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## Part B

Less is more  
inside your  
favourite  
12-page cultural  
supplement

# The Beaver

19 January 2010  
Newspaper of the  
London School of Economics  
Students' Union  
thebeaveronline.co.uk

## LSE teacher accused of holding "extremist" views

» Former prisoner has taught at LSE for three years

» Reza Pankhurst alleged to have preached extreme Islamist sentiments



### Phyllis Lui Sam Tempest Keeping

The School and the LSESU were fully aware that Reza Pankhurst, the teacher at the centre of a national media storm regarding allegations of preaching extremist views, is a member of a "hardline" Islamist group.

Pankhurst, currently undertaking a PhD in the Government department and employed as a graduate teaching assistant, has never denied his involvement with Hizb ut-Tahrir. However, he was not explicit about his membership of the group until after the media storm that erupted last Thursday. This was not questioned by the LSESU or the LSESU Islamic Society until last week, even though "informal" concerns were raised last year to the Students' Union by two recipients of his sermons.

Although both articles in the Times and the Guardian have stated that Hizb ut-Tahrir is listed under the National Union of Students' (NUS) policy of "no platform" organisations, it should be noted that this was revised at a recent NUS conference. It resolved that the early motion had "falsely accused" Hizb ut-Tahrir, and it was subsequently removed.

However, the organisation is banned

in Germany for anti-semitic activity, and is currently under review by the Home Office. A prominent member of the Conservative Party has spoken out against the organisation. Shadow Home Secretary Chris Grayling stated: "...anyone who doubts its true character should take a look at the website for its sister organisation in Bangladesh, which talks about evil American plans to subjugate Muslims and about mobilising armed forces to eliminate the Jewish entity. We cannot allow such views free rein in our society."

"No concerns about his conduct have been raised with the School and we are not aware that he is a member of any proscribed organisation or has broken any laws or LSE regulations," read a statement from the LSE. "All students and members of staff at LSE are entitled to freedom of expression within the law. Anyone who breaks a law or disciplinary regulation can of course expect action to be taken."

A School spokesman replied that they "were aware of discussions on these matters at the Students' Union but no complaints were ever directly raised with the School", when questioned about whether the Deans of the School were aware that students had addressed concerns to the LSESU about Pankhurst's comments in Friday prayers.

Between the months of September 2008 to February 2009, two separate

individuals indicated to LSESU officials that the content of Pankhurst's sermons contained material which raised concerns, according to the LSESU. LSESU General Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher found "the complaints themselves offered no evidence and were unspecific in nature" as "we could not substantiate them at all through discussions with Muslim students who were not members of the ISoc committee, but attended Friday prayers and other events where they would have heard Reza speak".

Fisher continued: "We met with senior members of ISoc to discuss the issue, to make them aware of the complaints, and to express our concerns; we asked them to be vigilant and report any issues to us directly. We also raised the issue informally with some academic members of the School, who agreed with our line of investigation."

In response to the Times' article, Fisher and LSESU Islamic Society President Talha Ghannam asserted in a letter that the article had "made a number of misinformed assertions about the LSE Students' Union Islamic Society as a whole", as it had accused Pankhurst of gathering a group of LSESU Islamic Society male members for private talks, in a so-called "Brothers' Circle". Both denied claims the Circles were "secretive": "They are openly advertised in society

emails and on the society website (<http://lseisoc.com>). All attendees are allowed to speak and challenge the views of others in an open environment of free speech. Non-Muslims have also been invited to Brothers' Circle meetings."

Pankhurst, responding to allegations concerning the "secretive" Brothers' Circle at which he espoused his "hardline views", said: "This is sensationalist inaccurate innuendo to compensate for no real accusation, in order to scare-monger amongst the wider public by painting false pictures of sinister, clandestine activities taking place."

Recordings of Friday prayers will soon be made available online. The letter ended with: "Challenging extremism is vital, but careless reporting does nothing to counter this; it only serves to foster further divisions and tensions in society."

A member of the LSESU Islamic society, who has attended Friday prayers every week that he has been in London revealed to the Beaver: "[Pankhurst] talks a lot about standing up for Muslims who are generally being oppressed but he never says anything directly about violence."

» Continues on page 3

Follow the debate:  
Comment page 8 and 10

### Reza Pankhurst's Statement

The latest media attention basically suggests that I am somehow unsuitable to be a lecturer or teacher at the LSE, due solely to my membership of Hizb ut Tahrir (HT). I don't believe this is a personal agenda about me. Rather, this is a wider debate in which there seems to be an attempt to demonise anyone holding ideological opinions the British government doesn't like, in a manner that the dictatorial "hereditary democracy" that is Egypt would be proud - hounding them into either remaining silent or else face being forced out of their profession. This new McCarthyism is apparent, with "reds under your beds" being replaced in this instance with "Islamists under your desks".

First of all - let me be clear about my professionalism. As a teacher, my role is to run the undergraduate seminar in a manner that encourages the students to think about the subjects at hand in a critical and academic manner, in order to develop their thinking. Anyone who suggests that I have done otherwise, or am incapable of doing so for holding certain religious and political opinions, should verify with the Government department and the School to confirm with them how I am viewed both by the students and staff.

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# The Beaver

Established in 1949  
Issue No. 719

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## Telling the truth

Arguably, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab has claimed his first victim. In the last week, thanks to an anonymous tip-off, the nation's media has been alerted to the existence of a member of Hizb ut-Tahrir within the School's faculty. Reza Pankhurst, a teacher of the States, Nations and Empires course who is held in high regard by many of his students, is alleged to have abused his position as an occasional preacher at Friday prayers to deliver extremist views that have caused concern amongst some members of the LSESU Islamic Society. When complaints were made to the Students' Union, it appears that the results were inconclusive. In the wake of widespread media coverage that has been at best factually incorrect and at worst grossly misrepresentative, there are lingering worries over a potential backlash against portions of the student body.

It is clearly not permissible to suggest that Pankhurst's membership of Hizb ut-Tahrir has impeded upon his academic responsibilities - the overwhelming reaction from his students has been to defend his qualities as a teacher, and to confirm that he has never brought any personal political views into the classroom. Crucially however,

Pankhurst is not only a teacher in the Government department of the School, but also a visible figure within a society of the Students' Union, thus it is not adequate to assess his actions purely in the academic sphere.

What we know of his role within Friday prayers is coloured by a series of differing and sometimes contradictory statements released by the Islamic Society and the Students' Union. Nonetheless, it is not inaccurate to suggest that a lack of communication between the relevant parties is partly to blame for the subsequent events. Pankhurst was never asked by the Islamic Society as to whether he belonged to Hizb ut-Tahrir, and nor should he have been, because the organisation is neither illegal nor subject to the no-platform policy of the NUS. Furthermore, most members of the society did not believe he held any extremist views and had no reason to question him on his affiliation with the group.

However, when complaints filtered through to the Sabbatical Officers from students attending Friday prayers, concerned about the content of Pankhurst's sermons, evidence suggests that full knowledge of the situation was not shared with the Islamic Society, as he never made his membership of Hizb ut-Tahrir explicit. In any situ-

ation involving the propagation of a potentially controversial ideology, the complaint of even a single affected individual must be taken seriously. As part of this process, a dialogue between all concerned should be the default position. According to our coverage of these incidents, it would appear that this dialogue was not forthcoming, hence why Pankhurst's appearances at Friday prayers did not cease, and were not scrutinized to any great degree, and why these allegations fermented on campus until an anonymous, disaffected society member chose to reveal all to a journalist at the Times.

The no-longer broadsheet's coverage of the story has been deeply troubling. One article made fatuous claims of secret meetings of a Brothers' Circle; another incorrectly quoted NUS policy. With such a wide readership as it has, we can only hope that misinformed readers do not adopt a similarly incorrect view of the Islamic Society, which does a great deal to improve campus relations between students of different faiths, and took on Pankhurst as a guest preacher in good faith. It is thus crucial at this time for rationality and measured judgement, and efforts on the part of our Students' Union to protect those most at risk from backlash and illogical attacks.

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The Collective is The Beaver's governing body. You must have contributed three pieces of work, or contributed to the production of three issues of the paper (editorially or administratively), to qualify for membership. If you believe you are a Collective member but your name is not on the list above, please email

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## COLLECTIVE MEETING

All are welcome to attend and discuss important changes to the Media Group Protocol. In addition, we will be holding elections for the following positions:

### General Manager

### Web Editor

### Collective Chair

Thursday 21 January  
6PM, G1 (20 Kingsway)

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The Beaver would like to thank LSESU RAG for their efforts at this time of humanitarian crisis

# Pankhurst "was a very helpful and co-operative teacher"

Shibani Mahtani

Despite his membership of Hizb ut-Tahrir and a few informal concerns raised about his sermons at Friday prayers, Reza Pankhurst's role as a teacher has been defended by the School and students alike.

Pankhurst, a PhD student in the Government department, is a graduate teaching assistant who teaches the course GV265: States, Nations and Empires. The course is concerned with the "study of the historical development of various types of states, principally inside but also beyond Europe".

When confirming Pankhurst as a PhD student and graduate teaching assistant at the LSE, a spokesperson from the School said to the Times: "No concerns about his conduct have been raised to the School".

Further to this, Pankhurst has been highly commended by his students. In a survey carried out last term, 80% of his students across two classes were "very satisfied" with his teaching, the highest student satisfaction indicator that can be given. These surveys have been put into place as a result of dissatisfaction with teaching at the LSE, and complaints that some graduate teaching assistants spend more time on research rather than their students.

Kate Strivens, a 2nd-year Government student, said: "Reza Pankhurst is a very helpful and cooperative teacher. He takes his time out to email and meet with students when they need to and often emails with no prompting. It seems hard to believe what has been written as this doesn't come across in his classes."

She added: "However, there has not been a situation where his opinions or matters on this subject have come up."

3rd-year Government student Nicolas Oudin had similar views, stating that: "Mr Pankhurst's classes as consistently well-prepared and unbiased. He covers the material accurately and engages his

students in debate."

Ahmed Peerbux, a 2nd-year Government and History student, who has written a letter defending Pankhurst in this week's issue of the Beaver, said: "I have never detected in his classroom agenda the espousal, convert or otherwise of any political convictions or religious inclinations."

On whether he holds extremist views, Peerbux believes: "Let people who come into direct contact with Pankhurst decide, rather than far-flung career journalists looking for that all-important scoop".

## Pankhurst's Profile

Reza Pankhurst was born in 1976 in Bristol, UK. He is married with two children, lives in East London and is a graduate of Kings' College.

In early 2002, Reza travelled to Egypt to study Arabic, and was accused of Egyptian authorities of belonging to and trying to reactivate Hizb ut-Tahrir, which is banned in Egypt even though it is a legal organisation in the UK. He spent four years in jail, and subjected to torture for days after his arrest. Speaking about his experience, Pankhurst said: "We were tortured the first four days after we were arrested. My hands and legs were tied by ropes, they put electric sticks on my legs." His lawyer, Sadiq Khan MP, said the case was "trivial" and "irrelevant". He was released and returned to the UK in 2006.

In 2006, he was accepted to pursue a PhD at the London School of Economics, and has been teaching course "States, Nations and Empires". The school was fully aware of his background, including his arrest, when accepting him as a PhD student. Until last week, his membership of Hizb ut-Tahrir has never been questioned or made public to the LSESU, or the LSESU Islamic Society.



# NUS affiliation fees broken down



Photo: Ben Phillips

## LSE teacher accused of holding "extremist" views

» Continued from pg 1

I wouldn't class him as an extremist but he's definitely not a conservative either. He has very strong views. But it is my feeling that many other people on campus, who are not Muslims, hold similarly strong views."

"People from the Islamic Society appear to be protecting him by calling him a conservative. I warned them that they should not point the finger at other groups without checking on what their own people were saying," continued the member. Hizb ut-Tahrir, an organisation which has a long track record of promoting intolerance, has not abandoned its efforts to infiltrate British universities in order to spread its destructive, confrontational message. Its infiltration of internationally renowned universities such as the LSE make a mockery of universities' claims to be tackling extremism on campus," said a spokesman for the Quilliam Foundation, an anti-extremism think-tank.

Pankhurst has taken legal advice with regard to an article printed in Friday's Evening Standard, which he would like to be "withdrawn and never repeated". He believes it to contain "baseless allegations" and is "outraged by their suggestion that [he] 'groomed' Omar Sharif for the 'Tel Aviv' attack".

Professor Janet Hartley said that she and other senior members of the School had met with members of the Islamic Society on Monday morning and had a very constructive and open discussion. They discussed the issues which had arisen over Friday prayers and the ways in which the School and the Society could together take matters forward.

"My main focus over the coming days

will continue to be working with the Islamic Society to ensure that the media attention focused on the situation does not lead to the smearing of all Muslim students on campus. The Islamic Society have always been an extremely positive force in my time at the School and I will stand with them in continuing to be so," noted Fisher.

## Reza Pankhurst's Statement continued....

... To suggest I am unable to talk about any issue academically, whether Islamic or otherwise, is an attempt to discredit both myself and my academia without any justification.

The fact is that I have had work on Middle Eastern and Islamic politics accepted for academic publication, and that whatever research I have done so far has been appreciated by scholars both in and outside of the LSE.

I would like to point out that no other religious or political grouping is treated in such a manner, whereby because someone is a Muslim who believes in Islamic values and the revival of an Islamic State in Muslim countries means that their professionalism is automatically questioned. This is actually a form of discrimination.

## Sam Tempest Keeping Sachin Patel

The value of the LSESU's affiliation to the National Union of Students (NUS) has been revealed in the the organisation's annual Services Benefit statement.

Each year NUS seeks to justify its membership charges by providing statements on the commercial gains that Unions make through being part of NUS Services Ltd (NUSSL). NUSSL works to "champion the commercial success of students' unions through the purchasing deals with suppliers."

LSESU Treasurer George Wetz pointed out that: "In the 2008-09 tax year we reaped a £31k benefit by using NUS Services Ltd. (NUSSL) when compared to industry standard suppliers. Paying our £32k per year NUS affiliation fee allows us to buy through NUSSL and make these

super savings."

"Considering that included in this fee is national representation for our Union and all that study at LSE, and access to expertise and training opportunities to support and develop us as an organisation, NUS appears to be recession-busting value for money."

NUS president Wes Streeting is due to speak at this week's UGM which will take place at 1pm in the Old Theatre.

Wetz added that: "As well as these direct benefits, we make back-of-office savings through a central billing platform and good relationships formed with big suppliers on our behalf. This year, our commercial benefits from being a part of NUS will increase even further, as our Union is now buying more of its products through NUSSL."

Another key aspect of the Students' Union's affiliation to the NUS is the existence of the NUS Extra scheme, whereby

students can purchase a card that grants them discounts at many retailers and services such as Topshop, Amazon and Odeon cinemas. It is believed that many students do not take advantage of this scheme, either because of a lack of knowledge about it, or because they do not feel the discounts offered by it merit the £9 cost. In addition, the suggestion has been made that other forms of identification are widely accepted in order to receive student discounts.

Second year BSc Government and Economics student James Wyse did not renew his NUS Extra card this year, explaining: "I had an NUS card last year, but I felt it wasn't worth paying to renew it. When you go to a shop that's supposed to have student discounts, I find you can just use your LSE ID card and they'll give you the discount."

# Underwhelming General Meeting - again

Sachin Patel

The first Union General Meeting (UGM) of Lent Term was characterised by a low turnout which concluded in another controversial call for quoracy that resulted in the meeting being disbanded.

The intention had been to elect a new UGM Chair and Vice Chair, approve a revised Media Group budget, and debate a motion regarding the renewal of policy mandating the presence of the Keeper at UGM.

The election of UGM Chair was fought out between three candidates: the previous Vice Chair, Jack Tindale; third year International History student Mark Twyford, and a further student named Katie. 3rd year International Relations and History undergraduate Pantellis Palividas posed a question regarding how they would run meetings well, to which Twyford responded that he would "sit in the chair and do the job". Following a vote, Tindale was elected with a clear majority.

With LSESU General Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher temporarily remaining in the Chair, the election of Vice Chair then took place. Initially, there were no candidates for the position; however, Fisher having elaborated that "unsuccessful candidates for Chair" could put themselves forward, Mark Twyford stood for election. A question was posed by 2nd year Law undergraduate Michael Lok as to whether Twyford possessed a laptop to aid with transcribing minutes, to which he answered: "That's a good idea". Once again, voting resulting in a clear majority, and Twyford and Tindale duly took their place on the stage of the Old Theatre.

After a minute's silence had been held to honour the victims of the tragic earthquake in Haiti, there were reports from the SU Executive. The General Secretary drew attention to the fact that the following



UGM would feature Wes Streeting, NUS President, as a guest speaker; Communications Officer Rob Low took a question regarding delays to the SU's new website, responding that the project was started by a "previous Sabbatical Officer", and that delays were due to "a lot of broken promises".

Environment and Ethics Officer Hero Austin gave a brief outline of the events

students should expect during Green Week, and the International Officer, Suraj Girjashankar, appealed for students to contribute to the Global Week task force.

The next section of UGM related to last term's Media Group budget, which was previously voted down amid widespread concern over value-for-money and the specific division of funds between the Group's constituent services. Following

consultation at the end of Michaelmas Term with the heads of the Media Group and the F&S committee, LSESU Treasurer George Wetz was at this juncture able to present a revised budget which he described as "pleasing", and this was subsequently approved by a substantial majority.

Before the UGM was able to discuss the first policy motion, a call for quoracy

was invoked and, since the meeting was inquorate (in that there were fewer than 150 students present) the Chair called it to a close.

In order that the proceedings from last week's UGM to stand, the minutes must be ratified at the next quorate meeting; the decision to renew the motion concerning the existence of a Keeper will also be debated at this meeting.

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LSE Students' Union

GREEN WEEK

18th - 22nd January 2010

Week 2 of Lent Term

Raising awareness about environmental and sustainability issues

► Google talk about post-Copenhagen, 7pm Tuesday 19th in S75

► Dr. Bike is here on Thursday 21st from 10am - 3pm

► The cycling Cinema comes to the Quad! Screening *Belleville Rendez-Vous* 100% powered by bicycles! 7pm on Thursday 21st in the Quad.

► Pot your very own plant to take home on the Houghton Street Stall

► Look out for our stall on Houghton Street all week.

► For more information get in touch with Hero Austin, Environment and Ethics Officer, on [su.environment@lse.ac.uk](mailto:su.environment@lse.ac.uk)

FutureProof

LSE STUDENTS' UNION

## Bike thefts on campus still thriving



Two bikes have been stolen from outside Parish Hall in the past week. The first theft took place on January 13 between 9am and 11.15am. The second happened some time between January 15 and 17. A LSE spokesman said: "We are concerned about bike thefts on campus and are working with the police and Westminster City Council to tackle the problem."



## LSE graduate's molester jailed

Phyllis Lui

Recent LSE graduate Kaya Eldridge, who was humiliated during legal proceedings in India had a verdict handed down in her favour last week.

Eldridge was "delighted to announce that the verdict has been declared in my favour, despite many obstacles justice has been achieved," according to her Facebook status update. She had been informed of the verdict through an email from her lawyer.

In an article by the Times of India, 'Brit girls molester gets 1-year jail', it mentioned the magistrate's observation that as Eldridge was a foreign national, and had gone to India for an internship as part of AIESEC, "the accused's act is not only a blot on character of an individual or a society, but on India. A heinous act that tarnishes image of the society and the nation cannot be taken lightly."

Kaya Eldridge was molested by a plumber during her 3-month long exchange programme in Ahmedabad, which had left her with bruises and scratches. The accused had grabbed her "bottom, breast and waist when he came to fix her shower at her house".

The defense lawyer, Sanjay Prakash, had asked Eldridge, in open court proceedings, whether she had bathed, smoked or drank alcohol. A complaint against him is still pending before the Bar Council of Gujarat.

Eldridge told Times of India: "It was not easy to get back to a normal life after the trauma I went through...I choked when I learnt about the court verdict. It will send a positive message to the society and also provide a fresh ray of hope for many victims like me."

LSESU Women's Officer Jessie Robinson, who organised a protest in support of Eldridge last term, stated: "Through highlighting and challenging the sexism of the law courts, Kaya has not only achieved a great personal victory, but also helped provide hope for all women that justice is possible."



