



# Dumbing up

We may not know who won the battle of 1066 – but we can tell you that if Gina is faster than Jane, and Jo is slower than Gina, then Jo is not necessarily faster than Jane. So what if we struggle to link Romeo with Juliet? We know something far more valuable: that it is possible to use three colours to paint the sides of a cube in such a way that two sides of the same colour never touch – so there.

In other words, we may know nothing about anything but our IQ is rising. That, at least, is the finding of a new study which suggests we are smarter now than ever before. Britons' average IQ has risen by 27 points since 1942, while Americans have seen their collective brainpower surge ahead by 24 points since 1918. The authors of the new research, published in America's *Psychological Review*, attribute the advance to the more stimulating environment that exists now compared to a century ago. TV programmes, the internet, even kitchen-table conversation, are all bubbling away with more information than was ever available in

the olden days. Whether it is Chris Tarrant stretching our brain cells on ITV, pub quizzes giving us a mental workout or the infernally difficult timer system on the home video, 21st-century life is a veritable gymnasium for the grey matter.

Yet how do we square this optimistic news with the anecdotal evidence of “dumbing down” all around us? Are we really so smart when the Guardian's recent survey found hardly any Britons can name four pre-war prime ministers and only a few can quote a single line of poetry? There are three possible explanations for this contradiction. 1) The anecdotal evidence of dumbing down could be wrong. 2) We could simultaneously be getting sharper and forgetting what used to be regarded as the foundations of western culture. Or 3) perhaps IQ is simply a useless indicator, measuring neither knowledge nor wisdom but rather a knack for doing silly puzzles. Remember: you can only choose one answer.

*'The Guardian'*

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### Murad Qureshi

#### A labour councillor in Westminster responds to an article by Ken Livingstone about the Government's new index of deprivation

29 August 2000

Ken Livingstone is right to emphasise the adverse impact that the new Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), announced last week by unaccountable Government bureaucrats, will have on London. My own ward, Church Street in Westminster, has gone down from a ranking of 189 under the old Index of Local Deprivation (ILD) 1998, to 838 under the IMD for 2000.

But he has got the wrong end of the stick over English as a second language being an indicator of deprivation. Rather, he should see it as a linguistic asset that we have among the London population, to be built upon, to the benefit of all Londoners, to maintain London's pre-eminence as a world city.

A recent publication from the Corporation of London called *Multilingual Capital* stresses this, reporting that an increasing number of international firms give as a reason for relocating to London the fact that they can recruit staff with a wide range of language skills, many of whom are bilingual.

Even an organisation with a vested interest in the continued supremacy of English such as the British Council, is concerned that in the next 50 years the world situation could change to give prominence to a range of other languages: some predictable (Arabic, Chinese, Spanish), others less so, such as Malay.

The real institutionalised racism is not that mother-tongue languages are demoted as an indication of deprivation, but that they are not regarded as an asset in the first place. They should be nurtured, both to benefit commerce and in the process enhance the self-esteem of the particular linguistic community.

*De volgende tekst is afkomstig uit het eerste hoofdstuk van 'Microserfs', een roman van Douglas Coupland, die zich afspeelt bij Microsoft, het computerbedrijf opgericht door Bill Gates.*

# 1

## Microserfs

FRIDAY  
Early Fall, 1993

This morning, just after 11:00, Michael locked himself in his office and he won't come out.

Bill (Bill!) sent Michael this totally wicked flame-mail from hell on the e-mail system – and he just wailed on a chunk of code Michael had written. Using the *Bloom County*-cartoons-taped-on-the-door index, Michael is certainly the most sensitive coder in Building Seven – not the type to take criticism easily. Exactly why Bill would choose Michael of all people to wail on is confusing.

We figured it must have been a random quality check to keep the troops in line. Bill's so smart.

Bill is wise.

Bill is kind.

Bill is benevolent.

Bill, Be My Friend ... *Please!*

Actually, nobody on our floor has ever been flamed by Bill personally. The episode was tinged with glamour and we were somewhat jealous. I tried to tell Michael this, but he was crushed.

Shortly before lunch he stood like a lump outside my office. His skin was pale like rising bread dough, and his Toppy's cut was dripping sweat, leaving little damp marks on the oyster-gray-with-plum highlights of the Microsoft carpeting. He handed me a printout of Bill's memo and then gallumphed into his office, where he's been burrowed ever since.

He won't answer his phone, respond to e-mail, or open his door. On his doorknob he placed a "Do Not Disturb" thingy stolen from the Boston Radisson during last year's Macworld Expo. Todd and I walked out onto the side lawn to try to peek in his window, but his venetian blinds were closed and a gardener with a leaf blower chased us away with a spray of grass clippings.

They mow the lawn every ten minutes at Microsoft. It looks like green Lego pads.

Finally, at about 2:30 A.M., Todd and I got concerned about Michael's not eating, so we drove to the 24-hour Safeway in Bellevue. We went shopping for "flat" foods to slip underneath Michael's door.

The Safeway was completely empty save for us and a few other Microsoft people just like us – hair-trigger geeks in pursuit of just the right snack. Because of all the rich nerds living around here, Redmond and Bellevue are very "on-demand" neighborhoods. Nerds get what they want when they want it, and they go psycho if it's not immediately available. Nerds overfocus. I guess that's the problem. But it's precisely this ability to narrow-focus that makes them so good at code writing: one line at a time, one line in a strand of millions.

