

LM 111

THE MAGAZINE FOR MEN AND WOMEN WITH BALLS

MARY BELL:
WHO KILLED
CHILDHOOD?

THE NEW
DEATH CULT
FROM DIANA
TO LINDA

WORLD CUP SPECIAL

HODDLE'S ROLE
MODEL ARMY?

WHY IT'S COOL
TO SUPPORT ENGLAND—
AND WHY ENGLAND
CANNOT WIN

SWEET FA
FOR THE FANS

CAN WOMEN
KICK IT?

TV GUIDE TO THE
PUNDITS' CODE

A MAN'S GAME?

How football is going PC

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JG BALLARD

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FAY WELDON

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LM 111

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MICK HUME

Editor



A MAN'S

LOOK AT THE PICTURE ON THE FRONT cover of this month's *LM*. A black footballer and his white team-mate, losing themselves in a multicultural moment of hugging, kissing and crying their eyes out, in front of the assembled world media; traditional British restraint it ain't.

The photograph (taken in Rome last October, when the England team qualified for the World Cup finals in France '98), provides an appropriate image of national sporting heroes for Tony Blair's New Britain. It illustrates how the national game has come to symbolise the dumbed-down values of our politically and emotionally correct post-Diana age.

Not only are we now supposed to celebrate a nil-nil draw with Italy as if it were another Waterloo, but our modern heroes act like losers even when they are winning. How these changed times have transformed what England expects its men to do; it is hard to imagine Wellington or Monty, or even Bobby Moore, behaving like such a big jessie in the public gaze, never mind winning the nation's hearts in the process.

On the left as you look at the pair is Paul Gascoigne, whose famous blubbing over England's exit from the World Cup in Italia '90 showed that the stiff upper lip was on the way out some time before Diana kissed it goodbye. On the right is Ian Wright, another man whose heart often overrules his head, who is almost as likely to rant and rave at his own fans as at the referee.

Both of these 'damaged' individuals have been in therapy of late: Gazza for his drinking and domestic violence, Wrighty for his general psychotic behaviour on the pitch. And because they proved willing to confess to their sins, not just in private but on the public counselling-couch provided by the media, both have been welcomed back into the fold with open arms by

England coach Glenn Hoddle (although, as I write this, it is unclear whether Hod's faith healer can resurrect Wright in time to make it to France).

Hoddle has tried to make it clear that his tolerance of Gascoigne in particular is 'not just for football reasons'. He wants to set an example to miscreants everywhere, about how they can get back into teacher's good books if they follow the moral code and get in touch with their inner feelings. 'For me', said Hoddle when he picked Gascoigne after a well-publicised bout of wife-beating, 'the greatest example would be Paul Gascoigne becoming a role model off the back of some of his mistakes...That's what Paul Merson has done'.

Merson, another aspiring England football hero, is the role model's role model who, having announced that he was 'addicted' to just about everything, switched from a diet of lager and cocaine to diet coke and support groups (a life-change symbolised by his move from glamorous Arsenal to grim Middlesbrough). 'If you are not being good off the pitch', says the humbled Merson these days, 'you don't deserve to be good on it'. In Britain AD (After Diana), it seems that the meek really shall inherit the earth, or at least a place in the World Cup squad.

Along with the likes of 'recovering' alcoholic Tony Adams, these are some of the football heroes of what has been called our 'therapy nation'. Where once we could look up to top international sportsmen as towers of strength and achievement, now they spend much of their time lying down while we are asked to 'relate' to them as victims of the same emotional weakness and vulnerability that the rest of us are meant to suffer from.

And where once football fans might have envied a George Best his high living off the

pitch just as much as his volatile skills on it, now we are supposed to admire footballing dullards who swear they will conform to Hoddle's new rules at home as well as when in Rome.

What does it say about a society when its heroes are therapy cases, and their emotional admissions of weakness are welcomed as signs of leadership and strength? That is how low our expectations of ourselves and others appear to have sunk today.

The implication should be clear enough: if even the stars and strongmen whom the nation idolises cannot be expected to get

OUR MODERN

through a football tournament without the aid of faith healers, counsellors and spiritualists, how can the rest of us possibly be trusted to get through real life without professional help and constant guidance and instruction?

In the world of football, the authorities are busy evolving a strict new etiquette to guide the behaviour of dysfunctional and untrustworthy players and fans alike. No doubt this initiative will be given fresh impetus by the recently announced Blairite crusade against the laddishness of those whom Whitehall has dubbed 'the Loaded generation'.

Football's new etiquette reflects the politically correct obsession with imposing regulation and control, while avoiding anything potentially risky or offensive. On the pitch,

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GAME?

it means no aggressive tackling, no elaborate celebrations, no joshing with the crowd. Off the pitch, it means no standing up, no swearing or abuse, no smoking in the family stand. And the bland played on.

The new etiquette is often justified as an exercise in making football a 'family game again'—something it never was in the first place. As usual, however, women and children are just being used as human shields, behind which the authorities can pursue their agenda of sanitising the game.

Far from making football a more people-friendly game, the new 'feminised' etiquette

You do not have to defend the boorish behaviour of overgrown schoolboys in replica football shirts, or even give a toss about the future of football, in order to see that there are broader developments here that should be of some concern. Football's new etiquette looks like a five-a-side practice version of the sort of code of conduct which New Labour longs to introduce across society.

In the name of combatting 'laddishness', the authorities' ambition is to encourage a general culture of passivity and acquiescence. They would like to turn the country into one big all-seater stadium, complete with CCTV and

Standards Council's pre-World Cup warning to the tabloids not to 'incite hatred' during the tournament.

Similarly, the authorities always liked the fact that football could act as a relatively safe outlet for burning off popular aggression. Indeed, in an earlier age of working class militancy, it was the potential usefulness of football as just such a safety valve which helped explain why so many capitalists got involved in organising the game. Today, by contrast, despite the demise of the working class movement, the authorities' loss of nerve means that they are sufficiently disturbed by any excited crowd to try to keep that aggression bottled up.

I am not nostalgic for the old football I grew up on, with its urine-soaked terraces, mudpatch pitches and clogging defenders, who would murder ball players in cold blood while supportive sadists in the crowd shouted 'It's a man's game, ref'. You can keep 1966, Sir Alf's 'wingless wonders' and all of that. I'll take Sky Sports, the premierships, a seat with a proper view and the foreign imports every time.

But while much about the game in Britain has changed for the better, there is a high price to pay—and not just for tickets. Football has been

HEROES ACT LIKE LOSERS EVEN WHEN THEY ARE WINNING

turns out to be a highly coercive exercise in emotional correctness. At a time when society seems almost bereft of collective experiences, commentators and politicians these days like to play up the mass passions and emotions generated by football around something like the World Cup—so long as they are the correct emotions, that is.

Passions which pass the PC test are those which chime with the victim culture, as reflected in sympathetic television pictures of players crying when they win and fans weeping into their beer when they lose. Displays of more typical footballing passions, however, like anger aimed against opponents and referees, must be suppressed. It is 'the People's game', only so long as the People play by the new etiquette.

security guards, where we are only allowed to sing from officially sanctioned songsheets, and where anybody who steps out of line can be told to sit down and shut up on pain of having their season ticket revoked.

MUCH OF WHAT IS SAID AND DONE about football today has little to do with the game itself, but reflects the wider loss of nerve in our society, from the top down. In the past, for instance, the national game was seen as a source of patriotic pride around which to wave the flag and galvanise support for the state. Now the insecure authorities are more likely to view any outburst against Johnny Foreigner with a mixture of fear and embarrassment, as reflected in Lord Wakeham of the Broadcasting

turned into a vehicle for all of the emotional and cultural rubbish of the nineties—many aspects of which are dealt with in our special World Cup section starting on the centre pages. France '98 threatens to be a festival of the worst as well as the best of the sometimes beautiful game.

But for all that, those of us who care about these things will no doubt enjoy every minute of the greatest show on earth. So try to get into the true spirit of it: sit back on your analyst's couch, crack out the nicotine gum, the alcohol-free lager and the swear box, and prepare to hug, kiss and counsel each other using non-aggressive communication techniques.

And as we say in sporting Britain, may the best team win, just so long as it's not the bloody Germans. ●

PURE REASON

The idea that such a thing as pure reason exists and is the diametrical opposite of what Ann Bradley termed 'emotional, irrational sentimentalism' ('Pro (the sporting) life', April) seems to run right through this journal. This is highly problematic, and leads to the assertion that political views, financial situation or body shape are the products of individuals making calculated choices from a range of rationally presented alternatives. Following Sara Hinchliffe's abusive attack on the overweight ('Less is more', April), will the next issue of *LM* feature an article on how the homeless have made their choice and must deal with it?

You present a false picture of humanity if you ignore or attempt to combat the role of the emotional subconscious in public behaviour, or assume that 'reason' has an existence independent from emotion or physiology. A world populated by 'active public subjects' sounds like the stuff of an HG Wells novel, and there is something vaguely sinister in Ann Bradley's bluff condemnation of sentiment; perhaps it is sentiment rather than reason that makes us fully human.

Incidentally, Sara Hinchliffe's article revolved to a great extent around the sexual advantages of weight loss. I think Sara is self-conscious about her tendency to balloon in and out, and feels that this verbal assault is a way of warding off the inevitable return of those packets of lard. What was *LM* thinking, publishing such an 'irrational' tirade?

PHILIP SEDDON Luton

ART CRITICISM FOR ART'S SAKE

While I cannot say enough good things about your excellent magazine, I must admit to being a little distressed by your occasional forays into art criticism. The latest example is Mick Hume's editorial on 'Ghoul Britannia' (May).

I detest the contemporary art world as much as any sane person. However, if I criticised idiots like Damien Hirst or (here in the USA) George Condo, I would be careful to do it on artistic grounds, not because they did not convey

a positive or progressive view of the human experience. Trying to interpret art in this way smacks a wee bit of philistinism. Art is not political in the way that Marxists or right-wing ideologues like Hilton Kramer think it is. As much as you may insist otherwise, politics is not a valid basis for judging the aesthetic value of art. Maybe you should add an art critic to the alt.culture feature.

NAME WITHHELD ON REQUEST

PROBLEM PUPILS

I was disappointed by Brendan O'Neill's article, 'Who's afraid of a five-year old?' (April). Schools are unable to expel pupils because they have 'tantrums', contrary to the impression given by this rather naive piece of writing. As a teacher myself, I believe the issue here is that the educational workers and the union concerned were anxious to prevent the education of the 29 other children in Karl Fitzharris' class being further disrupted.

A lengthy process has to be gone through before any child can be expelled, thus ensuring that the expulsion is in the interests of all concerned. Instead of seeing the real issues here, your reporter seemed content to chat to mums at the bus-stop who would have received their information via their own children. Perhaps such reporting is good enough for the tabloids (which you seem to have joined in your denigration of the teaching profession), but having paid something like eight times more for your magazine I would have expected a corresponding rise in the level of journalism.

MIKE HORNSBY Poole, Dorset

MARX MARCHES ON?

You are too impatient in doubting Marxism as an analytical tool for our society ('The return of Marx (& Spencer), March). With both raw materials and manufactures produced abroad, capitalism is creating a global industrial working class. As happened in nineteenth-century England, this working class will get organised, their wages will rise so that the

marginal benefit to middle class workers constantly diminishes, consumerism dies—and with the whole world now capitalist, there is nowhere to go to exploit cheap labour.

Capitalism tends to put a price on everything (and everybody) without discrimination. This engenders a vague notion of human equality, and so there is steady progress in, for example, equal rights for women and gays, formal democracy in Latin America, peace in Belfast. Yet this success increasingly comes up against the economic inequality and exploitation that is fundamental to the capitalist system. A new crisis looming?

Capitalism blocks the deployment of the best technology and renders advanced skills meaningless. The 'events' in Eastern Europe proved that once people perceive that their system is blocking progress they may well decide that the game is over, and then all the propaganda and police surveillance in the world cannot stop them easily sweeping their state aside. So is not the City of London our Berlin Wall? Maybe you should do a thorough analysis before quitting on old Karl, or at least give him another decade or two.

JIM DIXON Cork, Ireland

A nineteenth-century German philosopher said we should not just complain about the state of the world—'the point is to change it'. Can you recommend any magazines which discuss how change may actually be brought about?

PAUL WILLIAMS London SE11

COOL INDIA

In the wake of the Indian nuclear tests of 11 May, I would like to say that I am rather enthused by the dynamism of the new government in India led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Western commentators have taken to questioning the value of economic growth, and recently the Thai government announced it no longer wishes to return to 'tiger' rates of growth, but aims for a 'contented economy' instead. By contrast, the BJP aims for growth

at seven to eight per cent a year, up from five per cent in 1997-8, with an annual five per cent increase in the agricultural sector to achieve a hunger-free India by the year 2010. 'Let the common patriotic mantra be for one and all: growth, more growth and still more growth', said prime minister Vajpayee addressing industrialists in New Delhi recently.

You could condemn the explosion of nuclear devices as cheap populism. No doubt it is. But I am delighted that such a significant developing country as India has refused to accept that the 'will of the international community' is paramount and that the world is divided between powers responsible enough to have deadly nuclear arsenals and the rest. Diplomatic protests have been registered and economic sanctions against India are being discussed in the USA. I assume that the 19 March decision by the US department of energy to begin a series of underground explosive tests on radioactive plutonium will not feature in the debate. It would be a great shame if a government committed to rapid economic growth found itself the target for sanctions called for by breast-beaters in the West. Hands off India!

DAVID WEBB Kent

WE WELCOME READERS' VIEWS AND CRITICISMS

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The what's NOT on guide

NOT ON MESSAGE: When Rosie Boycott left the *Independent on Sunday* to become editor of the *Express*, she asked Paul Routledge to go with her as political editor. Routledge accepted, but a few days later he was informed that Boycott was sorry but she could not employ him. What happened? The *Observer's* Nick Cohen reveals that Routledge, an 'old-fashioned left-wing reporter', is *persona non grata* with Peter Mandelson and Tony Blair's press secretary Alastair Campbell, and concludes that Downing Street intervened via *Express* owner and Labour peer Clive Hollick. Cohen observes that 'if the Routledge affair had happened under Thatcher, metropolitan liberals would be screaming about censorship and creeping fascism. But now their friends are in government they are silent'. He also notes that National Theatre director Trevor Nunn rejected a request to stage a satire on New Labour from playwright Howard Brenton and former radical activist Tariq Ali, partly on the grounds that it would offend 'influential members of the government'. Who needs censors when newspapers and theatres seem to be run by the state for the state?

SOFT CORE: The cover and poster picture for Pulp's new album *This Is Hardcore* has been censored by the *Independent on Sunday*, among others, on the grounds that the woman lying face down in the

picture appears to have been raped. She could just as easily have been the willing but passive participant in either anal intercourse or just plain and simple 'rear entry'; nevertheless the *IoS* leader-writer adopts the missionary position and tells readers not to buy the record. Dad-rocker Eric Clapton has also been accused of misogyny. The song 'Sick and tired' from his new album *Pilgrim* is about whether to blow a woman's brains out. A spokeswoman for Wearside Women in Need claimed the song 'is upholding the level of violence that unfortunately permeates a lot of the relationships between men and women'. I don't believe 'a lot' of men are actually shooting their partners, even on Wearside; thinking about blowing their own brains out after listening to Eric Clapton these days, perhaps.

UNHEARD AND UNSEEN: On the day of its official publication, copies of Gitta Sereny's *Cries Unheard* were noticeable by their absence from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, the city where Mary Bell (then 11) killed two toddlers in 1968. The two largest bookstores have refused to stock the hardback but have agreed to take orders for it; in other words, it is available under the counter. Local bookshop Thome's said that the book would be displayed when it came in but that copies had not yet arrived from the supplier. A spokeswoman

added that 'we will only sell this book from a sociological point of view, hoping that certain authorities may learn from its content and to ensure such a dreadful act cannot happen again'. So it's alright for 'certain authorities' to read it 'from a sociological point of view', but the rest of us cannot be trusted with it on the beach.

NOT-SO-HIGH JUMP: May morning in Oxford may never be the same again. Traditionally there is a dawn chorus from the choristers of Magdalen College while revellers, still high from the previous evening's May Ball, jump off Magdalen Bridge into the river below. Not this year. The university authorities and students' union officials got together with the police to dissuade people from jumping; and on May morning Magdalen Bridge was cordoned off by the constabulary on 'safety' grounds that the bridge might collapse, the riverbed had not been dredged for dangerous junk because excessive rainfall meant it was flowing too fast, people might drown, etc. More police officers were 'on hand at other positions along the river-bank' in case anybody tried jumping from a nearby location. In these low times not even Oxbridge high jinks are safe from the safety police.

Compiled by Andrew Calcutt

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TABOOS

Impotent men used to have to grimace and bear it. But, argues David Nolan, the fuss about the development of a new 'cure' is not entirely good news

STIFFENING UP

Impotent men (and their partners) have been breaking 'widest smile of the decade' records, as urologists across America are inundated with demands for Viagra, a new drug hailed as a wonder-cure for impotence. One innovative doctor claimed he had to purchase a rubber stamp for his prescription pad to save his cramping hands from writing out 500 prescriptions a day. Shareholders in the US drug company Pfizer have also been celebrating, as their investment rose 20 per cent in a month.

One reason why Viagra has attracted so much attention is that previous cures for impotence were often awkward, painful and impractical. Who would not choose a simple tablet when the alternatives involve surgery, injections or implants, silicone rods, inflatable cylinders, vacuum pumps, and penile suppositories? The insertion of a large hypodermic needle into the penis is only a turn-on for couples with very peculiar tastes. Previous treatments also tended to deliver an erection which lasted for hours—hardly appropriate for a quickie in the toilet at a dinner party.

As a drug which treats an organic medical problem Viagra is to be welcomed. What is not so welcome is the way it has been hailed as a symbol of our times. Just as Prozac symbolised the 'nervous nineties' and Ecstasy stood for the atomised generation X, so Viagra is already becoming an icon to the wilted, crisis-ridden masculinity that is supposed to be a feature of the current day and age.

Camille Paglia's comments to *Time* magazine were predictable: 'The erection is the last gasp of modern manhood. If men can't continue to produce erections, they're going to evolve themselves right out of the human species. They need [Viagra] to bolster themselves. They need it to stiffen their erections. It's like the steel that they would get if they were at war.' *Penthouse* publisher Bob Guccione's comments were less expected. 'Feminism has emasculated the American male and that emasculation has led to physical

problems. [Viagra] will free the American male libido much the same way that the Pill did.'

Within days of attaining a licence from the US food and drug administration, Viagra had become a channel for an outpouring of euphoria and anguish about the state of America's manhood.

The universal acclaim is all the more surprising—even the Vatican has supposedly bestowed its unofficial blessing on Viagra—given that it is not without side effects. In our risk-conscious times, new drug launches are often accompanied by prophecies of doom. Not this one—potential adverse reactions have been treated as a joke. One UK doctor who tried it out said that it made him look like a bull frog with bulging eyes, but confirmed he is still willing to issue prescriptions at about £18 a tablet, albeit on a 'named patient basis' (which means he is not responsible for any side effects) as Viagra is not yet licensed in the UK. And he is not the only person who has suffered adverse reactions. About 10 per cent of the trial group had a variety of side effects including headaches (and we know what they do to sex), nausea, facial flushing and diarrhoea. About three per cent said that after taking the pill they had difficulty distinguishing between the colours blue and green and their vision was affected by a blue haze.

The most astounding fact in the Viagra story, though, is the extent of the demand for it. More than 113 000 prescriptions were issued in the second week it was on sale, 'dozens of times higher than typical for successful newly launched drugs' (*Time*, 4 May). Prescriptions in the USA have now levelled off at 40 000 a day. You would never have guessed there were so many men in need of chemical stimulation.

Men's sexual health groups have claimed that another benefit of the drug is that it has helped to bring impotence out of the closet. I am not so sure. Over the past few years, men's sexual problems have featured ever-larger in medical journals and the general media.

Whereas conventional wisdom used to be that women had sexual problems while men just had sex, today men too have become a subject of psychosexual scrutiny. Articles in men's health magazines are as likely to be about men's confessions of sexual insecurities as about their prowess. By Viagra's launch impotence was already a major issue, typically reported as a condition that affects all men at some stage. Perhaps in future we will be advised that we will all need to reach for Viagra at some time.

There is also a very modern obsession in men's magazines with the quality of the sex their readers are having. Gone are the days when it was 'how much and how often with how many women'. Now it is all about the level of enjoyment—both for the man and his partner. First men were encouraged to consider the quality of their partner's orgasms; now they are encouraged to examine the quality of their own. Today it is not enough for a man to have sex—he has



to have wonderful sex, and give wonderful sex. He must allow himself to be judged on his performance and he must judge himself—not just as an erotic athlete but as a caring man. A fuck is no longer just a fuck, but a whole statement of being.

Sexual counsellors now advise that the fear of failure after a lost erection may send a man into a spiral of despair from which there is no escape. Is it any wonder that an increasing number of men claim to be daunted by the prospect and feel they need a little chemical support?

Even the definition of impotence seems to have changed. According to the *British Medical Journal*, impotence was traditionally defined as 'the inability to achieve or maintain an erection sufficient for sexual intercourse', until in 1994 the US national institute of health called for a reclassification. Now it is renamed 'erectile dysfunction' (ED) and defined as an 'inability to get an erection adequate for satisfactory sexual performance', which immediately qualified three times as many men to join the category 'victims of ED'. This is not surprising—it is impossible to define what constitutes 'satisfactory sexual performance'. The category now presumably includes those who can fuck for 10 minutes but would prefer to fuck for an hour. Consequently, the UK Impotence Association claims one in 10 men experience erectile dysfunction. US sources claim between 10 and 30 million American men experience ED, making it 'one of the most common chronic conditions in Western countries' (*Lancet*, 1998, 351: 1368).

Impotence has been universalised. The normal lows that accompany the

highs of sexual activity have been turned into a clinical condition.

There are, of course, some organic reasons for impotence in a small minority of men: diabetes, age, prostate problems, strokes and certain prescription drugs. Viagra is a welcome treatment in these cases. But most of us should be able to accept problems in the performance department—and confront them—without a trip to the pharmacy. Most men at some stage will experience some form of sexual failure. That is normal. The advent of Viagra turns that normality into a problem, a condition. A rare event becomes problematised and medicalised, forcing men into an unnecessary relationship with their doctors over something that may not happen again for years.

In a world of emasculated men Viagra was bound to succeed. Now, however, the manufacturer has announced tests involving 500 women in England. Apparently boosting blood flow to the vagina may increase a woman's sensitivity in the same way it does for men. But the prospect of coping with hordes of rampant Viagra-impregnated women may deal a crushing blow to the already fragile

male psyche and render men unable to get it up at all, Viagra or not.

