

Calling Societies!

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The yesteryears of LSE unveiled...
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AU (sexual) Fantasy League extended and updated!

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17 November 2009

Newspaper of the
London School of Economics
Students' Union
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The Beaver

Davies: "public spending... dire"



Photo: Ben Phillips

Phyllis Lui
Sam Tempest Keeping

LSE Director Howard Davies spoke at last Thursday's Union General Meeting (UGM), where the LSESU's motion for an amendment to the Codes of Practice was also passed.

Davies began by giving a report about the School, how it is aiming for more "direct interaction" between students and heads of services such as LSE Chief Information Officer Jean Sykes. Furthermore, he spoke about the pilot course LSE100 which he hopes will get students to "think about big issues, why there is so much inequality in the world...why there are financial crises".

"Public spending environment in this country is, in a word, dire," Davies stated, "the government has got the biggest deficit it's ever seen, public spending is going to be cut everywhere...[there is] no room for public spending. It is an unfortunate background against which they have launched the fees review."

Davies further explained that there have been significant cuts in funding for research. Commenting on the panel that's recently been launched by the government regarding fees review, Davies felt that it was a "slightly curious composition of a

team" and added that it was "not a great picture looking ahead".

"I hope you look after it better," Davies stated as he noted the return of the penguin.

He also believed that in terms of career prospects for graduates: "the position has definitely improved and not just in the financial sector".

Davies commented on his personal contribution - bike seats covers - and hoped it would encourage more people to cycle, as Davies himself cycles everywhere.

The first question from the audience concerned student satisfaction and why it was so low. Davies replied that it was due to two reasons: "There is one technical reason, it would appear that we have a lower proportion of LSE students filling in the form than most other universities".

He went on to emphasise changes that have been put in place by the school, as recommended by the Teaching Task Force, such as measures to restrict masters class sizes on which they "spent quite a lot of money". These were important as primarily issues with "teaching bring down satisfaction".

However, LSESU General Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher refuted Davies' claim regarding student satisfaction results being linked to response rates, believing it

to be "untrue". Fisher pointed out that the response rate at LSE in 2008 was 56 per cent, whilst this year's was 58 per cent, yet student satisfaction dropped. He also noted that the rate is slightly lower than the national average of 62 per cent. He further highlighted the fact that Cambridge had the third lowest response rate, but also the highest satisfaction thereby disproving Davies' statement of the correlation between response rate and overall satisfaction.

Davies was asked to explicitly state his position on fees in light of the review, whether he thought they should rise or be abolished: "No I don't think it's [explicitly stating a position] sensible. There are essentially four variables, fee, person, interest rate and funding and we need to look at all of these things together...we need to try and get more money into the School."

He continued: "There is fundamental unfairness in the School, where overseas students are subsidising domestic students, I personally feel uncomfortable about that. We need to know what the options are in terms of public spending...at this point, we shouldn't advocate one particular option."

One student accused the LSE of being run like a business, as students have no say where the profit goes. Davies did not believe that to be the case.



LSE expands in Southwark

Phyllis Lui

LSE is currently considering a new hall of residence for students at Great Suffolk Street.

The potential hall, also known as Moonraker Place, will have 671 rooms, 127 of which are self-contained studios, as well as a gym, restaurant, common room and a park. Southwark Council gave planning permission to Q Developments, the developer behind the scheme, 2 weeks ago.

LSE Director of Finances and Facilities Andy Farrell told The Beaver that "Southwark Council have given planning permission subject to LSE or a university of similar standing (a short list) operating it".

The environmentally sustainable development was originally designed by Philip Thornton of Conran & Partners, intended for another institution. However, Farrell commented that it is "one of several that LSE is considering".

According to the report on a community website, the planning committee also heard from councillor Adele Morris, who spoke on behalf of other objectors to the scheme. Morris believed the new scheme to be "one heck of an increase" and that students would have to "walk through

nearby housing estates and other quiet residential areas in order to reach local tube stations".

UNITE, a company that specialises in student accommodation, is also building a 14-storey tower further up Great Suffolk Street.

"The Finance and General Purposes Committee (FGPC) recently endorsed a proposal to recommend to Council that we expand our residential stock to enable us to offer all first year postgraduates a room guarantee. We already offer a guarantee to first year undergraduates, students with relevant disabilities and general course students," Farrell commented.

LSESU Residences Officer Andrew Wright said: "Whilst the design looks great, we have to be careful not to overlook the practicalities of the project in terms of what is best for students, not simply constructing a fantastic building with inappropriate design. All of this sounds fantastic on paper, but the project will only be viable from the Students' Union's perspective if accommodation can be offered at a price affordable to students and not at a premium."

"The LSE is continuing analysis, evaluation and negotiation on this and other sites. Clearly, it will only be viable if it enables us to offer it to students at a rent they can afford. We hope it will," stated Farrell.

"The focus of your question is completely wrong. Firstly, we don't treat this place like a business, the objective is education and not profit," Davies shot back. "Secondly, students are on every decision-making body of this School...students are involved with every aspect of governance."

Further, the examples the student used regarding the art installations on campus that were recently put up riled Davies: "We deliberately looked for external funding and we had an extremely generous donor for Bluerain, none of that has been funded by students, you ought to be grateful that alumni are willing to put their hands in their pockets...and if they heard that, they might well stop that."

A student asked how much Davies' wages were, and whether he took a pay cut. Davies replied that he did, but not to make that particular student feel better but rather as he felt that the increase for academic and university staff nationally was impossible to justify in last year's circumstances. Therefore, he did not take the 8 per cent increase that was in his contract as he felt it was "unreasonable".

Davies responded to a question about whether fees for overseas students were higher than at other universities saying that "in our view, they are not out of line,

we do have rather higher costs here, in part because, we like to keep our international faculty at the top of their field, we pay them quite a lot, higher than average".

Nik Adhia, President of High Holborn Hall Committee, pointed out that fees at the halls have been increased. Davies stated that "residences have to break even, we are not allowed to subsidise residences from tuition fees" and beyond the renewal of energy contracts, there was also an increase of lower paid staff, following the LSESU campaign, which had implications for rent and "therefore increased fees at residences".

Questions regarding exam scripts, room bookings, re-shuffle of staff at Rosebery Hall, computer lab usage in peak hour as well as socially responsible investment policy were also addressed to Davies.

The motion regarding governance reform for the LSESU was also passed. There were questions regarding the exact procedures of the reform. LSESU Treasurer George Wetz, proposer of the motion, felt that "by going through the whole process, we can make [the Constitution] into a simple accessible document...we won't have these contradictions and it will allow everyone to be engaged with the SU a lot more."

Collective

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Collective Chair
Danielle Brown

Editorial Board

Executive Editor
Shibani Mahtani
editor@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Managing Editor
Sanjiv Nanwani
managing@thebeaveronline.co.uk

News Editors
Phyllis Lui
Sam Tempest Keeping
news@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Comment Editor
Sachin Patel
comment@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Features Editors
Madeeha Ansari
Ossie Fikret
features@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Social Editor
Marion Koob
social@thebeaveronline.co.uk

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Photo Editor
Cherie Leung
photo@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Sports Editors
Alice Pelton
Ollie Townsend
sports@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Part B Editors
Graeme Birrell
Calum Young
partb@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Design Editor
Natasha Bannister
design@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Web Editor
Louisa Evans
web@thebeaveronline.co.uk

General Manager
Nicolas Oudin
info@thebeaveronline.co.uk

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Contact The Beaver
info@thebeaveronline.co.uk
0207 955 6705

East Building
LSE Students' Union
London WC2A 2AE

LSE events Highlights of this week's public lectures and talks

Obama and the Arabs: the historical context
Dr Eugene Rogan
Tonight, HKT, 1830-2000

The Future of Christianity
Diarmaid MacCulloch
Wednesday, HKT, 1830-2000

Are Europeans Heading Toward the Same Economy?
Professor Yann Algan
Wednesday, NT, 1830-2000

The Road to Copenhagen: a global deal on climate change
Ed Miliband
Thursday, OT, 1830-2000

A Lecture by Jens Stoltenberg, Prime Minister of Norway
Jens Stoltenberg
Friday, Venue TBA, 1400-1500 (Ticketed)

In Conversation with Amartya Sen
Professor Amartya Sen, Professor Richard Sennett
Friday, OT, 1700-1800 (Ticketed)

Can we eliminate nuclear weapons?
Ambassador Richard Burt, Kate Hudson, Professor Mary Kaldor, HM Queen Noor
Friday, Venue TBA, 1830-2000 (Ticketed)

Positions of the week LSE Careers Service's pick of the best jobs

Urban Inclusion Co
Outreach and Research Officer

New Philanthropy Capital
Digital Media Intern

Focus Features
Part-time International Distribution Internship

The Nucleus Group
Health Economist

Search for Common Ground
Internship, Africa Program

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
Junior Policy Analyst

Hang Lung Properties Ltd
Management Trainee

Buffalo Fundraising Consultants
Trainee Campaign Assistant

Educa London
Economics Tutors

Unibet
Part-time In-Play Trader

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"Dismal" common room sparks petition

Shibani Mahtani

Last week, the Philosophy department urged students to sign a petition demanding an upgrade of their departmental common room.

This email, sent by the Philosophy Departmental Manager, Departmental Tutor and the Director of Graduate Studies, highlighted that the "facilities in the fourth floor common room are unsatisfactory" and mentioned that this is "a matter for the School's Estate Division", rather than an issue within the purview of the department.

Alex Voorhoeve, Departmental Tutor, further explained: "The student common room, which is used by both undergraduates and masters students, is in a dismal state. The furniture is thrown together at random, and many pieces are in poor condition. This makes the room virtually unusable. The common room is a place where students meet and talk to their peers. For this reason the room should have the character of a living room, a place where one likes to spend time."

The petition can be found on the Philosophy departmental website, and encourages student comments on possible improvements.

Speaking to The Beaver, Andy Farrell, Director of Finance and Facilities, admitted: "There is no real means of inspecting common rooms and the processes are not as good as they should be."

However, he also added that the Estates Division and the Space Management Group, chaired by George Gaskell, Pro-Director for Planning and Resources, "looks at requirements as a whole, not individual requests and petitions." The

Space Management Group, according to Farrell, is responsible for allocation of space at the School and would deal with requests such as the renovation and building of new common rooms.

Other departments, such as the Law and Management departments, have had their common rooms moved and they are yet to be replaced. The Law department common room was previously located in the Old Building, whilst the Philosophy department common room was previously located in the G Building (20 Kingsway).

Nik Adhia, a 2nd-year Law student, said: "I did not even know it existed. Students are not told about these things in details or at all in most cases." 3rd-year Management student Andreas Demetri added: "efforts have been made to get one back, but still don't have any luck!"

Farrell acknowledged that the Law department does not have a common room, but believed that the study and meeting facilities available to law students, especially PhD students, are much better than those available for other departments.

Other departments, even with common rooms, still find these under-utilised. 3rd-year History student Estelle Cooch said: "I have never used the History department common room, to be honest I'm not even sure where it is and I have no idea what's in it. At my college we had amazing common rooms that everyone used for socialising and for work. If LSE had common rooms that enabled students to discuss work or presentations, but also had computers and key books that could be kept in there permanently I would definitely use them."

PhD students have similar concerns, and the PhD steering committee has been pushing for a PhD common room since last year.



Photo: Cherie Leung

Some common rooms, such as the International Relations department common room, have recently been renovated with ample furniture and study spaces. However, the promotion of these facilities is still a problem.

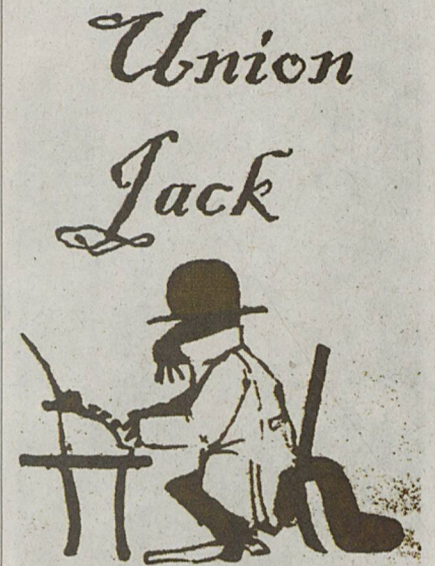
2nd year International Relations student Sulaiman Hakemy said: "The IR common room is a great potential space for students in the department to socialise. They just upgraded the furniture and the room can easily fit 40-50 people (the size of one undergrad year in IR). The problem is that the department does not actively promote socialisation among IR students beyond one departmental party a year. I'm sure half of the IR undergrads for that reason don't even know the common

room exists."

Farrell said that the Space Management Group is aspiring to put in place a more standard policy on the allocation of resources when it comes to departmental common rooms, but added that it: "won't necessarily be the case that all departments want or even merits a common room".

Farrell also mentioned that the priorities of the Estates Department are primarily to accommodate the increase in students, which he believes has been "done reasonably well", create new classrooms and facilities for LSE100, accommodate the expansion in staff and improve facilities for research students.

Union Jack UGM sketch



Jack is the Beaver's anonymous mole at the Union General Meeting, every Thursday at 1pm

Where once stood Dilwyn, now stood Davies.

An obelisk of a man, upright, uncompromising and, all importantly, unscathed by the financial crisis. Few people can hand back £5,000 of their pay cheque and still dress so wonderfully.

Jack was left impressed by the way H-Dizzle took to the stage with the confidence and bravado of a grime MC at 'Straight Out Of Bethnal'. Each time he managed to hoist a loss maker by their own petard Jack was reminded of the first time he watched a grainy version of 'Lord of the Mics' on Youtube. His posture seemed to convey the same message as the Wu-Tang classic: 'Protect Your Neck'.

However, as any aficionado of underground rhyme contests knows, no man is infallible. As subjects and ideas become more intrinsically complex so does the difficulty of effective articulation and execution. To quote the character Jimmy 'B-Rabbit' Smith after vanquishing Ward in a rap battle during the movie '8 Mile': "That 'leave it to the Beaver' line almost killed me."

The proverbial "Beaver" for LSE's 'Old Dirty Bastard' turned out to be the perennial issue of student satisfaction. Jack listened attentively as LSE-ODB harked on about "response rates" and "technical issues" being responsible for the school's poor performance in the National Student Survey. But as Mos Def pointedly notes about politics in his magnum opus 'Mathematics': "Its a numbers game but shit don't add up somehow."

Something else which didn't add up was the reasoning and the ratifying of the governance reform. Democratic-Fissure's mouth piece Wetz Blanket draped himself over the stage stressing the need for more time to debate serious issues. Yet as the flow of questions trickled out, and time ticked away, Fissure began to tremble like Muhammad Ali after six fags and a Redbull on an empty stomach, his dreams of full dictatorial control teetering on the edge of disaster. Borrowing from the track 'Break Ups to Make Ups' by Method Man: "Big girls they don't cry, but they damn sure lie."

Last minute succor came as a man, no doubt a plant, dressed like a member of Goldie Looking Chain demanded that this petty squabbling be put to bed and the 'Fissure Reform' passed, via a move to vote. It promptly did. Jack's feelings at this point were conveniently captured in these lyrics from the track 'Honest Expression': "These lames run around like mice in a maze, tryin' to get up on cheese, its just a rat race."

Now we enter a new era, Jack's privileged position as ridiculer in chief will no doubt be diluted by each and every individual at the school being able to laugh at the idiocy of our student politicians as they neglect their duties and take to the streets to campaign for your votes in referendum. So everyday students, now "you can feel how we feel, to walk around town to lookin down from those tall heels" Remember "who needs fame or fortune, when you get the same love that the fame is snortin." And beware a "future so afraid of yours that you strayed from the course and you came up short." - A paraphrasing of 'Puppets' by Atmosphere.

Delay in budgets causes disarray

Eunice Ng

Societies will not know their full budgets until Week 9, despite previous promises that they would know by Week 6.

For the first time, societies were guaranteed forty percent of their budget from last year. In June, societies were sent an email from LSESU Societies' Officer Chris Westgarth, explaining the new budget approval process.

The plan was as follows: following the deadline for the budget applications in Week 2, societies would know their provisional budgets by Week 3. By Week 4, societies would know their full budget, though they would only be allocated their budgets by Week 6, which would then still be subject to UGM approval in Week 9.

So far, only the first step has taken place. As far as societies know, they are only certain that they have forty percent of their budget from last year.

Treasurers are also able to claim expenses back from their budget, but few have tried to do so.

Speaking to The Beaver, Westgarth explained that the delay is due to the fact that such an ambitious plan logistically could not be carried out due to the large number of societies and the staggered pace with which they societies set themselves up.

"The fact remains that with society AGMs spreading themselves out over the first couple of weeks, it became impossible to get all the budgets in and then allocated swiftly enough," Westgarth stated. "With over 160 societies all requesting vastly larger amounts of money than the Union can afford to allocate, it inevitably takes some time to sift through them all giving them the proper attention that they require."

LSESU Treasurer George Wetz agreed: "Most societies' provisional budgets will be approved [in week 7]. They can't be confirmed until the UGM has looked favourably upon them on Thursday of Week 9. This has been perennial routine process for societies, which proves that the system is totally bonkers."

The LSE Athletics Union received no instructions about their budget approval process. Similar to societies, it received forty percent of last year's budget, which this year totaled over £70,000. Even so, because the budget allocation is based on proposals submitted last year, present allocations do not take into account of the

AU's enlarged membership, and some teams still cannot cover costs.

A late budget approval process means that teams cannot cope with emergencies. One such emergency is being experienced by the Basketball Club, which primarily spends on rent for an external sports hall, and coaching for its first team. As per establish guidelines, the club's provisional budget was based on figures from last year. In Week 2, just before training, Alex Christou, captain of the Men's Basketball Second team, discovered that the sports hall where the team practices had doubled its hourly rate. With no time to look for another hall, and without the funds to book more sessions, the team's bookings for one year shrunk into one term.

As a result, the basketball team will not be able to have any practices next

term, only matches. Basketball members have received no subsidies for their kits. The second team cannot afford a coach. Christou says he has no guarantee of having their transport cost being reimbursed: "The AU president told us that we may or may not be reimbursed, but we should keep our train tickets just in case."

While he acknowledged the lack of organisation, Christou, stated that the timing of the budget approval was the main problem, and that 40 per cent of the budget was not enough to cover first term expenses for nearly six weeks.

"By week 6, about 90 per cent of the budget is needed, with sports halls needing payment in advance, and the coach for the first team, and for the first team's sports kit," Christou explained, "The first team's season is nearly over, and the

budget was only just approved at the AU captains' meeting last week."

Wetz denied involvement with the AU procedure, which starts off with nearly £70,000 of money allocated to them by the LSESU. He mentioned that after budgets were approved, societies could still apply for extra funding from a newly-established projects budget. He also acknowledged that the current system for societies had to be improved.

"Our hands are tied by our governing documents, so we must reform," Wetz said, "We want input from all societies so that the Union can get the funding system spot on. If we don't hear from those that have to use the current system, then the chance of succeeding diminishes."



Hauled from the Hall: The LSE Men's Basketball team (above) has been left without a place to train after its normal practice facility doubled their fees. Their experience has added to calls for reform of the Unions governance system.

Students clean up Parliament



Sam Tempest Keeping

LSE students descended on Parliament this Wednesday to campaign against the proposed government review of tuition fees.

Reports claim that roughly four LSE students, excluding members of the Students' Union executive, attended the protest.

The protest was called by the National Union of Students (NUS) after the government announced on Monday that they would be launching the review. Crucially, however, it also stated that the results would not be published before the general election.

A facebook group created by the LSESU on Tuesday last week stated that "The aim of tomorrow's action is to put pressure on MPs to come clean about their position on fees and the future of higher

education ahead of the 2010 General Election."

Speaking on parliament square Susan Nash, NUS Vice President, Society and Citizenship, said "We are here lobbying MPs and asking them to come clean on their positions on fees."

"We have a general election round the corner and students and the general public have a right to know the party's positions before they vote at the ballot box."

Protesters joined in on chants such as "Come clean on student debt, don't do something you'll regret" and "Vote with us, or you're out".

When asked about why she had attended the protest, first year Economic History student Charlene Keen explained "a lot of people are interested and it seems like a good cause so I just wanted to help out."

Regarding the poor turnout from LSE Emma Clewer, a first year Sociology student, commented "Maybe students don't think they can change anything."

LSESU General Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher was happy with how the action turned out. He stated: "At short notice, the NUS managed to organise a very effective action that has put pressure on MPs to come clean on fees."

"Three of the four MPs who represent LSE Halls and significant numbers of LSE students in their constituencies came down with one day's notice to talk to students from the School and myself, and two of them, Frank Dobson and Simon Hughes, signed the NUS pledge not to support a rise in student fees, and to consider an alternative funding system."

Fisher warned of the grave consequences that could result from a rise in fees.

"Higher fees will further blunt access to higher education and replicate inequality; it is up to students to fight to ensure a fairer funding system".



Photos: Chris John

Casual staff "incorrectly paid"

Sam Tempest Keeping

Changes to the way the Students' Union (SU) processes its wages have led to chaos amongst student members of staff.

Students were informed that their wages for this month were due to be paid on the 6th November. While some members received their payments on time and in full, many did not.

"I checked my account on Friday and nothing was there. My rent was due and I had to borrow money off my friends to cover it," said one staff member who wished to remain anonymous.

After staff members complained to the sabbatical officers, payments were finally processed manually. However many of the staff received well below the amount they were due.

A statement released by the SU to student staff on November 12th read "Last month, we changed the wage processing ahead of our move to outsource our payroll. Although there were no issues with payroll last month, there appear to have been a number of student staff affected by an error made in processing this month."

Contrary to the statement, some staff have informed the Beaver that they were indeed mistakes made last month also.

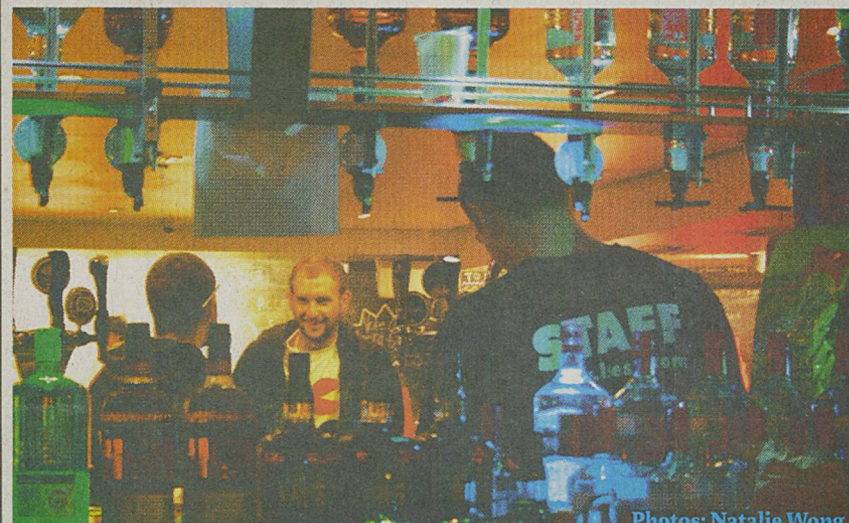
Another student staff member who cannot be named due to Media Group protocol said: "I'm still owed money from work I carried out over summer school."

LSESU General Secretary Aled Fisher said: "Some staff in the commercial team were incorrectly paid, and paid late (all of our staff in the Gym, Help Desk, and Advice and Counselling Centre were not affected). We apologise profusely for this oversight and have now sorted the issue. Action has been taken within the commercial management team to ensure this will never happen again."

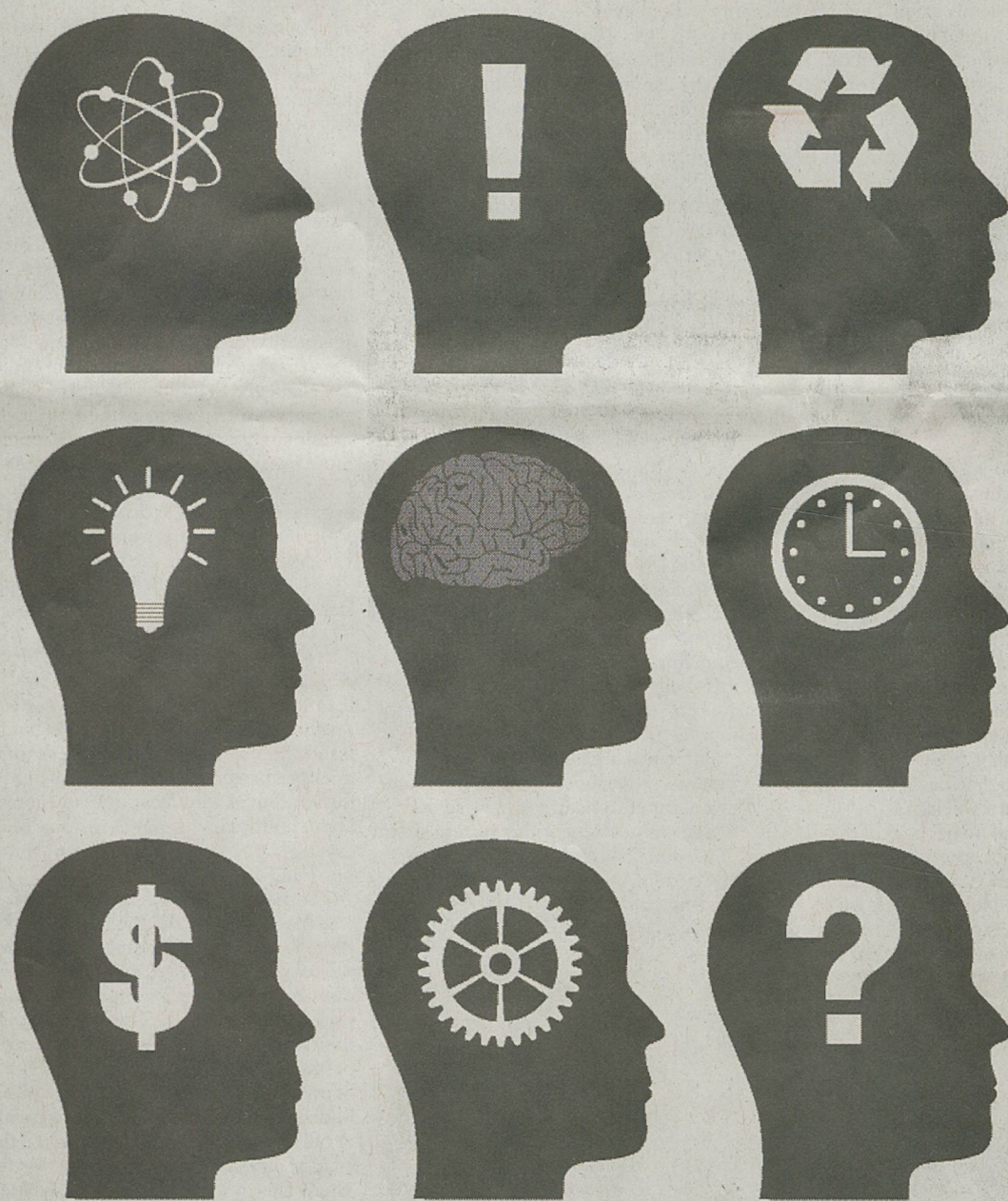
"Our casual staff are the best paid in London Students' Unions and we are extremely proud of the hard work they do. This is why we have set up the first ever Casual Staff Forum in the Students' Union to ensure that their views and issues are fed into every aspect of our operations".

The statement from the SU echoed Fisher's sentiment, and added: "We sincerely apologise for this error which led to a number of staff being paid incorrectly and we are working to rectify errors with individual members of staff."

"The Commercial Management Team will be able to tell you the breakdown of the hours that have now been processed for you and if your payment is not in your bank account by Friday Noon, please escalate this to us immediately."



Photos: Natalie Wong



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News In Brief

Sam Tempest Keeping

Will Hutton

Journalist and academic Will Hutton has claimed that Britain should place its future its economic future in the hands of entrepreneurs and scientists.

During his talk "Them and Us: How capitalism without fairness is capitalism without a future" at the LSE last week Hutton blamed the "shadow banking system" that was allowed to develop by Margaret Thatcher as the reason for the country's current economic woes. He cited Rolls Royce as an example of the type of company which should be nurtured by the government.