Top and left: Students from LSE and other London universities in a protest last term through LSE and India House in support of Eldridge.

Above: Kaya Eldridge, who holds a degree in International Relations from the LSE, graduating in 2008.

## Russell Group condemns cuts to universities

Phyllis Lui

The Russell Group, which the LSE is part of, criticised the cuts that will be made to "the funding of higher education...recently announced by the government".

On the Russell Group website, it is described as representing "the 20 leading UK universities which are committed to maintaining the very best research, an outstanding teaching and learning experience and unrivalled links with business and the public sector". Chair of the Russell Group and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leeds Professor Michael Arthur, along with the Director General of the Russell Group Dr Wendy Piatt released a statement which was described as "a withering attack" in the Guardian article dated 12th January.

The statement began: "It has taken more than 800 years to create one of the world's greatest education systems and it looks like it will take just six months to bring it to its knees. Britain's higher education system is superb...and recognised across the globe as a gold standard. But our gold standard system could be replaced with one of silver, bronze or worse, under swingeing cuts to the funding of higher education and science recently announced by the government. Exactly how much will be slashed and where the axe will fall is unclear, although it has been put at up to £2.5bn."

Lord Peter Mandelson, First Secretary of State responded: "This government's agenda for universities has included more state funding than ever before - an increase of over 25% since 1997. It is against this backdrop that British universities have developed into some of the very best

in the world and are a critical part of our knowledge economy...It is for universities themselves to identify where savings should be found, and they are as free as ever to focus on their research excellence and institutional strengths. The search for greater efficiencies should include more part-time courses and a greater range of one- or two-year degrees."

The LSE feels the same way in that, "there are serious and legitimate concerns that cuts in HE funding may harm the country's economy and the Russell Group is right to raise them". Further, an LSE spokesman continued: "While sound financial management has left LSE in a stronger position than many, we agree that it is important to discuss these issues now."

Chair of Aldwych Group, which is the group of students' unions of the members of the Russell Group of Universities, LSESU Education and Welfare Officer Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang agreed that although the government proposals to cut funding in higher education would pose a "threat to the future of education in Britain", "Russell Group universities should not represent themselves as cash strapped institutions as they are anything but. These cuts are set to hit the million+ [a think tank comprising former polytechnics] institutions far harder".

"Universities are not immune from this recession. But there seems to be a greater focus on cutting higher education funding than almost anything else. The health service, police and schools are all currently 'protected', presumably due to their perceived importance at the ballot box. Not so, it seems, HE," further read the Russell Group statement.

## Confusion over cancellation of Batteries Not Included

Pria Bakhshi

The future of the LSESU's Saturday night entertainment, Batteries Not Included, is uncertain after a dispute arose between the night's promoters.

Having replaced the LSESU's previous offerings at the beginning of this academic year, Batteries Not Included may already be heading the same way as Afterskool Klub, the Chuckle Club and Exilio, which were discontinued after the summer.

The Beaver has uncovered that issues first arose after Lee Rider, promoter of Batteries Not Included, refused to pay fees to other external promoters. Paul Nickeas, another promoter, was continually avoided by Rider in spite of being owed hundreds of pounds in outstanding fees from an event organised in early December.

Seemingly for this reason, although Rider had already approached Nickeas to book acts for a New Year's Eve event at the Quad, the event was cancelled and once again Nickeas did not receive compensation.

It was also claimed that Rider similarly refused to pay the promoters of Common People, a collaborative event with James Buckley held in mid-December. Common People was marketed as a re-branding of Batteries Not Included, which had been altered to a monthly event, rather than a weekly one.

Having been hounded by Nickeas and others, Rider finally circulated an email announcing that the night had been cancelled, stating that "sadly, Batteries Not Included is no more."

However, this statement has been contradicted by the LSESU, who are currently reviewing the situation.

When approached over the issue, LSESU General Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher stated that "this is a dispute between two independent promoters and whilst we have no responsibility over this dispute, we have previously encouraged the two parties to rectify the situation."

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# Osborne steals limelight from Borg

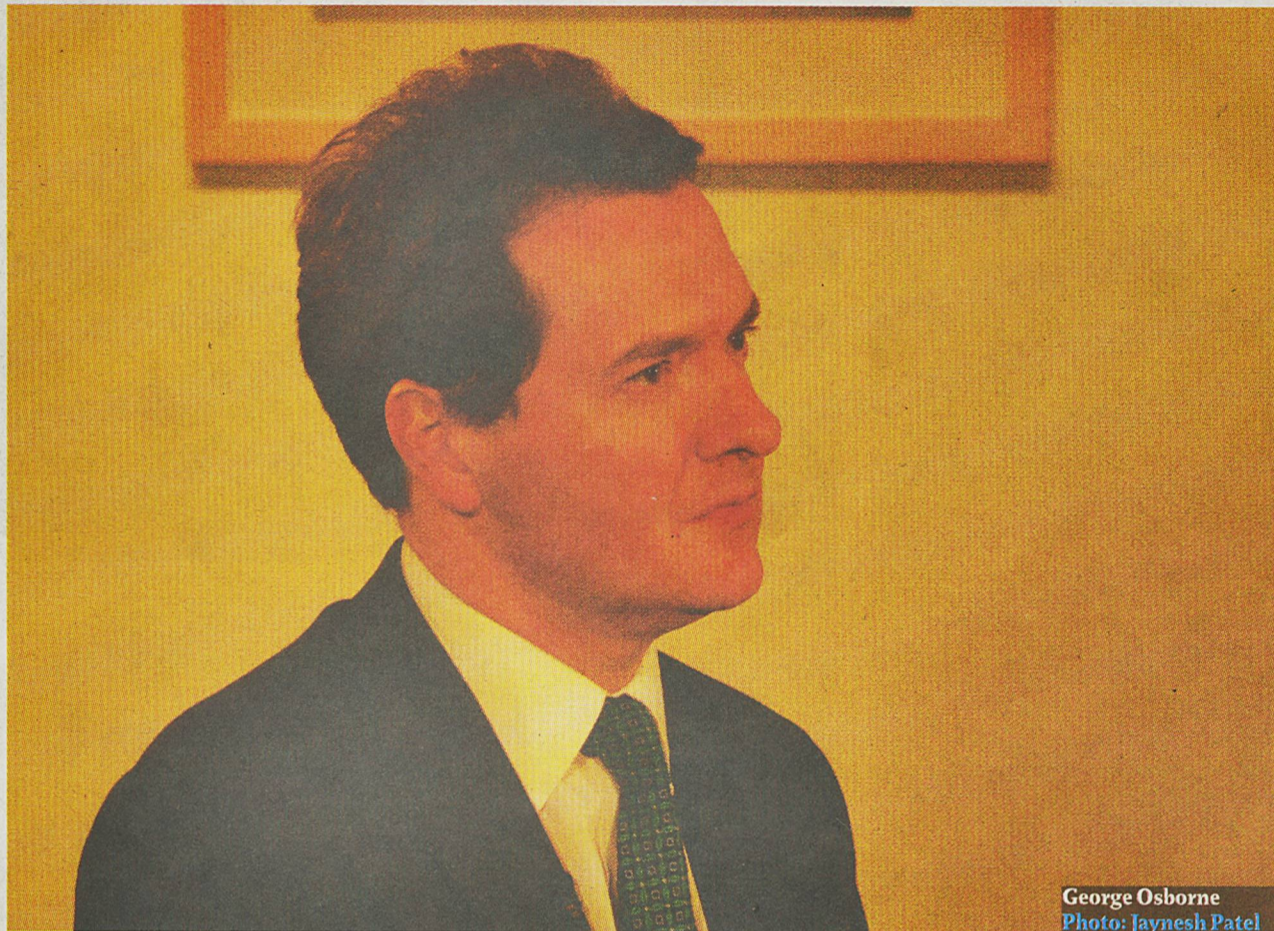
Nicola Alexander

George Osborne chose a public lecture with the Anders Borg, Swedish Minister of Finance at the LSE to identify the first fiscal steps that the Conservative party plan to take, if voted into government, last Thursday.

As one LSE student in the audience commented, the British Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer was "every bit the politician" as he criticised the Labour party's lack of economic sense in dealing with a £178 billion budget deficit. Indeed, Osborne stated that Labour's pledge to increase public spending by 2% is irresponsible, "driven by a looming election and not an economic reality".

Osborne also stated that, "if you find yourself on the wrong road, find an exit", thus launching the Tory's strategy to guide the UK economy onto the right path. Such is the perceived desperation of the situation that Osborne proposed an immediate spending cut within weeks of winning the election, even before the first official post-election budget. According to Osborne, several areas of the current budget which "represent poor value for money" will be targeted in the spending cuts; "excessive spending on things like advertising and consultants, spending on tax credits for people earning over £50,000, and spending on child trust funds for better off families" are amongst the areas to go. Other more long term strategies such as the pay-freeze for five million of the top earning public sector employees will add to the spending cuts.

Osborne was eager to stress that any government "must not balance the budget on the back of the poorest", committing the Conservative's to policies that pursue social-cohesion, a task that was deemed exceptionally important by Anders Borg, Sweden's Minister of Finance, in his speech. Certainly, Osborne agreed that Sweden will be an important role model in dealing with "one of the most difficult fis-



George Osborne  
Photo: Jaynesh Patel

cal challenges in our history", emphasizing that the UK will benefit from learning from other countries.

Borg set out some strategies in dealing with fiscal difficulties in his speech. Providing a wider perspective, Borg commented on the problem facing all EU countries with an average budget deficit of 7% of GDP, as well as countries such as the US, Japan and India who "will all be running fiscal deficits over 10% in 2009".

Borg further argued that these deficits must be taken seriously as the current fiscal status of some countries is not

sustainable, especially with immanent demographic challenges such as the ageing population of the UK and many other EU countries: "The only certainties in life are death and taxes. Well, I'd like to add a third uncertainty: future economic crises... we need to be ready for it."

Borg neatly laid out ten key "lessons from Sweden" that countries can use to consolidate their outstanding fiscal issues. Amongst these lessons, Borg included increasing taxes but used an OECD study to support his belief that any taxation should focus on products with

negative externalities such as alcohol and carbon dioxide rather than income or corporate taxes. Furthermore, expenditure reduction was identified as a key element for recovery. Borg, however, stressed that efforts should be made to preserve "spending that enhances growth and employment prospects".

The importance of protecting labour force participation was pressed by Borg throughout his speech as a key element government's must consider when building sustainable recovery.

Perhaps most interesting with the

emphasis that Borg placed on the credibility of the government. Any uncertainty in government decision making could lead to higher interest rates, a rise in inflation and stubborn fiscal policy warned Borg. Credibility is vital in ensuring that household consumption does not fall. Indeed, Borg set out that countries could build the trust in their governments with "transparency and honesty" as well as providing conservative goals and being flexible in policy approach. In support of what Osborne would go on to say, Borg encouraged governments to take advantage of the "window of opportunity to act" just after an election, when the public will best support decisions on public finance.

Although, as one member of the audience pointed out in a question, Sweden and the UK remain significantly politically and demographically different, both Borg and Osborne seem to believe that there is increasingly common ground between the two countries in terms of the economy.



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Photo: Estelle Cooch and Sam Bennett

At 12pm last Thursday, the LSESU Palestine Society held a vigil in the John Watkin's Plaza, outside the library, to remember those who were killed during Israel's offensive on Gaza last year. Observers of the vigil formed the letters GAZA, as shown above, in solidarity with the Palestinian victims.

# LSE100 launched

Eunice Ng

A reception in the Senior Dining Room marked the official launch of the pilot for the LSE 100 course, the new interdisciplinary programme for first-year undergraduates.

In his speech at the reception, LSE Director Howard Davies, stated that the idea for the course grew out of a concern that for all of LSE's claims for being a school that prided interdisciplinary teaching, "[it] was not totally delivered" at the School.

This concern led to a series of lectures on 'Thinking like a Social Scientist'. He added that more than 400 volunteers in the pilot course was a representative sample of the LSE first year undergraduate population, with the same gender ratio and proportion of UK and international

students. Students from every department were also on the course.

Course Director Dr. Jonathan Leape said that LSE 100 is an opportunity for LSE's highest profile professors to teach undergraduates. Ultimately, it is a course about learning.

Students will also spend 15 minutes at each class deconstructing and forming arguments, along with one-on-one consultations in the LSE 100 writing lab on argumentation and writing structure.

The LSE100 course will also bring some new approaches to lectures.

Whenever students feel that the lecturer was being unclear, they can text the word 'MUDDY' to a number. Lectures will also use electronic polling, where students can answer questions live during a lecture. LSE 100 will also look into using oral feedback, where instead of written feedback, students receive a record of their tutors

speaking about their work.

The LSE100 curriculum is a mix of current events and social science. The first three modules will be taught this term, and the last three will be taught in Michaelmas Term next year. Students will embark on their first module on climate change, with a lecture from Lord Stern this week.

Elections for LSE100 course representatives will take place in week 4, with students using the system for LSESU elections to select these representatives. The course will be compulsory for first year undergraduates in the academic year beginning in September 2011.

"LSE has a tradition of engaging in the big issues of the day," said Dr. Leape, "but this is a way of systematically engaging students."

# £433.20 raised for IUG

Shibani Mahtani

In light of the LSESU's recent twinning with the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG), the LSESU Palestine Society organised a day of fundraising for the university last Friday.

The society managed to raise £433.20 in donations over 6 hours on Houghton Street and around campus, with 3 or 4 people fundraising at the same time.

Ahmed Hashem, the public relations co-ordinator of the IUG and speaking on behalf of the university said: "Amazing news from this fund raising, as a student first and from the public relation office on behalf of the IUG second, I would like to send you all my deep thanks for this effort. You are amazing!"

The Palestine Society also organised a

vigil for the victims of Israel's offensive on Gaza a year ago on Thursday, and a video conference with students from the IUG on Wednesday.

Chair of the LSESU Palestine Society, Mira Hammad said: "We are delighted with this early evidence that twinning with the IUG has already begun to bear fruits. We are extremely proud that as a society and as a student body we have been able to begin an initiative which is already making a concrete difference to the lives of students living under occupation."

"We hope that the links between the LSE & the IUG move from strength to strength and set our sights on really changing the lives of students in Gaza for the better."

## INTERVIEW WITH A DJ...

**Tudor Jones of How Now Brown Cow**

**WHAT IS YOUR SHOW ABOUT?**

What's occurring in London, new music, Welsh relations and cow puns

**WHAT SONG DO YOU THINK FILLS A DANCEFLOOR?**

The Skream remix of In For The Kill by La Roux

**WHAT SONG DO YOU THINK CLEARS A DANCEFLOOR?**

Puppy Love by Donny Osmond

**WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE NIGHT OUT IN LONDON?**

Probably Friday nights at Cargo... There's always new and exciting, music and plenty of places to dance and relax

**WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE PIRATE RADIO THEME WEEK?**

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# The Beaver | 19 January 2010

# Comment

## A response to allegations

In light of recent media speculation, the teacher and student at the centre of the allegations speaks out

### Reza Pankhurst

The short media storm over a non-story printed in the Times at the end of last week involving the fact that I am a teacher at the LSE brought back certain memories placed at the back of my mind from April 1, 2002. I remember comforting my wife telling her not to worry, and kissing my 2 small children, before being taken away late that night to the offices of the State Security by Egyptian security services who had forced their way into my home. Four days later, having been tortured with electricity, beaten, stripped naked, threatened sexually, and having threats made towards my wife and family, I along with several others were taken to the office of the public prosecutor to sign the various "confessions" helpfully written by those supervising the torture (you can read about that in an article entitled "Confession signature code reveals Briton's torture in Cairo prison", ironically printed on the front page of the Times, November 18, 2002). Sadly, the revival of these memories was not limited to myself, something brought home to me when I heard from my wife that after informing the children about the ensuing media interest last Friday, our daughter asked - "Will Daddy be taken away again?" Since returning from Egypt in 2006,

I decided to make an attempt at entering into academia, believing that in the academic field I would be judged and valued according to merit and intellectual output, rather than the result of whatever tabloid articles a Google search may bring up. When applying to the LSE, I made it clear who I was and the views I was persecuted for in Egypt, and my hope that I could add a different voice and angle within academic circles that is mostly absent in a highly politicised field currently being filled largely by anti-terrorism careerists rather than serious research. As such, I expected my output to be judged according to academic standards, and to be accepted if it reached that level and rejected if not. I have had many open and frank discussions with fair minded academics at the university, as is to be expected with people holding differing political and world viewpoints. In other words, there has never been anything secretive or conspiratorial about my positions. As someone who has been tortured for and yet remained clear upon his ideas, whatever someone's opinion of those ideas they should respect that I will always represent them openly, transparently and authentically.

The latest media attention basically suggests that I am somehow unsuitable to be a lecturer or teacher at the LSE, due solely to my membership of Hizb ut Tahrir (HT). I don't believe this is a personal agenda about me. Rather, this is a wider debate in which there seems to be an attempt to demonise anyone holding ideological opinions the British government doesn't like, in a manner that the dictatorial "hereditary democracy"

that is Egypt would be proud - hounding them into either remaining silent or else face being forced out of their profession. This new McCarthyism is apparent, with "reds under your beds" being replaced in this instance with "Islamists under your desks".

First of all - let me be clear about my professionalism. As a teacher, my role is to run the undergraduate seminar in a manner that encourages the students to think about the subjects at hand in a critical and academic manner, in order to develop their thinking. Anyone who suggests that I have done otherwise, or am incapable of doing so for holding certain religious and political opinions, should verify with the Government department and the School to confirm with them how I am viewed both by the students and staff. To suggest I am unable to talk about any issue academically, whether Islamic or otherwise, is an attempt to discredit both myself and my academia without any justification. The fact is that I have had work on Middle Eastern and Islamic politics accepted for academic publication, and that whatever research I have done so far has been appreciated by scholars both in and outside of the LSE. I would like to point out that no other religious or political grouping is treated in such a manner, whereby because someone is a Muslim who believes in Islamic values and the revival of an Islamic State in Muslim countries means that their professionalism is automatically questioned. This is actually a form of discrimination.

Secondly - let us be clear about HT. I should point out that even documents

obtained from the Home Office under the FOI act state that "HT's activities centre on intellectual reasoning, logic arguments and political lobbying" and that "membership or sympathy with such an organisation does not in any way presuppose a move towards terrorism". With respect to the case of myself and the other detainees jailed in Egypt, Amnesty International adopted all of us as prisoners of conscience stating "We believe that they have been convicted solely for their peacefully held views." Since its establishment the only method used by HT in the work to re-establish an Islamic State, or Caliphate, has been intellectual reasoning, public debate and peaceful political struggle. That it has been banned and its members, including myself, have been jailed and tortured in several Middle Eastern and Muslim countries, is due to the fact that those totalitarian regimes have no legitimacy themselves, and the only way for them to maintain their grip over the oppressed people of the region is to combat debate with electricity, jail and even boiling people alive.

Finally, to briefly address the comment raised in the media that in a recent Friday sermon I claimed that the alleged Detroit plane bomber was radicalised as a result of foreign policy. So what? This is the opinion of several independent minded people. As an example, Ron

Paul, the Republican congressman who has run for the US Presidency twice holds the same opinion, stating "They're terrorists because we're occupiers" when discussing the same issue on CNN at the end of 2009. Of course, the comment in

the Times conveniently omitted that I had spent the first 10 minutes of the sermon explaining how such attempts were completely unjustified according to Islamic teachings and unacceptable whatever the provocation, before going on to explore what were the true causes behind his actions. Many of those who have attended my open sermons and circles with the Islamic society can attest to the fact that I have consistently refuted terrorism and the killing of civilians from a theological basis based upon orthodox Islamic teachings.

Irrespective of my clear stance against terrorism, the Times and other parts of the media are playing to a wider agenda of shutting down ideological debate by labelling certain views "extremist". What offends them is that not only do I consistently point out that the number of civilians killed by soldiers, tanks and aircraft under government orders - in wars and occupations that many of the people they represent consider illegitimate - is a much bigger cause of instability in the world today, but also that the people of the Middle East have the right, indeed duty, to determine their political destiny in accordance with their own beliefs independent of the hands of despotic monarchs and presidents and those who support them.

