

Tekstboekje

An end to anonymity

THE RIGHT not to tell and the right to know are rarely in sharper conflict than in the matter of sperm donation. Until now, respect for the anonymity of the donor has prevailed, largely for practical reasons. How many men would be prepared to be donors, it was asked, if they could later be traced by the children that they had helped to conceive? Far more, it transpires from pilot studies, than was initially thought. Which is why Baroness Warnock, who advised on the original legislation, is right to have changed her mind on the balance of principle; and why – with appropriate safeguards – the law should change, too.

Any change should not be retrospective. But if would-be donors are not deterred by the prospect of losing their anonymity, there is no good reason why their biological offspring should not be allowed to know who they are, and every reason – medical, social, cultural and personal – why they should.

The Independent

Looks 'r' us

'The Australian marsupial mouse makes Mick Jagger look like a librarian with a lost libido,' wrote Jerome Burne (News, last week).

Allowing for the compulsion to use alliteration, he has dug himself an interesting little hole here.

I must first declare an interest, being a qualified librarian. I have shinned up to the loft and dug out a very fetching twinset, pearls and sensible skirt. This, along with cleaning the old hornrims, and scraping my short spiky hair into a bun, has put me in the frame of mind for an indignant rant about 2. Much more conducive to the mood than my customary Prada leggings or Vivienne Westwood rubber frock, don't you think?

Come off it, Jerome, we library moles are now well and truly connected, with freedom to access all the naughty bits the Internet can throw at us. That can really kick-start the old libido, making Mick Jagger look just like ... a journalist with brewer's droop.

Judy Addison
Aberdeen

The Observer

De volgende tekst is het begin van hoofdstuk 1 uit Sweet William van Beryl Bainbridge.

In the main entrance of the air terminal a young man stood beside a cigarette machine, searching in the breast pocket of his blue suit for his passport. A girl, slouching in a grey coat, as if she thought she was too tall, passively watched him.

'It's safe,' he said, patting his jacket with relief.

Suddenly the girl's face, reflected in the chrome surface of the tobacco machine, changed expression. Clownishly her mouth turned down at the corners.

'You should have taken me with you,' she said. 'You should have done.'

He knew she was right, and yet how could he arrive in the States with someone who was not his wife? It wasn't like London. The University would never stand for him living with a woman, not in quarters provided and paid for by the faculty.

'I'll send for you,' he told her. 'I'll send for you very soon.'

She thought how handsome he was, with his dark hair cut short to impress his transatlantic colleagues, his chelsea boots. There hadn't been time for him to put on a tie, and his shirt was unbuttoned at the neck. It occurred to her how masculine he was and how unfair that she should realise it only when saying goodbye.

'Jesus,' he said. 'Look at the clock. I'll have to move, Ann.'

'Wait,' she pleaded. And he looked desperately at the queue forming outside the door leading to the coach park. 'All right,' she said bitterly. 'Go.'

He bent to pick up his suitcase and his white raincoat. She stood turned away from him with a bright deliberate smile on her face. He put down his case and touched her arm.

He said uneasily, 'I'll miss the plane.'

She relented and allowed him to embrace her. When they kissed, she felt her stomach turn over; it was probably the excitement of losing him. When they had been together she always stood outside, observing them both.

He didn't turn round to wave as he went through the departure door, nor did she follow to watch him boarding the coach. Acting out the fantasy that she had been betrayed, she stumbled with bowed head towards the exit. She was

already feeling a little frightened at the thought of facing her mother. Maybe if she bought some fresh rolls on the Finchley Road and a bunch of flowers for her breakfast tray, Mrs Walton would be less condemning. She might even be sympathetic; after all, it had been her idea that Ann get engaged. Ann hadn't thought she knew Gerald well enough – they had only known each other for a few weeks when he was offered the University post – but Mrs Walton said she would be a fool to think it over, particularly as Gerald was flying off to America and with such splendid prospects. She hadn't met Gerald then, but her friend Mrs Munro, with whom she played bridge, had a daughter married to an American, and Mrs Munro had made three trips to the States in four years.