He postulated that a clear conception of fairness is a prerequisite for this to happen. His own definition, the explanation for which can be found in his upcoming book, was "due desert for discretionary effort." Such a concept needs to become one of the core values of this country he said.

Otherwise disincentives will lead talented entrepreneurs to "simply fuck off to the city" and perpetuate the status quo, which could have disastrous consequences for the global community.



Photo: Duncan McKenna



PPPPut It Down

An attempt to steal the recently reinstated penguin has been foiled.

The incident happened early Saturday morning while the launch of 'Common People', the LSESU's new club night, was taking place. Two students and members of security on duty at the SU came across two thieves trying to prise the statue from its concrete base. Thankfully they managed to scare them off before they could be successful.

The original penguin, part of a donation of public art from a Canadian alumnus in 2006, was stolen in March last year. The aftermath saw an outpouring of grief from students and staff alike.

While the original penguin has never been recovered or its assailants identified, rumours abound that it was the work of students from LSE's arch rivals Kings College London.

And the winner is: Cancellation



Photo: Beaver Archive

Sam Tempest Keeping

The controversial Miss LSE event will not be taking place this year.

When asked about the reasons for the cancellation, no one from the company responsible for its organisation, 121 Entertainment, was available for comment.

Last year the event sparked a national debate over beauty pageants and their place in society. This was after it was greeted by protests from students who claim beauty pageants of this kind represents misogynistic values.

LSESU Women's officer Jessie Robinson welcomed news of the cancellation saying: "I'm sure that the success of previous feminist protests will have played a part in discouraging this event from recurring."

"As women we are constantly bombarded with images of what we should look like. Women smiling down at us from Billboards, magazines, music videos, all brainwashing us with unachievable images of female 'perfection'. This should not be perpetuated in a university environment where we expect to be judged on intelligence and hard work alone."

Reigning Miss LSE Keelin Gavahan was less happy. She said: "It's a shame because, most importantly, the event was run for charity. The event was a great night out for those that went and participated, but they are holding a Miss University of London in February, where a girl from LSE will probably take part, and hopefully people will go and support the good cause."

Those involved in organising Miss LSE are yet to disclose the amount of its proceeds that were donated to charity. The event was advertised as being in aid of Cancer Research UK. When asked about this issue nobody from 121 was available for comment.

Robinson added that "unfortunately the Miss University GB final will still be taking place in March, and we will need to continue campaigning against such pageants."

Miss University GB is another beauty pageant which has charitable motivations. It has been organised by the Joshua Foundation, a charity which aims to "provide holidays and experiences for children and their families, where the child is diagnosed with terminal cancer".

>> Left: Winner of Miss LSE 2008 Keelin Gavahan

Your hall, your call

Sanjiv Nanwani

LSE Students' Union officials last week visited residents of all LSE halls of residence as part of their "Your Hall - Your Call!" consultation exercise. The exercise served as a means of gathering feedback and opinions on a wide range of issues, including the use of hall social spaces, as well as the governance of hall committees.

Officials hailed the tour as a "great success" after they spoke with more than 150 students across 10 halls of residence. "This [project] is much larger than ever previously attempted," noted LSESU Residences Officer Andrew Wright.

Wright, who spearheaded the effort alongside LSESU Education and Welfare Officer Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang and LSESU General Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher, explained that a number of other issues were also discussed, including "UGM improvement, teaching, [and] the experience of halls and the arrivals/allocation process."

University of London intercollegiate halls of residences were not included in the recent exercise, but plans are afoot for a similar exercise to be launched for them before the end of Michaelmas Term. "The only reason these have not been covered during this week's process was down to timing - visiting 10 halls in a week is a massive undertaking alongside the many other activities taking place. We have already made increased strides towards engaging with intercollegiate residents through working with the Accommodation Office and University of London Halls Service where we have not before," said Wright.

Turnout at the various sessions varied greatly across the residences, but this was

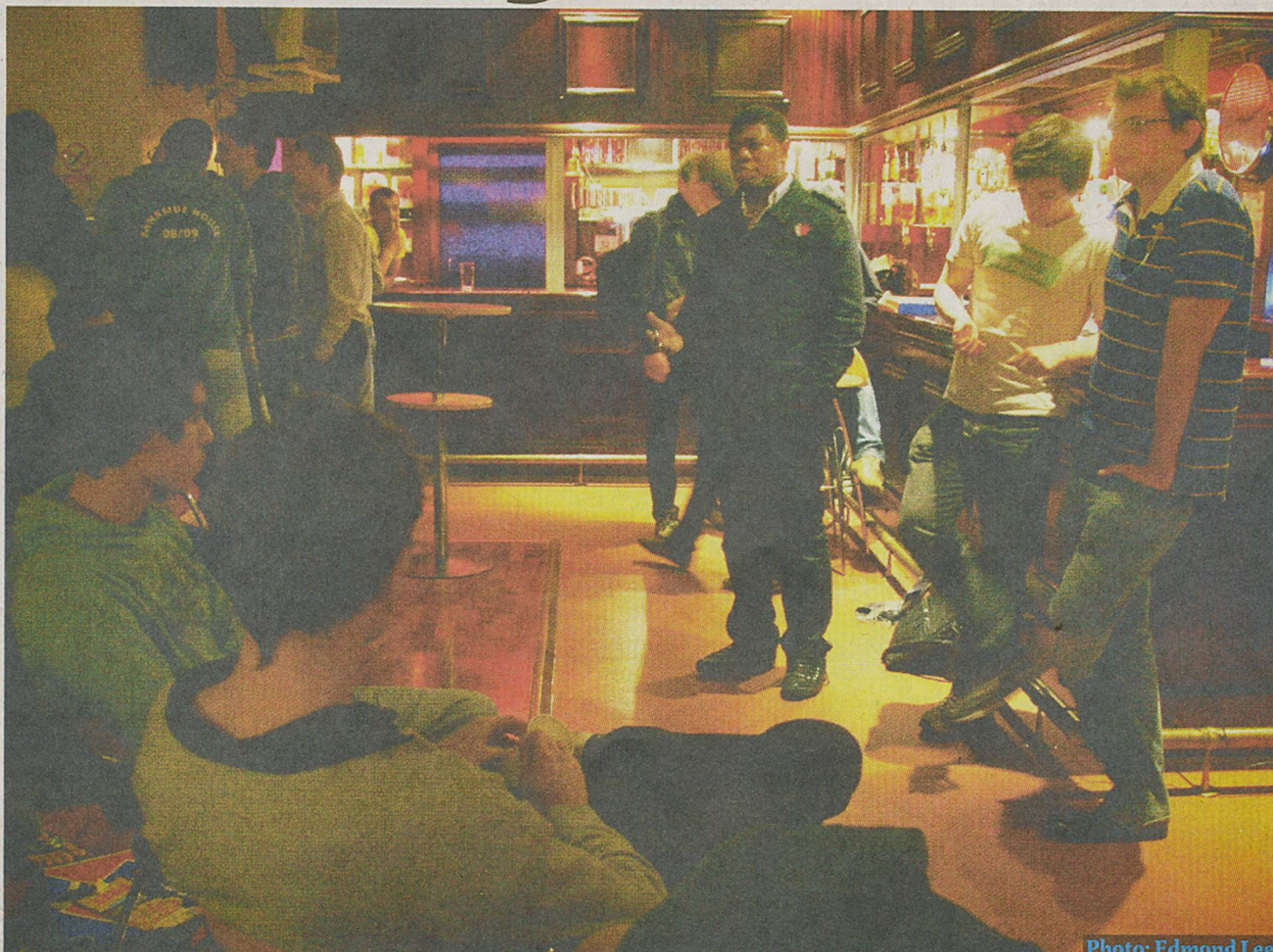


Photo: Edmond Lee

attributed to extenuating circumstances, such as "the day of the week, timetables, [and] campus events" according to Wright. However he stressed that discussions were equally constructive regardless of the turnout by residents.

>> Above: The team visits Bankside Halls

Comments made by residents spanned a wide range of issues, including queries about perceived inconsisten-

cies in hall pamphlets, the existence of non-alcoholic social events in residences, the means of allocating tickets for public lectures, and the availability of kitchens for use by students. Students also voiced complaints against apparent "spamming"

by societies, and proposed suggestions on how societies could improve communication with their members, for example through the use of the Twitter micro-blogging service.

Student then enquired about governance structures within the Union, questioning the absence of a Men's Officer from the Union Executive Committee. Responding, Akpan-Inwang said that "women are paid, on average, 17% less than men", implying that they needed more protection and an additional voice that defended their interests. However, Fisher said that "we don't know why some things are the way they are, they just are," and that the upcoming Union governance review provided an opportunity for students to review their position on this issue.

Fisher spoke about the need to improve inclusiveness and participation within the Union, noting that a number of students were put off from standing for elections into Union positions due to their nationality. "Singaporean students are literally spied upon by their embassy," he quipped.

"We're breaking down the comments and suggestions made from each hall into relevant areas to take forward. As with other consultations on the governance review which have already been undertaken, these results will feed into ideas also. Some ideas can be implemented very quickly, whilst others will take longer to be realised (such as those associated with Orientation) but will nonetheless be fed into current discussions. A paper will be presented to Residences User Group next term on findings with direct relation to halls. A further consultation exercise is planned for Lent Term," said Wright.

Hilary Mantel speaks on "Rules of Evidence"



Photo: Natalie Wong

Dominic Lam

Hilary Mantel revealed how her relationship with LSE, which started almost 40 years ago, has shaped and influenced her career as a writer.

Delivering a lecture on the topic "Rules of Evidence" last week, Mantel began by recollecting memories of her early years of studying. She was the first person in her family to receive higher education when she came to LSE to study law in 1970.

"Coming to LSE was like coming into an intellectual paradise," she described. She used to think of the law faculty as a narrow place which produced people tailored to fit a system: "But LSE wasn't like that. There was a great sense of excitement in learning the law, and a keen awareness of how the law fitted into

the wider society, which I never lost and which has informed a great part of my fiction."

The novel *An Experiment in Love* published in 1995, written many years later with the "multiplying irony of hindsight", was based on her study here in 1970. Although LSE was never mentioned in the book, the atmosphere comes through the lines.

Mantel studied at the LSE for only one year before moving to Sheffield to continue reading law. Then, in her twenties, she wrote her first novel *A Place of Greater Safety*, which was published later in 1992.

"I suddenly found my vocation. I became a novelist without any great premeditation. It was my vocation, it was my obsession and it was all about lawyers," Mantel stated.

Her works range from the historical to

the contemporary, and she explained her philosophy on rules of evidence when it comes to historical fiction: "I think every author of historical fiction formulates it for him/herself. Some people draw the line more strictly than others. I tend to draw it quite tightly about the facts that they are known. I stick to real situations. My characters are real people. But still there are gaps in the historical record and then the great question becomes: how much license do you take in filling them in? I try to put a version that is plausible and that could be true."

She said she spends a lot of time making sure that her casts were actually in the places where she put them. "I don't distort the record to serve the drama. I try to wrap the drama around the facts as we have them. And when the record runs out, I am happiest if I have a little half line of documentary evidence to build my characters

in situations with."

This was illustrated by her reference to her latest novel *Wolf Hall*, which was mainly about Thomas Cromwell, King Henry VIII's chief minister from 1532 to 1540. The book brought her this year's Man Booker Prize. While doing research for the book, which she had written for five years, she found that personal details about Thomas Cromwell's early life were so scant, like "in a room of indiscoverable."

"Thomas Cromwell's political career is extremely well documented, but his private life is almost entirely off the record. Much of his early life is a mystery. The Cromwell family was so obscure that we wouldn't know anything about circumstances of his early life at all if it weren't for the wonder of the legal records," Mantel continued, "The important part is knowing when a question is closed. When can you say we'll never find out anymore about this. From here we are licensed to imagine."

"I've become aware that his own story had never been told, that's why I set up the novel from his point of view. Because you change the point of view, just everything looks different."

Ms. Mantel then commented on the characters of her novel. Thomas Cromwell was historically pictured as a great administrator, but more than that, she regarded him as a great innovator, a man with a radical heart, and an advocate of modernization and simplification of the law.

"In my novel, he isn't a villain. He is an ambitious man, in an age when ambition was a dirty word. And he was making his way in a world where he was born with almost every possible disadvantage," she noted.

Explaining what motivated her to write *Wolf Hall*, Mantel said she wished to provide "an alternative version" to Robert Bolt's play *A Man for All Seasons*, which tells a similar story.

This lecture was part of the "Law and Other Things" series, organised by the Department of Law.

Pakistan: the eye of the storm

Medeoha Ansari

The ongoing military operation in northern Pakistan had been "massively mishandled", said BBC correspondent Owen Bennett-Jones in a public lecture on Monday 9th November.

The event was organised by the Pakistan Society in collaboration with the Asia Research Centre, and was chaired by Professor Athar Husain. Bennett-Jones is an LSE alumnus and has recently completed the second edition of his book "Pakistan: The Eye of the Storm".

The coverage of recent conflict in the region drew a diverse range of attendees to the lecture, which provided a clear analysis of the situation and the background leading up to it. Bennett-Jones systematically addressed the main issues associated with the region and the differences in how they were viewed in the East and West. The possession of the nuclear bomb, for instance, was largely condemned by the West, but there was no acknowledgement of the context: without an Indian bomb, there would be no Pakistani bomb. Without explicitly blaming either side, he mapped out the existence of conflict and the role of suspicion in bilateral relations.

He also had a clear though unconventional stance on democracy in the country, saying that historically military governments had delivered more economic growth. When asked if there may have been other factors responsible for this growth, he responded that dictatorships brought stability "by sheer dint of being there for long periods of time".

The third most important issue he raised was that of education. This, he implied, was the root cause of much of what was wrong. Only 1.3% of American aid after 9/11 was channelised into this sector, which was arguably in dire need of reform.

Article continued on page 7 »

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Why Superfreakonomics is fun

Eunice Ng

The US Secretary of Homeland Security Stephen Levitt and Stephen Dubner, best selling authors of *Freakonomics* and *Superfreakonomics*, their follow up, spoke at the LSE last Monday.

The night began with Levitt and Dubner telling the audience how they had met. Six years ago, Dubner had been assigned by the New York Times to profile Levitt, who was reluctant but agreed to the profiling "to make [his mother] happy." Eventually however, the two warmed to each other.

Asked about how the two write together, Dubner replied: "[Levitt] does names and adjectives. I do verbs and adverbs. We fight viciously over prepositions."

Professor Steve Pischke, who chaired the event, then asked why *Freakonomics* was "fun", when even popular books about economics were mostly about weight subjects. Dubner answered that it was mostly due to the fact that most books of economics concerned themselves with a single theme, whereas *Freakonomics* did not. Levitt further explained that the two had a "joint belief that storytelling is not a dirty word."

While both of them put great effort into getting the facts and evidence right, they were keenly aware that their results had to be delivered in an accessible way.

Asked whether *Freakonomics* was still without a theme, Dubner responded that though there was no unifying theme in its content, there was a "unifying outlook" there was still a common methodology to looking at the world. Levitt elaborated on this by saying this was mainly to ask questions that no one had asked, and to "look



Photo: Jaynesh Patel

for conventional wisdom that doesn't stand up to data."

Levitt and Dubner then spent the majority of the evening speaking about the controversy regarding their first book. The first issue addressed was Levitt's research about abortion and the crime rate in the US in the 1990s. Levitt concluded in the book that the lowered crime rate was due to the legalisation of abortion in the 1970s, which meant that women from poor communities did not have to have unwanted children who were the most likely candidates to become criminals. Detractors later pointed out that there was an error in Levitt's calculations. Levitt acknowledged

that there was a programming error, but stated that this did not really affect the results.

The second issue concerned Levitt and Dubner's proposal regarding climate change using carbon mitigation – to pump sulphur dioxide into the atmosphere to initiate rapid cooling of the earth. Levitt defended the proposal, saying that his facts were right: "People disliked the tone of our chapter. They disliked the conclusion, but I do not think that we got the science wrong."

Levitt further stated that climate change research was often infused with an element of morality. He also mentioned

that his proposal was only meant to buy the earth some time while science came to a more long term solution.

The audience repeated many of Pischke's questions, with a few exceptions. One audience member asked whether Levitt and Dubner's work should have effect on public policy. Levitt was skeptical about this: "Political debates do not end up being about the facts."

Another audience member asked what could be done to reconnect the public with economics after the credit crunch. Levitt replied that macro economics is very demanding, but there could be refocus away from "getting caught up with math".

Dubner ended the night by asking Levitt to tell the audience the story of how he met the high class prostitute featured in the first chapter of *Superfreakonomics*. Levitt duly regaled the audience with tales of how he had to let his wife know that he was meeting a call girl, and how he eventually invited her to give a lecture to his undergraduate students, only after promising to personally pay her hourly rate. She also efficiently dispatched similarly politically charged questions, such as one by a student who passionately argued that DHS should allow gay and lesbian Americans to bring their spouses into the country. In response she first mentioned that the department had dropped restrictions to those who are HIV positive, but that in the case at hand, she simply did not have the power to do anything and that it was in the hands of Congress to change the definition of marriage or the immigration law.

Just before the end of the lecture, she assured the audience that the Obama Administration was continuing to work to close the prison at Guantanamo Bay by the deadline of 22 January 2010, and that negotiations were fully underway with other nations and state governments within the US to relocate and try detainees. In response to the final question, she summed up the state of the department as "not in our infancy, but perhaps our early adolescence".

At the close of the talk, chair Professor Michael Cox presented her with a traditional LSE baseball cap, and requested that she invite President Obama to the LSE whenever she was next at the White House.

LSE closer to implementing SRI



Photo: Natalie Wong

Pria Bakhshi

The LSESU met with the LSE Investments Committee last week to discuss the development of a socially responsible investment policy. The Beaver reported two weeks ago that the LSESU would be meeting with the School to consider how its current investment policy could be amended in order to be more ethically sound.

The LSESU believed that the main issue was the lack of clarity on what is really meant by "ethical" or "socially responsible". As a result, it was decided last week that a representative committee should be created in order to arrive at a definition of these terms. The LSESU will therefore be submitting a proposal for such a committee to Council around the end of this month.

It is hoped that creating a clear definition of "ethical" will enable the committee to create a list of guiding principles of the

School on investments, so that they have a clear framework in which to work when researching potential investments. In addition, the committee will be able to make investment recommendations – although the authority to approve investment decisions will remain with Council.

In its proposal for a committee on socially responsible investment, the LSESU will emphasise that the committee should consist of the key stakeholders of investments at LSE. These include students, alumni, academics, administrative staff, and governors.

While the above will be able to vote on any outputs of the committee, there is also scope for it to have non-voting members with more professional and academic experience, who would perform a more advisory function.

LSESU Treasurer George Wetz felt that "School administrators on the whole really seem to be for the idea" of the committee on socially responsible investments. He cited the appearance of the School's

Director, Howard Davies, at last week's UGM, as Davies showed support for the plan and stated his belief that LSE should not invest in the arms trade.

Before the November Council meeting, the LSESU will have to finalise the composition of the committee and how its members are to be chosen. In addition it will be necessary to have further discussions on research and whether further research into SRI is required before submitting a proposal to Council. SESU General Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher explained that "an active investment policy will be necessary to satisfy student demand for LSE to be more ethical in its investments. However we [the SU] are cognizant of difficulties faced by the School in implementing such a policy and as such are willing to move slowly."

Wetz agreed that the development of SRI and LSE may be slow, but was keen to add that "progress is being made. We want to see something concrete in place by the end of this academic year."

Karsenty discusses media bias

Nicola Alexander

In an event organised by the LSESU Israel Society, Philippe Karsenty spoke about bias against Israel in the French press last week.

Karsenty focused on the court case he brought against the state-owned television network France 2 for airing, what he proved to be, fabricated footage of the shooting of Muhammad Al-Durrah, a young Palestinian boy, and his father Jamal in the Gaza strip. With Osama Bin Laden using France 2's reported shooting of Al-Durrah as part of the motive to behead American journalist American Daniel Pearl, Karsenty's case on the credibility of the news cast has attracted intense international concern.

As the founder of media watchdog 'Media Ratings', Karsenty is well experienced at identifying the manipulation of fact in the modern press and, as he revealed during his presentation, as viewers we have an obligation to maintain a level of scepticism when it comes to the reporting of news.

Karsenty stressed the importance for us, as the general public to hold those who are in the powerful position of controlling the information we receive accountable by actively calling them to justice. Indeed, at the time that the footage was first played on national television Karsenty himself was merely among the millions of France 2's viewers. Prompted by a German documentary which revealed disparities between the footage that was aired and the media commentary of the tape as reported by Charles Enderlin – "the most respected Middle-Eastern correspondent in France", Karsenty suspended his career as a stockbroker to take up a legal case against France 2.

Although the case was initially ruled in favour of France 2 in 2004, on appeal Karsenty revealed further evidence to overturn the primary ruling with the case judge of the French Court of Justice admitting that France 2 had been unable to produce consistent evidence.

Karsenty incorporated part of his legal argument into his 40-minute talk, identifying what he deemed to be weaknesses in the story that was presented by France 2. The key point of contention was

the reliability of the raw footage. According to Karsenty, who bought 18 minutes of the originally 27-minute long tape from France 2, there is evidence that the footage was edited in a way that was misleading by manipulating sounds such as machine gun fire and cutting the tape prematurely.

Although Karsenty did not reveal who he thought was behind the filming of the tape, he made clear that fabricated footage on both sides of the conflict in Gaza will always be available – as most of the raw material received is shot by local journalists who are emotionally involved in the situation.

However, as Karsenty argued, the ultimate responsibility lies with the news stations: "They are not forced to buy this rubbish."

Whilst the talk dealt mainly with Karsenty's case on the Muhammed Al-Durrah film, Karsenty drew on key issues that are relevant to media in general regardless of subject matter. Indeed, Karsenty raised the crucial issue of politicisation of the media, which he argued should be an objected vessel for relaying information.

"Now it's political", stated Karsenty when explaining how he had been snubbed by the Israeli Ambassador to Paris.

Karsenty made clear that he believed media regarding the Middle East is becoming increasingly desperate for sensationalism, so that stories remain unique. The Karsenty's case remains an issue of great relevance and is being taken to Cour de Cassation, France's highest court, by France 2.

Pakistan article continued »

Several of those who were present questioned his analysis of the madrassa system, which he insisted was in need of major revamping in order to produce well-rounded, integrated individuals.

In all, Bennet-Jones provided a fair assessment of a highly controversial situation. Putting several conspiracy theories in perspective, he stressed the need for all parties to shoulder their share of the responsibility. After all, he said, "To say that this is entirely America's war overlooks a lot of Pakistani dead."



**you
know
what
time
it is...**

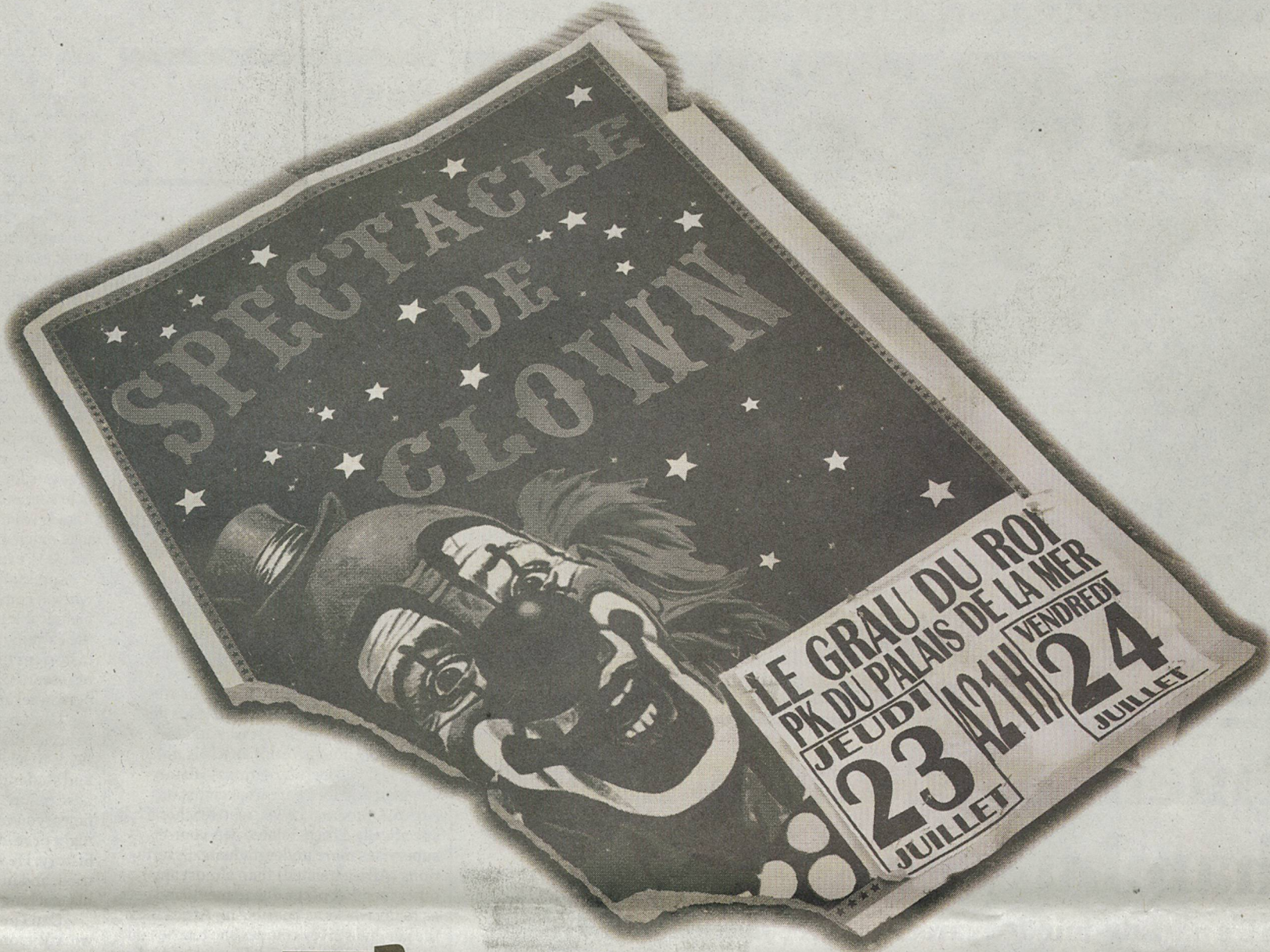


90s WEEK



(www.pulse.dj)

Comment



The Beaver

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A tame duck

We were right in declaring issue after issue that life on Houghton Street seem much calmer this year: inqorate UGMs, quieter campaigns, even somewhat thawed tensions between traditionally warring societies.

We were hopeful, however, about Howard Davies' appearance at the UGM, expecting the same overcharged

political opponents and dissatisfied masses of students.

Even this highly lauded termly appearance however, was a slight let-down. With even the toughest questions, our Director seemed to receive adoring praise. Students seemed convinced by his predictable, rehearsed responses. Beyond being simply 'convinced', the Old Theatre was filled with the sounds of hearty applause on several occasions.

It is true that the Director did not make any grotesque slip-ups, and no one was accused of being loss-making. More important than his improved sense of political correctness, though, is the fact that Howard's eager audience seemed very easily placated. Amidst all that is going on at the LSE; the fact that our rankings are still slowly but surely slipping, our facilities slowly degrading and the future of fees still uncertain, it certainly

seems that the Director got off fairly lightly.

With the Union's entire political structure up in the air given the upcoming governance review, perhaps the UGM is not the best way to engage with our esteemed Director. Whatever lies in the future of the Union, the fact remains that this was a prized opportunity for any concerned student. A prized opportunity that was somewhat squandered away with somewhat

poorly researched questions and a willingness to be easily quelled by rhetoric.

Howard got off lightly this time. We hope this does not herald a new dawn of student-administration relations, as this paper believes that only when students actively and consistently push for improvement, will this institution be one that we are unequivocally proud of.

Future of fees a farce

Last Wednesday, Union officials launched a call to arms for LSE students to rally against MPs and demand that they "come clean about their position on fees and the future of higher education."