When we returned to Building Seven at 3:00 A.M., there were still a few people grinding away. Our group is scheduled to ship product (RTM: Release to Manufacturing) in just eleven days (Top Secret: We'll never make it).

Michael's office lights were on, but once again, when we knocked, he wouldn't answer his door. We heard his keyboard chatter, so we figured he was still alive. The situation really begged a discussion of Turing logic – could we have discerned that the entity behind the door was indeed even human? We slid Kraft singles, Premium Plus crackers, Pop-Tarts, grape leather, and Freezie-Pops in to him.

Todd asked me, "Do you think any of this violates geek dietary laws?"

Just then, Karla in the office across the hall screamed and then glared out at us from her doorway. Her eyes were all red and sore behind her round glasses. She said, "You guys are only encouraging him," like we were feeding a raccoon or something. I don't think Karla ever sleeps.

She harrumphed and slammed her door closed. Doors sure are important to nerds.

Anyway, by this point Todd and I were both really tired. We drove back to the house to crash, each in our separate cars, through the Campus grounds – 22 buildings' worth of nerd-cossetting fun – cloistered by 100-foot-tall second growth timber, its streets quiet as the womb: the foundry of our culture's deepest dreams.

There was mist floating on the ground above the soccer fields outside the central buildings. I thought about the e-mail and Bill and all of that, and I had this weird feeling – of how the presence of Bill floats about the Campus, semi-visible, at all times, kind of like the dead grandfather in the *Family Circus* cartoons. Bill is a moral force, a spectral force, a force that shapes, a force that molds. A force with thick, thick glasses.

I am [danielu@microsoft.com](mailto:danielu@microsoft.com). I am a tester – a bug checker in Building Seven. I worked my way up the ladder from Product Support Services (PSS) where I spent six months in phone purgatory in 1991 helping little old ladies format their Christmas mailing lists on Microsoft Works.

I am single. I think partly this is because Microsoft is not conducive to relationships. Last year down at the Apple Worldwide Developer's Conference in San Jose, I met a girl who works not too far away, at Hewlett-Packard on Interstate 90, but it never went anywhere. Sometimes I'll sort of get something going, but then work takes over my life and I bail out of all my commitments and things fizzle.

Lately I've been unable to sleep. That's why I've begun writing this journal late at night, to try to see the patterns in my life. From this I hope to establish what my problem is – and then, hopefully, solve it. I'm trying to feel more well adjusted than I really am, which is, I guess, the human condition. My life is lived day to day, one line of bug-free code at a time.

# Diana's unwelcome legacy



THREE YEARS after the death of Diana, everything has changed – changed utterly.

The saintly character, the icon (that great cliché of modern journalism) is no more. She was, we are now told, a mixed-up, undistinguished sort of person, remarkable only for her physical beauty.

What has not changed is the press. It was the press – and the TV for that matter – who three years ago helped to

create the great Diana myth and at the same time foster an unhealthy atmosphere of hysteria. For the only time in life I got a whiff of what it was like to live under a fascist system. That was because one was made to feel like an outsider for not joining in with the artificially-created grief. Many people were literally afraid to speak their mind then.

To prove that little has changed, the same sort of thing has been happening, albeit on a lesser scale, in the wake of the murder of Sarah Payne, whose funeral last week inspired yet more pages of solemn nonsense, not only in the tabloid press. As with Diana, the message was that the whole nation was sharing in the grief of Sarah's family – an obvious

and easily provable falsehood.

It is not only the *News of the World* that is responsible for the dire events that have ensued since the Payne murder, notably the witch-hunt against suspected paedophiles that is continuing and which no senior politician has had the courage to deplore.

And as with Diana, when sentimental nonsense becomes a substitute for reporting, the real story goes untold. Three years ago it was the responsibility of the Fayeds and their employees like chauffeur Henri Paul for the fatal crash. Today it is the fact that Sarah Payne's killer is still at large and so may strike again.

*'The Observer'*

Letter from Uzbekistan Jennifer Balfour

## The cribbing game

1 ONE day my class of 20 university students turned in 20 identical assignments. Anticipating 20 red faces the following week as I prepared to hand them back unmarked, I was floored totally by a sea of uncomprehending stares wilting beneath my rage.

2 10 Some months later, during the final examinations, they were subjected to yet another fit of irrational pique. After disgorging crib sheets from every imaginable 15 hiding place, I threw them in disgust on the invigilator's table and was met with yet another blank face. She had seen them, she explained calmly, but had 20 interpreted them differently. This was not cheating, she reasoned, but moral support. "Your culture believes in justice," she said. "We believe in helping each other." 25 And there she rested her case. She accused me of not caring for my students and I sat, thoughtful and chastened.

3 Individual responsibility, fairness and playing by the rules permeate my Western conscience, but it seems that another law is at work here. I have been 30 forced to ask whether the communal approach to life has as much merit as my own individualistic morality, if not more.

4 I long ago gave up testing students according to their individual knowledge, primarily because of the seriously deleterious effect on my own, and consequently their mental health.

45 Attempts to encourage classroom competition have always degenerated rapidly into flurries of eager advice passed unashamedly between members of opposing teams. Weaker students are always a target of more assistance. 50 Woe betide the class know-all who refuses to pass on vital information, even to the "enemy".

