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## Art

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**Judith Collins**

EDUARDO PAOLOZZI  
304pp. Lund Humphries. £45.  
978 1 84822 131 4

Judith Collins takes the reader on an exhilarating journey through the life and work of Edward Paolozzi in what must be the definitive study of this major force in twentieth-century art. She moves chronologically, starting with Paolozzi's immigrant Italian family in Edinburgh and moving on to London and the Slade (in 1945). Here Paolozzi became friends with his fellow students Nigel Henderson and Richard Hamilton, and made his first experimental sculptures in plaster and coloured concrete. It was here too that he began, by using war-damaged books, what was to be his lifelong preoccupation with collage.

Following the success of his first exhibition at the Mayor Gallery, London, in 1947, Paolozzi moved to Paris where he was introduced to Alberto Giacometti and, through him, Brancusi, Jean Arp and Léger. He also befriended many Americans – GIs still in Europe after the war – and from whom he gathered American magazines and comics. These publications reflected a rich and colourful other world. Minnie Mouse, Dr Pepper, pictures of fruit salad, aeroplanes, toys, cans of tuna and movie stars: Paolozzi fell on this material with scissors and gusto, cutting and pasting them into collages and a new reality.

Returning to England, he began making sculptures in bronze, combining imagery of both man and machine, with titles such as “St Sebastian” and “Japanese War God”. He continued to make bronzes throughout the decade, up to his first exhibition in America at Betty Parsons, New York, in 1960. Invitations came to teach and work in Germany and, in 1962, he began working in aluminium, eschewing fine art bronze-casting foundries in favour of industrial factories and techniques. The emerging process of screen printing also took his attention at this time and he began his prolific association with Chris and Rose Prater at Kelpra Studio, where they pioneered techniques, many reproduced in this book – pulsating abstract patterns combined with cartoon characters, electronic circuits and objects past and present.

Paolozzi is perhaps the most commissioned artist of the past fifty years. His sculptures are seen throughout the world, whether it is the giant bronze “Newton After Blake” in the forecourt of the British Library, “Osaka Steel”, or the immense bronze “Vulcan”, currently displayed on “The Line”, a modern art trail which stretches from Greenwich to Stratford in east London. His work has also appeared in the form of ceramics, books, film, the glass tiles in Tottenham Court Road Underground station (recently partially destroyed by rail expansion),

even on a dress worn by the young Queen Elizabeth II, and wherever it is, it is instantly recognizable. In an age when the lights switched on and switched off, dust settles on the unmade bed, and artists themselves become the subject of their art, this beautifully produced book proclaims that one man, while thoroughly embedded in modernity, was still able to look to the traditions of antiquity, and attempt to make an answer to the Greeks with his own bare hands.

LAURENCE WHITFIELD

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## Sport

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**Edward Brooke-Hitching**

FOX TOSSING, OCTOPUS  
WRESTLING AND OTHER  
FORGOTTEN SPORTS  
258pp. Simon and Schuster. £12.99.  
978 1 471 14900 9

In *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, Rebecca West imagines the soon-to-be-assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand surrounded by hordes of the creatures that had fallen victim to his passion for hunting. I'd always wondered if she was exaggerating about the destruction our ancestors wrought on the animal kingdom in the name of having a good time. Edward Brooke-Hitching's entertaining survey of history's most bizarre and dangerous sports implies that, if anything, she was guilty of understatement. After a few pages I began a tally – 7,941 squirrels (the work of one day's “Barking”), 687 foxes (tossed to death by Augustus II of Poland) – but was soon defeated by the mounting piles of furry bodies.

Perhaps the violence inherent in most of these games is less surprising when one considers that, in many cases, their primary function was to act as informal training for war – though young soldiers schooled thus would have been surprised to discover that their opponents on the battlefield could fight back. Consider puntgunning: it involved blowing waterfowl to pieces

with guns that weighed over 200 pounds, and could obliterate an entire flock with one blast.

Among the blood and feathers, Brooke-Hitching is perceptive about the way many of these games did their share of cultural heavy lifting – as ways of transmitting information across generations, or re-affirming shared beliefs. But the real joy here is in the boundless silliness on show. For instance, one learns that, if there's a long-established activity that hasn't suffered the indignity of botched mechanization, it's only because the Americans haven't got around to trying yet (auto polo looks magnificent, albeit lethal); that deer, though fast, lack any kind of competitive instinct; and that, during the 1820s, being a gibbon was no barrier to becoming a sporting celebrity.

The introduction suggests reasons why these pastimes fell into oblivion: danger to the participants; a belated awareness of cruelty; and recognition of ridiculousness. It's tempting to speculate which of the games we play now will go the way of cat head-butting and human fishing. Whatever happens in the future, and considering the British government's vexed position on foxhunting, it seems certain that mankind will continue to devote much time and ingenuity to the serious business of fun.