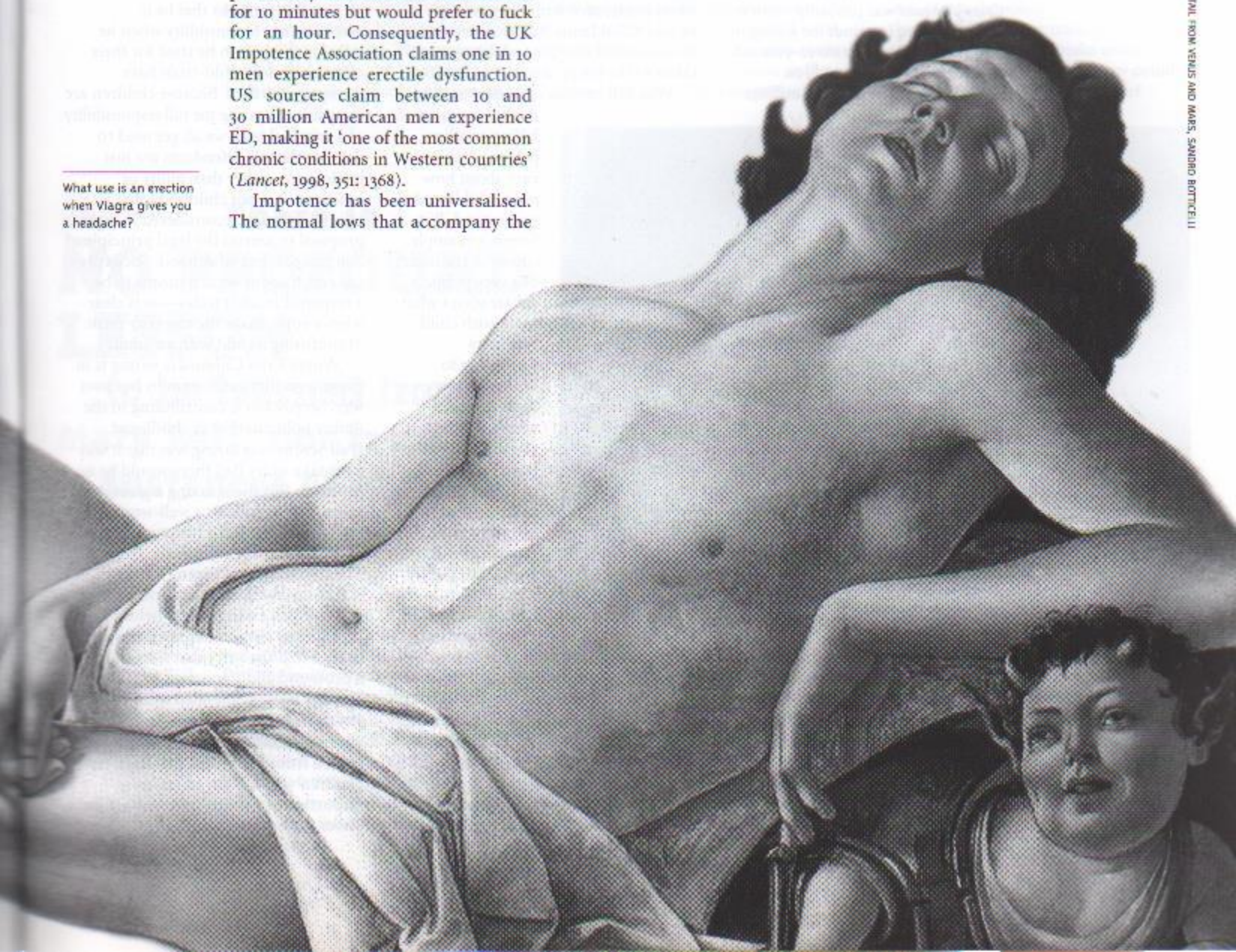
How Viagra works

VIAGRA IS THE CITRATE SALT OF sildenafil—a phosphodiesterase 5 (PDE5) inhibitor. By blocking the PDE5 enzyme, which is found mainly in the penis, Viagra enhances the effects of nitric oxide, a chemical compound produced during sexual stimulation. This in turn allows another chemical, cyclic GMP, to last longer. The longer cyclic GMP lasts the better the chance of increased blood flow around and to the penis, and therefore the better the chance of an erection.

Viagra does not itself cause an erection but enhances the response to sexual stimulation. This means that the drug will not give non-impotent men a better erection.

Viagra costs between \$8 and \$12 a pop and is expected to be licensed in Britain in the autumn.

What use is an erection when Viagra gives you a headache?



The row over Gitta Sereny's book about Mary Bell has helped to turn childhood into a political football, says James Heartfield

MARY MARY, QUITE CONTRARY

The publication of *Cries Unheard*, journalist Gitta Sereny's book about childhood killer Mary Bell, raised a storm of protest. Mary Bell killed two children in 1968 when she herself was 11 years old. She was sent first to a special unit and then, on turning 16, to prison. Since leaving prison in the eighties Bell wrote her own life story, which was turned down by several publishers. Now, Gitta Sereny has interviewed her extensively to write *Cries Unheard*, which was serialised in *The Times*.

Cries Unheard was probably written with another case in mind: the killing of toddler Jamie Bulger by two 10-year old boys, Robert Thompson and Jon Venables in 1993. More than a million

In a letter to her teachers from 1976, reproduced in *The Times*, Bell is clearly contrite, talking of the 'absolute enormity of my crime'. However, Sereny also persuades Bell to explain how she felt about death at that time, having only ever experienced the death of a pet dog: 'my dad bought me the same—well, to me, the same—dog the next day.' The implication is that Bell did not fully understand death as an irreversible state, and so could not truly be held responsible for killing somebody. Similarly Jon Venables, when confronted with the news that he had killed Jamie Bulger, is reported to have asked why the toddler was not taken to the hospital to be made better.

Was Bell capable of understanding the full moment of killing another person? Opinions vary about how much children do understand. But Sereny's example comes in the midst of a very public debate about what to do with child offenders. According to home secretary Jack Straw, young children can understand. His proposals to allow the courts to find children as young as 10 capable of evil look set to put more infants in the dock. Like author Blake Morrison,

who wrote a book about the Bulger case, Gitta Sereny is saying that it is wrong to treat children like adults, and to try them in adult courts as if they were capable of bearing the burden of criminal responsibility that adults do. As far as that goes, Sereny is right.

Straw is drawn to the argument that criminals must pay, thinking that such

retributive justice will appeal to the desire for order. But actually it just makes a mockery of justice to put children in the dock. In a recent case four young boys were tried on a rape charge at the Old Bailey. Conscious that the boys would have difficulty concentrating on the case for long sittings, the judge allowed them to take colouring books and pencils, so that they could draw when their minds wandered. But children who are incapable of concentrating on the deliberations over their incarceration could not get a fair trial.

Jack Straw thinks that he is emphasising responsibility when he calls for children to be tried for their offences. In fact child-trials have the opposite effect. Because children are incapable of bearing the full responsibility of a criminal trial, we all get used to the idea that all defendants are just inadequate, rather than guilty or innocent. It is not childhood that is ultimately being reconsidered in Straw's proposal to amend the legal principle of *doli incapax*, but adulthood. Society is uncertain about what it means to be a responsible adult today—as is clear when people make the category error of confusing a child with an adult.

Where *Cries Unheard* is wrong is in playing on that confusion. In her own way, Sereny too is contributing to the undue politicisation of childhood. If all Sereny was saying was that it was a mistake to try Bell there would be no problem. But she is saying a great deal more. Sereny follows a well-worn path in emphasising Bell's history of abuse at the hands of her mother. The implication of Sereny's story is that the abuse is an explanation of Mary Bell's own violent behaviour.

Like any author, Sereny wants us to believe that the story that she is telling is a profound and important one, so she says her book is intended as a 'warning' to us all. She means of course that we can all learn something from this case, and indeed from Mary Bell, that the cases of children who kill have something important to tell us about who we are, about the human condition.



people signed a petition against their release, amid a spasm of hatred for the child killers. It would appear that among Gitta Sereny's motives is the need to emphasise the problem of holding children culpable for acts of murder or manslaughter.

In the book, Mary Bell's account of her own culpability is considered.



Gitta Sereny, author of *Cries Unheard*, and below, Mary Bell as child and adult

Nothing could be further from the truth. There is no profound lesson to be learnt from Mary Bell, nor from her story, nor indeed from the instances of children who kill. The only thing that really stands out is how rare childhood killers really are—especially when you think just how beastly children can be to each other on a day-to-day basis. Children kill about once every 10 years in this country.

Explaining why Mary Bell killed is a fool's errand. You might just as well try to explain why schoolboys dangle out of windows or why infants throw their toys around. Childhood is in many ways without reasons. The depressing truth is that it was just Mary Bell's bad luck that she went that bit further than

needy, gay, competitive or whatever. But you are just kidding yourself.

Many educated and radical people have reacted against the press treatment of Mary Bell and Jack Straw's ham-fisted intervention. According to radical author Beatrix Campbell it is telling that it is an abused child who is being silenced. The liberal press has denounced Straw's crusade against Bell. Sereny herself, famed for her imperious manners and indifference to criticism, has been taken aback by the reaction. When the Mary Bell case becomes a matter of public debate, these intellectuals all react against the hysterical outbursts.

But who is responsible for the extraordinary politicisation of childhood that we see today? Beatrix Campbell helped turn child abuse into an intense public debate, by her forceful advocacy on behalf of social workers in Cleveland and the Orkneys who took many children into care on (generally unfounded) suspicion of abuse. There has been a great deal of criticism in the quality press of the 'hysterical mob' for supposedly hounding Mary Bell. But it was just these papers that have elevated the most extraordinary and unjustified fears about the dangers of child abuse more broadly. This is, after all, Sereny's second book about Mary Bell. She can hardly claim to have made no contribution to the public interest in this exceptional crime.

government approval. The players were the major newspapers, the prime minister and the home secretary. Even the mothers' grief was reproduced for the cameras. If there was a story it was a story about our society, about the way that it has taken childhood out of the hands of children and turned it into a big political issue.

Childhood is not something that children have and enjoy anymore; it is something that insecure adults obsessively debate the meaning of—to no great effect. That is why there is such a difference between how we react to Mary Bell today and how people responded 30 years ago. Indeed it is arguable that Sereny's book has caused more hysteria than the killings themselves.

Retired teacher Rennie Hughes remembers that at the time of the Mary Bell killings there was nothing like the hysteria there was about the Bulger case, and the press never told you anything anyway. Pamela Hodge lived near the Bells' home in Scotsford Road during the trial and recalls that very different questions were asked about the case back then. 'It was a slum—old bombsites, uncapped gas pipes sticking out of the ground', she remembers. 'We followed the court reports every day. It was supposed to be the first time that a child had been tried for such a crime and it did not make sense to me and the people I knew. How could a child be guilty of manslaughter?

There is **NO PROFOUND LESSON**

to be learned from
**Mary Bell, nor from the
instances of children
who kill**



torturing the cat or the budgerigar. Perhaps looking back over Mary Bell's life now it seems obvious that she was on a course of destruction. But then lots of people had terrible childhoods and never killed anybody. Everybody's life looks like fate when viewed in retrospect—you always think you can identify that influence which made you

The Mary Bell story is not really a story at all. The killing itself took place 30 years ago. Bell was released nearly 20 years ago. The only story revolves around the writing of a book that had already been written once before. The great hysteria that followed was almost entirely a creation of the media's interest—with New Labour

'There were some big meetings in Newcastle because of it. We asked questions like, why wasn't there proper childcare? You could only leave your kids with friends and family. And why did women have to work as prostitutes? Nobody could get decent jobs. Slum clearance was one answer, so was better childcare.'

The first report I heard of the schoolyard shooting in Jonesboro, Arkansas in March was on the local news station in a neighbouring Mississippi town. The horror of four little girls and their teacher being shot dead by two young boys was made all the more real to me by the direct local reporting. In a press conference that evening the arresting police officer mentioned that he knew one of the boys personally from a state-run deer hunting programme. In the local coverage there was no attempt to generalise from the tragedy: how could such a singularly horrific event provide any general lessons?

When the national media got hold of the story, however, it took on a completely different character. From this unique tragedy Americans were asked to learn lessons about the damaging effects of a 'gun culture', the vicious consequences of violent movies and computer games, and, especially, the evil results of bad parenting. Over the protests of the people of Jonesboro, the national press discussed the need to tighten gun control laws, and the parents of the two boys Mitchell Johnson and Drew Golden were placed under close critical scrutiny.

The Southern 'gun culture' came under fire as the media indulged the stereotype of Southerners as truck-driving, wife-beating, whisky-drinking, ignorant rednecks. Journalists' sensibilities were particularly offended by photographs of Drew Golden as a toddler, dressed as a cowboy and carrying a gun. The sinister suggestion was that young Drew had been socialised into committing murder. Reporters conveyed a sense of hopeless inevitability about the events at Westside middle school.

It is certainly true that guns are common in the South, where hunting is both necessary and popular. Young people learn how to handle guns early. Several southern states run deer hunting programmes for young enthusiasts. The rationale is that the more kids know about guns, the better shooters they will become and the more deer they will hit. Deer tend to overpopulate the many wooded areas in the South, and hunting helps reduce the menace they present to drivers on the road and highway system.

Cheryl Hudson reports from the American South on the distorted reporting of the schoolyard shooting in Jonesboro, Arkansas

THE LESSON FOR TODAY FROM WESTSIDE MIDDLE SCHOOL



But contrary to the impression given by the national media, while most of the children who attend schools like Westside know how to shoot a gun, the targets they aim at are tin cans and deer, not their classmates. Moreover, access to firearms is always strictly supervised. Golden and Johnson had to break into a safe and a locked house to get guns and ammunition. Local people expressed complete shock and disbelief at this extraordinary incident, and saw nothing inevitable in the shootings.

For those looking for moral lessons and scapegoats, it was not enough to blame the gun culture of the South. National commentators soon turned their attention to the importance of good parenting. Mitchell Johnson's parents were divorced and his father, a long-distance truck driver, had been away from home for long stretches. Drew Golden's father had taught him how to hunt and shoot, and encouraged his son's macho behaviour. The two very different parenting profiles of these children were strangely

both used as explanations for the kids going off the rails.

Listening to the media discussion of parenting in the aftermath of Jonesboro, you could be forgiven for thinking that there is no such thing as a competent parent. Widespread anxieties about changing family structures are reflected in the endless hand-wringing about parental neglect, parental absence, time-starved parents, and the lack of parental discipline.

Absent and divorced parents are charged with creating an emotional void in a child who is then likely to vent his frustrations on others. Parents who allow their kids to watch violent videos or play violent video games are accused of slowly poisoning their children's minds. *Time* magazine referred to *South Park*, Jerry Springer and Nintendo games as the 'ultimate in crazed nannies' (6 April 1998). Article after article has warned parents to take more responsibility for their children's moral and spiritual upbringing, lest they grow to be psychopaths. About a week after Jonesboro,

Oprah Winfrey dedicated her talk show to an interview with the parents of a teenage murderer. They were asked to prove that they did everything possible to prevent their child growing up to kill. And indeed, they were able to prove that they had provided 'age-appropriate' discipline and had demonstrated their love. After their son had thrown the TV remote control at his father (a 'tell-tale sign'), the parents tried to have him committed, but the judge ruled against this; a few days later the teenager raped and murdered a smaller boy. The judge, it was inferred, had blood on his hands.

The experience of parents like these is used as an illustration of the inadequacy of parenting generally. The lesson is that, whatever parents do, it can never be enough. Of course, there may have been very little that these particular parents could have done, but it does not follow that every parent must look to the authorities to contain their children whenever they throw a temper tantrum. The answer to the problem of impotent parenting always seems to be assistance from an external source: judges, social workers, counsellors. As the *Oprah* show concluded, nobody could ultimately be a good enough parent—it is up to the state to regulate the families of disruptive teenagers.

In reality nobody, not a judge, a teacher, a parent or a counsellor could have predicted what Drew Golden and Mitchell Johnson were to do. The media hysteria that attempts to explain the incident by reference to redneck culture and incompetent parenting inflates an individual tragedy into a general social malaise. The result of such a reaction is likely to be a drastic curtailment of freedom, for both children and parents.

Events similar to Jonesboro have been reeled off to show how children today are becoming gun-wielding maniacs. In fact, despite the publicity attached to cases like Jonesboro, Pearl in Mississippi and West Paducah in Kentucky, violence in US schools is becoming less common. Meanwhile, schools are being turned into fortresses, with metal detector checks, locked gates and security patrols. These restrictions can only do untold damage to children's outlook, turning the world into a place to be feared. •
Additional information from Chris Lee

If the critics are uncomfortable with the film adaptations of Nabokov's *Lolita*, says Irene Miller, they should read the book

MAKING LOLITA GROW UP

Adrian Lyne began looking for distributors for his remake of *Lolita* over a year ago. Now he has succeeded in the UK, overcoming similar hurdles to those which have faced Vladimir Nabokov's novel since its completion in 1955.

Nabokov's story of a middle-aged man's obsession with a 12-year old girl was originally refused by four different publishers. One claimed the story was too lacking in 'good' people, another recommended making *Lolita* into a boy to make the story more acceptable, and the last simply said he was not prepared to be imprisoned for it. *Lolita* was eventually published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson in 1959, even though Nicolson, a Tory MP, was asked by chief whip Edward Heath to drop the book. In the USA *Lolita* sold only through word of mouth, and in New Zealand it was banned.

Nabokov always knew that his 16-year work would be contentious. More than once he was on the point of destroying the manuscript. But he went ahead in face of accusations that he himself was the pervert, a pornographer, or a man with an unhealthy interest in his son's girlfriends. Those who cried child abuse seemed incapable of imagining that a man could simply invent a story.

Such a hysterical response has greeted both film adaptations of *Lolita*: Stanley Kubrick's version, made in 1962, and now Adrian Lyne's film. When Jeremy Irons (who plays the paedophile Humbert Humbert in Lyne's movie) rebutted claims that *Lolita* would encourage paedophiles, the *Daily Mail* headlined its report 'Jeremy Irons in child abuse storm' (24 April), incorporating news of real life Belgian child-murderer Marc Dutroux into the article as though the stories represented one and the same thing.

Yet both Kubrick and Lyne have done more to make *Lolita* 'acceptable' than their panicky critics realise.

Nabokov's *Lolita* is a tale of obsession and tragedy which puts heavy demands on its reader. Nabokov's great achievement is to portray Humbert Humbert as a love-sick soul, desperate to please and be pleased, infatuated with a 12-year old—and yet the most sympathetic character in the book. The writing is so engaging and enchanting that as a reader you become involved in Humbert's plotting and enamoured by his relentless passion to the point that, against your own will and instinct, you desire him to succeed as you would in any other love story. Just as you begin to feel more comfortable, one paragraph, line or word will brutally remind you that this is a 12-year old girl—a girl who sucks on straws till her face hollows and picks her nose in public, who has

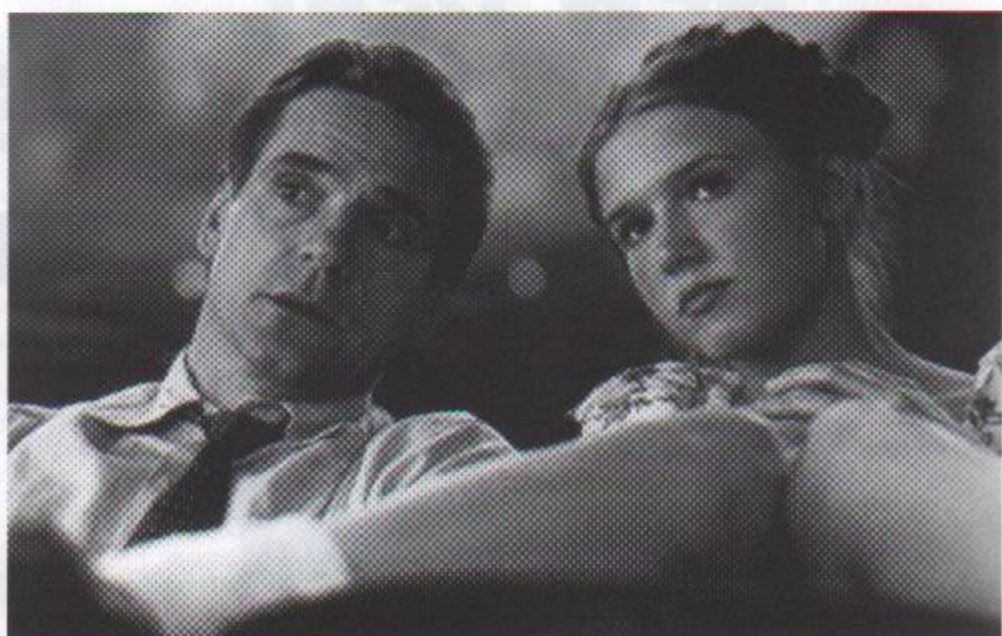


PHOTO: ANTHE

not developed hips and refuses to wash her hair. Nabokov's skill is in making his reader implicit in the crime.

Both Kubrick and Lyne shied away from this challenge, by making *Lolita* two or three years older so that she becomes a sexual being, a pubescent rather than a pre-pubescent. Kubrick made *Lolita* a blonde, Lyne a sexy redhead, where she was supposed to be a brunette—we are led to see her as something of a sex kitten, and so it is less shocking that a grown man should take a fancy to her. What Nabokov had portrayed as a rude, defiant, fickle, shallow and sulky child, Kubrick and Lyne both present as an erotic, flirtatious, sexy teenager.

The *Lolita* of the films in part seduces Humbert, flutters her eyelashes and is aware of her sexuality. Lyne even makes *Lolita* jump on Humbert passionately. This interpretation misses the subtlety of the book, where it becomes slowly clear that *Lolita*'s seduction of Humbert is purely his fantasy and his own wilful interpretation that her childlike actions are sexual. The films strip the story of much of its power, coarseness and beauty and turn it occasionally into farce—in Kubrick's version the collapsing bed sequence, Peter Sellers' characterisations and the music are on a par with a *Carry On* film.

Nevertheless, Kubrick's film, with James Mason as Humbert and Shelley Winters as the brash, unsophisticated Charlotte, is a stunning and stylish story with superb acting and some great moments. In 1962 it was well known that Kubrick was trying to avoid the censors by not making the film erotic and was unhappy with the results. Nabokov wrote the original screenplay,

and was credited with it, but Kubrick used little of his draft. Kubrick's most erotic scene is of Humbert painting *Lolita*'s toenails, showing beautifully his desperation and just how degraded he has become.

Lyne has been allowed a more explicitly sexual story. Yet in 1995, before he cast his actors and just as he had his writer, Lyne stated his intention to portray *Lolita* as she was meant to be—as a 12-year old. By 1998, Lyne was stating that he had to make her 14 because a 12-year old could not have played the 17-year old *Lolita* at the end of the film.

Lyne's *Lolita*, with Dominique Swain as *Lolita* and Irons as Humbert, is also stunningly filmed. Lyne deals with the storyline well, yet misses its essence. He sidesteps the moral pressures of Nabokov's *Lolita* by making the character a sexual being, cleavage and all, and so eliminating the discomfort one feels with the story. For all Lyne's determination to make the film true to the book, he abandons this goal at a key point; Lyne's *Lolita* may sometimes act in a childish way, but she is not childlike.

In the book, Humbert Humbert tells us that by the time we read his story of *Lolita* he expects the two main characters to be dead, leaving a question mark over what became of them. By contrast, both Kubrick and Lyne think it worthy to have Humbert die, and Lyne goes further by making *Lolita* die too, all in ominous credits at the end of the film. It would appear that both directors ultimately felt some need to show punishment and retribution as the end to an already tragic tale—ironic in an age of Hollywood happy endings. ●

The new Northern Ireland assembly will not overcome the old differences, says Kevin Rooney: it will institutionalise them

NEW DEAL, NEW DIVISIONS



PHOTO: IM ARCHIVES

Growing up in Catholic West Belfast, anti-Protestant jokes were met with a slap from the back of my father's hand. The non-sectarianism that I learned for the purposes of self-protection developed into a political conviction through my teenage engagement with republican politics. Reading the likes of James Connolly, Seamus Costello and other old left-wing republicans instilled in me and many others a conviction that the religious differences in Northern Ireland had been sustained by successive British governments. We learned that the British had often used similar policies of 'divide and rule' to maintain influence in former colonies seeking independence, and we were adamant that they would not succeed in Northern Ireland.

Despite repeated loyalist attacks on Catholic civilians, we refused to get drawn into a sectarian feud and continued to argue that Britain, not Unionism, was the problem. We believed that through ending partition we could also destroy the artificial barriers that kept Irish people divided.

Though many saw this as idealistic, it was in fact an entirely rational view. And we could not accept the alternative—that two communities would remain divided, in permanent conflict over their national identities. There is absolutely no natural or ethnic basis for the division between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. We are the same 'race', we speak the same language, we share the same history. The idea that we could share common goals as the people of Ireland rather than as Unionists or nationalists was an ideal well worth fighting for.

The much heralded peace agreement announced on Good Friday puts an end to that ideal, and promises to institutionalise the differences between Catholics and Protestants into the millennium. Worse, the same republican leaders who articulated the anti-sectarian views I have described are now at the forefront of popularising a politics in which difference is celebrated and where artificially created identities are presented as two traditions which should enjoy 'parity of esteem'. Britain is no longer to be pushed out of Ireland, it seems, but invited to stay as the referee between conflicting aspirations and the guarantor of equal treatment.

When Sinn Féin's Gerry Adams and David Trimble of the Ulster Unionist Party talk about an 'agreed Ireland', they express their newfound belief that there must be an accommodation of two fixed, immovable identities. The new peace agreement is not about overcoming the sectarian divide; it is about accommodating to the divisions in Irish society and creating institutions that reflect the permanence of these differences.

The main institution will be the new 108-member assembly at Stormont castle. Despite some nationalist fears that the assembly will be 'another Stormont' (the notorious anti-Catholic administration that ran Northern Ireland from 1923 to 1972, once described by its leader as a 'Protestant parliament for a Protestant people'), the new assembly will be a very different animal. It is introduced in 'The Agreement' as a body 'which is inclusive in its membership, capable of exercising executive and legislative authority, and subject to safeguards to protect the rights and interests of all sides of the community'.