55 Co-operation and communality are the building blocks of Central Asian society. From the moment a new bride enters her new household, even her baby is not her own. She produces heirs for her husband's father's line and individual responsibility only re-enters the picture when she produces the wrong sex child or, heaven forbid, no child at all. 60 Whereas I bristle when a neighbour announces her intention to marry off her son or daughter, she and her husband regard it as a matter of honour and pride to 65 bear the load and see them safely on their way. She will name the progeny herself, and with a simple whisper in the ear at a week old will ensure the child's 75 future as a Muslim.

6 Family loyalties are prized above all others, earnings are pooled and elders consulted over every major decision. Young 80 marrieds move into rooms or houses built for them, full of furniture bought for them, and wear clothes chosen for them. When a family decides it is time 85 for their new bride to return to work, grandparents faithfully

mind the children. Those children will, when their time comes, return all the favours owed, and 90 complete the cycle of obligation around which this society revolves.

7 Students recoil at my descriptions of our aggressive, acquisitive world, where family and friends take second place to career and individual aspirations, and think me heartless and cruel for leaving my own flesh and 100 blood to their measly pensions and the whims of state in a faraway land.

8 The 20 students were genuinely upset at my outburst that day. 105 They had gathered for hours around the class swot, painstakingly copying her answers and memorising every sentence. As far as they were concerned they had done the right thing. No one student outshone another and no one felt left out.

9 I would be more heartless and cruel than they had imagined if I 115 quarrelled with the means, but as their teacher I am also responsible for the end. Whichever way you look at it, their method might have taught them how to live, but 120 has it taught them anything else? And here it seems is where East meets West. I am working on the twain meeting one day, but until I get there, assuming they have the 125 same problems in the medical institute, I know where I'd rather have brain surgery.

*'Guardian Weekly'*



# Little women

By Katherine Knorr

1 **P**ARIS – When Calvin Klein was criticized last month for an ad featuring small children in underwear, it wasn't just more of the outrage that has greeted so many disturbing fashion images – notably skeletal models in tiny undies.

2 The marketing of clothes – some of them pretty raunchy – to children and pre-teens raises all sorts of issues about what clothes “mean” and about the influence of the vast network of popular culture salesmanship. It is ironic that, as fashion enters the third millennium, clothes for grown-up women have become positively genteel, with the twin set seeming ubiquitous and even the bad Brits toned down. It seems the real fashion victims now are Lolita's age.

3 Fashion is so self-referential and its cycles are so short that a lot of the “content” of fashion has disappeared; nothing today has the political impact of '60s near-nudity, or shirts made out of the American flag. Bra burning? Huh?

4 Fashion no longer tells us women are becoming more independent or men are getting in touch with their inner child.

5 And fashion, dipping into the world of uniforms and utilitarian clothing, blurs class lines in a dizzying way: expensive ready-to-wear drawn from ghetto threads; sportswear morphed into evening clothes; Casual Friday vs. the suit. And of course middle-class teens dressed in their own sad rags uniforms: think back to the farmboy look, which horrified so many American parents in the late 1960s and early 1970s, who had grown up on Depression-era farms and fled them for college degrees and serious desk jobs, and could not understand why their children started wearing baggy overalls and baggy T-shirts and looking pretty much like the Beverly Hillbillies.

6 **A**LL THIS makes sense in societies with soaring stock markets where the social fabric is money. In fashion the social fabric is just that, fabric. All of us in this way invent ourselves like Jay Gatsby, with, one hopes, better results. In that sense, fashion helps to create

some kind of melting pot.

7 When it comes to children, however, what fashion “means” does become more prominent. An 11-year-old wearing come-hither clothes isn't in the same position as a 25-year-old. She is being used, in what would seem the most cynical way, to sell not only clothes but synthetic popular music groups and goey animated movies.

8 The only real customers for the extraterrestrial floozy look of the Spice Girls or the irredeemably commercial tie-ins of those movies are little girls. Clothes catalogues sell skintight two-piece outfits (bra

and pedal pushers) advertising the boys band 2 Be 3 (the Chippendales for the pre-teen set) to 10-year-olds. The boys in the band are barechested. The little girl models strike alluring poses.

9 Marketing to little people is nothing new, of course, and Saturday morning American TV early on specialized in telling children to tell their parents what to buy. But the marketing of clothes is something else.

10 **I**F CLOTHING has lost its “guild” breakdown – if it no longer separates the blue and the white collars, the ghetto and the country club – it has not lost its power to disturb when it blurs the line sexually. The decadent pictures of willfully androgynous models, of anorectically thin and sickly young models, of “heroin chic” – none of which has gone away despite lots of noise to the contrary – seem to have paved the way toward breaking the ultimate taboo:

children.

11 This isn't selling Barbie dolls, this is selling the Barbie doll look to girls in grade school. At the same time as Barbie herself turns 40 and is being reissued with a more realistic body, we're remaking little girls into disturbing erotic figures.

12 It's difficult to judge how much of this tacky costume party is harmless, just more of the waves of popular culture that we can't, after all, do anything about.

13 There is an argument that the reason only adults are shocked by these things is that kids have an elaborate but complicated relationship with truth and



*The Lolita look from Dolce & Gabbana*



fiction that allows them to put on faces and costumes without absorbing the associated behavior. They can play cowboys and Indians without becoming killers and they dress up as showgirls just as they would dress as princesses.

