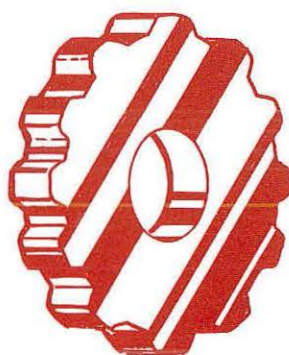


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PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

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 Donaghue of 1 Walton

Well Road, Oxford (colour section) and Charles Eastwood of Christ Church (b/w). Our thanks to all participants.

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 Information for all their time and effort. Thanks to Reece at Parchment Press, to Connie of the Clubs Committee, to Carolyn Brice at Blackwell's Bookshop, to Lindsey for her unstinting efforts in contracting advertising, and to Tristram our groovy designer.

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The Editors welcome comment on any Isis article.

Isis No. 1764
November 29th 1985

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A DIM VIEW

On 6th November, a public meeting was held in the Town Hall to discuss the proposed lighting facilities for Oxford's High Street. The forty or so in attendance were chiefly conservationists, along with certain publicity-conscious city councillors. Student representation was minimal, but Helen Thomas (St Hilda's, OUSU Women's Committee), Helena Djurkovic (Pembroke, Vice President and Treasurer of OUSU) and Paul McKinney (Univ., OUSU City Liaison)

all made speeches.

The chief issue of debate became the 'romantic gloom' of Oxford's streets versus personal safety, particularly that of women pedestrians. The conservationist faction was largely oblivious to this factor. 'A coarse and unpromising object' is one way of describing a rapist, but Mr T. F. R. G. Braun (Merton) was actually speaking of the 'basic globe and bracket' design of light, currently on trial run, affixed to All Souls' College. The County Council has now made funds

available for permanent installation.

In a meeting somewhat bogged down by jargon and technical detail, Michael Hart (Fellow, Exeter; County and City Councillor) articulated clearly some of the practicalities involved, such as the distribution of lighting along the High, and the actual positioning of equipment on buildings for the greatest effective illumination.

The general consensus of the meeting was in favour of the 'Windsor lantern' design

and against 'street furniture' such as free-standing lights. Helen Thomas reiterated the need for giving priority to personal safety above subjective aesthetic considerations. She challenged the demand for 'softer lighting' made consistently by the conservationists, asking whether this, in fact, meant 'less lighting'. The responses were evasive. It was evident that the problem was one more of taste than of cash.

Catherine Max

KEITH JOSEPH'S VISIT TO OUCA

On 13th November the police estimated that over 1,000 people gathered outside the Union to demonstrate their opposition to the 8 per cent cuts in university funding which the Government has proposed for the next five years.

OUSU were determined to make this a peaceful event in contrast to the angry picket of last December, when Maggie and Sir Keith came to All Souls'. On that occasion, press coverage was minimal until news of the violence spread; this time sensation-mongers were out in force, only to be disappointed. That morning Matthew Taylor, President

of OUSU, emphasised that he wanted press coverage to depict a large, peaceful demonstration, not pockets of violence.

OUSU attempted last year to liaise with the police, but representatives of the Oxford Constabulary failed to appear at an arranged meeting. This time cooperation paid dividends. Brand-new crowd-control barriers split St Michael's Street down the middle - stewards and police on the Union side, demonstrators on the other.

All the police present were from Oxford this time. Reserves were unnecessary; the only friction between 'us'

and 'them' was verbal. Last Christmas, though London and Welsh accents were much in evidence, police refused to reveal their origin. This year an officer, asked whether he or his colleagues hailed from London, grinned across the barrier, 'No, even we hate the Met.'

'Kick Keith in the teeth', cried demonstrators, expressing hatred for the man rather than his policies; an ineffective tactic, though Sir Keith's muttered 'I hope it rains on them' betrayed a loss of cool. On his way into the Union, he dodged a few eggs - no doubt carefully intended as a shattering

indictment of this Government's 'grocer shop' economics. Once inside, he cleverly managed to convince an OUCA meeting that capitalism is the best economic system available at present.

Outside, the banners were waved and the chants chanted for the benefit of the cameras. After twenty minutes of this, the demonstrators became cold and bored. They wandered home, leaving St Michael's Street to the police and the press.

Steve Thomas

EXAM REFORM

At the beginning of Fifth Week, OUSU began a campaign to reform the University examination system. They set out to finalists and recent graduates over 1,000 copies of a questionnaire, in order to obtain their views on the present system. Although this move was not prompted by any specific injustice or anomaly, Philippa Thomas (Univ.), OUSU's Education Officer, feels that the system is 'long overdue for reform'. The questionnaire, aimed at those who have taken or are about to take Finals, covers a wide range of issues, and OUSU hopes to collate this

information into a report to be brought before University authorities at the end of Hilary Term.

The questionnaire deals with preparation for, as well as assessment of exams, and also asks for student opinion on such things as sub-fuse, automatically awarded MA degrees, and the unique practice of using only internal examiners, even for Finals. This 'closed shop' attitude has been attacked by both the NUS and the Association of University Teachers, and Thomas hopes that the NUS may be able to assist OUSU in pushing for reform.

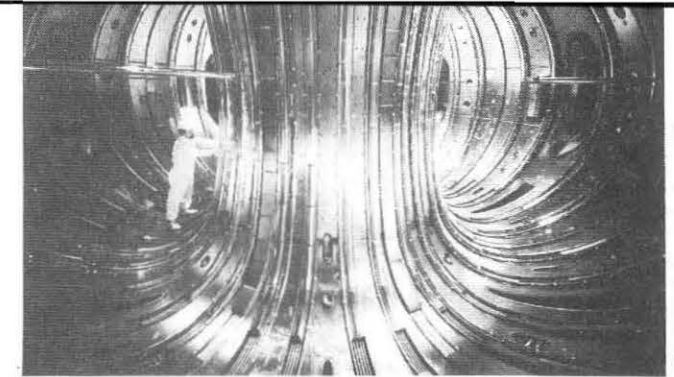
The questionnaire may be filled in anonymously, and this may elicit honest opinions on such questions as whether or not Finals should be concentrated into a very short period during Trinity, whether there should be a thesis option, and whether certain changes would help make the system fairer. Under the present system, students are completely failed for failing only one paper, viva-voce examinations for borderline candidates are strictly obligatory, and reassessment is impossible since papers are destroyed after marking, so that there exists no appeal

system for candidates who feel they have been unfairly treated.

After the disaffiliation of Wadham on the grounds of OUSU inaction, the question is whether OUSU is trying to re-establish credibility by manufacturing controversy. Philippa Thomas insists that 'we're not trying to be radical for the sake of it' - she feels strongly that 'real problems do exist' and that bringing them out into the open by means of this survey is an important first step towards a solution.

Simon Howarth

JET



© JET Joint Undertaking

International cooperation is one of the central themes of fusion research, so much so that it was one of the topics of discussion at the recent summit in Geneva. Britain is part of a joint European programme to discover the feasibility of fusion as an energy source. The Joint European Torus, or JET as it is more commonly known, has been based at Culham Laboratories near Abingdon since 1972, and it is the largest fusion experimental site in the world.

With continuing worries over the long-term safety of nuclear power stations, research is currently being carried out into the possibility of using nuclear fusion as a means of providing a far 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 together of the nuclei of hydrogen atoms. These fusion reactions release vast quantities of energy.

The Torus referred to in 'JET' is the doughnut-shaped chamber used to try to force the atoms of hydrogen together. Since they naturally repel each other, the temperature in 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 elec-

trical power. It is expected that the generating system will work using the energy released from the fusion reaction to raise steam and thus generate electricity in the conventional way.