The way that the assembly will serve to strengthen divisions rather than overcome them is shown in the requirement that all members must designate their identity. Members enter this assembly as representatives not only of a political party, but of a particular 'tradition'. 'The Agreement' states: 'At their first meeting members of the assembly will register a designation of identity—nationalist, Unionist or other—for the purpose of measuring

This is the first time that a political INSTITUTION has been established on the basis of identity politics

cross-community support in assembly votes.'

Before all votes members will be asked to designate themselves as nationalist or Unionist, to ensure that the votes are cast on 'cross-community' lines. This sealing of sectarian divisions is dressed up as a necessary safeguard 'to ensure that all sections of the community can participate and work together'.

Closely linked with the freezing of different identities in law is the dangerous erosion of democracy in the new assembly. Given that all votes and decisions must be taken on a cross-community basis, the concept of majoritarian democracy is out. Instead almost all the parties with members in the assembly will be given a cabinet post. Voting procedures are also subject to a complex system of checks and balances which are supposed to ensure that all sides agree to any rulings.

The voting arrangements proposed for the new assembly bear no relation to the Westminster system of passing legislation with a simple majority. No legislation will be passed unless there is 'parallel consent', described in 'The Agreement' as 'a majority of those members present and voting including a majority of nationalist and Unionist designations', or a 'weighted majority', described as '60 per cent of members present and voting, including at least 40 per cent of each of the nationalist and Unionist designations'. So even though the Unionists are likely to form the numerical majority in the assembly, they will be prevented from dominating the legislative procedure in the way that Tony Blair's majority allows in Westminster.

Far from producing harmony, this anti-democratic system is bound to exacerbate tensions in Northern Ireland. At least under majority democracy issues can be settled one way or another. But the future for both communities in Northern Ireland is a constant round of compromises that will satisfy nobody.

While the politics of identity has become increasingly influential everywhere in recent years, this is the first time that a political institution has been established on the basis of it. The designation of politicians by identity and the abandonment of majority voting are a serious threat to democracy throughout the UK and Ireland. The fact that they have been broadly welcomed as an attack on Unionist hegemony rather than an assault on democracy is even more worrying.

Only a few years ago the debate about democracy in Northern Ireland concerned the denial of the rights of nationalists to form part of a majority in Ireland. Nowadays Gerry Adams would be the first to accept that such all-Ireland democracy is unacceptable to the Unionist tradition. Instead everybody agrees that Northern Ireland needs structures which reject 'simplistic' notions of democracy. In a pamphlet published by the influential think-tank Democratic Dialogue, Elizabeth Meehan, a well-known liberal academic, articulates the dominant view:

'The conditionality of majority rule upon the protection of minorities has been overlooked in the dominant understanding of democracy in Northern Ireland. Elsewhere, simplistic majoritarianism is under attack for its adverse effects—closing discussion and being susceptible to the suppression of legitimate minority viewpoints.'

The language of minority rights and pluralism is very seductive and has certainly helped to undermine any criticism of the new 'Agreement', but take away the fine words and you are left with an institution which is even more

undemocratic than the old Stormont parliament. Tragically, today it is left to bigots like the DUP to point to the democratic deficit in the new institutions.

There are other worrying aspects in 'The Agreement'. A code of conduct for ministers states that they must 'operate in a way conducive to promoting good community relations and equality of treatment'. This clause will undoubtedly be used to restrict free speech and to reinforce the theme of the peace process—that strong opinions from intransigent politicians have been a major part of the problem in the past. Already the (tiny) minority Northern Ireland Women's Coalition has called for Unionist politicians to be prosecuted for undermining good community relations by their behaviour in the Northern Ireland forum.

Monitoring the work of the assembly will be an even less democratic body, the civic forum—unelected, with membership by government appointment. Northern Ireland secretary of state Mo Mowlam has already indicated that it will be a colourful assortment of minorities from women's groups, academia, community groups, etc.

The British government and its allies have imposed their will by reinforcing the divisions in Irish society. They have done so with such ease because the national struggle in Ireland had been roundly defeated. Rather than admitting to that defeat and stepping back from the imposed settlement, the republican movement has embraced a peace process based on celebrating difference. Sinn Féin will take its seats in the new Stormont. It will be there as the representative of the Catholic working class, and will argue for gaelic street names, the promotion of the Irish language and for the re-routing of Protestant marches. It is a far cry from the movement that described itself as the voice of the people of Ireland as a whole.

Growing up near to the so-called peace line which divided Catholic and Protestant communities in West Belfast, one survival mechanism was to make sure you could do a good impression of a staunch Catholic or Protestant as required. When stopped by menacing characters demanding to know your religion, the ability to reel off a Hail Mary or the loyalist theme tune 'The sash' without hesitation could mean the difference between life and death.

Today this depressing backward behaviour which many of us fought to destroy seems to have been elevated to the defining feature of Northern Ireland's new parliament. Instead of reciting the Hail Mary or singing 'The sash', politicians will 'designate' themselves as nationalist or Unionist. Some breakthrough. ●



PHOTO: JOHN GILSON

'GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WILL BE USED TO MANIPULATE MEDIA/PUBLIC'

...reveals a leaked Northern Ireland Office document. Brendan O'Neill reports on the stage-managed selling of the peace deal

As the world welcomed the Northern Ireland peace deal in April, one thing played on my mind: where did those children outside Stormont castle come from? Just hours before the deal was agreed a group of Catholic and Protestant schoolchildren appeared before the cameras on the steps of Stormont, singing 'carry on, carry on', as inside Unionist, nationalist and republican politicians exhausted themselves in the search for agreement.

Of course the children did not turn up spontaneously – they were 'supplied' by Belfast radio dj Tommy Sands, who has a reputation for staging this kind of stunt. Earlier in the week Sands himself had been refused entry into Stormont on the grounds that the negotiations were too serious to be disrupted by his shenanigans. But when he returned with a group of doe-eyed children the gates of Stormont were flung open and everything came to a standstill, as politicians vied to have their pictures

taken with the fresh-faced youth of Northern Ireland.

This story is typical of the way in which the New Labour government and its allies have stage-managed the peace process in order to sell 'The Agreement' to the people of Northern Ireland. The peace deal has been promoted through a campaign of spindoctoring, media manipulation, blackmail and censorship.

On 26 March, as the negotiations were entering the final stages, the Democratic Unionist Party leaked a British government document on selling the peace deal, entitled 'Information strategy'. Written by Tom Kelly, formerly of the BBC and now director of communications at Mo Mowlam's Northern Ireland Office, the document outlines the government's strategy for getting the right result in the 'most crucial election campaign in Northern Ireland's history'—the 22 May referendum on the peace deal. Despite being under-reported and played down in the British press, the document is a shocking read.

'During the next ten weeks', writes Kelly, 'we need to convince the Northern Ireland public both of the importance of what is at stake, and also convince them that not only is agreement possible, but they have a vital role to play in endorsing it'. The document suggests that the government's message should be 'clear, simple and direct' and advises ministers to 'keep repeating it at every opportunity': 'the momentum towards an agreement and the people's decision in a referendum must become a central part of every message government sends, whether the context is the economy, health or even agriculture.'

However, the document's author is aware that if government ministers keep ramming 'key lines' and the 'right message' down people's throats, many might gag on it: 'it could be seen as "big government" imposing its views, which would be entirely counterproductive.' To resolve this problem the document suggests enlisting the help of community representatives, church leaders, women's groups and, most importantly, the media, to help push the government agenda. 'This will keep the message fresh by introducing different faces delivering the message.'

The NIO document then proposes a campaign of blatant media manipulation designed to flood Northern Ireland with positive stories about the peace deal. As the accompanying commentary, also leaked, bluntly states, 'government officials will be used to manipulate media/public'. The document itself proposes 'effective monitoring' of media coverage so that ministers and civil servants will be better placed to

intervene and set the agenda:

'We will wish to put more emphasis on the briefing of media people generally... We will be particularly anxious to use this as a means of exerting some influence on the content and quality of media coverage. The many weekly newspapers around Northern Ireland offer considerable scope for us to present our message, and the editors of these papers should feature in the efforts of ministers to *cultivate the media*' (my italics).

Influential media people should be 'cultivated' and coaxed into running with the official line that this agreement is the best thing to ever happen in Northern Ireland. The document refers to '10-12 current affairs broadcast programmes with which Information Service will liaise closely' and mentions important 'intelligence gleaned from informal contacts with key media people'. Kelly of the Northern Ireland Office ends on a proactive note:

The 'key message' of the deal was agreed in **THE BACKROOMS** of the Northern Ireland Office while the Stormont negotiations were still taking place

'I will myself arrange a number of occasions on which I will bring together selective influential media people.'

Despite New Labour's claim that the peace deal was born of 'the People', in reality the 'key message' of the deal was agreed in the backrooms of the Northern Ireland Office while the negotiations were still taking place. A comprehensive strategy for selling the deal and enlisting the media to do the government's dirty work was drawn up even before the nationalist and Unionist parties had agreed to it. It is not often I find myself agreeing with Ian Paisley, but I sympathise with his claim that this document 'makes Machiavelli look like a rank amateur'.

The document has had the desired impact. Before and since the peace deal the media in Northern Ireland has unquestioningly endorsed the government's line with headlines like 'Don't give up' and 'History is made'. Indeed, something else that went largely unreported was Robert McCartney MP's survey of media coverage in the weeks

after the peace deal was announced. McCartney, leader of the UK Unionist Party, found that the BBC gave 68 per cent of its coverage to Yes campaigners and 32 per cent to the No camp; Ulster Television gave 72 per cent and 28 per cent respectively; the *Belfast Telegraph* gave 78 per cent to Yes and 22 per cent to No and the *Irish News* gave 74 per cent and 26 per cent respectively. Much of the media seems to accept its role as mouthpiece for the government.

When I told a friend in Belfast about the government's media manipulation he responded 'so what? Look at the opinion polls; people like this deal'. It is true that every opinion poll has shown massive support for 'The Agreement'. But that is no surprise. With the old political blocs of both Unionism and nationalism exhausted and in some disarray, the government has been able to use the media to saturate a disoriented public with positive messages about both the deal

itself and the level of support for it. In New Labour's brave new Northern Ireland even the opinion poll is being used for propaganda purposes.

'A key requirement in developing our communications strategy', writes Tom Kelly in the Northern Ireland Office document, 'will be a continuing flow of information about public attitudes and response. On some occasions this will be helpful to our cause and on others not so. It will be important therefore to ensure that *not all the results of the opinion polling, etc, will be in the public domain*' (my italics). The document goes on:

'It would be open to us to encourage some degree of public opinion polling by for example newspapers and current affairs programmes, where we believe *the results are likely to be supportive*' (my italics). Some of this can be encouraged during meetings and briefings of senior media people.'

The document makes clear that this secret intervention in opinion polling is already taking place ►

Spinning a line: politicians like David Trimble and journalists give the 'right message'

◀ (it is dated 4 March, six weeks before the peace deal was agreed): 'We have now commissioned [PR company] McCann Erickson to have both quantitative and qualitative research carried out without it being seen to be Government Inspired. Further and more in-depth work through focus groups has been instigated by [the] Political Affairs Division and a detailed paper will follow later this week.'

we are not imposing a deal, but giving the people a choice. The central message will be "It's your choice".

The stage-management of the peace process did not end when the deal was agreed by the parties at Stormont over the Easter weekend. In the weeks after the 'long Good Friday', the government enlisted the help of the main political parties to purge Northern Ireland of any dissent.

anybody critical of 'The Agreement'. This led one staunch republican, Joe Dillon, also expelled, to plead with the Sinn Fein leadership to 'be at least as honest' as the Ulster Unionist Party leader, David Trimble. 'I disagree with David Trimble politically', said Dillon, 'but I respect him for stating his mind on the Stormont agreement'.

For its part, Trimble's UUP has openly declared that it will 'weed out' and 'silence' all those within its ranks who oppose the peace deal. It will also prevent dissidents from standing for the assembly. One leading Trimble loyalist has said that there will have to be a 'culling' to ensure that only those who agree to back the deal are given positions of responsibility.

By outlawing dissent and debate, Sinn Fein and the UUP have helped to clear the way for the imposition of 'The Agreement'. In effect this purging heralds a new form of divide and rule, between those who are willing to accept New Labour's agenda and those who want to hold on to their political principles; between the Yes men on the moral high ground and the No camp at the lunatic fringe. New Labour's aim is to create a broad centre ground under its supervision, made up of Sinn Fein, the bulk of the UUP, the SDLP and the smaller parties, with those who oppose the deal forced out into the cold. Whatever you may think about the No camp, the attempts to silence them and turn them into pariahs is an insult to democracy.

At the end of April it looked like the government, with the help of the media and the parties, had ensured that the implementation of 'The Agreement' would not be seriously disrupted by political conflict or debate. Then the Parades Commission came along with its report into the controversy over this year's Orange parade in Drumcree, due to be published so that interested parties could debate it. Not a chance. When Blair heard about the report he wrote to the Commission's chairman to suggest (ie, insist) that it be withheld until at least after the referendum. The government has been determined to stamp on anything that might cause political waves and endanger the smooth passage of its deal, even if that means direct censorship from the prime minister himself.

By the time you read this article 'The Agreement' will have been passed and New Labour and its friends in the media and the parties will be patting themselves on the back, hailing a new era of peace and democracy. But the reality is that this deal was agreed behind people's backs, promoted by manipulating the media and polls, and imposed by purging dissent and outlawing political debate. Welcome to New Labour's New Ireland.

By outlawing DISSENT AND DEBATE Sinn Fein and the Ulster Unionists have helped clear the way for the imposition of 'The Agreement'

As the document admits, the aim of all this underhandedness is to make the backroom deals look like they are the property of 'the People'. 'A central part of the government's approach is that

Sinn Fein's ard fheis (annual conference), held the weekend after the peace deal was agreed, was described by one journalist as being 'as choreographed as *Riverdance*, and the audience is as appreciative' (*Irish Times*, 20 April). Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness enjoyed standing ovations and easy questions as they presented the peace deal to their membership as 'the best opportunity for equality and democracy'. Seasoned republican-watchers might have noted the absence of some of the diehards who like to raise awkward questions, like whether their leaders might be 'selling out' their cause. That's because just one week earlier they had been expelled from the party.

In the week from the 6-12 April, as the peace deal was being negotiated and agreed, Sinn Fein purged its party of dissidents. Francie Mackey, a Sinn Fein councillor in Omagh, county Tyrone, was expelled, along with nine members in Balbriggan in Dublin. Both the Omagh and Balbriggan branches of the party had prepared motions for the ard fheis criticising the leadership and the peace deal. 'We disagreed with the leadership, and now they are trying to silence us', says Francie Mackey. 'They are treating their delegates like sheep rather than people capable of making rational decisions.' Mackey was forcibly removed from the ard fheis and the media was prevented from speaking to him.

In keeping with New Labour's strategy of imposing the peace deal by any means necessary, Sinn Fein has sought to isolate and expel

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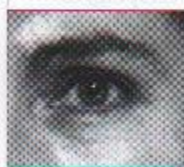
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ANN BRADLEY

The right to be

wrong



The May court of appeal ruling that a pregnant woman has the right to refuse medical treatment, even if her decision may jeopardise her life and the future of her pregnancy, was welcome. Three judges overturned the decision of a lower court and ruled that medical authorities and social workers did not have the right to force a pregnant woman, referred to during the proceedings as MS, to have a caesarean section against her will.

It was useful for eminent judges to confirm that pregnant women are not walking wombs and that, despite being 'with child', they remain individuals entitled to the same rights as anybody else—including the right to reject their doctors' advice.

It was also timely for the court to remind society that 'although human and protected by the law in a number of

of ethicists and medical specialists probably breathed a sigh of relief that the court's ruling was so stridently clear. At least for the time being we can confidently assert the traditional truth: persons acquire rights at birth and not before.

There were fewer howls of outrage than might have been expected from those who—as part of their struggle to ban abortion—insist that fetuses should be accorded full rights in law. *Sunday Telegraph* editor Dominic Lawson curiously predicted the introduction of voluntary euthanasia after the case. Expressions of disapproval have, in the main, been reserved for the woman known as MS who, by means of this case, won her right to sue the hospital where her baby was delivered by a caesarean section to which she did not consent.

Some might think that this was in itself proof of insanity such as to throw MS' mental competency into question. However, we who have not seen her medical records are in no position to judge whether her decision was as absurd as it seems. And the court of appeal judges, who cannot afford the luxury of outrage, were wise to remind us that the Mental Health Act cannot be deployed to achieve the detention of an individual against her will merely because her thinking process is 'unusual, even apparently bizarre and irrational and contrary to the overwhelming majority of the community at large'.

One columnist did challenge the near consensus on the matter, asking 'has there ever been a more blatant example of the modern obsession with "rights" and corresponding neglect of "duties"?' She was, of course, counterposing a woman's right to decide to her duty to manage her pregnancy in the best interests of her child-to-be. In her view, the court of appeal ruling has 'made the duties of motherhood into an object of contempt'.

Leaving aside the minor point that MS was not—in either law nor fact—yet a mother, the same pithy rhetorical question was on my lips too, but from a different perspective. There is, indeed, a 'modern obsession with rights' and 'neglect of duties'. Some doctors and lawyers would do well to end their growing obsession with the rights of the unborn, and concern themselves with their duty to heed the decisions of their patients.

The principles at stake in this case extend far beyond that of a woman's right to decide the future of her pregnancy. They touch upon the very principle of personal autonomy, liberty and our ability to make decisions for ourselves, free from coercion from external agencies. One of the most important rights we have is the right to make 'wrong' decisions. Freedom that only means freedom to do as doctors, social workers and lawyers think best, is no freedom at all.

It was useful for eminent judges to confirm that pregnant women are not walking wombs

different ways...an unborn child was not a separate person from its mother. Its need for medical assistance [does] not prevail over her rights'.

There has been a growing unease among those of us who follow the contorted debate over medical ethics that, increasingly, the fetus is being seen as a patient in its own right. Frequently, doctors involved in fetal medicine talk of having two patients and muse about their obligation to the 'unborn child' independently of their obligation to the pregnant woman. Journalists who have grappled with the claims and counter-claims

In truth it is hard to feel much sympathy for her. Most women, having carried a pregnancy to 36 weeks, are keen to cooperate with medical staff and see them not as adversaries in a battle, but allies who can help them achieve the birth of a healthy child. Most women, if told the life of their child was in danger, would submit to almost anything to improve its chances. Not so the woman in this case.

On being told she was suffering from severe pre-eclampsia and advised that she needed urgent medical attention, MS insisted that she wanted to give birth to her baby 'naturally' in a barn in Wales.

Following on from the Princess Diana grief-fest, the response to Linda McCartney's death shows Tony Blair's 'Young Britain' dancing to a slow march. Andrew Calcutt remains out-of-step

FUNERAL RITE-ON

She was someone who made a tremendous contribution across the whole range of British life.' On Sunday 20 April Tony Blair broke off from his peace mission to the Middle East to talk about Linda McCartney's death from breast cancer. Previous prime ministers did not interrupt affairs of state to mourn the demise of a pop personality. But pop stars and their insignificant others are as close to the hearts and minds of the current Labour government as union leaders once were to its predecessors. Furthermore, one of the oddest aspects of Blair's 'Young Britain' is that death seems to be what gets everybody going—especially politicians.

The exhaustion of traditional politics and decline of the old-time religion has left New Labour ministers desperate to find a new 'SNE' (shared national experience) which can bring society together. In their haste to establish a point of contact with our lives, they have hit upon death as the one thing we all have in common. Nowadays almost every death is elevated to a 'national tragedy' in the forlorn hope that this sad ritual will somehow reconstitute a sense of togetherness. The result is a sepulchral society in which politicians and media commentators have turned into ambulance chasers and professional mourners.

Blair's eulogy-in-a-soundbite bore no resemblance to reality. Lady McCartney was first and foremost the wife of Sir Paul. In her own right she was an instinctive photographer who never mastered the technical aspects of her profession, a bad singer (when Wings took the stage her microphone was mixed down; the bootleg recording of her singing 'Hey Jude' is sufficient explanation) and barely adequate keyboard player, and a proselytising vegetarian and cookery-book author who marketed 'meat-free' products, that is, tasteless TV dinners for veggies. A credible CV in certain circles, but hardly a 'tremendous contribution' to modern life. Yet Blair was only one of many who

waxed lyrical about Lady Linda's considerable achievements.

At the Bafta awards on Sunday 20 April, Lord Puttnam's luvvies paid tribute. When she was alive Fleet Street dismissed Linda McCartney as 'barmy'. In death, however, she acquired the status of a saint. For three days the *Sun* led with the Linda story, culminating with the full text of Paul McCartney's farewell message ('Paul's poetry...is so gentle and loving'), and a special *Sun* 'Woman' supplement, 'The legacy of Linda', which carried the exhortatory headline 'Go veggie' (printed, helpfully, in green ink) above an account of how 'Caring Linda has changed the world' by turning people on to vegetarian 'food without fear'.

The broadsheets were equally effusive. In the *Guardian*, Maureen Freely described how her own earlier resentment towards Linda Eastman (hardnosed American chick steals the prettiest Beatle from Britpop girl Jane Asher) turned to admiration for 'the wife who wasn't a wife, the twentieth-century icon who never was'.

On Saturday 24 April the *Guardian* allowed singer and fellow-vegetarian Chrissie Hynde two more tabloid pages in which to say what 'My friend Linda' meant to her. The McCartneys, Hynde said, 'were the ones who made you feel that it's worth falling in love and being with someone'. 'I always had a kind of prejudiced dislike for rich people, but funnily enough I wouldn't regard those two as rich people...It's more of a frame of mind isn't it?' Hynde added that Linda 'was living proof that you don't have to get dragged down by all the bullshit', a subject with which Hynde is clearly familiar.

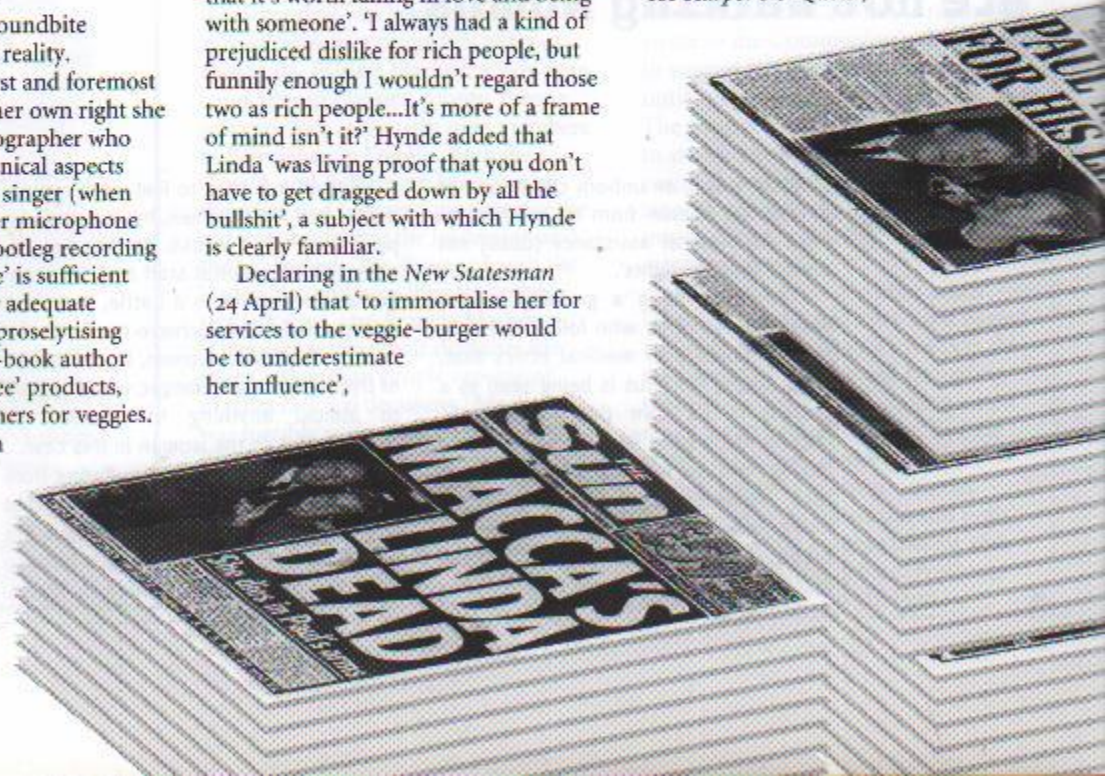
Declaring in the *New Statesman* (24 April) that 'to immortalise her for services to the veggie-burger would be to underestimate her influence',

Mary Riddell took another two pages to commend her for developing, in the words of management guru Charles Handy, 'a portfolio marriage'. Along with many other commentators Riddell rated McCartney for staying married to the same man—something which billions have managed to do in the past. The message seems to be that Linda McCartney was so ordinary she became extraordinary.