14 Maybe it is, after all, just the old game of putting on Mom's clothes – except it's hard to believe Mom would ever wear these clothes.

15 Once upon a time, before the sexual revolution and the Me Generation, school uniforms or smocks served

laudable purposes: they protected street clothes, they made children look studious (this is actually useful, in a clothes-make-the-man kind of way), and most important perhaps, they avoided keeping-up-with-the-Joneses clothing competitions. As fashion recycles the greatest hits of the last 50 years, it's high time for a comeback: Call it the Return of the Nice Kid.

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**KATHERINE KNORR** is a deputy editor of the *International Herald Tribune*.

*'The International Herald Tribune'*

## SCIENCE AND RELIGION

# A new moral order

Brave New Worlds  
*Genetics and the Human Experience*  
 by Bryan Appleyard

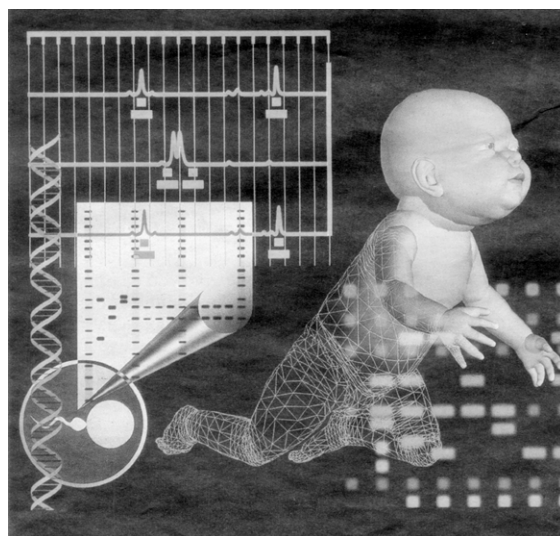
Karen Armstrong

1 Perhaps because we live in an increasingly pluralistic world, we have repeatedly witnessed a clash of orthodoxies during our troubled century. Today, in all leading faiths, religious fundamentalists believe that only their interpretation of tradition is correct. They are derided and even reviled by the more liberal establishment, which has, however, generated a form of secular fundamentalism ("Religion is absurd and demonstrably untrue: let's get rid of it!"), which is similarly reductive and intolerant. Finally, there is a widespread scientific orthodoxy that also demands our total and exclusive allegiance.

2 Bryan Appleyard begs the reader to resist this scientific claim to be the sole arbiter of truth. This is a brave book. It will doubtless be vilified and Appleyard will certainly be accused, in some quarters, of wishing to return to the bigotry and irrationality of the Dark Ages. But this is part of the problem, and one of the reasons why this book needed to be written. Appleyard helps the non-specialist to confront and to appreciate the disturbing significance of some of the achievements of science.

3 Dolly the sheep made many of us feel queasy. One of the geneticists interviewed by Appleyard confessed that the possibility of parents being able to select the sex of their child horrified him, "although", he added, "I cannot say why". It is certainly frightening to imagine what might happen to a society in which, as a result of genetic research, it might be possible to abort a foetus who might one day be homosexual, violent, or simply too short. Appleyard denies that this is scaremongering. We all want our children to be happy and successful. It would be difficult for some parents to resist the opportunity of bearing only those children who fit the current social ideal.

4 This type of genetic engineering, Appleyard argues, is another form of eugenics, the science



**Live issue: one geneticist confessed that selecting the sex of a child horrified him**

that was discredited because of its abuse by the Nazis.

5 There is no discovery that cannot be used for an evil end, but is that a reason for halting experimentation? Obviously, if a cancer gene could be isolated, it would be a triumph to eliminate the suffering that the disease brings. In this sense, genetics is part of a noble endeavour.

6 But Appleyard had a niece ("the most extraordinary person I have ever known"), who has died since he wrote the book. She suffered all her life from muscular dystrophy, but despite her disability, she led a rich life and the lives of everybody who knew her would be immeasurably poorer if Fiona had not been born. There are no easy answers. Appleyard simply asks whether such mingled pleasure and pain is not essential to the human experience.

7 One of the main difficulties is that some scientists will not admit that there *is* a problem. They can be as dogmatic as any religious bigot in their claims for an exclusively scientific approach to life. Francis Crick, who pioneered research into the structure of DNA, has argued that all truths and values are simply molecular functions. Love, art, altruism, spirituality, mathematics, and human consciousness itself are, in this approach, mere evolutionary survival stratagems. To attempt to find "meaning" in life is pointless; there is simply scientific fact.

8 Such scientists believe that they have a mission to liberate us from religious delusions. Their language can be aggressive. Daniel Dennett speaks of Darwinism and artificial intelligence striking "a fundamental blow" at the

“last refuge” of those who cling to a more spiritual view.

9 Yet, in claiming to be the sole bearers of truth, they give themselves Godlike attributes, even though, like every other human venture, science has often been wrong in the past. Why should today’s theories be any more immune to error?

10 Scientific beliefs and values should be submitted to the same rigorous scepticism as the truths of religion and philosophy. When they go wrong, all such orthodoxies can have a devastating effect upon society. Genetic science, swallowed uncritically, could radically undermine the institutions of liberal democracy. It is patently not true that all human beings are genetically equal, and, if we believe that our lives are totally determined

biologically, what becomes of our systems of justice, which hold individuals responsible for their actions?