The rally was intended to pressure MPs into signing a pledge promising to vote against a hike in university top-up fees, and to press the government to find a "fairer" alternative funding model. More than 60 MPs were summoned to the National Union of Students' (NUS) rally in Westminster Palace.

Yet for all the hype surrounding the event, less than 10 LSE students found the courage - or the will - to present themselves at the occasion.

The LSESU lost a precious opportunity to directly lobby MPs over fees, and to demonstrate the anger and concerns of students en masse.

The future of higher education is vital to the future of the LSE. Although the top-up fees primarily concern domestic and EU undergraduates, they have a clear implication on international and postgraduate students, all of whom are part of the larger debate

relating to higher education financial reform.

The Beaver is utterly disappointed to have been a witness to this tragic development. When the NUS first announced its call for emergency action in Parliament last Monday, just hours before our final publishing deadline, we scrambled to gather any relevant information and urgently wrote a piece that was eventually published on our front page. The sabbatical officers, on their part, tried to make their voices heard through Facebook groups and appearances on Pulse radio shows, encourag-

ing students to come along and fight for an issue that should concern all of us.

We firmly believe this matter to be of utmost importance. The Beaver has been a leading voice in criticising Union and School officials for their failure to take strong, robust action in promoting student welfare and interests. And while we continue to hold them accountable, students ourselves have an immediate responsibility to take charge of our own affairs.

We cannot rely on "the authorities that may be" to shape our future. Organised student protests have histori-

cally been an effective means of inspiring and triggering change, dating back to the Great Butter Rebellion, which took place at Harvard University in 1766 - the first recorded student protest in what is now the United States.

And as we look into the future, plenty of opportunities remain available for us to embrace and exploit in our favour. The Union is in the midst of a governance review, and the nation is in the midst of political turmoil, in anticipation of next year's general election. Whatever your political colour or stripe, we urge you: get involved.

Out of Africa, into Aldwych? Unlikely

Though there is a clear demand for an undergraduate course in African history, myriad external forces are preventing it from becoming a realistic possibility



It is true that without African history, we cannot comment on African politics
Photo: flickr user gbaku

Investment banking is much like a hamburger

Don't let the LSE's narrow-minded careers advice shackle your dreams

Poorna Harjani

Conformity lies in replicating similar behavioral styles in accordance with prevailing attitudes, customs, or beliefs of others. Here at the LSE this is done in small groups but perpetuated through the university itself. Think about how many people you see in their sharp-suited attire during the day attending consultancy fairs, meetings with Deutsche Bank in Starbucks and after class hours on campus. While being accosted in my first week with questions on how my internship applications were going, I soon learnt of the 'Big Four'. This is the moniker given to the most prominent 'professional services' firms that the archetypal LSE student applies for. Unsurprisingly, there are similar hierarchical codes for banking and consultancy firms.

Such likeness in students' career aspirations isn't necessarily an evil to society or a damaging one. It can have a positive influence, helping to maintain a smoothly functioning university and greater harmony. However, investment banking has become a borderline cultural obsession at the LSE and there is a growing minority who feel like second-class citizens, when considering the extent to which the School caters for budding investment bankers.

Recently I was enthused to attend a talk by Lord Maurice Saatchi, hoping to hear great stories from the advertisement guru, only to be disappointed to have to sit through a debate centred on Marxism. This is just one example of how most public talks are solely catered towards an economics perspective regardless of the guest speaker's diverse interests. Then there's the Careers Service's website. When I tried looking for government-sponsored internships, I was taken to a site with links I could have googled myself.

So why do people conform in the first place, and who is to blame at the LSE? In general terms, people conform to derive a sense of security. The LSE's conformist environment is strangely reminiscent of McDonald's Hamburger University, which was started in 1961 to cater to the growing needs of an expanding McDonaldisation of the world. Both relatively modern institutions, LSE and the Hamburger University are known to be centres of global excel-

I see myself as the 'Che' of LSE; one of the few at LSE who will end up pushing for government policies

lence in their specialised fields - one for fast food; the other for banking. Burgers are always a fast food one inevitably regrets indulging in and, similarly, the true nature of an investment banking job is not reflected in its salary. The long hours into the night, coupled with regular assessments, mean graduates are constantly in danger of burning out. LSE itself is to blame for its close relations with the banking industries which do not benefit everyone, and maybe this is reflected in Howard Davies' background at the FSA.

Whatever happened to true passions and childhood dreams? LSE kills any entrepreneurial spirit by subjecting its new recruits to banking banners, advertisements, leaflets, and emails from the moment they first step into the Quad. It is not that investment banking is a wholly detestable industry to go into: on the plus side, it is fast-paced, challenging, and those who can cope with the environment can reap hefty monetary awards. My gripe is that though the possession of an LSE degree should mean that for most students, the world is their oyster, too many revel in narrow-mindedness.

With the possibility of being so easily swept up in an investment banking culture very few have time to realise their true passions. A colleague of mine travelled to Thailand this summer, and, having realised that the corporate lifestyle was overrated, and managed to be saved in time from the big sharks. Maybe some of us want to work somewhere where we don't have to 'buy' more holidays; be constantly monitored; wear sensible heels.

History has shown that an unwillingness to conform can lead to social rejection and criticism from peers. However, I believe in the spirit of individuality, that we all have something new and different to bring to the plate. I see myself as the 'Che' of LSE; one of the few at LSE who will end up pushing for government policies, working for NGOs, or teaching in a failing school. LSE has the potential to give its students a wider interest in career fields; perhaps we should turn to atypical alumni who will give the School an edge. If the current cultural trend continues then LSE will become the Hamburger University of the banking world, churning out graduates with a single industry in mind. In the words of Christopher Morley, "There is only one success - to be able to spend your life in your own way."

So abandon the Big Four, because in my world, I can whittle it down to a three-word sentiment: Never ever conform.

Dominic Lieven

I welcome Philip Rushworth's piece on African history at LSE for two main reasons. In the first place it is important that departments are open to suggestions about improvements in their teaching programmes and at the same time have the opportunity to explain to students and others why the current programmes exist and the constraints under which we operate. Secondly, I strongly endorse his comment that "without history, it is impossible to comment on Africa's politics". And of course, not Africa's alone: Iraq and Afghanistan are obvious recent examples where history might have served policy-makers well. I don't believe that all history teaching at LSE must be "relevant" to current issues and designed to educate future policy-makers. An education in history is also all about developing the imagination, getting students to think outside assumptions rooted in their own time and space, and training people to evaluate evidence. But perceived "relevance" does also matter greatly, not least because historians depend on public interest, taxes and fees.

But Mr. Rushworth's article is not entirely fair. The International History Department does have a specialist on Africa, Dr Joanna Lewis, who teaches a specifically Africa-related MA course, supervises more undergraduate dissertations (Africa-related) than almost any other member of the department, and gets as many weeks as possible on Africa into the general survey courses she teaches on world history, the British Empire and other topics. The reason she teaches an 'African' course at MSc but not at undergraduate level is that, when she was appointed, the strongest demand for African history came from our masters students. Actually, I take the calls (which I have also received from others during my two brief months in the International History Department) for more teaching on African history as a compliment to the skill and commitment shown by Joanna, which has contributed to encouraging students to want more on Africa.

Nevertheless, the article is also not entirely unfair. We have undergraduate courses on Europe, East Asia, India, the USA and the Middle East, and we have just succeeded in plugging our long-standing gap as regards the teaching of Latin American history. So Africa is an obvious gap at undergraduate level.

Of course in an ideal world, we would

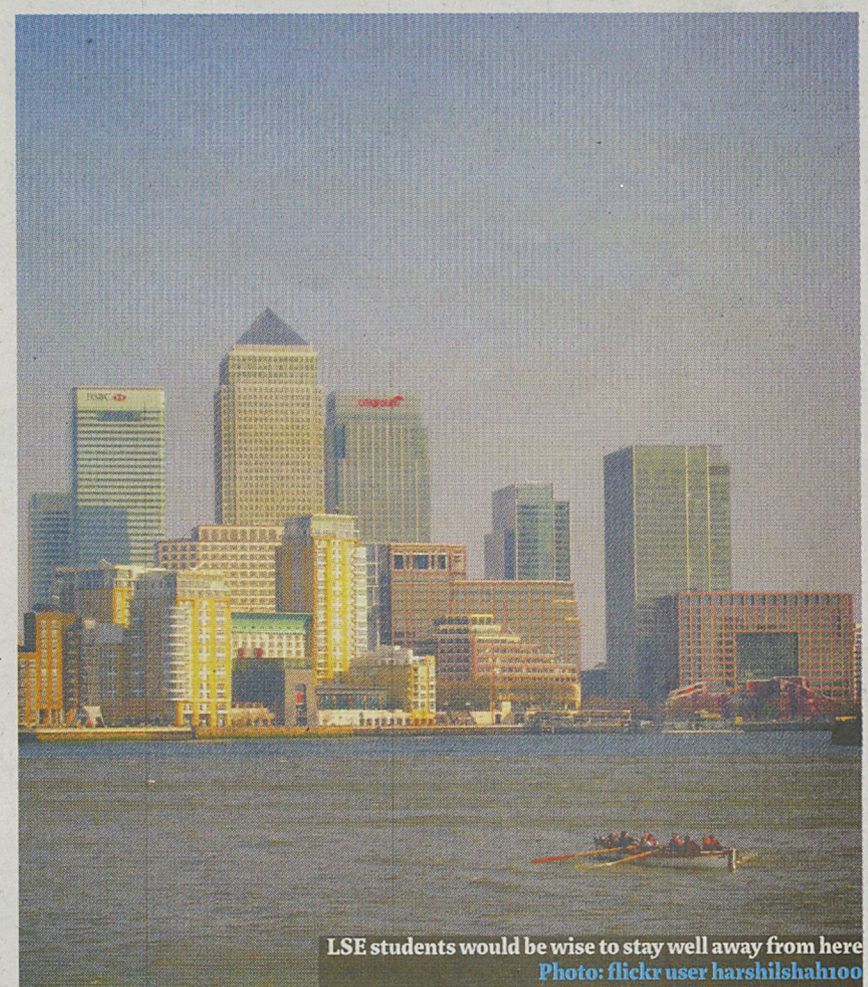
go to the School to ask for a new post on the basis both of clear student demand and of the undoubted importance and intellectual fascination of African history. But the School - for good reasons - has rejected any increase in student numbers (the traditional way of financing new jobs) and in the current financial climate LSE is in no position to set up new posts from existing resources. Exploring the possibility of externally-funded posts might seem a cop-out to your readers but actually I did just help to get £500,000 for Russian history from a splendid outside donor committed to that country. So this is not a totally hopeless strategy and if any of your readers has any ideas or contacts which might help us in this respect they will get our strong thanks and cooperation.

Realistically, however, much the likeliest way to meet undergraduate requests for a course on African history is to somehow re-jig existing resources. That is where the trouble begins. It would take much more than eight hundred words to explain the many and contradictory pressures on heads of departments when it comes to meeting (sometimes changeable) student demands, managing the extreme and destructive impact for historians of the government's funding of research, and operating within tight personnel and financial constraints.

One key point is that academics need to accumulate great expertise in their fields to have credibility with colleagues and students. They also (more or less) have tenure. Even if interest in Russia fades, you cannot kick out Lieven overnight or re-deploy him to teach African history. He would kick and scream if you tried, and in any case no one would take his teaching seriously.

Can I promise Mr. Rushworth that we will soon provide an undergraduate course in African history? The answer is no, and not just because I'm writing this response on my own behalf and not as head of department, and in any case such decisions are made by the department as a whole, not by its head. I can't create resources out of nothing, ignore immense student demand in other areas (e.g. the Middle East), or turn myself into an Africanist. But I can promise that I will bring the issue raised by Mr. Rushworth to colleagues' attention and that I personally will see whether there might be ways to set up an undergraduate course on African history by re-deploying existing resources and seizing any future opportunities to strengthen ourselves in this field.

• Dominic Lieven is a Professor of Russian History in the Department of International History. He is also the head of the department.



LSE students would be wise to stay well away from here
Photo: flickr user harshilshah100

Art's great enemy is ignorance



Photo: Cherie Leung

Attempts to criticise the School's investment in art fail on both artistic and practical grounds

Gregor Titorelli

Whenever I have that rare privilege of walking through the New Academic Building (it is meant mainly for Managers and Lawyers, we are told), I feel just a tiny bit cleaner than I did before I entered. I don't mean to say the good old harmless NAB has any mystical properties; that would be absurd. But at a purely emotional level, I can't deny that it makes me feel just a bit more reconciled with the world; as if the identity I am expected to assume, as a captive of a post-industrial capitalist society, has just been reaffirmed. Now I'm no scientist, but I imagine this is most probably due to Joy Gerrard's terrific work, *Elenchus-Aporia*, which is to be found suspended in the central atrium of the building.

The artist herself has claimed that the hanging structural red globe 'represents ideas or discussions around political concepts'. But it would be a grave folly to pay too much attention to the opinion of artists. After all, they are just trying to justify their work in order to recover some semblance of creative authority over it. And as we well know, while it is the artist's conscious self that plans, designs and fashions a work, often the final product is more a result of the murmurings of her unconscious, that unfathomable yearning,

that irrevocable and irreproachable silence within. It is in this that *Elenchus-Aporia's* true beauty is to be discovered.

Some have claimed that it means nothing (This, of course, is entirely irrelevant to the question of the piece's worth: art isn't about rational deductions and deliberate messages, but genuine feeling. If it has no capacity to arouse emotions, then it is, undeniably, absolutely worthless). Such an accusation reveals more about the critic than the critiqued. All it succeeds in doing is unveiling the accuser's masked philistinism and boasting her intellectual debility. The meaning of *Elenchus-Aporia* is rather clear.

The title of the work alludes to the Socratic method of teaching through critical cross-examination. As Socrates tried and tested his often-unwilling victims, they would gradually descend into a state of utter confusion (*Aporia*), realising the contradictions and inconsistencies in their thought. He reduced their certitude to doubt, and therefore prompted many of them to reconsider their views and search for truth. The work itself of course, captures the essence of the notion of seemingly insoluble intellectual and spiritual impasse in physical form. This is not to be explained, but felt.

The great English Renaissance dramatist, Ben Jonson, once claimed that art's great enemy was ignorance. He does have a point. But if ignorance is its enemy, its nemesis must surely be unfeeling: that insurmountable pandemic that afflicts generation after generation of us in post-industrial capitalist society. How can we truly feel, when we feel the world through preconceived ranges of emotion? How

can we truly see when we see the world through the lens of a vast array of preconceived images? How can we free ourselves from the shackles of preconception? And do we want to?

In our Brave New World, *Elenchus-Aporia* elevates us to the heights of *Aporia*. Through its own banality, it has the potential to make us acutely aware of the purpose of education. Contrary to popular belief, it is not there solely to equip us with an opportunity for lucrative future employment; it is there to remind us that the meaning of life is far from clear, and we must dedicate our own existences to searching for it, rather than allowing the question to subside amidst the Totalitarianism of Kitsch. This used to be the sole purpose of the institution of the University, but alas, times have changed.

And how could a discussion of new artwork at the LSE take place without a mention of Michael Brown's *Bluerain*, that often-invisible news-tickerish piece above 'the other entrance' of Waterstone's? The light-emitting diodes that make up the work are said to spell out the names of books being searched, checked in and checked out of the library. The piece is intended to reflect the 'research' going on in the library itself: as we see title after title of excessively bookish, often convoluted scholarship, almost entirely detached from reality, we cannot help but ask ourselves fundamental questions as to the worth of our reams and reams of 'learning'. In its simplicity, does the piece not simply echo the words of the great mystic-poet Kabir, who proclaimed that 'Reading books everyone died/None became any wiser'?

The school now appears to stand for everything, yet actually stands for nothing. Is this not exactly what our new acquisitions represent?

Of course, I joke. Neither *Elenchus-Aporia* nor *Bluerain* are intended to convey any such meanings or arouse any such emotions. They are, perhaps, entirely meaningless. But then again, they have been produced by two well-regarded artists, and according to Howard Davies, cost the student absolutely nothing, having been donated by the school's benefactors. What's to complain about? Claims of LSE's new investments not fitting the 'personality' of the school are far-fetched and implausible. Should art at LSE really represent the central tenets of the institution? And what exactly are these tenets? Do they even exist? And if not, would we even want them to? LSE's days as a hotbed of student radicalism or Fabian socialism are long gone. The school now tries to appear to stand for everything, yet actually stands for nothing. Is this not exactly what our new acquisitions represent? Do they not just endorse the principle values of the society in which we live and the institution which nourishes us? What harm in that? They are both beautiful and tragic: odes to the fatuity of our existences: at one sight, grim, at another, glorious.

Ultimately, we would do well to remember that art does not exist in a vacuum independent of greater power structures within society. It is almost entirely the product of the Zeitgeist. Both of LSE's masterpieces, and masterpieces they certainly are, illustrate the fundamental vacuity of our times, the totalitarianism of kitsch. That is their purpose, and by god, is it beautiful.

Lewinsky

Estelle Cooch



A rise in tuition fees should never be the way of securing greater funding for universities

Last week, with his characteristically smarmy grin, the not so 'Right Honourable' Lord Peter Mandelson launched the long-expected review of the university tuition fees system. The review panel includes two university Vice Chancellors, a former civil servant, the chief executive of Standard Chartered bank, an economist and a student. The panel will be led by Baron Browne of Madingley; the former chief executive of BP and one of the most highly paid executives in the UK with a remuneration package of approximately £5.7 million in 2004. A more motley crew could not be found. About as suitable for investigating Higher Education as George Bush is at running a Pretzel Theme Park, the outcome of the review will most likely result in the doubling of tuition fees in Britain to over £7,000 per year.

There are a number of arguments to address regarding fees. The most prevalent is that with the expansion

of universities there exists neither the resources nor the funds to provide for the influx of students. This completely misses the point. Since the beginning of organised education systems, central to their goal was the view that education was in itself a positive thing. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries women and the working class fought for their right to education, arguing that education ought not to be a privilege for those that can afford it, but that it should be a right for all. The education system provides one of the most important public services for our society and, just as the NHS should remain free and accessible on demand, so should education.

When Lord Mandelson introduced the fees review he declared, "Variable tuition fees provide institutions with a secure income stream worth £1.3bn". Well, I'm sorry Peter, but that argument is just not good enough. The money to fund Higher Education already exists; it

is purely a question of priorities. Is public money better spent on the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, which cost the taxpayer over £4.5 billion last year, or is it better spent paying lecturers? Is the £18 billion due to be spent on ID cards worth more to Britain than the education of all young people? Of course not.

Since the 1980s we have seen the rapid marketisation of the education system. Those supporting tuition fees argue say that the public should not be forced to pay for 'middle-class welfare' and that students represent a privileged elite. In effect if students will earn more as a result of a degree, they should pay for it. This argument is wrong on two accounts. Firstly it ignores the fact that most students are now from a variety of backgrounds: working-class, female, multi-ethnic. But secondly, behind this argument lies a very cynical view of education; that it is only there to make money. The government is willing to fund education if it means

getting a skilled workforce that will keep British businesses competitive, but it is not willing to pay for people to learn about the world around them, to become critical thinkers who can question authority.

Last Thursday, the Director, Howard Davies, addressed the Students' Union General Meeting. I asked him how much his wages were and unsurprisingly he declined to comment. The average university director currently receives £194,000 a year. The wages of the highest ten Directors in the UK amounts to over £3 million - that's enough to fund the university education of 350 students. I know which one I think is a more worthwhile investment. Over the next year the government will peddle many myths while they argue for an increase of tuition fees. Let's not be fooled. The money to fund Higher Education exists; it is just a matter of forcing the richest, most privileged in society to give it up.

Currie

David Whitaker



The contribution graduates make to the economy means elevated tuition fees are unjustifiable

The increasingly likely prospect of higher tuition fees for students has been met with a disappointing response from the UK Conservative Party. Both Lord Mandelson and David Willetts - the Shadow Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills - have signalled that their respective parties would not stand in the way of higher fees. An American system of unlimited fees may even be possible in the future. The damaging and notorious U-turn on tuition fees by the Conservatives leaves the Liberal Democrats as the only major UK party opposing tuition fees in all forms. This must change.

As both a student and a Conservative supporter, I would normally find my dual loyalties tested on this divisive issue; whilst I would oppose higher fees, I consider universities to be businesses, selling degrees as products; free to set their own prices and quality. However, universities

are much more than that. They supply the economy with the next generation of high-skilled workers and are a major source of innovation. Last year the higher education sector spent some £19.5 billion on goods and services produced in the UK. That is why deterring students (particularly those from low-income backgrounds) with higher fees would be disastrous for Britain's long term economic prospects, and would make a mockery of the Government's target of getting 50 per cent of young people into higher education. While the average undergraduate currently expects debts of £23,000 upon graduation, this figure could rise to an estimated £32,000 if fees rose to £7,000, saddling an already indebted generation with an even greater burden. In addition, no-one has tried to address the issue of how students can expect to assess value for money with higher fees. The Conservatives have clearly got it wrong on this issue.

Whereas students at LSE will have no doubt been exposed to strong arguments against tuition fee rises, the debate is supported on both sides. Vice-Chancellors across the country have advocated higher fees as the only viable means to support their finances (the other options of recruiting more international students, or increasing endowments, were deemed unviable). There is also a common view that taxpayers are fed up of subsidising the education of future high-earners. Government Advisor Professor John Holman, who advises ministers on science, suggests that it is 'difficult' to see how university quality could be maintained without higher fees. Unfortunately, the last point falls into the trap of using fees as a proxy for quality or efficiency. Clearly an alternative needs to be found, rather than simply milking students, and the Conservatives need to address this.

Therefore, instead of blithely fol-

lowing the Government's lead on tuition fees, the Conservatives should diligently promote an alternative to higher fees; order vice-chancellors to improve the efficiency of their universities and to change their business models if finances are to be improved. An example of this policy might be to use university buildings more efficiently, rather than simply paying for new buildings. The Resource Development International (RDI), an independent provider of degree courses, advocates spreading learning over 52 weeks (instead of 36) and offering a more flexible model for learning as a means to keep fees low. The RDI also believes that any fee hike would not reflect higher quality. So there are alternative ways to keep fees low. If the Conservatives do not act on tuition fees, the only result will be a disenfranchised and debt-ridden generation of students and continued inefficiency in universities.

Civil society is great society

There is greater consensus about the role of the voluntary sector than we might think

Arundhati Pal

There are plans afoot in the Tory camp for a remaking of society; the solution to Britain's chief problem, that government is too big and civil society not big enough. David Cameron urged for a shift towards individual responsibility rather than the current culture of expectation produced by the welfare state. There is a call for the involvement of voluntary, community and charity organisations to enable the withdrawal of the state. The argument goes that the nanny state has dehumanised society to the point of "selfishness and individualism". There

has been, according to Cameron, a "moral failure" of Labour's welfare state. The rhetoric in both camps is strong. The Work & Pensions Secretary, Yvette Cooper, has branded the Tory plans as Thatcherism under a new guise. Labour is asserting that the concurrent Tory politics of state withdrawal and tax cuts for the wealthiest is a return to 19th century liberalism. This will leave the poorest and the most vulnerable on the margins of society. Cooper asserts that the idea of the state's withdrawal is not viable: "The voluntary and community sector play a vital role in tackling poverty, but they cannot do it alone."

Cameron's label of the Big Society reforms are reminiscent of President Johnson's Great Society programme in the 1960s. Johnson too wanted the 'community in action' to frame the War on Poverty so that those affected had a say. There was, however, a vast dispensation

of state resources: \$1 billion in 1964, \$2 billion over the next two years. Crucially, 'socialised medicine', however limited, came within America's polity framework: Medicare and Medicaid. The Great Society, many argued, demonstrated that government as a vehicle for solving social problems was a myth. Yet figures from the time show that the number of Americans living below the poverty line was dramatically halved. The orthodoxy is that the Republican administration of Richard Nixon dismantled the centrepiece of the War on Poverty - the Office of Economic Opportunity, and with it the Great Society. Yet, Nixon mandated automatic cost of living rises for those receiving social security and developed the likes of the Great Society's Model Cities programme. There is more consensus than initially apparent from the battle of ideologies.

Here, then, is the lesson for current British politics. Cameron's asser-

tion that the state needs to be utilised to remake society is much akin to President Johnson's state-engineered Great Society. This rather unexceptional Tory conception of civil society resonates with Cooper's statement on the necessary interaction of the state and civil society. Consensus politics is what dominated 20th century Britain - take the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), created by the Conservatives under Major to revamp ailing public services and welcomed enthusiastically by Blair. Private contractors footing the bill for constructing hospitals, schools and the like and then renting them back to the public sector ensured provision of service and freed up limited public funding. While the language is distinct - Labour's 'merger' and the Conservatives' 'efficient value creation for tax-payers', the idea is the same. There is a danger, then, in buying into an apparent battle of ideas where there is actually none.

Letters to the Editor

Madam - I am the new Head of the Disability & Well-being Service and work in very close collaboration with the Accommodation Office. I am sorry to hear of the difficulties experienced by two students around kitchen access and nut allergy. Staff from the Disability & Well-being office and Accommodation Office have met to discuss the issues raised in The Beaver and we will continue to work together, with staff in residences, to ensure effective liaison.

One of the incidents reported raised the very serious issue of nut allergies. As a result of this, I am having discussions with staff and SU officers in the LSE about running an awareness-raising campaign about food allergies, and hope that The Beaver may be able to help.

I am very keen to receive student feedback so that we can work together to continuously improve the services we offer.

Best wishes,
Nicola Martin
Head of Disability and Well-being Service

Madam - Having recently completed an MA in the History of International Relations, I would have liked to have left my university in high spirits. Unfortunately, that is becoming increasingly difficult. I have had a great year, I have met some amazing people, made good friends, learned interesting things and have been taught by some amazing professors. Although concerning that last part, it's a pity I only had 120 hours of formal teaching over the entire October 2008 to September 2009 period: in some respects, it was more like a home-schooling than a taught master's degree. But I'm being overly fussy, I'm sure.

Anyway, I handed in my dissertation in a very good mood but since then, that mood has dampened a bit. First of all, we were informed that there would be no results until mid-November, which due to delays is now more the end of November: a good five months after we finished our exams. Until then, most departments do not give provisional marks - an excellent start in the worst graduate job market for decades. But that's not even what gets me most. It is not even the fact that our department gave us the wrong graduation date, meaning that many parents had booked flights for the wrong days and had to re-book at substantial cost. No, the thing that annoys me most is the fact that for the privilege of attending their offspring's graduation, our parents have to pay £20 per person. Excuse me?! I thought that a graduation ceremony was an integral part of studying, not some kind of Ryanair extra for which you have to pay more. Or was it just me who failed to get that memo?

So let me just get this straight. After paying a substantial sum in tuition fees; after having a small number of classes in return; after having spent most of the past five months waiting for results, I have to pay £40 so that my parents can sit in a theatre for my five seconds on stage to receive my degree and have a glass of cheap bubbly afterwards? Sorry, but that's just not on.

Henk van Klaveren
MA History of International Relations '09

Madam - I wonder why, with all the empty seats at UGM every week, there is a gaggle of people standing and heckling at the side of the stage all the time? Are they too busy doing God knows what, to notice that the good people of LSE have provided plenty of seats to sit on? Or do they have piles? For the latter problem, I direct them to aisle two of the Boots on Kingsway!

Mazida Khatun
BSc Government '10

**YOUR LETTERS SPELL
OUT OUR HAPPINESS**

comment

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Flickr user: Elias Pirasteh

Leaving on a jet plane

Ali Auda discusses the seemingly unexpected emergence of Iraq as a holiday spot

The Ancient land of Mesopotamia, the land between the two rivers, the cradle of civilisation. Before the pyramids existed, a thriving civilization had already developed and established itself between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in what is modern day southern Iraq. The country is, therefore, dotted with historical and religious sites from the north to the south. Last week the chairman of Iraq's tourism board, Hammoud al-Yaqoubi, made an official trip to Britain to promote Iraq as a suitable place for sightseeing.