The really extraordinary aspect of Linda McCartney's life is that British public life was so galvanised and obsessed by her death. In the *Observer* (24 April) Joan Smith was one of the few who recognised the morbidity of it all: 'The final straw was when we were asked to "go veggie" in tribute to Lady McCartney, begging the question of what we are supposed to do when our own friends and relatives die. Stop eating altogether? Revive the custom of suttee?'

Now that a British university has introduced an MA in 'death studies' and the trendiest new title in the bookshops is *Girlfriend in a Coma*, perhaps we are living in a suttee society. Welcome to what *LM* editor Mick Hume has dubbed 'Ghoul Britannia'.

Pop culture has always liked to dally with death, but it was never as funereal as now. In 'Boys' own', an article for *Harper's & Queen*,



later reprinted in the *Style Wars* collection (Sidgwick and Jackson, 1985), Peter York described the jubilation of the punks at the Vortex club when they heard that Elvis Presley had died: '16 August is the night the Clash's famous little prophesy "No more Elvis, Beatles and Rolling Stones in 1977" seems to be coming on stream, because around midnight the dj tells them the King is Dead, and this *almighty cheer* goes up.'

Poor Danny Baker tried to remonstrate with them. But punk was all about dancing on the graves of Elvis and the Beatles (and their wives). Nobody wanted to hear about pop's heritage, and his impromptu speech got short shrift. In the early hours of Sunday 31 August 1997, by contrast, late-night clubbers were among the first to be asked to respond to news of the death of Diana; and the dazed grief of their vox pops set the tone for the bacchanalia of mourning that was to follow.

In any case there used to be a distinction between pop culture and public life. Pop and its pantomime of death was regarded as a 'phase' to be gone through before the serious business of adulthood. In 1977, when newspaperman Michael Leapman asked whether he should go to Memphis to cover the funeral of Elvis Presley, he received the reply 'sorry. Not a *Times* story'. Nowadays pop stars are always newsworthy in the broadsheets. By 1996, according to press historian Matthew Engel, editor Charles Moore was berating his staff for not putting the Oasis concert at Knebworth on the front page of the *Daily Telegraph*; and in 1997 pop and public life converged around the icon of Diana, 'the pop princess', whose death is said by press cuttings agency Durrants to have accounted for 'at least 40 per cent of all news coverage' in the month after it occurred.

With the death of Diana, the New Funeral has become a defining ritual of public life. Many of its elements are taken from the morbid side of pop culture. When Kurt Cobain died four years ago, 10 000 fans attended a candle-lit vigil and a memorial concert in scenes which

prefigured the crowds that queued to sign the books of remembrance for Diana. MTV set up a telephone counselling-service and went into what one commentator described as 'day-long overdrive'—a prototype of the TV rescheduling which followed Diana's death. With its Cobain commemorative front cover, the following week's edition of the *NME* could have been a dummy for the special Diana issues of national newspapers. In previous decades the pop press reported the death of its stars as a straightforward news story. But in pop, and in public life also, death now often seems to be the focus for the meaning of life; and the coverage of Cobain's and Diana's deaths took on an oddly existential tone—even on the front page.

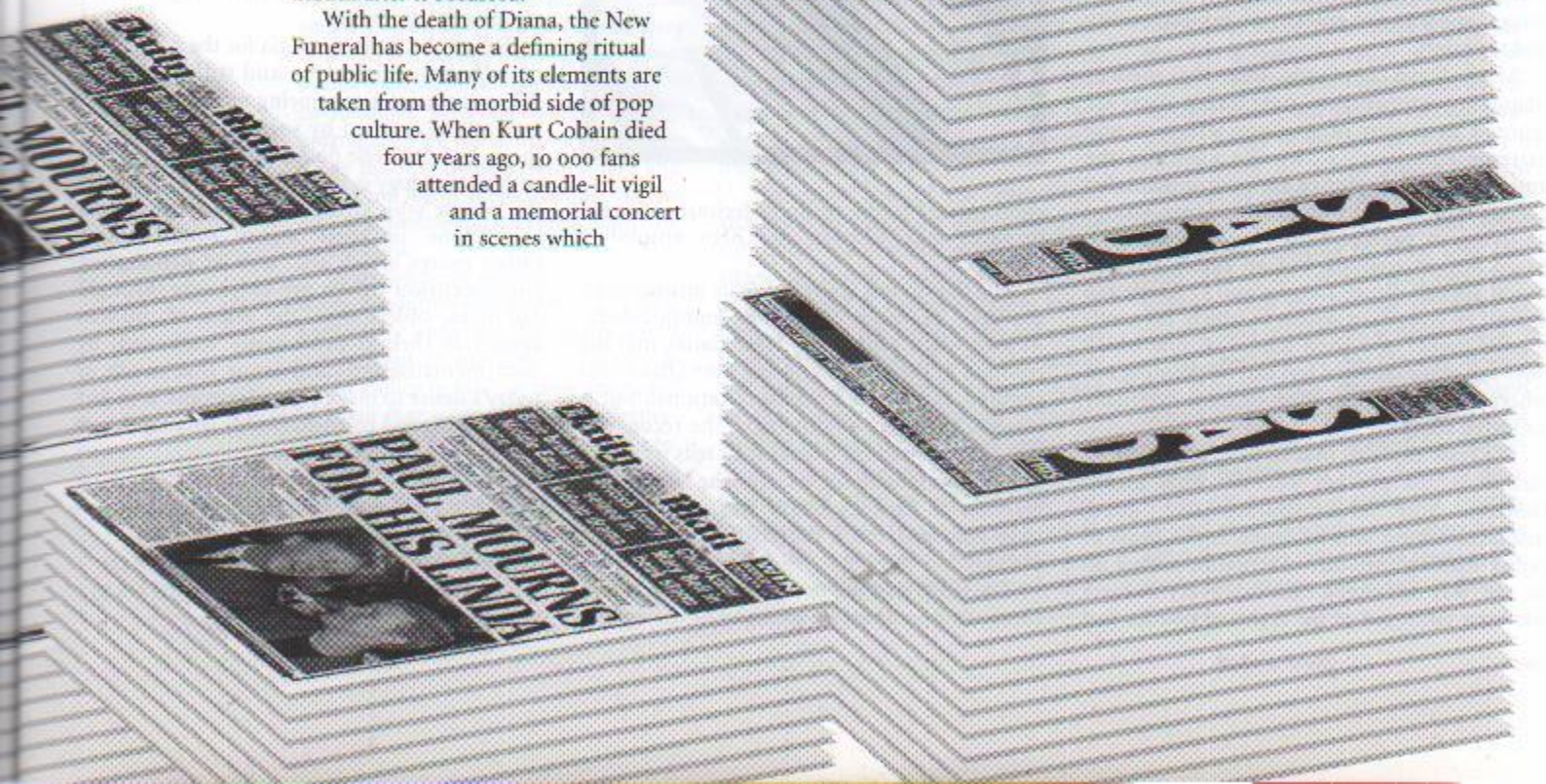
If Cobain's death was the pilot for Diana's, the funeral of Australian rock singer Michael Hutchence was the first of many sequels. The hour-long service was broadcast live from St Andrew's cathedral in Sydney, with sepulchral singer Nick Cave performing a song in the Elton John slot. Paul McCartney pre-empted this sort of pomp and ceremony by having the body of his wife cremated and scattering her ashes before anybody else knew what was going on. But then the 'secretive' manner of her death itself became an issue of public concern.

Society, hooked on death, will have its fix no matter what.

Diana is the supermodel of Britain's 'death cult', and Linda McCartney has just walked down the catwalk behind her. Looking up at these icons of Ghoul Britannia is Tony Blair, who first achieved star billing during an early bout of mourning sickness. In May 1994, when the Labour Party clothed itself in widow's weeds after the death by heart attack of leader John Smith, it caught the public mood for almost the first time in 15 years. New leader Blair was cushioned by the outpouring of sympathy which followed Smith's death (the *Tory Express* devoted 16 pages to it, claiming that 'even the chimes of Big Ben seemed muted and mournful'). New Labour was forged in this funereal atmosphere, and Blair's PR machine has been feeding off the dead ever since.

New Labour's combination of 'youth culture' and death cult is pretty sick. Indeed, if public life has sunk so low that death is its only common ground, and mourning the only cause around which our rulers can rouse the nation, then we really are experiencing the Day of the Living Dead.

Andrew Calcutt's *Beat: the iconography of victimhood from the beat generation to Princess Diana* is published by Sheffield Hallam University Press



Claire Fox talked to some of the authors who created a storm with their criticisms of Diana and 'fake' sentimentality

SNOBS AGAINST SOBBING

Tony Blair is right—the Social Affairs Unit collection of essays, *Faking It*, is full of old-fashioned snobbery. But so what? It has some insights, shatters a few taboos and asks embarrassing questions: a rare virtue in Blair's Britain. As contributor Dennis O'Keeffe told me, 'Some of the writers probably are snobs—I'm not—but I think snobbery is a relatively minor fault; much less serious than gross sentimentality'. And when O'Keeffe protests that Elton John's song at Diana's funeral 'was the most utter banal doggerel', who is to say whether he is guilty of snobbery or good taste?

O'Keeffe explains that the book, subtitled *The Sentimentalisation of Modern Society*, is not about Diana, despite the press controversy it caused. That short essay was added after the project was conceived because 'the Diana phenomenon perfectly embodied the kind of neurosis and self-indulgence that we were trying to get at in the other essays'. As its author, Bradford University professor Anthony O'Hear, put it, 'Sometimes in the history of a people there is a defining moment in which a nation discovers what it has become'. O'Keeffe admits that adding the essay was also a marketing device: 'I commented that the Diana essay would sell the book, which proved to be a great prediction. My wife said, being shrewd, that it would divert from the other essays and it has done that too.'

The other dozen essays, on the media, food, health, music, environmentalism, welfare, education and literature are a worthwhile attempt at describing the newly sentimental world wherein 'the elevation of feelings, image, spontaneity rules over reason, reality and restraint'.

Mark Steyn contends that the media's 'slapdash sentimentality' now means 'facts are ignored in favour of versions which arouse extreme emotions'. Jo Kwong identifies the anti-human character of an environmentalist agenda that is 'bolstered by sentimental visions of living in perfect harmony with nature... based not on analysis, but on emotional and moral appeal'. Bruce Cooper and O'Keeffe rail against an education system in which 'the sentimental model of a good school is...one which does not make children feel bad by pointing out where they have fallen short of some externally validated standard'.

O'Keeffe explains that to him, sentimentalisation is 'the process whereby what makes thinkers and administrators feel good, displaces reason and evidence as the basis of policy-making'. Another contributor sums it up as the way in which 'almost every subject has been taken out of the realm of politics and



DAVID CONLARD

to hold on to old 'real' values and institutions. Such nostalgic restorationism is particularly strong in relation to religion and the monarchy. The book's editors bemoan the fact that 'there are new carpets and armchairs in the sanctuary': but replacing cosy chairs with 'judgement, purgatory and hell', as they suggest, is not an attractive option. Peter Mullen, writing about religion, gives a hilarious account of a visit to his local Anglican Charismatic church, describing the horrors of stylised hugs, pop lingo and 'the big, bearded man' with 'enough smiling unctuousness to fill the closet of Uriah Heap' who turns out to be the vicar. His alternative? The '400-year tradition' of 'the King James Bible and the Book of Common Prayer'. Now I can really see that taking off in Cool Britannia.

What these writers' rose-tinted glasses blind them to is that it is precisely the irrelevance of the values and institutions of the past that have created the space for today's new emotionalism to take off.

O'Keeffe's comments on the monarchy show just how unconvincing this nostalgic sentiment is. He rants against the Hollywoodisation of the monarchy ('did you see the princes surrounded in South Africa by those Spice Girls?'), but his reflections on Diana show how clueless he is when it comes to an alternative. 'If she had the sort of strong and gritty personality her sister-in-law has, she'd have been able to take it', he says. Her sister-in-law? He continued wistfully, 'Anne's not beautiful in the same way. She's a genuine English eccentric. She could've handled that kind of...'. But can anybody really see horsy Anne as a role model for a generation fed on counselling and the virtues of victimhood?

For all the futile nostalgia for the golden age of authority, original sin and stiff upper lips, the essays paint a convincing picture of human aspirations crushed by society's emphasis on the victim. O'Keeffe points out that 'the trouble with victimology is that it now wishes to freeze the people who are sentimentally recognised as victims in their status permanently'. Other essays attack the 'web of debilitating condescension woven pre-emptively through' our lives, object that 'the sense of...human agency is (being) profoundly weakened' by 'sentimentalisation' and argue that much of today's desire to make things 'relevant' is in fact 'patronising and babyish, Noddy language'. ●

Faking It: The Sentimentalisation of Modern Society (eds D Anderson and P Mullen) is available from the Social Affairs Unit, 314-322 Regent Street, London W1R 5AB, priced £15.95 plus £2 p&p

appropriated to the realm of feeling'. All seem to agree that 'Clinton and Blair absolutely embody it'.

The flaw in this collection is its insistence on the 'fake' character of nineties' emotionalism. At least when Anthony O'Hear claims that the emotion of the people grieving over Diana 'was genuine, misdirected maybe...irrational, but it was not insincere or superficial' he recognises that sentimentalism, trite as it is, tells us something important about society. The 'emotional' reaction to Diana's death was shallow and stage-managed, but it reflects the real morality of today.

The belief that the new emotionalism is fake comes from a desire of so many of the writers

DR MICHAEL FITZPATRICK

The drugs campaign— just say no



'All statistics are imperfect, but those related to drug use are egregiously bad.' This judgement by a commentator on the US drug debate in the 1980s would seem to apply even more forcefully to the discussion in Britain around the government's recent White Paper, 'Tackling drugs to build a better Britain'. Every newspaper and television report features the results of surveys revealing shocking levels of exposure to drugs among schoolchildren and terrifying estimates of the scale of crime related to drugs.

Cursory inspection suggests that these statistics are about as reliable as the police's inflated estimates of the street value of their latest seizure. Claims for the effectiveness of drug prevention and treatment programmes, when they are not simply asserted, rely on similarly spurious figures.

Now over the 20 years or so I have been in practice, I have been conducting my own research into the drug problem. My (statistically rigorous) conclusions are as follows: 1) There are quite a lot of drugs about and all sorts of people take them, mostly recreationally without much harm, while some pursue a self-destructive course. 2) Though there have been significant shifts in the patterns of drug use (the rise of crack and Ecstasy, the decline of solvents, barbiturates and amphetamines) and there are marked local variations and passing fashions, I doubt that overall there has been a major increase in consumption. 3) Prevention and treatment programmes are worse than useless.

As the first point is self-evident and the second highly subjective (just like the official assessments), I'll concentrate here on the third.

In its editorial welcoming the drugs White Paper, the *British Medical Journal* particularly endorsed the government's commitment to pursuing an 'evidence-based' policy (9 May). It then proceeded to admit that evidence for the effectiveness of the preventive measures proposed—including drugs education in primary schools—is 'unfortunately weak'. In fact, much evidence suggests that such activities are ineffective, if not counter-productive.

In an account of the launch of the 'Heroin screws you up' publicity campaign in the 1980s, Robert Power has detailed the 'apprehension and misgivings on the part of professionals in the drugs field' who feared that it might provoke imitative behaviour and 'increase the prevalence of drug misuse' ('Drugs and the media' in *Drugs and British Society: Responses to a Social Problem in the 1980s*, ed Susanne MacGregor). The fact that the campaign poster subsequently became a popular feature of druggy bedsits suggests that these fears were amply realised.

As Power indicates, this problem has long been recognised in the USA, where 'decades of prevention campaigns have been seen to result in "boomerang" effects': 'The anti-chewing tobacco drive of the 1900s contributed to an increase in smoking; the anti-barbiturate campaign of the 1940s led to more widespread use; and the anti-amphetamine programmes of the 1960s alerted a new generation not only to the perils but also to the pleasures of the drug. More recently, anti-cannabis, LSD and glue campaigns were all followed by an increase in use.'

The drive to impose anti-drugs propaganda on schools is based on some elementary misconceptions. Young people do not take drugs because they are ignorant of the dangers, but to get high, irrespective of, perhaps even because of, the dangers. Telling them scare stories will not put them off; on the contrary, it will encourage them, partly because they don't believe them, partly because they want to defy authority and partly because they relish taking risks.

The other arm of the government strategy is to encourage GPs to prescribe substitute medications such as methadone for heroin users. The aim of this policy is what is known as 'harm reduction', reducing the harm to the individual from injecting drugs of unknown quality and reducing the harm to society caused by the (sometimes criminal) activities required to raise the necessary cash.

My experience of prescribing methadone—and that of most of my colleagues—is close to 100 per cent failure. I think this is because of two fundamental problems with the substitute medication

policy, one relating to motivation, the other to addiction.

When somebody asks to go on a methadone programme, it is customary to judge their suitability for medication by assessing their 'motivation'. In fact this is superfluous, because the very fact that they have presented the problem in this way confirms that their motivation is to continue taking drugs rather than to stop taking them; they simply want to continue in a different way, getting less of a high perhaps, but also getting less hassle. The high level of conflict in relations between GPs and junkies often arises from this basic confusion: while the GP thinks they want to stop, the junkie just wants to continue.

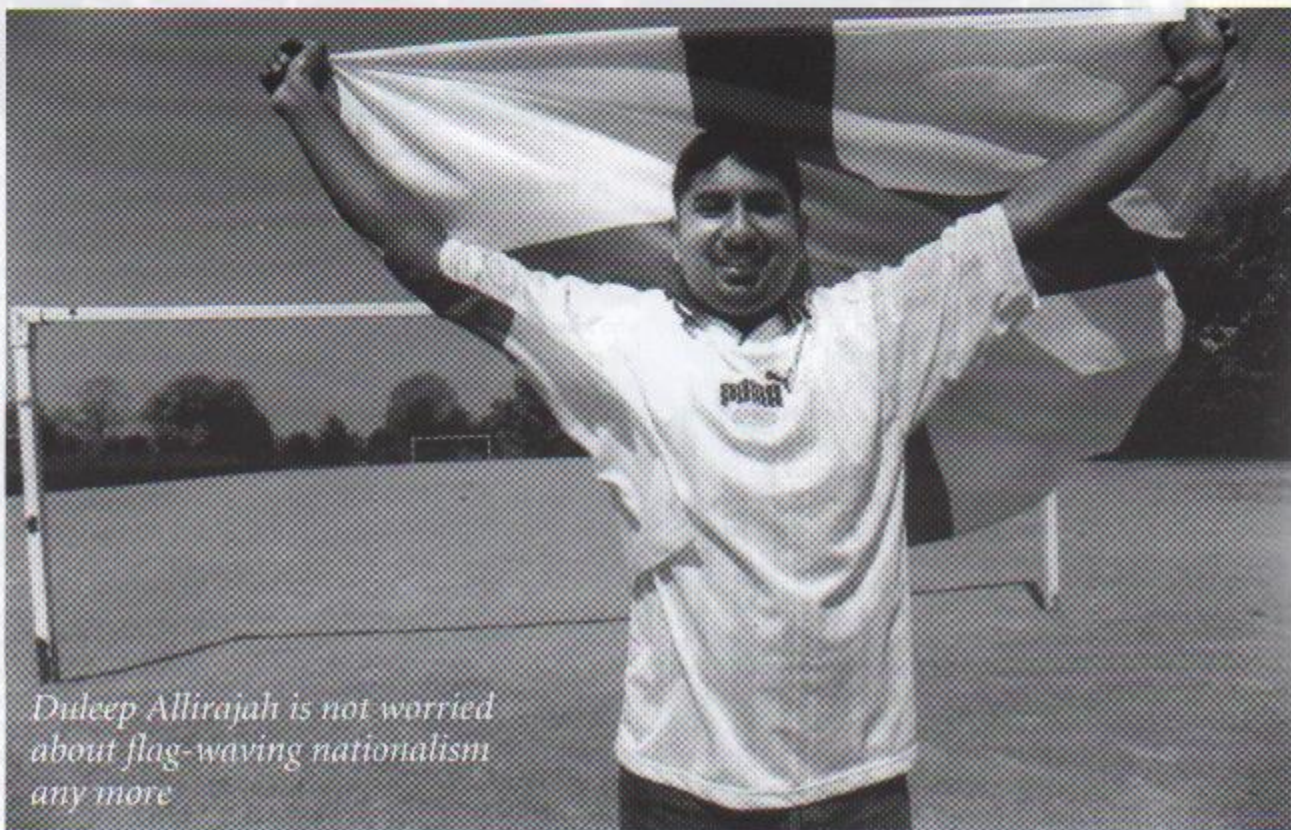
The second problem follows from the endorsement of the concept of addiction. Whereas heroin is generally considered to be highly addictive, methadone is not. Yet people who consider themselves addicted to heroin are quite capable of becoming addicted to methadone, or even relatively minor analgesics like dihydrocodeine or coproxamol, which are not regarded as addictive and have only slight narcotic effects. This suggests that the pattern of behaviour associated with drug addiction is socially conditioned rather than being biologically or pharmacologically determined.

When I come across people who have taken drugs like heroin in the past, sometimes for quite long periods, I often ask them what made them stop. It turns out that this is rarely the result of drug treatment programmes, 'detoxification' or 'rehabilitation', but usually follows some wider change of lifestyle prompted by a new partner or a new job, a spell in prison or by simply getting bored with the drug scene. This confirms that when people really decide to stop, they just stop and often report relatively little difficulty with the familiar problems of physical and psychological dependency.

My conclusion is that the way forward lies through both decriminalising and demedicalising drugs. If teachers taught children something interesting, doctors treated people who were sick and politicians got on with running the country, instead of all interfering in matters about which they know little, maybe fewer people would seek escape and solace in drugs.

Your alternative 12-page guide to the World Cup and all things football starts here

WHY IT'S COOL TO SUPPORT ENGLAND



Duleep Allirajah is not worried about flag-waving nationalism any more

I am not a patriot, I wasn't born in Britain and I'm not white, but I'll be backing England in the World Cup. I am not particularly bothered about what happens to the 'reggae boyz' of Jamaica or the African or Asian teams. I'd really love to see England play Germany—and this time turn them over. It would appear that I've just passed the Tebbit test.

There was a time when I felt a bit uneasy about supporting England—a time when Norman Tebbit's brand of chauvinism carried some influence in society. When England played Argentina in the quarter-final in Mexico 1986 the still-fresh memory of Margaret Thatcher's Falklands War imbued the game with a greater significance (I still supported England, but discreetly). When Liverpool fans charged at Juventus supporters in the Heysel stadium, waving Union Jacks and chanting 'kill the wops', I couldn't help but feel sickened.

Times, however, have changed. Old-fashioned nationalism seems to have lost its grip along with most other Great British institutions like the monarchy, the church of England and the Tory Party. When I saw William Hague and Pffyon skanking at the Notting Hill carnival, it struck me how dated Norman Tebbit and his brand of jingoism appears now. I have never been one for singing 'Rule Britannia' and 'No surrender to the IRA' at football matches, but I can't get worked up about the few who do, especially today. The trappings of old-fashioned nationalism no longer mean very much outside a football stadium. Painting the cross of St George on your face no more signifies British nationalism than Chelsea fans wearing Ruud Gullit wigs was an expression of Rastafarianism.

Euro '96 illustrated how obsolete traditional fight-'em-on-the-beaches nationalism had become. The tabloid press indulged itself in a kind of cartoon

chauvinism, a joke version of jingoism. Before England played Holland the *Daily Mirror* urged its readers to pull up their tulips, throw out their Edam cheese and clogs, and stay away from windmills. Before the quarter-final against Spain the *Mirror* announced 'You're done Juan!' and listed '10 nasties Spain's given Europe'—including syphilis, carpet-bombing, Franco and flamenco dancing. On the eve of the semi-final against Germany the *Sun* issued the battle cry 'Let's blitz Fritz!', while the *Mirror*, under the headline 'Achtung surrender!', declared 'soccer war' on Germany.

It is indicative of its decline that traditional foreigner-bashing can no longer be presented with a straight face. Some people, however, did not see the funny side. The opprobrium heaped on the tabloids was also a sign of changing times. Even the *Daily Mail* joined in the chorus of condemnation, declaring that 'England deserves better than this orgy of jingoism'. The national heritage select committee slammed the tabloid press for their 'xenophobic, chauvinistic and jingoistic gutter journalism'. *Mirror* editor Piers Morgan felt obliged to issue an immediate public apology saying, 'It was intended as a joke but anyone who was offended by it must have taken it seriously, and to those people I say sorry'. Displays of traditional nationalism, it seems, are now something to be ashamed of and avoided even in jest.