I would like to express my appreciation to the LSE, the Government department, my fellow Phd colleagues, my students and the many others who know me personally for their support and understanding over the last few days.

## Taking money from anyone

The LSE is danger of being seen as a London School of Extremism

### Noah Bernstein

LSE: London School of Extremism? For the moment, an exaggeration. However, recent events at the 'esteemed' LSE are pushing its reputation very much in that direction. As the mainstream media pick up on the embarrassing revelations listed below, the loser in the end will be the school, and, in particular, its students.

The story began in late 2008 with LSE's controversial acceptance of a £2.5 million donation from Sheikh Abdullah of the United Arab Emirates towards the establishment of a Centre for Middle Eastern Studies. The quid pro quo was the naming of the theatre in the New Academic Building (NAB) after Mr. Abdullah's late father Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. The LSE's Students' Union at the time protested vigorously: "to accept a donation from a state with such a well-documented history of human-rights abuses is simply unacceptable. Further, to name a new lecture theatre after a dead dictator with links to Holocaust denial, anti-Semitism, and anti-Americanism is completely beyond the pale." While Harvard University saw fit to reject such funds, the LSE had no such qualms. Now every time a student walks into the NAB theatre he or she can warmly reminisce about a dictator who amassed a multi-billion dollar fortune off the backs of slave labour, the repression of his people, and by stealing the profits

from his country's natural resources. The moral of the story is surely corruption and hatred pay - in the end you might even get a theatre named after you. While it is true that Sheikh Abdullah is not his father, nor his father's radical 'Centre for Co-operation', by requiring that the theatre take his father's name he is guilty by association.

The plot thickened in November of 2009 when a small majority of LSE students - 167 of a student body of over 8,000 - voted to twin with the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG). Despite the defender of the motion proclaiming that 'we do not support Hamas, yuck', it has been clearly demonstrated that the IUG, affectionately known as Hamas U in the Gaza strip, is closely tied to the government. A reminder, this is a government that came to power in a 2007 coup, one that is still classified a terrorist organisation by the European Union, one that calls for the destruction of its neighbouring state, and continues extrajudicial killings of members of its rival political party Fatah. The IUG was founded by Ahmed Yassin, also a founding member of Hamas. IUG President Kamalain Shaath admitted that the "Islamic University was established as any other university, but gradually it became Hamas." For those who still doubt, the university hosts Hamas's research and development program for the Qassam rocket. Members of the IUG faculty, unfettered and without criticism, have called gays and lesbians "a minority of perverts and the mentally and morally sick" and urge the killing of "Jews... no matter where they are, in any country... [w]herever you meet them, kill them." While IUG may not by title be Hamas, they are guilty by association.

The latest LSE cash-grab was just over

a week ago when it was announced that a Libyan NGO, run by Saif Al Islam Al Gaddafi, son of the Libyan leader Muammar al-Gaddafi, had generously donated £1.5 million to the school. The funds were, laughably, earmarked for the LSE's Global Governance Centre. Putting aside Saif Gaddafi's own controversial statements - Libya's "innocence" in the Lockerbie Bombing, and his referral to the victims' families as "greedy" and "materialistic" in their demands for compensation - the Gaddafi International Charity and Development Foundation (GICDF) is funded domestically, which translates into only one source: Gaddafi Sr., if not directly, then through his coterie of sycophantic elites.

One can only scratch their head while reading the LSE press release: "It is a generous donation from an NGO committed to the promotion of civil society and the development of democracy." This in a country ranked 130th on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, a country that in a 2009 Amnesty International report was described as anything but democratic and respectful of human rights: "Libya's human rights record and continuing violations cast a shadow over its improved international diplomatic standing. Freedom of expression, association and assembly remained severely restricted in a climate characterized by the repression of dissident voices and the absence of independent human rights NGOs. Refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants continued to be detained indefinitely and ill-treated. At least eight foreign nationals were executed. The legacy of past human rights violations remained unaddressed." The GICDF, regardless of official LSE doublespeak, is

guilty by its association to this repressive regime and country.

Finally, it was revealed on January 15th by the Times Online that a senior figure in Hizb ut-Tahrir, a hard-line Islamist group based in Egypt, is 'teaching and preaching' at the LSE. It was reported that Reza Pankhurst was imprisoned in Egypt for his radical views, one of which includes the political aim of "the re-establishment of the Islamic Caliphate as an independent state". While the group does reject forcing change "by means of violence and terror", it has been banned in Germany for anti-Semitic activity and is supposedly barred from the National Union of Students' events, under the NUS' policy of "no platform" for racist or fascist views. Queen Mary College protests kept Mr. Pankhurst and Jamal Harwood, another Hizb ut-Tahrir member, from taking the platform in December 2009. This raises the question: does the LSE want religious extremists whatever their brand, even non-violent ones, teaching and preaching on campus? A member of the LSE Islamic society, much to his credit, told The Times: "He [Pankhurst] preaches every other week and is constantly bringing the subject around to politics, talking about Afghanistan and the need to establish the Caliphate [Islamic state]." In a recent speech, Chris Grayling, the Shadow Home Secretary, spoke of Hizb ut-Tahrir: "Within the UK it takes extreme care about how it words its propaganda... But anyone who doubts its true character should take a look at the website for its sister organisation in Bangladesh, which talks about evil American plans to subjugate Muslims and about mobilising armed forces to eliminate the Jewish entity. We cannot allow such views free rein in our

society." Mr. Pankhurst may not personally hold such hateful views but, unfortunately, he has not as of yet renounced his affiliation with the extremist group and is thus guilty by association.

And so too is the LSE. Just as the IUG is guilty by their association with Hamas, Gaddafi Jr. With Gaddafi Sr., Zayed with anti-Semitism, and Pankhurst with Hizb ut-Tahrir, the LSE is now willingly guilty of its association with all four. Reputations can take decades to build, but often only a day to crumble. The LSE - already battered in table rankings - and its administration seem content to take the money and run, unconcerned with the fallout that may result from their newfound affiliations. The student body - and faculty - should be more worried. Prospective students, regardless of LSE's (debatable) prestige, may think twice about enrolling; alumni and donors may write their cheques to other institutions and causes that are more in line with their morals and values. Ultimately this translates into reduced income for the school and the only losers will be you the student reader. Perhaps more important than monetary considerations, if the LSE is guilty by association to the four unsavory figures mentioned above then, by default, so too are you the reader guilty of being associated with the LSE. This is a reality that even the most indifferent student should not ignore.



# SU reform up for debate

Changing your Union is a complex process that some believe to be necessary; others, a rush job fraught with dangers. We assess whether the proposals will result in more engagement and a better deal for students

**Robin Low**

LSE has been my home for 5 years now. Every year I have heard the same 'Your Union is changing' spiel from whichever Sabbatical Officer happened to be in charge at the time. It's quite tiring to be told that everything is changing for the better, yet nothing improves. The UGMs are still inoperative, it takes forever to get a budget to run a society and my experience at LSE was consistently only just above par.

Anyone could now ask why would I so readily throw myself into agreeing that this has now become a reality. The Union has just undergone a significant staffing restructure amid a pioneering collaboration with another students' union. This has afforded us the chance to completely rewrite our governing structures, which will be put to referendum shortly. That's all well and good, but what does it actually mean and how will it realistically affect students?

Starting off with Postgraduates, as they represent 50% of the student population, would be a good way to kick off. The feedback from consultations showed that clearly postgrads are a massively under-represented group at LSE and one of the best ways to tackle that is to create a Postgraduate Sabbatical Officer. This will be a part-time role, and whomever is in the role will also lead the Postgraduate Assembly. This will ensure that the issues affecting all postgraduates are accurately represented, and action that leads to change can be a realistic result.

Having Assemblies will dramatically change the effectiveness of the Union. No longer will everything have to go through a UGM which few people understand. These will be autonomous groups, with a budget allocated for whatever they best see fit. They will have the ability to structure themselves in whatever way seems most appropriate. This means that those

students who care about any issue in particular will be able to influence, take part in and direct the Union's work on it, which can only be a positive step from where we are now.

Because of changes introduced under the new Charities Act legislation, Students' Unions are required to make it clearer who their Trustees are, and have a clear and accountable process for the Trustees. This means the creation of a Trustee Board, separate from the political functions of the Students' Union.

Any Trustee will not interfere with the political functions of the Students' Union, or have the power to override policy unless it damages the financial stability of the organisation. They will be tasked with making sure the organisations finances are stable, and that the activities of the Students' Union are in line with the law.

Now we need to look at what the purposes of trustees are. They hold legal and financial responsibility for the Students' Union as an employer and as an organisation. They exercise ultimate control of the financial and staffing matters of the Students' Union. To be ultimately responsible for the stability of the organisation's finances.

To have a successful Students' Union we must have strong trustees. This is why we are suggesting the following make-up: 5 Sabbatical Officers, 4 Students and 2 External Trustees. A few people have raised concerns over why we would bring in external trustees, rather than have more students having a say over the Union.

External Trustees are able to provide a lot to the Union, that our students couldn't. Yes we have experienced professionals doing postgraduate degrees at LSE, and it would be fantastic to have them on the Trustee Board as well, but we would be able to have experienced, high calibre, current professionals who can bring a specialised input to the board; whether it's in law, finance or HR, or any other profession that would be beneficial for students. Having external trustees is a safeguard for ensuring we have specialist knowledge on the board. After all we would only get these high calibre students if they were elected; we could get popular people that lack professional skills being the trustees.

Removing the Treasurer as a Sabbatical is the logical step to take in this scenario. Using professionals and student trustees to oversee the finances and commercial side of the Union is important. Not only to allow a Sabbatical Officer to fulfil their role as a representative of students by being bogged down in financial details, but it will also have the effect of increasing the efficiency and accuracy of the Union's accounts.

Moving forward the question then becomes "How will this all affect me?"

The answer is fairly straightforward. The new document will allow for greater flexibility for common sense in the running of the Union. It seems utterly ridiculous to me that it societies, clubs and the Media Group must wait until Week 9 to have their budgets confirmed. At that point we have already lost a term's worth of activity.

In the current Constitution and Codes of Practice we have so many contradictory rules which bog down the democratic procedures of the Union. Further than that, it actually limits what the Union and its members can actually achieve. The documents will be coming out very soon so you will be able to see the changes for yourself. Indeed, the Union will aim to show all the significant changes that are being made and how this will affect you in further detail.

Nothing will have as much impact on life at the Students' Union in such a positive way as passing this reform once it goes to referendum. That is why it is crucial that you vote when the opportunity arises.

Getting a new constitution will see the end of hacks. The new constitution will be easy to understand and follow, which will make it easier for people to get involved.

Every opportunity has been given for students to impact and feedback on the process. The "change" that has been professed for the past five years is actually happening now, and you have the chance to make sure it happens. Your Union is changing, finally.

**Robin Low is the Communications Officer of the LSE Students' Union**

**Estelle Cooch**

There is nothing wrong with change as long as it is in the right direction', quipped the too often quoted Winston Churchill. Now, for fear of leaving readers with the wrong impression, I would add that I am no great fan of Ol' Man Winston. Gross anti-Semitism and arguing for the gassing of Kurds in Iraq isn't really my scene. In light of the proposed Students' Union reforms however, the idea that change is necessarily a positive thing is something worth addressing.

Over the past few months the Students' Union has consulted precisely 496 students about reform, asking them what they think is relevant, what can be improved and what should be scrapped altogether. The final reform paper outlines the complete overhaul of many of the current union structures, in a few cases making them better and in a few cases over-bureaucratising and taking away from the democratic tradition that makes LSESU so renowned. I hope that in the coming weeks students will read the reform paper and eventually vote to retain the structures that foster democracy and accountability in its truest sense.

One of the proposals in the reform paper is to extend voting that usually happens in the weekly Union General Meeting to online and allow for voting all day after the meeting. At first glance this appears a relatively uncontroversial proposal; surely a way to increase voter turn-out? Surely therefore, a way to increase democracy? Yet in reality what online voting does is remove the ability to debate policy and turn voting into a passive, rather than a political act. Debating at a weekly UGM, not only results in policy decisions, but it empowers those who take part to get involved in the change that has been decided upon. The UGM is a weekly focus for our Unions' collective action and a truly active democracy is not based on clicking a button every week, but arguing, leafleting and campaigning.

Online voting also disadvantages minorities within the LSE community. Whether or not one agrees with many of the most controversial motions that have passed through our union this year, the

fact remains that they have done so only after lengthy and polemical debate, debate that allows for students who may be a minority initially to put their views. An issue as important as 'No Platform for Fascists' would most likely not have passed if put to referendum without addressing the legitimate concerns of free speech that were discussed at UGM. The UGM as it stands is dominated by an unattractive, pretty boring clique of people, many of whom have never done a decent day of campaigning in their life. But rather than water down our structures and devaluing the political choice we should instead seriously address why students do not come to UGM.

A further issue of serious concern in the reforms is the proposal of 'lay' or external trustees. We are told that external trustees bring necessary expertise and would save us money on legal or financial advice. But what they also bring is the attitude that legal and financial security has to precede student welfare. The notion that business acumen is a necessary pre-requisite to running an organisation is simply not true. Indeed in the case of organisations that exist to provide a service, study after study has proven the desire to maintain profit (even amongst so called 'Charity' organisations) acts as a hindrance rather than a help. Surely it is better to pay for objective advice when needed, rather than bizarrely giving external organisations representation at the highest levels of our Union. Furthermore questions of accountability and appointment of trustees are not sufficiently outlined in the reform proposal. It is all too easy for trustees to be appointed and end up completely unaccountable or recallable to students.

I am not against change, many of the proposals are welcome and needed, but uninformed change can have an impact long after we have voted on it. LSE is the only Students' Union to still have a weekly general meeting open to all students. The Union has led struggles against racism, fascism and been at the forefront of campaigns to defend the oppressed. In a year in which students are going to face billions of pounds of cuts and increasing tuition fees we have to ratchet up those struggles. But that involves asking the question 'What do we, as students, want to do' and not 'What do we want the Union to do on our behalf'.

# Reshaping the atmosphere

Why geoengineering is a viable response to our climate change emergency

**Oliver Wiseman**

Copenhagen has taught us a lot. The two-week summit was an unparalleled study in the collective folly of mankind. Despite a nearly irrefutable body of scientific evidence pointing towards the grave position we have put ourselves in, earnest and binding commitments to reductions still seem an unobtainable mirage. The increasing implausibility of effective collective action on emissions means we might need an emergency fix. Geoengineering – a catchall term for technological interventions to cool the climate system – might be just that. The most promising of these ideas is the suggestion that we pump sulphur dioxide into the stratosphere, reducing the amount

of solar radiation that hits the face of the earth. Other, more far-fetched, propositions include launching mirrors into space to reflect sunlight away from earth.

Make no mistake: geoengineering is not the answer to our climate crisis. All of the current proposals come with harmful side effects. Damage to the ozone layer is a possibility as is a disruption to the hydrological cycle resulting in droughts in some places and floods in others. But this technology should not be dismissed. It has the potential to be a pivotal weapon in the currently limited armoury with which we are fighting climate change. Proposals that superficially seem the stuff of science fiction have the power to stop our idiocy short of our climate's tipping point (when the permafrost melts, releasing huge amounts of methane and sending temperatures rocketing). If this were to happen, reductions in emissions would be futile whereas geoengineering, being quick to implement and take effect, could reverse the irreversible. Science is split on where this tipping point is. Some say we are

only 10C away, others say 80C. With such uncertainty surrounding the powerful and unpredictable system our atmosphere undoubtedly is, having a well-thought-out and multilateral geoengineering option to hand seems hard to disagree with.

Not so. The vanguard of the environmental lobby stands in staunch opposition to further research into geoengineering. Greenpeace's chief scientist, Doug Parr, has ridiculed existing proposals as fantastical and labelled them as "outright dangerous". It is true that geoengineering creates a moral hazard insofar as knowledge of its existence could take the imperative out of political progress towards effective action on emissions. This concern is valid but it is probably too late to avoid the hijacking of geoengineering by those that don't take our climatic problems seriously. This moral hazard will, it is most likely, diminish with more research done on the subject. A more developed and nuanced understanding of the advantages and risks involved in geoengineering will no doubt lead to a greater appreciation of the fact

that these schemes are in no way the answer. The dogmatic dismissal of scientific progress is foolhardy in any context but in this arena, the likes of Doug Parr undermine the sincerity with which they claim to treat global warming.

A common feature of geoengineering proposals is how cheap they are in relation to the problem they endeavour to tackle. Their cost is estimated to be somewhere in the hundreds of millions or low billions, making them affordable to developing nations and even private individuals and corporations. This potential for unilateral deployment by a broad range of actors is at the heart of understanding the politics that surround geoengineering. Those who dismiss geoengineering, rightly arguing that a reduction of carbon emissions is the only real cure to the harm we have caused the planet and ourselves, fail to consider the consequences of sidelining this area of science. If we fail to take successful action on carbon emissions, a country faced with dangerous changes to its climate will almost certainly feel compelled to embark

on a geoengineering project regardless their knowledge of the risks involved and the harmful side effects that might be felt elsewhere. This dangerous execution of uncertain and unrehearsed ideas, rather than geoengineering more generally is what must not happen.

It is clear that what is needed is a multilateral and enfranchised geoengineering research project. The research must be broad-based, not only looking into the projects themselves but their side effects too and how they might be mitigated. International lawyers need to work to develop a framework in which these programs might be launched and politicians have an obligation not to use this powerful tool irresponsibly. Geoengineering does not change the fundamental problem of our excessive levels of interference in the climate. In that sense we have been geoengineering for hundreds of years. If we don't stop in time, we may as well do it intelligently.

# The Alaskan and Fox

Sarah Palin certainly will not be US President in 2012

Javneet  
Ghuman

**F**ox News: 'Fair and Balanced'. If ever there was an oxymoron that would be it. Fair and balanced towards whom exactly? Fox News is the only news channel which feels the need to justify itself and the need for justification is not about to end. The latest 'asset' to their team is none other than the 2008 Republican nominee for Vice President, Sarah Palin. To some she is known as the woman who can see Russia from her house, to others she is simply Tina Fey on Saturday Night Live.

News broke last week that she would be signing a deal with them, becoming a regular contributor to the channel. For those who are unfamiliar with the Fox News channel, it is the channel which called President Obama a racist and someone who has a 'deep seated hatred of white people' according to Fox stalwart Glenn Beck. It is also the channel which condemned Obama for waiting three days before speaking out about the Christmas bombing, despite the fact that George W Bush waited six days in 2001 when attempted shoe bomber Richard Reid tried to blow up Flight 63 in De-

ember 2001. And, worst of all, it was the only channel which took the claims that Barack Obama's birth certificate was a fake. Seriously. 'Fair and balanced'?

There is no doubting the channel is a hard right wing outlet for what is now a clearly failing Republican party. The Grand Old Party is in disarray. With no coherent policies they are hoping that

## The Grand Old Party is in disarray

fear mongering will be enough to see them through the Midterm elections this year. The aforementioned Glenn Beck has certainly stepped up to the mark. In his nightly slots, he has so far scared the American population into thinking that swine flu and the vaccine are being used a political tool and openly cried over

the state of the country compared to the America he knew when he was a child. If Sarah Palin is the politician that the Republicans are sending forward to lead the fight against this new 'socialist' America, they really must be desperate. Their most recent act has been to call for Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid to resign after comments he made about Obama. Since then Obama has forgiven him and yet Fox News and the GOP do not seem to have the capacity to do so.

Sarah Palin will therefore fit right in. Her intellect is certainly on par with the likes of Mr Beck, Mr Hume and Mr O'Reilly and her stance (on the few and far between). Republican policies are as clear as her reasons for stepping down as Alaskan Governor. She stepped down claiming that she was 'not a quitter but a fighter' and that it was to help the Alaskan people. How she feels she can help the Alaskans without holding office is an interesting notion. They are undoubtedly better off without her but somehow that is probably not what she meant. Palin's recruitment to the news channel has already sent the American media into a frenzy. Along with stepping down, she also released a book and now she has a regular slot on a prime time television. Speculation is that she is getting ready to run as the Republican nominee for President in 2012. Agreeing to appear and broadcast to millions of Americans is perhaps not the best way to convince the population that you are the best person



Sarah Palin in Missouri  
Photo: flickr user geerlingguy

for President if you find it difficult to name a newspaper that you read and it will in fact be a platform for her humiliation. Anyone who takes her seriously should not be allowed to vote.