The first stop is Mosul. This city is rich in old historical places and ancient buildings: churches, mosques, castles, and monasteries. The Mosul Museum contains many artefacts from the former Assyrian capital cities of Nineveh and Nimrud. Also, located in Mosul is Saint Elijah's Monastery which happens to be Iraq's oldest monastery, dating from the sixth century. Until the onset of the Iraq War, Christian pilgrims continued to visit the ruins. Moreover, here also exists mosques containing the burial site of the Prophet Yunus (or Jonah), Prophet Jerjis (or George) and the Umayyad Mosque. Each has biblical and historic significance

for any prospective visitor.

Before moving off to Baghdad, one must stop in Erbil (or Hawler), a city which can be dated to at least the twenty-third century BC. This city is located within Iraqi Kurdistan and the main feature is the gigantic ancient city which still dominates the centre of Erbil. An interesting fact about Erbil is that the Battle of Gaugamela, in which Alexander the Great defeated Darius III of Persia in 331 BC, took place about one hundred kilometres (sixty miles) west of Erbil. Baghdad, located on the River Tigris, is Iraq's largest city, and the second largest, after Cairo, in the Arab World. It dates back to the 8th century and was once the centre of the Muslim world. Some of the most famous and well known monuments located in Baghdad include the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the Hands of Victory arches. Mustansiriya School dates back to the thirteenth century and is regarded very highly in Iraq and beyond. Many of the One Thousand and One Nights tales are set in Baghdad.

Travelling south to Babylon, one can appreciate the thought provoking ruins of the Hanging Gardens, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, which

With all these historical and religious sites it is almost inevitable that tourists will start booking their package holidays to Iraq

symbolise King Nebuchadnezzar II's love and devotion to his wife. The city is famous because of King Hammurabi who is known for codifying the laws of Babylonia into the Hammurabi's Code which has had a lasting influence on legal thought today.

In Karbala and Najaf, one can encounter some of the most important religious shrines for Shiite Muslims. The golden shrines of Imam Ali, Hussain and Abbas (A.S.) are located here. Already, these places attract millions of religious tourists from the rest of Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Lebanon and the Gulf States. The shrines at night are an amazing array of colourful lights, water fountains and a lively atmosphere.

Due to Iraq's once thriving Jewish community there continues to be places located in southern Iraq that is of great importance to the Judaism. One of the most important is in a small town called Al Kifl where Jews believe the tomb of the biblical prophet Ezekiel is located. On the walls inside the tomb there are Hebrew scripts under a dome with medieval Islamic floral designs. Up till the mid-20th century, up to 5,000 Jews used to come to the tomb during Passover.

Finally, we end our journey in Basra,

near the Shatt Al-Arab waterway, which used to be known as the 'Venice of the Middle East' due to its extensive network of canals. This is the hometown of Sinbad the Sailor and the proposed location of the Garden of Eden. A truly beautiful city sitting on the banks of the Persian Gulf.

With all these historical and religious sites it is almost inevitable that tourists will start booking their package holidays to Iraq. It is starting to happen at a slow pace. Here in the UK, Geoffrey Hann, head of Hinterland Travel, was in charge of the first group of eight adventurous people who toured Iraq in March of this year. It is reported that he has already taken bookings for several trips next year. Having said that, Iraq's situation is sadly still precarious, with terrorists attempting to destabilise the country's fledgling democracy through violence. As a result of this, bomb attacks still occur and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office still advises against all but necessary travel to the country. Only time will tell when Iraq becomes the new tourist hub of the Middle East. It certainly has the potential, and then some.



Photo: flickr user RubalJain

Rediscovering resilience

Poorna Harjani examines how Mumbai has responded to the terrorist attacks of last year

Terror can come in any guise, be it a bombshell, a land mine or a bullet from an AK-47, and its wrath knows of no boundaries. In today's world terrorism has become a weapon of fear and a daily ingredient of headline news. We see its occurrence on TV, and yet being so desensitised, we carry on eating our dinners. Yet occasionally, a moment of news stuns us as it happens and that moment remains more than just a fleeting image. During last year's November attacks my cousin was changing the window display at Louis Vuitton and I spoke to her as the Dome of the Taj was up in flames. Luckily she was rescued in time by the army, ten minutes before the invasion into the Chambers. The day after two relatives of mine were found dead in the Oberoi hotel after a romantic dinner, leaving two young children orphaned. Yet terrorism targets indiscriminately and has changed the nature of combat, bringing a new meaning to 'total war'.

It is the nature of the attacks that distinguishes them from its predecessors. The militants targeted iconic symbols such as the majestic Gateway of India, the luxurious Taj hotel and the headquarters of Mumbai's Central Railways, Victoria Terminus. It targeted the city's political and business classes as well as the cultural glitterati. For an elite that almost always emerges unscathed from violence in the country, the attack came as a cold wake up to the realities of the modern era. Also, going after foreigners guaranteed attention in the global spotlight.

The attacks were forewarned by a

The terrorists confiscated Blackberrys in order to go onto global news websites like CNN and BBC so they could find out what action the military and police were taking

local fisherman, who alerted the authorities after seeing a suspicious boat which was carrying the terrorists from sea. This warning was duly ignored. The terrorists confiscated Blackberrys in order to go onto global news websites like CNN and BBC, so they could find out what action the military and police were taking on the outside. Having found out that the military were evacuating a hoard of people from the Taj Chambers they went with their guns to manically shoot everyone hiding. Taj's very own chefs escorted their frightened customers out of the building with knives across their chests in an 'X' form like warriors. The General Manager of Taj witnessed his wife and children shot before him, and the next day he went back to picking up the pieces of the tragedy. Back to work was also the attitude the famous Leopold's café took by reopening their doors the very next day as well. They still have a bullet hole on their wall to symbolize the tragedy.

The dust has yet to completely settle on the aftermath of the tragedy. Being in India just a month after the attacks, New Year's Eve was a sombre celebration with clubs closing early and raves in Goa confined to the day. However, now a new kind of resilience has been fostered. The youth have created an imminent spark for change. Protests raged on with placards saying 'Bring back the bar women, maybe they can save us' and 'India needs leaders not dealers'. There was even an immediate firing of political leader the day after. Many young university students no longer want to build careers abroad. They want to stay in Mumbai and foster its entrepre-

As an exceeding amount of Indians feel vulnerable and unprotected by their leaders, a realization has dawned of the pressing need to vote

neurial spirit.

Nearly 50 per cent of Indians are under 25 years old, thus making it one of the youngest democracies in the world. As an exceeding amount of Indians feel vulnerable and unprotected by their leaders, a realization has dawned of the pressing need to vote and ensure that Mumbai's governance does not fall back into a passive state. Many believe that this might be a turning point in India's political history. Politicians previously used opportunities like this to garner votes by creating a communal tension, but this has not been allowed to happen. Here is one concrete change so far: India's defence spending would grow by 25 per cent in 2009-10 as it moves to modernise its weapons systems.

Mumbai is still healing but its recovery will not be due to the government but rather the local people. It is the General Manager who at the point of despair, carried on working for the sake of his country, the bravery of chefs who took it as their duty to escort their customers to safety, and the waiters in a small tourist café that had the determination the next morning to open their doors to a new day of business. What eleven months has shown is that the country's uplifted spirit lives on through its people. It is these people at a local level who have won the trust and confidence of India and the world for full recovery and progression onwards. It seems more fitting than ever to have a tiger, symbolizing the fearlessness, strength and elegance of India. As the recent movie, 'Wake up Sid', quoted, "Mumbai is as tough as it is beautiful".



Flickr user: Thomas Hawk

The Facebook generation

Mazida Khatun considers how Facebook is affecting our relationship with 'friends'

Facebook is meant to bring us closer to the people we want to stay in contact with, or even new people that we might otherwise forget about, but when I log on and see that some people have hundreds, or even over a thousand so called 'facebook friends', I wonder whether communication is really made easier by social networking sites. For one thing, these insanely popular people must be unable to open their chat portals, which at the best of times tend to malfunction monumentally, without bringing the whole thing down when someone with 1,001 friends attempts to chat with whoever is online. I am proud to say that I seem to have survived several Facebook friend purges in recent times, but at other times I have noticed my number of friends dwindling. My ego tries to find out who these abandoners might be, but I can never figure it out which shows that these individuals were probably not my nearest and dearest.

This leaves me quite grateful that I no longer receive status updates on people who I couldn't care less about if I'm honest. What is the point of Facebook if we are enduring inane status updates such as "OMG X Factor has me ROFL" from people we barely know? At least if I actually know the person, I can feel comfortable

in pointing out that by watching X Factor they are pushing actual valuable information out of their heads, or I could even just ask what on earth ROFL means.

For those with more friends than there are habitants in Liechtenstein, I wonder about how they suffer the forest of constant updates about people they have no tangible connection with, and find those priceless nuggets of news from the people that they truly care about. How many of us have taken the advice of the good people at Facebook, who have recently been reminding us to re-connect with the "friends" we haven't interacted with on the site for a while?

However, there is something to be said about the fact that with over 200 million users all over the world, we can find nearly everyone on Facebook that we could ever wish to find. This means that when we all graduate from such an international university as the LSE and thus go off to each of the far flung corners of the world, we will be able to have one single forum to reunite on if we wish to do so. On the other hand, you might be one of those weird individuals who become obsessed with collecting "friends" with a particular name, as I have found several times when people have attempted to collect me as an individual with the surname 'Khatun'.

Only the most emotionally needy would describe every dimension of how they are feeling at any given time

The crux of this debate is the same that we have about any tool – does the technology promote good or bad habits? The answer to this debate is the same as all the others, and that is that all instruments have the potential to be useful to both ends. We cannot blame the creators of Facebook of anything we see as a detrimental effect of the site. Instead, it has unleashed perfectly human and natural behaviour. It plays on our curiosity thus we snoop around other people's profiles; it feeds our egos and so we like to add lots of "friends"; and it makes us feel part of people's lives to attach photo images and videos to the things that they describe to us.

However, I think that the most interesting way in which Facebook actually has impacted upon communication is evident when we look at the kinds of status updates are posted. Of course some are about our trivial pursuits, or commentary on events, but the third category are actually those in which we share a tiny little bit about how we feel. Only the most emotionally needy would describe every dimension of how they are feeling at any given time, but the rest of us reveal parts of our psyche that we might otherwise not have done. To even allude to one's emotion in a heavily veiled and ambigu-

ous comment which no one else really understands can be a release. To just say post a sad emoticon can make people feel a little better, and I think this is to be commended. Those who are so self-centred that they feel the need to share every single thought that they have will always find ways of doing this, whether in person or online.

Yet Facebook is replacing journals and diaries in a world where we don't seem to write anything down anymore, for those who are a little more introverted, but still crave the liberation of sharing their thoughts. In this way, Facebook may very well be a good facilitator of communication, but in most ways it is nothing truly revolutionary. It merely provides a new channel for expressing our pre-set personalities, rather than changing the way in which we communicate, hence the people who are already extroverts have many friends and always update their profiles, while the more introverted behave in a way that is concurrent with how they behave in their non-virtual life. Thus the onus remains on individuals to use social networking sites in the way that they feel is right for them, and Facebook cannot change this.

LSE Diary

Personal perspective: Being in Berlin

Kim Wall shares the euphoria of celebrating the fall of the Berlin Wall



had so much symbolic significance? The wall divided not only a city, a nation and its people, but signaled the ever-growing gap between East and West. The crumbling Iron Curtain was - and still is - a victory for people across the globe. Representing primary human rights, democracy and the immense power of a grassroots revolution, its fall was not caused by the decisions of politicians as much as by the people. These values, essential to all of us, are even more so for those still locked up behind barricades in other parts of the world. The Chinese "Great Fire Wall" of internet censorship; the 2500 mile Indian-Bangladeshi barrier spanning through villages and even houses, and most notably the "Berlin Wall" of our generation - the Israeli West-Bank barricades - all remain to this day. These physical or psychological walls as well as the many others not mentioned here, should appear less and less justifiable in the light of the weekend's celebrations. Perhaps the vast funds invested in this "Fest der Freiheit" (Festival of Freedom) are then the most well-spent on this side of the recession. Anything that could embarrass and push these policy-makers towards a new era of glasnost by showing the obsolescence and absurdity of these kinds of artificial dividers must come without a price tag.

Twenty years ago, I was actually, coincidentally, in Germany. I wasn't in Berlin, so I did therefore miss out on the sight of families, friends and lovers falling into each others' arms, and of soldiers

putting their Kalashnikovs down to pop champagne with the joyous masses. Being two and a half years old I don't remember much of what I did see: the massive currents of East Germans streaming into West to enjoy newfound liberties. These included wearing clothes in colours other than grey, blue and brown; listening to whatever music one liked; commenting on and possibly criticising politicians; eating bananas every day. Individual freedom can be embodied in such small things. After witnessing and sharing the unrestrained joy on 9 November 2009, I am not sure I can imagine this feeling, minus 2 decades worth of depreciation. It is probably just too grand for a youth born and raised in Sweden - a country with one of the longest democratic traditions on the planet - to grasp.

The importance of acknowledging historic events such as this one is allegorical. By celebrating the twentieth birthday of a united Germany, we can put the Iron Curtain into perspective. Furthermore, it is the perfect opportunity to acknowledge the situation of peoples divided and oppressed elsewhere. This, rather than celebrating a historic turning point, is why the world leaders are present today. It is for the individuals behind these remaining walls that the celebrations today are so significant. The Berlin Wall is fundamentally a metaphor, telling us how it is possible, and necessary, to knock down walls in the lives of people less fortunate than the Berliners.

When I arrive at Brandenburger Tor it seems like most of the anticipated several hundred thousand people are already there. I get swallowed by a crowd only some fifty meters from the stage where the Berlin wall used to be two decades ago, minutes before the celebrations of the anniversary are due to begin. I am already soaking wet in the pouring autumn rain, but two Frenchmen hold an umbrella over my head. Just ahead of me barricades and policemen obstruct the path to the scene. Due to security reasons they cannot let any more people into the area, which seems ridiculous considering the vast space available in front of us.

However, this is clearly not the day to erect walls. Cheerfully chanting the 1989 slogan, "Wir sind ein Volk!" ("We are one people"), my fellow bystanders break the provisional fence, their running accompanied by laughter. It happens in the blink of an eye and the police can merely protest. As I run with them in what could count as my first riot, I get a vague conception of how something similar took place on the same night exactly twenty years earlier - only on an infinitely larger scale.

Somehow I make it all the way to the Brandenburger gates, where the speakers line up after the performance of the Berlin philharmonic orchestra. Hillary Clinton, Angela Merkel, Gordon Brown, Dmitri Medvedev, Nicolas Sarkozy, Lech Walesa. They are all here save Mr. Obama,

who instead pays tribute through a speech aired live from the White House on huge TV screens. The air is steamy from the rain and excitement. Being here is a bit like standing in the front row at a rock concert, only that much more intense. The most significant speaker is perhaps Mikhail Gorbachev - the Soviet leader who in 1987 was explicitly asked by Reagan to "tear down that wall", and who was responsible for introducing glasnost, a precondition for the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Behind me stand 1000 unique man-sized dominoes, decorated by children, artists and poets from across the globe. Forming a symbolic wall, their trail stretches from Potsdammer Platz, past Brandenburger Tor and onwards to the Reichstag. The last speaker is José Manuel Barroso, Chairman of the European Commission, who has the privilege of toppling the first domino. As they tumble one by one, few eyes are left dry and the cheers of thousands of people are accompanied by fireworks.

The American girls to my left ask me to take a photograph of them in front of the Brandenburger monument during Hillary's speech, while the Frenchmen to my right embrace and share a cigar "Pour la liberté!" Around me I see African and Asian people as well as, obviously, plenty of Germans with their own wall-related stories to tell. Indeed, all of us have our reasons to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Berlin wall.

Has a human construction ever before



What if...

China sold its \$800 billion in US government securities?

Noah Bernstein

China isn't only something you set the table with." Words of wisdom brought to you by renowned internationalist Sarah Palin upon returning from a visit to the Middle Kingdom where she learned, among other things, how to use chopsticks. Something else the former Alaskan governor discovered much to her dismay, is that China is the proud owner of \$800 billion of US government debt.

How did this happen? While the US and China may seem like a sparring couple on the international stage, their economic relationship is considerably more intimate: for the past decade China has been the top to America's bottom. In wooing the United States, a 'developing' China lent vast amounts of money to rich America, so that the latter could spend that money on cheaply-made Chinese goods, and thus send the money right back to China. These dollars were then lent by China again in the form of American debt, the cycle repeating ad infinitum (this is somewhat of a simplification: China's efforts to undervalue the Yuan should also be considered). China eventually became America's number one sugar daddy, owning more US Treasury Bills than perennial leader Japan. This all seemed to be working until the precipitous drop in the dollar, and the cosy "Chimerican" (as coined by Niall Ferguson and Moritz Schularick) relationship is now headed towards a possible divorce.

What would happen if China decided to cut their losses and sell their accumulated trove of US debt? Simply put, the dollar would crash. And we're not talking a few points. 62 per cent of global trade is transacted in US dollars, and so chaos would reign supreme in the markets, as everyone - banks, governments, individuals - tried to unload their rapidly-depreciating dollars as fast as they could, increasing the rate at which the dollar would become useless. This devaluation would also lighten China's wallet: their \$800 billion would fetch only a fraction of that when they did decide to sell. The very thin silver lining, if the dollar ever did stabilize, would be a dramatic increase in the competitiveness of American exports.

But it is unlikely, at least in the near future, that China would make such an irrational move. While logically China's position should provide significant economic and political leverage, in reality the United States is holding them hostage with their own debt. So what if China decided to stop buying US debt and starting looking to another currency for prominence on the world market? While the Euro may not currently be ready for such attention, the day of reckoning is coming when the US dollar will be abandoned by its creditors.

There is one other solution to this mess. As proposed by an LSE finance expert, China could offer all American debt to the United States, in exchange for the state of Alaska. The would cause little upset to the international economic system and, above all, would enable Sarah Palin to learn how to use chopsticks in her home state, saving her the trouble of a trip to Hong Kong. In this scenario, everyone's a winner.

Measured musings



Flickr user Alain Bachellier

Rumours of Google's evil nature almost certainly originates from its informal motto, 'Don't be evil'. The logic follows that since no other multi-national company needs to tell itself not to be evil, Google must be just that. We continue to tell ourselves this as we attempt to navigate through the googplex of Google products: Maps, Mobiles, Talk, Mail, Earth, Scholar, Calendar, Documents, Images, Videos (Youtube) and most recently Wave. It is very hard in fact, to find a sector that Google isn't investing into.

If anything, Google is a perfect example of the Nobel Prize winning Ronald Coase's firm which arises when transactions costs are low. This, Coase suggests, will lead to economic and social benefits. This is hardly debatable when one imagines the internet without Google and begs the very simple question: How would we find anything? Yet with that in mind, it is worth noting that a company that can

dominate can, nonetheless, still be evil.

Google's evil may be found in its implicit support of the 'Great Firewall of China'. Google does have a presence in the People's Republic of China (PRC), yet this is a highly limited and censored version. A version which does not provide all available information and helps continue the stranglehold over information in the PRC.

Closer to home, people fear the roving van that takes pictures of our cities, streets and homes all in aid of the latest project, Google 'Streetview'. People do not fear the pictures in and of themselves, what they fear is the accumulation of information by a corporate entity. They worry that their emails may be stored for decades to come or that their online profile, as compiled by online search engines like Google, Bing or Yahoo! may be less than flattering.

They fear that Google is gathering too much information and actually making their life too simple. In the least cynical sense possible, while people like to have books recommended to them on Amazon

(based on previous purchases), they are fearful of suggested websites or adverts based upon Google searches. They worry about pictures of their homes, videos of their children or their family's health records (as suggested by David Cameron) being misused. Information is a precious commodity and something that can undoubtedly be abused.

Whether Google is evil or not is a moot point. Revelations about Google's shady nature are no more revelatory than suggestions that other multi-national vertically integration firms may be untrustworthy. The fact is, Google is able to provide a service. Furthermore, this is a service that people crave and have come to depend upon. For years we have known that the coffee industry was morally bankrupt, yet the demand for coffee rarely if ever dwindled.

The difference with Google is what this accumulation of searches, images, word documents, videos and emails means for the future. It forces us to ask

questions about freedom of speech and how much information we are willing to give away to Google or other social entities like Facebook, Twitter or Flickr. It forces us to question our entire relationship with the internet.

Ossie Fikret
Features Editor



Flickr user: blmurch

How and why to get to Sesame Street

Madeeha Ansari pays tribute to forty years of the classic children's show

Entertaining adults is simple; their preferences can be classed into such easily identifiable categories. When they pick up the remote, they have the option of switching to any number of variations of "Gossip Girl", "Chelsea vs Arsenal" or "How I Met Your Mother". Whatever their intellectual pretensions may be, a dose of raunchy humour keeps much of the public quite happy. Children's television, on the other hand, is a far more complex phenomenon.

For children, television has the potential to be much more than a form of escapism. Of course, the advent of Cartoon Network trimmed a great deal of this complexity, bringing children that much closer to adulthood. When "Sesame Street" premiered about forty years ago, however, it opened up a vast area of possibilities. The idea was to tap the humour, creativity and impressionability that is dulled over the years, till the unresponsive adolescent steps in. At the time, it was really a means to reach out to underprivileged inner city children and get them interested in letters and numbers. That was why the set consisted of an ordinary brownstone street lifted right from the real world. Out of this urban graffiti'd landscape stepped Jim Henson's fantastic troupe of muppets, with distinctive talents and roles in life.

When they think of "Sesame Street", most people immediately think of Big Bird. Let not his big bright yellow-ness eclipse the rest of the crew, however.

Count von Count, with his dark abode and obsession with numbers, had a range of clever tricks to teach children how to count and add. Elmo was so widely loved that the production team thought it appropriate to expand her "world". Kermit was a bit of a nerd. The Cookie Monster, Oscar the Grouch and the Bert-Ernie duo were interesting enough to raise their own sets of controversy over the decades.

The point remains that there was more to the show than colourful costumes and catchy jingles. While originally developed with a defined curriculum to enhance preschool learning, it also reflected the shifting societal trends. Watching the archived programmes from 1969 to the present day could serve as a chronological account of the issues faced by the average American. From teaching tolerance and racial integration to dealing with obesity and 9/11, "Sesame Street" has been gently shaping children's understanding of the wider world.

There are those who would disagree with its didactic mission; of course, it is essentially preachy. As each generation moves faster towards cynicism, the show has also experienced a steady fall in its popularity. Perhaps this has something to do with the loss in spontaneity brought by concerns about political correctness. Now, the Cookie Monster is fast becoming a Veggie Monster, while Oscar is having to deal with his anger management issues. The set has become cleaner and tamer, catering to a different kind of audience. The transition towards "healthy-eating"

The idea was to tap the humour, creativity and impressionability that is dulled over the years, till the unresponsive adolescent steps in

themes was happening even in the '90s while I was growing up, so I got to see the "Cereal Girl" spoof of Madonna's "Material Girl", starring a perky blonde muppet with a pony-tail. I must admit, I still found it rather brilliant.

While the Western world is moving towards different coloured pastures, children elsewhere are discovering how to get to Sesame Street via local vehicles. The non-profit "Sesame Workshop" has created twenty five international co-productions, in partnership with indigenous teams that give the show the flavour of each unique country. In 2003, for instance, "Takalani Sesame" introduced Kami, the first HIV-positive Muppet, to address the AIDS epidemic in South Africa. The Workshop ensures that the core values of optimism and tolerance are upheld, by stipulating that initially the script of each programme be approved by the New York executives. The balance becomes particularly hard to strike in places where the media is highly politicized. Imagine creating muppets to deal with the prevalent issues in Palestine.

In fact, the story of the Sesame Workshop's presence in Palestine is a nutshell version of the conflict in the Middle East. It started out as an effort to bridge the rift between the Israeli and Palestinian populations, so that there would be a single show for both sides of the borders. This could not be sustained due to a history of irreconcilable differences, as well as the strong opposition to "normalization" of relations. Neither side wanted to show

the other's flag, or even cultural dress. According to Khalil Abu Arafah, the head writer for the Palestinian show, "the issue of hummus and falafel was very heated." Those who have seen the musical comedy "West Bank Story" will be able to tell how far even the rivalry over ownership of food traditions can go.

Interestingly enough, the joint Israeli-Palestinian production eventually fell apart after a failure to decide where the characters from the different communities could interact with each other. Now the Palestinian script-writers are faced with the classic dilemma of balancing fantasy and reality. In a zone that has known little but conflict, it is not easy to produce a children's show.

It is not easy to produce a good children's show, period. Little people often see more than we appreciate. For years, "Sesame Street" has been acknowledging their insightfulness, while preserving their sense of wonder. The eclectic mix of musical, whimsical characters never forgot that children were children and had a right to believe in love, friendship, miracles and clichés. At the same time they had more substance than the Teletubbies, more depth than Barney, and far more intellect than "Cow and Chicken" or "Johnny Bravo" can ever hope to possess. No matter what the current ratings may be, it will always retain the status of a classic in the history of popular culture.

Social

The small comforts Hall benefits

Poorna Harjani thoroughly enjoys living at home

There are two ways of looking at the experience of living at home during university. It either offers the best of both worlds, or otherwise the worst of them. Living in halls last year was undoubtedly a vital first step for most students towards independence, branching out into diverse social circles and embarking upon many cherished memories. However, there also existed the perils of too much freedom which gave way to petty dramas, unstructured routines and sometimes unsatisfactory living quarters. Like myself, many domestic UK students have chosen to stay at home after their initial year in halls. This, to some, may seem bizarre, but let me paint you a picture of the advantages of living at home: there is no need to ensure drunken knocks after Crush, fire alarms at 3am during the exam revision period, and flooding which makes the floors reek. I can light up candles as I please and not have to deal with receptionists putting my Amazon packages in the wrong post box and accidentally spelling my name in different variations of 'Porn'.

Life is more structured. My groceries are done, my bills are paid, my bedsheets cleaned, and the broadband internet is connected.

An in-built support system plays host to emotional advantages. You can go home and shut your door without worrying about being unsociable. Your family understands you if you come home and



Photo: flickr user Andreas Solberg

slam the door from a tiresome day. They won't get the wrong idea that you may have a 'problem' with them.

Students forge bonds over when they live in common living conditions, created by events organised by hall committees. Without this, it just means one needs to launch oneself on to the social scene with extra gusto, joining societies and attending more events on campus. I even got invited as a Living at Home student to attend a meeting to share my perceptions of the LSE Students' Union, and what it could do better to include those not living in halls.

Living at home can be a strong predictor of a student studying during term-time. My prime focus is academic and any extra-curricular activity that I take on. Life is more structured. My groceries are done, my bills are paid, my bed sheets cleaned, and the broadband internet is connected. You think you'd go to every lecture, being down the road... in contrast, living at home makes you stay at LSE the whole day and actually work during breaks in the library.

Eating habits are also much healthier, with no more ready made meals. It's a whole lifestyle change when you go back

to live with your parents. Its perks are ones that ease a person in their second and third years when there is less scope to go out too. Being in halls isn't also necessarily more cost-effective than sharing a flat with friends. Prices have dramatically increased in High Holborn this year.

Economic expediency influences students' decisions to stay local, and so studying while living at home is a growing trend in England. This is due to the widening participation of students from more diverse backgrounds, many of whom are less likely to endorse the stereotype of student life that emphasises the importance of leaving home.

They say that it is when you live with someone that you really get to know them. However, I appreciate that bit of distance I have with my friends. When we meet to have coffee, it is because we want to, not because we're bound to live together or we move in the same social circle. Second year can be a haven away from the stresses of university life, with no more awkward lift conversations. First years have all the fun they want with keepsake memories embedded in solid friendships. My question is, why repeat something that will be mediocre the second time round?

Rahel Abraham loves company

Does living in halls make you smarter? Unlikely, but not completely implausible. Although this is probably not the most common association that is made, it can be validly argued (at least for the sake of being a devil's advocate), that surprisingly, students are likely to have a better academic performance when living in LSE accommodations.

If asked to imagine the typical life of a student today, the first image that would come to mind would probably include the somewhat idolized American concept of the college experience; incredible parties, empty beer bottles, apparent memory loss and late classes in the morning. A nostalgic, ageless stereotype, most often set within the backdrop of living amongst your somewhat everlasting friends.