Tony Blair suggested that Euro '96 had restored a sense of national pride. However, unlike real nationalism this mood could never be susceptible to manipulation by politicians, precisely because it was based on nothing more than football. The euphoria dissipated almost as soon as Gareth Southgate missed That Penalty. Ironically, those who make a living out of patriotism were able to spot the difference between a nationalist revival and a fleeting collective feeling around



a football tournament. As Chris Penman, proprietor of House of Flags (which experienced a surge in demand during Euro '96) explained, 'Last year, even with the VE-Day commemoration, we sold only about 1000 St George Flags. The English as a nation are not very patriotic. Until now a lot of people did not know what a St George flag looked like...Fans have suddenly woken up to the fact that it is St George for England'. And when the tournament was over, they forgot about it again; misguided attempts to build on the 'spirit of '96' and turn St George's day into a popular national festival have flopped in the past two years.

So I feel it is alright to support England today without worrying about whether I am encouraging nationalism or indulging racists. In fact, what worries me more than the remnants of old-fashioned nationalism is the attempt to replace it with a new politically correct form of patriotism which is better suited to New Britain. The components of this new patriotism were summed up well by *Guardian* journalist Jonathan Freedland after Diana's death last year: 'New Britain is less formal and deferential. It's more open and personal. It's more tolerant and optimistic, less macho and miserable. It's more diverse—less straight and more black—and less centralised.'

In truth, this idealised notion of New Britain is just as mythical as John Major's romantic vision of old maids bicycling to holy communion through the morning mist. Intolerance and deference, which characterised traditional nationalism, have not been abolished—just repackaged in a PC form.

Never mind the conformist Tebbit test, what about the Blair test? Those out-of-date nationalists who follow the England football team and who, according to football writer Jim White, 'clench their fists in fervent salutes during "God save the Queen"', are exactly the sort of people who fail the

Blair test—a more insidious and intrusive demand for conformity than anything the old guard proposed. Norman Tebbit only wanted us to stand up while the national anthem was playing. The Blair test goes further and demands that we not only respect the national anthem of England's opponents, but that we behave ourselves throughout the entire game: no racist chants, no swearing in the family enclosure, and no taunting opposing fans with internationally recognised obscene gestures.

It seems to me that New Britain is no less elitist than the old version, except that elitism has been given a Blairite makeover. It is what a journalist like Matt Tench of the *Independent* expressed during Euro '96, describing his discomfort when he found himself on a tube train 'cocooned among a mob of Chelsea fans...and looking around all you could see were white males mostly between the ages of 16 and 30'. When the humourless new elitists of Blair's Britain attack the 'jingoism' of the tabloids, they are really attacking the racist scum which they take many tabloid-reading football fans to be.

To me, supporting England has nothing whatsoever to do with feeling British or English or anything else. I feel no more allegiance to New Britain than I did to old Britain. My allegiance is confined to the England team, players whose fortunes I follow throughout the season (although I would feel closer to them if a few Crystal Palace players made the squad). It's a football thing and nothing more.

I could not care less if England fans chant abuse at the opposition or boo foreign national anthems. Intimidating the opposition is what supporting your team is all about. I would be more worried if England fans applauded their opponents, took part in the Mexican waves and joined in songs of international friendship. As I see it, a football stadium is no place for this sort of behaviour.

...AND WHY ENGLAND CANNOT WIN

If you are looking for the winner of France '98, says World Cup historian Alan Hudson, round up the usual suspects—Brazil, Argentina, Germany and Italy—and forget about the rest

Next time somebody tries to tell you that the invisible hand of 'globalisation' has changed everything on Earth in the past few years, ask them how come the same handful of countries dominate international football today as have done for the past half century. As the World Cup in France approaches, you would have to abandon all critical faculties in order to look any further for a winner than the big four of Brazil, Germany, Italy and Argentina.

Stuck in the past? Ignoring the changing dynamic of the world game? What about the rise of African and Asian football? What about England and the host country France? The answer to all these questions is look at the facts.

- Only six countries have ever won the World Cup
- Between them the 'big four' have won 10 out of the previous 11 championships
- Germany have contested four of the past six finals

Only six teams have ever won the World Cup: Brazil four times, Germany and Italy three times each, Argentina and Uruguay twice each, and England once. Look a little deeper and the patterns become even clearer.

Habits in technique, tactics, preparation and success provide the basis of achievement, and give a handful of countries the accumulated raw material to challenge for supreme success in the

greatest team competition in the world. Football is a very simple game. This is why it is beautiful. But in order to make it simple you must work incredibly hard. You must pay attention to technique. You must pay attention to tactical awareness. You must have team spirit and discipline. ►

The 1998 World Cup Finals

GROUP A



BRAZIL MOROCCO SCOTLAND NORWAY

GROUP C



FRANCE SAUDI ARABIA DENMARK SOUTH AFRICA

GROUP B



ITALY CAMEROON CHILE AUSTRIA

GROUP D



SPAIN PARAGUAY BULGARIA NIGERIA

◀ You must have the habit and certainty of winning. There is an inherited capital in the world of football which is very difficult to overturn—so much so that it is becoming more concentrated.

Here I have looked at all the world championships since the competition began in 1930, and allocated five points for the victors, three points for the runners-up and one each for the losing semi-finalists. To give a sharper focus on the trends in the modern game, I have separated the prewar and postwar results.

	Postwar	Prewar	Total
1 Germany	26	1	27
2 Brazil	25	1	26
3 Italy	13	10	23
4 Argentina	13	3	16
5 Uruguay	6	5	11
6 England	6	*	6
7 Holland	6		6
8 Hungary	3	3	6
9 Sweden	5	1	6
10 Czechoslovakia	3	3	6

(*England did not enter until 1950)

The six winners make up the top six and the international pecking order is pretty much established already.

At fifth, Uruguay's position may appear strangely high today, but it was relatively recently that Argentina replaced it as the second power of South American football. Uruguay beat Brazil in front of 200 000 in the Maracana to win the Jules Rimet in 1950, and reached the semi-final again in 1954 only to go down to the Magical Magyars of Puskas, Hideguti, Kocsis et al. The Uruguayans remained strong in succeeding World Cups but the difficulty of qualifying from the limited number of places on offer in South America, plus the limited success of South American sides in Europe, has told against them.

For the record I have placed England at six, ahead of four others with the same points total, only because they have actually won it. Holland and Hungary feature next, above Sweden and the former Czechoslovakia, because the Hungarian team of 1954 and Cruyff's Dutch side of 1974 are incontestably the best teams not to have won the trophy.

But these are marginal matters in comparison with the overwhelming domination of the big four. The axis of world football power runs between Europe and South America, with two sides at each end; and they are now Germany and Italy and Brazil and Argentina.

Let us exclude the issue of semi-finals and get down to the real nitty gritty—the finals. The next table gives a breakdown of which nation has contested each final. It is followed by a summary of the finals records of all the teams who have got that far. Together they show that only 10 teams have ever contested a World Cup final, only six have won one, and the big four are pre-eminent.

Winning and losing finalists by tournament

	30	34	38	50	54	58	62	66	70	74	78	82	86	90	94
Germany						W		L	W			L	L	W	
Brazil				L	W	W		W							W
Italy		W	W					L				W			L
Argentina	L											W	W	L	
Uruguay	W			W											
England							W								
Holland										L	L				
Hungary			L	L											
Czechoslovakia	L					L									
Sweden						L									

The appearance of the Hungarians and the Czechs in the finalists' table highlights one change which has occurred in international football. Central Europe is the lost centre of football excellence. It was in prewar Central Europe that the first major tactical innovations of the modern game were made. You could have probably seen them first in the compelling derby matches between Rapid Vienna and Ferencvaros of Budapest. They bore fruit in the Austrian breakaway from the static centre-half which had been inherited from the English game, providing a mobility that could equally become the *libero* or the more defensively oriented sweeper of the Italian *catenaccio*. More thrillingly, this new thinking about the game produced the deep-lying centre forward that the Hungarians deployed to sweep England aside 6-3 at Wembley in 1953 and 7-1 the following year in Budapest.

This tradition should have reached its apotheosis in the World Cup in Switzerland in 1954. But the Hungarians fell foul of Puskacs' injury after the semi-final 'Battle of Berne' with Brazil, and lost the final after failing to focus on the task in hand against Sepp Heppberger's very physical German team. Within two years that great side was torn apart in the maelstrom that followed the Soviet Union's crushing of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. So politics does count a bit after all.





GROUP E



HOLLAND SOUTH KOREA MEXICO BELGIUM

GROUP F



GERMANY YUGOSLAVIA USA IRAN

GROUP G



ENGLAND COLOMBIA TUNISIA ROMANIA

GROUP H



ARGENTINA JAMAICA CROATIA JAPAN

To summarise the record of winners and losers:

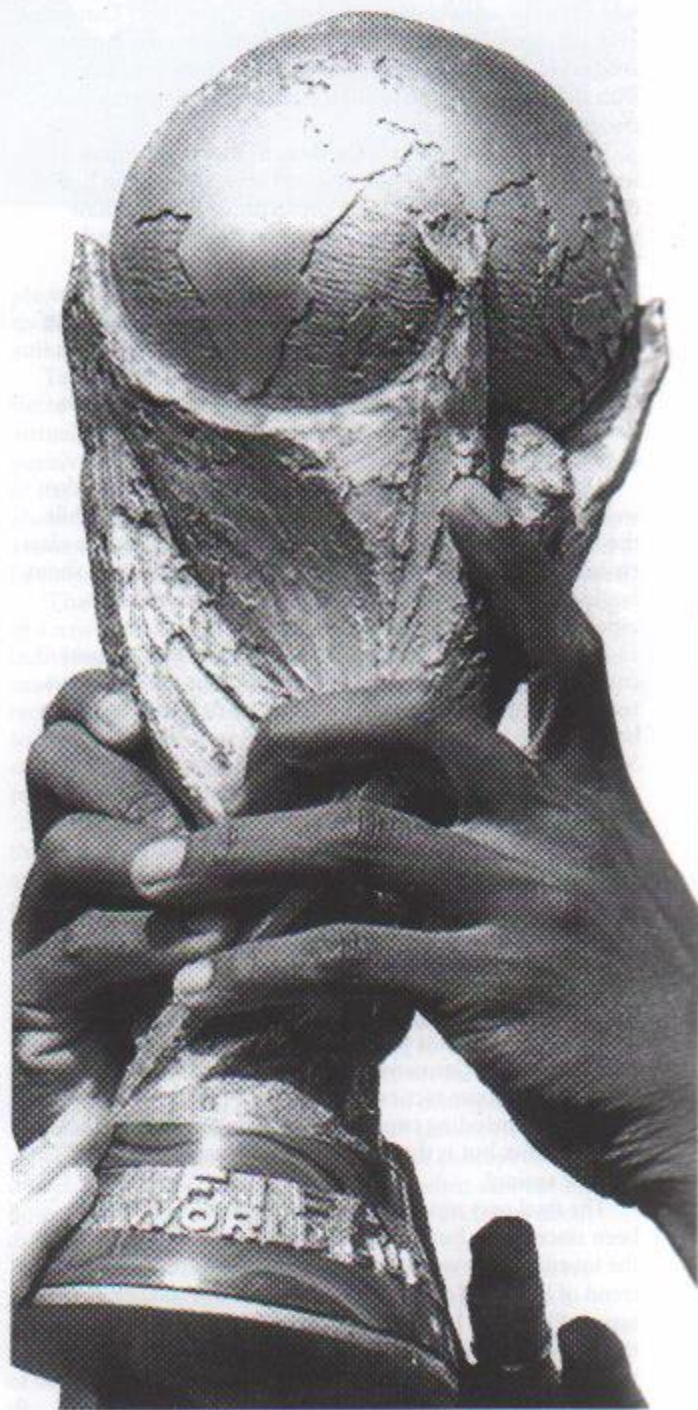
	Total finals	W	L
Brazil	5	4	1
Germany	6	3	3
Italy	5	3	2
Argentina	4	2	2
Uruguay	2	2	0
England	1	1	0
Holland	2	0	2
Hungary	2	0	2
Czechoslovakia	2	0	2
Sweden	1	0	1

One striking feature in the win/lose statistics is the Brazilian hit rate. When they get to the final they win (only final loss 1950). Good and even great Brazilian teams have, however, succumbed earlier on in the tournament: the 1966 side proved vulnerable to the attention which Bulgarian and Portuguese defenders paid to Pele's legs, the 1982 side to Paolo Rossi's inspiration of the Italians. Brazil also has an intriguing weakness against Argentina (check out the 1990 quarter-final and the overall record between the two sides, including the friendly that Argentina won 1-0 in May).

Before we look forward to the only thing that really matters, the coming World Cup in France, I want to introduce one more table to demonstrate, if you were in any doubt, that the modern game has concentrated power even more than in the early days. The last time that a final was not won by a big four team was in 1966 when England (at home) beat Germany. The following table works backwards to the great day in 1966 with the winning team first. (Non-big four teams in brackets.)

1994	Brazil v Italy
1990	Germany v Argentina
1986	Argentina v Germany
1982	Italy v Germany
1978	Argentina v (Holland)
1974	Germany v (Holland)
1970	Brazil v Italy
1966	(England) v Germany

This is a good point at which to evaluate the significance of playing at home. It is not the advantage it is cracked up to be; five wins by hosts and 10 by travelling teams in 15 tournaments hardly speaks of home bankers. ▶



continued from page 27

◀ Even Brazil and Italy have contrived to lose at home. Are France in 1998 more like England in 1966 or Chile in 1962?

England won in 1966 not only because they played all their matches at Wembley, but because they had the minimum requirement of three world-class players in Banks, Moore and Bobby Charlton. They also had a system that worked under a ruthless but effective coach, and a striker, Geoff Hurst, who came good during the tournament. Any winning team needs most if not all of these attributes as well as the breaks with injuries and suspensions. Even in these circumstances, England needed to take advantage of Pele being fouled out of the tournament, Argentina's inability to adapt to tournament conditions, and the help of a Swiss referee and a Russian linesman.

When you look at Brazil as warm favourites for France '98, at least consider for a moment that the Brazil side of 1958 is still the only one ever to win the World Cup outside its own hemisphere. The home side is not guaranteed a victory but a side from the same geographical area is a good bet. That being said, the Brazilians (and the Argentinians) are now more attuned to European conditions than they have ever been, with stars like world player of the year Ronaldo plying their trade on the Continent.

Who is going to survive the month-long tournament to win the World Cup? Would you rather trust to a faith healer or the accumulated habits of a professional lifetime? Raw talent and even genius is not enough at the highest level. What is needed is applied talent; only application makes the intervention of genius possible. I was very struck by the comments of Enzo Bearzot, the Italian World Cup-winning manager of '82, who said that he was confident that Italy would beat Germany because of a superior heart-weight ratio. The Germans were strong but sluggish. Pace will always win out, both in the sense of speed and in pacing a tournament.

All things considered this time around, England will do well to keep one of the big four out of the semi-final. While the French are good bets to reach the semis, the lack of a class striker will do for them in the end. Spain should have a shout but look at their poor record in top-class internationals, especially against the big four.

So round up the usual suspects. Germany are the most consistent tournament team in the world but the victorious team of Euro '96 was almost at its sell-by date, and what has happened to improve it since compared with the loss of Sammer? Italy have a quality keeper in Peruzzi, a wonderful striker in del Piero and an efficient defence, even if it lacks the commanding figure of a Baresi, but their midfield lacks a touch of speed and mobility. Argentina are less of a known quantity. Batistuta and Simeone are good but perhaps not quite as good as the other superstars—although that will not matter if Ortega really is the new Maradona (a possibility which has prompted the Maradona-worshipping editor of this magazine to back them at a generous-looking 12-1).

My feeling remains that it should be Brazil, who recently went to Germany and won despite the home team's roughhouse tactics. Brazil appear to have everything, including two world-class strikers in Ronaldo and Romario, but is the goalkeeper weak again and is the defence ageing?

The final may not be a good game (arguably it has not been since 1970), but it will take a good team to win through the tournament overall—and an exceptional team to buck the trend of history. To win the World Cup, this unidentifiable team will have to beat at least two and probably three of the big four. Any outsider who manages that will deserve the trophy and all the glory going. But I just cannot see it. Sorry Scotland.



Why should we expect footballers to set an example to the rest of us?
asks Carlton Brick

GLENN HODDLE'S ROLE MODEL ARMY?

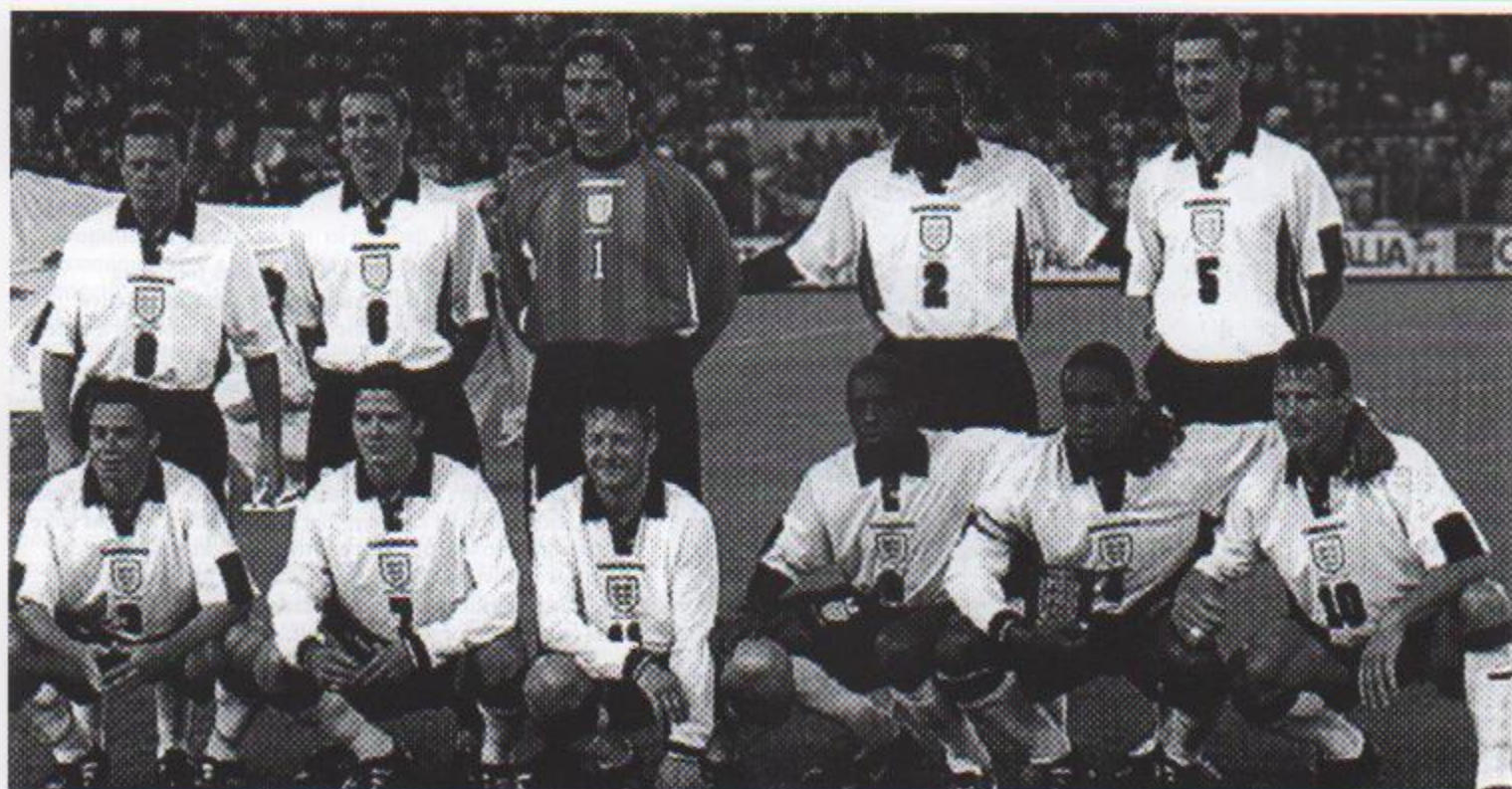
England's footballers seem of late to have been in the news as much for their exploits off the field as on it. Lurid tales of sex, drink, drugs, gambling and domestic violence have led to demands that players grow up and recognise that their irresponsible behaviour is setting a bad example to the youngsters who idolise them. Under the born-again Glenn Hoddle, it has become clear that England internationals in particular are expected to mend their ways and, with the help of counsellors and a supportive media, become role models for the nation's youth.

Before the Euro '96 tournament, members of the England squad found themselves in hot water over a tequila binge in Hong Kong and some casual vandalism on the flight home. In the run-up to France '98, by contrast, Hoddle was at pains to assure us that his players were getting in touch with their spiritual side through faith-healer Eileen Dewey.

Is all of this fuss about footballers behaving badly justified? Not according to Garry Whannel, co-director of the centre for sports development and research at the Roehampton Institute in London. 'Professional footballers lead fairly cosseted lives, and have not gone through a lot of the processes of maturation that people in other circumstances go through. If you add to that the huge rewards now available to our top players, it would be surprising if incidents like the one in the Hong Kong nightclub with the dentist's chair didn't happen. I don't think that English footballers squirting tequila cocktails down each others' throats when off duty is really an issue that should concern anybody unduly.

'Behaviour is not in any natural sense bad; we produce bad behaviour by a process of labelling. The things about sportsmen's behaviour that are highly publicised are often incredibly trivial. Ian Botham spent months in the press because the police found a small quantity of marijuana in his house. It is only by dragging somebody's name through the papers that it becomes a much more elaborate and highly exposed issue than it perhaps might be.'

Through his extensive research into issues of sport and morality, Whannel has become convinced that the notion of the sporting role model has little to do with the actual behaviour of the sportsman, but reflects a wider concern in society. 'The idea of the role model', he suggests, 'is a political



Setting national standards: Glenn Hoddle's England squad

concept at root, and there is a moral agenda lurking not far below the surface. A lot of things in society are supposed to be in crisis: masculinity is in crisis, morality is in crisis, family values are in crisis. Now that is not to say that those things actually are, but they are talked about as though they are. Sport is a great provider of major celebrities on to which these concerns can be condensed'.

'When Bobby Moore died a couple of years ago', Whannel recalls, 'he was eulogised as an exemplar of a set of lost values, rather than just a sporting hero. Moore became the means

players to act as good role models in terms of behaviour and sportsmanship'. Whannel is concerned about the possibly authoritarian consequences of this demand for role models.

Take the FA's random drug-testing initiative, which has led to several young professionals being banned, their careers virtually terminated before they have begun, after testing positive for recreational drugs like cannabis. 'The implications of the drugs cases', Whannel suggests, 'raise huge questions about the responsibility of employers. In what circumstances are we asking employers, such as football clubs or the FA, to be the moral guardians of the private lives of their employees?'

'The worrying thing is that sport is now at the cutting edge of a new extension of a moral guardianship over an individual's private life. There is a very clear distinction to be made between the use of performance-enhancing drugs and recreational drugs. But that distinction is being blurred, more so in football at the moment than any other sport. It is quite strange that they seem to catch far more people using recreational drugs than performance-enhancing ones.'

It is not just the lifestyle of the sports star which suffers in this process. There are also worrying implications for the rest of us. As Whannel points out, the assumption of the need for role models within society rests upon a very bleak view of the way people and their children understand the world they live in. 'The idea that young people need sports stars to set them a good example posits a very one-sided view of children', says Whannel, 'where they simply pick a particular player they admire and model themselves according to that star's behaviour. It seems to me that children are far more subtle and sophisticated. They are quite able to distinguish for instance between Gascoigne the football genius, Gascoigne the clown, and Gascoigne the wife beater. The concept of the role model, I think, is completely inadequate when accounting for how people really live their lives and make decisions about different kinds of behaviour'.

A society that demands role models is one that believes people are inadequate, unable to cope if left to their own devices. Deeply patronising and insulting, the demand for role models, sporting or otherwise, reduces everybody to the level of the ill-behaved child. It is about time some people realised that football is only a game; it is not a way of life. ●

'Sport is now at the cutting edge of a new extension of
MORAL
GUARDIANSHIP
 over private life'

through which the sixties were mythically reinvented as a time in which family values were in place, when crime was low, when there was a respect for authority, and of course when England won the World Cup. But if you go back and examine the period, a lot of those claims look rather questionable—except of course England winning the World Cup'.