When the No. 13 bus came, Ann sat on the top deck at the front holding tightly to the chrome rail as the vehicle tore between the parked cars and the tattered trees. She closed her eyes and re-lived Gerald kissing her goodbye. The excitement was still there – the sensation in the pit of her stomach – though she couldn't be sure it wasn't panic at the thought of the scene to come. Mrs Walton had insisted on travelling up from Brighton to be introduced to Gerald before he departed. It was natural enough that she should want to meet him, though she could have chosen a more convenient time. She'd brought a large suitcase too, as if it was going to be a lengthy visit, although she knew Pamela was arriving the day after tomorrow and there wasn't room for them all; there weren't enough sheets or blankets. Ann had asked her mother to come ten days ago but Mrs Walton said she hadn't a spare moment. She had a busy agenda; there was a bridge evening arranged. The night before, Gerald's friends had given him a farewell party to which Mrs Walton wasn't invited. 'Don't be ridiculous,' snapped Gerald when Ann hinted that perhaps they should take Mrs Walton. 'You can't take your mother with you.' Mrs Walton's mouth trembled the way it always did when she was put out about something. 'I had thought,' she said, 'that we'd stay in and perhaps have a nice round of cards.' And Gerald said 'Tough' under his breath. But she heard. Ann worried all evening about her mother being upset, and Gerald drank too much.

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From the lecture given at Gresham College, London, by Mary Warnock, moral philosopher and Visiting Professor in Rhetoric

- 1 When Prince Charles, in his Reith lecture last year, rebuked biologists for drawing society into areas which "belonged to God and God alone", urging them to try if they wished to understand nature, but not to change it, he drew an impressive response from many confused and vaguely frightened people.
- 2 The new biotechnology seems to have opened up possibilities of changing the genes of plants and animals in a way which nature, or God as the Creator, never intended. Because such an appeal to the laws of nature is often used in arguments about genetically modified crops, transgenic animals, which may cross species boundaries, cloning, either reproductive or therapeutic, indeed about any aspect of what may seem like dramatic interventionism, it is worth revisiting the question of what we mean by nature, and how we value it, as a matter of some practical urgency.
- 3 What validity has the appeal to what is or is not natural? Prince Charles is no fool. He did not need his father or sister to point out, as they did, that human beings had been interfering with nature as long as they had sown crops or bred cattle. It cannot be intervention as such that is held to be against nature. Prince Charles allowed, as he had to, that agriculture itself was in one sense not "natural". But he contrasted producing genetically modified crops with "traditional methods of agriculture which have stood the test of time, because they are working with the grain of nature". What is, and is not, to "work with the grain of nature"? Which way does nature's grain lead us?
- 4 Our attitude towards nature is complex and has a history. The word has resonances strongly influenced both by the attitude of respectful observation of nature and that of the romantic searching of nature for our own proper dwelling, for where we feel we most deeply belong. Both attitudes derive from the change in sensibility that came about roughly at the time of the French Revolution, the end of the Age of Enlightenment. It would be impossible for us to free ourselves from such attitudes, if only because of the immense influence on us exercised by European and American art of the period. Nor do I suppose that many of us would want to be rid of them, since for many they afford the greatest pleasures in life.
- 5 But we are also subject to the influence of Darwinian biology, and the new way in which we have been taught to think of nature as one organism, whose "building blocks" are genes. We are confronted not only by science, which has discovered and will discover more about how these genes work, with one another and with their environment, but also by more sophisticated technology, needed both for the discoveries themselves and for any interventions which agriculturists or doctors may decide to undertake.
- 6 It is doubtless prudent to be fairly cautious in what interventions there should be. But a modest conservatism does not entail that nothing new should ever be tried. Nor do I believe that the resonance and emotive force contained in the word "nature" should have any power to influence the decisions of society as to what is or is not an acceptable intervention.
- 7 If it can be shown, as I believe it can, that the genetic modification of rice to make it more tolerant of adverse weather would make a great difference to the level of nutrition in countries where rice is the most important element of diet, then such modified rice should be made accessible on the grounds of common humanity. If it can be shown that nuclear-cell transplant (and thus the transplant of genes) can effectively restore someone's damaged liver, brain or spinal cord, the common humanitarian concerns which have always been the concerns of medicine should be permitted to develop the technology. That it is perhaps "against the grain of nature" is no more relevant an argument against it than it would be to claim that a replacement hip joint is against the grain of nature.

It's hard work trying to escape from the gooey corporate hug

Opinion

Naomi Klein, critical as ever towards superbrands

When I was 17, I worked after school at an Esprit clothing store in Montreal. It was a pleasant job, mostly involving folding cotton garments into little squares so sharp their corners could have taken your eye out. But for some reason corporate HQ didn't consider our T-shirt origami sufficiently profitable. One day our calm world was turned upside down by a regional supervisor who swooped in to indoctrinate us in the culture of the Esprit brand – and increase our productivity.