No prominent American commentator does not have an opinion on health-care reform and Sarah Palin has certainly not been one to hide her opinions (another reason why Fox News is just the place for her). She accused Obama of setting up 'death panels' which would decide who had the right to live and die, an accusation so farfetched that only Fox News took it seriously. With Congress looking to pass the bill in the next few weeks, Palin will no doubt have something to

say. In her eyes Obama is a socialist but what she is yet to realise is that President Obama wants to help children - like her son with Down's syndrome. What she does not realise is that Obama has provided the inspiration and hope that a generation of people had been waiting for. What she clearly does not realise is that Obama is what America needs right now and what she will never comprehend is that she will not be the first female President.

One thing is for sure, if she is the Republican candidate in 2012, Obama will have an easy fight on his hands.

# Letters to the Editor

**Madam** - We would like to respond to the article 'Keeping our library to ourselves' in the last edition of Beaver.

With regard to availability of study space within the Library, we constantly monitor usage data and can confirm that so far this academic year the average occupancy at peak times was 72%. So study spaces should always have been available this year, even if not always in the most popular areas at busier times. Spaces can generally be found on the upper floors, even when the Ground and Lower Ground Floors are very crowded.

The Library does get very busy in the summer term, as exams approach. Every year at that time we provide a study space booking service, for LSE members only, to ensure that LSE students can always book a study space. This year we are planning to introduce an online booking facility. Students will be able to see maps of seat availability in the areas we designate as bookable; they can then choose their seat, enter their details to make a booking and receive an email confirmation.

LSE is part of a national reciprocal university library access scheme. This enables students from other universities to use LSE Library, and it also ensures that LSE students can gain access to other libraries in subject areas in which this library is less strong, and helps part-time LSE students who may need access to a library nearer to where they live. In fact, the vast majority of usage of LSE Library is by LSE students, not external users.

However, it is worth noting that the Library is now open 24 hours a day until the end of exams, and during overnight opening, it is accessible to LSE members only. There is a similar issue with PCs within the Library, as PC usage information is also collected in detail. Average peak PC usage in the Library during Michaelmas term show us that it did not exceed 90% at any point, which means that there were always some PCs available for students to use in the Library. These PCs are available only to current LSE students and staff. External users are only permitted to use the small number of Visitor PCs on the 1st floor.

In order to help students locate available PCs IT Services provides a real-time PC availability information service which is available to students via their mobile phones or online. Students with smart

can view this in their web browsers: <http://itservices.lse.ac.uk/systems/checkpr/>. Students who don't have smart phones can view a WAP version of the information at: <http://itservices.lse.ac.uk/WAP>. Real-time PC availability is also displayed on the plasma screens in the Library. In addition to the lower ground floor PCs are distributed throughout the Library (as well as in other campus buildings) and we would encourage students to first check availability before heading to a particular PC cluster. We commend the author of the article Poorna Harjani for her good advice on considering PC clusters or study spaces in areas which may not be the most apparent.

IT Services are constantly monitoring printers in the Library and across the campus as we appreciate how important printing facilities are for students. Over the Christmas vacation, all the printers were cleaned and serviced, and five of the older high-volume printers on the lower ground floor of the Library were replaced with new models. We are also currently in the process of replacing a further six medium-volume printers in the Library with more robust high-volume models and we now keep a number of spare printers to use as "hot swaps" in the eventuality that we are unable to fix an issue ourselves and need to bring in an engineer. Another article in the same edition of Beaver mentioned some students feeling intimidated by library staff enforcing rules on eg eating and drinking, using mobile phones, and loud talking. As was also reported in the article, we have clear evidence from our latest survey that the majority of students support the enforcement of these rules, to maintain a quiet and studious environment. If any student feels unhappy with the way in which they have been approached by a member of staff, they should report it via the feedback form on the Library website, and the incident will be investigated.

We value feedback and encourage students to send us their feedback ([www.lse.ac.uk/library/enquiriesandfeedback](http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/enquiriesandfeedback)) so that we can continue to address any issues and improve our service.

**Helen Cocker**  
User Services Manager

**Madam** - We read in The Times article published

group Hizb ut-Tahrir teaches at LSE") that a postgraduate student in the LSE's government department, Reza Pankhurst, is a member of the aforementioned group and teaches on the course 'States, Nations and Empire' (GV265). The Times' article goes on to argue that 'the presence of one of its [Hizb ut-Tahrir] prominent members as a university teacher raises new concerns about Islamist radicalisation on campus'. While HT has been on the NUS "no platform" list of organisations since 2004, banning it from speaking and organising on campus, the inferred allegation of Mr. Pankhurst proselytizing on campus is tenuous at best.

As a student of Mr. Pankhurst on the 'States, Nations and Empires' course, I have never detected in his classroom agenda the espousal, covert or otherwise, of any political convictions or religious inclinations. If I had, I wouldn't have hesitated to report him, or any teacher for that matter. A fellow classmate and Government undergraduate friend of mine largely feels the same, saying "I would have had absolutely no idea whatsoever about his personal religious/political convictions." So too does Philosophy general course student Azam Zafar, who commented "Reza has never tried to impose his views on us. The whole class is structured around debate. He is always looking for counterarguments." How do his students at large feel? From the teacher appraisal surveys carried out by students last term, across his two classes Mr. Pankhurst enjoys a formidable 80% "very satisfied" score (the highest student satisfaction indicator that can be given). Indeed this is further impressive in light of the controversy surrounding PhD student teaching at the LSE, with the oft-repeated controversy around scholars tending to be more focused on their research and rather than teaching their students. With such comfortably above-average assessment figures, perhaps it is too late, and the sinister Pankhurst already has his 'States Nations and Empires' students under his calculating control. Probably not though. More likely it's attributed to his pertinent teaching; last term, one GV265 student anonymously commented in a student feedback form that "Mr. Pankhurst brings in relevant material at appropriate times and structures the class around an objective assessment of arguments rather than putting forth one argument only - intellectually stimulating and useful food for thought".

The Evening Standard then sensationally weighed in to wow commuters with the serious allegation that 'LSE's Islamist teacher 'groomed suicide bomber for Tel Aviv attack'. While generously giving Pankhurst the best part of a page and

nail bomb factory from his bedroom' was given a limp, straggly column, consigned to the corner. Terence Gavan, who 'stockpiled 54 improvised nail and ball bearing bombs capable of the maximum number of deaths and maiming of innocent victims' is sure to be firing his agent, disappointed that he has been somewhat overlooked.

According to the ES, Pankhurst "was alleged to have played a key role in radicalising Omar Sharif, the British suicide bomber who died after an attempted attack in Tel Aviv in 2003." For such a strong accusation, linking a student and employee of the LSE to the disgusting tactic of suicide murder, we are provided with paltry evidence and arbitrary linkages. Sharif attempted to blow himself up in Tel Aviv at the end of April 2003. Pankhurst however, along with two other men, was busy being imprisoned in Egypt in April 2002, for what Amnesty International believes was "solely for their peacefully held views." It is difficult to see how Pankhurst could have groomed Sharif for suicide murder in the decisive make-or-break months and days before his botched attempt, unless of course he came over on a flying carpet from the local Egyptian prison bazaar. Pankhurst also denies any contact between him and Sharif after they left university (1996 and 1995 respectively), a lengthy period in which seven years elapsed before Sharif's attempt.

The problem here is sadly a consistent trend in the media today; selling newspapers on the exploitation of fear and prejudice of 'the other', with often little in the way of truly investigative verve. Let the people who come into direct contact with Pankhurst decide, rather than far-flung careerist journalists looking for that all-important scoop.

**Ahmed Peerbux**

**Madam** - LSE is a multiracial and multicultural institution with students from diverse backgrounds and nationalities. It should be an environment where everyone feels safe, welcome and free from prejudice and bigotry. This week, however, The Times newspaper and others chose to publish unsubstantiated allegations about one of LSE's post-graduate student Reza Pankhurst, linking him to "new concerns about Islamist radicalisation on campus".

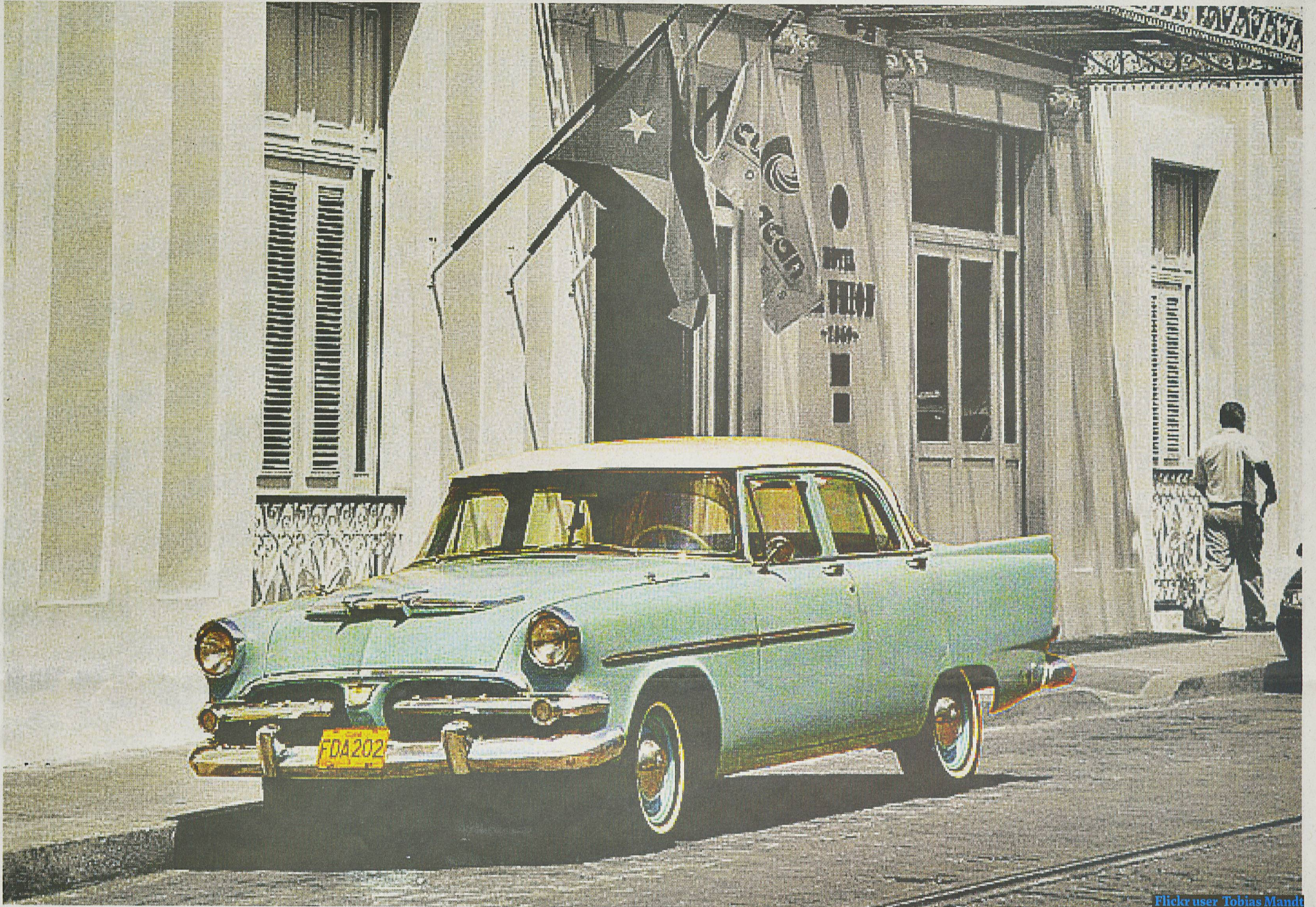
No one should be subject to a media witch hunt not least a student who endured 3 years of imprisonment and torture in Egypt before returning to study and teach at LSE.

increased dramatically over the last year. We have seen four Muslim students stabbed and others attacked at City University, the burning to the ground of a mosque in the West Midlands on Boxing Day and electoral breakthroughs by the fascist BNP. In our universities staff have been pressured to spy on Muslim students, armed police have arrested innocent students on campus and academic freedoms have been attacked under the so called terror laws.

As LSE students and staff we stand united in opposition to Islamophobia and racism on campus. We reject the scapegoating of all Muslim students and are united in opposition to the victimisation and hounding of our colleagues. We are pleased that LSE have released a statement about Reza making clear "no concerns about his conduct have been raised with the school" and call on them not to give into pressure to attack him. We stand in solidarity with our colleague at this time.

**Estelle Cooch** (LSESU Green Party Society, LSESU Palestine Society, LSESU Stop the War Society, LSESU Islamic Society, LSESU Socialist Worker Student Society), **Bronswa Cheung** (President LSESU Finance Society), **Mike Cushman** (LSE University and College Lecturers Union Secretary), **Jessie Robinson** (LSESU Women's Officer), **Vladimir Unkovskik-Korica** (LSE SU Mature and Part-time students Officer), **Scott McDonald** (LGBT Officer), **Yomna Nasr** (Vice-Chair Arab Society), **Nazia Khanzada**, **Mira Hamad** (NUS Delegate), **Aliabbas Virani**, (Member of LSE SU Finance and Services committee), **Ben Jones** (LSESU Anti-Racism Officer), **Dr E.A. Whelan**, **Dr Robert Boyce** (Senior Lecturer International History), **J. Bovensiepen** (PhD student), **Gustavo Barbosa** (PhD student), **Md. Mohituzzaman**, **Filip Zielinski**, **Mark Twyford** (UGM Vice-Chair), **Neil F. Ketchley** (MRes/PhD student), **Kevin Goh**, **Vishal Vikram Chauhan**, **Lois Clifton**, **Jaravee Osathanugrah**, **Nizar Manek**, **Lucio Gianicoli**, **Nihad Ahmed** (Marketing Team, ISoc), **Muhammad Usman Qureshi**, **Brendan Greenfield**, **Gina Byrne**, **Emma Clewer**, **Ossie Filkret**

# Features



Flickr user Tobias Mandt

## The spirit of Cuba

Jonathan Couturier speaks of a lifestyle and identity preserved for over half a century

**C**uba is the past in the present. Whether you are in 1959 or in 2010, life is the same, and it's not that bad. The Socialist Republic of Cuba is a Marxist dream turned bittersweet in paradise. Its revolution disposed of Batista, the vile CIA sponsored dictator, and replaced him with a highly charismatic band of brothers: Fidel and Raul, side-kicked by Che Guevara. To the incessant cries of *patria o muerte!* (fatherland or death!) they pulled the country away from capitalism and into authoritarian socialism. It is true that they have inherited all the ills of centrally planned economies – no freedom of expression or information, catastrophically low productivity, a decaying infrastructure, dull tower blocs, no great diversity of food or material goods, and brain numbing propaganda. But there comes a time when you have to take your nose out of your World Development Report and go somewhere different to see that Cuba has an excellent health care system (they live as long as we do) and a 98% literate, cheerful population.

Over the years, Cubans have nurtured their gift for joy. Cuba is music, colour, and laughter. If you're walking down the crowded streets of La Habana, or riding an ox-cart through the rural village of Vinales, every house will be playing music that is outrageously loud by European standards. Inhabitants will be wearing something colourful with canary yellow being a striking favourite and will, at some point in the day, have fun. Sounds banal? Open your eyes: how many people around you are wearing black, listening to their iPods with earphones and how many of your friends have told you they're having a miserable day?

**Years of revolutionary deprivation have ensured that the Cubans are masters of improvisation**

How could anything be banal in Cuba, when the islanders possess ingenuity as a second gift? Years of revolutionary deprivation have ensured that the Cubans are masters of improvisation. What could beat organising a major event on facebook over your blackberry? Perhaps making a 55 year old american Chevy run on homemade spare parts and bits of engines from at least 10 other cars. Or making a hot-water shower out of a small goblet of plastic attached to live power cables. Amidst the deprivation underproduction has brought to the island, Cubans have gone day by day with homemade solutions to most of their problems. Do not be fooled; the exterior facades of the old colonial mansions in Habana or Cienfuegos may be decaying in the tropical heat and humidity, but inside a cave of preserved or handmade wonders ensures most Cubans live in comfort. And if you don't mind chicken, pork and rice at every meal, life is not so bad.

True enough though, it isn't always rum and Rumba over there. Despite feeling deeply attached to Fidel Castro and his brother, the Cubans are growing somewhat impatient for change. They deplore their lack of basic freedoms, they want to travel, to see what they have been hidden from these 51 years. They do not really care if they have cars that are older than their parents; they have not yet been corrupted by Western materialism. They simply long to do, see and say what they want. This is what they will unreservedly tell you over a Cuba Libre at the local bar, but in your language, not theirs. Los Comités de Defensa de la Revolucion are working hard in the background to make sure another revolution doesn't supplant them.

One day freedom will come and with it, dol-

**One day freedom will come and with it, dollars will plant sky-scraping hotels on the postcard beaches**

lars will plant sky-scraping hotels on the postcard beaches, replacing the birds of the valleys with noisy buses. Cuba has sites of outstanding natural beauty which no camera in the world could ever do justice to, sights that take your breath away and only give it back when you close your eyes at night. Fortunately, the UNESCO has tried to pre-empt the forthcoming tragedy and classed many of Cuba's treasures as World Heritage Sites: central Havana and its decadent colonial charm; the French 18th century pomp that lines the streets of Cienfuegos, the waterfalls and underground caves of Topes de Collantes, places where Indiana Jones would dream of being stranded in; the underwater coral forests of the Bay of Pigs; and the valley of Vinales, a valley of ancient and luxuriant mounds and pillars, untouched by time and man since the Jurassic, a landscape of the worlds' younger days. These are but a few amongst many treasures that authoritarian socialism, for all its ills, has saved from the steaming destructive rampage of mass tourism.

As for the spirit of Cuba, it may live on. For years to come we may still be able to swerve between the potholes of its motorways, overtaking ox-drawn carts in the fast lane, while picking up hitch-hikers tired of the buses that never come. Old women, dressed in white with weather worn faces, may still ask for a peso or two to take a picture with them and their foot-long cigar. Markets may outlast supermarkets for a while, even as tourist attractions, because who would want to do away with a life of colours such as this? All this may endure a little longer, until money finally usurps charm and standardises beauty into banality.



Photo: flickr user wallyg

# Spain: the final frontier

**Calum Young** finds a surprising dichotomy in Spanish identity

**“W**e study History,” remarked the Philosopher Leszek Kolakowski, “not to know what success is or how to master the future, but to understand who we are”. If he was only half-right, Kolakowski would be ideally placed to judge modern Spain. Well over thirty years since the death of General Franco in 1975, and over 20 years since Spain’s entry in the European Union in 1986, the nation remains puzzled and at times even tortured by its past. Today, as just another middle-ranking European state, Spain faces serious challenges. With the exception of Latvia, it has the highest unemployment rate within the Euro area. Nationalist egotism still makes centralised administration difficult, and cultural division atomises society. These issues were created, distorted and magnified under Franco’s regime, and their continuance represents the collective failure of Spaniards to come to terms with their past.

To understand Spanish the divisions within Spanish culture, one need only consider the nation’s women. Spain’s twentieth century was marked by the new freedoms rightfully gifted to women in 1931, and then cruelly removed by Franco’s state. These liberal reforms were then reinstated under the new constitution in 1978. Equal rights were politicised, both through the Republican’s desire to have women fight alongside men during the civil war, or through the Nationalists’ attempt to confine women to the home. Spain traditionally was a country where

men walked on the left of their wives – the better to attack them with their sword. As late as 1975 women could not use contraception, open a bank account, or own property.

If people make history, then history makes people and Spain is no exception. While travelling through the rural north last summer, this dichotomy within the female species was still evident. I met thirty year old farmers who were ‘mothered’, in every sense of the word, by doting wives to-be. One beautiful ‘full-time mum’ informed me that in her village, frequenting bars and cafes alone was an action left to prostitutes. Some women are complicit in their own subjugation. Others in the village, as though to make up for the philistinism of their peers, were assertive to the point of violence. A stocky teenager, spying my slight build, spotted an arm-wrestling challenge she couldn’t resist.

