

Born Yesterday by Gordon Burn

...the vigorous younger one) — that first sighting of the powerful world leader, now looking vulnerable and frail, brought back something Mrs Thatcher's former foreign-affairs private secretary Charles Powell had said after her eviction from Downing Street, in November 1990, seventeen years ago now.

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With Denis, and in subtle dissent, tears smudging her make-up, she had been driven straight from Number 10 to the house in the impressing-looking gated development in Dulwich which was meant to be their new home. It was from there that Mrs Thatcher called Powell after she had been out of office for a few days: she had a phoning problem and didn't know what to do. 'Try the *Hillier Page*,' is what Powell is said to have told her.

The News as a Novel

Tony Blair's boss was that he never touched a computer during his years as prime minister. He didn't own a mobile phone. He didn't need one; he was surrounded by aides with phones and pagers — battalions of people with personalised ringones, dashing about, staring into BlackBerries and do-everything mobile devices. When it came to the mobile he used as prime minister, he said was typical of his usefulness with any kind of new technology.

That was less than a week ago. Today — 3 July 2007 — Blair has been out of office for just six days. On 24 June, at a rare press rally in Manchester, he had finally passed the Labour leadership on to Gordon Brown. On 27 June, Brown had at last settled his craving to become prime minister. Blair had arrived at Buckingham Palace in the official armoured-plated car shortly after one to tender his resignation to the queen; he left the palace in a plain Vauxhall. A few

...station with its perforated walls and oily rage, for their arrival in the New World. The irony of this for Tony Blair, the man who had invested such energy in the issue of national security, the introduction of identity cards, of biometric screening and so on, was also made much of by commentators.)

But the car sent to pick him up at Darlington station was late. The early news had shown him logging his own bag out of the first-class lounge at King's Cross and onto the train. The bag was open, bulging, a brown woollen sleeve trailing, the buckle of a strap bouncing along to the dirt.

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The scene at Darlington, played out under the vaulted glass roof with its cast-iron pillars and braces, on the grey cobble ramp that led up to the narrow circle and the taxi rank, was a melancholy one. For

Blair, the master communicator, it was a symbolic sackcloth-and-ashes moment, larded with barbs, photographed for the cameras that is what you wanted and now you've got it. But Cherie's face was fierce. She did the thing of twisting her watch-strap on her wrist, scowling at it and twisting it back temporarily again. (She had never looked like a willing visitor to the north-east and his constituency in his twenty-four years as an MP, and this would be one of the last visits ever she was out of there.) She shifted from foot to foot. A pool of liquid



Summer 2007 was an extraordinarily rich time for news. Floods. Foot and mouth. The disappearances of Tony Blair and Madeleine MacCann. The arrival of Gordon Brown. Terror attacks in Glasgow. And Gordon Burn, artist, journalist and true-crime author, has taken the events from this bleak summer and turned them into a novel about the way news is made, and the way the media creates and manipulates the stories we see before us. This is a daring and thrilling novel from one of the most astute observers of celebrity and tragedy. It is sure to make the headlines itself for the way it is written and for the controversial subjects he tackles. In "Born Yesterday" Gordon Burn creates a whole new way of writing a novel, and makes us think again about the stories we are fed by the media around us.