchy. In fact, the bulk of the book is historical and evidential. Rather than supporting the argument, the documentation taken over, French's argument is perfectly coherent and valid. But the two aspects of the book are not synthesised into a satisfactory whole.

The historical thread of the book draws together an impre­
sively wide range of female experience. The anthropological and sociological coverage of women's position in 'primitive' societies (both ancient and modern) and in 'civilisations' from the classical to the modern is exhaustive. This account is bolstered by French's thesis that the wielding of power over women has developed virtually in line with civilization.

She obviously has a clear understanding of the different senses of 'power' (power over and power to), yet fails to apply them to some of her evidence. Women's activity as hunters in numerous primitive societies would not neces­sarily make them powerful (or even autonomous), particu­larly as in many cases we are told that they were and are excluded from male hunting rituals. It may simply be the case that power has less significance as a goal in a simple society.

French oversimplifies Marx's historical materialism and so rejects it on the grounds that two different hunting and fishing societies - she takes this to be a mode of production - do not have identical relations between the sexes; no reference is made to the fact that Marx evolved his theory totally outside the context of primitive societies.

Other somewhat crude interpretations of Marxism and socialism occur elsewhere in the more theoretical sections of the book. French identifies socialism as just an inadequate solution to women's oppression, but many socialist feminists would question her citing of the USSR as an example! The main theme of her book - which should be argued far more - is that power is in itself bad. It is the product of fear, of not being in mastery, and cannot lead to happiness. Please is then the only ultimate goal. Power being a phenomenon of patriarchy, its downfall will be achieved through feminism. As a personal and political position (to the feminist as defined by French, the two are identical), this is so utterly compelling that a whole book should be devoted to coordinating its theory. French stresses the need for theory (not organisa­tion structure), but does not develop her own position suf­ficiently to provide it (or to adequately tackle male theories such as Marx's). Curiously, considering the apparent affinity of her own position with anarchism and situationism, both are absent from her index, while Marxism, of which she disapproves, crops up all over the place.

As a historical venture, Beyond Power rivals Judy Chicago's 'The Dinner Party' in its power to inspire; as a theoretical venture it is only a starting point, both for the reader and, I hope, for the author.

Claire Monk

18

19
Indeed, that 1968 collection "Rings on a Tree" is probably his finest; there is, though, no natural development over the twenty-eight years of his writing - the two most recent collections are disappointing.

The tragedy of MacCaig's poetry is that while he is constantly unwilling to tackle 'big themes', preferring instead to describe local landscapes and the passing of the seasons, it is one of the least used fields for his material that he is at his best. His nature poems may possess the merits of accurate observation, as if coming from a child seeing the things around him for the first time, but, ultimately, they give only the merest hint of what is being described and leave no lasting impression. By contrast, his most political poems, in which he takes the side of the individual against the establishment, reveal an unassuaged contempt for politicians of all types, are by far the most powerful and compelling.

MacCaig is, however, well aware of the limited scope of his writing, and in 'Balances' sums up his attitude to poetry, justifying his determinedly local approach:

Because I see the world poisoned
With and brutal self-seeking,
Must I be silent about
Shadows uselessly waterfally,
The dunock's nest
In the hedgebank?

Ultimately it is up to the reader to judge which of the two approaches he prefers - personally, I have no doubt about which is my favourite and which works best for MacCaig.

Tim Jotischky

COLLECTED POEMS
by Norman Mac Caig

The Hogarth Press, £9.95

In an author's note at the front of the book Norman Mac Caig points out: 'Many poems from my previous books are not reprinted here for the good reason that I do not think they deserve to be.' This begs the rather obvious question, 'do all the poems that have been included deserve publication?', and unfortunately the answer is a very firm 'no'.

While Mac Caig's poetry is, at its best, very good indeed, delightfully precise in its observations and evoking a sort of joyful innocence, at its worst, however, it can be quite absurd.

Any poem that opens: 'Clip-clop go the water drops', for example, is pretty well irretrievable, no matter what follows. It is this sort of laxity that so often lets him down; in 'Construction Site', for instance, he describes how 'a tanking beast supplies a ton of knack', and then 'turns its head in disgust to spew its horrible mouthful out'.

One wonders how those lines can have come from the same man who wrote such beautifully tender love poetry:

If I could kill this poem, sticking
My thin pen through its throat,
It would stand crying by your bed
And haunt your cruelty every empty night.

or who has written so evocatively about his visit to New York, describing the actions of the tourists on the Circle Line boat tour around Manhattan with unerring accuracy, and a night along the Bowery with a yet controlled manner:

The frontier is never
Somewhere else. And no stockade
Can keep the midnight out.