Spain’s press, like its women, is also still trying to come to terms with the nation’s fascist past. Open El Pais, the leading quality daily, on any week-day, and it is likely you will find a comment piece on the fate of Garcia Lorca. A left-wing poet killed by Franco’s death squads, Lorca’s body was ditched in a mass grave, but its location is still unknown and recent scientific testing of one site yielded negative results. Lorca is the most translated and internationally renowned poet in Spain’s history, and so his planned extermination at the hands of fellow countrymen now appears as an act of self-harm on a grandiose scale. Watching the country’s best scientists and historians dig suspected sites and retrace past journeys

**The thin veneer which separates democratic civilisation from the barbarity of militarism is nowhere more evident**

is like watching a nation seek reprise, as though the discovery of an eighty year old corpse will constitute a closure. Of course, digging holes in wintry earth will never resuscitate the past. Spaniards did not just watch Spain die; they also perpetrated the murder.

The shadow Franco casts over Spanish life has dissipated over the forty years since his death, yet the reactions to his rule and the spirit of freedom which exploded once the lid of oppression was removed, continue to this day. The assertiveness of the nationalist movements running counter to El Caudillo’s policy of centralisation remain virulent. Indeed, whilst Basque nationalism has its roots in the late 19th century, its violent manifestation in the form of ETA began in 1955. The movement’s verve is a historical product of alliance with other anti-Franco groups. In a strange twist of fate which, today, baffles historians, the nationalist movements worked side-by-side with the left-wing elements forced underground. Whilst a marriage of convenience, the relationship proved successful: in 1973, ETA assassinated the grandee and Franco’s preferred successor, Carrero Blanco, in a car bomb.

The thin veneer which separates democratic civilisation from the barbarity of militarism is nowhere more evident than in Spain. As late as 1981, a military coup attempted to oust the elected government. In scenes reminiscent of a Charlie Chaplin film, parliamentarians stayed seated and smoked whilst bullets rained overhead. Few in Spain today want a repeat of this sort of protest. To the contrary of all other

middle sized European states, Spain can claim to hosting the most liberal and left-leaning middle class. When surveying opinion in a Barcelona bar on whether the European Human rights convention was a good thing I received the answer, *pues hombre, como no?* Of course, why not?

Even so, Spain’s politics are not akin to other European democracies. No other elected leader is forced to construct policy according to what will satisfy multiple groups of devolutionists. When producing economic policy, Spain’s Prime Minister, Jose Luiz Rodriguez Zapatero, has to appeal to both Catalan free traders and Cantabrian protectionists. Even the allocation of regional budget funding remains contentious; despite its relative economic security the Basque region still receives more social security and infrastructure hand-outs than any other part of the country.

These injustices would be difficult to maintain in normal times, but in Spain, these are not normal times. National unemployment is creeping close to 20 per cent, a figure which reflects a structural hang-over from a nation which was drunk on bricks and mortar before the property bubble burst. Such frustrations are compounded by a vicious two-tier labour market system; this makes one fifth of those in work immune to being fired and the bulk of those without jobs unemployable. If Spain wants to meet these challenges and prepare for the future, it first needs to come to terms with its past.



Photo: flickr user looking4poetry

## An extension of identity

**Mazida Khatun** discusses what it means to be a citizen of the European Union

I am a Londoner, a central Londoner, to be precise and I've lived in England my whole life. I could probably tick off a few of the criteria on one of these 'You know you're from the UK when...' Facebook groups. By extension, I suppose I am also a European, but this identity is a less immediate one for me and many Britons. Before the obvious point that Euro-scepticism is rife in the UK is highlighted, let me point out that in 2007 27 per cent of respondents in both the UK and Finland said that they felt attached to the EU. In Cyprus, this number dipped down to 25 per cent, and similarly low levels of identification could be found in both new and older member states.

This is all despite the fact that the same respondents often believed that the EU was in fact good for their nation. Why do EU citizens not feel more attached to something which they perceive as a good thing? Several academic theories exist, including the idea that states with low levels of identification feel that they have not benefited economically from membership. For example, 60 per cent of the Irish say that they personally gain from membership, compared to less than 20 per cent of the generally Euro-sceptic Brits. Ireland has received billions of Euros in aid from the EU.

Yet, if we travel back to 2007 and

look at the Eurobarometer survey from that year we can see that 48 per cent of Irish respondents felt attached to the EU, whereas 74 per cent felt that membership was a good thing. Again, we must ask why this gap between the two numbers exists. Another theory posited is that non-identifiers generally don't identify with many or any territories, not even their region or nation. However 91 per cent said that they identified with their nation compared to 49 per cent with the EU, which suggests that this theory is also inadequate.

At the LSE's very own European Institute, academics and students are busy trying to figure out the answer to the question I have just posed. In attempting to avoid stepping on their toes, I will put forward a suggestion which probably wouldn't hold up to academic rigour. It seems to me that concepts of European identity have been very political, whereas we often regard it as a subjective or emotional attachment. It isn't always reasonable, and we often struggle to pinpoint exactly what it is that makes us feel part of a nation we believe in it.

Europe suffers from its own eclecticism and vastness. Identity includes two main components: inclusion within a distinct group, and the exclusion of all else. Therefore, identities are inherently limited. Alas, it is difficult to delimit

**How many people could claim that they know when Europe Day is, or recite a short extract of 'Ode to Joy'?**

Europe, or even the idea of it. Demarcation lines between Europe and Asia could set, for instance, at the Urals. However, with the EU seeking ties in central Asia, is it inconceivable that countries such as Kazakhstan could one day become members of the EU? Turkey is the epitome of this very question, as it struggles to convince the EU and its citizens of where it belongs, whether inside or outside of the EU.

Why does Turkey want to be a part of the EU anyway? The 2009 Eurobarometer suggests that over and above every other factor, citizens of Europe feel that the greatest benefit of membership is that they are free to travel, study and work in any other member state. Again, this is an understandable reason for thinking of the EU as a good thing more often than not, but it is a political freedom and you can't cheer a freedom on in a sports game... And even if we could cheer on a European team someday, I wonder which language we would all cheer in. We certainly aren't a region with a common language, nor common myths and have spent the greater part of history fighting each other. What do we have in common?

We might be held together by the lack of barriers between member states, by similar views about welfare, or by the modernity that we are beginning to enjoy across Europe, but these aren't tangible

symbols of our unity. How many people could claim that they know when Europe Day is, or recite a short extract of 'Ode to Joy'? These are our symbols of European Unity and yet we barely know them. The more educated a person is, the more likely they are to identify with the EU and I guess, also be aware of these symbols, possibly because they are open to the idea of a cosmopolitan and open Europe. And it is the idea that one has to embrace, because as Benedict Anderson put it, what is nationalism, other than an 'imagined community'?

Approximately half of all European citizens feel attached to the EU to some degree, whether it is their most important level of identification or their least important, which suggests that the EU is somehow creating an idea of commonality. Maybe Samuel Huntington was wrong, and the more we interact, the more we will understand each other despite our differences, rather than never-ending rejection. Could it be that a political right to freedom of movement has brought us closer somewhat, by bringing us face to face? I think I might take advantage of my EU passport and go on a little trip to find out just how much we do have in common.



Flickr user: bucaorg

# The boulder of memory

**Craig Willy** pays homage to the intellectual élan of historian Tony Judt

In 2008, British historian Tony Judt was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), a motor neuron disease. Today, he is paralyzed from the neck down and cannot live without a wheezing breathing aid. ALS typically removes mobility but not sensation, a mixed blessing and a strange torture when on the verge of sleep one cannot reach for an itch. Last October, despite his paralysis Judt delivered an impassioned, two hour lecture defending welfare state. The sight, of this man under a blanket constantly pausing for air, to share the fruits of a life's worth of reflection was at once pathetic and heroic. It inspired me to reread some of his works and try to draw out the essence of the man.

I do not want to say that Tony Judt is our greatest historian. He is not a thinker with a grand narrative or an overarching system, but is certainly a man with a method. Why care about history? For Judt, we cannot understand ourselves unless we remember where we came from. Today, we are intellectually lazy. It seems so easy now, as we recite the verses of freedom, democracy, mixed market economies and universalism; all laudable, no doubt, but it forces us to forget why often good, intelligent people became Communists or Fascists or so often chose war over peace. Why would Europeans cheer as they head towards the horrors of the trenches? Why would Russians wage war against themselves in the messianic hope and sheer terror of Communism? Why would Nazis enterprise to exterminate Jews? Judt believes we have duty to remember some of this, to have the beginnings of understanding. To this end he set himself an aim of some ambition: to save the twentieth century – with all its marvels and terrors – from “the enormous condescension of posterity” referred to by E.P Thompson. A man of the Left but unswervingly critical

of its failings, he seems a more appropriate voice than most to redeem social democracy and the welfare state.

Though an obsessively European historian, Judt lives in the United States of America. There is something of that other great voice of reason, Stanley Hoffmann, in Judt's choice to live, teach and write in North America. These are two men who have in part dedicated their lives to explaining Europe to Americans for whom the Old Continent is increasingly of purely touristic interest. This might have placed some constraints on Judt's writing. He once bemoaned the “middle-brow political acceptability” of the “terribles simplificateurs” that are American public intellectuals. Indeed, one need only read a few of the cartoonish opinion pieces that grace the pages of America's newspapers of record – those of Thomas Friedman or Charles Krauthammer for example – to understand what is meant and to shudder at what passes for “discourse”.

Yet, Judt never dumbed himself down or pandered to his audience. Many people have come under the withering criticism of his pen. The effect is devastating and memorable. The academic texts on the esoteric Marxism of Louis Althusser's are “unreadable excursions into the Higher Drivel.” Judt writes of Tony Blair that “He conveys an air of deep belief, but no one knows in quite what.” But he is also not afraid to say things that might make him unpopular in his adopted country. He excoriated the American “Left” in a classic 2006 article on “the Strange Death of Liberal America”. In this work, Judt condemned the stunning array of liberal intellectuals who jumped onto the bandwagon of the War on Terror and the Iraq War, from opportunistic “converts” like Christopher Hitchens and Paul Bertram to even thoughtful writers like David Remnick and Michael Ignatieff. They

**A man of the Left but unswervingly critical of its failings, Judt seems a more appropriate voice than most to redeem social democracy and the welfare state**

were, for Judt, nothing more than “Bush's useful idiots”.

But if Judt has railed against America's “liberal armchair warriors”, his entire world view could be described as one of total opposition to the American Right – which has sometimes cost him. It is one thing to extol the virtues of the welfare state or to attack American Cold War triumphalism. It is quite another to criticize Israel. Judt has written on the country's “dark victory” in the 1967 Six Day War and of the criminal and stupid policy of sending more settlers to live in the West Bank. Characteristically, he was able to write harsher things in the liberal Israeli daily Ha'aretz than in the American media. Where criticism and praise for his work was “more measured” in Israel, in America it was often “hysterical”. Judt has gone so far as to advocate a one-state solution for Israel-Palestine, a position which, whatever its merits, is one that requires great courage to take in America. As a result of this he lost, among other things, his seat at the New Republic's editorial board.

Still, even as Judt is an engaged intellectual – indeed, one with an agenda – this never takes him to falsify or exaggerate or mislead. He would rather us merely understand what has occurred. How else can one interpret his magnum opus, “Postwar”? This brick-like 900-page tome is something of a chronological encyclopedia of European history since the Second World War. Judt could have written, as the title suggests, a triumphant story of how the Europeans came together after total war to achieve peace, prosperity and an embryonic union. Instead, there is no imposed narrative, no theme except the subject itself. The book suffers from this, sometimes seeming like a series of unrelated articles. But it also a sign of the author's integrity that he cannot distort

history in an artificial, preconceived narrative. In such a self-conscious bid to make himself the historian of Europe, he sought to give Europeans a history, a sense of the road they traveled from the abyss that were the years 1914 to 1945. Judt writes as an heir to those “chance survivors of the deluge” who were European intellectuals – among them Hannah Arendt, Isaiah Berlin, Albert Camus – who having lived through war, Nazism, collaboration and Communism, had no choice but to write of it. There is something autobiographical when Judt says of these writers that “they were constrained, like Camus's Sisyphus, to push the boulder of memory and understanding up the thankless hill of public forgetting for the rest of their lives.”

Is the work of Sisyphus futile? One could be excused for having that impression. We need constant reminding that the welfare state was born of the misery of depression, that the desire for peace comes from the horrors of war. And need it be stressed that the paths of both Stalinism and Nazism passed through the industrialized death of the Great War? The work of remembrance never ends. Judt himself has not stopped working, despite the temptation of suicide. And now, even as he is subjected to the quiet torture of his bodily prison, even as this article approaches the tone of the obituary, I cannot help but hope for more words from this most admirable of intellectuals. The Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci produced his celebrated Prison Notebooks under the duress and censorship of Mussolini's jails. The great theorist of postcolonial revolution Frantz Fanon penned the most eloquent lines of his *Wretched of the Earth* under the feverish pain of the leukemia that would soon kill him. The mind stays even as the body fails. If Tony Judt cannot heal, then let him produce a few lines more.

## LSE Diary

### Into the woods: Journey to Kashmir

Sanjana Janardhanan was led to wonder how questions of identity take shape

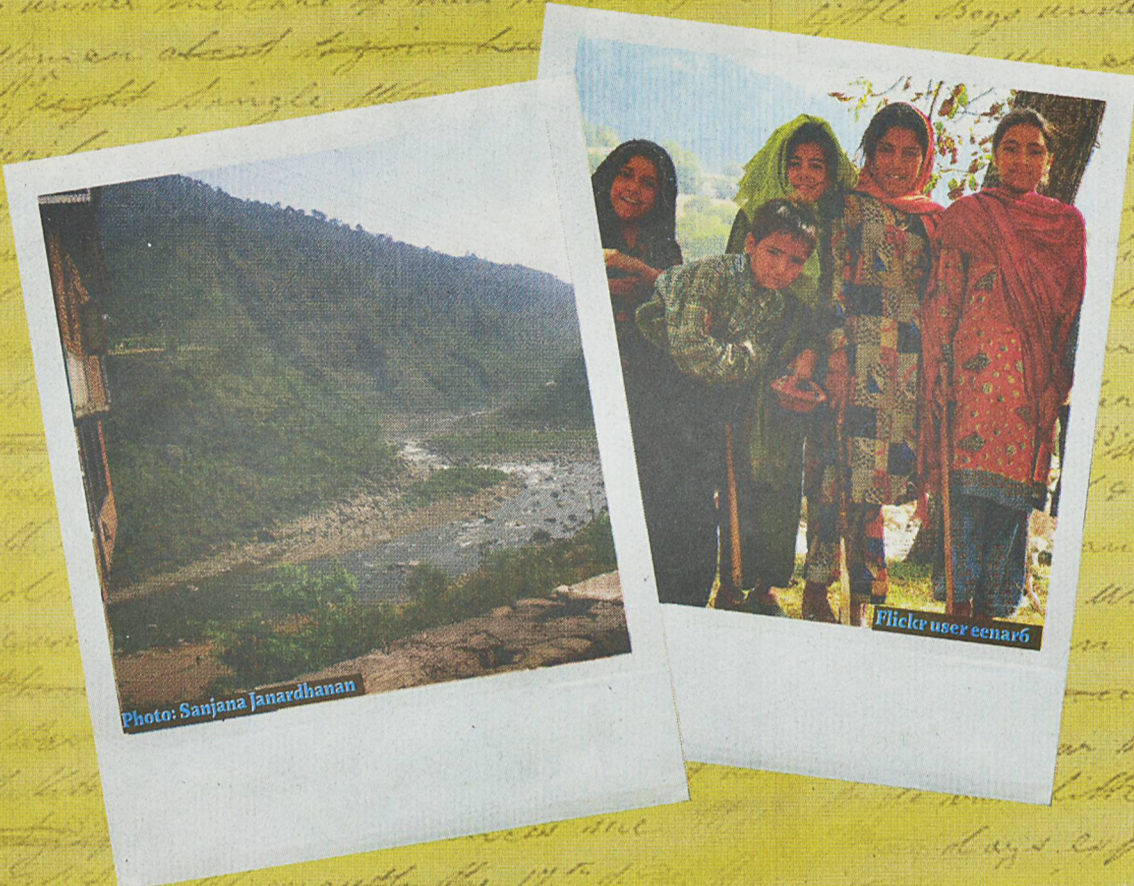


Photo: Sanjana Janardhanan

Flickr user eenar6

The drive to the Kashmir Valley is not an easy one. Having reached Jammu, the northernmost city before Srinagar, I haggle impatiently with a driver who demands far more than what I consider reasonable. Half an hour later, I am ensconced in a straight backed seat, legs squashed in a space which would be perfect for a toddler, leaving the hot, teaming city behind for the road through the mountains.

This road from Jammu to Kashmir is one of the many symbols which signify the Indian ownership over the Kashmir Valley. Hewn through rock and stone, it was amongst the first infrastructure projects under the new Indian government in 1947, hastily built to provide legitimacy to India's claim over Kashmir. On the way, I see a great number of signs patriotically proclaiming India's superiority. "All are Indians," shouts one. "Victory to Mother India," proclaims another.

The road was built not just for mere convenience. The historical access to the Kashmir Valley was originally through Lahore, today in Pakistan. Post 1947, when the king of Kashmir, Harish Singh Dogra, was confronted with the decision of whether to join India or Pakistan, he decided to remain independent, forming the State of Kashmir. In the ensuing tug-of-war, Kashmir was invaded from the North West Frontier Province, the Dogra King had to ask for help from India. India agreed on the condition that Kashmir accede to the new nation which

led to the first Indo-Pak war. The war effectively partitioned Kashmir: one part remains under Pakistan's control and the other under India's. Road access was now impossible to Srinagar and for there to be effective military intervention, air-lifting soldiers was not a sustainable option.

And so a road was built. And Kashmir became Indian. And Kashmir rejected India.

That's why I headed to Srinagar last summer. Curious at what could make a whole 65 per cent of the State's population to first violently and then politically reject the Indian identity, I went there hoping to find some kind of answer both for academic and personal reasons. And 20 days later, I returned emotionally and ideologically battered, my pride in my country sorely damaged and a new knowledge in the insidious ways of imperialism.

Kashmir seethes with anger and fury today. In a country like India, where regional identity has always had a more powerful hold than the national one, Kashmir has gone beyond any kind of simplistic demarcation of regional and national. The present Kashmiri identity which compels an ordinary person to proudly state that he or she is Kashmiri and not Indian did not just arise spontaneously but through decades of torture, anguish, invasion and repression. It is like a jigsaw puzzle with pieces not just slotted together, but forced to fit each other in order to form that bigger picture. There are a number of forces which have contributed to this formation. The Indian State, the

Pakistani Army and militants have all exerted pressure on key points to mould and form the contemporary Kashmiri. The main impact has come from the Indian State, or the rejection of State policy and machinery. Not only has the State's pro-Hindu stance and imposition of Hinduism as the only acceptable identity served to alienate the majority of the Kashmir population, the special status accorded to the state has led to its citizens not being included in a number of important state policies. It was all this plus the two wars fought in 1947 and 1965 between India and Pakistan, the religious affinity towards Pakistan and India's refusal to grant the Kashmiris plebiscite that led to the eruption of militancy in 1989 – an event which has further served to both fragment and compound the Kashmiri identity as it is today.

The state reprisal was hard and heavy-handed. Violence was met with violence. Words like torture and encounter deaths have become a part of daily vocabulary. However the number of active militants did come down to 500 in this year, according to the Kashmir police. Talks of withdrawing the army began. At the same time, the continued presence of large numbers of army troops in Kashmir, the alleged use of torture in the army interrogation camps and the indignity inflicted on the people by army people has led to the strengthening of the anti-India stance by the people in the valley. People wanted the army gone. They wanted to be treated with dignity and respect. In Kashmir, that

means being independent.