The popular press have long hailed fusion as the panacea to the world's energy problems; unfortunately, the reality of fusion is a little different. Radioactivity will be generated and waste created. Waste 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 it may be that fusion proves not to be an economic means of generating power.

A continuous fusion reaction of the kind necessary to make power generation feasible should, according to sources at JET, 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.

Alan Harris

SOUTH AFRICANS IN OXFORD

The minute South Africa comes up in conversation, most people go little beyond a crude condemnation of apartheid. I spoke to some South Africans in Oxford to get a closer view of the situation, from people who have had to consider it more deeply.

Their frankness and eagerness to talk about their homeland seemed to reflect how keen they are to face the serious problems dividing their society. Perhaps, as one of them pointed out, they can afford the luxury of analysis because in Oxford they are abstracted from reality. One said, 'I enjoy the openness of being able to talk about it to people here.'

At a distance, it is obviously easier to isolate the problems, perhaps speculate on solutions. Even so, more than one confessed the vague fear of being monitored by the South African authorities. One person explained that participating actively in, say, Anti-Apartheid in Oxford might be misconstrued as advocating violent struggle and insurrection back home. But this

accepted that 'violence is inevitable', but few condoned it. The intransigence of the Afrikaners' Nationalist Party in negotiations with Blacks, particularly with the ANC, and the few unsatisfactory concessions already made, were seen as being 'too little, too late'. It was universally agreed that eventually 'for better or for worse' the Blacks must get the vote, and majority rule was the only possible solution.

However, views about how this should come about ranged, unsurprisingly, over a wide spectrum. Lyanda Lekalake saw South Africa becoming Azania ('the land of the black people') 'by the end of the decade'. In her opinion, the latest uprisings are part of 'the final offensive as far as black people are concerned'. Undoubtedly in the face of an increasingly violent cycle of rebellion inspired by black consciousness movements in Sharpsville, Soweto, major townships, and now even in outlying smaller towns, this is conceivable.

The people I spoke to

did not mean that one could not criticise the regime, though most of my interlocutors were anxious to remain anonymous, lest they should be misinterpreted.

For the white men, one aspect of this fear is that if they return to visit their families in South Africa they may be pressed into staying to do National Service, and prevented from returning to Oxford because of their views. Two years National Service is compulsory for male (white) citizens and can entail confrontation with insurgents, defending of a government they may not necessarily agree with. There is not much choice over this - either six years social work if one can prove religious objection; the risk of six years imprisonment in a military detention camp and then two years National Service, if one is thought to be shirking; or severing all connections with the country - these are the only options.

All of them categorically condemned apartheid. They were 'not at all sad' at the pressure for change. Most

emphasised that sanctions and disinvestment are very wide terms which need definition with respect to the types of interest harmed by the different forms of sanctions. Some thought it was the threat of stopping direct financial aid to the government in Pretoria which caused P. W. Botha to begin negotiations in the first place. However, they also thought that economic sanctions against industry might be harmful to the bargaining power of the liberal middle-class members of the Progressive Federal Party, who wish to dismantle apartheid.

One can only hope that the faith some South Africans in Oxford hold in the 'residue of goodwill' between Blacks and Whites will be reflected in the turn of political events in the future. Meanwhile the opportunities afforded by universities in the West, like Oxford, for frank discussion and free mixing between black and white students, be they South Africans or not, cannot but help to promote greater understanding.

Margaret Aird

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/grad status, party loyalty) there was overwhelming support for retention of the monarchy. Only among those who support the Labour Party and who are not British citizens did the margin of retention over abolition fall below 3 to 1. Prince Charles was universally popular among all subgroups, though Tories did cast a narrow plurality of their votes for the Queen Mother, who came in a close third overall. The Welsh Corgies 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 6% 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 foreign policy also makes a poor showing in Oxford. Almost half of those surveyed believe that the Reagan Administration has undermined the unity of NATO, and more Oxford students would blame the United States than the Soviet Union for the failure to reach an arms control agreement. Not surprisingly, Labour Party supporters were five times as likely to blame the United States for arms control failures than the University students as a whole, while Tories were three times as likely to blame the Soviets.

Oxford students show a very positive overall attitude toward the University, though almost half feel that their fellows are too politically apathetic and 10% of those surveyed were so apathetic that they had no opinion on the issue! Surprisingly, foreign students have the lowest opinion of Oxford 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 tasty - 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

1) If a national referendum were held whether to keep or abolish the monarchy, how would you vote?						
Keep: 75%		Abolish: 19%			Don't Know: 6%	
2) Which is your favourite member of the Royal Family?						
(ranked in order of preference)						
1. Charles	2. Anne	3. Queen Mother	4. Diana	5. Queen	6. Andrew	7. Others
3) Overall, do you have a favourable or unfavourable impression of this University?						
Favourable: 72%		Unfavourable: 16%		No Opinion: 6%		Don't Know: 6%
4) Overall, do you think students here are too politically active or too politically apathetic?						
Too active: 12%		Too apathetic: 48%		About right: 30%		Don't know: 10%
5) If the United States and the Soviet Union fail to reach an agreement at the Geneva summit, which country would be most responsible for the failure?						
Soviet Union: 13%		United States: 19%		Equal: 52%		Don't Know: 16%
6) Have the Reagan Administration's European policies undermined the unity of NATO?						
Yes: 47%		No: 30%			Don't know: 23%	
7) Which of the four following issues do you consider most threatening to Britain's future?						
Unemployment: 44%		Arms race: 30%		Inflation: 5%		Pollution: 6%
8) If the British General Election were held today, for which party would you cast your vote?						
Labour: 28%		Alliance: 34%		Conservative: 20%		Don't know: 18%
9) Regardless of which party you plan to support, which of the current party leaders would you most like to see as Prime Minister?						
Kinnock: 28%		Steel: 12%		Owen: 26%		Thatcher: 22%
Don't know: 12%						

GUFF AT THE TOP

Summit meetings are a spectator sport, and nobody expects them to be more than an exercise 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 Chernenko, the media have only been able to speculate on the acting ability of the present incumbent. This kind of ultimate entertainment for the benefit of news reporters is the sole 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 I. 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 - his 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 'fireside summit', Reagan still believes that the USSR 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 symbolically important regardless of the solutions they never provide. But the question prompted by Reagan's intransigence is precisely what do they symbolise. All that Geneva has symbolised is 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 differences between the two universities and their towns which 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 Liberation Theology, 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 back home 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 academics throw themselves into their reading and research and participate in argument and discussion without embarrassment. 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 ambition 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 services 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 tension 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' teas, Masters' sherry and waltzes are all part of the tradition, as are Finals clubs - all-male fraternities which are the Harvard equivalent of the Bullingdon. Although you don't have to be third generation Harvard or as WASP-ish as in the past to qualify for membership, there are still plenty of rules and prejudices surrounding these fraternities. Two years ago, the University threatened to cut off their finance if they did not allow women to become members; the fraternities chose to remain all-male and forfeit the financial backing.

The conservative backlash sweeping across the USA even affects this apparently liberal stronghold. In a mock election last year, Mondale received the majority of votes - but only just. And there are plenty of undergraduates and graduates who want to be investment bankers, go to Business School, and earn plenty of bucks, just like their Oxbridge counterparts whose aim in life is to be merchant bankers.