JOSH IRELAND

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## Politics

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**W. J. Berridge**

CIVIL UPRISINGS IN MODERN  
SUDAN  
The “Khartoum Springs” of 1964 and 1985  
293pp. Bloomsbury. £65.  
978 1 4725 7401 5

Thirty years ago, large crowds of protesters swept away an unpopular and increasingly erratic dictator in Khartoum. It was the second time in Sudan's post-independence history that the people had overthrown a military ruler – yet these Sudanese revolutions have received so

little attention abroad that many journalists and commentators mistakenly described the Arab Spring revolts that began in Tunisia in late 2010 as the first to shake the Arab world. Even several of the major English-language scholarly works on Sudanese history devote relatively little attention to the popular uprisings of 1964 and 1985. In this thoroughly researched book, W. J. Berridge puts this right, and examines the prospects for a third Sudanese spring that might one day overthrow Omar al Bashir, the country's current military ruler, who seized power in a coup in 1989.

Berridge has dug deeply into contemporary Arabic- and English-language accounts of the revolutions and the short democratic periods that followed them, and conducted an impressive number of interviews with the students, trade unionists, lawyers, politicians and soldiers who played prominent roles in 1964 and 1985. The resulting analysis is nuanced: Berridge denounces a facile opposition between secularists and Islamists, noting “the folly of defining anti-regime uprisings in the Islamic world as either ‘secular’ and ‘democratic’; events based on ‘civil society’ that rely on imported European leftist and liberal thought, or ‘religious’, ‘anti-democratic’ movements driven by political Islam”. Many of the most prominent Islamists who participated in the two Sudanese uprisings did so in part in the name of the people; and as Berridge shows, leftist movements in the post-revolution period sometimes attempted to forestall truly democratic elections. In Sudan, at least by the 1980s, popular support for the Left had dwindled.

The author considers the differing roles in the two uprisings played by political parties, the armed forces and the “Modern Forces” – as students, professionals and union members were known in Sudan. The tensions between the revolutionaries that undermined both subsequent transitional periods are comprehensively examined. In fact, such is the level of detail, the casual reader may perhaps struggle to keep hold of the thread of events. A short, clear account of what actually happened in 1964 and 1985 at the very start of the book would have helped; instead, the text veers almost immediately into analysis of why the Sudanese revolutions have been largely forgotten or misinterpreted. Nevertheless, *Civil Uprisings in Modern Sudan* stands as the definitive account of two curiously overlooked revolutions.

JAMES COPNALL

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## Memoirs

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**Léon Werth**  
33 DAYS

Translated by Austin D. Johnston  
144pp. Melville House. Paperback, \$16.  
978 1 61219 425 7

“He lives in France, where he is hungry and cold”, wrote Antoine de Saint-Exupéry in his dedication of *Le Petit Prince* to his “best” friend, the Jewish writer and art critic Léon Werth (1878–1955). “He needs to be comforted.” Werth was then trapped in German-occupied France; Saint-Exupéry had made it to the United States. The two men never saw each other again. For the first time, Werth's short book on “l'exode”, the flight south of some 8 million French people in the early summer of 1940, has been brought together with the introduction that Saint-Exupéry wrote for it, “Letter to a Friend”, both texts at various points lost.

Much has been published in recent years (not least works by Irène Némirovsky) on the great exodus of cars, horse-drawn carts, prams, wheelbarrows, vans and bicycles that flowed south from Paris towards the Loire. *33 Days*, which Werth wrote while in hiding, is a remarkably vivid description of this chaotic river, its vehicles abandoned by the roadside, its dead horses rotting in ditches, its hungry and desperate families and those who preyed on them, its defeated and demobilized French soldiers, and, soon, the exultant Germans, swooping through their conquered lands.

Werth and his wife soon run out of petrol. They find refuge first with a woman who loves Germany with an “exhibitionist passion”, and whose “dull soul had been infected by a crazed lip service to order, even Hitler’s order”. Escaping her hateful company, they are taken in by a generous farmer and his wife, but must soon share the farm with changing platoons of German soldiers – big, blond men, “death’s heads topped with flax”. Long before France was ensnared in “le temps des autruches” (“the time of ostriches”) – the complicated game between occupiers and occupied – Werth was writing of their troubled relations with delicacy.

Saint-Exupéry, younger than Werth by twenty-two years, regarded his friend as his literary mentor. His “Letter” is an elegy to their friendship, to France, to his roots. Werth survived the war in a small village in the Jura, where he was indeed hungry. Saint-Exupéry did not. His plane disappeared while on a reconnaissance mission over the Mediterranean in July 1944. *33 Days*, admirably translated by Austin Denis Johnston, is a beautifully written portrait not just of the shock of sudden occupation, but an eloquent essay on the meaning of how to remain human, even in the face of such confusing adversity.