"Esprit", she told us, "is like a good friend." I was sceptical, and I let it be known. Sceptical, I quickly 11, is not considered an asset in the low-wage service sector. Two weeks later the supervisor fired me for being in possession of that most loathed workplace character trait: "bad attitude".

I guess that was one of my first lessons in why large multinational corporations are not "like a good friend", since good friends, while they may do many horrible and hurtful things, rarely 12 you.

So I was interested when, last month, advertising agency TBWA Chiat-Day rolled out the new "brand identity" for the north American retail giant Shoppers Drugmart. (Rebranding launches are, in corporate terms, like 13). It turns out that the chain is no longer "everything you want in a drugstore", ie a place where you can buy things you need, but

is now advertised as a "caring friend". This is a caring friend that takes earthly form in a chain of 800 drugstores, with a \$22m ad budget.

Shoppers' new slogan is "take care of yourself", selected, according to campaign creator Pat Pirisi, because it "echoes what a caring friend would say". Get ready for it to be said thousands of times a day by young cashiers as they hand you plastic bags filled with razors, dental floss and diet pills. "We believe this is a position Shoppers can own," Mr Pirisi explains.

Leaving aside the somewhat unsettling idea of "owning" friendship, asking clerks to adopt this particular phrase as their mantra seems 14 in this age of casual, insecure, underpaid McLabour. Service sector workers are often told to take care of themselves – since no one, least of all their mega-employers, is going to take care of them. Yet it's one of the ironies of our branded age that, as corporations become more remote by cutting lasting ties with us as employees, they are increasingly sidling up to us as 15.

It's not just Shoppers: Wal-Mart ads tell stories about clerks who, in a pinch, lend customers their wedding gowns, and Saturn's ads portray car dealers who offer counseling when customers lose their jobs. You see, according to the new marketing book, Values Added, modern marketers have to "make your brand a cause and your cause a brand".

Maybe I still have 16, but this collective corporate hug feels about as empty today as it did

when I was a 17-year-old about-to-be-unemployed T-shirt folder. Particularly when you stop to consider the cause of all this mass-produced warmth.

Explaining Shoppers' new brand identity to Canada's Financial Post, Mr Pirisi said that "in an age when people are becoming more and more 17 corporations – the World Trade Organisation protests will attest to that – and at a time when the health care system isn't what it used to be, we realised we had to send consumers a message about partnership."

Ever since large corporations such as Nike, Shell and Monsanto began facing increased scrutiny from civil society – mostly for putting short-term profits far ahead of environmental responsibility and job security – an industry has ballooned to help these companies 18. But it seems clear that many in the corporate world remain convinced that all they have is a "messaging problem" that can be neatly solved by settling on the right, socially minded brand identity.

As evidence of the state of corporate confusion, I am frequently asked to give presentations to individual corporations. Fearing that my words will end up in some gooey ad campaign, I always refuse. But this advice I can offer without reservation: nothing will change until corporations realise that they don't have a 19 problem. They have a reality problem.

The Washington Post

Dutch decision on euthanasia

Editorial

- 1 The Netherlands has become the first country to legalise active euthanasia. The decision by the Dutch upper house of parliament on April 10 goes much further than any previous legislation elsewhere.
- 2 Denmark had earlier authorised passive euthanasia (the withholding of treatment that can keep terminally ill patients alive). And in 1994 the American state of Oregon legalised medically assisted suicide.
- 3 France's National Ethical Committee came out against the decriminalisation of euthanasia a year ago, but made an exception, in extreme cases, for passive euthanasia. Depending on the circumstances, French law continues to regard euthanasia as either manslaughter, murder, or failure to assist a person in danger. At first sight, the issue of active euthanasia would not seem to be on the agenda.
- 4 However, the taboo that has been broken by a European neighbour forces us to ask ourselves certain questions. Deep down, we have all at some time thought about euthanasia, either after having had to face the ordeal of a dying loved one, or imagining ourselves in such a situation.
- 5 That probably explains why public opinion is broadly in favour of euthanasia, or at least certain forms of it. A poll carried out in September 1998 for the daily *Le Figaro* and the France 3 television channel couched the question as

follows: if you were suffering from an incurable disease or experiencing extreme suffering, would you wish to be helped to die? Of the interviewees, 79% said yes, and only 12% gave a categorical no. A smaller but still substantial majority (61%) believed that the law should allow doctors to help terminally ill patients to die if they ask them to. Only 35% disagreed.