(\textit{Hotel Room, 12th Floor}).

THE CATHOLIC
by David Plante
Published by Chatto & Windus, £8.95

The book is a sequel, or perhaps the commoner human failure of our age, but it treats isolation in philosophi-
cal, rather than human, terms. Dan Francoeur, the narrator, is haunted by a sense of sin that makes him despise himself, yet he feels too distant from others to be able to join their world. He cannot love what he is as he is, and he cannot know what is different in order to love it. He is stuck in a vicious circle.

Even his sexuality is founded in this ambivalence. He is startled to find that men are physically the same as he is - but they are different people, and their bodies should show it. Women, on the other hand, are so completely different that there is no common ground from which a relationship could develop.

Self and other, same and different, are categories which never come together for Dan Francoeur. But Plante's writing, too, suffers from the same polarisations. The manic concentra-
tion on detail emphasizes the way in which the novel's world differs from the author's, but the jargon tries to fit the world into sameseness. These elements never cohere.

This is also true of the characters' problems. Dan concen-
trates single-mindedly on his lover's body: the mole under the left nipple, or the way his hair falls. But even in the most graphic description of the act of sex, we are aware that his mind begins to wander. He sees images rather than reality, imagining the shape of the body which last lay in the rumpled linen; and he tries to fit life into these images, rather than using these images to explain life. Sex becomes a game of dares: a dare to do what you can imagine, however evil, however perverse.

Andrea Kirkby

THE WAR OF THE END OF THE WORLD
by Vargos Llosa
Faber, £9.95

'Ve play the part of heroes because we're cowards, we play at being brave because we're scared from the moment we're born,' Sarre's maxim is an epilogue to Vargos Llosa's first novel, \textit{Time of the Hero}, twenty years ago, and these misconceptions, or rather confusions, lie at the heart of the Peruvian novelist's latest work, \textit{The War of the End of the World}, winner of the Ritz-.

Hemingway Award.

The novel represents the reciprocal blindness provoked by the two distinct ideologies of politics and religion. Inspired by a historical event - the war set in the 1890s in the backlands of Brazil - it describes how a fanatical preacher known as 'the Cassandra of Peru' divulges his secrets and criminals pact to rebel against the new Republic, believing it to be the Anti-

Christ. The Counsellor, initially an itinerant preacher, estab-

lishes an army of cut-throats and prostitutes at Canudos and announces the apocalypse. The Republican Government mistakenly suspects a British-funded monarchist plot and an expeditionary force is sent to quell the rebellion.

Vargos Llosa's work is animated history infused with the blood and guts of revolutionary conflict. Suspense is subordi-

nated to the intensity of the drama. Baron de Canabraz's sexual awakening takes up ten pages of detailed narrative description, and Vargos Llosa, like the Baron, does not rush into the action but, rather, indulges himself at length in the orgy of blood that accompanies the outbreak of war. The battle scenes are vividly described, with peasants ruthlessly slicing off Republican phallus and thrusting them into the mouths of corpses. The narrative tends to clot into a catalogue of macabre phenomena and is dangerously close to becoming tedious and overwrought. The prolonged siege of

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This is self-centred: he imagines people as he

tries to

his veterinary

to
do what you can imagine, however evil, however perverse.

\textit{The War of the End of the World}

would be, rather than interacting honestly with them. 'I'm always interpreting,' he says, 'all my actions are interpreted in the end forces the book into failure.

The play-off between detail and schema, between a relevant but incoherent reality and coherent but irrelevant imagery, never works: the polarities do not coalesce. The book is one of those rare cases in which it cannot develop beyond them. It is not a novel, but an epistemology.

Andrea Kirkby

STARS AND BARS
by William Boyd
Penguin, £2.95.

'Stars and bars is the story of an English art expert, Henderson Dore, who has moved to an art firm in New York to find himself. He is sent on an assignment to the home of an eccentric millionaire, Gage Loomis, to attempt to buy his collection of minor masterpieces. Everything can go wrong does. Twice.

This book does not deliver on its initial promise - an impres-


distinctive vision of the New American - though that's undoub-

tedly half of what Boyd was trying for. Over 200 pages are

spent in the Loomis household, and its cast of crazy inhabi-


tants and crumb situations divers the impressionistic stroth and comes close to farce. Perhaps that's slightly unfair; Boyd does eventually realise the intriguing suggestion that this Wodehouseian alpaca is linked with Sebastian's metaphorical vision. So, when Henderson Dore, Ph.D., author and authority on the Impressionists, lies naked in an alleyway, clad only in a tampon packing-case, it's the high point of this work of comic imagination, and also a worrying comment on a city teetering at the edge of civilisation.