Does living in halls make you smarter?

Needless to say, stereotypes are often based on some notion of truth, and the LSE is no exception when it comes to this particular theme; upon being asked to describe her first year experience in Halls, a student referred to it as "pretty damn good", making a point to reminisce about the nightlife, her newly found independence and crowding the corridors in the early hours of the morning. Another student, perhaps more romantically, put it as "living for the nights you don't remember, with the people you will never forget".

Against such wistful anecdotes, it might be difficult to imagine how anyone could view such a place as consisting of any form of academic atmosphere, let alone the ideal environment to help you thrive in your studies. However, as is custom with the LSE when concerning education, ambition and the expectation to achieve high targets have a large role to play in student accommodation atmosphere. It is important to keep in mind that many students at the school endure a

great amount of pressure, whether familial or self-imposed, and the community lifestyle found in Halls can be an encouraging and motivating source of social support.

Some students find that one of the most important things, when it comes to studying, is having a positive attitude towards your work, and it goes without saying that the people you surround yourself with can have a great influence on this. One of the students mentioned above believed that if there was anything about living in halls that had helped her academically, it is was friends; in short, the general atmosphere of being "in the same boat, and building on each other's confidence".

Of course, on perhaps a less fuzzy note, the predominantly corporate culture of the School and its air of competition is also evident (perhaps even more so) when people live together in the same building. In frantic times of job searching and scouting for internships, students may find that the greatest resource they have in these occasions is in fact, each other; indeed, it may be surprising for some to find that through sheer word of mouth and learning from the experiences of those surrounding you, a greater awareness can be developed, not only of where you want to go, but also of how exactly to get there.

So does living in Halls actually make you smarter? I think we can all agree that this can be safely termed as a somewhat "far-fetched" question. However, perhaps there is also some practical truth in that living in student Halls which are closer the LSE means that you don't spend several hours of your day trying to access school resources (or simply trying to get there, for that matter).

In any case, when it comes down to it, most people's experience of Halls, regardless of how it affects their studies, can often be described as the best time of their lives.

I personally strongly recommend it, because you see, there is really nothing to lose; for whatever reasons you may choose to stay there, Halls is, at best, something you fall in love with at first sight, and at worst...an acquired taste.

A German exchange

Christoph Kreileder explores the difference in lifestyle of Oxbridge and LSE students

Did you ever ask yourself how it might be to study in Cambridge? Do you sometimes wonder if people from Oxford do actually feel a bit like Harry Potter? Or have you ever been curious about what the LSE offers a student which you can't get there? Well, the LSESU German Society was, and therefore discussed these issues with Oxbridge students last weekend.

There is a saying in Cambridge that you never ask 'why' but 'since when'?

The societies' annual meeting started in the Old Building and soon moved to a couple of pubs in London. Aided by a large amount of alcohol and jokes, a lively discussion emerged concerning the different experiences at the three universities. Sometimes, you could easily make a guess as to who studied where. For instance, the percentage of those checking their BlackBerry or iPhone every five minutes was definitely higher among LSE students.

First of all though, it was determined that location really matters. Whilst student life at LSE is closely connected to the rhythm of the metropolis of London and has a very international touch, life at campus centered universities such as Oxbridge is closer to the one of an academic monastery. Students like Niklas (Oxford),

21, spoke of their daily routines: "For eight weeks you get up at six for rowing, have lectures at nine, stay all afternoon in the library ... and perhaps go out for a party in the evening." Whereas at the LSE student life is characterized by careers fairs, internships and an overwhelming variety of society-activities, students at Oxford and Cambridge seem to form a closely knitted community; along with music-clubs and other cultural activities, there is a much more familial ambience.

Another theme of the evening was tuition fees. In Germany, this had recently provoked a huge public outcry. Are there only 'rich kids' studying at Oxbridge

and LSE? According to Diana (LSE), 22, "people often just don't know that there is much support available. Your school has to provide you with this information." Many other students shared this view. However, they pointed out that people with a wealthier background were more likely to be accepted in one of the three universities, just because their schools gave them better support. Pupils in better off establishments simply get more information about the application process. The same applies for loans and support schemes. Benedict (Cambridge), 21, points out "there are up to three different types of loans available. The university re-

While the LSE is characterized by modern factors, life at Oxbridge still seems to resemble some fairy tales: "Some years ago, there was a student who rode to this final examination on a horse"

ally gives extensive support, you just have to know about it".

Moreover, everyone was curious to find out whether there was a 'stereotypical' student profile. The answer was: not really. Whereas it is surely true to consider Oxbridge-students to be very academic, students from Oxford and Cambridge agreed on Diana's remark that "even the people who focus very much on banking have broad interests. I just had a long discussion with a fellow-student going for investment banking about Kant's philosophy." What also turned out to be interesting for German students in general was the flexibility of the British system. Unlike in Germany, it is possible to work in a bank as a political scientist. From the students' point of view, this allows many to embrace their real interests at university.

Finally, what about the "Harry Potter" stories? How does it feel for a German student to become part of the time-honoured British traditions at Oxbridge, where you are supposed to kneel down in front of the principal in an old-fashioned cowl? "There is a saying in Cambridge that you never ask: 'why?' but 'since when?'" Benedict says with a smile. Yet, especially as a foreign student, you feel that "this is just like a fire being passed down generations." While the LSE is characterised by modern factors, life at Oxbridge still seems to resemble some fairy tales: "Some years ago, there was a student who rode to his final examination on a horse", Niklas remembers. This would surely not be a good idea on Kingsway.



Photo: Christoph Kreileder

The coming of Clive

Alexandra Kane introduces the LSE's new media outlet

A band played on the roof of the LSE last Thursday. Wayfarer and Post-It clad undergraduates were dancing to dub-step on Houghton Street. Dramatic music was pulsating through the windows of C120. People were screaming that someone named "Clive" was "coming." You have probably already heard of any combination of these activities around campus. But what was it all about?

Meet Clive, designed to be a new medium through which LSE students can interact and engage with, well, whatever they want to. Clive's arrival on campus was meant to cause a bit of a splash. Clive, which technically stands for Clare Market Review Live, was conceived as a tangential arm to the Clare Market Review, reflecting but not mirroring the content of the print publication. Blog-like in structure, Clive is a collection of submissions from myself, the editor, and links and articles that anyone who has access to the site has sent in. Right now we are featuring content ranging from anthropological obituaries to sex diaries, art installations to post-Chernobyl music videos. Open commenting is enabled, making the site one of the most

interactive student forums at the LSE.

Clive is still a work in progress. In the next few weeks a new feature titled The Agenda will be instated showcasing some of the most off-the-beaten-path, not-your-typical-union nights and places to see in our fine city. The most important element of the site is YOUR participation. The more users engage with Clive, commenting, and submitting their own material, the better Clive will be of service to the LSE community. You can access the site via Clare's main website, www.claremarketreview.com. There is a "submit" link in the welcome page that will place your material in a queue to be added to the site promptly by myself. We accept almost anything that will get you going, grind your gears, tickle your fancy— Clive is a neutral man.

Back to the roof. So, in a manner Guy Fawkes would definitely approve of, on November 5th Clive made his big rule bending debut on the streets of LSE. London based band, Beaty Heart, played a three minute set on the roof of the East Building that was streamed live on the Clare Market Review Website via campus computers and the UGM. Security busted our high-altitude jammers but not before

the impact was made. Clive was here and he's here to stay.

Clive's arrival on campus was meant to cause a bit of a splash

But what about the rest of the journal? Released termly, Clare's first issue is launching in week ten focusing on the theme of "borders and boundaries," as well as a web based section highlighting works on "identity." The other editors and I are very excited about this issue. Some of the tricks up our sleeve include a cover designed by London artist Hannah Bays, the woman behind album artwork of The Libertines and Babyshambles, and a launch party hosted at the Black Heart in Camden. The journal, one of the most elusive kids on the LSE Media block, is always open to submissions from any and all LSE students. Written pieces (fiction or non-fiction), poetry, original artwork and photography are among some of the work that Clare actively seeks to publish. If interested, feel free to submit any of the fruits of your creative labor to submissions@claremarketreview.com at any time during the year. We have contributor's meetings before each issue that will outline general themes, but there is always an audience for your work if you so choose to submit. The first issue will feature a majority of submissions from LSE students and staff, making the journal as reflective of the LSE SU as possible.

For the 2008-2009 school year, Clare Market Review was short listed for Publication Design of the Year and Diversity Writer of the Year at the Guardian Student Media Awards. Still pending the results of the shortlist, Clare is working on developing and expanding the journal even further. So come, meet Clive, get reacquainted with Clare, and help shape the future of your media group.



CLARE MARKET REVIEW GOES LIVE!

SOCIETIES: WANT YOUR PIECE OF BEAVER?

To get your societies' event listings featured within these hallowed pages of Social, fill in the online forms by midnight Saturday to be featured.

Log on to

www.thebeaveronline.co.uk



Photo: Clare Market Review

Re-discovering a nationality

Pallavi Kavdikar thinks multiculturalism is a great asset

After having spent all of my school years in international schools around Europe, I didn't really expect the LSE to surprise me in terms of the diversity of students. From reading the prospectus, I was not only aware of the world class teaching and public lectures of globally influential people, but also of the fact that over half the student body came from outside the EU. Hence, I really thought I would find myself at home, as the majority of students in the schools that I went to were not from the UK. However, I feel that my time at the LSE so far has done more than that.

At this university, I have found myself letting down barriers and changing my perceptions like never before. With so many events and different societies, I have had to work, live with, and fortunately become friends with people from the most diverse cultural and religious groups. Since most had never moved from their homeland, their stories have given me a real insight into intricate aspects of their lives. The varying positions on politics, development, religion, food, shops, studying, sex, marriage, divorce and life,

have made me reassess my own way of thinking, and consequently has made me more willing to explore my options in life. Also, I learn from their personal struggles as they try to cope with being far away from home. In spite of not being able to even speak to their loved ones for days (as the time difference may be too great) they still get on with their lives, and manage to give themselves at a hundred percent to whatever they set out to do. I admire them for doing this, and it makes me aspire to be strong, and continue to taking risks in my own life.

Secondly, I feel that I have been made to reconnect and reconcile myself as an Indian. While I have been to international schools in Europe, I felt that I never truly accepted who I was culturally, primarily because I didn't meet a great number of Indians in my schools. As a result, I never fully embraced my nationality and frankly, I never truly took any pride in it. At the LSE, with so many Indian nationals, and people of Indian origin, I have reconnected with India the way I never did even when I was in the country itself. I have learned to appreciate all the cultures of India, not only the part of the country

(Maharashtra) that I was used to. Only last year, I watched my first Bollywood film in the cinema! Unlike previous attempts where I left after five minutes, I really enjoyed it. Maybe it was just a good movie, but I felt more that as a group of friends, I was truly allowed to appreciate my culture and its quirks, without feeling that I was excluding anyone else.

Finally, although the LSE has made me proud of my heritage, and some of my closest friends are Indian, just as many of them, if not most, are not; for me, the pride in my heritage still is no excuse to rest in my cultural niche. Moreover, my experience has made me question what it is to be integrated and what it is to be international. Is it just the recognition of diverging cultures? Is it integration only possible through the formation of friendships? Assuming all of these are part of a broad criterion, then to what extent do we integrate as a student body? Some people say that while the LSE is a diverse group of students, this diversity has not necessarily led to the integration of the student body in the area of friendships. Some say that the Chinese only hang out together in the Chinese Development Society, Indians in the Hindu/SPICE society, Christians in the Christian Union, Muslims in the Islamic Society, and the Europeans in their respective societies. While I have observed this to be true in very few instances, I really believe that ultimately, it comes down to the attitude of that individual person and whether they are willing to take that extra step out of their comfort zone, broaden their horizons and make friends outside their own traditional social groups. Fortunately, I feel that students for the most part, do this. Irrespective of their nationality or background, most who are here genuinely have an awareness of their role in society and in the international scene. This is what unites us. I truly believe that there is no other university quite as international as the LSE.

Fishing for cultures

Shrayans Agrawal loves diversity

Having grown up in an international environment, xenophobia is a concept unknown to me. Continuously studying in international schools where a class of nine had eight different nationalities spanning the Middle East, Europe, South Asia and the Orient, I have never understood those who treat other cultures 'differently'. The feeling of knowing you are an international, a global citizen is exceptional, as if realising the world is your canvas and you can paint it in whatever colour you so desire.

Circling in the sky, suspended as time dragged slowly, I was full of anticipation as Heathrow awaited my landing. I did not know what to expect, if I should have expected anything at all. Anxiety. That is the only way I can describe how I felt as I

I felt like Nemo floating into the ocean...

arrived and was rushed through the immigration procedure wondering how being a "freshie" would be regarded, and how I would be treated as a result. Early on, every day at halls I met people from different countries: Ireland, England, France and Germany. Interacting with people from diverse backgrounds with so many stories to share, I felt like Nemo floating into the ocean, scared yet wanting to explore what was "out there".

Freshers' week was a unique experience. The unending energy is almost frightening; the thirst to meet new people shuts off the associated xenophobia of being in such an international environment. Not once was I made to feel I was different in an insulting manner; rather, I was completely accepted as an individual.

The fact that there are so many people from different nationalities definitely allows you to find groups of people you are more comfortable with. In reality, interacting with people from the most diverse range of nationalities yet at the same time retaining your culture and not moulding yourself to adapt to the surroundings is a unique prospect. Hence, if anything, being far away from your homeland gives you a greater sense of belonging. The LSE isn't a perfect substitute, but it is adequate enough to keep you reminded of who you are and where you have come from.

So why the claim that racial issues exist on campus? In all likelihood, it stems from the fact that 'cultural' cliques are common, which I think is natural as humans will seek those with similar interests. Because they will have had similar background, relating to them is easier. Taking a daring step to get to know people you can't relate to is not something everyone can accomplish immediately. However, people should try to experience and adapt to new cultures, otherwise they will never be able to broaden their horizons. It is all about the perception you have whilst countering a new situation. C'est la vie, is the only way to put it.

Adapt, mould, reflect. People all have common needs which they will seek to accomplish, the only distinguishing factor being the approach; and that is the fun of it. We have a unique opportunity to merge our experiences with others, and gain the most unique insights possible. This privileged opportunity has only come about because of the inherent nature of the LSE, which I am greatly thankful for. Over the past year I have met many interesting and unique people, an opportunity I would not have had if I wasn't here. This is one of the things students will remember from their time at LSE; the people they have met and the experiences they have shared. Make the most of this and don't let cultural differences bog you down!



Photo: flickr user Hans on Experience

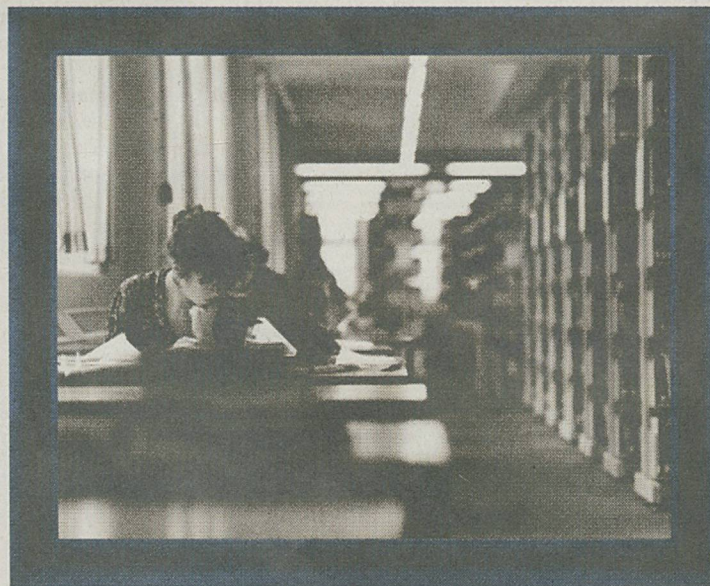
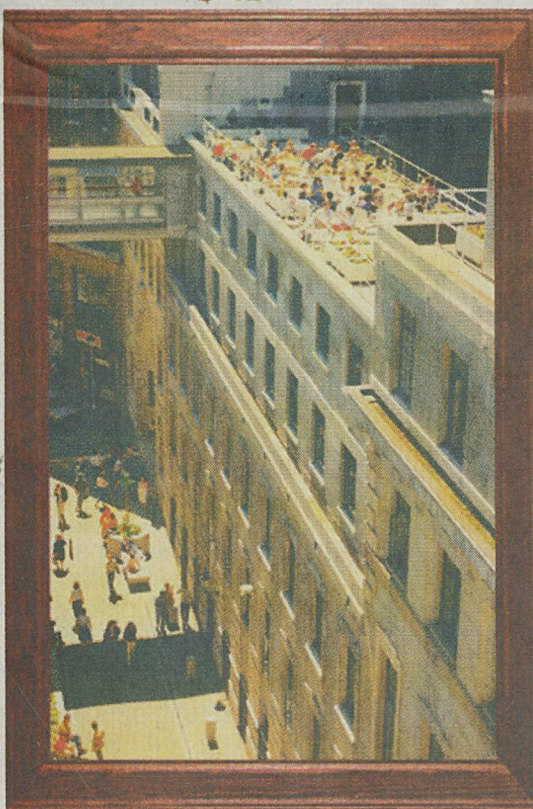
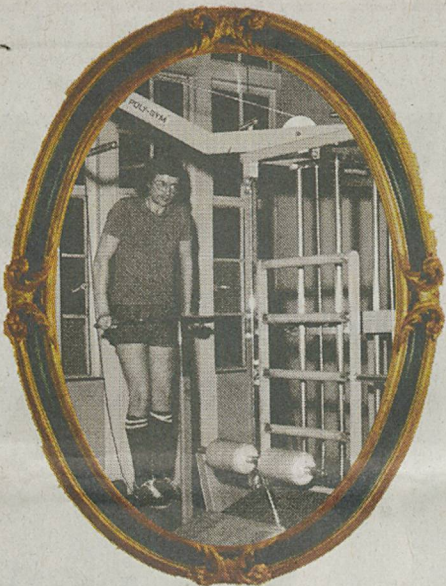
LSE IN HISTORY

On 3rd November the first phase of "LSE: A History in Pictures" went live on Flickr. The project, generously funded by the Annual Fund, delves into the archives to bring a wide range of historic photographs out of obscurity. So far around 500 images dating from the 1890s to the 1990s, have been digitised, capturing various aspects of LSE life through the ages.

In recent years, increasing interest has been shown towards historic images of LSE by academic researchers, family historians, the media as well as our own staff and students. Recently the SU used some of the archive photographs in their renovation of the Underground. Previously the images were accessed only by the select few who were willing to sift through a variety of different collections and look through them in the reading room. Now they will be openly accessible on the Flickr site, where students past and present will be able to comment, add their own memories and use them for their own events or research. The project is ongoing until May 2010 by which time there will be over 1000 images available.



For more archive images, visit...
www.flickr.com/lselibrary



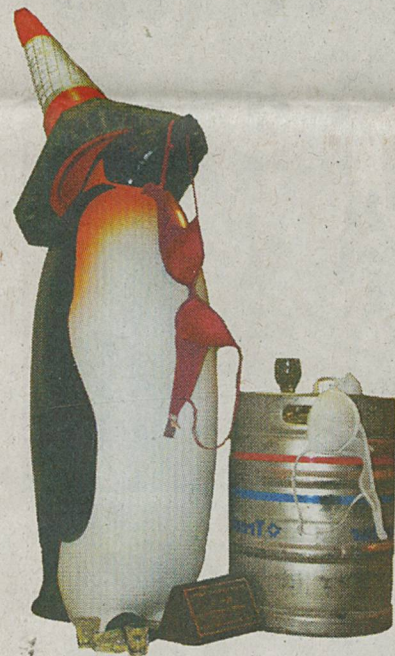
League Update

We welcome some new players to the game and evaluate the good, the bad, and the ugly after a chaotic night of Pub Golf last Wednesday

The AU fantasy league launched last week to much excitement/horror/outrage. As this was the first week since we published our player valuations, it was a perfect opportunity for us to see who lived up to their ratings, who exceeded expectations and who let themselves down. Pub Golf is always a test of alcohol tolerance, and night-on-the-lash endurance, and it didn't disappoint.

Apologies to those who found themselves omitted from last week's list of player valuations. We hope the new players prove themselves to be valuable assets to their respective teams.

Here's our hits and misses of the week, along with the players we forgot to include. For the full valuations list, visit www.thebeaveronline.co.uk. Please keep the teams coming in to sports@thebeaveronline.co.uk



Beaver Team

Megan Protheroe	£22.5m
Tom Davies	£20m
G-Crow	£20m
Anna Swirski	£17.5m
Tim Cooper	£15m
Felicity Homewood	£7.5m
Rob Fenton	£-2.5m
Total	£100m

Players of the Week

G-Crow (FC) £20m
1 (Tuns)+
1 (Zoo)+
3 (Drunk and disorderly)+
4 (Fighting)+
10 (Shag) = **19pts**

Ruth Vinon (WFC) £17.5m
1 (Tuns)+
1 (Zoo)+
3 (Drunk and disorderly)+
10 (Shag) = **15pts**

"Unknown" rugby lad (RFC)
1 (Tuns)+
1 (Zoo)+
3 (Drunk and v. disorderly)+
4 (Thrown out of Zoo) +
4x4 (4 bouncers needed to evict him) = **25pts**

Top of the Flops

Tom Lennon (RFC) £22.5m -
1 (Tuns)+
1 (Zoo)+
2 (Drunk and pathetic) = **4pts**

Player Valuations

Megan Protheroe (Netball)	£22.5m
Hayley Fiksen (Netball)	£17.5m
Kendall Bora (Tuns)	£17.5m
Ashleigh King (Tuns)	£15m
Jake Greenland (Tuns)	£12.5m
Frank the Tank (Tuns)	£17.5m
Joe Coney (Tuns)	£12.5m
Chris Knight (Tuns)	£10m
Mel Mok (Tuns)	£15m
Hazel Lucian (Tuns)	£15m
Ema O'Reilly (Tuns)	£7.5m
Olivia Capra (Tuns)	£7.5m
Marina Boterashvili (Tuns)	£12.5m
Lis Toombast (Tuns)	£12.5m
Jess Stubbs (Tuns)	£15m
Arun Kalra (RFC)	£17.5m
Ruth Vinon (WFC)	£17.5m
Shanx Tandon (Hockey)	£22.5m
Luke Davies (Hockey)	£20m
Neel Popat (Hockey)	£17.5m
Krishnan Patel (Hockey)	£17.5m
Chris Cattermole (Hockey)	£12.5m
Shaz (Hockey)	£12.5m
Ellis Savva (Hockey)	£10m
Ian Scanlon (Hockey)	£10m
Rob Turner (Hockey)	£10m
Dan Steene (Hockey)	£5m
Alison Chadwick (Hockey)	£20m
Christina Ivanova (Hockey)	£17.5m
Clare Pickering (Hockey)	£17.5m
Octavia Larentis (Hockey)	£17.5m
Emma Heap (Hockey)	£15m
Kathryn Eastwood (Hockey)	£15m
Fiona Wills (Hockey)	£15m
Emma Haugh (Hockey)	£12.5m
Caroline Matthews (Hockey)	£12.5m
Olga Turner (Hockey)	£12.5m
Bridget Parker (Hockey)	£12.5m
Dru Davis (Hockey)	£12.5m
Mary Mactaggart (Hockey)	£12.5m
Shilpa Rajagopal (Hockey)	£12.5m
Mel Takle (Hockey)	£12.5m
Roberta Taggar (Hockey)	£12.5m
Pete Rickett (FC)	£10m
Ali Higson (FC)	£12.5m
Alex 'Sleepy Lion' Pearce (FC)	£12.5m
Crispy Duck Cotton	£10m
Sachin	£5m
Joel Ong	£5m
Ben Prommawin	£5m
Ruge	£2.5m
Anil Bagga	£5m
Jon Nolan	£12.5m

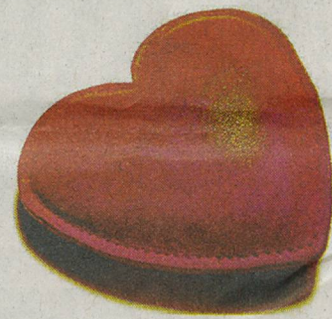
Concept

- Managers pick a squad of 7 players.
- Players earn points based on their Wednesday night performance (according to the scoring system outlined below).
- Teams may be changed at Christmas.
- The team with the most points at Easter wins.
- There will be a "Player of the Week" every week.
- Point scoring behaviour must be backed up by photos/3 witnesses/generally accepted rumour.
- Submit teams to sports@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Points system

Out (Tuns) on a Wednesday night	1 pt
Out (Zoo) on a Wednesday night	1 pt
Drunk (visibly)	2 pts
Drunk (and disorderly)	3 pts
Collecting lost items from zoo on Thursday	3 pts
Nudity (cock or breasts)	4 pts
Fight	4 pts
Thrown out	4 pts
Pull	5 pts
Shag	10 pts
Arrested	20 pts
Throwing up	-2 pts
Taking someone home but not converting	-10 pts
Cheating on partner	Double points
Threesome	Triple points

Rugby Boy's Lonely Hearts



M, 6'2". In my world three is most definitely the magic number. Adores weightlifting, XBOX and Uz. Seeks a number of women, preferably with open minds. Replies to box 0104.

M, 6'. Welshman with a ginger perm seeks woman who enjoys romantic walks round Trafalgar Square. Don't worry, they don't have to lead to anything. Other interests include captaining university rugby third teams. Replies to box 0307.

M, 6'1". Seeks Moira Hindley or like-minded individual. Replies to Box 0208.

M, 5'10". Two personalities for the price of one. Passion for fine red wines. Seeks straightjacket.

M, 5,10". Enjoys gin based drinking games and 2nd Year. Seeks catholic girl willing to turn the other cheek. Or without Facebook. Replies to box 0113.

M,6'. Seeks training partner. Must have sub 20min 1.5k swim time, sub 59min 40k bike time and sub 36min 10k run time. Replies to box 0106.

M, 5'11". Ideal woman must be able to impersonate Ringo Starr. Enjoys expensive watches, Ralph Lauren clothing and Netballers. Seeks woman immediately for an easy life. Replies to box 0102.

M, 6'2". My idols include Jon Jonsson, Gok Wan and Derek Zoolander. If you ogle the men in Freemans and Matalan catalogues, I'm your type. Seeking size 0 catwalk model, preferably with drug problem. Replies to box 0108

M, 5'6". Seeks KFC female employees for staff discount. And maybe more... if you're blonde. Replies to box 0214

M, 6'2". Aladin-esque Rugby player

seeks his very own 'Jenny-in-a-bottle'. If unavailable, any 'honey' from the Hadramaut Valleys will suffice. Replies to box 0105

M, 5'11". Self-styled HR 'guru' with a love for Bhangra, Maximuscle and Injuries. Looking for obedient bar-woman for a free taxi home on Fridays. Same blood type and a surplus kidney preferred. Replies to box 0111

M, 4,5". Seeks female 35+ postgraduate companion with low standards and/or partial vision. I enjoy karaoke, hypothetical sex and pork. Must also enjoy 'the pump' from playing rugby. Please, no Fraulines. Replies to box 0000

M, 6'2". Incomprehensible radio presenter known for his tact and diplomacy. Seeking woman who shares aversion to upper body clothing on Wednesdays. Replies to sportsdirect@stjamespark.co.uk

M, 6'2". Maaaaaaate....seeeeeee-rioussssssly, I will do anything you ask of me. I'm big and beautiful, so don't judge a book by its cover. Even if its covered in red wine. And baileys. Replies to box 0104

M, 6'3". Some say I'm cultured. Some say I'm Warwick's finest. Those who know me say I'm a pig. Seeking female fellow Halo enthusiast. Replies to box 0112

M, 6'1". Seeking well spoken companion, preferably with Royal connections. Enjoys cream tea and scones, cucumber sandwiches and walking the corgis. And 20 shots of vodka. Replies to box 0107

M' 5'10". Gaelic guy seeking fellow alcoholic marathon runner. Enjoys Iron Bru, deep fried mars bars and a warm snuggle on a park bench. Replies to 0109



WFC slash the Vets wide open

Alice Pelton
Sports Editor

Thanks to the AU Sexual Fantasy league, Wednesday nights have been transformed. It's all about how many points you can rack up, how naked you can get, and how many bouncers you can put into a headlock. Last Wednesday Women's football didn't waste any time getting into the spirit of things, with one young lady in the team having a shocker, after waking up in bed with...well she didn't actually catch his name. He was saved as '???' in her phone.