In the last two decades, the Kashmiri identity as defined by a number of disparate leaders began to crystallise and to mean different things to different people. However they were all demanding the same thing: the right to self determination in the pursuit of their right to life and dignity and the right to lead their own private lives independently without state interference. Increasingly large numbers of people are setting aside violent forms of protest for more political and peaceful articulations of their demands. The Kashmiri movement, a movement which hinges on the acceptance of their identity has today evolved and grown. Discontent is voiced through peaceful protests and non-violent assembly. The unwarranted and disproportional force with which the State deals with them only served to expose its intentions. The police and army fire upon peaceful crowds, and target people who are both involved and uninvolved with the demonstrations. This has only lent greater strength to their demand for self-determination.

Coming back from Srinagar, I was forced to consider notions of national identity and how they are created and moulded. The things we do, the people we listen to, the decisions that we make – what influences these? From an almost blind acceptance of my identity as an Indian and all that that signifies, I can sense a movement towards understanding all that which makes me as non-Indian as the Kashmiri. Today, I am able to look back at things my family has told me, things taught to me in school, things which I discussed with my friends and things transmitted to me via the media as well as the historical and traditional factors of this country to understand what made me do certain things and what made me reject certain things – the same way a Kashmiri, or a Naga, or a Tamil in Sri Lanka accepted and rejected what was being told to them. The identity of the Kashmiri or Naga or Srilankan Tamil is just as fluid and malleable as mine is and it is this characteristic which is utilised to both control and shape the growth of the people, communities and societies. Yet we are not passive in these processes and it is indeed up to us, at the end, to identify them and decide whether we want to be controlled or not. For Kashmiris, it was first the perceived betrayal of a nation state which promised them one thing and delivered quite the opposite followed by the constant infractions on their rights as human beings which has today led to a cultural and spiritual evolution of their movement.

The Kashmiri movement for freedom has gone beyond factionalism and religion. Today, it is a demand for recognition of the Kashmiri identity and freedom, a demand which has weathered disproportional force and complete disregard, a demand which echoes daily in the minds and hearts of the people of the valley. I can't help but echo it with them.

## WHAT IF...

you came to possess a "Sixth Sense?"

Madeeha Ansari

With a mirror, a camera, a projector and a pack of coloured markers, anybody can play Tom Cruise. At least, that is what is claimed by developers of the "Sixth Sense" technology at MIT.

This eclectic set of instruments, combined with a pocket-sized mobile computing device, can be made sensitive to the hand gestures of the user in such a way that the boundaries between the real and virtual worlds will be blurred. You will no longer need to settle onto an unwieldy desktop to access a vast database of information. It will be, quite literally, at your fingertips. When picking up a roll of toilet paper or a tube of toothpaste, the system will assess the best brand according to your specific preferences. When taken unaware by a special Kodak moment, you will only have to make a frame with your fingers in order to take a picture. More unbelievable still, these pictures can then be projected onto any surface, including your hand.

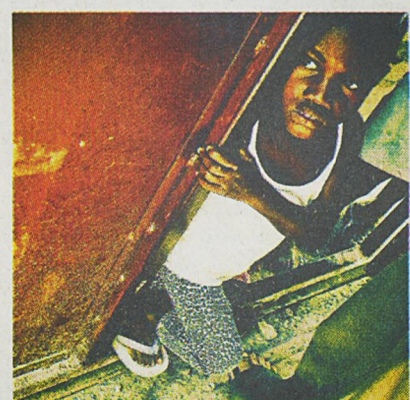
The present manifestation of Sixth Sense technology is a large pendant to be strung around the neck. In future, it is likely that this will take smaller and more aesthetically pleasing forms. The laptop, the blackberry and a variety of similar convenience-enhancing devices will be rendered obsolete by its widespread use as, in true Minority Report style, all you will need is the palm of your hand to make a call or locate any exact piece of information on the Internet.

Contrary to expectations, it is not meant to be ridiculously unaffordable, confined to an elite group of users. The brain-child of PhD student Pranav Mistry, this technology and the know-how of assembling it is meant to be made available for large-scale use once ready. It follows that this digital "sense" has the potential to introduce another dimension to the smallest of decisions in everyday life.

Once a small group of very smart individuals allow the knowledge of the web to be overlaid on the world surrounding laymen, however, the question is what it means for the future of the laymen. Life will most certainly be easier and more efficient. It may lead to the creation of a better informed world. Alternatively, it could result in the dulling of the other senses, so that increased reliance on the virtual "sense" stunts the evolution of the human character and spirit. That is, we may become helpless to take decisions or deal with situations without it.

iTunes has replaced music libraries, the Amazon Kindle may soon replace real libraries. Sixth Sense technology has the potential to replace a range of modern substitutes for paper and effort. The day is not far when we go around creating screens and touching icons in the air. What a wonderful, chilling, thrilling thought.

## Measured musings



Flickr user LucasTheExperience

The humanitarian disaster provoked by the recent earthquake is ever more poignant because of Haiti's initial dire poverty.

Corpses and rubble lie around in roads and villages alike, and very little infrastructure is available to remedy the on-going catastrophe. The airport is currently described as a 'bottleneck', and personal disasters are common, such as the one of a Haitian who, after traveling to the island for his mother's funeral, also lost his wife to nature's wrath. Families sleep outside, many still remain trapped under rubble. Despite all of this, help remains scarce compared to the magnitude of what is needed. Estimates are that three million will need to be fed over the next six months.

What is most curious, however, is the speed at which full news coverage was established on the island. A news spoof commented on images of journalists from all around the world avidly crowding around a single corpse, that the interna-

tional community had indeed arrived on the terrain. These priorities seem to be quite distorted.

The tone of the reports have been horrified and gripping; the media, often strangely stoic in its reports of death in Middle Eastern countries, has let itself, for once, display a smidgen of emotion. More cynical minds would go as far as to attribute this to a likely marketing technique; it rather seems that the stark unfairness and cruelty of it all has permeated the human consciousness. When reading these accounts, it is impossible to prevent oneself from the almost childlike claim that this seemingly random location, time, and event epitomizes the notion of fairness. Societal norms have taught us that pain scarcely comes in any other form than the one of (well-deserved) punishment, despite the fact that history and current events, however, blatantly disprove this common misconception.

The resulting shortages have led to instances of looting and violence. Crowds

try to divert search teams to their own plight, whilst some in a stand of remarkable dignity and refuse to ask help from even journalists. Such an absolute contrast in the face of extreme adversity is perhaps unsurprising; some escape drowning in sorrow through holding onto their morality with a grip of steel, whilst others let go and scramble for survival.

Aid seems too slow; reporters in Leogane complained of the UN mission's behaviour regarding the citizens down the street. It is difficult to grasp from the differing report whether the issue is a matter of lack of resources as opposed to a dramatic organization.

The United States, Mexico and Brazil have thus far been the most active donors, whilst international organizations such as the World Bank and the World Food Programme have started planning and offering their assistance on ground.

Numbers will never mean much to the human emotive organ, despite their prominence and logistic practicality. Es-

timates of the death count range between 50,000 and 100,000.

Sitting within the warmth of The Beaver office, I do not consider myself well-placed to comment any further on the situation.

Marion Koob  
Features Editor

# Social

The Beaver | 19 January 2010

## Through the lens of optimism

Srinjoy Banerjee envisages South Asia in 2020



First things first: approximately a quarter of LSE undergraduate students are from a South Asian background and, in a spooky parallel, a quarter of the world's population is also South Asian. This is to say one in four of us, whether on campus, or in the world at large, are from the nation states of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan or the Maldives. And so, on the basis of sheer numbers alone, South Asia matters.

Even ignoring these sweeping statistics it is impossible to deny the importance South Asia holds in the international community at large. The subcontinent poses some of the most significant challenges faced by humanity today. One third of the world's poorest population lives in South Asia; Pakistan and India are the two countries in the world most likely to go to nuclear war; and most damning of all, four of the nations listed above are now considered failed states.

How, then, does the South Asia Development Society fit into the patchwork of LSE Students' Union societies? When faced with massive challenges such as overpopulation, impossible border issues, endemic corruption and insurgencies, South Asians may be excused for resorting to a "position of surrender", a position characterized by complete acceptance of the inevitability of perpetual backwardness and the pessimistic belief that there is no way out. This was the position our Society sought to counter. When our committee set out to develop this term's agenda, we were certain of one thing: that doom and gloom would not be the message that our members took away for the long term prospects of South Asian peace and development. We, with our mission at

the LSE to learn (almost everything) about social sciences, must understand how to apply these disciplines to the benefit of this juggernaut province of the world, and by doing so learn something about human nature itself.

### The subcontinent poses some of the most significant challenges faced by humanity today

For one, we are eager to celebrate progress. A potential "UK-India Business Forum" will, for the first time at the LSE, look into the positive impact Indian firms have in the UK. We will consider how far we have come since the days Dr. Manmohan Singh liberated India from the

shackles of her own, state-made acceptance of being a perpetual begging bowl. Today India is the second largest investor in the UK, and one of her greatest firms, the Tata Group, owns household brands such as Jaguar, Land Rover, Chorus and even Tetley Tea. But we are also eager to challenge our naive optimism. For every South Asian who retreats into "surrender position" there is one, and most often one who is a non-resident citizen of the country, who settles into "splendid complacency". Such a one believes that given the passage of time, their country will automatically join the league of the developed nations. This term, we will challenge how close India has come to becoming a developed country – against the timeframe her own previous President (Dr. Kalam) set her, of 2020. Vision India 2020 in Week 3 will explore why India is still only the 12th largest economy in the world and where we expect it to be in 10 years time. Watch out for us partnering with various societies, including SPICE, to get these ideas rolling.

South Asia is definitely not just India, and our Society is very keen on exploring the great spectrum of issues that, for example, Pakistan faces. Again, we are eager to see signs of optimism. We reject blind categorisations of "Failed State" status and see reassuring signs in the continuation of democracy and swift military action against forces that seek to destabilise the country. This term, we will hold an event that explores the challenges Pakistan faces, particularly with regard to her security situation. We will also consider her potential to fulfill the expectations of an N-11 country (next 11 leading economies after the BRIC economies).

Finally, and certainly not least, the Society will hold a South Asia Debate Cup. This is an opportunity to explore the variety of issues that the rest of the countries in the subcontinent face, in a series of competitive debates. Most importantly, this is an opportunity for you to get involved and debate, with no previous experience required. It's an opportunity to challenge our own prejudice and views; watch out for news on this in Week 3.

Lent Term at the LSE will, as per tradition, see a number of South Asia-centric events; India Week, Pakistan Week and Bangla Unplugged will all aim to showcase the cultural heritage and traditions of the Subcontinent. The South Asia Development Society hopes that you can take some time out to explore our events that look seriously at the issues of political, legal and economic development, but at the same time, put optimistic thinking back on the agenda when discussing the future prospects of a quarter of all humanity (and the homelands of a quarter of all undergraduate students on the LSE campus).

## Holiday blues

Marion Koob considers travel's restorative powers



Tourism is a land of conflicting impulses. At home, tourists are often regarded by the average inhabitant with gentle disdain, or sometimes a slight annoyance. Whilst journeying abroad, however, we slip into the role and prefer to remain oblivious to whichever stereotypes we previously had held in our home countries. In places we are welcomed almost too eagerly, whilst in some others we find ourselves wondering, minute upon minute, whether we are not cheated by our self-proclaimed guides.

And it is true, travellers can often be uncultured and insensitive. Snapping photos senselessly will not compensate for the minute amount of holidays which one is attributed during a full-time working year. Madame Tussauds' at its current entry price of £25.54 is a rip-off in its purest sense, and absolutely unrepresentative of day to day London-or-English-life. And yes, asking your Egyptian guide whether there are still snake charmers around is displaying a great lack of respect.

Classic tourism is based on a policy of isolation; hotels and travelling groups are often composed of a majority nationality. Cultural exchanges become, in short, both rehearsed and monetary. Explanations of how an artefact is made are followed by the inevitable gift shop, and traditional dancers either visit the hotel,

or are watched in a theatre. The most frightening fact emerging from this, as the greatest over-used economics statement will tell you, supply equals demand. These fabrications of a 'different' way of living are in fact accepted, and sometimes even welcomed by the average visitor. In some areas of the world, dubious complaints will often be made regarding the ever-constant attempts to extract revenue (read: consumer surplus). The individuals claiming to this, however, do not realize that too often their own behaviour is the root of their problems.

Nothing irritates me more than the resulting typical touristic discourse of separatism. Traditions are not experienced via newfound friendships forged between the tourist and the local; the sole possible encounters are with employees in hotels. The local language is not often learnt – rather, the locals have been taught yours. The greatest possible travelling sin (if I may use the religious register), in my view, is the one of the resort infrastructures. It is already saddening that beaches and natural treasures alike are progressively drowned in concrete abominations. If looking for an example, simply take a look at French or Spanish coasts. The way in which they are conceived, however, is usually just as damaging. These buildings are designed, in other words, to keep the customers in. If supplied with a swim-

## Acknowledging our tragic flaws

Fahd Humayun anticipates a fall and sees the importance of assessing our mistakes

We all make mistakes. We mess up. We re-evaluate. We spend a lifetime atoning for that sandcastle we once kicked over, or the hurt we inflicted upon the firefly that came between our finger and thumb.

The sign is clear; 'Do not walk on the grass', and yet, oblivious to the writing on the wall, we choose to walk anyway. Or perhaps we choose not to see the sign at all. After all, ignorance is bliss, and feigned ignorance is even better. A whimsical stroke of luck may save us from disaster, and yet we are doomed to repeat our mistakes. Again.

And again. And again. History has a parade of examples,

which, being the opportunists that we are, we choose to interpret in whatever light is most convenient to us. Some men strive for greatness, others leave the world's stage unsung. The tragic flaws of Hamlet, Othello and Macbeth are arbitrarily incidental. And yet if we look within ourselves, those same flaws exist, buried deep within layers of sublime unconsciousness. The precedence for making mistakes was very much set the day an apple was benignly plucked from the branches of a blessed tree. We all stumble. We all fall. The motive? Greed? Jealousy? Revenge? It doesn't matter. By the time we set sail, the stars stand still – helpless, handicapped.

They say there are only so many times you can be screwed over by life. But what about the number of times you screw life

### What is important is to go into this phase aware that mistakes will be a part of the learning process

yourself? A mistake is only a mistake once you acknowledge it as such. How long do we wait, watching from our cushioned windowsills, before we realize that a line has been crossed, and that what lies ahead is a path of unforgiving repentance.

So why, exactly, am I writing this? As students we find ourselves living the last few years of our lives before we must embark upon an era of responsibility and a lifetime of no-turning-back. This is the age of experimenting, of finding ourselves, of losing ourselves. That mistakes will be made is a given. The nature of those mistakes will vary from individual to individual. The frequency with which a mistake is made depends on the rationale of the maker. This is an area where logic ceases to hold meaning. But what is

important is to go into this phase aware that mistakes will be a part of the learning process. It is foolish to enter life blind-sighted, kidding yourself that there will be a safety net to catch you when you fall. The more unrealistic you are, the greater will be the chances of getting hurt. After all, a mistake only truly becomes a mistake when you hit the ground, look back up and realize you didn't see the edge of the cliff coming. The crash, when it happens, should have been anticipated to at least some degree before. Ignorance is bliss but stupid.

We all make mistakes but it is important that we see them coming. Why? Because nobody likes to be a stranger at the party.



# Looking for London

**Natalie Wong** finds her feet in the city

**L**ondon is not exactly new to me but I am totally new to London. This is so even after a hundred days of residence. The good thing about big cities is that they are comprised of patches of immensely varying cultures and street scenes. And that they have an extensive transport network.

If you search the words 'London Transport' on Facebook, you will find that around 90% of the groups in the search results are against the city's system of mobility. I am definitely loyal to London's public transport, since it's a great excuse to procrastinate; alternatively, some may enjoy observing the urban space from the upper deck of a bus. The bus turns every passenger into a tourist, while at the same time ensuring they remain involved in the busy activity of everyday London life. Even so, though I'm not going to criticize the conditions of the Tube or the punctuality of buses, the best way to feel the city's texture is to wander around on foot. No surprises there. By all means do get on a bus, but then get off at a random destination, and start exploring.

On one occasion, meaning to hang around in Spitalfields Market, I ended up in a housing estate in Tower Hamlets. A man who was wearing a thin jacket and holding a supermarket bag stared at me as he walked past, and I convinced myself that he was indifferent. But then I questioned what he thought of the Chinese girl wandering around his area. Surrounded by brick houses in an open space, where the largest objects were cars and rubbish bins, I stood feeling like an intruder, if not an alien. At the same time though, I sensed an appealing sense of enclosure that might have created a comfort zone for its inhabitants.

True, the residents in this part of the city did not live in detached houses in the suburbs with their own garages, but what better form of community is there than the sharing of space? One person's most intimate circle in life is the one most inaccessible to everybody else, and perhaps this is applicable to a living area as well. If you feel comfortable in the assurance that a park outside somebody's home is a public park, then the surrounding residents would probably see the area as public too. I looked up at the open corridors and witnessed the domestic face of the city: bed-sheets were hanging along with various other clothes; a bicycle glinted all the way up on the third floor; wooden racks stood outside doors and were seemingly used as additional refrigerators in winter, a thought that was amusing for someone hailing from the sub-tropics, like me. A sign said 'NO BALL GAMES', and under

the text was a Bengali translation. To be honest, the open area did provide a good site for ball games! Everyday life is ordinary, but it can be unique as well. In a place like London, lives can vary in the form of dazzles and glows, which are equally enchanting.

London's architecture and the pattern of buildings have a lot to say about the historical features of the city. The blue plaques, signs which indicate the connection between a place and the famous events that took place, or people who lived there, are apparently a source of understanding the city's past. But it's not only the plaques. To me, it is interesting to see just how specialised the shops are, for example the Button Queen in Marylebone, which sells a massive range of buttons, plain and deco, 'modern and antique' (at least this is how the shop portrays itself anyway). This is a strong reminder of Victorian times when the Industrial Revolution had allowed the transition from craftsmanship to a high degree of specialization. In fact, there's a lengthy drawing in the Transport Museum which shows every building along Regent Street (and beyond) in Victorian Times, detailed from the Admiralty to a wax shop. From the drawing you can also see contemporary advertisements and a group of men chasing after an escaped bull, which was a common street scene at the time. So yes, surely, museums and galleries are a big part of cultural life in London.

Even outside of these museums, artists are everywhere. At 5PM in the evening, in an alley with closed shops and shut doors, there was an illuminated unit that caught my attention. The walls were a clean white, with track lights on the ceiling. There wasn't a single person in sight, only a table of art books. And by 'art books' I mean the printed mediums themselves were pieces of art. There was a series of books called Somerset Stone, each with a real stone in it, with pages of a large hole in the middle, accommodating the stone stuck in the back page of the book. I wouldn't say many of the books there appealed to me, but the unit provided a space for sharing and exhibition. Even the subways are full of art in the form of graffiti: an amazing sight! I was truly astonished at the subway just outside Waterloo station that is a creation of many nights and the labours of many people, each spraying their ideas over somebody else's.

Discovering the city streets is one of the biggest recreations in the world. London's diversity is alluring - beware, else you may spend a lifetime trying to ingest it all.