- 6 Looked at from a personal angle, the freedom to die when one feels one has had enough, and "the right to a dignified death", to use the terminology of those who advocate decriminalisation, are defensible and even desirable.
- 7 But what if they are looked at from the point of view of human society as a whole? To accept or legalise the curtailment of lives because they have no future or are painful or unconscious is to admit, *a contrario*, that life is worth living only if it is beautiful, good and useful. That is precisely the message that our consumer society implicitly hammers home.
- 8 The Dutch decision was not the result of a new situation created by technical progress, as is the case in other bio-ethical issues such as in vitro fertilisation or genetic manipulation.
- 9 Euthanasia poses the same ethical problems as it ever did. The technical question is only a side issue: on the one hand, with modern hospital techniques, it is easier than it used to be to terminate a life, and on the other it is now possible to quell suffering by using palliative treatment.
- 10 That prompts the question: what is actually changing? A particular conception of humankind? That is something we should ponder long and hard.

Guardian Weekly

It's shocking, but I'm still scared of stage fright

1 WHAT'S REALLY
terrifying in the theatre
these days? I know that a
line of small print
5 reading: "This production
runs for four hours and
20 minutes, including an
interval of 10 minutes,"
can chill my blood pretty
10 effectively, but that's not
the kind of dread the
question is really
addressing.



THOMAS
SUTCLIFFE

2 I'm thinking, rather, about the kind of jolt of
15 fright that announces itself with an adrenal all-
points bulletin, and the question is prompted by
the appearance of the ghost of Hamlet's father in
John Caird's new production of *Hamlet* at the
National Theatre. This is a traditional ghost,
20 clammy with early decomposition. He appears,
quite strikingly, through a narrow slit in the
backdrop – but I doubt if his entrance made a
single follicle stir on the back of a single neck.
"Oh, here comes the ghost," you think, as blithely
25 unperturbed as the American family in the
Thurber story, who react to grisly spectral
manifestations with infuriating matter-of-
factness.

3 This is partly a problem of familiarity, it's
30 true. Pretty much everyone knows when the
ghost comes on and what he's going to do. But it
also marks the degree to which the territory of the
uncanny has now been colonised by the cinema.

4 Movies have largely taken over the task of
35 scaring us witless – that is, into some instinctive
region where the body starts worrying on its own
behalf. It was a trick that theatre used to have – if
we are to believe the stories of women
miscarrying at the entrance of the Furies in Greek
40 tragedy – but that it has largely lost to a medium
better equipped to bypass reason and get at the
body's unconscious levers of anxiety.

5 That doesn't mean that fright is impossible in
the theatre; but it has to be arrived at by
45 indirection if it is to work. Richard Eyre and
Jonathan Pryce once pulled off the trick of

making the ghost genuinely eerie by having its
speeches emanate from the actor's own mouth, as
if he was intermittently possessed by the spirit of
50 his dead father. But what made that work was the
audience's keen apprehension of the danger of
the performance. Our fear that risibility – only
one subversive giggle away – might actually
break through offered a powerful substitute for an
55 older dread, one that could be enlisted in the task
of shifting us to the edge of our seats.

6 A recent Royal Shakespeare Company
production of *Macbeth* made a commendable
stab at good old-fashioned frights with some
60 special effects – including sudden apparitions
through an apparently solid brick wall – but it
couldn't exploit cinema's great trump card when
it comes to making an audience feel threatened,
the director's absolute command over what we
65 can and cannot see. Tellingly, its most charged
moment was an unnervingly extended period of
absolute blackness at the opening of the play, a
theatrical shot at cinema's ability selectively to
blind us.

7 If theatre has lost some ground to cinema in
70 respect of fright, it has won some back
elsewhere. If you need to think of a
Shakespearean scene that can still exact a
visceral, rather than intellectual tribute, one
75 immediate candidate would be the blinding of
Gloucester, a scene that has lost none of its
power to appal and may actually have gained
some.

8 Cinema can do human cruelty, too, of course,
80 but it cannot quite match the theatre for the sense
of bodily presence, the way in which an actor's
squirming beneath the point transmits itself to all
those bodies in the stalls. It isn't entirely
surprising, then, that contemporary theatre should
85 have become increasingly fascinated by hand-
made atrocity, as opposed to supernatural forms.