When I asked her what had gone on dans la chambre, she responded that she couldn't remember, except that there were 3 condom wrappers on her floor. She then added that she had subsequently found 3 unused condoms in her toilet. Confused? She wasn't the only one. It has since emerged that the man in question has killer pulling tactics, mainly consisting of looking for the drunk girl who has 'strayed from the pack'. Watch out girls, there's Hyena is on the loose. You don't wanna be the unlucky buffalo.

Needless to say last Wednesday night was a good one for women's football. After I smashed some bloke in a suit at a burping competition in Ye Old Cock, we went to the Strand on the Poly's Temple, that is Walkabout. Bonnie was a bit upset when I dragged her away from pulling 'the fittest bloke she had ever seen in whole her life' and bundled her into a taxi; she complained about it non-stop on the way to Zoo, where the American contingent of the squad held out to the bitter end of the night, enduring endless molestation by foreigners in the main room. Girls in Zoo get molested more often than Bocca gets

his top off, and that's a lot.

My night was embarrassing. Standard. My housemate Clare Pickering has recently started to invite men back to our house, on my behalf. I can honestly say that there is nothing more humiliating than Clare chasing after Ali Higson in Trafalgar Square, 'come backkkkk maaaate you know you want tooooo'. Ali ran away harder than a family of starving steroid

Cheryl was forced to go to A&E after a nasty accident on Sunday morning, in which her head was repeatedly banged against the headboard of her bed

injected mexican quintuplets armed with crowbars, smacking the shit out of a candy filled pinata, on their birthday. If he's reading this, I'm so sorry. I got Clare back on Saturday night when we went out for a few drinks; only problem was the blokes I invited back actually ended up coming back, and then we didn't really know how to get rid of them.

Anyway, onto the 'sport'. This weekend

we faced Vets at home, and thrashed them 5-0. At first it didn't seem as if this was going to be our day; our goalkeeper Cheryl was forced to go to A&E after a nasty accident on Sunday morning, in which her head was repeatedly banged against the headboard of her bed. A few eyebrows were unequivocally raised.

Elise bravely stepped up the challenge and was unbelievable; her kicks were gargantuan and she charged at the opposition to the extent that they barely had a single shot on goal. Elise undoubtedly undersold herself when she told us at the beginning of the match that she had only been in goal 'a few times, years back'. She faired much better than the Vet's goalie, who was left with a bloody nose after being booted in the face by one of her own players.

Our ref was awful - the fatty didn't leave the centre circle once, blaming his 'calf injury'. He was a bit of a lad though, telling us how he 'wanted banter' with him during the match; I gave him what he asked for after he made several sexist comments and numerous references to stopping the match early so we can all go to the changing rooms together. Aside from that, there were multiple arguments over the offside rule, with Vets getting all frustrated because our back line is about as tight as a Nun's backdoor.

Anja, our gorgeous blonde, was back on goal scoring form. She got a hat-rick, and Heather managed to score a 30 yard screamer. We were prepared for them to come back fighting in the second half, and for their strong defenders to switch up position and come forward, but the threat didn't materialise. With a bit of support from the rugby lads, we managed to win comfortably. It was our first win at home and a much needed relief for those of us who frequently fail to score off the pitch.



The missing minge

Brian Ong
Bong

Where the fuck have you been? It's week 7 and Zoo Bar has been consistently dominated by second and third years. "Where the fuck is all the fresher minge?" yells footballer Jack Fellows from across my living room, probably out of his frustration of coming home alone yet again on Wednesday night.

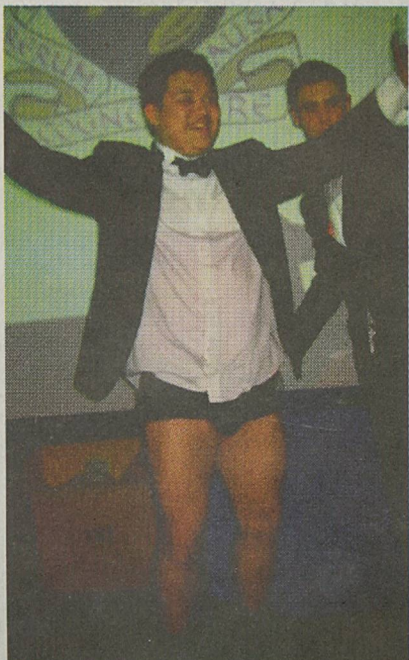
However, he does have a point. Freshers, this is what you're missing out on so far this season - three holes in the ceiling of the Three Tuns from the F.C, a dented Bentley during a round of pub golf from hockey player Shanx "Threesome" Tandon, and the Sisterhood of the Travelling Netballers deserting their Deevious leader who spent the remainder of the night pulling a toilet bowl.

We are tired of looking at gingery 4th team ginger footballer Ginger Chris's extreme gingeriness and watching Rob "airbrushed" O'Donovan stealing all the established netball talent. What you have to look forward to are the hench Baywatch bodies of the RFC, the piss banter of the FC (yes, Trent), and umm... the Hockey Club.

In comparison to last year, the current batch of freshers have naaaaaafing on Josh Olomaleiduhayujieaye's repeated public urination, Tim "Murderer II" Cooper's in-Church sex antics, as well as Nadir Gohar's ever-changing pull targets and repeated failure to convert... Bacon? Callela?

Freshers, we know the environment's important, but we're getting rather bored of recycling. The situation has deteriorated to the point that two of the F.C.'s finest freshers, Lloyd Martin and Noraya Djerrahian have resorted to competing for Mr and Mr LGBT UK. Stop hiding away, and come out to play. Zoo Bar. Wednesday. Be there.

The situation has deteriorated to the point that two of the FC's finest freshers, Lloyd Martin and Noraya Djerrahian have resorted to competing for Mr and Mr LGBT UK



TORSO OF THE WEEK



**GOT ABS OF STEEL? GUNS OF GLORY?
EMAIL SPORTS@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK**



Netball Firsts Kick Ro-buttt

Hannah Dyson
Rhi Edwards

If you were out on the Wednesday of Halloween, you may have been lucky enough to see the first netball team shining out from the sea of clowns, animals and rockers in the Tuns in their gleaming robot costumes. With the AU offering more funding to Netball this year (we wish), the firsts jumped at the chance to create robot alter-egos to ensure control of the league, as well as the Tuns. So far the strategy has been a success, with first a draw and then a win (against St Bart's and UCL 2nds respectively) bringing us to second place in the ULU league. Furthermore, after much needed and much deserved victory against Queen Mary's (24-21) in BUCS, we look to be set for a successful season.

Our match against Queen Mary's proved somewhat temperamental. In the first quarter we came out strong, with only a few minor glitches getting our new set plays working efficiently. The defence looked strong and held their own, with Ashleigh Snow (already a legend off the court) making it very difficult for the shooters to even attempt a shot.

In the second quarter our concentration fell slightly and we allowed the opposition to draw level. However, nothing should be taken away from 'kiddy fiddler' Kelly's performance, as she used her basketball expertise to make many a flying interception. She regularly puts us all to shame with her constant energy and fitness on the court.

The start of the third quarter saw the installation of another newbie, Keely "I have never" dark horse" McKinlay, who managed to keep our score nicely updated. Rhiannon continued to battle on even though her dislocated thumb from the previous week was starting to swell badly. We all realised we really couldn't let this team defeat us.

It wasn't until the final quarter of the game that things really came to a head. Generally known as quite a docile player, I surprised even myself in the last two matches with a slight change in disposition. This time, I came closer to a 'cat fight' than I have ever before in my life. Fortunately, I just managed to control my rage. In an attempt to overcome this sudden bout of aggression, I have been seeking guidance from anger management veteran Brucey, who has so far this year maintained a game face to the ultimate degree.

A huge sigh of relief was shared when the outcome reflected what we were capable of. With some first class players joining the team that brought us to promotion last year, we were left at a loss as to why the potential wasn't converting itself into score sheet so far this season. At the very least, we have not had to lose all face and call in ex-goalkeepers (my honorary house mate), or stoop as Low as the football first team in calling on a certain Sabb who can't leave LSE...

Since the Queen Mary's fixture there have been a few on-court 'system crashes' with our new robotic regime, perhaps related to the same technical problems the SU have had with wages last week. However, we're working harder than ever to 'revert to saved' in converting our potential onto the score sheets, hopefully more successfully than a certain Mr Luther on slightly different 'score' sheets.

As well as some intense skills training brought in by our head Captain Miss Davies, we decided some team bonding was crucial and decided to arrange an additional round of team dinners in week 5. To initiate our new members, we agreed that our annual game of 'I have never' was essential. To give an idea of the first team antics here are some of the confessions involved; threesomes, bum licking, cowboy role play, lift action and the expertise of faking orgasms - sadly not always from our own sex.

Unfortunately I was forced to face the



Guess who owns this social minge?

consequences of being 'dick of the day', which goes some of the way to explaining the mess that I was later that night. Dirty Pint apparently equals passing out and being kindly asked to leave by a Zoo bouncer (Ashleigh I know you would agree). While my several hours in Zoo were pretty much a blank, the rest of my team, joined by our legendary Netball social sec and Lauren Deevy, took part in a bit of stripping on the aptly named 'minge' bed. Not satisfied with stripping behind a curtain to such a contained audience, our Social Sec and the AU President proved what the AU and Netball are really about by whipping out their breasts on the dance floor.

So far this term my team have proven they never fail to disappoint on a Wednesday night and, along with the rest of netball, have ensured an impressive presence. I must note the severe lack of effort from the other female sport teams. The response to the frequently chanted 'Can you hear the rugby girls sing' is sadly quieter than ever. I never thought I'd say this but 'ladies' please man up. With some of your key members even asking to join netball, your clubs are in serious meltdown.

With the added incentive of earning points for the new AU fantasy league this past week, my teammate Effalicious carried on the stripping tradition in pub golf attire. Other events of the night include little Natello proving her worth by completing the majority of holes en route to Zoo (my personal recommendation for fantasy league bargain buy), and International relations with Ireland and Australia being kept friendly.

As much as I would like to include more of Netball's 'hard drive' and '3 1/2 floppy' antics, my loyalty has to lie with the club. I can only recommend trying to hack onto the Netball Name and Shame secret group on Facebook for more information. Finally, with Netball set to have the highest attendance at Calella, keep watching out for more tour warm up antics in the following months.

Cariad mawr.

A right royal balls up for LSE Taekwondo Club

The team return from Cambridge forked off at both the lack of cutlery and victories



David Woodbridge

The number of competitors the LSE Taekwondo club manages to send to the Cambridge Open seems to decrease every year. From a high of 'quite a lot' (von Ranke would be displeased with my

limited archival research) in 2007, down to five in 2008, we mustered just four fighters for the 2009 tournament. By 2013, we'll have to send cardboard cut-out figures of team members to the university town in order to maintain our presence.

Fortunately, this year's cohort were of a far higher calibre than cardboard cut-outs, and all, bar one, were hardy enough to be out of bed and at King's Cross train station in time for 7:30am on Saturday morning

(Joshua had not made it to the station, perhaps owing to a heavy/messy time at Crush the previous night). The fighters, consisting of Chris, Clarissa, and me, were joined by our glorious captain, Kooyeon, who was not competing in what would be his third Cambridge Open in a row, but was nevertheless hoping that his magnificent élan would rub off on us. Would it? Would we be able to match last year's haul of four medals, two of which were golds? Would Joshua, the last fighter in the team, make it to the station before our train left? Would I find better offerings for lunch-time at the Cambridge train station than at the King's Cross WH Smith? These are trying questions, which I am sure you, the reader, are asking yourself with increasing urgency. Worry not, for this article will attempt to DESTROY these questions. With answers.

The train station at Cambridge had a Marks & Spencer, a veritable oasis in a desert of unsuitable foodstuffs. Kooyeon and I stocked up on pasta meals for lunch, later realising to unabashed horror that they did not come with their own forks. However this issue was soon superseded by the perennial question for Taekwondo fighters: will I fit into my weight category? Fortunately, the answer for all was more-or-less 'yes', so we were good to go. Clarissa, fighting in her very first tournament, was scheduled to fight in the very first match of the competition, so no pressure there or anything. Although we had hoped that she would dispatch her opponent with precision German efficiency, it was not to be, especially since that opponent was aggressive to the point where I was

terrified that she might leap from the ring and start devouring spectators. Presumably, she hadn't eaten for a while.

My own fight followed, against a similarly aggressive guy from Birmingham

If you want to get anywhere in life (or Taekwondo tournaments, at least) bring a bouncer from Crush along

ham University. What was up with these people? Push-kicking his repeated attacks back put me in mind of a lion-tamer. Then, at a point when we were almost level (the score being 6-5 to him), I received a kick to the crown jewels. The immortal line uttered by Rainier Wolfcastle in his role as Radioactive Man - "my eyes! The goggles, they do nothing!" - best applies in this instance, although obviously substituting the terms 'scrotum' and 'groin guard' in the appropriate places, and that was the end of my fight. Life got better at lunchtime, however, when Clarissa procured a fork, allowing me to eat my pasta, which was good.

We weren't off to the best start, but would Chris turn things around? Raring to avenge his defeat in the Nationals back in February, he looked ready to reduce everything in his path to rubble. Unfortunately, this didn't extend to reducing his opponent to rubble, though he was extremely pleased to land a couple of points. A bad wrist, obtained in training and exacerbated by the tournament, unfortunately plagued his second fight later on in the day, effectively forcing him to withdraw before it started.

Obviously, too much time spent on problem sets and essays and too little spent doing knuckle-pushups were the root cause of our inability to make much of an impression at Cambridge. Salvation was to come in the somewhat large (105kg) form of Joshua, however. Did I mention that Joshua's relation to Crush is not that he parties there, but is a bouncer? As we all know, never pick a fight with the bouncer. After kicking his opponent in the head a few times, it seemed fairly inevitable that he was going to win. Since his was the only fight in the green belt heavyweight category, Joshua emerged from the ring with a gold medal after a comfortable 11-4 final scoreline.

There was nothing left following this but to head home. Joshua drove; the rest of us headed to the station. Banter on the train mostly revolved around the intricacies of Dutch politics, which could only really happen with a team from the LSE. Anyway, if there's a moral to this story, it's probably that if you want to get anywhere in life (or Taekwondo tournaments, at least), bring a bouncer from Crush along.



Make do and mend. Make do and mend

17.11.09

GARETH LEWIS - PARTB-LITERATURE@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

4 LITERATURE

VICTORIA TERRY - PARTB-FOOD@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

6 FOOD

JACQUI JAMES - PARTB-FASHION@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

7 FASHION

AMIE ROGERS - PARTB-DESIGN@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

8 THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE LSE

LIAM MCLAUGHLIN & CATHY DRUCE - PARTB-MUSIC@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

10 MUSIC

SARA DOWNES - PARTB-VISUALARTS@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

12 VISUAL ARTS

JONATHAN STOREY - PARTB-TV@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK
NATHAN BRIANT - PARTB-RADIO@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

13 TV & RADIO

AHMED PEERBUX - PARTB-FILM@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

14 FILM

RUBY BUCKLEY - PARTB-SEXANDGENDER@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

16 SEX & GENDER

EDITORIAL

Overheard at LSE

East Building Building, E204; Saturday,
November 14th; 13:05

Graeme: Hey Calum, I reckon this week's PartB is possibly the best one we've ever done.

Calum: I couldn't agree more.

G: If you were to rate it on a scale of 1 to 10, what do you think you'd give it?

C: (After a short pause) Probably about a 9.8.

G: So that means we're nearing perfection with the section?

C: Yeah, I'd say so.

G: Does that mean we are, like, possibly the world's greatest student paper editors?

C: (After a short pause) Yes.

G: The phrase 'don't believe your own hype' comes to mind. But I don't think it's really relevant in this situation.

C: How do you figure that one?

G: Mainly because I do believe our own hype.

C: Fair Enough.

Calum Young & Graeme Birrell
partb@thebeaveronline.co.uk

COVER DESIGN BY:

AMIE ROGERS

PARTB-DESIGN@

THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

Frank!

by Mark Twyford



PROUDLY AFRICAN

Adetoun Adele

Today I wept!!
Yesterday I wept!!
Tomorrow the weeping will continue!
Am trapped!
The nights silence broken by weeping
Can this be the life am destined for?
Is there truly a God out there?
Greatness is incomprehensible
I see the chiefs and their wives with their big automobiles, fancy clothes and perfect kids
My heart is heavy
The life I live is one of sorrow
Constant struggles
The burden is too great
I want to shed my skin
This identity card I carry around
Unwanted, stuck with forever
My calling card
Am not my skin colour
My child you are beautiful
My mama used to say
Mama where are you?? I need you now
Your child needs you!!
All your sayings mama:
You are the child of a great land
Abundant resources, colours, rhythms, beautiful people
Africa is in you, its all around you
Treat it with respect, and it would respect you in return
That great continent!
Home of Pharaohs, Shaka Zulu, the graceful massai warriors, beautiful Kilimanjaro.
You lied mama!!
Africa is stumbling, we have lost our way!
We are corrupt, blinded by our greed
Our people are dying, aids is real, war is raging, children are going hungry
Wipe your tears I imagine you saying
Look around you young one
Look at the integrity around you
Look into the hearts of the people
Hearts as solid as gold, as sincere as the ground you walk on
Lose faith in your continent
And it will surely lose faith in you
The farmer who toils to send his daughter to school.
The cook who is also the nanny, the mother figure in the mansion
The child with big brown eyes, who laughs uncontrollably when his father tells a joke.
The shiny wet eyes at a sons graduation
Fill the pride in their hearts
Proudly African
The masses make up the continent, are the continent.
Africa does not require a new dawn, it needs to rediscover itself.

AUNT BEVERLY

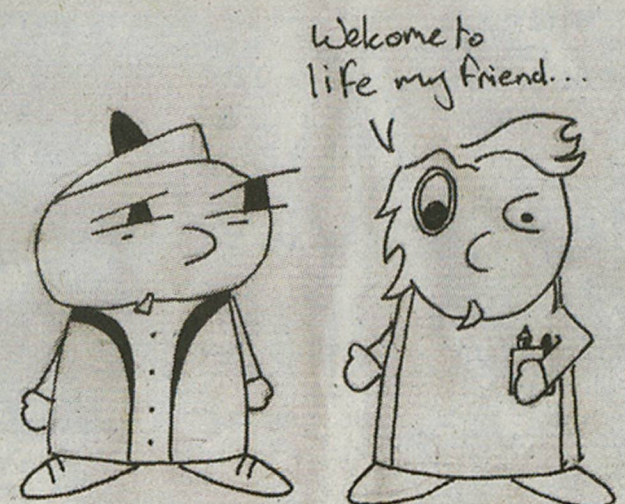
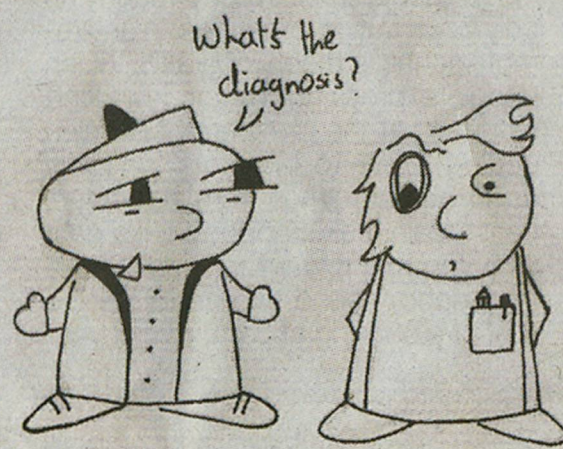
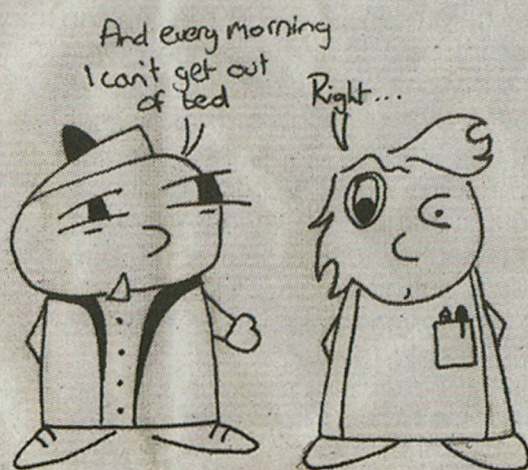
Do you have problems? Stuff on your mind that you can't sort out on your own? Why not email PartB's own Agony Sunt/Slut at partb@thebeaveronline.co.uk and see if she can help.

Dear Aunt Beverly, I am a nymphomaniac. I have no doubt of it. I love orgasms. Who wouldn't right? The toe-curling, the sweat, the whips. So, I was really disappointed when my current conquest refused to enter the realms of exhibitionism, namely sex in public. How do I convince him that this is not only a fabulous idea but hot as hell?
From Happiness Comes From A Good Shag, 2nd Year

Dear Rampant Fornicator, do you know I'm not sure I blame your poor fellow from balking at the thought of fornicating in public. Firstly it can be incredibly uncomfortable and result in sorts of nasty strains and bruises, but also the legal implications are really quite severe. However, if this is what gets your motor running I suggest you start slowly: coax him out into the garden or onto a balcony and take it from there. You're only one small step from a public park. It can be mightily rewarding converting a sexual prude. Exercise caution though, pet.

Dear Aunt Beverly, people are constantly letting me down. I give and I give and I give but alas I never seem to reap the rewards of my generosity. Am I simply expecting too much of people? If people say they are going to do something, they should do it: whether it's a finger up the bum or the notes from last class.
Constantly Disappointed, 3rd Year

Dear Grumpy Boy, my, my someone has his y-fronts in a twist. The human race can display some incredible acts of altruism but it can also be an overwhelmingly selfish play of dog-eat-dog. Maybe, young sir, you give too much, a pushover, perhaps? And, I'm sorry to say chicken, your 'generosity' doesn't appear to be that at all - you seem to expect something from your acts of kindness. That is not how it works. Don't lower your expectations of the human race, you will become a bitter and lonely man but maybe take a day or two off from the pity parade.



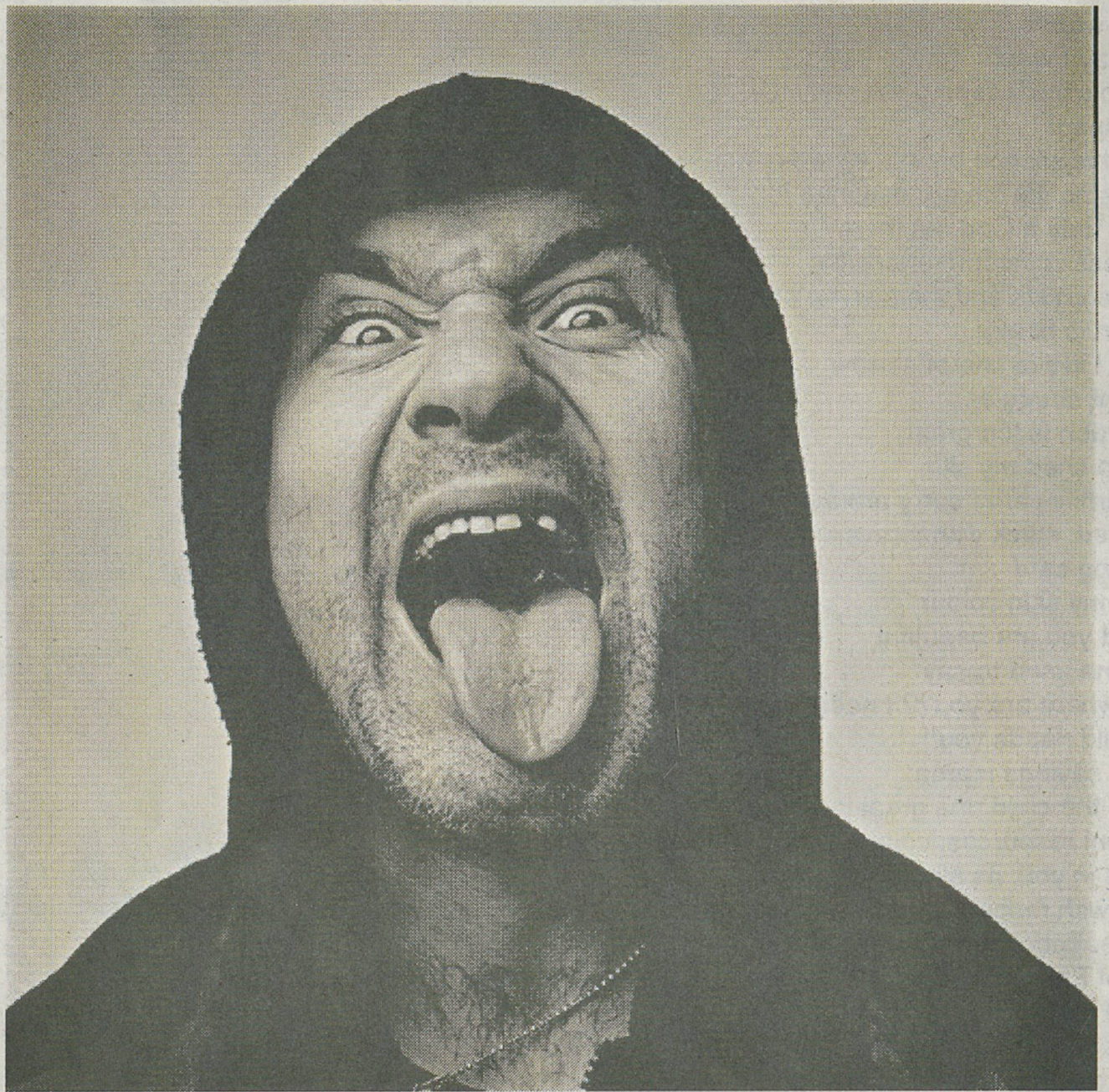
THE MONEY'S IN THE BANKSY

GARETH LEWIS ON WHY WALL AND PIECE IS PURE, BLEAK, TOLSTOY

Be warned: I'm not an artist, an art critic or even a regular visitor of galleries. Between Damien Hirst and Banksy, there's just a dusty aperture, Platonic shadows, vague shapes. Bojangles Creative Café is where I do most of my own work, but I won't be returning even there. Last week, a precocious six-year-old took a disliking to the bloodied, stumped, wingless bumblebee I was painting onto my mug, and told his nanny I was making 'rude pictures'. They suck the Ballarian impulses out of you, these places, like a Colonic. There's no room for expletives, guts or genitalia here – unicorns, fauns and flowers are the order of the day.

Speaking of which, news has reached my Vulcan ears that Damien Hirst is 'painting again', and that unicorns, fauns, and (particularly) flowers are the order of his day too. It seems the prying six-year old in Bojangles was more of an *enfant terrible* than I thought. Apparently Damien's pulled a Martin Amis and – along with every FHM-reading male with a *weltanschauung* dire enough to make starting a home-brewery seem like a good idea – has moved into his garden shed. As the days glissade by, gathering their chill, Damien sits in his pants (Y-fronts, if you must know, and not from American Apparel) among the slippery-slides and the bicycles, the hedge-cutters and the cobwebs. And there he draws skulls and flowers, skulls and flowers, skulls and flowers.

If this sounds familiar, it probably should. Students – even LSE students – have been sitting around in their underwear drawing skulls and flowers for years. Scribbling, doodling, defacing – on the phone, on the shower-pane, on the crapper. And yet, the point here – and the emphasis on almost all that's been written about Hirst's fresh interest in the art of, well, art – is how remarkable it is that he's actually *doing* anything at all. It's well known he employs a troop of winged monkeys to spit paint at the hollowed crania of substandard ex-colleagues, before selling these harlequin totems on to other, wealthier, simian lifeforms. For me, Hirst has always been the pimp, gently flexing his whip somewhere in a deliberately unremark-



able Kings Cross warehouse. The only question was whether his little apes could cut and bag enough pill-paintings to satisfy the gurning art market.