11 Appleyard himself shows that religion has been affected by modern science. Many now believe that their doctrines are facts (instead of poetic symbols of the ineffable), and their myths history. Instead, perhaps those who are convinced of the need for some form of spiritual quest and who wish to challenge some of the possibly dangerous trends of genetics, should emphasise the basic and universal religious perception that every human is sacred and inviolable – a belief that requires no simplistic or literalistic conception of the supernatural.

*‘The Sunday Times’*

## THE BIG ISSUE: RUGBY UNION GETS THE NEEDLE

# Drugs and the generation gap

By Eddie Butler

I THINK IT IS the fault of my generation, those people who played their games back in the Seventies and Eighties. We all knew that, behind a closed iron curtain, doctors were at work, still trying to manufacture the master race. If the East Germans felt like turning out spotty women with beards who could run like cheetahs because they were flush with the hormones extracted from that particular feline, then there was nothing we could do except give thanks that we 28.

This was the Cold War and the sight of a Bulgarian shot putter strapping her lunch pack into the Frankenstein fold of her upper thigh before taking to the circle was a reminder that it was good to belong to the free West. Sebastian Coe and Steve Ovett – with rare affection we knew them simply as Seb and, er, Ovett – didn't get on particularly well, but they were 29 and could beat the Commies.

And we all liked Liverpool FC because they were the best and were rumoured to drink like fish. Rugby was amateur and even more boozy. And if someone did a little speed to get them through the afternoon, then it was a laugh because it only went to show that he was a hell of a boy who'd had a skinful the night before.

**A YEAR BEFORE** the fall of the Iron Curtain, at the Seoul Olympics, it was clear that drugs had 30. But even then it didn't seem quite so bad. Oh, I know there was a right stink when Ben Johnson failed his test, but, let's admit it, no one liked Carl Lewis and to see his smile wiped out by a chap from the Commonwealth was damn good sport while it lasted. If there was one thing worse than a hairy East German fraulein, it was a smug Yank.

But now, of all people, the Irish are taking drugs. Michelle Smith was bad enough, but now it seems that lads who didn't marry dodgy Dutch discus throwers are up to their overdeveloped pecs in the mess. It's like finding out that one of the Von Trapp children grew up to become an arms dealer, that Coe became a Conservative MP. Somehow, drugs have come into our own back yard, where the children play.

They've always been here, though. In the course of doing some casual research on the extent of noxious-substance abuse back in 31, I was reliably informed that there were a lot of pills doing the rounds even when there was no money in rugby. This, I retorted with admirable patriotic zeal, would have been a peculiarly Welsh weakness. Body-building gyms seem to abound in Wales. Must be the weather.

No, I was informed, drugtaking was, without being commonplace, evident across the board. In changing rooms 32 players have been doing stuff for years.

**IT'S QUITE UPSETTING** really. All those watering eyes and determined stares in the changing room may not have been the result of the power of my oratory after all. Those rides across waves of natural passion turn out to be nothing more than trips down billowing cloud nine.

I'm sorry if I sound 33 about the whole thing, but I suspect that at some imprecise time around the fall of the Berlin Wall, I began to fear that corruption in sport was not just confined to the institutes and laboratories of the Eastern Bloc. Such a fear predates the arrival of absurd sums of money in the arena of sport, but there's no question that the lure of huge rewards has 34 the basic human instinct to cut corners in the competitive pursuit of

victory. Hell, we cheat. As much as we can and as often as we can. The spirit of competition relates, according to that same session of casual research, to our primeval hunting instincts. Who cares if the lion is engaged in noble chase up hill and down dale until the spear is cleanly driven through its noble heart? Much safer to creep up on it in numbers 35 a good session on the narcotic home-brew and rip it to pieces before it has a chance to stir.

**THE SAFE ASSUMPTION** to make is that everyone in every form of athletic endeavour is on drugs. Sport is the playground of dopeheads. Only from such a starting-point do we stand a chance of being surprised by romance, when somebody bucks the trend and wins 36.

Absurd sums of money are washing around sport. How can it be that at a time when footballers rank among the richest people in Britain, the drug-testing agencies complain of lack of funds? The most dangerous narcotic on earth – 37 – should be used to keep all the growth hormones, steroids, caterpillar excreta and ladyshaves in some sort of check. Everybody is cheating, but let's try to keep our competitors free from permanent mutation for as long as possible.

The Irish are on drugs. It is enough to put you off sport for good. Such was the consensus around the table of our informal research group. Among the generation who had played their games in the Seventies and Eighties, and who felt that they were somehow to blame for not doing enough at the time, heads drooped. But not for long. Luckily somebody had brought a little pick-me-up. Spirits were raised and hair began to sprout in strange places.

*'The Observer'*

# No case for laying blame on the dead

1 **H**istorians are supposed to be clinically detached, but Sheldon Watts's exploration of the pestilences of the past seethes with passion. Successive chapters vividly recreate the suffering and devastation brought about over the centuries by bubonic plague, leprosy, smallpox, cholera, yellow fever and malaria.