Switch on the news or pick up a paper these days and you are likely to find some player or another fronting a 'socially responsible' campaign about knives or racism or doing your school homework. The New Labour government's Football Task Force says it wants 'to develop the opportunities for

Alex Standish questions the motives of those promoting women's football

CAN WOMEN KICK IT?



By 2010 women's football will be as important as the men's, suggests FIFA's general secretary Joseph S Blatter. I hope not, because, to me, the likes of Blatter have another agenda which has little to do with equality of the sexes.

It is suddenly fashionable to promote women's football. Earlier this year the major BBC drama series *Playing the Field* brought the lives and loves of women footballers into the nation's living rooms. The BBC also insists on at least one female player per team in its staff five-a-side league.

The football authorities too now take the women's game more seriously. In 1991 the FA ruled that girls could play alongside boys in teams up to the age of 11. The English School's Football Association has recently introduced four competitions for schoolgirl teams, each with corporate sponsorship; at under-16s level the Vimto Trophy this year attracted 500 school teams, a fivefold increase since the competition started two years ago.

When Sue Lopez was appointed women's international officer as recently as 1991, she found that the England players could not wear their shoddy, ill-fitting training suits, and had only one set of kits which they had to wash themselves after each match. By the time of the second women's World Cup in Sweden in 1995, Umbro was providing every England player with 15 shirts, each with their own name on, enough for them to swap shirts as the men's team have long done.

The authorities were not always so friendly towards the women's game. In 1921 the FA banned women's teams from playing in affiliated club grounds, amid concerns over the effect which playing a 'man's game' would have on the flower of English womanhood and her reproductive system. That ban was not lifted until 1970, and women's football was not really seen as important until the 1990s.

So why this sudden enthusiasm for celebrating a slower inferior version of the real thing? It is good that girls and women can now enjoy football, and more are taking up the opportunity. But it remains very much a minority sport (15 000 players in 600 clubs in England) attracting little public interest. Arsenal ladies might have matched the trophy-winning performance of the men's team last season, but the women play their games at Potter's Bar FC in front of a handful of spectators—a far cry from sold-out Highbury.

Clearly the promotion of women's football is not tapping into a huge demand. This suggests there is something else going on. It seems to me that the female game is being used as a means of changing the game, for everybody, away from an aggressive, competitive game and into a more 'feminised' sport.

If women are to play a part in football then the game needs to change, because it is assumed that women

play football differently. FIFA's comments following the 1995 women's world championship were instructive: 'It was gratifying to see women's football is evolving a style of its own. The women have inevitably adopted many elements of the men's game, but they have integrated them into a distinctive women's style of play, characterised by a certain elegance which has prevailed over a more robust impersonation of the men's game.' For 'distinctive style' read 'not as good', and for 'a certain elegance' read 'softness'. FIFA also expressed concern that some women's teams were using tactics to 'outmanoeuvre' their opponents. 'Tactical progress is obviously necessary but in the long run it could reach a stage where women's squads play more for the final score than for the game itself.'

Apparently FIFA thinks women are (and ought to be) more concerned that their match is pretty to watch than they are with winning. Isn't the whole point of a competitive game to try to win it? FIFA also drew attention to rough play and suggested that this 'occasionally affected the quality of the game'. But why should women play the game any differently to men? Surely they want to compete just as much as the men do?

The way in which female players are being used to change the game is most clearly exemplified in mixed football. Lisa plays for the Vikings team in the BBC five-a-side league, where 'referees watch out for the rough behaviour of the men towards the women'. She recalls one incident when a bloke shoulder-barged a woman (a legal manoeuvre according to the rules) and the referee blew for a free-kick, telling the man that 'you can't do that to a lady'. When Lisa protested about the differential treatment the referee corrected himself: 'Sorry! You can't do that to anybody.'

Over recent years the men's game has moved a considerable distance down the road of 'feminisation' and away from physical contact, due mainly to the actions of football's governing bodies. Both USA '94 and Euro '96 set precedents for handing out yellow cards for tackles that previously were considered part of the game. This has now reached the stage where mere physical contact between players, such as a hand on a shoulder, may be considered foul play. Any contact with the goalkeeper has been virtually outlawed. France '98 promises more moves towards outlawing physical contact. FIFA has announced that a foul tackle from behind will result in instant dismissal. Mistime any challenge and you are off.

I am not trying to support dangerous tackles; no doubt the law changes were initially conceived as a way of protecting skilful players. But in the end, limiting physical contact restricts a player's ability to compete for the ball. The game is not just about passing and scoring—how can you do that if you don't have the ball? Winning the ball usually demands a physical challenge, pitting individual against individual, a key part of the game. To remove physical contact would be to reduce football to something more like basketball, with long mundane spells of passing, more goals and less moments of genuine excitement. And how can you truly be a skilful player if you need protecting from tackles? To reduce the physical element of football is to change the nature of the game itself, to one that is less competitive, less exciting and less demanding of players.

As veteran journalist Ken Jones comments in response to FIFA's plans to crack down on tackles in France '98: 'Some of the most thrilling football in

World Cup history was made possible by ruthless acts of intervention. The orange glow of Dutch football in the 1974 finals would not have been possible without the aggression of the two militant midfielders, Johan Neeskens and Wim Van Hanegem, who could be relied upon to regain possession.' The article was entitled 'They fail to understand that football is nothing without passion' (*Independent*, 12 March 1998).

Alongside the 'feminisation' of football, 'fair play' leagues are becoming less of a joke as they impinge on the outcome of competitions. In January of this year UEFA suggested that England's additional place in next season's European competitions, awarded for the country's success in the European fair play league, could go to the club with the best fair play record. So a club could be relegated from the Premiership (partly because its players were not competitive enough) and still play in Europe.

It seems as if football is being transformed into a game for weak individuals who need to apologise after tackles, need protecting from physical contact, cannot play on bumpy pitches or in the snow (unless they have gloves and tights on) and need the protection of a tribunal when somebody calls them a name.

Through trends like the artificial promotion of women's football, the implicit message being forced upon us all is to be less competitive, less aggressive, less passionate, less prepared to take risks, and instead to be more passive, more polite and more cautious. This new set of football rules perfectly reflect the values of Tony Blair's paternalistic Britain.

Girls and women should play football if they want to, no differently from how the men play it, as a full-blooded contest, a competitive game where strong-minded individuals succeed. As Lisa puts it, 'It's a chance to get away from everyday life, release aggression and become totally focused on the game'. We should expect no less from football and no less from life.

Sex and power

It is assumed by some that if the game becomes more skilful and less physical, women will be able to compete on a par with men. As Jack Tarr, who chairs the English Schools Football Association girls' committee, put it after the Vimto Trophy under-16s final, 'Don't forget there are 120 years of history to catch up with the boys. I have seen the last two finals and the standard here was far higher'.

If the women's game received the same resources as the men's, no doubt it would improve. But could women ever be as good as the men at the highest level? Or does the physical advantage that men have mean that they will still outperform women on the football pitch?

Studies show that, with training, women can achieve 75 per cent of the power of men in the arms, about 80 per cent in the thighs and 65 per cent in the back and hands. This means that women cannot achieve the same power as men in key aspects of football: running, kicking, throwing, tackling, jumping or diving.

The significant differences in skeletal composition include broader shoulders and longer arms. This means men can throw the ball further and have a longer reach when diving in goal. Oxygen intake is also important. It takes an average man seven litres of blood to pump one litre of oxygen around the body, while the average woman needs nine. This limits the endurance of women in all but the very longest of events, as a better oxygen flow around the body delays fatigue setting in. This difference is smaller between male and female athletes but is still significant (see T. Lang, *The Differences Between a Man and a Woman*, 1951).

It is true that over longer distances stamina of the kind that women have becomes more important than strength. But football is all about power and pace over 90 minutes, which is why the fittest females would not be able to match the fittest males.

Among pre-pubescent children, where skeletal and muscular differences are less significant, if anything the earlier physical development of girls could give them an advantage. But past puberty, just about the only physical advantage women have over men on the football pitch is that they don't have testicles to cover when making a defensive wall.

By Dan Travis and Alex Standish

For 1998-99 WORLDwrite is launching a Brazilian Amazon Youth Exchange

This is a once in a life time opportunity for a group of British school students to travel 10,000 kilometres through six states, through forest, reserves, savannah, favelas and cities, journeying by boat, plane, foot, train and truck to meet state governors, federal politicians, environmental NGOs, development experts, streetchildren, favelados, rubber tappers, indians, industrialists, loggers and ranchers. School students hope to find out the truth about global warming, deforestation, biodiversity and most importantly to find out what Brazilians want from development in the Amazon.

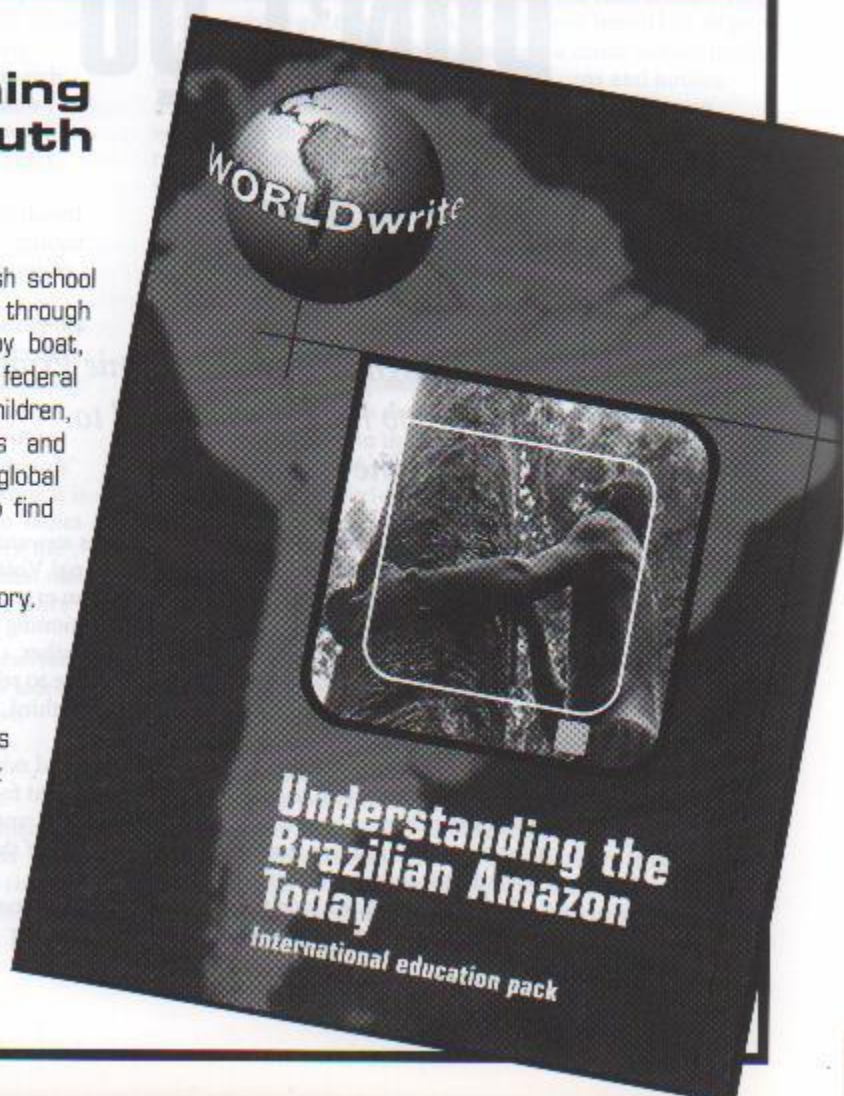
They are determined to come back and tell their peers their story.

Can you help make sure this project is a success?

Exchange participants need to raise £20,000 by August this year, so please rush donations big or small to: The Brazilian Amazon Exchange, The WORLDwrite Centre, 14 Theobalds Road, London WC1X 8PF (Make cheques payable to 'WORLDwrite').

WORLDwrite also needs volunteers: researchers, fundraisers and media experts.

Please ring Ceri Dingle on 0171 242 3533 for more details or e-mail us at: worldwrite@easynet.co.uk



FA FOR THE FANS

by Carlton Brick

Any England fan hoping to get tickets for France '98 while avoiding the lottery of the jammed phonelines, had to be a member of the Football Association's official England member's club. For £18 a year, the England travel club member gets first refusal on tickets for England matches overseas, including the World Cup (subject to availability of course). Ticket in hand, your face painted red and white, and the unforgettable (unfortunately) 'Three lions' in your throat, you set off across the Channel, with four weeks of wine, women, song and soccer on your mind.

But there is one snag. Having paid their subscription fee, for the privilege of paying more money for their ticket, members find that they have bought into not just a travel club, but a semi-religious order. They are bound by the

rules and regulations of the member's club—bound being the operative word.

There are 19 rules, number 12 of which stipulates: 'A member shall not drink alcoholic drinks on coaches, chartered trains, boats or planes on which he is travelling to or from a match. A member shall not drink alcoholic drinks or carry alcoholic beverages in any street or public place on the day of a match or at any time when attending a match or travelling to or from a match.'

Rule 13 adds a dress code to the drinks ban: 'A member shall not wear clothing which is considered by the Football Association to be inappropriate, indecent, abusive or prejudicial in words or design.'

In addition there is a special FA rule for the World Cup: 'No ticket-holder shall, while attending a match or upon arrival at

the stadium where the match is played, display, wear or carry any documents, leaflets, signs, symbols, banners, devices or equipment or other items of any nature, shape or size of a political, ideological, religious or advertising nature or any commercial slogans in such a way that the item(s) concerned are visible to others.' See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil!

If you have a ticket, but take yourself and your football seriously, my advice is don't go. Stay at home with a cold beer and a hot TV. It will be a lot more fun than the Sunday school outing planned by the FA. ●



Carlton Brick is coordinator of Libero!, the football supporters' network

'I BET YOU DON'T DO THAT AT HOME'

Scarborough steward Stephanie Pride says her job has been changed to nannying the fans

My club Scarborough may be giving us stewards red and yellow cards next season. Meaning? Visitors to Scarborough's McCain stadium can expect to be 'booked' for such offences as questioning the referee's parentage, inciting the opposition and other traditional pastimes employed by fans everywhere to relieve the agony and frustration of supporting a typical third division side.

These are changing times for Scarborough—and not just because we have started to play some halfway decent football. Most of the changes have in fact come off the pitch, and are nowhere more apparent than in the changing role of the stewards, the public face of the club.

Before I started working there two seasons ago—mainly as a means of getting paid to go to matches—a former

acquaintance and ex-member of the intervention team described to me how he once sent a Chesterfield supporter 'flying down the terraces' to a broken ankle. Today's 'intervention', by contrast, is more likely to involve asking fans to sit down and mind their language—to the accompaniment of hoots of derision.

These days at Scarborough, the new model steward seems to have more in common with a nursery assistant than the kind of glorified bouncer some still see themselves as. It is perhaps significant that our newest supervisor is a mother of three, whose day job involves walking donkeys along the seafront and who was scared witless on her first day with a two-way radio. Now more confident, she chides 'I bet you don't put your feet on the furniture at home' at the gangs



WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE TARTAN TERROR?

It is a standing joke in Scotland that 'the English think we're kidding when we say we don't like them'. And it is a source of consternation to Scots that, despite their best efforts to be fierce and rebellious, the English seem to like them anyway. This is more apparent than ever these days in discussions about Scottish football supporters.

While the more tiresome Scots still like to whinge about 'English stereotypes' of drunken Scottish fans rampaging across Wembley,

it is clear that perceptions have changed. The Scottish fans have become the fun-loving good guys, exemplary little brothers for the English rowdies. With the absence of 'big Jack's army' of loveable Irish fans, it seems that the Scots fans will be the ones to be patronised and patted on the head in France as the media's idea of model supporters for modern football.

Perhaps the turning point was 'the game that never was', when Scotland was the only team to make it on to the pitch for the World Cup qualifier in Tallinn, Estonia. The home team's failure to show up did not seem to bother the Scottish fans, mainly because they were under the impression that this meant an automatic victory. Pictures of tartan-clad revellers merrily exposing their arses to the cameras were being approved back to British living rooms as an example of what football is supposed to be about.

Eccentric women in face paint, squaddies in silly hats, the bizarre cult of Colin 'Braveheart' Hendry: doesn't it make you proud to be a football supporter? What do you mean, no? Personally, I've always thought Scotland supporters were a funny lot. Scots have suffered enough humiliation over the years watching

Rangers and Celtic falling apart in Europe without having to watch Blackburn Rovers do the same thing in tartan jerseys.

While some have faith in Craig Brown's renaissance (all this nonsense about playing as a team instead of just thumping the ball up the field and running after it with scary faces on!), the fans that really hit it off with the media are the ones who don't expect to win at all, the ones who just show up for the carnival. In this capacity, the 'tartan army' has become the international equivalent of the Partick Thistle support: a safe camp for those 'football fans' who don't really approve of winning anyway.

Given the inevitability of the results in France (the traditional scoreless draw in the opener against Brazil, a glorious victory over Norway followed by a severe gubbing at the hands of Morocco), the only hope of restoring national pride rests with Duncan 'Disorderly' Ferguson. The original Scottish 'heid-the-bal' has long been excluded from the squad, but if he can make it to France as a spectator then perhaps the fans will 'Rise and be a public nuisance again'.

Dolan Cummings



of Manchester United-supporting tots who charge around squirting soft drinks at each other as their guardians try to follow the match.

It is not just the kids who get this treatment. While on duty in what is popularly known as the 'cowshed', I am expected to ask fully grown adults to step down from a slightly raised ledge at the back of the enclosure, ostensibly for safety reasons, but probably just to stop me watching the match. Traditionally, the 'cowshed' is home to the club's more vocal supporters, where fans engage in witty dialogue with the opposition ('Come on, Boro!', 'Fuck Off, Boro!', etc) unmolested. Over the past couple of seasons, however, the gap between the two camps has been gradually widened (and policed) to such an extent that it is sometimes difficult to hear calls of 'did you come in a taxi?' if you are standing at the wrong end.

Earlier this year, I was stunned to be asked by the deputy safety officer to report on a middle-aged man with a crutch who was using the words 'bent', 'black' and 'bastard' (of the referee), presumably because he was in a family enclosure. Strong language, we are told, sets a bad example to young people and offends women. As if to bear this out, stewards' children are now banned from attending briefings while it is not uncommon to hear male stewards apologising to 'ladies present' for swearing. (Never mind that most children use demonstrably worse language than their parents or that many women, myself included, find men's apologies much more offensive than their choice of vocabulary.)

So who is pushing this drive against 'offensive behaviour'? Usually it is the whingeing minority of letter writers, aided and abetted by the ground regulations and one or two jobsworths desperate to make their mark on the club. One indication of the current importance placed on 'customer complaints' is the way stewards' briefings regularly start with a rundown of letters received, which range from the trivial (clean toilets!) to the ridiculous ('I expect better treatment as the [fill in appropriate relative] of the chairman') to the actually quite serious, like occasional allegations of assault.

The other perennial subject is what gets past the search teams. Many a debriefing is spent arguing the toss about whose fault it was that somebody got in with a can of pop. Not, as some would suggest, because it is against the ground regulations (although it is), but because the club is still trying desperately to get through stocks of its own brand line of pops before the last remaining player to have a drink named in his honour decides to move on. Apart from cans and bottles, other items confiscated for 'safety' reasons since I began working for the club have included motorcycle helmets, air horns, a cardboard coffin for the unpopular chairman of Hull City and even a garden gnome!

One sign of the times is that current training for stewards places more emphasis on identifying offensive language than on how to prevent pitch invasions or find knives in people's collars. Long sessions are spent defining racial abuse in particular, never mind that it is practically non-existent in my experience (allegations against a former goalkeeper notwithstanding). Apparently it is not just allusions to the race or nationality of a person that is deemed unacceptable these days, but even to their local provenance. Hence the recent disciplining of a Scarborough player for the use of the term 'monkey-hanger'—not, as you might imagine, a racial epithet, but a reference to the apocryphal tale of a monkey that was allegedly put to the gallows in Hartlepool on suspicion of being a French spy.

Of course there are some terms of abuse that are genuinely offensive to people, and I am not sure how a referee's assistant guilty of little more than a questionable offside decision felt about being called 'Nazi paedophile'. In my experience, however, nobody is genuinely upset by the colourful insults and humorous use of stereotypes, and if they are then they probably should not be at a football match. Football supporters are not such fragile creatures. I always remember how one set of visiting Welsh supporters responded to repeated provocations (and an early goal) by singing 'One-nil to the sheep shaggers!'. In the current climate, they might expect to be disciplined for this, although who they could be offending is unclear. The sheep?

TV GUIDE TO TI

by Ed Barrett

Football and clichés go together like Ronaldo and Romario, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the World Cup. This carnival of clichés pairs know-nothing pundits with countries they have never heard of and continents they would have difficulty locating on a map.

How do they cope? Simple: they fall back on the national stereotypes handed down through the mists of time, from Wolstenholme to Coleman to Motson. Thousands of hours of foreign football are broadcast in Britain every year, and dozens of foreign players grace our leagues, yet Belgians are still 'the Belgians' and Moroccans and Nigerians are all just 'Africans' to us.

ENGLAND

England 'gave football to the world' but the world rather ungratefully brought in all kinds of fancy tricks and started to beat us. So we console ourselves that although our players may not be the most skilful, they nevertheless uphold standards of 'commitment' and sportsmanship (English players are 'physical', never dirty). The fact that England have been out-run and out-fought many times is simply ignored.

The English are always brave, 'honest', have a terrific work rate and always show 'character'. Tony Adams is all heart. Paul Ince, like Terry 'Captain Courageous' Butcher before him, will be forever remembered for his blood-soaked head bandage rather than his footballing abilities.

English players are not expected to display flair or skill—indeed, true talent is traditionally regarded in much the same way as diving, spitting and other such 'foreign' habits which have been 'creeping into our game' for as long as anybody can remember. So in the unlikely event of Beckham bending a 30-yard free kick into the top corner, or Gazza beating five men to score, Motty and Co will follow the strict rules drawn up to cover such events, and sourly note that 'if a Brazilian had done that, we'd all be applauding it'.

If England is eliminated, teams with players from the premier league will be treated as honorary Brits, and cited as proof that our league is the best in the world. Also, the English referee will become eligible for the final. If selected, this will confirm that our refs are also the best. If he isn't, the foreign ref will be compared unfavourably to him.

SCOTLAND

In emergencies, such as England failing to qualify, loyalties are transferred to Scotland as representatives of 'the British game'. Scotland's past performances have been a combination of farce and heroics, invariably resulting in a first-round exit. As with those other occasional 'British' representatives, the Irish, attention is therefore focused on their 'marvellous' fans, whose good humour, kilts and bagpipes are contrasted favourably with the aggressive English: 'Win, lose or draw, these fans are going to have a party.'

GERMANY

Germans are viewed with a mixture of resentment and admiration; superiority and inferiority. German teams down the years have boasted such artists as Beckenbauer, Netzer and Schuster. Yet their technical gifts count for nothing compared to their reputation for discipline, organisation and



determination. They will forever be an efficient, 'well-oiled machine'. They will 'keep going for 90 minutes'. So remember: 'Never write off the Germans.' You do so 'at your peril'.

The English attitude to the Krauts is superficially bullish ('Two World Wars and one World Cup'). But the fact is that England's record against them since 1966 is abysmal. The penalty shoot-outs of '90 and '96 have raised the rivalry to new levels—but only on the English side. The Germans, by contrast, treat England as a medium-sized stepping stone on their path to glory. Each time they wheel on Beckenbauer to pay tribute to Bobby Charlton, it only serves to underline how long it has been since we were genuine contenders.

AUSTRIA

Treated as a third-rate Germany: methodical and steady, but lacking in talent.

SPAIN

The Spanish 'never punch their weight at international level', and are perennial 'dark horses'. This lack of success means that they tend to avoid the usual anti-Latin flak. As long as they don't beat England, or start a fishing war, this sympathetic attitude should persist.

'THE SCANDINAVIANS'

As with the Scots, their fans are patronisingly lauded for their friendliness—the blueprint being the dreadful Danish 'rolligans' with their silly hats and goodwill mission. They are regarded as honorary Brits because they speak English, watch our football and play in our leagues. They also 'play an English game' and can be relied upon to produce at least one huge blond striker who can be dubbed an 'old-fashioned British-style centre forward'.