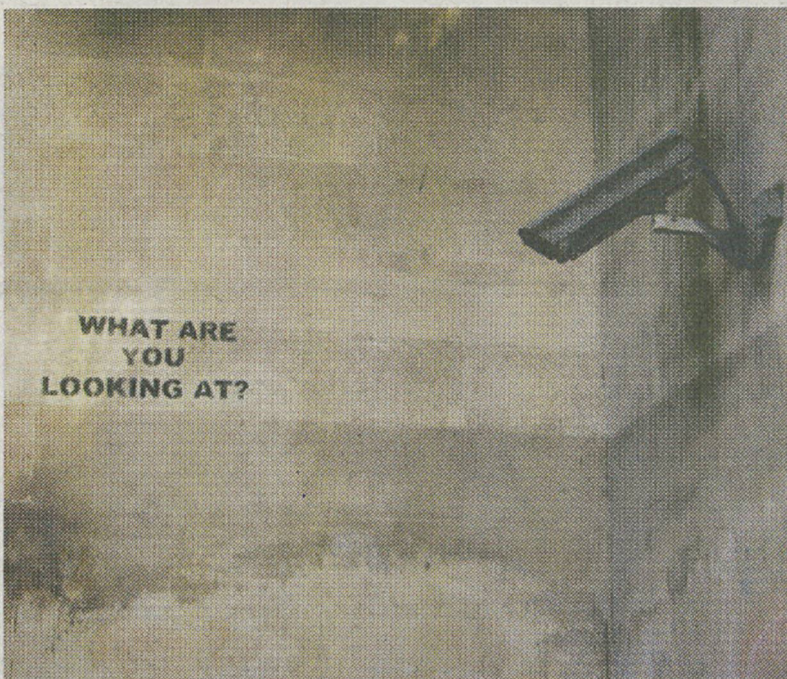
Practice, then, is pivotal. We care when Hirst shifts his routine. Hence my interest in Banksy.

Of course, like the financial crisis, Jordan and Peter, and Facebook (admire how, in our society, we can nicely clump these together and make an overarching judgement), Banksy is already boring. To clarify, I'm not here to fight his case (there's no point – he's not the best at what he does) or defend his merry leap into the champagne-heart of the Academy (I can't – it's indefensible). But where Hirst and his 'provocative' (eek!) army of imbeciles have been written about extensively, *Wall And Piece* (2006) is still pretty much the only book that approaches, in any remote sense, a theory of graffiti. When people express admiration, awe and wonder at the prospect of Damien getting 'back to his roots' or Emin using actual names from her actual past (again, eek!), nobody quite gets why you might want to break into a train depo, spend two hours on the roof of a building at 3am, or risk your

life scaling a drainpipe to scribble something that may, or may not survive the week itself.

In short, then, whilst there is no dearth of books showcasing, commercialising, vandalizing graffiti, there is next to nothing written about what it is, what it involves, what it means. Are we so convinced that all the nocturnal unnamed really crave is a little daytime fame? Perhaps this was possible in '70's New York, where hardly anybody ever got caught. Nowadays you risk your life, your 'career prospects', and the wrath of a society that wants every street to look like the stationary aisle in MUJI. And for what? Nobody is asking this question, because they are afraid of what the answer might mean.

Much of today's aesthetic theory is wrapped up the Wildean problem of whether 'art for art's sake' holds. Hopefully my position on this is clear. Not only is practice and process both before and beyond the making of an artwork intrinsic to the essence of the piece itself, but when 'art' stands not alone, but as the possession of a Church that blesses and excommunicates as it pleases, depicting those who stand outside of the parish as beggars who just want to be let in is ignorant, stupid, wrong. Banksy took a seat at the pew a long time ago, but his book still stands as a testament to those who refuse, on principle, to come in from the cold.



SEARCHING FOR A DREAM

GRAEME BIRRELL READS SOME QUALITY AMERICAN FICTION

When I was in my mid-teens I fell in love with twentieth century American fiction. At first I couldn't quite work out just why it was this specific category that so engrossed me and drew me time and time again to various US authors, considering that I was also at the time reading (amongst others) Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, Aldous Huxley and Anthony Burgess. Yet I found myself picking up and returning to American literature at every opportunity. Over time I have come to realise that whilst I am neither American nor searching (in any conventional sense) for the 'land of opportunity'; it is the concept of the American Dream which so draws me into these types of novels. Returning to Bronte and Burgess I found that what most appealed to me in non-American novels was the mystery of travel and foreign places in *Jane Eyre* and the angst and desire for escape in *A Clockwork Orange* – themes that are heavily drawn upon in the 'Great American Novel'. And it is on this note that I present some of my favourite American authors who have always and continue to inspire.

Kurt Vonnegut

Easily one of the greatest satirists of all time, Vonnegut presents some of his most sparkling ideas in the simplest conveyances. *Slaughterhouse 5* may be his most famous work for its brilliance in imagery and contex-

tualisation of both the American and human spirit, but it is in his other novels that I often find the most rewarding. *Breakfast of Champions* is a truly brilliant piece of fiction, punctuated by painfully short sentences and illustrated by Vonnegut's crude pencil-drawings throughout (of vaginas, assholes, and KFC amongst other things) which serve to create a seemingly complex and yet simple objective and inward looking depiction of American society in the 1970s.

Cat's Cradle is also a personal favourite if for nothing other than it's straight-laced satire of religion and US imagination of the world outside its own borders. The unearthing of the most simple yet devastating flaws in human ingenuity and judgement illustrate the tension surrounding the Cold War in the '60s with seemingly effortless ease.

Bret Easton Ellis

American Psycho gets a lot of recognition for its detailed graphic descriptions of manic sexual fantasy and murder, mixed in with a dose of blurred reality (the chapter entitled 'Taking and Uzi to the Gym' is a favourite). However, by looking beyond juvenile shallow humour in the narrative, it's possible to uncover a truly brilliant piece of writing. At the beginning of the novel chapters start off with full titles, and well formed and recorded dialogue which depict the protagonist as a man with a hidden fantasy that he seems to be able to control (to a certain extent). As the story progresses the

narrative becomes less full-formed, dialogue recollections become lost and chapter titles begin to reflect a man losing his grip on his thoughts as he fails to adjust to the hedonism and dog-eat-dog world of 1980s Wall Street; the chapter 'A glimpse of Thursday afternoon' starts and ends mid-sentence, and reels off a Kerouac-style ramble about running down the street.

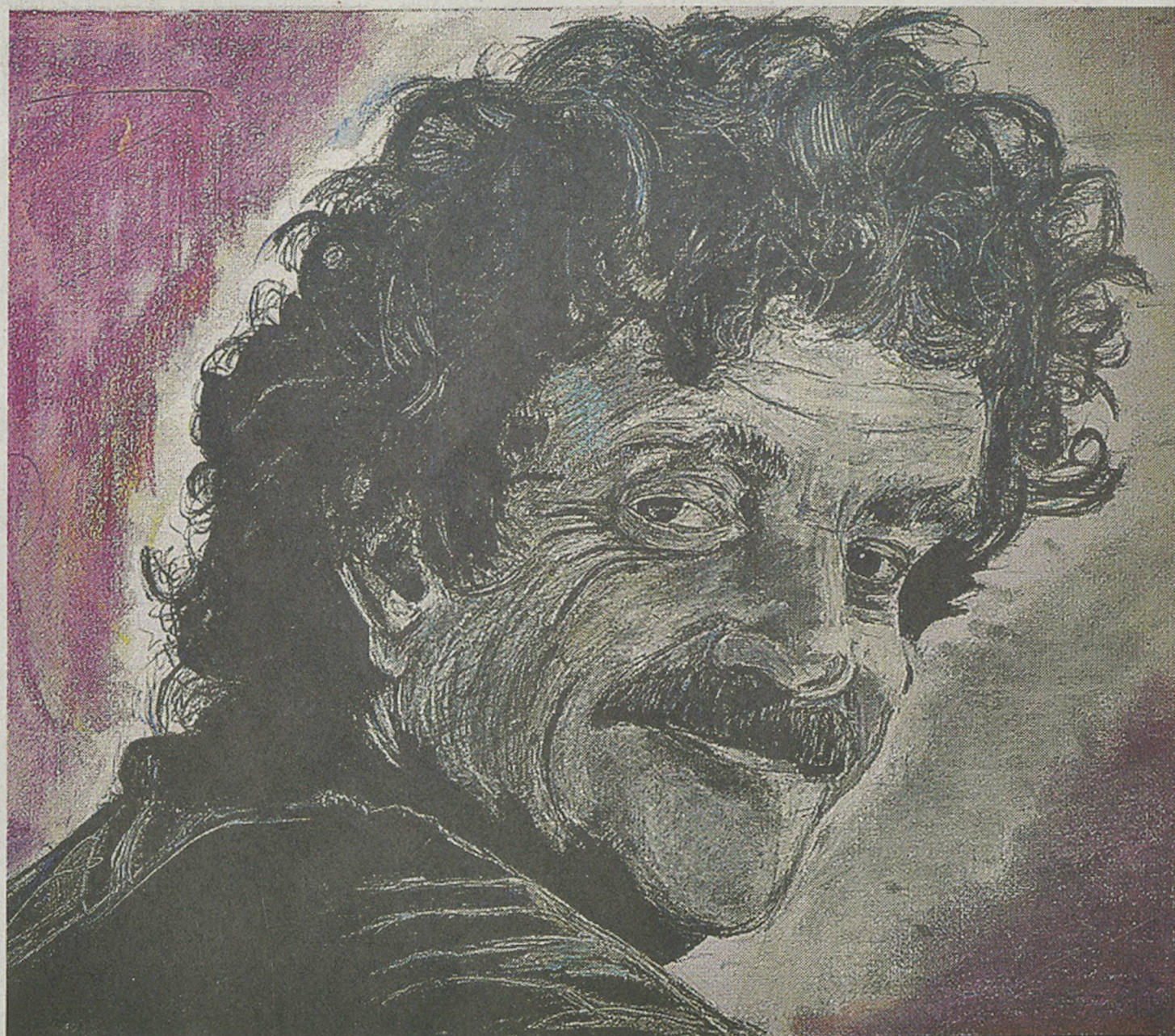
It is this pressure of trying to fit in socially whilst at the same time losing grip with the main character's own sanity that I find the most insightful as a means of glimpsing the complexity of the American Dream taking hold of insecure twenty-something executives in the 1980s. Plus, who doesn't want to read about an investment banker losing his mind?

John Steinbeck

Never has any other author been able to so effortlessly communicate the imagery and setting of his novels more clearly for me than John Steinbeck. *Grapes of Wrath* is considered something of a cliché when discussing the 'Great American Novel' but clichés are what they are for a reason. The novel conveys such a large mixture of human emotion and dynamics that it really is nearly impossible to justly summarise in just a few short words the realism it conveys. What I find most ingenious though, are the paragraphs that descend into descriptions of everyday life 'working in truck stop diners, driving on newly built highways, and eating in McDonald's' that ground the novel in such powerfully and quintessentially American settings; these serve to draw on the subtleties of impeding social change in the US that are ever-present throughout.

Another gem of Steinbeck's is *Cannery Row*. Drawing on similar themes as *Grapes* in the impacts of social change, stereotyping, and desire for opportunity to a better life, *Cannery Row* beautifully employs an ensemble cast of prostitutes, bums, immigrants, artists and scientists. This structure serves to maintain an air of camaraderie, community spirit, and above all a sense of optimism that is juxtaposed against both the setting and situation of the place and characters. Overall, this makes the novel both tragically sad and optimistically happy at the same time.

Of course there are many others who each individually warrant space on this list for their own reasons, including Don DeLillo, John Updike, Margaret Atwood, Ralph Ellison Annie Proulx, and F. Scott Fitzgerald – novels such as *Tender is the Night* and *Postcards* are perennial stand-outs that hold much significance in my life, which alongside the works of Vonnegut, Easton Ellis, and Steinbeck – all of which continue to draw me back time and time again to twentieth century American fiction.



'LET THEM EAT CAKE!'

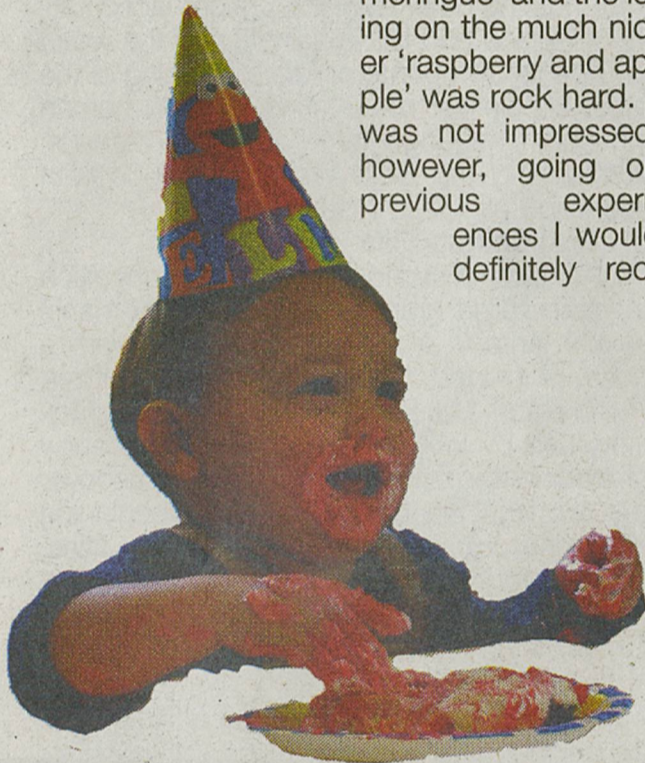
AN OVERDOSE OF CUPCAKE CRAZINESS FOR **VICTORIA TERRY**

As it was my birthday week and I had a free afternoon, a friend and I decided to live out Marie Antoinette's immortal words by testing out the various cupcake shops in central London. We ate at least a full day's worth of calories in the space of a couple of hours, felt ill and my purse was substantially lighter. Covent Garden was supposed to be the beginning of our disgusting gorging but was the place which sent us home feeling rather ill.

The first shop we entered was Ella's Bakehouse; the colour and sparkle of the shop is slightly disorientating when entering from the grey winter of London, but there was not much time to get my bearings with an eager queue pushing us forward. The cakes were unarguably pretty, although the huge amount of edible sparkle makes it appear that a five-year old girl got loose before the cakes were put out for sale. The friendly shop assistants recommended the 'red velvet' and the 'cookies-and-cream', while J bought his personal favourite, 'peanut butter'. We took our rather expensive cakes and had to re-enter the wintry city as the seating is outside. The Ella's experience was further detracted from by the dirty pigeon with a gammy leg which was sitting on our table. J claimed that the ratio of sponge to icing was perfect, however, I found the whole thing rather dense and felt slightly ill after only half a cupcake. The 'cookies-and-cream' didn't rock my boat and the red velvet couldn't measure up to that of the Hummingbird Bakery. The 'peanut butter' was different and rather nice, though I don't know how anyone could eat a whole one. While I'm tempted to say that I see no need to return to Ella's, the memory of seeing a 'malteaser' flavoured cupcake beckons me back. Suffice it to say that while it is clearly popular, in my eyes the jury is still out on Ella's.

Feeling slightly queasy but determined to battle on, we walked for one whole minute before reaching Candy Cakes. Some would say the shop was lurid and tacky but I found

the colourful cave welcoming and warm. More muffins than cupcakes, these massive baked goods were in a large variety of bright colours, fun decorations and weird, and some wonderful, flavours. Having been a Candy Cake fan since discovering the shop in Goodge Street, I was expecting great things. However, the assistants pointed us to a very overpowering and sickly sweet 'lemon meringue' and the icing on the much nicer 'raspberry and apple' was rock hard. J was not impressed, however, going on previous experiences I would definitely rec-



ommend Candy Cakes. They are far more original than the other cake shops who all serve cupcakes with butter icing, compared to Candy Cake's muffins with water icing.

At this point in our cake adventure, we realised our aim had not taken into account the sweetness of the cakes and, feeling rather overdosed on sugar, we gave up. I do feel sufficiently well-versed in the area of cake to be able to tell you about the two bakeries I consider the best for cupcakes in central London- Hummingbird Bakery, in Notting hill and South Kensington, and Lola's, in Selfridges and Harrods.

I had heard rumours of the heaven that is

Hummingbird, but had not bothered venturing there until after my first fateful encounter which gave me a 'red velvet' craving which still persists a whole year later. It was at the end of a friend's 21st party when a mountain of small boxes appeared for guests to take home. Being slightly tipsy, and so naturally peckish, I ripped mine open in the car ride home while my sober boyfriend unwisely saved his for later (leading to me eating most of it the next day). As anyone who enjoys the occasional drink knows, no food tastes as good as it does when drunk, hence the numerous forays into dirty kebab shops and the legendary crispy duck restaurant in China Town. Imagine tasting your very first Hummingbird 'red velvet' when in this state of tingling taste buds... lets just say that heaven will most definitely be a cloud made of cakes that taste that good. My sober experience of Hummingbird was less ecstatic but still delicious. A friend and I, both dreaming of the cakes of that night, undertook a special trip to Notting Hill to find our new found love. We discovered it in a tiny shop on the bustling main road with a huge queue outside. Alas, there were no cupcakes left, but there was an equally marvellous red velvet cake from which were cut very generous pieces, at not so generous prices. The cake was perfection, not so hot were the wooden spoons, which made the cake taste slightly less incredible, and the severe seating shortage.

Now if you want somewhere nice to sit while enjoying a delicious cupcake, then Lola's in Selfridges is the place to go. What is better than sitting in one of the hubs of London eating the perfect vanilla cupcake? As it doesn't have its own seating area, my friend and I, who make this pilgrimage every birthday and any other occasion we can think of, buy a drink in the salt beef section and sit down to enjoy our cupcake of choice. The sight of Lola's is guaranteed to make you want a cake, row upon row of beautiful, not at all garish, cupcakes. Personally, I go for vanilla every time... when something tastes that good why look at the others?

RECIPE OF THE WEEK

CUPCAKE CUPCAKE CUPCAKE CUPCAKE

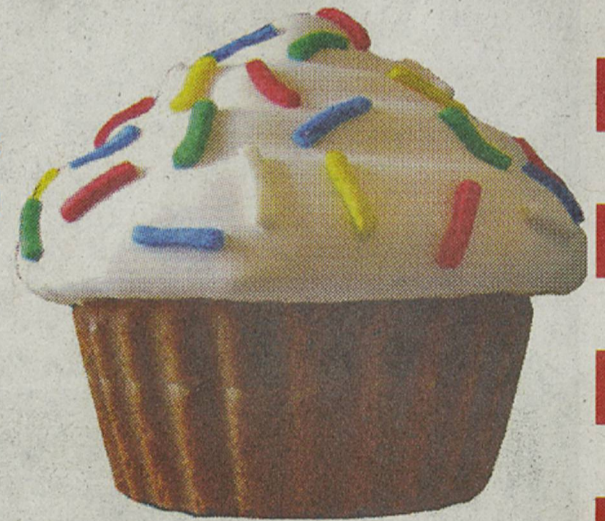
Source: Georgia's grandma

INGREDIENTS:

100g self-raising flour 100g butter
100g sugar 2 eggs

DIRECTIONS:

Put all ingredients in a bowl and beat together until smooth by hand if you want some stress relief (or food processor for quicker results). Shove in pre-heated oven (180C) and wait 20 minutes until you can enjoy the delightful results!



Lost in Fashion

ADETOUN & JACQUI SHARE PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

Do you remember that one fashion item from your earliest memories; the one that changed the way you saw your relationship with clothes? Well, we do.

"Mine [Adetoun], if I remember correctly were a pair of black platform wedges: with a wooden heel. I went into the shop as myself and came out a different person; a cliché perhaps, but truth nonetheless. Those black wedges transformed me into another person, a better version of me, taller, slimmer, more mysterious. I looked into the mirror, smiled, and I haven't looked back ever since. These shoes didn't cost me a fortune, in fact they cost way less than I spend on the average pair today. They opened my eyes to the world of fashion. Don't get me wrong, I do not own a herve ledger dress in three colours and I don't think I would... or could - they are way out of my price range."

Fashion introduced us to the world of *Vogue*, runways, exotic locations and designer clothes. Beautiful clothes modelled by exotic looking women.

"To be honest, I [Jacqui] can't really remember what particular item of clothing made me view myself as a more confident and self assured person. After swimming hopelessly in a phase of trying to be like everyone else, saving all my money to parade in the latest Nike tracksuits, and feeling like the Top Dog after being the first one to have a certain pair of trainers in school, I finally grew out of my need to wear the same clothes as every-

one else. Somewhere between the ages of 15 and 16, I began to rely on my own sense of style to inform my mode of dress. My taste for clothing seems to have developed an evolving nature, yet one thing has remained constant - both worlds required a considerable amount of money that I did not have (but somehow I always managed to find it)."

People criticise certain aspects of fashion for painting unrealistic images in the minds of millions of women who buy magazines, read lifestyle section of newspapers and watch music videos. It is this characteristic of fashion that we love - we're just putting a different spin on it. And the fact that it can transform you for the hour or two you spend reading fashion magazines, so immersed in the world of beautiful clothes and bags that'll you leave trivial issues behind, makes it a great escape too. For people like us, who love and respect

every aspect of fashion, it provides a soothing effect, the same as any other literature people read.

It may be audacious that we have likened reading a fashion magazine, such as *Vogue*, to reading broadsheet newspapers; but in the same way that books open your imagination to the sounds, smells, emotions and everything else that 'the hero is subjected to' in the novel, fashion magazines can do exactly the same thing. Here the 'heroes' are the designers; the smells are the perfumes being advertised; and the emotions are the heartfelt editorials and write ups in every edition. One advantage of fashion magazines is that it's all there for you - your imagination need not strain itself.

Now, we can hear many 'buts' in this argument from radical feminists to others who may underestimate the power of fashion. In the grand scheme of things does fashion really matter? Shouldn't opinion be based on what the person is about on the inside and not how they look on the outside? Sayings such as 'beauty is only skin deep' come to mind. However it's a contradiction that most would say first impressions count for a lot, or at the very least think it. And lets be honest, we unconsciously judge people on appearance because it's engraved in our psyche. This problem may indeed present itself as deeply rooted in the fashion industry, but what we tend to forget is, as a collective we make the industry what it is.



Have you got a passion? Got something to get off your chest? PartB needs you.

We want new writers,

So come and join us!

(We promise we can make you happy)

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There's No Place

Overheard AT LSE...

"You know thanks to these stairs, my right ass cheek is considerably stronger than my left."
02 November at 17:54

"You cant make up nicknames if you didnt go to an all boys school you didn't pay for"
03 November at 11:59

(Lower ground floor of in the middle of the corridor)
Lad sat at a computer lets out an epic fart and announces loudly that's arrogance!
05 November at

Two girls in Itsu talking about LSE: "Being at the LSE feels like you have to know everything about everything. I'm, like, anti that. No one knows anything about anything."
29 October at 18:04

(During exams last year)
"Wait, they don't let students sleep in the library?"
02 November at 13:13

Like

LSE

(the library, computer area).
computer
e, looks up
ly: 'Now
for you'
22:37

(Notice last year in Northumberland
House reception) All subscriptions to
The Economist will now have to
be collected from reception.
Please bring your student ID.
This is to stop theft.
Only at LSE would students steal
each other's Economist.
08 October at 11:02

(On the stairs of
the old building)
"I think he failed"
"Yeah, but... to be fair,
he was pretty stupid"
30 October at 19:18

"I don't think we are going
to save the world..."
02 November at 13:42



MUSIC

LIAT TUV REVEALS THE IDEALISM OF KRAUTROCK

The term 'krautrock', is inherently xenophobic, coined by British journalists to describe the experimental and electronic music emerging from Germany in the late 60s and 70s. The condescending use of 'kraut' to group together a whole variety of unique and groundbreaking German musicians (many of whom had little knowledge of each other before this grouping) shows how, even in the 70s, Britain were not over the war. While the origin of this term is acknowledged, music fans still continue to talk about this 'krautrock' as a specific group of musicians all reacting to the frustrations of living in 1960s Germany and in the process creating some of the most boundary challenging engaging music of the 20th century. Like most things in life 'krautrock' is not as clear cut as people would like. Yet it is these ideals constantly associated with 'krautrock'; the need for something new, for experimentation and expression, that have caused it to be one of the most important music genres; influencing everything from punk and new wave through to techno and hip-hop.

Germany in the 60s, like most other western countries, was undergoing a revolution of sorts. More and more people were pioneering for rights and for change, especially the dissatisfied youth. It was the rise of the hippie and the commune and it was in a commune that the collective *Amon Düül* were formed. Arguably one of the first 'krautrock' bands, *Amon Düül* were about expression, political as well as musical. In fact a few members of the original *Amon Düül* would become radical political activists, involved in several bombings as well as protests. German youth, unlike many other of the 60s generation, also had to deal with the history of their country; a history the older generation constantly avoided. Furthermore, in Germany, especially in Berlin, the reality of Cold War was much closer to home, as it had left both country and capital divided. So, while Anglo-American imports, such as *the Beatles*, were inspirational, the youth of Germany needed more and they sought to distance themselves from these groups. This can be heard in Faust's

very literal destruction of *Beatles* and *Rolling Stones* tracks, in the opening moments of their eponymous debut. Perhaps it was the destructive element and the emphasis on expression rather than musical proficiency, that attracted people like John Lydon. So, just as punk rock would rise out of youth dissatisfaction in Britain and America, 'krautrock' rose out of youth dissatisfaction in Germany.

But 'krautrock' is about far more than rebellion. Tellingly *Amon Düül II* was created by the more musically motivated members of *Amon Düül* who sought to distance themselves from the violence of the political activists. The aim was more towards escapism than rebellion; to create something completely detached from, not only Western music forms, but the history and the present state of their own country. It was not a destruction of past musical forms, but an attempt to

more on creating the right sound (using the voice as an instrument) rather than making sense. *Can* have been cited as an influence on many artists including bands such as *PiL*, *Joy Division* and *The Fall*; Mark E. Smith even wrote a song entitled "I Am Damo Suzuki".

Just as the punks would incorporate 'krautrock' so too would the punk-influenced new wavers. Many artists today are still citing 'krautrock' as an influence. *The Horrors'* most recent album for example, owes a lot to these German pioneers. Other acts are inadvertently affected by 'krautrock' because it affected the bands that they listened to as well. As Bobby Gillespie puts it "Neu! influenced me long before I ever heard them". This quote comes from the press release for 'Brand Neu!'; a collection of Neu! covers by bands as unexpected as *Oasis*. That is not to mention the effect of 'krautrock' in

the development of other genres such as techno and hiphop (*Kraftwerk* were famously sampled in *Afrika Bambaataa's* 1982 track 'Planet Rock'). It is not just the sound created by these different groups that would make 'krautrock' so important but the idea of experimentation; the idealism in creating something brand new.

In an essay in the recently published *Krautrock: Cosmic Rock and Its Legacy*, Michel Faber points out that in Germany what we know as 'krautrock' isn't given the same praise as

would be expected considering the amount of artists claiming its influence. Not every German musician decided to create experimental music in the 70s and not all experimental musicians were good. But the idealised vision of 'krautrock' in the minds of music fans and every musician claiming to be influenced by it, is important in itself.

Idealism in music and art is a tricky point; artists either stay around long enough to be proved hypocrites (John Lydon advertising butter!?) or are driven to breaking point by the impossible goal of complete artistic integrity. Yet it is this idealism that captures and influences other artists. That is why 'krautrock' remains one of the most influential niche genres of all time.



begin again, to experiment with music and create something entirely new. *Kraftwerk*, for example, aimed to create a completely electronic music and yet also, albeit somewhat satirically, took influences from western pop; most notably in their hits like 'Autobahn' and 'Das Model'. For *Kraftwerk*, the industrial and electronic element was the move towards more futuristic sounds, and to creating something new. The original *Kraftwerk* line-up would also spawn the aptly named 'Neu!', which means 'new' in German.