9 If you want to be frightened in the theatre
these days – it is living, breathing human beings
that are going to do it to you, not visitors from
90 the underworld.

The Independent

Why no one just says no

Drugs may be bad for us, but banning them is not the answer

Nigella Lawson



1 A MONTH OR SO ago, following Julie Burchill's *Guardian* piece on her earlier, admirably unrepentant, extravagant cocaine use, columnists queued up to reveal the exciting details of their own lives in the druggy fast lane. Some had a wild old time, others no more than the odd toke, blow or snort which they now rather regret. But all were now sure that however good it might have felt at the time, drugs were as dangerous for them as they were for less sensitive self-observers.

2 True, they were usually hard put to explain precisely why feeling good was bad, but they were agreed that that was then and this is now. And now we – or rather, *they* – should just say no.

3 Of course they would say that, wouldn't they? The national press, of whatever political stripe, is far too responsible an institution to allow its columnists to advise readers to turn on and drop out. But at least they went half-way to the truth, which is: most drugs are fun and safe. (Bear with me: the qualifier is yet to come.) Last week on Radio 4's *Today* programme, the Deputy Drugs Tsar, Mike Trace, turned up to talk about the number of only-just teenagers using and even dealing in drugs.

4 Trace was worried. Teenage drug use is growing and the kids have to be persuaded that drugs are bad for them, that they're dangerous, that they should leave them alone. It is a valid point... at least if you're a grown-up Deputy Drugs Tsar or a newspaper columnist or a parent or anyone else who has blanked the memory of what it's like to be young and have nothing more pressing to worry about on a Saturday night than which club to go to and what top to wear.

5 The point is, teenagers aren't stupid. They are, like the rest of us, empiricists. They hear that drugs are bad for them, will enslave their

souls, sap their youthful spirit, deprave, even kill them. But that isn't what they see. For all Leah Betts' parents touring schools warning pupils of the dangers of Ecstasy, the teenagers know better. And I'm not being ironic: the evidence they have is precisely the opposite of that which their elders and betters present to them. Every weekend they see hundreds, thousands, hundreds of thousands, of their peers taking E and having a wonderful time. The chances of them ever coming across another Leah Betts are tiny: only some 60 users have died in Britain as a result of taking Ecstasy.

6 If he wants merely to save lives, Mr Betts would be better off telling children not to fly, not to eat nuts, not to get stung by wasps, not to play by the railtracks, not to do any of the things which kill more than the half dozen teenagers who each year die taking Ecstasy.

7 If teenagers go to a different sort of club – the sort where booze rather than drugs help the night along – there's more likelihood that they'll see the effects of the intoxicant of choice: punch-ups, loud-mouthed drunken oafishness, blood, vomit, the post-euphoric depression that inevitably follows drunkenness. And on that evidence why should they believe the Government official who tells them what they're doing is dangerous and illegal, but what the man with the black eye retching into the gutter is doing is legal and relatively safe?

8 The recent Euro 2000 was a case in point. The Dutch police at Eindhoven turned a blind eye to the dope peddlers. Thus, when Holland lost to Italy, the Dutch supporters were seen, on camera, stoned into inoffensive passivity. Cut to any English match and I can't help concluding that selling joints rather than cans of lager on the terraces might be a rather more effective way of combating hooliganism.

9 I have an equal distaste for all substances, legal or otherwise, that make the user out of control to the point of unsociability, but the facts are shocking. These are the known drug-related deaths in the UK, 1990: tobacco, 110,000; alcohol, 30,000; volatile substances, 112; morphine, 91; methadone, 84; heroin, 62; barbiturate type, 7; anti-depressants, 4; cocaine, 4; pethidine, 3; MDMA (Ecstasy), 3;

amphetamine type, 2; hallucinogens, 0; LSD, 0; psilocibin, 0; cannabis, 0.

10 If the figures above are right, then the case against drugs is a difficult one. Those of us with children see beyond the figures to our little loved ones in later years being zonked out at best, and annihilating themselves at worst. It's hard not to have that picture, and I would assume that most of us know enough people who have more or less destroyed themselves with drugs. But still, despite my parental fears and susceptibility to scare stories, I feel that drug use doesn't make a junkie any more than getting drunk makes an alcoholic.