2 Imagine going down with cholera in 1830. You grew nauseous and dizzy. Stomach cramps, vomiting and diarrhoea rapidly followed, and your stools turned to a grey liquid known as rice water. You passed up to 10 litres in 24 hours before dehydration set in. You could wake up hale and hearty but be a corpse tomorrow. There was no cure. It was a terrible way to die — indeed, it can be still, and the current cholera pandemic, starting in 1961 in Indonesia and rampant in Asia and South America, is the longest pandemic ever.

3 The real scandal, in Watts's view, is that such catastrophes, far from being inevitable accidents of nature, were, and remain, the avoidable products of human agency or neglect. To be precise, it is the triumph of the West which has aggravated these killer diseases. Capitalism has wrecked stable ecological and social systems, and imperialist greed has created the ideal environments for malaria, TB and Aids.

4 For those who, like myself, were brought up at school on heroic stories of medical missionaries, Watts's message may seem mean. Yet no one can deny his book is well-documented: ample evidence is adduced to show that, be it in medieval Europe or modernising Ethiopia, the measures jointly taken by civil and medical authorities to prevent pestilence or counter plague commonly did sufferers precious little good, and often made bad worse.

5 Indeed, Watts argues, such policies were often actually intended to be punitive, as priests and physicians would hold natives or paupers responsible for bringing disease about in the first place. The authorities often regarded the diseased as more threatening than the diseases, and epidemics frequently triggered victim-blaming and oppression.

6 Thus Europe's first pogroms against the Jews were launched to assuage God's wrath at the height of the Black Death. Later on, doling out smallpox-infected blankets to native Indians, North American colonists turned pathogens into weapons of war, while crediting the outcome to "the good hand of God". Based in Cairo and hence immune from automatic Eurocentrism, Watts is as sceptical of the medical profession as of the governments and business interests they

ultimately served. His case carries much conviction.

7 Yet *Epidemics and History* also suffers from overkill, because Watts cannot resist the itch to pass sentence upon the dead. Physicians are scolded if they intervened ineptly — for example by setting up leper colonies, when they had no effective treatments. But they are equally censured for inaction.

8 Thus the Victorian John Snow, the first to demonstrate how cholera is communicated via contaminated water, gets a rap over the knuckles, since he neglected to peer down a microscope and so failed to discover the cholera bacillus. The verdict is anachronistic and preachy.

**Roy Porter**

## EPIDEMICS AND HISTORY

Disease, Power and Imperialism  
By Sheldon Watts

9 The upshot is a kind of history-by-hindsight which ironically echoes the moral superiority of the imperialists here so scathingly denounced. Nevertheless, Watts's urge to affix blame springs from a generous rage on behalf of humanity, and this trenchant book provides a salutary antidote to world health complacency, past and present.

*'The Times'*



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A collection of original essays and reprinted articles focusing on various aspects of American expressive culture from professional football to soap operas.

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A collection of reprinted articles encompassing a wide range of topics pertinent to American anthropology through the 1950s and 1960s.

**Kottak, Conrad Phillip, ed.** *Researching American Culture*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1982.

Twenty-five original articles analyzing aspects of American culture, particularly symbolism, enculturation, and expressive forms (art, television, films, myth).

**Messerschmidt, D., ed.** *Anthropologists at Home in North America: Methods and Issues in the Study of One's Own Society*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981. ISBN: 0-521-24067-0. \$42,50. ISBN: 0-521-28419-8. \$15,95 (paper).

A collection of several articles addressing the key conceptual, methodological, and existential issues encountered by American anthropologists studying American culture.

**Spindler, George D., and Louise Spindler.** "Anthropologists View American Culture." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 1983 12: 49-78. Palo Alto, Cal.: Annual Reviews, Inc.

A bibliographic essay that reviews 162 articles and books by anthropologists on American culture, assessing early works, topical pieces, holistic analyses, and case studies.

**Spradley, James P., and Michael A. Rynkiewicz, eds.** *The Nacirema: Readings on American Culture*. Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1975.

A collection of the most notable anthropological articles on American culture from the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, joined with several original articles. Analyses of technology, kinship, economy, ideology, and expressive forms of culture.

**Applebaum, Herbert.** *Royal Blue: The Culture of Construction Workers*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1981. ISBN: 0-03-057309-2, HoltC. \$9,95 (paper).

A fine example of a recent genre of case studies focusing on American occupational cultures.

## INTERPRETIVE WORKS

**Gorer, Geoffrey.** *The American People: A Study in American Character*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1948.

An attempt to distill American culture down to the essences of its character. A major study in the culture-personality literature of the early post-World War II period.

**Hatch, Elvin.** *Biography of a Small Town*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979. ISBN: 0-231-04694-4 \$31.00.

A social history of the deterioration of a small, rural town in central California that occurred after World War II when personal economic gain gradually replaced merit approved through social achievement.

**Hsu, Francis L.K.** *Americans and Chinese: Passage to Differences*. Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1981. ISBN: 0-8248-0710-3 \$22,50. ISBN: 0-8248-0757-X. \$10,95 (paper).

A comparison of the individual-centered American culture with the situation-centered Chinese culture, attributing major social dislocations and disruptions to American individualism.

**Jorgensen, Joseph G.** *The Sun Dance Religion: Power for the Powerless*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972. ISBN (1986 reprod. of 1972 ed.): 0-226-41086-2. \$14,95 (paper) ISBN (1972 ed.): 0-226-41085-4. \$12.50 (paper).