Experimentation does not mean that all bands of this time lacked musical proficiency. Some bands like *Can* were formed of classically trained instrumentalists. Yet some of *Can's* greatest work was with the singer Damo Suzuki, whose lyrics focused

CONVERGE - AXE TO FALL

LUKE FERNANDO

Converge return with their 7th full length studio album which is even more outrageously in your face than previous releases. The Boston group take their brand of mathematically edged metalcore (what math-core?) to exciting and daring new heights ensuring anyone within a mile has to dart in fear for their ear plugs. Drummer Ben Koller leaves your brain pummelled with drum fill after drum fill of tinnitus inducing thrashery. Watch out for the axe wielding guitar magic from Kurt Ballou on such ball-scrunchers as 'Effigy', 'Dark Horse' & 'Cutter'. *Converge* is not for the faint of heart, a minute of listening

to Jacob Bannon scream his lungs off and you'll be a definite convert to the 'things ain't so good round here' vibe he so eloquently pulls off. *Converge* stand head, shoulders and skyscrapers above anything in the music industry today pushing musical boundaries into the least commercial outlets they can find. The proverbial middle finger is well and truly given to the industry here. Is it punk? Is it metal? After nearly 20 years as a band Converge are not the sort to care. Give 'Axe To Fall' a chance, you might find something unnervingly beautiful amongst the chaos.



THE DEAD WEATHER @ BRIXTON ACADEMY 29/10



JASON MERRITT

I've never understood why the library has been criticised. I've always thought it's a decent place to go on Facebook in between lectures. Maybe it's because I'm 6 ft. 5" but I've also never had a problem with the stairs. Sure, they may be a bit tricky to use, but they were designed by Norman Foster, so of course there can't be a problem with the design. I've also thought though, that maybe I'd appreciate the genius of the design more if I didn't have to walk down it myself, but could bungee jump along side it proclaiming Foster's genius in one great cathartic breath. This is what seeing *The Dead Weather* live is like. I have to confess that I never really got into their debut, 'Horehound', and after feverishly anticipating its release I could only really describe the album in terms of disappointment at what might

have been. On paper *The Kills+Queens of the Stone Age+The White Stripes* sounds pretty much like a rock fan's wet dream, whereas in reality it barely raised a semi. Until one cold and misty night in Brixton when Jack White and co. made me see the error of my ways. With Alison Mosshart on vocals White finally seems to have found someone of equal presence and charisma, and together they tore up the Brixton stage taking every single member of the audience along with them. It's not until you see them live and witness the ferocity of White's drumming or watch him power through a solo despite a broken string that you can really appreciate 'Horehound' and the musical brilliance behind it. Now I just have to see a Mr. H. Davies about some changes to the library...

THE TWILIGHT SAD @ SCALA 29/10

ASH BICKFORD

The night began with openers *Talons*, a six piece including two violinists whose wrenching sound was probably best described as a melodic hardcore wall of sound. They repeatedly built up the tension and then descended into a frantic chaos. An epic band to say the least.

Next up were *Airship*. Combine driving, rhythm heavy American garage with the mellowness of *the Pixies* or *Sonic Youth* and you're somewhere close.

The Twilight Sad came on to a full house. They opened with 'Reflection of the Television' to a captivated audience. James tilted his head back, and erupted into the microphone so forcefully you'd think he was Henry Rollins. His voice was uncompromising, weaving through slow, quiet interludes and impassioned expressions of a tragedy he is

able to turn into everyone's own. Andy was stunning on the guitar as well, one minute plucking through the most delicate of melodies and the next drenching the crowd in unabashedly loud and distorted waves of noise. Their sound is full to an inexplicable extent when compared to their recorded material. The song 'I Became A Prostitute' was received very well as were 'Seven Years of Letters' and 'The Room'. Their stage presence was fantastic and James has the uncanny ability to sing to every single person in the room. The band's unique sound, coupled with their exceptional lyrical honesty make them easy to find fascinating. With a couple of solid albums and a devoted following on two continents, things are looking increasingly sunny for *The Twilight Sad*.



POP LIFE

SEX, OBSCENITY AND THE BANAL WITH **JXSHEN**

For an exhibition that warranted a visit from the Metropolitan police and boasts of 3 rooms containing exhibits of "a challenging and sexual nature", *Pop Life: Art in a Material World* manages to be provocative without being thought-provoking and carnal without being intimate.

Taking its basis from Andy Warhol's claim that "good business is the best art", the exhibition gathers a collection of work from artists who followed Warhol's art-as-business models, and sells the show at a rather pricier-than-usual admission fee of £12.50 (£11 for students). Warhol's obsession with the banal objects that surround us undoubtedly originated from Marcel Duchamp's concept of object-as-subject and his infamous urinal that takes the concept to its visceral extreme. Sixty years later, Warhol managed to establish himself as the subject of art in his series of self-portraits and self-advertising antics, which reached a crescendo in his 1978 Self-Portrait wallpaper. The artist-as-art concept begs the question: After Warhol, what are the possibilities for art and its definition in the age of capitalist culture and, indeed, in the material world? The answer, according to the exhibition, points overwhelmingly towards sex, shameless self-merchandising activities and meaningless gimmicks.

Pop art is inherently transient in nature and defined in relation to the popular culture – which is determined by the masses. Thus, pop art is sometimes regarded as a "democratization" of art given that it is, in a sense, "made by the people, for the people". We have learnt that democracy can often go wrong despite its best intentions, and so can the democratization of art. As the monopoly power that the royalty and the church used to wield in commissioning art had been seized and scattered since the Industrial Revolution, so the sense of the artist as a business-person and commercial agent has emerged and matured. The purpose of pop art is not to induce educated admiration, but to attract attention – any kind of attention. The service of an artist, previously engaged only by the royal family and the church, has become pandering to the highest bidder in a democratic pursuit of the dollar. The demand of the media and popular culture call for art designed for a mass audience: glamorous, showy, stunt-driven, and with low qualifications for entry. Thus begins the manufacturing of a slew of art offerings that continu-

ously pushes the limit of credulity of the art world.

Have we raised consumption to an art form, or reduced art into a form of mass consumption?

The Show: Leaning forward to welcome you at the entrance of this exhibition is Murakami's creation "Hiropon", with her cartoon perkiness and her torso encircled by spurts of milk from her impossibly large breasts. If you look right ahead, you are greeted by the sight of the balloon rabbit sculpted from stainless steel, a shiny and blank toy object that seems to mirror your wonder at it from the reflective surface of its round silver tummy. These set the tone for the rest of the exhibition – cheerfully painted, impeccably varnished, bewilderingly loud, self-consciously ironic, and created with questionable taste for maximal media impact.

Wandering through the next few rooms reveal the extent of Warhol's ruthless self-merchandising activities and his expansion into the mass media in every form imaginable – television commercials, advertising campaigns, music videos, and even a Neiman Marcus catalogue. Following that, in stark contrast to the overwhelming array of mass media cut-outs, is a room featuring a single display – a picture that replaces the picture which had been the cause of the police visit. The original display was an image taken by Richard Prince, of the actress Brooke Shields aged ten, in the nude and heavily made up which, warned the Scotland Yard, could break obscenity laws. The replacement was another work in Prince's series, which was photographed in collaboration with Shields when she was much older. It

depicts the actor in a near-identical pose but wearing a bronze bikini. Murmurs of disappointment had been heard in that room, but those seeking sexual thrills might find fulfillment in the subsequent rooms – Jeff Koons' notorious offering, "Made In Heaven", is displayed in Tate in its full glory, featuring the artist in various sexual positions with the porn star La Cicciolina, who also happens to be his ex-wife. The exhibition also features Andrea Fraser who, in the name of an artistic venture to explore the relationship between the artist and the collector, videotaped the hour-long sexual encounter between an anonymous art collector and herself for all to see in a quest to push "the viewer's desire for intimacy with the artist to their logical extreme.", as well as Cosey Fanni Tutti, founder member of the Industrial band *Throbbing Gristle*, who crosses between the music and porn industry with nonchalant ease.

Pop Life tries to juxtapose the superficiality that is the basis of pop art with Martin Kippenberger's eclectic amalgamation of collaborative work that shows his prankster ego, Piotr Uklanski's Nazi jokes, Tracey Emin's minuscule memorabilia from her first White Cube show "My Major Retrospective" and Pruitt Early's installation reflecting the exploitation of black icons by corporate America. However this falls rather flat under the glitzy appeal Damien Hirst's shelves of manufactured diamonds and Takashi Murakami's short film of Kirsten Dunst as the hyper-colourful, ultra-cute Akihabara Majokko Princess that is as cacophonous musically as it is visually.

The Verdict: As you walk out of the exhibition with the bubbly soundtrack of Murakami's short video still playing ebulliently behind you, you are left with a strangely empty feeling, rather like after that episode of bad romance with the girl whom you know is out of your league and is just using you for something or the other. It comes with the realisation that pop art, and its artists, do not actually like you. Neither are they interested in you as an individual. They just like your attention, and your money.

They turn your consumption into their art.

POP LIFE: ART IN A MATERIAL WORLD IS AT THE TATE MODERN UNTIL JANUARY 17TH



Blue, Bacon and Cocaine

NATHAN BRIANT TAKES ESSAY ANGER OUT ON MINOR CELEBRITIES

The BBC appears to be the best at news broadcasting. Just look at Sky News for goodness sake - not much competition. Well, on BBC 5Live, there are certain glaring anomalies to this trend. Richard Bacon was, for some unknown reason appointed to front the station's late night talk show a couple of years ago. Someone then fronting a mid-afternoon show on XFM London, whose most famous achievement is taking cocaine while a presenter on Blue Peter - not typically seen as a breeding ground for potential newscasters - was hoisted to a position way above what his achievements merit.

He is patronising to colleagues, as self-confident as Ricky Gervais minus the awards (he even expresses his disappointment that after David Dimbleby's escapades with a bullock, the producers of Question Time didn't ask him to stand in on the show, seemingly without irony), and his programme is regularly unappealing to anyone interested in hard news. Evidence of this is the last half hour of the show every night. Some kind of fan club set up by Bacon for the massaging of his ego - 'Richard

Bacon's Special Half Hour' - (of which I am shamefully a member, a personality flaw possibly akin to a serious drug habit) - has just over 11,000 members, which considering the hundreds of thousands of listeners can be expected for the station at the time, appears to irritate more than it pleases.

His show isn't constantly bad, but it rarely errs above mediocre. However, as a result of being a nationally broadcast station, relatively important names are drawn into the BBC's news net. In a previous episode last Thursday, Bacon presided over - fortunately rarely interrupting - a debate about whether the X Factor 'was killing the 'music industry'. As is typical for the Bacon show, its topic tends to be taken from worryingly broad areas. The debate's focus was taken from an appearance from Sting on the One Show on the previous Monday. Mmm... really broad news perspective triggered by a washed-up pop star.

In this X Factor-related debate, Jon McClure, the lead singer of *Reverend and the Makers*, and the former manager of *Blue*, worryingly suggestul boy band locked horns about whether music and money should mix. Note: Bacon had little input, and both

guests were passionate enough amongst themselves. It wasn't a constructive debate, though it was entertaining. It was McClure in the red corner, probably in more ways than one, battling out for independent music companies and revolting against the seemingly Cowell-led corporate machine ('I was on the dole for three years...and a record company offered me £250,000 to make an album...an' I didn't take it') versus the *Blue* man whose ambitions appeared to amount to making as much money as possible. Verbal punch-up ensued, but quickly reached a surreal nadir when McClure seemed to hold up 1990s band *M People* as a band who didn't sell out to corporate labels. *Rage Against the Machine. The Clash. M People.* Hm: suspect.

Anyway, the long and short of this is that Bacon's programme isn't constantly dreadful, though this seems to be in spite of what he puts into it. In fact when he does put more work in, it gets worse. As recently seen on the aforementioned Facebook site even Bacon reviews his own programme in such a way. Predicting how successful his next show was going to be he wrote 'It'll be patheitic[sic]'. Indeed, Richard. Indeed.

Shovelling through shit

JONATHAN STOREY GOES IN 'THE THICK OF IT' ALL

The best comedy on television at the moment is undoubtedly *The Thick of It*. Seen as a successor to acclimated *Yes, Minister*, *The Thick of It* is a political satire highlighting the struggles of the media and spin doctors against the block of neutrality that is the civil service. The star of the show is Malcolm Tucker (Peter Capaldi), the government spin doctor whose eerie resemblance to Alistair Campbell and profane outbursts at government ministers and civil servants alike cause insane amounts of laughter to emerge from every orifice of those watching. To my knowledge, there hasn't been a television character allowed to say such wonderful swearing such as: "come the fuck in or fuck the fuck off", "he's about as much use as a marzipan dildo" and, my personal favourite, "feet off the furniture you Oxbridge twat, you're not on a punt now!" (The show even has a swearing consultant, it's that dedicated to providing top-quality profanity.)

The main thrust of the show revolves around Tucker trying to spin successfully the goings on of the incompetent and thoroughly useless Department of Social Affairs and Citizenship so that the government doesn't look completely inept. Headed by rookie minister Nicola Murray (Rebecca Front), DoSAC has to deal with one fuck-up after another ranging from wiped immigration records to changing government policies

on the hoof to the cleaning up of a cleaning woman's mother's piss! Advised by bickering aides Glenn Cullen (James Smith) and Ollie Reeder (Chris Addison), and helped not so much by the Civil Service, of which Waitrose recruit turned press secretary Terri Coverley (Joanna Scanlan) is the shining example, it's Nicola's job to shovel through this minefield of shit and come out looking like both a normal human being and a responsible politician at the same time.

Created by Armando Iannucci (who also helped created the character of Alan Partridge with Steve Coogan), what makes the show good is how, unlike Whitehall favourite *The West Wing*, *The Thick of It* pulls no punches in describing how craptastic government really can be. Created in 2005 at the height of the Tony Blair/Alistair Campbell network of spin, the show remains fresh simply because British politics will always be associated with scandal and general moral turpitude. The foundation of good satire rests on the target being sufficiently high and mighty: said target doesn't get any higher or mightier than government itself.

Another reason for the success of *The Thick of It* is that it taps into so many features that make British comedy so successful. It shows complete disrespect to the establishment, shines a light on the embarrassment of social ineptitude on a grand scale, shows the 'war' raging in office (and

general) politics, and is typified by an absolutely wonderful antihero who you can't help but root for, no matter how much swearing he inflicts upon his poor victims!

The one criticism that can be attributed to *The Thick of It* is that it does this all too much. Ofcom have received a number of complaints from the more delicate viewers perturbed by all the nasty language (boo hoo), and it's true that the show has put a much greater focus on Tucker's tirades in the new series (especially after the spin-off movie *In the Loop* ramped up the profanity level to 11). However, the show is doing better than ever in the ratings; hopefully it will achieve an almost *Office*-like cult of popularity and be promoted even further to BBC One (and knock the crapfest known as *The Armstrong and Miller Show* off the telly for good).

So, there you have it!! The best show on television is the swariest most wonderful piece of non-escapism one can watch. Without being able to think of a better way to end this, I'll leave you with the wise words of Malcolm Tucker: "Fuckity-bye!"

THE THICK OF IT AIRS ON BBC2



rough cut

AHMED PEERBUX SEES WHAT THE LONDON KOREAN FILM FESTIVAL IS SAYING



Director: Jang Hun. **Screenplay:** Kim Ki-duk.
Cast: So Ji-Sub, Kang Ji-Hwan, Hong Soo-hyeon, Ko Chang-seok, Song Yong-tae, Han Gi-joong, Jo Seok-hyeon. **Year:** 2008. **Cert:** 18

Life is all about peaks and troughs, as ailing actor Soo-ta (Kang Ji-Hwan) certainly knows. He has a bit of a temper, which isn't helped by his director's high pitched calls for more realistic fight scenes; the result of which sees him pummelling his opposite star into a hospital ward. As for who will replace his co-star, and save the production, no one in the industry wants to know. He lands himself in the centre of a media rampage for all the wrong reasons.

But then someone takes the call. Not another archetypal badboy actor who throws a hissy fit over lukewarm cappuccino's, but a certified gangster. Gang-Pae (So Ji-Sub) comes on board on one condition; that the fight scenes are real.

This is a character-centric film, of which the Armani suits, German-import cars and stylised shots are subordinate. Unlike Henry

Hill, who 'always wanted to be a gangster', Gang-Pae is a man who is merely assigned to his lot. In him there is a loner, wholly detached from the sex, excess and gaudy vulgar jokes of the perceived gangster life. As a character he doesn't neatly fit into preconceived ideas of morality; 'when I'm with you, I feel like a different person' he reveals to his mousy and sweet girlfriend. Set against this is the cocksure and naïve Soo-ta – fist throwing, but unaware of what it's like on the wrong side of the tracks. He has it all, yet he's still desperate to prove himself. His egotism and onscreen bravado is empty, worthless currency in the real world; 'you, you're just an actor, an imitator. And they call you a hero.'

But the best thing about *Rough Cut* is that it isn't a pretentious dissertation requiring viewers to pull out their Brodie's Notes. It's a film that appeals to the Jeremy Clarkson instinct in us: cars, guns and explosions. It also ventures beyond that, but ultimately strikes a cool balance between popcorn entertainment and thought-provoking profundity. Remarkably, *Rough Cut* also manages to juggle between contrasting emotional appeals. The bum-

bling Director Bong's squeals of 'Action!' are painfully funny, the emotional journeys of the two protagonists are at times painfully sad, and the fight scenes are...painful. Raw and effortlessly choreographed, *Rough Cut* is something of an unvarnished, down-

Rough Cut strikes a cool balance between popcorn entertainment and thought-provoking profundity

on-your-luck street fight. Though there are some shockingly brutal scenes, the end result is not a parade of violence for its own sake, but instead a brutality that carves a niche for itself as a coherent, necessary element of the narrative.

Rough Cut is a film that will certainly find its way to the front of many DVD cabinets as a perennial favourite. It's one of those films that Hollywood will probably take and pointlessly sex up like a dodgy dossier. It's one of those films that should probably just be left alone.

fantastic mr. fox

AHMED PEERBUX REACQUAINTS WITH BOGGIS, BUNCE AND BEAN



Director: Wes Anderson. **Screenplay:** Wes Anderson.
Cast: George Clooney, Meryl Streep, Jason Schwartzman. **Runtime:** 87 min. **Cert:** PG. **Year:** 2009.

After the double disappointment of *The Life Aquatic* and *Darjeeling Limited*, there's little cause for complaint with *Mr Fox*. It's certainly a joy to look at. Anderson opts for stop-motion animation, giving *Fantastic Mr Fox* an air of warmth and child-like naivety that somewhere along the line goes missing in the sterile CGI lab. It's also a film for everyone. The cameo of

Willem Defoe as a pocket-knifing southern-psychoic rat is a treat, as is the game of Whackbat, the pointlessly complicated bastard child of cricket and baseball that gym teacher (Owen Wilson) walks us through. The children's book is only ninety pages long, which does justify Anderson filling in the gaps with his own familiar imprints, such as the family dysfunctionality familiar in *The Royal Tenenbaums*. Fox's son Ash (Jason Schwartzman) finds it hard to come to terms with the totally radical awesomeness of his cousin Kristofferson (Eric Chase Anderson). And like that last sentence, *Mr Fox* does occasionally come off as flagrantly Americanised.

Roald Dahl's work is quintessentially British, which makes it somewhat patronising and frustrating that Anderson follows in the bizarre tradition of the villains being identified as so by their evil, sadistic British accent. *Lord of the Rings*, *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, *Tango and Cash* even. The Axis of Evil? Anderson opts for the Accent of Evil. This is difficult, because both Wes Anderson and the late Roald Dahl are so distinct in their respective styles. Anderson's offering is indie. It's a hip soundtrack. It's understated and wry. Is some of the Dahl-ness consequently pushed out along the way? I don't know, I haven't read the book in a long time.

paraiso travel

KAMILLA KHABIBRAKHMANOVA REPORTING FROM THE DLAFF 2009



Director: Simon Brand. **Screenplay:** Jorge Franco Ramos, Juan Manuel Rendon. **Cast:** Angelica Blandon, Raúl Castillo, Aldemar Correa. **Runtime:** 110 minutes. **Year:** 2008. **Cert.:** TBC

Drary London to an even drearier Brooklyn landscape did not elicit much hope for an escape into tropical paradise. However, the movie itself more than made up for initial disappointment. On the surface, the story behind *Paraiso Travel* does not seem anything interesting or new: yet another account of a Latin American young man leaving his home and family behind in order to pursue a future in America, the land of dreams. Yet the director Simon Brand manages to take this traditional concept and create something truly exceptional with his new movie, a joint Colombian-American production featuring a talented young cast.

Marlon is not your typical Latin American

immigrant: he lives in Colombia, with a family that is comfortable enough that when he asks his father if he can work as one of his taxi fleet drivers, his father tells him that he wants he son to focus on getting a university degree instead. It seems like he has a bright future ahead of him in Colombia, but a girl (of course) gets in the way. The flirtatious Reina skillfully seduces him into following her to America. The innocent Marlon mistakes lust for love and gives up everything for the promise of finally being alone in bed with Reina once they reach New York. Unfortunately, this is not to happen, as within an hour of reaching the promised land, Marlon gets stopped by two cops for littering on the street and during his escape he ends up getting lost in the big city and is never able to find his way back again.

The rest of the movie follows Marlon as he creates a new life for himself in New York, while showing his treacherous journey from Colombia to New York through flashbacks.

Aldemar Correa, the actor playing Marlon, gives an excellent performance: he is able to portray the fear and loneliness that come with finding oneself alone in a strange place, as well as the joys that come from the new relationships that he eventually establishes. The bizarre events that seem to follow him everywhere, like having to pay for his room by being photographed and whipped in fetishistic torture, make for an entertaining storyline. Ana de la Reguera, who plays his new love interest Milagro, also gives a stellar performance. The only thing that left something to be desired was Angelica Blandon's portrayal of Reina: she did leave an impression of a girl who was following halfway around the world.

The best part of the movie is the ending. It did end with rain, but it was so satisfying, unexpected, and full of hope that I didn't even mind having to face the London rain when I came out.

harry brown

PAUL REES JONES ON BARBER'S BROKEN BRITAIN



Director: Daniel Barber. **Screenplay:** Gary Young. **Cast:** Michael Caine, Emily Mortimer. **Runtime:** 104 minutes. **Year:** 2009. **Cert.:** 18

Billed as the British *Gran Torino*, *Harry Brown* tells the story of a vigilante who sets out to enact vengeance on those responsible for murdering his friend. With a strong cast, including Caine (*The Italian Job*, *Dark Knight*) and Emily Mortimer (*Chaos Theory*, *Match Point*) and directed by the Oscar nominated Daniel Barber, this film had the potential to become a classic.

Unfortunately the film is let down by the story. Split into two parts, the film expertly builds up the persona of Harry Brown allowing time to add depth to his character. From the death of his wife to the brutal murder of his friend, we are allowed to see the evolution of Harry from law-abiding citizen into gun toting killer. However the 'bad guys', the delinquent youths, are not afforded the same service. There are no nuances to their characters, they are presented as one dimensional thugs. Whilst this may appeal to readers of the *Daily Mail*, those who are more interested in the causes of anti-social behaviour and social exclusion will be left with a bitter taste at the simplification of these issues.

What makes this more infuriating is the fact that the film does the technical aspects brilliantly. The direction from Daniel Barber illustrates that he is a huge talent for the future. The links to Western films including the standoff in the underpass and the eventual shootout in the saloon demonstrate an originality that is missed from most films. Furthermore his choice to show action from a distance and through Harry Brown's eyes allows for more immersive viewing without stooping to the level of gratuitous violence.

Michael Caine revels in his role as Harry,

and provides one of his best performances in years; murmurings about a possible Oscar nomination are fully justified. The film also acts as a showcase for young British talent, with Sean Harris producing the standout performance with his stunning cameo as the local drug lord. The one note of complaint about the acting is Emily Mortimer's meek performance as the clichéd busy body cop. She only manages one facial expression, overt concern, throughout the film and by the end viewers are left wondering how such a timid policewoman could follow such a tenacious

course of actions.

This film is a thoroughly enjoyable watch. The script is quirky, with some genuinely laugh out loud moments. However it suffers from a lack of subtlety. It sets out to prove the inadequacy of the British law system, but the point is bludgeoned home and thus loses its impact. That being said it is well worth watching purely for the brilliant cinematography and Caine's gripping performance. *Harry Brown* is a flawed masterpiece which will certainly entertain, but leave those who had high expectations feeling hollow.



Stay-at-Home Dads

LET THE PATERNAL BOND FLOURISH, WRITES LEON MATTHIAS

One of the principle justifications for sexism has come from biology – men are the hunters and women do the child-rearing. It can be argued that we are physically suited for this, men having protruding brow-ridges to stop them getting punched in the eye; and women having breasts. But what about nurturing, is it true that the paternal bond can never be as strong as the maternal? I think it can be, as long as we allow it to develop.

In Britain, fathers receive 2 weeks paid paternity leave at a rate of £123.06, and can apply for more unpaid leave through a Parental Leave request; this is against the 39 weeks paid leave for mothers. This seems to me so archaic and ridiculous, when my father took a year off work to help me recuperate after I broke my leg when I was three it was the best year of my childhood! I am grateful that we lived in a society where he felt able to do that – and was not thought less masculine for it.

Stay-at-home fathers are increasingly prevalent, having increased by 83% from 1993 to 2007 in Britain. Changes in the structure of the workforce have made men less employable and women more so: the need for a flexible labour force, the rise of 'pink collar' work and deindustrialisation. A combination of the freedoms won for women during the 2nd feminist wave and economic necessity mean that there

are more stay-at-home dads. In Britain there is less stigma attached to it than in other countries where gender roles are more entrenched – like in America or Saudi Arabia.

Stay-at-home fathers are able to develop much closer bonds with their children from a young age, something which working mothers are still able to do; whereas with a stay-at-home mother the father may feel alienated at home.

On top of this, working fathers are often subject to more stringent rules when they work – asking your boss to leave early to look after your child is more acceptable for a female than a male.

One of the most beautiful passages in *The Female Eunuch*, is when Greer describes spending time with an extended family in Greece, without the oppression and rigid roles of the nuclear family, she witnesses a young boy having a talk with his Grandfather and the strong relationships that developed between the whole family. This may



not be practical for the way we live in Britain, but what sweet freedom for a man to be able to look after his children and enjoy their company, for a woman to make her way in the world of work and for the children to enjoy close relationship with a caregiver of any gender identity. The rise of stay-at-home fathers is another example of how supporting Feminism is good for Men, because it helps them too. And without meaning to, by liberating women from the shackles of domesticity, men have been liberated to take the household reins, willingly and with pride.

Working Mums

ANNIKA RANGA BEMOANS THE BAD TIMES

We live in a society that fights for equality between men and women: whether it be the right to vote, in the workplace, about pay, or reproductive rights. Another changing view occurring in our society is that more mums are willing to work, and are being encouraged to work. They want to go out in society and get jobs. This is great news for women – it's showing how we are breaking away from the stigma that still unfortunately exists and is believed by some people: that women should get married, have children and be stay out home mums - i.e. the 'Perfect Housewife.'

Well, as you've probably noticed at the LSE - it's not just full of guys

trying to get a degree to get a well-paid job - nope it's not - women are here too and working just as hard! And having children should not discourage such an idea.

Also, there is the subject of single parents to consider, who are in the majority women. This type of situation makes very it difficult for women to pursue a career. But the person left holding the baby has to make ends meet, and they do. There often isn't a choice for single mothers, but they still manage. So if women are capable of this, then why aren't guys?

Is it a man's world in the workplace? Ladies, we're all going to say NO but

unfortunately, we do still hear about some instances where women are repressed in the workplace. I know girls, I'm nodding my head in unfairness too. Women are still seen to be subordinate to men in the workplace: where typical stereotypes still exist. For example, women going on 'unnecessary coffee breaks to gossip' or 'going to the toilet in pairs'. Furthermore, in some workplaces women are seen to adopt more masculine characteristics to have a higher chance of being promoted. I don't agree with this notion at all and I can't believe that women actually feel that they have to do this to get a promotion or to even get a job. Whose place is it anyway to attribute 'firmness' or 'strong management' to men only. Women too can play these roles. It just shows how sexism still plays a part in the workplace - bad times for women indeed.