Undergraduates can get a raw deal here, often being taught in classes of a hundred, or even several hundred students, so the only time they get to see their tutor is when he or she is lecturing in those classes, 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 bad advice, about what courses they should take or in which subject they should major. In contrast, Harvard is renowned as a university for graduate work - and doing graduate work is much more 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 it - no fear of Finals, none of the horror of Schools.

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.

CENTRAL AMERICAN DIARY



Sitting on that goddamn dismal dirty converted school bus halfway between Tegucigalpa and Managua, I began to seriously ask myself what the hell I was doing spending the better part of my summer wandering through Central America. All the preppy frat boy types I go to school with were probably sitting poolside at the country club just then, while the most comforting thing I had to look forward to was five more hours of this Guatemalan evangelist telling me in broken English how much Jesus loves me. But I was disconsolate after the two live chickens some Indian had left hog-tied to a stick in the aisle below me had crapped all over my feet during the night.

I encountered my first alienated Central American Indian while sitting in the bar of the train station in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico. I had been fighting off sleep waiting for my train only out of fear of getting my wallet pinched in this overgrown red-light slum border town useful only to people looking to buy a cheap switchblade. Then this Indian woman walked in, wearing a kind of 'native costume' I had not seen before. All she had on was a tiny soiled white negligé. Her calves were caked with mud, her thighs covered with fresh scabs as though she had just been rolling around in barbed wire. She was just standing there obsessively combing her filthy hair and staring at me with a particularly crazed look in her eyes. She started following me around and I was soon surrounded by a pack of drunken workmen hooting and hollering like they were watching a good cockfight. Visions of

Yanqui lynchings and Mexican prisons filled by fatigued brain, and I only managed to scare her off by turning to one of the guys and saying, 'What does this chick want with me?' 'She wants you, gringo', came the answer, which they all evidently thought was really macho, and I spent the rest of the afternoon refusing offers of free shots of tequila and Mezcal worm.

Travelling through Guatemala as an outsider is not unlike travelling through Mississippi: both are particularly socially backward, repressive states, where looking 'straight' is a key element in not getting hassled. 'Straight' in Guatemala means that you cultivate the look of a refugee from a 1954 issue of 'Boy's Life' magazine.

Guatemala is the most beautiful country in Central America; it is blessed with emerald jungles and highlands, exotic wildlife like the quetzal, monolithic Mayan ruins, a gentle, colourful, hard-working indigenous population, and a rich supply of natural resources. The only catch is that Guatemala is run by an army that makes the Spanish Inquisition look like a bunch of grannies. A gang of brutal, machine-gun-toting hooligans with faces like ancient Olmec totems, the Guatemalan soldiers' favourite method is to disfigure their victims with the machetes they all carry. They have a chilling knack for giving contemptuous stares that let you know they would just as soon cut off your fingers knuckle by knuckle as let you pass their checkpoint.

A good 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-torn posters showing torture victims and armed students in ski masks, murals in memoriam to 'disappeared' classmates. Add to this tank battalions in Radcliffe Square and death squads roaming college corridors at night, and you may get the picture. The students are the only sector of the population to have maintained outspoken opposition to the regime throughout the terror of the last five years, so they keep getting killed even when the civil war slows down. The official government spokesman (a former head of military intelligence whose favourite gag is to remind visitors what an interesting chat they were having with so-and-so the other night) told me that it is necessary to keep raiding the University because it is the centre of international drug trafficking.

The closest I came to feeling in touch with the Guatemalan zeitgeist was flying with a military press junket to a highland province to see refugees returning from the camps in Mexico to be interned in 'model villages'. Modelled on the 'strategic hamlets' in Vietnam, these have been built by the army as a means of controlling the movement of the Indians, who are sympathetic to the guerrillas. It was rather ethereal, like some scene from 'Apocalypse Now', as we floated through low clouds and darted in and out of the channels between the sharp, teeth-like hills in an unmarked military helicopter.

Central America manages to attract the real 'fringe' foreigners. One afternoon, I walked out of the cathedral in Antigua, Guatemala to find about 100 Indians sitting in the plaza intently watching a bunch of suburban middle-class Americans dancing around in front of a cardboard stage dressed up as 'Mr Tree', 'Mr Rock' and 'Mr Bunny Rabbit', while a Salvadoran translated the biblical message over the kiddie music coming through the p.a. Later on, the young Arkansan who led the group told me that they had been travelling all over the Isthmus spreading the Word. 'The Salvadoran Army are some of the most receptive people to the Gospel I've ever seen', he said. 'You give them a Bible and they just sit down and read it. Right there. Amazing.'

Tegucigalpa, the Honduran capital, is like one big slum, with the notable exception of all the American-style hotels filled with U.S. military officers looking for some poontang, and geriatric generals playing black-jack as they turn sclerotic in their white tropical leisure shirts and lime green golf slacks. I also ran into a number of elusive American 'independent businessmen' who always seemed to be on their way when the word 'journalist' entered the conversation. In Comayagua, where the air base is situated, you find a lot of regular army soldiers, a pretty harmless bunch of rednecks and inner-city teenagers whose biggest impact has been to introduce Van Halen, Ozzy Osbourne and Run-DMC to the locals. But it was in a dirty neighbourhood bar in Tegucigalpa, waiting for a 4 a.m. bus, that I caught the real spirit of Honduras. My buddy and I were the only people in the place, run by two inbred looking women in their early thirties. An off-duty cop friend of theirs dropped by, and after a few drinks asked us if we 'rich Americans' wanted to meet some women. We were so bored that we decided to tag along just for kicks, and he led us into a little living room in the back. There was this fat madame who gave us beers as we watched some American cop show on the tube. She brought in the girls, a sorry looking bunch, and assured us that 'They're all clean. You want to see their certificates?' She was insulted when we passed, and I couldn't help thinking that this was the level to which Honduras has sunk: a bunch of battered, pathetic people whoring themselves off to sleazy Americans. We spent the next two hours pressured by the cop into dancing with the barmaids to the cheesy ballads on the jukebox, as they breathed on our necks and one told me all about her dead husband. Man, was I glad to get on that bus.

If there is a place that would be the ideal setting for a Mad

Max film, it is Managua. Neither Somoza nor the Sandinistas were able to do much rebuilding following the '72 earthquake, and the once elegant colonial downtown is now filled with abandoned shells of office buildings and shops, overgrown with prairie grass and cluttered with rusting tanks and armoured cars - like Hiroshima without the radiation. We had unwittingly told the cab driver at the bus station to take us to a hotel in the downtown area, and were given a \$10 a night room with no linen, one bare lightbulb, a pitcher of water, no mirror, peeling walls, and an exposed metal fan. The view looked right out onto the ruins, and the clerk, a teenage girl with a Ché T-shirt watching 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 populated by the strange combination of Conservative Party leaders (plantation owners from the provinces) and several Russian engineers who played chess, drank vodka and listened to Michael Jackson tapes all night. In the wee 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 kicked up the economy.

The black market currency exchange in Nicaragua is the best in the region, and having exchanged \$100 at the rate of \$1 to 240 cordobas (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 revolutionary books, posters, T-shirts, records, etc. (I now have several different translations of Muammar Qadhafi's 'Green Book').

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

The only consolation was that all the bourgeois steak-houses had survived the revolution, and we were able to eat like Texas cattle ranchers twice a day. Unbelievably, there is 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 fries for a tray, and flat Cola. At least they still have the pictures of Ronald McDonald and Mayor McCheese on the wall.