THE PUNDITS' CODE

FRENCH

The French are 'proud', 'technically gifted' and, as hosts, 'can't be written off'. There will be much dark talk of the coach's alleged reluctance to pick English-based players, but they will be sentimental favourites with the pundits thanks to the stirring deeds of the Platini-Giresse-Tigana side. Deep down, though, the French are not regarded as a true football nation, and their exit will be greeted with gleeful 'Hop off you frogs!' headlines.

ITALY

Football in Italy is a 'religion', not a game. Serie A (never 'the Italian league') is 'the most expensive/glamorous league in the world' but—despite their clubs' domination of European competitions—this should not be confused with the best/hardest/most exciting league in the world, which is of course, our own. The Italians, as always, will be 'there or thereabouts' in this World Cup, but 'anything less than victory will be seen as failure' by their 'demanding public', who have been 'brought up to expect success'. Confusingly, they combine skill, style and romance with cynicism, negativity and discipline. Italian defenders are always 'uncompromising'.

HOLLAND

'Flair' is the key word here. Dutch sides have been built on the 'Ajax system' and 'total football'—two phrases the pundits repeat like a mantra. Most of Holland's stars play abroad, and their big-money players always ensure that there are 'internal divisions' in the Dutch camp. At least one will be sent home, and others will refuse to come at all because of 'disagreements' with the coach. Nevertheless, they will be 'in with a shout'.

BRAZIL

Brazil are favourites in both senses. As reigning world champions and possessors of Ronaldo, Roberto Carlos and the rest, they are expected to retain their title. They are also, we are constantly told, 'everybody's favourite other team'. They 'play the game the way it should be played'. They play the 'beautiful game'. And they play it to the rhythm of the Samba.

Brazilians are 'colourful' and 'exuberant', and the cameras will always pick out a group of pretty girls dancing in the crowd and also a fat moustachioed man with a drum. As with the Italian fans, 'nothing less than victory will do'. If their team should lose, 'a nation will mourn'.

ARGENTINA

Brilliant technique, wonderful flair, but undermined by their 'cynical attitude' and 'brutal streak'. For English viewers a passing reference to the 'animals' of '66/'hand of God'/Falklands war will suffice.

OTHER SOUTH AMERICANS

For commentating purposes, 'South America' includes Central America. As with Argentina and other 'Latins' they

are temperamental, underhand and volatile, but 'full of ability'. Will always have a Valderrama/El Loco-style eccentric in the side to raise a laugh or allow Ron Atkinson to make a joke about what Brian Moore would look like with a crazy haircut.

'EAST EUROPEANS'

Sadly, they have 'more important things to worry about than football', though the players will be 'endeavouring to give their people something to smile about'. The World Cup is a 'shop window' for individual players, and they will be 'out to show the world what they can do'.

USA

'Athletic' and 'well-organised'. Talk will concentrate on the eternal problems of the US league, and Lalas's rock band.

SOUTH KOREA/JAPAN

These two countries are co-hosting the 2002 World Cup, and they will be treated as interchangeable. They will inevitably be referred to as 'nippy' and industrious.

In the absence of any real knowledge about South Korea, expect lots of reminiscences about knocking out Italy in 1966 (even thought that was North Korea). Whatever they do, they will 'play the game in the right spirit', and 'win a lot of friends'. Since commentators know nothing about Japan, they will mention the 'J League' as much as possible, and refer to 'Gary Lineker's Grampus 8', in the way they used to talk of 'Chris Waddle's Marseille'.

IRAN

Again, in the absence of any real information, expect talk of 'surprise packages' and 'unknown quantities', plus a few cracks about ayatollahs and mad mullahs.

SAUDI ARABIA

As above, except with tales of how some long-forgotten former Bournemouth manager is employed by an oil sheikh to train his personal team.

JAMAICA

Too early to say exactly which clichés will attach themselves to the 'reggae boyz', beyond references to support back in Brixton. Probably some variant on the African happy-go-lucky, here-for-the-party theme. Players based in England will bring 'valuable experience'. The rest will be 'instinctive'.

'THE AFRICANS'

They are 'a breath of fresh air'. They 'play with a smile on their face' and are 'happy just to be here'. Their enthusiasm is infectious. The first round is 'their Cup final', but they are unlikely to get to the final stages because their 'natural ability' is undermined by being 'naive in defence'. Although they have now been 'emerging' for nearly three decades, they will once more be tipped to 'win the World Cup within 10 years'. ●



FUTURES

Speed, spills and thrills are not considered sexy any more. Austin Williams of the Transport Research Group takes issue with the killjoys and the safety campaigners

SPEED REDUCTION CAN KILL

An Exeter city council employee complained to his road safety advisory group in March that the BBC's *Top Gear* was encouraging recklessness on the roads. Mr Collins, a keen cyclist, protested that Jeremy Clarkson's predilection for driving powerful cars at high speed was 'setting a bad example', 'showing off' and 'encouraging bad driving'. In a typically robust response, Clarkson told Mr Collins to 'grow up', among other things. However, he failed to challenge the emerging consensus that driving at speed is a growing problem.

Are people driving faster? I can't say that I've noticed. I am more perplexed that the issue is even being raised.

The government's White Paper on 'Integrated transport' focuses on speed as an inherently hazardous practice. The stated aim is a laudable one—reducing deaths on the road. But then deaths on Britain's roads are already at a record low. Back in 1987 the Tory government set a target of reducing all road accidents by one third by the year 2000, and this target has already easily been met. So at a time when fatalities on the road are at an all-time low and falling, it seems strange that concern over road safety should be racing up the agenda. The fact that a central feature of this is a discussion about the dangers of speed only adds to the mystery.

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with speed. Richard Noble's Thrust, the car that broke the land speed record by touching 768mph, gave its driver Andy Green a few frights, but in the end the only casualty was Noble's bank balance. Record-breaking and racing against others at speed may be dangerous (though not so much now, thanks to the killjoys who run Formula One), but these are extreme examples of taking man and machine to the limits. They bear little relationship to the problems of everyday driving. Yet speed is now being isolated as a general source of danger to

all drivers, passengers and pedestrians.

The parliamentary advisory standing committee on transport safety asserts that 'speed is the biggest single factor' in road accidents, while the department of transport, environment and the regions speculates that speed is a contributory factor in up to one third of all accidents. Yet there is no statistical basis for either assertion, other than the fact that one or more of the objects involved in a crash has to be moving, that is, travelling at some speed. Unfortunately, this does not get us very far.

Blaming speed for accidents presents the road safety issue as an abstract argument about the need for individual restraint, but ignores the very real measures which the authorities need to take to prevent specific dangerous situations arising.

As it happens, there is a good case for increasing the motorway speed limit to 85mph on safety grounds. On these, the fastest roads, accidents are fewer than on any other, even though they are more heavily trafficked. This gives the lie to the idea that speed per se is a problem. Indeed, researchers Lave and Elias of the University of California's department of economics have shown that, when the US freeway speed limit increased from 55mph to 70mph, there was an average 3.5 per cent decrease in fatalities in some states.

There may well be a case for lowering the speed limits in other areas and on other classifications of road, but it all depends upon what is called 'the given conditions'. Three-quarters of all accidents occur at junctions, for example. What conclusions can we draw from this? That people are approaching junctions too fast? Possibly. Or maybe people are pulling away too slowly? Indeed, what about the suggestion that there is an inherent problem with the junctions themselves: dimly lit, badly located and inadequately signposted? After all, isn't that why we have such

things as accident blackspots? Surely a useful first step would be to upgrade substandard intersections.

There should be more clearly signposted local speed limits where there are obscured obstructions or dangerous bends. This is needed more in rural areas than in well-trafficked urban areas, where knowledge of the road is complemented by percentile speeds. If the signposting is correctly sited, experience shows that drivers respond to the instruction. However, if the cautionary signage does not correspond with the driver's actual experience of the risk—that is, if nobody can see the need for a 30mph limit on a fairly clear road—then the mean speed levels will exceed the posted limit over time. Rather than this being a heinous crime, I think it is reasonable behaviour, especially if it can be backed up with interactive signage systems which give updated warnings of specific hazards.

The Colorado department of transportation's Intelligent Vehicle Highway Systems Programme is a good case in point. This improvement programme has been shown to aid mobility, reduce congestion and enhance safety through widespread use of advanced technology. Systems include roadside information which flashes up details of weather conditions ahead, advanced warning of tight bends, obstructions and route closures, as well as recommended variations to the speed of approach to these hazards. Unfortunately, such massive investment in road infrastructure in the UK is not on the cards. Instead, drivers themselves are blamed for accidents. I think that this is a dangerous evasion.

Many theories have been developed to explain the decline in deaths on the roads. Most are based on the belief that high-profile road safety campaigns have been successful; that these campaigns, with their roads-are-dangerous-places message, have modified people's behaviour and made everybody more safety-conscious.

The truth of this assertion is impossible to test. After all, over-cautiousness, as any road user knows, can cause more problems than it solves. It could legitimately be argued that, for driver and pedestrian alike, speed can be a lifesaver, whereas hesitation and sloth are major liabilities.

So is it the case that highlighting the dangers of the road has saved lives? It seems more likely that the accumulation of experience and expertise in the fields of highway engineering, car manufacture and traffic management has played a bigger part in reducing accidents than Tufty ever could. For example, fatalities have been cut in half on built-up roads in the last decade, but decreased by only 21 per cent on rural roads. This reflects more on the significance of urban infrastructural improvement than on the penetration of the Speed Kills message.

legitimate joint use of the streets, Pedestrian Man is recklessly trying to assert his primacy over the motorist. With drivers in the dock, cyclists and pedestrians have an inflated sense of their own importance and years of sensible caution can be thrown to the wind.

Pedestrians and drivers are party to a contract with other road users that allows them to share the road in a reasonable, rational and ordered way. Once you call that into question then you may as well hang up your driving gloves. That contract is based on trust. Motorists trust that other motorists will drive on the left and not pull out in front of streams of traffic; they also trust that the pedestrian will not step out into the road. However, anti-speed campaigns are helping to

Just over 100 years ago, the government abolished the need to carry a red flag in front of a motor vehicle and raised the speed limit from four to 14mph. In the same year, Mrs Brigit Driscoll was knocked down and killed by a car in Crystal Palace, so becoming the first casualty statistic of the age of the private motor car.

A century later and New Labour MP Helen Brinton is sponsoring a proposal for the widespread introduction of Home Zones—local authority designated residential areas in which 'pedestrians and pedal cyclists [will] have priority over mechanically powered vehicles'. In these zones, pedestrians will be allowed to stroll in the roadway and a standard 10mph speed limit will be imposed for the length of the street. The motorist



PHOTO: DAVID COWLAND

Given these facts, it is strange that commonsense local campaigns for improved street lighting, traffic lights and crossings seem to be a thing of the past. Instead, local demands now range from road closures to traffic bans and 'pedestrian' speed limits. Rather than this being a case of reclaiming

undermine that trust. With the motor industry on the defensive, cars are now widely seen as accidents waiting to happen. The driver can only trust his airbag, SIPS and ABS, while the pedestrian is told to trust nobody but a local government official wielding an armful of anti-traffic measures.

will be deemed liable for any accidents. In this scenario I can well imagine that road casualty statistics in residential areas will increase regardless of speed, as drivers spend their time nervously looking over their shoulders rather than concentrating on driving. Red flags will be optional. ●

a l t . c u l t u r e . m u l t i c u l t u r e

BLACK IN THE UNION JACK?

STILL FROM FOREIGN OFFICE VIDEO PROMOTING BRITAIN



and frustration expressed in the inner city riots of the early eighties. But by this time British identity was also ailing seriously.

Nowadays traditional British institutions stand discredited: from the monarchy to cricket to Oxbridge, they are a source of embarrassment rather than pride—even to the elite which created them. There is no common, cohesive culture that is quintessentially British. This means that blacks cannot be excluded in the same old way; but their original demand for inclusion cannot be met either. There is simply nothing there to be included into.

This is the context in which multiculturalism has come to the fore. Nowadays blacks can be British, sort of, but only by default. In such circumstances equality is well nigh inconceivable. Instead we have the celebration of difference. We inhabit not a melting pot but a kind of cultural salad-bowl in which the various ingredients retain their separate character even when they are cheek-by-jowl.

Few will now defend a notion of Britishness that no longer exists. This means that racism in Britain is not usually as overt as it was 20 years ago. Moreover, black and Asian culture is much more a part of everyday life. But it is hard to see a cause for celebration in the fact that black people are half-in and half-out of a society that is so lacking in direction and definition.

Andrew Calcutt

cate that British identity is now so ill-defined that nobody can be counted definitively in or out—not even blacks?

When 492 Jamaicans and Trinidadians disembarked at Tilbury 50 years ago, they expected to be included in the common culture of the 'mother country'—after all, they were British subjects and some had fought for the Crown in the Second World War. Once in Britain, they and those that followed were denied access to Britishness and the freedoms associated with it. But at least they knew what it was that they were not allowed into.

Through the sixties and seventies, disappointed that the 'mother country' had refused them inclusion, immigrants and their children nevertheless remained expectant that equality could be won. Their fight for equal rights ended in failure, giving rise to the desperation

Finally, half a century after the first West Indian immigrants got off the *SS Empire Windrush* in June 1948, black people are no longer screened out of British culture.

There are plenty of non-white faces in the video made by the foreign office as a showcase for Britain's new image (left). Former *Sunday Telegraph* editor Sir Peregrine Worsthorne has bemoaned 'the depth of racist indoctrination which I received at school' and lauded 'my new friend' Darcus Howe, the black journalist and TV presenter, for being 'more British, in the old-fashioned sense' than many whites. If even the likes of Worsthorne are leaving some of their prejudices behind, it seems that the old adage 'there ain't no black in the Union Jack' is no longer true. But is this a triumph for anti-racism? Or does it simply indi-

'Tilbury, Tuesday. What were they thinking, these 492 men from Jamaica and Trinidad, as the *Empire Windrush* slid upstream with the flood between the closing shores of Kent and Essex? Standing by the rail this morning, high above the landing-stage at Tilbury, one of them looked over the lovely town to the grey-green fields beyond and said, "If this is England I like it". A good omen, perhaps. May he and his friends suffer no sharp disappointment.

'...Having satisfied themselves that those in the first group did in fact have friends to go to, they issued

PHOTO: DAVID COWLARD



I was in this totally different world with all my black friends and a few mixed race guys who ran a rare groove sound system. At these parties, if you step on somebody's shoes, you could be stabbed—there's going to be a fight, black on black.

A friend of mine, a waiter in the Rock Garden, was in with all these women who seemed really rich. Because I was black and cockney, I'd be pulling them and they used to

them each with a travel warrant and a loan of ten shillings against future insurance contributions, brought them to London and saw them off. This party numbered 204.

'It was simpler to deal with the second group, of 52: they were taken to a Colonial Office hostel in Wimpole Street, where they will later be interviewed by recruiting officers. The 236 friendless and jobless were taken to the deep shelter at Clapham South, and there the Colonial Office will maintain them until Ministry of Labour officials have seen them placed'

MANCHESTER GUARDIAN, 23 JUNE 1948

'Some immigrants, disappointed by what they found in Britain, have written home warning their fellow countrymen not to repeat the mistake which they have made. They find that the myth of Britain carries more weight than their advice, for intending migrants conclude instead that the writers must be trying to prevent others from sharing their good fortune'

SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGIST MICHAEL BANTON IN *THE TIMES*, 31 MAY 1954

'A boy of my own age, I'd say, carrying a hold-all and a brown paper parcel—a serious-looking kiddy with a pair of glasses, and one of those rather sad, drab suits that some spades wear, particularly students, in order to show the English people that we must not think they're savages in grass skirts and bones stuck in their hair, but twentieth-century numbers just like we are...Anyway, down the road he walked, stepping aside politely if people were in his way, and they all watching. All those eyes watching him, and the noise dropping. Then someone cried out "Get him!", and the spade dug it quick enough then—and he started running down the Bramley Road like lightning...and at least a hundred young men chasing after him, and hundreds of girls and kids and adults running after them, and even motorbikes and cars'

FROM COLIN MACINNES' FICTIONAL ACCOUNT OF THE NOTTING HILL RIOTS (1958), WHEN BLACK RESIDENTS WERE ATTACKED BY WHITES (*ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS*, 1959)

'Every day there were fights with Teddy Boys, and then the Mods came with their suits and hush puppies, and rockers in leather. Chaos. I didn't mind fighting, as a youth I loved it. I kicked a lot of butts—you had to just to be able to walk on the streets'

JAMAICAN IMMIGRANT CLAUDE ANTHONY

Research by **Toby Marshall**

*Wayne Anthony, author of the best-selling rave novel, **The Class of '88**, recalls life as a mixed-up mixed race kid*

My dad is Jamaican, and my mother came from Malta. Because I was mixed race, and because of all the crap that black people took from society at that time, they put us up with their enemies, no matter how black we talked and how we

dressed. So I was always fighting and I kind of rejected my black side.

I went through this skinhead stage, the only black skinhead I ever knew. I hung out with a gang of 50 from the Trowbridge estate.

Our days were spent glue-sniffing and then going out and causing havoc. Then I went through this punk stage, spitting in each others' mouths and being really obnoxious. Until my mum's brother offered me £300 to become a casual boy—Waxman slacks, Burberry macs and all that stuff. Within a week

alt.culture.blackmusic

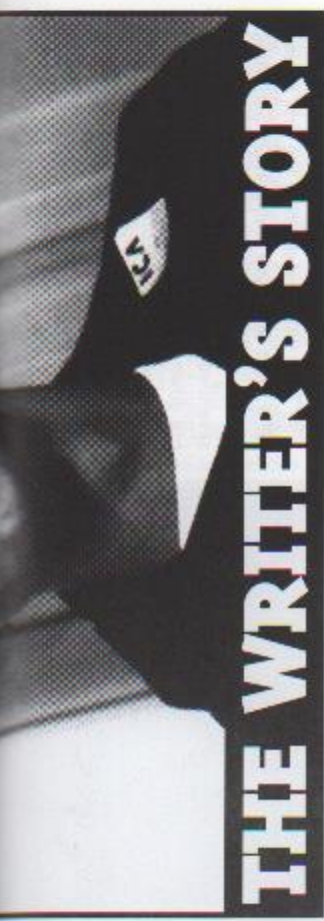
SS SOUND SYSTEMS

In TV documentaries about the *SS Empire Windrush*, there is usually a mention of the calypsonians who provided a musical documentation of the passage itself, and who went on to reflect simultaneously the contact with urban Britain and the wish to retain a connection with the Caribbean. That is the clichéd image of migrant music. But something else that often gets overlooked is the sound systems which they also introduced into Britain via Jamaica. The original sound systems were not separate from the calypsonians; they were often closely connected. Together they provided a source of entertainment, a meeting place, and a kind of informal employment exchange. And you can trace the origins of today's rave scene right back to this.

Talking about sound systems, the latest Massive Attack album, *Mezzanine*, is in some ways a barometer of how much things have

changed and how little they have changed. Massive Attack are a cultural sponge who have refined all kinds of elements into a voice of their own, a voice which is distinctly British. But not without cost. So while they have been lauded in the rock press, my local record shop in Brixton doesn't stock it, and the guy behind the counter will say that there is not much call for it round here. They have been marketed like an indie band, but in order to cross over into that sector, they have had to play the game. At different times various people have tried to go outside the narrow niches allotted to UK-based black musicians, but few have succeeded for long. Really, I am not sure that the position of second or third generation musicians is any more secure today than it was for their grandfathers 50 years ago.

Rebop is a dj and writer whose internet music website (undergroundlondon.com) is currently under construction



buy me stuff. But their fathers did not want them going out with a black guy. Then there were the girls who would not go with a black guy but I had a good chance with them because I'm mixed race. As a young guy I thought it was really cool getting these girls that the others couldn't.

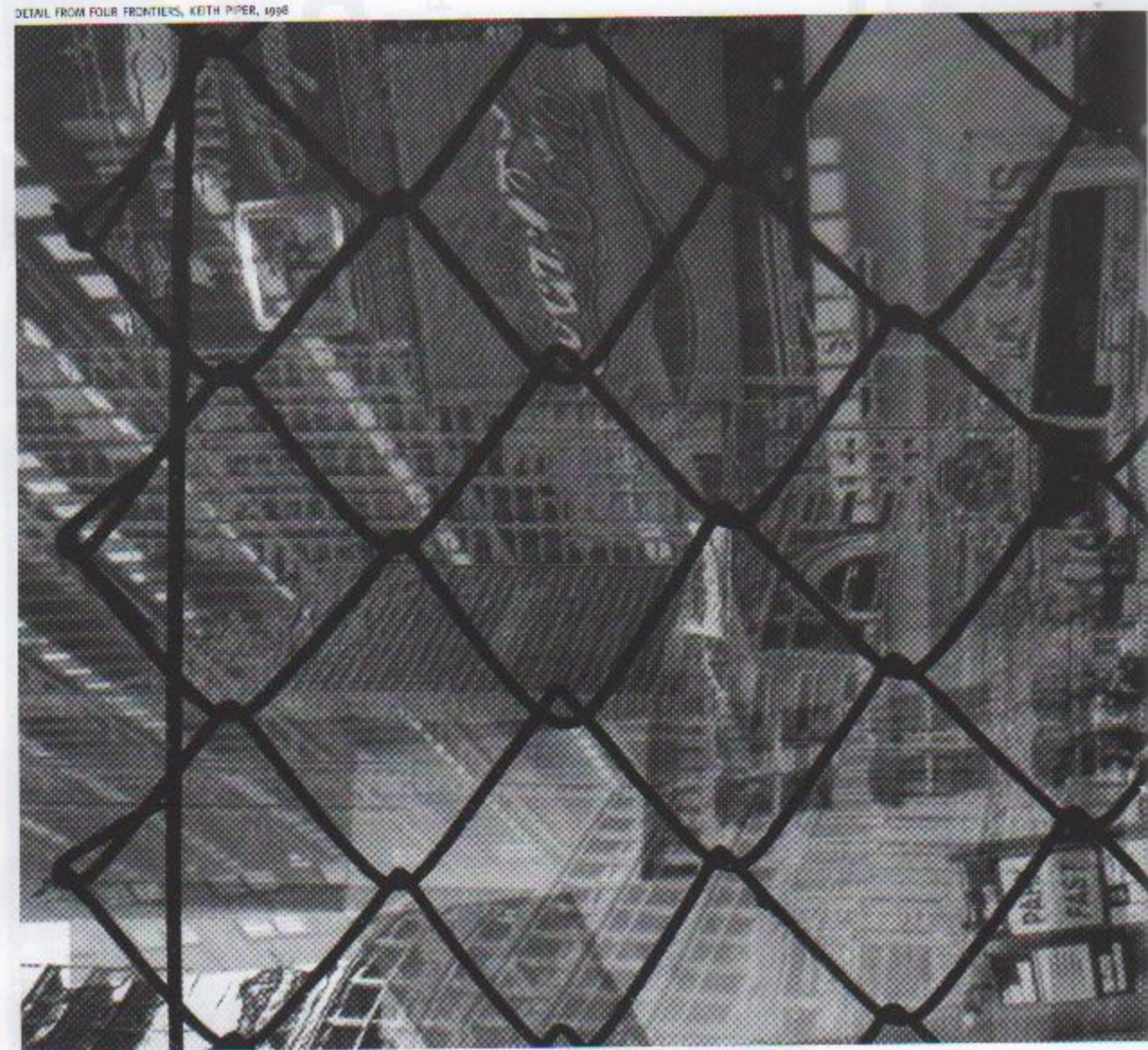
So I realised that the way you spoke and the way you dressed played a major part in the way people perceive you. If I talked West Indian slang like with my friends, people were quite cold. But if I spoke cockney, the same person would be a lot easier. Sometimes it pisses you off, because I'm me, why should it matter how I speak? But I know you won't get anywhere if you speak like you do with the brothers. On the surface there is black in the Union Jack, but not in the heart.

I think Ecstasy did more for multicultural integration than a hundred years of politics, and that's what I describe in my book. It may have died down now, but in those two years we did have it and a lot of people from that time can still share that emotion.

The Class of '88 is published by Virgin

PHOTO: DAVID COWLARD





DETAIL FROM FOUR FRONTIERS, KETH PIPER, 1998

FRONTIERSMAN

Black British-born artist Keith Piper's 'Four frontiers' (commissioned by Photo '98) is concerned with Europe's perception of itself and its attitude to outsiders. The work is presented as an installation of four large-scale lightboxes set on opposing walls, each representing one of Europe's frontiers and containing a collage of digitally manipulated photographs taken by the artist on a series of journeys around the continent.