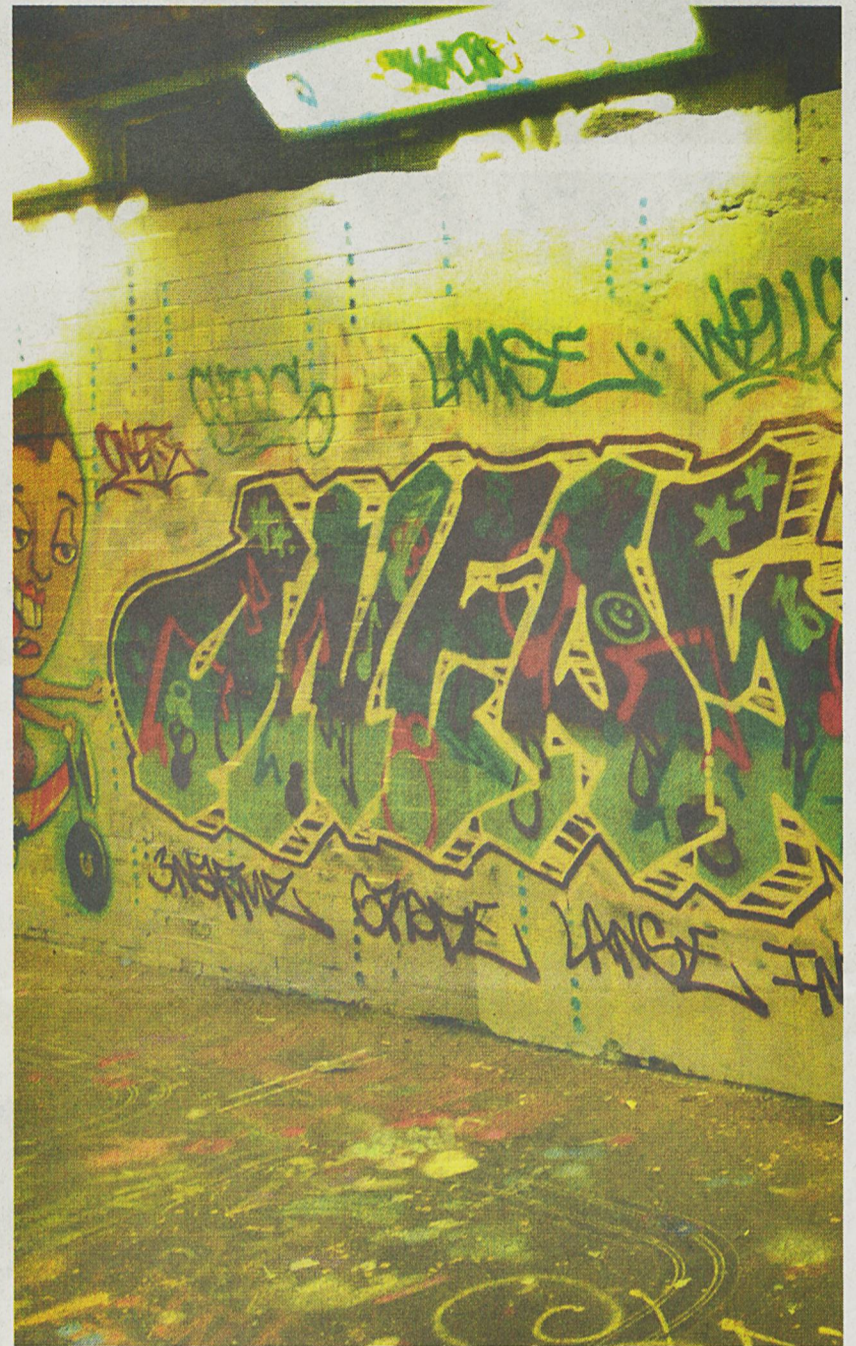


ming pool, food and drinks aplenty and a bit of sporting activity - then why venture outside?

Ideally, the new and improved version of average travel would be, for instance, a complete submersion in the visited culture. In order for this to be genuine and form true relationships, however, this takes time. Fast track trips reek of short cutting much more than the not so well known museum. In the same take, diversity is given very damaging blows. There is no point in commenting, upon return to your home country that the place was sunny; or the journey relaxing. Travel ought not to relax, it ought to question and challenge.

Perhaps there is no existing market, however, for these two components. Ready made peace of mind is attractive enough on a brochure, but the strange and potentially dangerous anecdote in the midst of an unknown city significantly less so. Out of the two, however, the latter will be remembered and perhaps cherished as a 'bonding experience'; the former will sink into the oblivion of well-ran routine.

You might say that this type of tourism is not one which students are usually exposed to - and thankfully so. It is however an ever-expanding industry. And if never supplier, one may one day become client...



LSESU  
ATHEIST &  
HUMANIST  
SOCIETY  
PRESENTS:

A. C. GRAYLING

Disbelief

Thursday 21st January

New Theatre

## OVERHEARD AT LSE

Girl in old building lift: 'You really should go see the doctor.'

Guy in old building lift: 'But I only bled once, a load of times.'

At PS446 class after the introduction to course the teacher asks whether students have any questions. One girl: 'Can we eat during your class?'

Anon: 'I'm just feeling a bit down, that's why I'm going to the library on Saturday, it'll cheer me up!'

10:57 am: Roommate wakes up  
10:59 am: Roommate gets out of bed  
11:00 am: "Oh fuck! I'm supposed to be in a meeting right now...with the student services centre about my time management."

Economist: '...and that's the problem I have with the Black Eyed Peas - tonight is statistically unlikely to be a good, good night.'

Sociologist: 'I just find it ironic when it comes on in Crush.'

Macro teacher: 'Economics is all about assumptions. What do we assume a girl will do if I approach her and ask her to come home with me?'

Student: 'Walk away?'

Teacher: 'No, she'd probably slap me.'

Second year to overly eager first-year discussing deadlines:

'Of course I havn't started the essay, its due in over 20 minutes.'

Guy on Houghton Street: "Twilight - taking the 'n' out of 'fangs'."

I work in the Admissions Department, and we got a phone call from a prospective student one day that went like this: (in Welsh accent) "Allo, I've spoken to the RAF this morning and apparently I'm too old to be a pilot. So now I'd like to enroll on your MSc Economics - when can I start?"

ST107 lecturer about percentiles: "hopefully you have all heard of the word percentage, percent, per cent.. 'pour cent' in french"

french girl next to me (ironic): "Oh! now I know"

# Photo

## LSE Photo Prize

In light of the recent photo prize competition, we have decided to show some of the previous years fantastic submissions  
This year's contest had 'risk' as its theme. A selection of this year's best entries will be exhibited from March 1st to April 2nd in the atrium.  
The opening reception, hosted by Sarah Worthington, will take place on Tuesday 2 March 7-9pm. Prizes will be awarded by Howard Davies.



Photo: Zhou Lei



Photo: Tugkan Batu

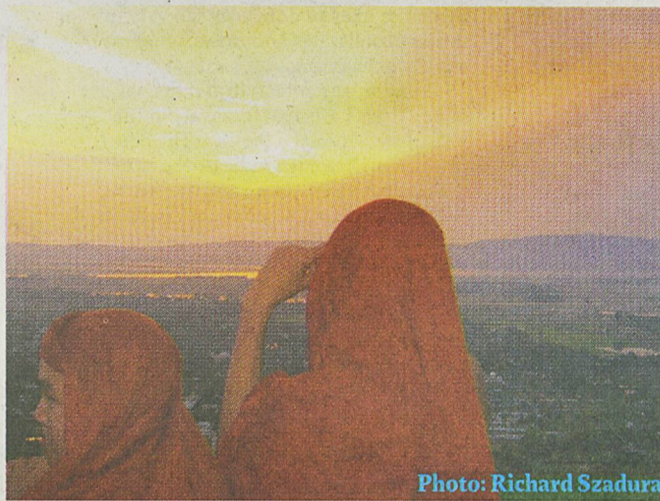


Photo: Richard Szadura

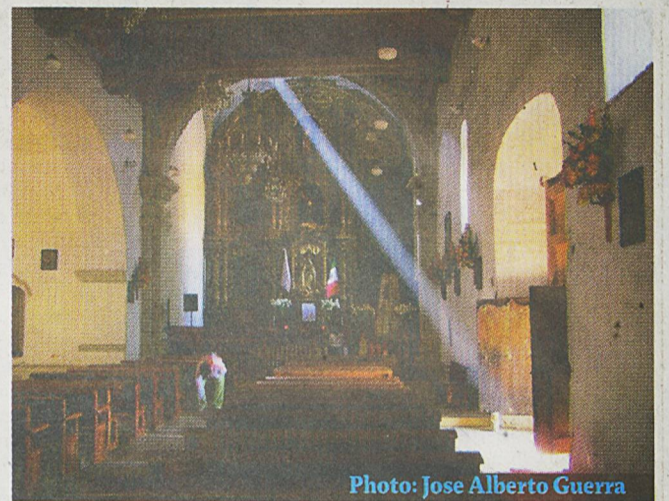


Photo: Jose Alberto Guerra



Photo: Jean Jameson

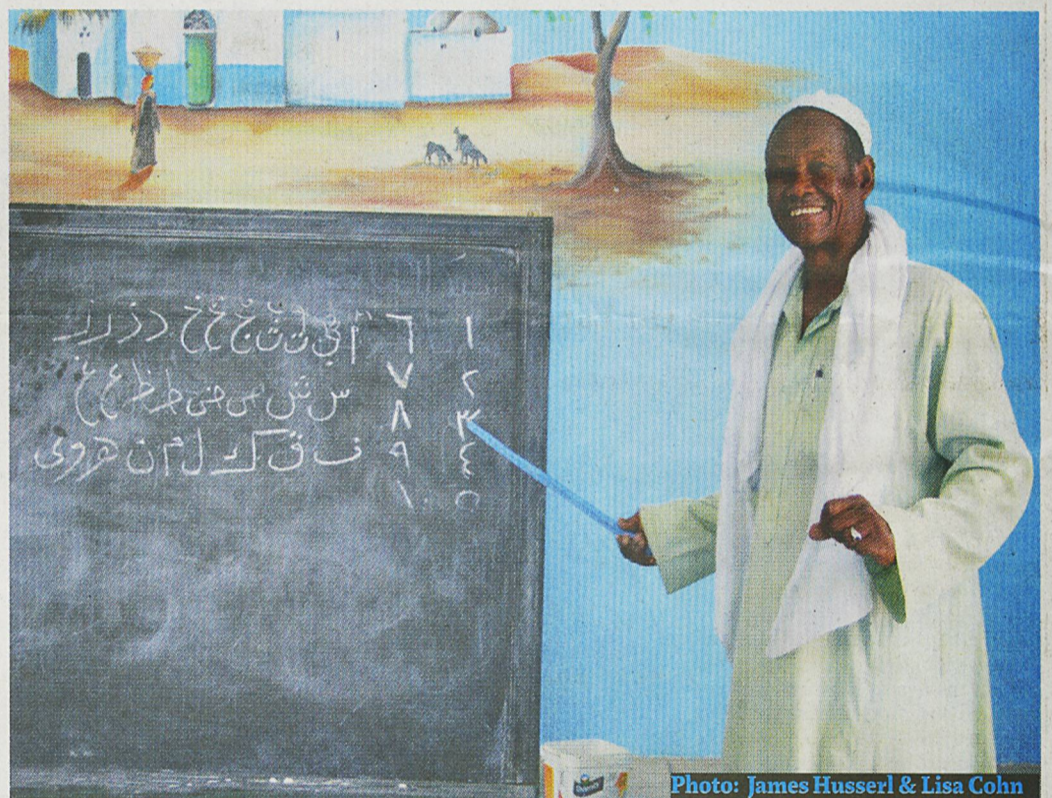


Photo: James Husserl & Lisa Cohn



Photo: Carlos Felipe Pardo



Photo: Dennis Mao

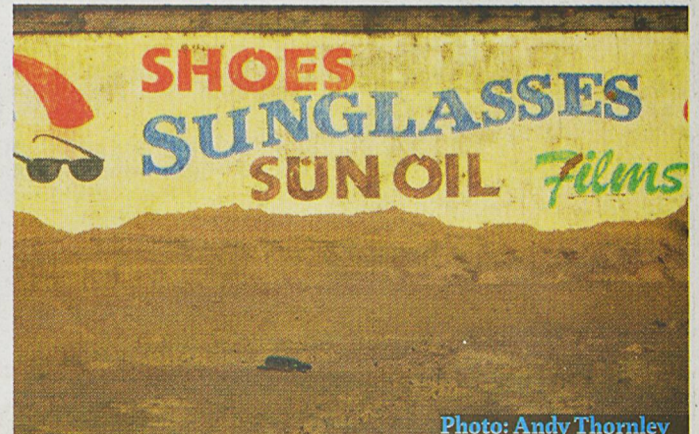


Photo: Andy Thornley



Photo: Filippo Dionigi



Photo: Diana Tonea

## Players of the Week

**Kate Strivens**  
 1 (Tuns)+  
 1 (Sports Cafe)+  
 3 (Drunk and disorderly)+  
 10 (Shag)  
 = 15pts

**G-Crow**  
 1 (Tuns)+  
 1 (Sports Cafe)+  
 3 (Drunk and disorderly)+  
 10 (Shag)  
 = 15pts

## Flop of the Week

**Emma Heap (by her standards)**  
 1 (Tuns)  
 1 (Sports Cafe)  
 10 (2 pulls)  
 = 12pts

**Megan Protheroe**  
 1 (Sports Cafe)  
 = 1pt

# Jonas and Xisco tell it like it is

This week sees the inaugural banter column from Jonas and Xisco, two renegade reporters hailing from the Peruvian coast. They will be accurately depicting the week's banterous AU activities, cutting short and exacerbating existing rumours.

Jonas Westoph  
 Xisco Getege-D'ore

Christmas is over. However, you could be forgiven for thinking that you had gone back to the future if you were to ever go home with Middlesbrough's finest, Joseph Watson. The floppy haired tosspot (no not Jonathan Ross) has seemingly developed a penchant for serenading women with his fellow addict and lookalike Shane Macgowan's Christmas cracker 'Fairytale of New York'. However, this was no fairytale. The charms that had worked so well on Kate 'it's serious' Henry failed to impress the former Soviet spy, who he had lured back from Tiger Tiger.

The illegitimate love-child of Charles Kennedy and Corrie's Fizz, Ginger Chris, did manage to get some action. Unfortunately, due to a strict Catholic upbringing, the young lady's meat wallet was M.I.A - luckily she was a slut - so a quick blowy outside Buckingham Palace had to suffice, meaning Gingersaurus Rex went home happy.

As the week progressed onto Wednesday night, the AU descended upon

Sports Café. Prolific Napoleon hunter and Marouane Fellaini wannabe Kate Strivens took her chance to snaffle the recently unemployed pint-sized hedgehog G.Crowler. After having had his two previous penile charged ultimatums rejected quicker than Barack Obama's health bill, Georgeous

the fact that he is a little bitch of Norayr proportions. Blundering Cameronite James "there is currently, no class system in, the world" Heath managed to stoke up a relationship with Russian slalom-chump Maria. Lastly but definitely not least, tubby Townshend pinned down (some-how) Sophie Smidge for the 3 Count.

**Due to a strict Catholic upbringing, the young lady's meat wallet was M.I.A - luckily she was a slut**

### Best Lad

**George De-Ste-Croix/Owly;** No explanation required for the latter. With 1001.5 lad points in the bank this week Crowler is back to the form of his breakthrough first season.

### Worst Lad

**Joseph Watson;** Coming over all sensitive and being polite and thoughtful to Katya is not the type of behaviour you would expect from a student of the Al O'Brian school of chivalry.

went into sexual administration much like his beloved Portsmouth Football Club. When questioned about his bedroom performance Crowler quipped "Man Utd don't play their first team at Wrexham away."

Having been rejected on numerous occasions by Rosie 'Susan' Boyle, Malibu decided to move onto her less impressive namesake Sophie 'Susan' Boyle. Despite this, the starlet still failed to obtain even half a lad point as a direct consequence of

Know anyone who has had banter with Fenton? Heard the Rugby sing? Fended off Snaville? Don't fancy Seb? Let us know, email [jonas&xisco@thebeaveronline.co.uk](mailto:jonas&xisco@thebeaveronline.co.uk)

# ReAU Union



Wednesday 20th January  
 The 3 Tuns  
 8 till Late

## Zoo Bar Safari Scorecard

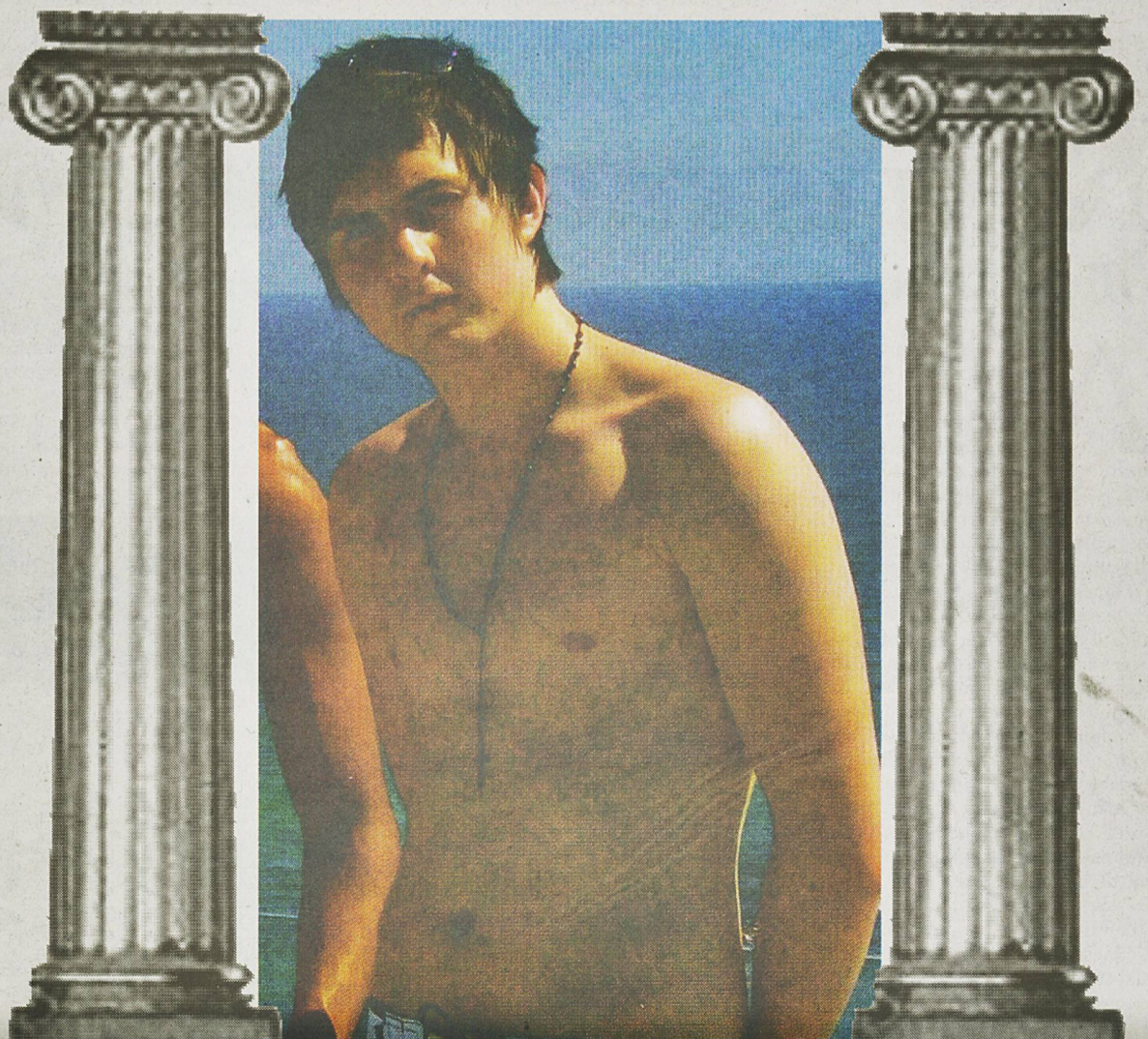
Tear out this scorecard and look out for the following on Wednesday night. Tick all the appropriate boxes and return your scorecard to The Tuns. Prize\* for the person who sees the most!

Name: .....

- 1. BJ pulling Kate Henry
- 2. Girls on the pull:
  - Heap
  - Protheroe
  - Deevy
  - Henry
- 3. Boca without his shirt on
- 4. Townsend pulling someone else's girlfriend
- 5. Reesy (aka Rees Sutton after 2 bottles of wine)
- 6. FC singing "Stand by me"
- 7. Jake '3rd team FC captain' asleep in the corner
- 8. Hear the rugby sing:
  - Yes
  - No-o, no-o
- 9. Bowers and Strivens 'hunting' (often as a pair)
- 10. Tim 'Murderer the 2nd' Cooper lurching

\*Signed copy of the Beaver by your Sports Editors

# TORSO OF THE WEEK



# Sport



Take part in  
our Zoo safari  
inside!