I suppose a good place to find the mood of the other side of life in Nicaragua is to visit the Herba Buena Libro Café, a Sandinista bookstore/bar serving expensive drinks and herbal teas to the internationalists who hang out there singing songs of the revolution before they head back to their \$95 a night rooms at the Hotel Intercontinental. The most enjoyably sociopathic thing to do in Managua is to go into Libro Café and say you think 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, although most of the time the Sandinista university 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 & Crosby and Johnny Cash impressions as we walked the 7 km no-man's-land let loose a few rounds over our heads to shut us up. So what? I made it back alive, and spent several days relishing the return to a land where the toilets have rims and covers, and you don't even need to supply your own paper.

Christopher T. Brown

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN

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 Mum waves 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 the 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 than 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 they were not Royal, we would not be commoners.)

The question is not whether the perceived otherness of the Royals - their embodiment (sanctioned by God, no less - or Henry VIII's version of Him) of traditional values - serves the interests of the status quo, but of which status quo? Fittingly, the latest development has been The Royals 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 than mere metaphor) can be extended to the older Royals too. Princess Margaret as the faded starlet after the audience has departed and the bouquets have wilted: '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 sips 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, soaraway 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 fringes 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 personifying more abstract institutions in the twentieth century, they would have no meaning without the image.

Indeed, rather than the media exhibiting a facet of the Royal Family, the Royal Family are only one part of the entire arsenal of opiates propagated by the media. And, as a numbing agent in troubled times, they're a helluva lot 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 soap powder 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 subversive 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 diverts energy (emotional and physical) away from our own lives. The stars are above us; they glitter, and they are unknown to us. They are shrouded 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 *par 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 is '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 fully human ourselves rather than partially (in?)human through identification with the qualities of others, is far from casual. The Royal Family provides a compulsory spectacular sideshow which we are expected to constantly emulate but can never be. 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 declare her uniqueness and her ordinariness. This is yet another falsification influencing our desires; as if any young woman with one 'O' level and a Mini Metro can catch a prince - and as if she should WANT to!

While our dreams continue to be expropriated in the name of Queen and Country (euphemisms for control), 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 'moral' indignation; 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 Royals themselves), our future can only be an endless repetition of the past. As Johnny snarled: 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 issue of *Vanity Fair* magazine and has caused more outrage than almost any other Royal piece. When it came out, several English papers 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. Unexpectedly, the Prince and Princess of Wales even appeared on television to reassure their subjects that she never spends 'hours cut off alone dancing to Dire Straights and Wham! on her Sony Walkman', and that he is not a 'wimp' who tries to get in touch with his uncle on ouija 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, has 'snaggle teeth, size nine feet and a face that would win the Grand National'; Serge Gainsbourg no longer has to try to look like the before picture in an advertisement for cosmetic surgery. Unfair, perhaps, but never malevolent; an inventive wit and an infectious enjoyment temper the sharpness of her perceptions.

Mainly because of the pressure of time, the article on Charles and Diana is the first she has written since she became the Editor of *Vanity Fair* at the beginning of 1984. 'Running a magazine in America is a completely different job. It's a huge money-making concern.' Her offices are in the swanky Condé-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 drunken 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 newsrooms. 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 blatantly sexist about it, she is far too pretty, with huge blue eyes and a frequent and dazzling smile.

But it would be a mistake to assume that Tina Brown's is a soft touch; she is determined and ambitious. At Oxford, perhaps in moments of hatless sobriety, she wrote award-winning plays, edited *ISIS*, and led an extraordinarily full social life. One of many boyfriends was Martin Amis. She worked hard on her articles, going all the way to Somerset to interview Auberon Waugh. He was utterly charmed and took her to *Private Eye* lunches and to various media parties where other captivated journalists offered her jobs in the national press. She went straight into work for *Punch* and *The Daily Telegraph*, and the articles from this period are hilarious. 'Why don't you become a nude centrefold?', the Editor of *Punch* once asked her, 'This magazine is short on human interest.' She never appeared in porn pictures but, for the sake of copy, she became a go-go dancer, toured behind the Iron Curtain with a rock group, hired male escorts and entered a bathing beauty contest at Butlins. In 1976 she was voted the most promising young woman journalist; she became the Best Young Journalist of 1977; and in 1979, at the age of twenty-six, she was made the Editor of *The Tatler*.

When she flew to New York to rescue *Vanity Fair*, she remarks, 'I had no real idea what I was getting into. The first year and a half was crucifixion, total crucifixion.' *The New York Times* had described the magazine as a 'discordant jumble of esoteric typefaces, jumpy layouts and self-consciously highbrow prose'. Launched only a year before at a cost of \$15 million, it had failed to attract readers and advertisers and reputedly Condé-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 beginning, I was battling with the perception of the magazine, everything here has to be like a Broadway show:



either a hit or a flop. *Vanity Fair* was seen to be a loser. Now it's rather disgusting: the status reading has gone up and there is endless slobbering flattery, freebies . . . ' Unfortunately, this has not yet proved sufficient incentive to advertisers. The October issue was only 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 that 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? 'I'm not sure; I'd like to come back to Oxford perhaps to do a condensed course in literature - the classics. I miss Oxford. Life afterwards is so directed, so structured. I still consider it as the happiest time of my life. But it depends on how much money I'm offered. Here, one is disproportionately well rewarded. And I find America very, very exciting; England feels like Lilliput in comparison. The sheer scale of the USA is exhausting and exhilarating. You can never say that you've made it in America; there's always somewhere higher to climb to.'

Georgia Metcalfe

POETRY

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

SCENE 59

Interior/Exterior. Night.

Outraged by her literary ambitions THOMAS HARDY decides to strangle his second wife. This intercut with a group of LITERARY PILGRIMS making their way up the muddy path that leads to the HARDY'S cottage. Headed by PROFESSOR QUIRT the PILGRIMS (V.O. throughout) intone:

THE HETERODIDACT'S LITANY

- Ext: *Knickers In Chaucer*
Pray for us.
Multiple Resonance Of Language
Pray for us.
Central Discipline Within The Humanities
- Int: TH. GOES TOWARDS MRS TH.
Pray for us.
Expanding Metaphor And Levels Of Meaning
Hear our prayer...
- Ext: *Belief In The Potency Of Imagination*
Hear our prayer...
Myth As A Source Of Knowledge And Power
- Int: MRS H. MOUTHS "NO! NO!"
Hear our prayer...
Internal/External Rhyme Of Particulars
TH. GRIPS HER THROAT WITH HIS HANDS
Have mercy on us!
- Ext: *Celebrant Of Nature's Splendid Impurities*
Have mercy on us!
Disambiguous Intertextuality
- Int: Have mercy on us!
Creative Tension and Diachronicity, Internal Structure And Metrical Directive
- Ext: PROFESSOR QUIRT KNOCKS ON THE COTTAGE DOOR
Have mercy on us!
- Int: THE HARDY'S COMPOSE THEMSELVES.
TH. TO HIS DESK. MRS H. TO THE KITCHEN.

Christopher Logue

LUCKY DUST

Music by Sally Groves

Read my Milton on a Greyhound bus.
Booked to Limbo City, Tennessee.
"Praise the way that lady does her eyes,"
Said the angel Gabriel to me.

Uptown squeezey traffic just but dusk.
Bought a double bed for 50c.
"Paradise obtained by lucky dust,"
Said the face that filled the room's TV.
"Help me," is close by,
"Save me," far away.
Fly today.

Midnight flicker 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 skylight beaming in two heads.
"Pick your friend before you check your key."
China faces beg each others eyes
"Turn this moment to eternity."

Christopher Logue

OPEN

for Jane te Riele

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

Then it rained two days without pause
And this morning the sky opened its silver case
And threw the sun, a Doge's ring,
On to the sea of land.