'Western front' considers the 'attraction and dread' of the Americas. Besides drawing on Hollywood, MTV and advertising, the piece also considers the impact of 'black musical and aesthetic forms' from the USA, the Caribbean and Latin America. Piper describes

'four frontiers' as an 'extension' of earlier installations such as 'Fortress Europe' and 'Tagging the other'. His work has focused on questions of race and identity since his student days at Nottingham Trent Polytechnic in the early eighties.

Returning from Europe, Piper was questioned at immigration control about his reasons for travel and 'length of stay in the UK' — despite his British passport and UK-registered car. The experience reinforced his 'personal impression of one's status as "other" and outsider'.

'Four frontiers' is showing at the Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, Bradford, until 28 June 1998 (telephone 01274 493313)

alt.culture.blackfiction

FICTIONAL EPISODES

(White) writer John Williams reviews the back catalogue of black British fiction

There was a clutch of books written in the fifties celebrating the first wave of post-Windrush immigration. Surprisingly few books were written in the sixties and seventies as the first immigrant generation put down roots; and now in the nineties there is a new wave of second generation writing.

The first post-war black British novel was George Lamming's *The Emigrants*, published in 1954. Lamming is an important Caribbean writer, much underrated in the UK. *The Emigrants* is a big, dense account of the

and ER Braithwaite's more conventional protest novel *To Sir With Love* (later filmed with Sidney Poitier and Lulu in starring roles). But in the sixties, the trickle of black British novels dried up almost entirely. Selvon produced two sequels to *The Lonely Londoners* while Lamming moved his attention back to the Caribbean, as did other writers resident in the UK such as Roy Heath and Lindsay Barrett. The upsurge of black women's writing in the USA in the eighties eventually acted as the catalyst for the first black British women authors to appear, most notably Joan Riley with *The Unforgiving*.

But the first black British novel to find a mass audience within the black British community was the rather less edifying *Yardie*, by Victor Headley, which prompted some controversy for playing up to assorted stereotypes of

'One grim winter evening, when it had a kind of unrealness about London, with a fog sleeping restlessly over the city and the lights showing in the blur as if it is not London at all but some strange place on another planet, Moses Aloetta hop on a number 46 bus at the corner of Chepstow Road and Westbourne Grove to go to Waterloo to meet a fellow who was coming from Trinidad on the boat-train'

OPENING SENTENCE FROM SAMUEL SELVON'S *THE LONELY LONDONERS* (LONGMAN)

'A shop in Savile Row caught my eye, the sign above it read Oswald Boateng, the clothes weren't boring, they screamed of sex. They were pucker not for suckers, you could admire them in the same way you would a painting in the Louvre, or a good body. They were definitely the sort of garments that would do something for me, make me more approachable, give me an elegant look; the fabrics shone bright in the light, it was no hocus pocus business, I knew it was the real deal, delivered and sprinkled with energy. I just had to put one on then I could walk strong and feel like a don'

FROM *Q'S DEADMEAT* (SCEPTRE)

'The hip society in Notting Hill in those days was basically very involved with the West Indians. They were the only people around who had good music, they knew all about jazz and ska and bluebeat. They also smoked rather good dope. That was the classic excuse if anyone got busted. "Where did you get it from?" "I bought it from a black man in Notting Hill." And the magistrate agreed: how can you possibly ever recognise them again, they all look the same'

[BARRY] MILES, CO-FOUNDER OF THE UNDERGROUND NEWSPAPER *IT*, QUOTED IN *DAYS IN THE LIFE: VOICES FROM THE ENGLISH UNDERGROUND 1961-1971* BY JONATHAN GREEN (1988)

'At the moment we're hero-worshipping the spades — they can dance and sing...we do the shake and the hitchhiker to fast numbers but we're going back to dancing close because the spades do it'

16-YEAR OLD MOD QUOTED BY CHARLES HAMBLETT AND JANE DEVERSON IN *GENERATION X* (1964)

banana-boat journey, full of expectation, towards the imaginary homeland of Britain — it is hard to underestimate the extent to which the first generation of West Indian immigrants, brought up in a cod-British educational system, really did see Britain as both the mother country and a promised land. The remainder of the book explores the many and varied ways in which Britain proved deficient. The title of Lamming's novel encapsulates what is crucial about it: this is not a book about immigrants coming into Britain; it is primarily about the experience of emigrants leaving the Caribbean.

By considerable contrast to Lamming's sprawling and imposingly literary work, Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) was a defiantly short narrative. A prose poem of the city, it is among the very finest British novels of the last 50 years. *The Lonely Londoners* is a depiction of men (most of the first immigrants were men) adrift in an alien city. But Selvon's triumph is that he not only chronicles the everyday injustices suffered by them, but also evokes the comedy, camaraderie and the sheer excitement of the times when he and his protagonists exploded on to the grey, fog-bound London of the fifties.

Other novels followed soon afterwards, such as Andrew Salkey's *A Quality of Violence*,

mad, bad and dangerous black men with guns. Its real significance, however, is that here was a black British writer producing the kind of story he wanted to read, rather than a manifesto or apologia aimed, implicitly at least, at a white literary audience. Moreover, the particular merit of *Yardie* was not its knowingly hackneyed story-line but the freshness of the dialogue delivered with an ear for dialect that is just as canny as that of Irvine Welsh or James Kelman.

And *Yardie*'s success led in turn to the expansion of X-Press, a kind of New English Library producing books by black Britons for black Britons — books full of romance, crime and humour which, alongside the more literary efforts of Andrea Levy and Oxford graduate Diran Adebayo (*Some Kind of Black*), make it clear that black Britain is no longer a novelty but a permanent presence.

Best of the current crew, though, is Q, the clubland legend whose fictional debut *Deadmeat* brings it all back home by combining the prose poetry of *The Lonely Londoners* with the street language and violence of *Yardie* into the one genuinely original work to come out of last year's shower of over-promoted, underwritten Brit Lit.

John Williams' debut novel *Faithless* is published by Serpent's Tail

alt.culture.white negro

WIGGAS IN WIGAN

Soul music that emanated from motor-city Detroit in the sixties was kept alive in the seventies by clubs in the north of England like Manchester's Twisted Wheel, the Torch in Stoke-on-Trent, the Blackpool Mecca's Highland Room and, most famously, the Wigan Casino. The clientele for Northern Soul, as it was called, was a bunch of white working class youth from all points above a line roughly drawn from the Wirral to the Wash. Every Saturday night through to late on Sunday morning, we upheld an almost religious devotion to this black music: keep the faith!

Though the Blackpool Mecca was just down the road from me, most Saturdays I climbed into a battered Ford and tore down

the M6 to Wigan to dance to Casino stompers like Willie Mitchell's 'The champion' or the World Column's 'So is the sur'. Adulation greeted every black star who performed there like Billy Butler, Edwin Starr and Betty Wright. I'll always remember my local dj 'Harlem' Jon Le Saint's oft-quoted expression: 'I might be white outside but inside I'm all black'. Crowds of white girls stood gawping at the few black dancers stripped down to their kecks, sweat dripping off them as they danced at 'one hundred miles an hour' on Mr M's sprung dancefloor upstairs. On the Northern scene, there was no doubt that black style was seen as the best, and black people were considered to be the greatest

dancers, singers and musicians in the world.

Among the Northern Soul crowd the fanatical adoration of blacks coexisted with hostility towards them — just as it did among the skins who followed ska and then reggae, and the suedeheads who danced to Tamla. But prejudice against blacks also coexisted with resentment towards almost anybody who was not part of the Northern scene. Scousers and all Southerners were automatically assumed to be 'divs'. It was not until later in the seventies, when black people were systematically set up by politicians and the press as scroungers and muggers, that they stopped being just another 'div' and came to be seen as wholly alien and criminal. But that did not lessen the attraction of black music. If anything it seems to have added to it.

Aidan Campbell Wigan Casino Soul Club member No 033039

PHOTO: DAVID COALARO



WHOSE WAR IS IT ANYWAY?

The Dangers of the
Journalism of Attachment

MICK HUME

a fierce and trenchant

pamphlet... Hume makes

a devastating attack on the

"journalism of attachment",

especially as applied to

the war in Bosnia,

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READING

BETWEEN THE LINES

MICHAEL FITZPATRICK reviews a stimulating study of how the counterculture of the sixties helped shape the dominant values of the nineties

SENILE DELINQUENTS

ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT: POP CULTURE AND THE EROSION OF ADULTHOOD

Andrew Calcutt
Cassell, £14.95 pbk

IT WAS SHORTLY AFTER THE MEMORABLE NIGHT at the White Lion at Heeley Bottom in Sheffield, when the underground band Pharmaceutical Earthmover smashed up their equipment, that the headmaster summoned me to his office. He had heard a rumour that I had plans to divert a coach hired for a school trip to the Motor Show in London to an anti-Vietnam war demonstration in Grosvenor Square. For the generation that came of age in the late sixties the happenings of the counterculture were as familiar as the demos of radical politics.

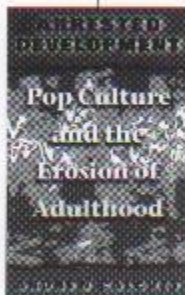
I offer these reminiscences of those far-off days in the spirit of the personal vignettes which illuminate Andrew Calcutt's stimulating new book. In turn garage band bass player, record producer, revolting student and campaigning journalist, Calcutt has certainly paid his dues. Now an older and wiser man (and a regular contributor to this magazine), he looks back with some embarrassment at the foibles of his youth (don't we all?). But Calcutt's retrospective gaze has a sharper focus as he traces the evolution of some of the key preoccupations of the radical fringe in the postwar decades to become the mainstream prejudices of Western society in the post-Cold War era.

When you notice that a song by Lou Reed, formerly of the Velvet Underground, has become a hit in the

form of a promotional video for the BBC Children in Need appeal, and pick up a leaflet advertising a 'celebration of the life and work' of the beat poet Allen Ginsberg to be held in a church in central London (seats bookable by American Express, Visa, etc), you begin to see that Calcutt has a point. The fact that the current political leaders of the USA and Britain both proclaim their youthful role in rock bands and advertise their continuing affinity for popular culture further confirms Calcutt's thesis.

In a series of tightly argued and well substantiated chapters, Calcutt reveals how the values of marginalised writers, musicians and artists of the 1950s and 1960s have acquired apparently universal appeal in the 1990s. When existentialists and beatniks first celebrated the experience of alienation, the estrangement of the individual from society and from other people, they were generally regarded as perverse and nihilistic. In the postmodernist fashion that prevails in contemporary intellectual life, such ideas are commonplace. The elevation of a childlike sensibility was once a peculiarity of the hippies; today it is a central feature of the culture of victimhood.

The virtues of vulnerability, even of madness and disability, the cults of 'the freak', the 'beautiful loser' and the 'damaged'—all have now won popular approval. The Millennium Dome offers space for the ▶



THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURE OF THE COUNTERCULTURE—THE TWIN REJECTION OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY AND OF THE POSSIBILITY OF CHANGING IT—HAS NOW BECOME TIRED AND UNIVERSAL

◀ New Age mysticism that was once confined to tents in Glastonbury (an event which has itself been embraced as a feature of national life alongside the Last Night of the Proms). The ironic postures that were once an adolescent rite of passage now provide a way of evading responsibility for a whole society.

Calcutt's key point is that the distinctive feature of the counterculture—the twin rejection of contemporary society and of the possibility of changing it—which was then the novel conviction of a marginal fringe, has now become tired and universal. Today everybody is revolted by capitalist society (even its most successful entrepreneurs), while nobody believes that any alternative is possible (even those most oppressed by the system). In this climate of fatalism and despair the counterculture provides every cynic with a ready source of intellectual reinforcement.

Displaying an encyclopaedic knowledge of the diverse manifestations of the counterculture, Calcutt supports his thesis with a wealth of illustrations from the novels, films, poetry and music of the period. He has also unearthed some fascinating contemporary critiques of the counterculture, including some astonishingly prescient comments from the most unlikely sources, from Bernard Levin to George Kennan.

I take a slightly less jaundiced view of our youthful antics than Calcutt however. And, while accepting the general drift of his analysis, I would enter a few reservations.

There is a danger here of reading history backwards, of viewing the counterculture only from the perspective of its degraded consequences, rather than in its own context. It is worth recalling the atmosphere of stultifying conformity that prevailed in the aftermath of the defeats that led up to the Second World War and was sustained through the international and domestic impact of the Cold War. Calcutt quotes a critical contemporary assessment of the radical psychiatrist RD Laing: 'his inculcation of society comes so near to being absolute that it is experienced as an exhilarating liberation.' This is indeed how Laing—and many of his co-thinkers—were experienced at events like the 'Dialectics of liberation' conference at the Roundhouse in Camden Town in 1968. The transition of ideas from the bohemian ghettos of the 1950s to the establishment circles of the 1990s was a complex process and each moment needs to be grasped in its particularity.

There is also a risk of a one-sided perception of past trends. To continue with Laing, it is quite legitimate to criticise the irrational extremes to which he took his repudiation of orthodox psychiatry, and to note the enduring influence of the absurd notion of madness as a more authentic mode of existence (in film, for example, from *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* to *Shine*). On the other hand, it is also important to recognise the intellectual force of Laing's critique of the mechanistic tradition

and the deeply humanistic current in his work. This contributed to the movement to abolish the asylums in favour of care in the community (a trend now casually disparaged by many who, unlike Laing, have no experience of the back wards of the old institutions).

The relationship between the left and the counterculture was, I think, more complex than Calcutt allows. In his discussion of the trend for elevating the sensual and the emotional over the rational and intellectual, he notes that 'the left allowed itself to be reworked in the image of the counterculture'. This is undoubtedly true of certain sections of the left, notably of the more academic elements of the New Left, but it is not true of the more trade union oriented sections, which were little influenced by any form of culture. It was also more true at some times than at others—and it was a relationship which worked both ways. In the 1950s and early 1960s, and again from the late 1970s, the left was in a relatively weak and defensive position and tended to retreat into 'cultural politics'. By contrast, in that golden decade from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, when a combination of factors created unprecedented scope for radical political activity, the popular upsurge encouraged a wave of innovation and creativity in the wider cultural sphere.

The stagnation of society in the 1990s is revealed in its compulsion to revisit this period and the apparently ceaseless recycling of its products. But, as Bob Dylan rightly says, 'nostalgia is death'. While Andrew Calcutt concludes that 'there are no cultural solutions to the problems posed by victim culture', his book is an important contribution to understanding some of these problems and their antecedents. ●

Joe Kaplinsky on the debate about the limits to scientific knowledge

THE END OF SCIENCE?

THE END OF SCIENCE: FACING THE LIMITS TO KNOWLEDGE IN THE TWILIGHT OF THE SCIENTIFIC AGE

John Horgan, Little Brown, £18.99 hbk

IMPOSSIBILITY: THE LIMITS OF SCIENCE AND THE SCIENCE OF LIMITS

John D Barrow, Oxford University Press, £18.99 hbk



JOHN HORGAN IS A SENIOR WRITER AT *Scientific American*—one of the most respected popular science magazines in the world, and John Barrow an

'SCIENCE HAS MANNED THE BATTLEMENTS AGAINST THE POSTMODERN HERESY THAT THERE IS NO OBJECTIVE TRUTH, ONLY TO DISCOVER POSTMODERNISM INSIDE THE WALL'

astronomer at the University of Sussex. Unlike many influenced by a postmodern perspective, both would declare themselves pro-science. So despite their pessimistic mood, it is interesting to see what they have to say about the way in which the debate over the future of science is influenced by a sense of uncertainty, limits and even despair.

Horgan has interviewed many of the world's greatest scientists, and others including Francis Fukuyama, Karl Popper, Thomas Khun and Paul Feyerabend. He originally envisioned his book as 'a series of portraits, warts and all, of the fascinating truth-seekers and truth-shunners I had been fortunate enough to interview'. *The End of Science* remains full of well-written character sketches. But in the course of asking whether there are limits to science, Horgan writes, 'I began to imagine that I knew; I convinced myself that one particular scenario was more plausible than all the others. I decided to abandon any pretence of journalistic objectivity and write a book that was overtly judgmental, argumentative, and personal' (p5).

Horgan was turned on to science while at college. An English major, he became disillusioned with literary criticism that could never resolve questions of meaning and whose message is that all texts are in a sense 'only kidding'. In contrast he was attracted by the power of science to provide definite answers.

In the afterword to the English edition of *The End of Science* Horgan approvingly cites a reviewer who understood his message better than most: driven more by fear than by certainty, Horgan is warning that 'science has manned the battlements against the postmodern heresy that there is no objective truth, only to discover postmodernism inside the wall' (p281). The picture he paints is one of scientists retreating from the world to ponder the unanswerable. Partly this is an accurate reflection of a society which seems no longer able to value science as a tool of progress.

Perhaps most importantly, Horgan sees how limited in scope are many of the ideas that are attracting the brightest minds. For example, chaos theory and complexity theory (Horgan coins the deprecating term 'chaoplexity') are not going to provide a universal means for understanding nature and society. Evolutionary psychology has yet to yield many profound insights, and may ultimately prove unimpressive. The speculations of physicists that the smallest constituents of matter might oscillate in unseen dimensions seem to be based more on criteria like mathematical beauty than on the experimental data of old. Horgan's point is not that these ideas are unscientific, but rather that they are invested with unwarranted significance. While undoubtedly true, at least outside the scientific community, the reason these ideas get so much attention today remains to be explained.



Horgan's explanation is that all the big ideas have been discovered. It may be, he suggests, that we simply cannot know the answers to questions like how life on earth began; we can only speculate and guess. For Horgan, scientists who turn to such questions are living in the shadow of the past. Like Harold Bloom's 'strong poets' who can only come to terms with Shakespeare, Dante and other masters by seeking to misread and reinterpret them, Horgan's 'strong scientists' practice what he calls 'naive ironic science' in a post-empirical mode.

Horgan takes inspiration from biologist Gunther Stent's 1969 collection of essays, *The Coming of the New Golden Age*. In particular he takes the simple point that just as science had an historical beginning, so we are forced at least to concede the possibility of an end point. Horgan seems not to have appreciated the prevalence of 'endism', and thinks that this is a controversial point. While it is vigorously contested by many scientists, in popular culture more broadly it chimes perfectly with today's gloomy outlook.

The Coming of the New Golden Age was written in response to the student's free speech movement at Berkeley. Concerned at the challenge to its authority the university appointed a committee to talk to the students and 'calm them down'. Stent's lectures and essays were an attempt to make sense of the abandonment of rationality, civilisation and technological progress by the elite of America's youth.

Stent characterised the mood of the Berkeley students as 'anti-rational and anti-success' (*Golden Age*, p17), emphasising that 'the anti-success aspect goes far beyond opposition to meretricious strife for material reward' (p18). This he traces to the beatnik culture which evolved in the North Beach district of California in the early 1950s. The beatniks, he suggests, never grew up. They 'did not need to conform to society upon reaching middle age; by then, society had already conformed to their standards' (p16). By the 1960s, Stent explains, 'beat philosophy had moved across San Francisco Bay and matriculated in the University of California at Berkeley' (p17).

Stent explained the attraction of youth to these ideas by focusing on the decline in struggle. He suggested that if people became content with what they had there could be no incentive to develop science further, and so society would arrive at a static end point, a 'new Polynesia'.

Horgan seems not to understand the 'coming of the new golden age' that Stent described. During his interview for Horgan's *End of Science*, Stent apparently 'plunged into a diatribe against environmentalism. It was at heart an anti-human philosophy, one that contributed to the low self-esteem of American youth and poor black children in particular'. Horgan was thrown: ►

TECHNIQUES SUCH AS GRAVITATIONAL-WAVE ASTRONOMY, THE DETECTION OF RIPPLES IN SPACE-TIME, ARE YET TO BE DEVELOPED—IT SEEMS PREMATURE TO DECLARE THAT WE ARE REACHING THE LIMITS OF KNOWLEDGE

◀ 'Alarmed that my favourite Cassandra was revealing himself to be a crank, I changed the subject.' (p14) Yet the spread of environmentalist sentiment—which does indeed have powerful anti-human undertones—is perhaps the best index of the way in which the spirit of North Beach has engulfed the whole of society.

Barrow's book, *Impossibility: The Limits of Science and the Science of Limits*, is much less focused on people than is *The End of Science*. Rather it is an exploration of how the laws of logic and of nature place limits on what we can ever do or know. Like Horgan, Barrow is sensitive to the fact that his audience will instinctively react against the idea of any absolute limits to science: 'There are some who would equate the very idea of limits to scientific knowledge with a violation of our freedom of thought and action. Limits of cost are one thing, but absolute limits are surely something completely different. Show me one of those and I'll jump over it, tunnel under it, or simply skirt round it.' (p190) But Barrow is, quite rightly, having none of that.

Natural laws, by definition, must be obeyed, and unlike their social counterparts they cannot be repealed. A law of nature may be shown to be of more limited scope than we once assumed, but in essence it represents something of the truth. We can only comprehend the world because it is ordered, and that order rests on the existence of rules. Where Barrow goes too far is in viewing all natural law through the prism of limits. Where traditionally science has defined the world by describing and manipulating it, Barrow finds persuasive the possibility that reality may be defined more precisely by the limits of its description and manipulation.

Barrow gives a brief assessment of past views of progress, including a more competent reading of Stent than Horgan's. He does not think Stent was right, preferring to locate limits in the natural realm. He suggests that inequality rather than absolute wealth will be a spur to development even in Stent's 'golden age', and that new answers bring new questions. Barrow has more sympathy for Horgan's point of view, which at first sight he says 'seems very likely' to be true: 'If there are limits, and knowledge is cumulative, we can only be approaching them—there is no alternative.' (p34)

He runs through limits ranging from the speed of light, which limits how much of the universe we can see, through to limits imposed by the structure of our brain (which was not evolved for 'doing science') and to Gödel's theorem which suggests there are limits to logic itself.

But Barrow cannot give practical examples of where these limits have become absolute. Given the scope for practical experimentation that remains, it seems premature to declare that we are reaching the limits of what may ever be known. Take his discussion of 'cosmological limits'. Our most sophisticated theories of the big bang

go under the name 'inflation' and suggest that the entire visible universe is contained within an isolated 'bubble' whose edge we can never observe simply because it is too far away. Right now a series of space telescopes are being prepared for launch which are designed to test our still uncertain theories of the big bang against observations many times more accurate and detailed than any we have made up to now. Other techniques such as gravitational-wave astronomy, the detection of ripples in space-time, are predicted but yet to be developed. In this situation it seems perverse to suggest that a defining feature of our best theories is that they tell us what cannot be known.

Horgan ultimately admits that what he wants from science is spiritual fulfilment. It is this lack which prompts his pessimistic conclusions. But it will not be made good by science—or literature—alone. In the nervous nineties we stand on the shoulders of giants, but dare not enjoy the view for fear of falling. The problem is not the end of science, but vertigo. ●

READ ON READ ON READ ON READ ON READ ON READ ON

A WIDOW FOR ONE YEAR

John Irving, Bloomsbury, £16.99 hbk

Okay, so I'm not exactly neutral. I have read everything John Irving has written and I am, in a Kathy Bates kind of a way, his biggest fan. *A Widow for One Year* entirely lives up to my expectations. Eddie O'Hare, a 16-year old virgin, is employed by a children's writer ostensibly to be his assistant, but really to sleep with the writer's wife in order to help him with his divorce strategy. Project achieved, Eddie becomes obsessed with the wife, who duly leaves her husband and child, and indeed he remains so for 40 years.

The book is the story of the writer's child, Ruth Cole, a successful novelist: her interviews with journalists who haven't read her book, readings for her audience, re-meeting Eddie, her refusal to contact her long-lost mother, and her research for her new book which leads her to witness the murder of a prostitute and to her second husband.

Particularly since writing *The World According to Garp* in 1976, Irving has developed a style which is traditionally character-based, and one which is entirely engrossing.

Everybody who has the capacity to get lost in a novel should read *A Widow for One Year*. When I reached the last 40 pages I walked around my flat for half an hour just to avoid finishing it.

Irene Miller



LM libel appeal

The **OFF THE FENCE** fund

ITN

is suing *LM* magazine for libel, over a story about its award-winning pictures of a Bosnian camp published in the February 1997 issue. It is a case that threatens to bankrupt *LM* and raises wider issues about the threat to press freedom.

English libel law is a censorship charter that the rich can hire to buy immunity from criticism through the courts; an American court recently called it 'repugnant' to

human rights and the principle of free speech.

Now, in this unprecedented case, a major news organisation which is supposed to uphold media freedom is itself using the libel laws to silence its critics, and threatening to close down an independent magazine if we do not comply.

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