Comparative historical analysis of several Indian cultures and their religious responses to dominant American cultures.

**Lantis, Margaret, ed.** "The U.S.A. as Anthropologists See It." *American Anthropologists* 57 (1955): 1113-80. Special issue.

The first special issue on American culture to appear in the leading anthropological journal.

**McFee, Malcolm.** *Modern Blackfeet: Montanans on a Reservation*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1972. ISBN: 0-88133-043-4. \$6,95 (paper).

A case study of Blackfeet Indian culture in the 1960s with special emphasis on the similarities between Indian culture and the Anglo culture of rural Montana wheat and cattle ranchers.

**Mead, Margaret.** *And Keep Your Powder Dry*. New York: Morrow, 1943. ISBN (reprod. of 1942 ed.): 0-8369-2416-9. \$18,00. ISBN (1971 ed.): 0-688-21654-4. \$7,95 (paper).

A general assessment of American character consonant with culture-personality theorizing during World War II.

**Myerhoff, Barbara.** *Number Our Days*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978. ISBN: 0-671-25430-8. Touchstone. \$8,95.

A case study of elderly Jews and the community they form at a senior citizens center in the 1970s in Venice, California, describing their memories, desires, frictions, and fears.

**Perin, C.** *Everything in Its Place: Social Order and Land Use in America*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977. ISBN: 0-691-09372-5. \$31,50. ISBN: 0-691-02819-2. \$11,50 (paper).

A semiotic analysis of American real estate. Although ahistorical, comparisons among ethnic groups within the U.S. exhibit systematic differences in buying, renting, living on, using, thinking about, and planning for real estate.

**Rapson, R., ed.** *Individualism and Conformity in the American Character*. Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., 1967.

A survey of the most significant and influential analyses of the dialectic between individualism and conformity in American ideology and practice.

**Schneider, David.** *American Kinship: A Cultural Account*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968.

A symbolic analysis of American kinship that puts kinship in a central place in American culture – drawing persons together and promoting solidarity. Kinship is contrasted with and compared to other ordering principles in American culture.

**Spindler, George.** *The Transmissions of American Culture*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959.

An ethnographic analysis of the ways in which the cultural views of a specific ordinary teacher influence classroom behavior.

**Spindler, George, and Louise Spindler.** *Dreamers without Power: The Menomini Indians*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971. ISBN: 0-88133-090-6. \$8,95 (paper).

A social history-ethnology of cultural and personal change among Menomini Indians as the forces of the dominant American culture have influenced Menomini organizations and practices.

**Spradley, James P., and B. Mann.** *The Cocktail Waitress: Women's Work in a Man's World*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1975. ISBN: 0-394-34412-X. \$9,00 (paper).

An ethnoscientific ethnography of a college bar that focuses on the real and symbolic differences between male and female employees and extends those differences, by implication, to cultural settings outside the bar.

**Stack, Carol B.** *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community*. New York: Harper & Row, 1974. ISBN: 0-06-131982-1, TB1982, Torch. \$6,95 (paper).

A study of personal histories of black urban women and the strategies they follow to cope, keep their families together, maintain kinship networks, support networks, and alliances.

**Varenne, H.** *Americans Together: Structured Diversity in a Midwestern Town*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1977. ISBN: 0-8077-2519-6. \$15,95 (paper).

An analysis of incipient networks, focusing on transactions and exchanges among persons in a midwestern community. Emphasizes the unifying structure of symbols in a surprisingly diverse cultural landscape.

**Vidich, Arthur, and J. Bensman.** *Small Town in Mass Society: Class, Power, and Religion in a Rural Community*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1958. ISBN: 0-691-09342-3. \$33,00. ISBN: 0-691-02807-9-131.

A pacesetter analysis that helped to redefine anthropological inquiry into American culture from the perspectives of culture personality (national character, modal personality, ethos) and closed and structured communities, to deeper analyses of the networks of relations within a community and the way in which communities are dependent parts of a larger system.

**Waddell, Jack, and Michael Watson, eds.** *The American Indian in Urban Society*. Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1971. ISBN: 0-8191-4038-4. \$15,25 (paper).

A collection of original articles assessing the adaptations of American Indians in urban areas to the dominant American culture and society.

**Wallace, Anthony F. C.** *Rockdale: The Growth of an American Village in the Early Industrial Revolution*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980. ISBN: 0-393-00991-2. \$10,95 (paper).

An expert social history of a small village in Pennsylvania that is sensitive to the multiple forces shaping a community over time.

**Warner, W. Lloyd.** *The Social Life of a Modern Community*. Yankee City Series 1. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1941. ISBN: 0-686-83769-X. \$20,00.

The pre-eminent study of a northeastern American community in which the analysis of class and formal, bounded relations, and organizations set the paradigms for community analyses for the better part of the following three decades.

**Williams, Melvin D.** *On the Street Where I Lived: A Black Anthropologist Examines Lifestyles and Ethos in an Urban Afro-American Neighborhood*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1981. ISBN: 0-03-056132-9, HoltC. \$9,95 (paper).

An ethnographic case study of a black urban neighborhood.

**Wong, Bernard.** *Chinatown: Economic Adaptation and Ethnic Identity of the Chinese*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1982. ISBN: 0-03-058906-1. \$11,50 (paper).