At once there were green strips coursing,
Young animals, up the hills,
The wry 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
panicking around my bed,

The earth, open now after the rain,
Risen green, glitters
Everywhere engaged.

Charles Leftwich

VISUAL



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 reaction not only to political events but to existing conventions in art. By means of violent colours and strokes, Kirschner and Meidner reify 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 fun 'expressing' his raging pagan disgust with the formal, representational, Christian world. His are teutonic tantrums par excellence.

Max Beckmann's work is among the most heroic in the exhibition. His later, war period paintings are Goya-esque in their grotesque portrayal of torture and death; gay circuses and parades parody the hypocrisy of National Socialism; his heavy, black strokes literally underline its horrors.

Although there is much wit in the hard, intellectual paintings of Dada and Neue Sachlichkeit, this is a grave humour. These surrealists used collage, photomontage and painting of a clinical, almost photographic sort to attack the bourgeois values of Weimar Germany. With their very literal approach, these works are perhaps more interesting as socio-political commentary than as art *qua* art.

Many of the exhibits might be better labelled 'Abstract Oppressionism', 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 four distinct political, rather than artistic, periods), it is a shame that National Socialist art has been omitted. Though one may disagree on the plausible grounds that 'propaganda is not art', it nonetheless seems like an eerie parody of the sweeping censorship of 'degenerate art' by the Nazis themselves.

The best paintings in terms of their purely artistic interest are those of the Swiss artist Paul Klee, who makes it into the show by virtue of having taught at the Bauhaus. The very structured orientation of Klee's paintings has the paradoxical

effect of making them seem comparatively free and lyrical. In constructions clearly influenced by Cubism, the subtleties of tone, line, colour and composition have much greater value. Compared to Klee's eminently plastic expression of a flat surface in a rhythm of tones, the formlessness of Expressionist *Geist* seems strangely homogenous and impersonal.

Stepping lively through the galleries of the grim Fifties (a bad time was had by all), zipping past The Zero Group (which speaks for itself), we come up to the Sixties and a return to the brushstroke and the figure, looming larger than ever before. Even the worst of these certainly do make up in size for what they lack in spirit. The best of the Sixties and Seventies is represented in the work of George 'upside-down' Baselitz and Penck. Back in Berlin with Baselitz we are confronted with the ineluctable Wall, dividing East and West and bifurcating man himself. The theme of alienation in an urban purgatory raises its ugly head once again. Baselitz's 'Last Supper' is particularly haunting in its violent squalor, although it is ambiguous to me how the vaguely apologetic practice (gimmick?) of turning everything upside-down enhances the effect of his paintings.

While some of the works of Penck seem distressingly fashionable, he does have a strong personal calligraphic iconography, reminiscent of Klee and of Egyptian hieroglyphs. One of his most delightful is the festive 'Metaphysical Passage Through a Zebra', which is like an ultra-trendy beach party on bubble-gum-pink sand; we all emerge a little stripier for the experience.

One leaves the exhibition with the inexorable impression of the overall deterioration in the standards of German art. This may only be apparent because we see it documented in 'movements' and there is clearly less and less concerted coherence as the century unfolds. This may just reveal that we live in an increasingly atomistic age, or possibly that stable democracy is bad for art. The unusual opportunity to get an overview of a whole century of a national art affords this kind of insight, but it should not obscure the plethora of great individual works on exhibit. The spectacular range and sheer volume of goodies which assault the senses and fire the 'social self' easily outweigh any criticisms of selection and mandate multiple viewing.

Isabel Fonseca

MUSIC

OXFORD BANDS

'Oxford audiences are too apathetic to throw anything at us', explains *Shake Appeal*, one of the many rock bands operating in and around the town at the moment. The local 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 difficult.

Most of the bands which play locally are not made up of students. The lack of a central University venue, and the complete absence of 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 knew the groups 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. This is nobody's fault, 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 to the extent that they are doing in somewhere like Manchester.

The impulse to move outwards has to come from the bands themselves. *Here Comes Everybody* definitely have higher ambitions. They take their melodic, Byrds-influenced music to as many local 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 in order to make a good demo tape. Recording locally has proved a great bonus for another local group, *Raindance*, who have sold 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 in 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* still have no P.A. of their own and no transport to move their equipment. Their only other option is to move to 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 vast metropolis.

There is room for 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, 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 determination, if the sessions are well enough recorded and if the distribution is effective, we might see some of these bands getting lucky.

Paul Bajoria

UNIVERSITY JAZZ

'Live at University College, Oxford' - ? Not quite The Marquee, you may say, but after launching itself onto the jazz scene with a performance of the Peter King Quintet, Univ's Musical Society clearly wants to be taken seriously as a venue. That concert was recorded and released this week as 'Ninety per cent of one per cent'.

The music from this concert is as exciting as its title is curious. Unafraid of innovation, the group remind us how wide the interpretation of the five essential jazz instruments can be. The band - Peter King (alto sax), Henry Lowther (trumpet), Spike Wells (drums), John Horler (piano), and Dave Green (bass) - produce a controlled variety that is born of maturity.

The four pieces from the recording encompass the new (Herbie Hancock's 'Eye of the Hurricane') and the old (Robinson/Hill's 'Old Folks'). The former begins with the bassist conducting a prolonged conversation of single notes with the pianist. The provocatively uncomfortable opening is steadily undermined by ripples on the saxophone which lead on to the frantic main theme. In 'Old Folks', Peter King's alto sax takes centre stage as he develops a depth of expression that is unique to jazz. His sensitive improvisation is followed by a soulful track, 'Peace', made so by Green's bass which stirs underneath the sharpness of the piano, and the concert finishes with the drum-orientated '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. Alternatively there is Univ's next jazz feature: the Phil Bates Trio with Don Weller on the Saturday of Seventh Week.

Rupert Boswall

WASO

St Paul's Theatre, Tuesday 12 November

Waso presented a unique evening for all jazz enthusiasts on Tuesday with an enchanting performance of gypsy swing lasting over three hours. It was a shame that only sixty people turned up for the pleasure of listening to this Belgian Hot Club Quartet.

Waso's cosmopolitan origins were clearly reflected in their music. Flamenco, Russian, Hungarian and French-influenced jazz pieces were all played with the same melodic - almost nonchalant - ease. Changes in style were paralleled by changes of instruments. Koen de Cauter, leader of the band, and Vivi Limberger both sang and played guitar and piano - the latter closing Part Two with a couple of vibrant gypsy pieces in the authentic Romany tradition.

But the outstanding musician of the evening was Bill Greenow, who played both clarinet and saxophone with equal dexterity. Sitting cross-legged and dead-pan for most of the performance, he occasionally rose slowly to fill the hall with a clear, harmonious solo. In contrast Michel Verstraeten, on string bass, and Vivi Limberger lost themselves from time to time in a confusion of rhythm - so confused in fact that Limberger was able to break a string, re-string and tune up during one song without noticeably detracting from the overall effect.

The faster pieces were played with great energy, drive and unity yet an air of relaxed humour pervaded throughout the performance. The musicians drifted from one rendition to another as unhurriedly as they drifted to and from the bar during intervals. Perhaps this explains Koen de Cauter's incoherence in the preamble to each song. Not that it mattered anyway since the titles have no immediate resemblance to the material.

Each song hinted at an underlying attitude of 'take it or leave it'. Just so with their very distinctive version of 'Nature Boy' - introduced by de Cauter as 'a tune we don't know very well'. This individuality of interpretation is Waso's strength. By combining the folk music of various European cultures whilst maintaining a broad jazz structure, they have succeeded in creating an original yet accessible style of music.