CAROLINE MOOREHEAD

## Food

**Hsiang Ju Lin**

SLIPPERY NOODLES

A culinary history of China

272pp. Prospect Books. Paperback, £18.

978 1 909 24837 3

Few countries can claim a culinary history as long, diverse and above all, literate, as China’s. In *Slippery Noodles: A culinary history of China*, Hsiang Ju Lin draws on over three millennia of sources – some in their first English translations – to piece together the technology, tastes and cultures that have shaped Chinese food since antiquity. The book encompasses cookbooks, household manuals, Confucian classics, banquet menus, poetry, books of tea and incense, an erotic novel and more.

Hsiang begins with China’s oldest surviving cookbook, Jia Sixie’s sixth-century *Essential Skills for Common Folk*, then leaps nearly 2,000 years back to antiquity. From there she proceeds more or less chronologically to modern times. Despite the deliberately “informal style” intended for the “general reader”, the structure may lose all but the most devoted, as the first eight chapters of extensive quotation from Jia’s cookbook give the erroneous impression that the volume consists of nothing but unwieldy recipes (“[build] a special hut with a roof made of straw”; “heat over a cow-dung fire”; “do not use barley planted in spring”).

That said, persistence is amply rewarded. This study is a rich tapestry of texts and details.

The variety of sources, including the food writing of “gentleman cooks”, who took great pride in eating well, lends a lyrical quality which pervades the entire work. In the sixteenth century BC the cook Yi Yin speaks of phoenix eggs, flying fish and a “longevity tree” whose fruit “is said to confer immortality”. Of a roasted suckling pig, Jia writes, “the meat melts in the mouth like snow”. A century later, the poet Du Fu evokes a chef slicing raw fish: “Swiftly he wields the knives right and left. / Snow-white slices drift down on the golden plate”.

For the most part Hsiang maintains a translator’s distance, deftly weaving together her sources, broad historical context and some detective work (on soy sauce or kitchen timers, for example). Sometimes this distance is frustrating: why were only married women employed as wine-makers in the Royal Palace of 350 BC? Was one Ming Dynasty playwright’s chapter on “Plants for Famine Relief” required often, and if so, by whom? Surely very different readers to those intended by a Qing Dynasty poet with the instruction, “Get a dozen of the servants’ children to remove the [sparrows] insides with their fingers”.

*Slippery Noodles* aims to plot the story of Chinese cuisine against its shifting cultural backdrop. Given the vast time span, geography and array of socioeconomic contexts in question, it is impossible to believe in any one story – but the many told here are illuminating.

MARION RANKINE

## Film

**Stephen M. Hart**

LATIN AMERICAN CINEMA

224pp. Reaktion. Paperback, £18.95.

978 1 78023 365 9

In Buenos Aires in the 1990s, cinemas were elegant old picture palaces operating an unofficial pension top-up scheme. An elderly man at the door to the auditorium sold you an obligatory “programme” (a photocopied sheet of adverts). Another elderly man got a tip for showing you to your seat. An elderly woman sat at the door to the Ladies selling squares of toilet paper. Woe betide the cinemagoer who arrived short of change.

There was nothing old-fashioned about the films, though. As Stephen M. Hart shows in this informative and approachable survey, Latin American cinema found its own style early on. Its characteristic gritty realism came to be dubbed “imperfect cinema”, in contrast to the slicker, blander offerings from Hollywood. The Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa may have set the tone when he agreed to delay executions for the benefit of an American documentary filmmaker who complained that the light wasn’t good enough at 4 am. “The executions will take place at six. But no later. Afterwards we march and fight. Understand?”

It was *Los Olvidados* (1950), a portrait of Mexico’s slum-dwellers by the Spanish director Luis Buñuel that formed a “bedrock” for later films like Héctor Babenco’s *Pixote* (1980), with its bleak depiction of street children in Rio de Janeiro. Fernando Meirelles’s *Cidade de Deus* (*City of God*, 2002) also used untrained actors to portray gang life in Rio. Even more commercial films such as Luis Puenzo’s *La Historia Oficial* (*The Official Version*, 1985), which shone a light on Argentina’s “disappeared” and their abducted children, had a strong political flavour.

Once they learned their trade from French and Italian filmmakers. Now Latin American directors are exporting their own vision to Hollywood. Hart points out that, in 2007, three Mexican directors won sixteen Oscar nominations among them – but is it really right to call *Gravity* “a Latin-American film”? True, the director Alfonso Cuarón is Mexican, but most of the filming and production took place in Britain, where he now lives.

While Hart’s focus is clearly on films and plots, a little more on the personalities behind the camera would have been welcome. For instance, what about the role of Gabriel García Márquez in setting up Cuba’s Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión? All we get is a photograph of him with fellow founders – and since the caption refers to him only by his nickname, Gabo, you might miss even that.