The book must be recommended to anyone who may have spent the last decade believing a comic novel to be the read-

ings, at once middle-aged and puerile, of a Tom Sharpe. Boyd has reasserted, in Dore, the fundamental decency and standards which have to underlie any departure from Sharpe's brand of facile humour. But it should be added that if you're looking for what the book seems to offer - an up-to-

the-minute look at America and its mores - you should go to

Martin Amis's \textit{Money}, published at the same time and due out in paperback soon. Boyd is good on local detail, as you'd expect a travel novel to be; his descriptions of local radio in C&W land are painfully accurate out-takes from \textit{Nashville}. But Amis is at once more involved, more the reporter, and more the major novelist in convincing you of America's awful significance.

There's nothing wrong with writing an intelligent and hilariously memorable minor novel, and Boyd has done all that.

Michael Walker

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Andrea Kirkby
Health food shops are the specialist source of the kind of healthier foods we should be eating and buying on an everyday basis. In Oxford a few shops monopolise the market. If you’re not so concerned about herbal remedies, and just want to buy food that is good for you, you’re going to have to pay through the nose for it.

Contrary to what The Oxford Handbook claims, Oxford’s health food shops are not in plentiful supply, though they are dotted all over the town. In the covered market is Natural Choice, where you can find a good selection of peripheral products - ‘alternative’ remedies, vitamins, and bodybuilding aids (they come in a bottle) - as well as an excellent spice selection. Worth avoiding is Holland & Barrett, also off the High Street. This shop combines the advantages of variety to be found in a chain store with the drawbacks of the small shop with guaranteed sales: unfriendly service, overpackaged products, and it’s expensive. Better is the Bournemouth in Oxford, on George Street, with a bit of everything at a more reasonable price - and a wider selection of more basic foods like beans, flour and mustard.

But best of the bunch is Uhuru on the Cowley Road - definitely worth the ten-minute walk (or the more healthy five-minute bike ride). This is really a wholefood shop, selling its own home-packed organic products as cheaply as possible. Uhuru is run as a cooperative and distinguishes itself from its fellow traders in friendliness, price, and variety. They’ve got everything, including the most ideologically sound beans in Oxford.

Avoid Beaver’s health food restaurant, unless you have a bank account as robust as Charles Atlas. The food is good but very expensive. This may have led you to suspect that, apart from ‘alternative’ ventures like Uhuru, the health food business is a bit of a racket. You’d be absolutely right! If manufacturers and supermarket chains did not provide the consumer with such a battery of processed foods, full of often harmful additives, and instead offered at least the choice of a healthy diet off the shelf, they would break the health food business. Tesco on the Cowley Road (open till 8 p.m. Mon. - Thurs.) has begun an excellent and positive campaign of ‘Health Eatin’, removing from its products as many additives and processed foods as possible, and, if we start eating more intelligently, the other chain stores will have to follow suit.

So what is so bad about our normal ‘convenience’ eating habits, and how can we improve our diet, conveniently? There are about 3,500 food additives in general use, of which 25 have been blacklisted as causing hyperactivity in children, and a further 17 have been shown to be dangerous to asthmaics or aspirin-sensitive people as well as children. These are positively harmful to about 10% of us, and can do the rest no good at all, particularly as an average meal may contain a cocktail of maybe ten additives.

Not all ‘E’ numbers, listed in the ingredients of packaged foods, are harmful, but here are a couple of examples of real nasties, in everyday use: E102 or Tartrazine - the yellow dye to be found in fish fingers, lemon squash, chewing gum, mint sauce and jelly, salad cream, tinned peas, cakes, crisps. . . . Its side effects are: skin rashes, hay fever, breathing problems, and blurred vision. E102 has been banned in Scandinavia as it may cause skin cancer. Or take the antioxidants E320 and E321. These will do you as much good as E261 - monosodium glutamate - found in crisps, pork pies, sausages, quick soups, and pot noodles. This can cause ‘Chinese restaurant syndrome’ - migraine headaches, nausea, and dizziness. As for meat products, pork pies are only required by law to contain a minimum of 29-35% of lean meat, and there are no regulations restricting the use of ‘offal’ in cooked meat products like pies or sausage rolls.

So what can we do? Eat - just exercise a bit of judgement next time you go into the supermarket. From 1 July 1986, all food additives will have to have an ‘E’ number. Until then, avoid blanket terms like “permitted preservatives” - if they weren’t permitted (like E102) they wouldn’t have been added at all. Removing unnecessary additives to your diet (chemical or animal) can only do you good.

Until our health become synonymous with what we eat, shop wisely, and you might end up buying something that’s good for you.

Patrick Deer
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