Nick Hanson

MUSIC

BACH AND LLOYD WEBBER

Oxford Pro Musica, Sunday 10 November

To have such a programme of music on Remembrance Sunday was entirely appropriate. All three pieces - the two Cantatas by Bach, and Andrew Lloyd Webber's Requiem Mass - commemorate the dead.

Both Cantatas (nos. 118 and 106) were written for funeral services; the most moving was the second (no. 106), contrasting Death in the Old and New Testaments. The choir were mainly accurate, after a shaky start, but the soprano solo (Alexander L'Estrange) gave the work its definition and emotional impact.

The crowd-puller of the evening was the Oxford Premiere of the Requiem. The angular and cacophonous opening to the work immediately recalled 'Joseph' and 'Evita'. They were soon forgotten as the Mass assumed its own identity, and did not emerge again until the Hosanna, where the Lloyd Webber touch 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 overshadowed by a strident drum beat - particularly in the Dies Irae and Lacrymosa.

This is a very testing piece of music for the soloists. The soprano (Christina Collier) struggled with her many entrances on high notes. William Kendall, the tenor, 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 to be heard and experienced 'in the flesh' rather than via recordings, and the overall impression is of a forceful, exciting and original work.

Anna Horsbrugh

SIOUXSIE AND THE BANSHEES

Oxford Apollo, 14 November

I must confess to having lost track of the Banshees' musical exploits over the past five years. Having once known the discordant punk-primordial music of the 'Join Hands' era, I did not know what to expect from the two 'skeletons' who escorted a hobbling Siouxsie 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-and-lighting display inextricably entwined with some swirling, charging and hypnotic music. The Banshees deliberately distanced themselves from their audience. 'Dazzle', 'Cascade', 'Melt', 'Nightshift' - all songs were unannounced. 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 'Arabian 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 happily as was the latest, 'Cities in Dust'. This was a pleasing approach from a band which still managed to convey a feeling of musical progression.

Perched on her stool or standing straight-legged, rays of coloured light seemingly emanating from her person, Siouxsie still plays the ice-scream 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 orgy of strangely compelling noise. Oxford Apollo paid due homage.

Phil Dawson

PLAYS

MACBETH

Newman Rooms, Fifth Week

Here was 'Macbeth' with a difference. Gone was the blasted heath and in its place hung a huge skeleton around which the witches gibbered and crawled, falling about with laughter at the mere mention of Macbeth.

For Alex Hardy's (modern dress?) production one had to abandon rapidly any pre-conceived ideas about the play. Whether one agrees with Andrew Mulligan's interpretation 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 by no means fiend-like in her invocation to the evil spirits - the more minor roles were emphasised to make this a very balanced production, with Wes William's 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 gratuitous in its violence as the murderers lay back in armchairs, smiling callously, waiting for their turn to rape her. James Brown's Macduff was actually likeable, left sobbing on the floor after the news, whilst a very public-school Malcolm (Freddie Bavistock) 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 recorded and played from the darkness as the brothers parted in the gloom.

This is not to say that the major roles were inconspicuous, though Banquo, played by Peter Wingfield, and some mockingly cheerful music in the banquet scene, was rather too much on the sidelines. But the Macbeths were, for once, human. From the perfect wife and hostess, Lady Macbeth was reduced to stumbling about, scrubbing the floor as well as her hands to remove the bloodstains, and her husband, from a friendly chap with a sense of humour, became a lonely, apathetic figure, stating without a trace of self-pity that he had lived long enough. By the end of the play, peace seemed so desirable that Malcolm did not come across as the spoilsport. Macbeth's death was a relief for everyone, and the final procession with lanterns the only possible ending.

Helena Hird

SOFT WHITE KIDS IN LEATHER

Lindsay 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 Lindsay 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.

Delia (Sue Woodhead) was supposed to have ended a relationship with Dean the artist (Andy Peters) in favour of the idealistic young hippy Andrew (played by Jon Prestwich). An eternal triangle indeed - yet one was not convinced of latent hostility, sexuality, or even particular interest between the three of them. This was the fault of poor direction and a weak script rather than of the players themselves.

Sue Woodhead's portrayal of the poor little rich girl, the anorexic surviving on pills and men in a struggle to stay among the 'in' crowd, was particularly good. Her natural sense of stagecraft often brought the flagging drama back to life.

The cameo role of Lucy Capito as the Kohl-eyed Female Fan produced the best laughs of the evening. Michael Diamond as the sycophantic doctor syringeing any passing



R. Scoffin

Kate Fenwick and Kate Pickford as Queen Elizabeth and Princess Eboli

thigh set a tone for the play which it could not, unfortunately, sustain.

Andrew (Jon Prestwich) worked hard, but his part as the idealist turned decadent required a transition with which the script did not provide him. Only in his relationship with Loring (Luke Medding), which developed into unspoken lust, was there the sexual electricity which 'Soft White Kids in Leather' required.

The script was empty except for a load of psychedelic clichés that even Andy Warhol would have blushed to write. The only really successful moments came when the play fell into comic parody.

Anyone who decides to stage a play about New York should remember that very few Oxford undergraduates can speak like Soft White American kids. The prevalent mid-Atlantic drawl in this production was disconcerting. Even more so was the lame moralising on the perils of being a 'beautiful person' in the druggy Sixties.

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

Jessica Douglas

DON CARLOS

by Schiller

The Playhouse, Sixth Week

Don Carlos, heir to the Spanish throne, loves his step-mother, Elisabeth of Valois, and his personal rebellion against his unloving father leads him to espouse the political views of his childhood friend, the Marquis of Posa, who is opposed to the King's repressive policies in Flanders. The prince's attempt at military revolt 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 and passion, political pragmatism and youthful idealism, the severity of orthodox religion and a faith in humanity and nature.

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 intrinsically 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! Sam Kily-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 Weihe as the Marquis of Posa was diffident rather than prophetically inspired, and the scenes involving exchanges between these two characters were the worst in the play: a disgusting display of mawkish 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 (Hossein 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 Harrap 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.

Fiona Tomkinson

FILMS

Polished and well produced, *'Cocoon'* documents the by now rather familiar theme 'Aliens meet Men', and though possessed of some annoyingly familiar sci-fi clichés gets away with them by its unusually human characterisation. 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 hired out by what turn out to be neon aliens in rubber human-suits, searching for colleagues left behind in the collapse of Atlantis. Three OAPs have unwittingly stumbled into a life-force-imbued swimming pool, used to re-energise the rescued aliens. The old folks run back to their retirement home and, predictably, they are not believed. Without re-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 a gorgeous Tahnee 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 raptures of ecstasy - 'If this is foreplay, I'm a dead man' - ought to go down in the list of great one-liners alongside *Ghostbuster'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 their peers.

Unfortunately, Ken Russell does not provide what you would call sex interest. His *'Crimes of Passion'* deals with a posh girl who leads a double life as a whore (and swears a lot) and a rather nice guy facing the breakdown of his marriage to a high-school sweetheart. Pursuing the girl is Anthony Perkins, a 'Psycho' reverend who wants to save her soul by killing her with a huge vibrator - 'A man of words: you make up in diction what you lack in dick', she tells him. Banal direction and photography is interrupted once (and apparently pointlessly) by a cheap-looking 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 fantasies in which our heroine is asked to participate, and ultimately reveals the true generosity and warmth of the métier when she is paid by a loving wife to indulge the needs of a frustrated husband. The escapism of *China Blue's* (her 'nom de chambre') S'n'M interests reveals chronic insecurity - 'That hotel is the safest place in the world: I can be anything, anyone . . .' The film's climax (well, one of the many) comes as Perkins begins 'one more game, 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 recognise it'. But I was unconscious with boredom long before that.