An ethnographic case study of New York City's Chinatown. [Under the general editorship of George Spindler, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York, published 30 anthropological case studies of America's dominant, minority, and occupational cultures.]



# New album releases

## STOCK, HAUSEN AND WALKMAN Ventilating Deer (Hot Air)

THE NAME alone should warn you this is not an act that takes itself, or its listeners, seriously. If a label is required for SHW's output, experimental easy-listening hip hop would be apposite; sample-heavy but cheesy half-formed doodles that amuse, initially (*Upset*) but quickly grate (*Feather*). There is simply not enough invention or imagination here. The album glories in subverting an already thoroughly subverted genre but adds next to nothing. That this Salford duo (said to be fun live) have managed to insinuate themselves in the affections of peerless cheesemongers such as Pulp and Lady Miss Kier, as well as the marvellous Mouse on Mars, ought not to deceive you, because what condemns this album is its lack of warmth – you never completely escape the impression that its progenitors are laughing, not with you, but at you. – PC



## DELICATESSEN There's No Confusing Some People (Viper)

LEICESTER QUARTET Delicatessen have been a perennial mid-table second division indie act since they launched back in 1994. Their reference points look good on paper – Cave, Bukowski, Waits – but the reality is that they have never demonstrated that level of songwriting ability. *There's No Confusing Some People* is their third longplaying strike, nine songs whose titles – *Psycho*, *Cruel Country*, *He Killed Himself In 1980* – skirt familiar territories of madness, guilt and depravity, but fail to deliver even the cheapest of thrills. *Psycho* teases out a halfway memorable tune but the arrangements throw few interesting shapes in to the shadowplay. Delicatessen imagine themselves soundtracking your nightmares, a gothic lounge act playing twice-nightly sets in your subconscious. Instead they are the cue for an early night. – MP



## ADD N TO X On the Wires of Our Nerves (Satellite)

ON THIS slack-jawed analogue debut, Add N To X have seized every synth from the Jurassic era that has been dumped in a scrap-metal yard. After some fanciful jiggling around, a malfunctioning Moog symphony has been concocted that verges on lunacy. The incriminating articles are tracks such as *Grey Body*, *Green Gun*, which conjure up images of grunting Metal Mickey hippopotamuses taking a mud bath and *Nevermind*, with its digital hardcore-style killer gnat hisses. These sounds are more disturbing than William Burroughs's drugfuelled dreams. Yet there is more to this album than the obvious Krautrock influences that seep through the blips and bleeps. Add N to X ooze with personality, and there is a kinky glam essence buried in the rusty circuitry of their synths, making tracks such as *Hit Me* a digital tease. – VV



## BLACK JAZZ CHRONICLES Future Juju (Nuphonic)

FOR SEVERAL years, producer, remixer and club DJ Ashley Beedle has recorded his own music under numerous pseudonyms including the Disco Evangelists, X-Press 2, Ballistic Brothers and Black Science Orchestra. Black Jazz Chronicles, his first solo project, shies away from his trademark dancefloor-orientated tunes and draws instead on dub, jazz and funk influences, which are often set to Eighties-style electro beats or laid over rhythmic, tribal drums. As a result, the debut album, *Future Juju*, is an hour of beautifully crafted, intense, atmospheric music. However, while *Snooky's Spirit*, the Fela Kuti-tinged *Dope Stuff* and *Ancient Future* are individually hypnotic, over the length of the album, the subtle moods struggle to sustain the listener's optimum interest. A charming distraction, nonetheless. – LV



## THE SEX PISTOLS We Have Come for Your Children (Castle)

AN INTRIGUING slice of punk history, hauled from soundman Dave Goodman's archive. The Pistols were the most incendiary rock'n'roll band ever to hold real power, and this warts-and-all compilation shows them at their spunkiest and venomous best. As well as snotty live cuts, such as *No Lip* and *No Fun* ("You must be f\*\*king mad wanting more of us"), there are demos of *Pretty Vacant* and *Submission*, and the tantalising "ultra rare mystery track", *Revolution in the Classroom*. *Suburban Kid* has Rotten at his sneering best; *Here We Go Again* is Cook and Jones in power-pop mode, with a lyrical nod to punk cred ("How far can you spit?"). There are also American radio ads ("They said no one could be more bizarre than Alice Cooper...") and the notorious Bill Grundy interview ("Go on, say something outrageous..."). – PH



## GUY CHADWICK Lazy, Soft & Slow (Setanta)

SOMETHING OF a surprise, this one. Chadwick's jangling guitar band, The House Of Love, fractured in 1993 and a deafening silence ensued until out of the blue he re-emerged last year with an unexceptional single. It created no great expectations of his debut solo album, yet *Lazy, Soft & Slow* turns out to be a polished gem. There is a distinctly Sixties flavour to Chadwick's brand of singer-songwriting – the shimmering and sultry *One of These Days* and *Soft & Slow* bear the influence of the cult singer-songwriter Nick Drake; *Crystal Love Song* recalls the neglected rock singer Al Stewart and *Close Your Eyes* sounds like a Donovan lullaby. The result is as fragile as gossamer and as gentle as the beat of a butterfly's wings. Not an album to crank you up on a Saturday night but definitely one for chilling out on a Sunday morning. – NW



Reviewers: Paul Connolly, Mike Pattenden, Veena Virdi, Lisa Verrico, Patrick Humphries and Nigel Williamson

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