MIRANDA FRANCE

## Turkish Literature

**Sait Faik Abasıyanık**

A USELESS MAN

Selected stories

Translated by Maureen Freely and Alexander Dawe

240pp. Archipelago. Paperback, \$18.

978 0 914671 07 7

In the epigraph to *Snow*, Orhan Pamuk’s most directly political work, the Turkish Nobel laureate quotes from Stendhal: “Politics in a literary work are a pistol-shot in the middle of a concert, a crude affair though one impossible to ignore”. In Turkey, bitter politics have a habit of infringing on art. It is a country where the number of people who read novels is relatively low, but where novelists are expected to make regular political pronouncements.

Part of the charm of Sait Faik Abasıyanık, who wrote almost 200 short stories in two decades before his premature death in 1954, is the way he floated above the fray of his turbulent times. This new selection of tales is welcome. Today, Sait Faik is regularly described as “Turkey’s Chekhov” – an annoying phrase that nevertheless has some truth to it. His stories bear multiple readings. They usually portray single characters rather than complex dramatic plots; they are elliptical, fragmentary, defined mostly by what is left unsaid; they never outstay their welcome: few of the inclusions in *A Useless Man* extend beyond five pages.

In their afterword, the translators Maureen Freely and Alexander Dawe (who have done a crisp, unfussy job) describe Sait Faik’s stories as “stills of life organically unfolding”. Many do not even do that; the author is so closely focused on character that plot is often almost non-existent. In “The Silk Handkerchief”, which marries character-orientated meditation with a relatively busy plot, the author is at his naturalistic best. A poignant masterpiece of concision, it tells the story of a guard at a silk factory who strikes up an empathetic relationship with a wild young thief before tragedy arrives. In “Papaz Efendi”, which, like many of Sait Faik’s stories, features a protagonist from Turkey’s dwindling Christian minority, the naivety of an eccentric island priest with “the look of an unruly child” is baffling to the locals. Slander is the sad, inevitable result.

In “Loneliness”, the final entry of this selection, Sait Faik addresses the reader directly: “Nothing’s beautiful without people. It’s people who bring beauty into a landscape . . .

Without people there is no meaning”. But the author was by no means a one-note optimist. Sait Faik’s best stories combine intelligence with his trademark innocence, showing that people also bring sadness, disappointment, rivalry, frustration and confusion.

WILLIAM ARMSTRONG

## Cultural Studies

**Iain Gately**

RUSH HOUR

How 500 million commuters survive the daily journey to work

378pp. Head of Zeus. Paperback, £8.99.

978 1 78185 408 2

The term “commuter” first emerged in America, where in 1843 the Paterson and Hudson River Railroad offered passengers the opportunity to commute, or replace, their daily fares with a single payment for a season – or “commutation” – ticket. According to Iain Gately, it was “locomotivity” that heralded the age of commuting. The arrival of the railways in the 1830s meant that the dream of escaping the Dickensian squalor of industrial-age cities became a reality. For the first time people could “live somewhere healthy and work where it was most profitable”. The London to Greenwich line was the first to draw most of its business from commuters. Opened in 1836, within eight years it was carrying more than 2 million passengers a year. And with commuting came new suburbs, communities such as Surbiton, as Bromley and Ealing sprang up around railway stations. Suburban dwellings may have been dismissed by Ruskin as “gloomy rows of formalised minuteness”, but commuter suburbs proved immensely popular in America and Europe alike. In London, they grew by 50 per cent each decade between 1861 and 1891.

Gately’s book passes through some well-travelled territory, but he makes the journey worthwhile with many entertaining anecdotes and surprising facts. At one point he observes that early railway travel was so dangerous that ticket offices also sold life insurance. Elsewhere he notes that the first “traffic light” was installed at the junction of Great George Street and Bridge Street, London, in 1868. It had red and green gas lamps but exploded within a month, fatally injuring the unfortunate policeman who was operating it. The streets of the capital were busy and indeed dangerous. But, according to Gately, in present-day India, rush hours are enlivened by no fewer than forty-eight types of road transport, from rickshaws and 4x4s to camels and elephants.

Included in Gately’s eclectic survey of the past, present and future of commuting, are the Tokyo salarymen who ogle schoolgirls on public transport (they are so common that women-only carriages have been introduced); a brief history of “road rage” (the Victorians legislated against it and now American psychiatrists have renamed it “Intermittent Explosive Disorder”); and discussion of driverless cars and telecommuting. A commuter himself, Gately rejects the common view of his subject as “a kind of purgatory, which lies between the poles of production and recreation that cap our days”. Instead, he celebrates commuting, seeing this “clockwork wanderlust” as being rooted in our evolutionary origins as hunter-gatherers. Commuting, he concludes, is “a positive, perhaps even natural, activity”.

P. D. SMITH