'The brightest new talent in American films', wrote one critic of Penelope Schneer's *'Suburbia'* which, it has to be said, is something of a condemnation of the American film industry today. It's easy to be negative about an idea like this, but then it's a negative film.

Following the likes of *'Rumblefish'* and *'Over The Edge'*, this 'teenagers in revolt' movie concerns a group of punks who call themselves the 'T.R. kids': The Rejected. There's Evan whose mother's an alcoholic, Jack whose father's a homosexual, not forgetting Joe's father who's a policeman and is black (Joe is white, incidentally). And these were the lucky ones; the rest didn't even have parents. The plot - and there's not an awful lot of it - centres mainly on the T.R. kids sitting around in their T.R. house wallowing in self-pity: 'Mum says I'm just a pain in the arse', wails one twelve-year-old punk as his bedtime story is being read to him. They're the products of America's suburbia, or, as their parents call it, utopia.

Everything is a symbol of rejection: the looting 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 so unconvincing, 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 Launderette' is a film so sharp it nearly cuts itself. It advertises itself as just another street-wise and street-cred movie with the odd sidekick at homosexuality and the National Front. What it is really about is Thatcherism, materialism, racism, sexism, homosexuality, and the family. These are all smartly and slickly vetted in the film. A gay young Pakistani whose father takes to his bed and the bottle decides that further education is not for him and that it's hard cash and fast cars he's after. Through the family, whose connections and internal wranglings make *'The Godfather'* look like Andy Pandy, he is landed with a seedy launderette in a down-and-out backstreet. The film concerns his miraculous tarting-up of this hole with the help of his sultry, pouting boyfriend Johnny. Omo and Johnny, the enterprising pair, turn the place into what looks like an up-market hairdresser's salon complete with Habitat bean bags and aquarium. Along the way, there are a couple of long love scenes, more than a few bloody scrapes, and over a million one-liners that illuminate the script like Blackpool fairy lights.

Like *'Boys from the Blackstuff'*, *'My Beautiful Launderette'* looks like it's heading for cult status. It's a snappy, up-to-date, off-beat 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 atrocities are commonplace. High school history teacher Alicia remains safely protected from the political maelstrom by her husband Robert's success in business - until the reunion with a close friend (Ana) brings the issue home. Ana recounts stories of torture and rape, and mentions the possible disappearance of her own five-year-old daughter Gaby, who has been adopted by one of the 'families that don't ask questions'. Alicia begins a clandestine enquiry into Gaby's origins, becoming aware of the world outside her dinner-party set for the first time. Her marriage and the 'official' illusion are both dealt destructive blows by the exposure of unpleasant reality, accompanied by an innocent rendition of the recurrent song 'In the land of I don't remember' by Gaby, who has learnt the words.

Norma Aleandro's stirring performance as Alicia well deserved the accolade of Best Actress which it received at Cannes this year, but hers is by no means the film's only excellent interpretation. Luis Puenzo has created a haunting film that poses more probing questions about what happened during the years of 'the Protest', such as why it was ever allowed to happen.

Kate Davies
Karin Galil

Jason Kingsley
Alex Connock
Richard Downes



BOOKS

BEYOND POWER: WOMEN, MEN AND MORALS

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 intellectually) than Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Inside this excellent doorstop, 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 takes 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 impressively 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 coloured by French's thesis that the wielding of power by men over women has developed virtually in line with civilisation. She obviously has a clear understanding of the different senses of the word '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 neces-

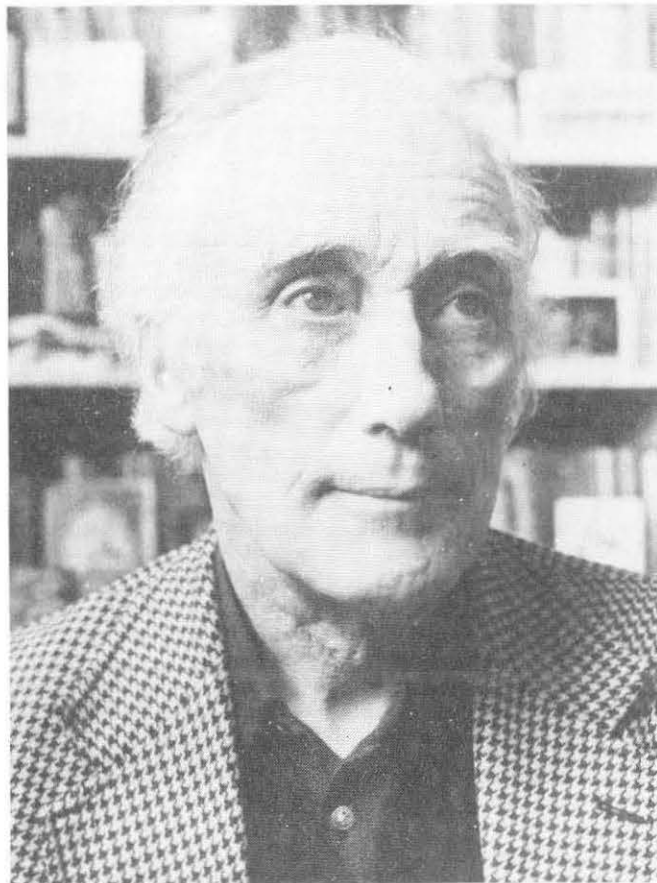
sarily make them powerful (or even autonomous), particularly as in many cases we are then told that they were and are excluded from male hunting rituals. It may simply be the case that power has less significance as a goal in a simple society.

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 power 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 at best an inadequate solution to women's oppressions, 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. Pleasure is 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 organisational 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



COLLECTED POEMS

by Norman Mac Caig
Chatto & Windus, 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 exuding a sort of joyful innocence, at its worst, however, it can be quite abysmal. 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 'clanking beast guzzles a ton of muck', 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.
(*'You Went Away'*),

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

The frontier is never
somewhere else. And no stockade
can keep the midnight out.
(*'Hotel Room, 12th Floor'*).

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 Mac Caig'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 on those rare occasions when he *does* go further afield 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, revealing an undisguised contempt for politicians of all types, are by far the most powerful and compelling.

Mac Caig 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
by cant and brutal self-seeking,
must I be silent about
the useless waterlily, the dunno'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 Mac Caig.

Tim Jotischky

THE CATHOLIC

by David Plante
Published by Chatto & Windus, £8.95

This book is about isolation, perhaps the commonest human failure of our age, but it treats isolation in philosophical, rather than human, terms. Dan Francoeur, the narrator, is haunted by a sense of sin that makes him despise himself, yet he feels too distanced from others to be able to join their world. He cannot love what is the same as him, 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 concentration on detail emphasises the way in which the novel's world differs from the author's, but the jargon tries to fit the world into sameness. These elements never cohere.

This is also true of the characters' problems. Dan concentrates 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 perverted.

This is self-centred: he imagines people as he wants them to be, rather than interacting honestly with them. 'I'm always interpreting what you say and do', Dan complains. And this 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 so determined by its linguistic categories that it cannot develop beyond them. It is not a novel, but an epistemology.