11 I worry more that there are so many children who have lives so utterly lacking in hope or promise that the junkie way doesn't seem such a bad idea. It's easy for middle-class parents (and there is no shortage of middle-class children on drugs) to worry over

what a mess their offspring are making of their lives, how they're squandering their potential, but there is a whole class, or underclass, out there who are, fairly understandably, trying to block out the fact that they have no chances, no recognised potential.

12 But whatever one feels about alcohol or any other drug, it appears to be the case that the desire for intoxication is innate in humans. Any primitive society investigated by anthropologists depicts peoples who either danced themselves into whirling states of frenzy or who ate berries calculated to induce hallucinations (or both). Both my children, from the age when they were barely stable, used to twirl themselves around until they fell down helplessly dizzy. I agree, just because something is innate doesn't make it good, but whatever, prohibition can never be the answer.

The Observer

Tekst 9

Search for long-term reservoir of Ebola begins

Scientists are flying out to equatorial Africa to sample birds in an attempt to identify the mysterious reservoir of the Ebola virus, which has caused repeated fatal outbreaks in the region.

The most recent, in the Republic of Congo, was first detected on 4 January. On Friday, health minister official Joseph Mboussa, said the death toll had risen to 106, out of a total of 120 cases.

The haemorrhagic fever can kill up to 90 per cent of its victims. In Congo, people are thought to have contracted the virus through contact with infected gorilla meat.

But scientists do not know the identity of the long-term reservoir of the disease, from which the gorillas caught the disease. "And as long as we haven't established the reservoir of the Ebola virus, it's an illusion to think of an appropriate cure," warned William Karesh, of the US Wildlife Conservation Society recently.

Structural similarities

Birds were implicated as a possible host to the deadly virus by David Sanders and Scott Jeffers at Purdue University, Indiana and Anthony Sanchez, at the US Centers of Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia, who showed in December that there are strong structural similarities between Ebola and some bird retroviruses.

"The biochemistry of entry of Ebola [into a cell] is really similar to bird retroviruses. It is clear that they have a common ancestor," Sanders told **New Scientist**. "We suggest the possibility that the current natural reservoir is

a bird host – it's consistent with Ebola's epidemiology."

The central African rift valley separates the ranges of bird species into distinct western and eastern groupings. Ebola outbreaks occur in central and western Africa but not in the east – consistent with being confined to the bird populations on one side of the rift valley. Sanders says gorillas or other primates cannot be the long-term reservoir of Ebola because they die too quickly, meaning the virus would die out too.

Gloves and masks

Now Townsend Peterson, an ornithologist at the University of Kansas, Nate Rice at Purdue, and colleagues are flying out to Equatorial Guinea, with all arriving by the end of March.

In addition to ecological research projects, they will be collecting samples of liver and spleen tissue from about 100 bird species. The researchers will be protected by gloves and masks.

Peterson says his previous work tracking the ecology of outbreaks of filoviruses – the group to which Ebola belongs – suggested that bats were a more likely reservoir. But Sander's study means that "birds certainly merit examination", he says.

The samples will be sent to Sanchez, a molecular virologist at the CDC, who will test for the viral proteins that identify Ebola. "There is this link with avian retroviruses," he told **New Scientist**: "It's a long shot – but we'll see what happens."

Shaoni Bhattacharya in the *New Scientist*

TALKING BOOKS



◇ **Brighton Rock** by Graham Greene dramatised by Ken Whitmore

The sorry tale of Pinkie — teetotal, razor-toting teenage mobster hampered by a twisted Catholic conscience and a hint of homosexuality — and Rose, the girl who loves him with blind devotion, is played out against the full might of BBC special sound-effects. The archives are raided for suitable 1930s popular songs and church music and, whenever the action moves to the Brighton seafront, the characters find themselves competing with vendors bawling their wares (“Brighton rock!” “Razors!”). The multi-layered soundtrack (complete with swirly flashbacks and dream-like repetitions) often makes it difficult to work out what is going on, as Pinky and his gang try to cover up the murder of a journalist and keep control of Brighton’s thriving extortion rackets. The strengths of Greene’s novel (the raffish atmosphere, the characters tormented and eventually destroyed by their own evil, the twists and shocks of the plot) are indestructible, however, and the actors in this production make a fine fist of turning the dialogue into memorable characters (BBC Radio Collection, £8.99, 2 hrs 15mins). **KR**

Einde