Andrea Kirkby

THE WAR OF THE END OF THE WORLD

by Mario Vargas Llosa
Faber, £9.95

'We play the part of heroes because we're cowards, the part of saints because we're wicked; we play at being because we're liars from the moment we're born.' Sartre's maxim was the epilogue to Vargas Llosa's first novel, *Time of the Hero*, twenty years ago, and these misconceptions, or rather confusions, lie at the heart of the Peruvian novelist's latest work, *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 work is set in the 1890s in the backlands of Brazil - it describes how a fanatical preacher known as 'the Counsellor' inspires a band of motley disciples and criminals to rebel against the new Republic, believing it to be the Anti-Christ. The Counsellor, initially an itinerant preacher, establishes a utopian community 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.

Vargas Llosa's work is animated history infused with the blood and guts of revolutionary conflict. Suspense is subordinated to the intensity of the drama. Baron de Canabrava's sexual awakening takes up ten pages of detailed narrative description, and Vargas 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 ritually slicing off Republican phalli 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 Canudos mitigates the momentum of the earlier scenes and the peripatetic escapades of the Counsellor gathering his flock. The dénouement of the novel is the annihilation of Canudos, leaving nearly 40,000 killed.

Canudos is symbolic of Latin American rebellion today. The Counsellor's followers are beguiled by his fanaticism while the intolerance of the progressive Republicans is prompted by their own incomprehension. But the phenomenon of Canudos itself defies rational explanation: 'Here something different from reason governs men, time, death: something that it would be unfair to call madness and inaccurate to term faith or superstition.'

In the novel the eccentric Scottish revolutionary Galileo Gall tries to interpret Canudos in terms of class warfare. A phrenologist by profession, he takes a vow of chastity to preserve his vitality for the revolution. Ironically, his mental deliberations seem more commensurate with sexual frustra-

tion than revolutionary fervour: 'Would his penis get hard at the supreme moment as was said to happen to men who were drowned or were beheaded?' The European intellectual's ideas do not grasp the realities of the popular movement.

Vargas Llosa himself cannot totally demystify the historical Canudos; consequently it remains a rather confused metaphor for rebellion. However, *The War of the End of the World* succeeds on another level as a great 'adventure' novel with American roots. It is a formidable work in its evocation of nineteenth century history, and its intellectual dynamism is sure to establish the author as a future contender for the Nobel Prize.

Sebastian Shakespeare

STARS AND BARS

by William Boyd
Penguin, £2.95, 348 pp.

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 that can go wrong does. Twice.

This book does not deliver on its initial promise - an impressionistic survey of the new America - though that's undoubtedly half of what Boyd was trying for. Over 200 pages are spent in the Loomis household, and its cast of crazy inhabitants and crazier situations diverts the impressionistic stream and comes close to farce. Perhaps that's slightly unfair; Boyd does eventually realise the intriguing suggestion that this Wodehousian absurdity is linked with Sartre's metaphysical 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 twaddlings, 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 *Money*, published at the same time and due out in paperback soon. Boyd is good on local detail, as you'd expect a travel novelist to be; his descriptions of local radio in C&W land are painfully accurate out-takes from '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 of that.

Michael Walker

THE HEALTH FOOD GUIDE



Robert Spicer

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 chainstore with the disadvantages of the small shop with guaranteed sales: unfriendly service, overpackaged products, and it's *expensive*. Better is **Beanfreak** in 'Omni' on George Street, with a bit of everything at a more reasonable price - and a wider selection of more basic foodstuffs like beans, flour and muesli.

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 'Healthy Eating', 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 23 have been blacklisted as causing hyperactivity in children, and a further 17 have been shown to be dangerous to asthmatics 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 about as much good as **E621** - 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 19-25% 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? *Easy* - 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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Monday, 2 December 1985

Randolph Hotel

Presentation and
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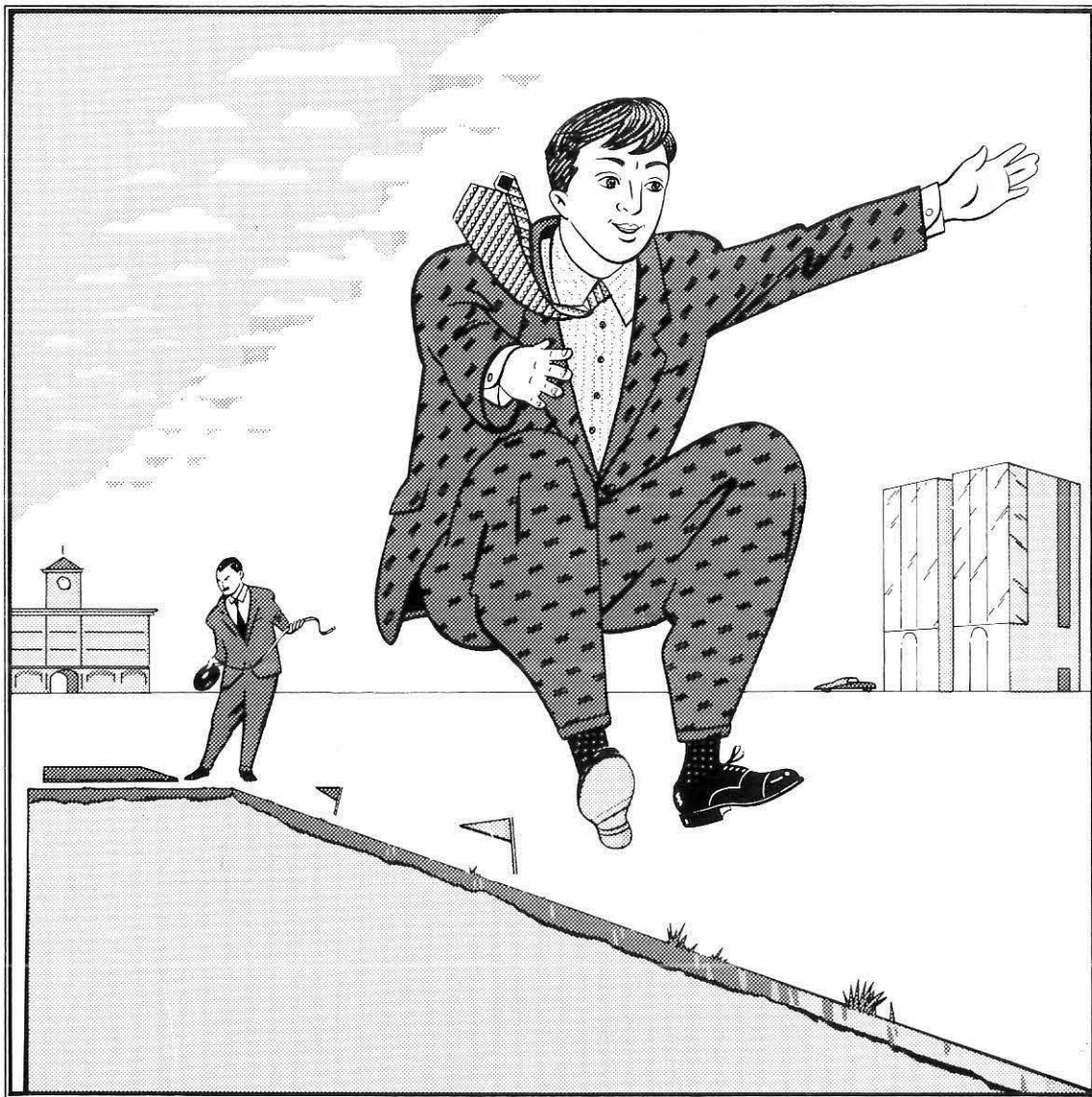
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