## Gaels get going

13 Irish lads make LSE history by founding the university's first Gaelic football club



Ciarán Deeny  
David McCauley  
Niall Quinn

Taking inspiration from the founders of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) in Ireland, who in 1884 set up a sporting and cultural organization to promote and foster Irish traditions in the face of British oppression, the Irish at LSE have finally marked their territory by setting up the first Gaelic club at this university. After a few training/drinking sessions and a shiny new kit, the list of new recruits veteran and rookie alike, soon got to grips with the skills involved in playing the sacred game and were ready for their first match.

The date was set, the newly formed LSE Gaelic Football team was to play its first ever match. The weight of history rested on the shoulders of 13 courageous

young men - much like Jesus and the twelve apostles. All that was left to be decided was, who would be messianic figure...?

Several of the gaels had patriotically kept up the age old Irish tradition of getting absolutely inebriated the night before the game, which left our fearless leader in a bit of an agitated state, waiting at Holborn Tube station with only 3 other players. Following our eventual arrival at the ground and some intense negotiations with our Poly competitors we managed to postpone our first game for a while in the hope that the rest of the team would arrive. Surely enough, two hours later and looking like they'd just been at George Best's stag do, Niall "Shoreditch" Quinn and Davey "Missing-in-Action" McCauley finally arrived to complete our Motley Crew and we were ready for the first game. It was a terribly wet and blustery Sunday morning in Burnt Oak playing grounds but this didn't dampen our

spirits. In fact, it helped ease some of the Irish lads' homesickness - it beat being at Mass and surely wouldn't the rain help the potato harvest!

Our first game of the day was against Southampton Poly. Most of our team hadn't played a proper game of Gaelic since the last time Deeny converted at Zoo Bar, with three having never played at all. Yet we battled hard. The pick of the defence was Dermie "Francie Bellew" McCloskey who kept the boys in check at the back alongside Joe-Joe Harris who took to the game like a duck to water and, after his initial Michael Jordan impersonation, bouncing the ball up the pitch, was solid in defence. Our resident Aussie, James "The Hitman" Perry set the tone early on. After carefully explaining the subtleties of tackling to him, it appeared that it had went in one ear and straight out the other as he proceeded to throw caution to the wind and spectacularly speared his marker to the ground - in true 'aussie rules' style!

The AU's very own head honcho and Iron Man, Jarlath "Marathon Man" O'Hara, was an inspiration to everyone playing and alongside McCauley in midfield was the powerhouse of the team. Once we got into our flow and the forwards got the touch of leather we soon put the scores on the board. Andrew "Freestater, Mexican" Simpson was involved in some nice plays and showed that he isn't just a one movie... eh, I mean a one trick pony. Southampton scored first but we soon found the net after some intricate passing in the forwards and superb vision from O'Hara, McCauley was played through and slotted home nicely from 10 yards. In the second half, el Capitano Ciaran "Stalin" Deeny somehow pulled

Imperial College London. After winning the throw-in we kept possession and scored early through a McCauley free kick. It started as a pretty evenly contested affair but we soon got the lion's share of possession. In defence Donal 'D-bag, Buddy, FinSoc' Taylor stepped up to the plate and, showing that he was more than just a Corporate whore, got stuck in and put a few of our Poly counterparts on their hole. In defence Noel Burke alongside McCloskey held solid, keeping the poly at bay. Shane "Jason Sherlock" Canavan, our resident 'Dub', at full forward was getting plenty of service but after missing a long series of chances seemed as though he wouldn't be able to score in a netball-run whore house. However, after some fine passing we parted the opposition defence like the Red Sea and he executed a fine finish to score a valuable goal, putting us well clear. For the remainder of the game we largely kept the Gimperial attacks at bay and rounded off a well-deserved victory with scores from McCauley (2 goals-3 points), Deeny (1-2), Canavan (1-0), O'Hara (0-1) and Simpson (0-1).

Covered head to toe in muck but triumphant, we hit the showers and even the penis-hibernation-inducing freezing cold water couldn't get us down. For a post-game pint we happened upon the tackiest Irish pub in London, which aptly described in the words of our articulate Donegal thespian, 'twas absolutely lethal, like a cross between Father Ted and Phoenix Nights!' Unfazed we downed our celebratory pints and enjoyed the craic that followed.

As we are a new club this year, we're still looking for new members and we've got the British Championships coming up next month in Birmingham so if you've played before and are looking to get back in touch with your Irish roots or even if you haven't and want to take on a real sport, send us over an email and we'll let you know what's happening; c.deeny@lse.ac.uk

Lastly, everyone from the club extends their thanks to the AU management in facilitating the founding of the club with special mention to Jarlath O'Hara for his enthusiasm and Harriet Rothwell for her tireless work in securing funding.

Go raibh maith agat agus Éireann go Bráth.

The weight of history rested on the shoulders of 13 courageous young men - much like Jesus and the twelve apostles

a 35 yard left-footed point from the left wing out of his arse to level up the scores. Elliot Vick, a stand in goal keeper for the second half, pulled off a sublime save but quickly went from hero to villain after a Southampton free kick skidded through the muck and into the net giving them a one point lead with a few minutes to go.

Just as things were getting tense, we played a ball up the field but our left-half forward was nowhere to be seen. On closer inspection, Shoreditch Quinn was found on all fours throwing up the copious amounts of whatever mixture he had consumed the night before on the sidelines. In fairness to him he got up afterwards, wiped his mouth like a good altar boy and played on.

We ended up losing by a solitary point in our first match but it was a solid performance, which we could build on for the next game; The London derby versus

## Now is snow time to quit

Oliver Townsend writes on why you should play on, whatever the weather

As you are all aware, this winter has been one of the coldest and snowiest in recent memory. The snow has brought us great fun in the form of sledding, snowball fights and days when you can justify not leaving the house. It has however, taken its toll on the sporting world. Last weekend saw all Premiership rugby matches cancelled bar one, and Wednesday saw little or no action from the LSE sports teams. It is the time of the year when many of us find ourselves asking why on earth it is that we go out in these conditions for hours on end, running around freezing our bollocks off (metaphorically or otherwise). To be fair, with cancellations and the cold, I regularly find myself questioning the incentives to leave my flat and trek down to Berrylands on a Wednesday. Nonetheless, when we next have a match, come rain or shine, I will definitely be there.

Many people, no doubt, have found other things to do to occupy themselves on Wednesday afternoons, and it is definitely easy to fall into a cycle of poor fitness and not exercising. The question is, will we want to give them up again when the call

comes that the pitches have thawed and dried enough for a game?

I have to admit, as sad as it is, that when I don't have rugby on a Wednesday afternoon I am like a little lost boy, confused and disorientated. The AU has become such an integral part of my university life and routine that when it is taken away, I don't know what to do with myself and often find myself sat on my own in the Tuns, counting down the hours 'til 7.30, when Wednesday night begins. Even then, Wednesday nights are not the same when you haven't had a match in the afternoon. The atmosphere is often more subdued and generally the turnout is lower, making you realise how integral matches (win or lose) are for team spirit off the pitch.

It is at times like these that I realise why I play sport. Enjoying yourself on the pitch and wanting to be there is undoubtedly an important aspect of playing sport, however, for me at least, it's about so much more than the game. If it weren't for the AU, many of us wouldn't get any exercise outside of the walk from the Tuns to Wrights Bar and back. Given the alcohol intake in the evening, pre-emptively burn-

ing off some calories justifies the excesses we so enjoy afterwards, or at least offsets them to some extent. For others, it's the social side alone that draws people to the AU (think back to the 'social 8ths' in the netball club last year - the team with no fixtures!). I remember in my first year

being told 'If you want to get laid or make any friends, join the AU', and I don't doubt its truth. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, sport at university is a release, a break from studies and a chance to leave your work behind for an afternoon a week. I for one would go mad if I didn't have

sport to distract me from my work, and for a lot of people, it's something that helps drive them through from one week to the next. All of these points add up to why, despite my slightly tubby frame and notorious aversion to running, I cannot wait for our next game, even if it is snowing.



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] less [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] is [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] more [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] PART B [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

# 19.01.10

ALEX WHITE – PARTB-RANT@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

## RANT

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

## FOOD

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

## LITERATURE

## INTERVIEW: DIANA YUKAWA

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

## MUSIC

SOPHIE MARMENT – PARTB-THEATRE@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

## THEATRE

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

## FILM

IMO OTORO – PARTB-FASHION@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

## FASHION

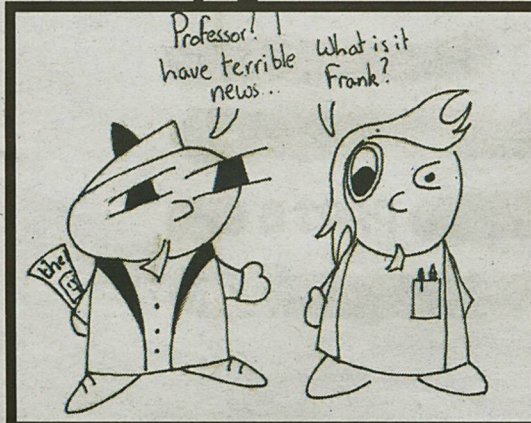
JONATHAN STOREY – PARTB-TV@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

## TV

ALICE PELTON – PARTB-SEXANDGENDER@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

## SEX AND GENDER

### Frank! by Mark Twyford



## EDITORIAL

*Only worry about what you can change in life – Bertrand Russell*

So right brov, dis one geeza came up in ma face and was all like, yo part B aint fit for 16 pages no more. so I was like yeeah, y'all aint feelin me. I was sweatin fresh to death, aint no white boy gonna circumscribe my journalistic in-tegraaty. Tho den I thought on dat, I was like, am I bowvered? We wealthy without cash - feel me. We be high, yet our feet never leave the ground. I be wired but i don't know electric..Aint no fly boy gonna be beating on me,

Does this face look bowvered? I aint bowvered, So now I am all on that 'less is more' shit', so tap that mofo, Some days be hot, and this shit is hot, like a forty degree day. We be barbecuing in this heat, but we aint be sweatin - we be chillin. Time was, there be beef on this Some guy gotta get, got, thats what war is. It dont matter who did what to whom at this point.

But that aint me, that aint how I roll. some times in this life we let the wind blow. Hoe.

### Calum Young & Graeme Birrell

[partb@thebeaveronline.co.uk](mailto:partb@thebeaveronline.co.uk)

#### WHAT OUR CENTRESPREAD WOULD HAVE BEEN IF WE HAD ONE THIS WEEK:



# A Talleyrand Monologue.

A short story by Marion Koob

Hello? Hello?

...  
OY!

...  
Ah, there you are. Don't you ignore me, you little moron. I can see you smirking. And you don't look too good; a bit pale. Must be the age.

...  
Anyways. You probably know what I've come here to talk to you about. It's not very pretty. And I know you're upset.

Alright, fine. You're pissed off. No need to make crude gestures.  
The thing is, I need a stupid, little, tiny, favour. The kind that I hear you're very good at.

...  
What you do, it's a bit like... insurance, right? Well, I haven't paid my fees in fucking years- and let's be honest with you, I don't regret it. I need the emergency kind now. I know you do those as well. I've read about it in the papers.

...  
You know what happens if you don't give it to me, right? Really?  
Come on, I don't think you've ever been there, mate. I've never read about that, it's not on your firm's books. And what about all of that PR nonsense? The nit-wit 'love thy neighbour' themed splurge?

...  
You could even employ me, in your damn little corporate heaven. I don't even mind if I'm the low of the lowest. Life's been quite good so far.

...  
An amazing life, actually.  
All of that money- it started with the money, I think, me forgetting.  
Not the insurance business though. I gave up on it much earlier than that. All a bunch of thieves, these salesmen, that's what my dad used to say. And he was right. Yeah, that's why I don't regret, I think.

What money brought me was the good food. After a taste, that's what kept me going for more.

You wouldn't understand that either, I would imagine.

You're much too thin.

I need to keep on having the amuse-bouche, sink in the flavours, inhale whichever good products come my way. I need to keep on eating, man.

You wouldn't bloody understand, skinny little bastard like you are, would you? WOULD YOU?

...  
Hey! Hey! Don't go!  
You're supposed to fucking forgive n' forget!

...  
In Room, two others.

"He's going to hurt himself if he keeps thrashing around."

"We should tie him when he sleeps. It sounds like he's talking to the wall."

...  
(Final thoughts of a dying atheist)

## 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 Aunt/Slut at [partb@thebeaveronline.co.uk](mailto:partb@thebeaveronline.co.uk) and see if she can help.

**Dear Aunt Beverly,**

What have you done with the sun? And what is with the freak weather? Signs surely that the world is a terrible place to be and that my duvet provides me with more than anything outside my front door can. Any tips for hibernation?  
*Beyond-depressed-and-gloomy, 3rd year*

**Dear Apocalypse Now,**

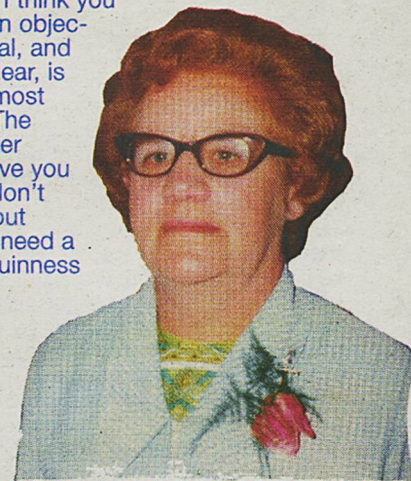
Good grief someone has a terrible case of the January blues. The best form of defence here is attack. Get that be-hind of yours out the door, I understand work is unappealing, and that you probably have no money but why not join a new dance class, or volunteer in a soup kitchen. Or simply spend some quality time with your friends. Chances are you'll all feel terrible and will benefit from mutual griping. Either that or form a suicide pact. It can feel very communal I'm told. Best of luck, pet.

**Dear Aunt Beverly,**

I can't stop touching and stroking things. Textures make me happy... And this way I can properly understand who people are and connect with them. People give me odd looks in shops and now people I know won't stop and talk to me. What is their problem?  
*Soft-or-sticky-bristly-or-smooth, 2nd year*

**Dear Touching-isn't-loving,**

This situation may actually be beyond even my most impressive capabilities. It is hickory, hickory, to believe that energy flow or whatever nonsense connects you to these people and things. Emotions connect you to people, you see? I think you may be an objectum sexual, and that my dear, is serious, most serious. The Eiffel Tower cannot love you back...I don't know about you but I need a tequila-Guinness chaser.



## Just a Thought

AJ Ayer was both one of the greatest Philosophers of the twentieth century and an excellent dinner party guest. Whilst being wined and dined at one of Manhattan's finest tables, Ayer intervened in an altercation between Naomi Campbell, the supermodel, and Mike Tyson, the champion boxer.

Tyson had, quite reasonably, been flirting with Campbell throughout the course of the evening when, less reasonably, frustrated by his failed attempts to coax her into bed with him, he turned aggressive.

When Ayer demanded Tyson stop, the boxer said, 'do you know who the fuck I am? I am the heavyweight champion of the world'

To which Ayer replied 'and I am the Wykeham professor of logic, we are both pre-eminent in our field. I suggest we talk about this like rational men' Ayer and Tyson then began to talk while Campbell slipped out.

Aiding comely lasses was not Ayer's only notable contribution to popular culture. During a life which spanned some eighty years he successfully befriended almost all the leading intellects of his time, from Arthur Koestler to George Orwell. Whilst also finding time to jointly edit, Polemic, a philosophical journal intended for mass circulation.

That journal unsurprisingly failed. Despite his best attempts, and what seems to have been an infinite number of dinner invitations AJ Ayer failed at making Philosophy popular. Indeed, popular Philosophy is effectively an oxymoron today.

But this need not be so, it wasn't until the 20th century that the bulk of Philosophy started being produced in universities. Before that, thinking about the world and what it all means was a democratic discipline, open to all. Spinoza, the great rationalist was a glass-blower whilst Goethe dabbled in diplomacy, business and a bit of writing on the side.

Through their ability to multi-task, whether it be through evening invitations or day-time manual labour these philosophers were able to ground their thinking in mundane goings-on. Could there thinking be called practical? Certainly when they were writing there was no such distinction between the practical disciplines and Philosophy.

But then, how could the search for the best way to live ever be called irrelevant?

# FOR THE LOVE OF GOD

## IS JOAN TAY THE ANTICHRIST?

**S**o I was walking on the streets of one of Singapore's busy shopping districts, minding my own business and as far as I know, not posing any threat to anyone whatsoever, when my way was blocked by an immensely enthusiastic advocate of Christianity. In fairness, I'm all for religious tolerance. You continue practicing religious beliefs, and I'll go ahead not believing, Deal?

No deal.

Because upon hearing that I wasn't browsing the Christianity market, Mr. Paul the Apostle himself decided to start waxing lyrical about the tragedy that had befallen my 'grubby black little satanic soul'. Turns out I'm 'a pig in the mud to be smote on Judgment Day' should I choose not to repent. I kid you not, those are direct quotes. Loudly he announced to the eager ears of all passer-bys that I, the atheist, was mega-satanic.

Firstly, brother needs a dictionary. As being atheist ultimately means I don't believe in the existence of God, or the bible. Where the hell (no pun intended) does it say I worship Satan?

Every time I repeat this anecdote, a member of my long suffering audience jumps to the opposite conclusion that I'm anti-Antichrist. That isn't what I'm about either. I do know a couple of Satanists who are who are only really flawed insofar as anyone remotely human is. It's not so much that he called me satanic that pisses me off, but that he did it with the mentality that Satanism=bad, Atheism=bad, therefore



Atheism=Satanism=Possibly Fundamentally Different, But Hey, I Don't Care.

Secondly, I'll be the first to admit that I sometimes get influenced by family background to consider Buddhism, and I was also in a Catholic primary school and still get the urge to convert now and again. But since I made the choice, however temporary it is, to be Atheist, I'd like that to be respected, even if grudgingly so. We keep stressing about how freedom of religion is a vital necessity for harmonious co-existence. Well, fine. But what about my freedom of non-religion? It's a bloody (or it soon will be if no one leaves my Atheism alone) choice too, so for Heaven's sake, just accept its existence and move on.

He was the single least appealing Christian the God Squad could have sent really. There's a mountain of lovely good-Samaritan happy clappy type Christians anyone would be less horrified to listen to. Why they weren't chosen for his job instead, I don't think I'll ever know. In the true spirit of the LSE, the church should think about its marketing. Pretty ladies and stealth-jesus, dressed up in all his ninja finery.

At any rate, I figured that I do have something to thank him for. I have since more or less cemented my Atheism, if only out of the sheer, vindictive, petty spite. One-nil to nothing. Your move, Jesus.

## The No-Nos of Fad Diets

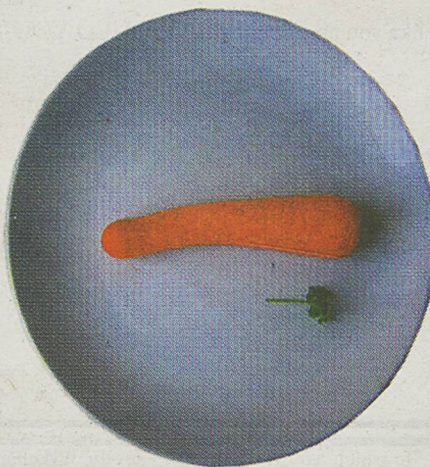
VICTORIA TERRY EXPLORES SELF-IMPOSED STARVATION

**I**t's that time of year where a number of people decide to wage war on the perceived excess around their middle, or butt or thighs or whatever else they are not happy about. It is also, in my view, the hardest time to attempt such things.

The joys of Christmas food are still fresh in the mind and cabbage soup or only liquids cannot fail but seem even more unappetising in comparison to the feasts that have just been consumed. Plus the weather is still upsettingly cold and the temptation of good hot food hard to push to one side in favour of a salad. Summer and the dread of bikinis is still far away, and its too late for new years hotness as the pictures squeezed into that slightly too tight dress are already up on facebook.

Nevertheless, new year means new goals and in this society that often means a new and smaller size. The inevitable occurs... weightwatchers adverts appear on tv and the dreaded gym membership deals are examined. More dangerous and, in my view, useless are the fad diets that begin to crop up in magazines promoted supposedly by numerous celebrities. So instead of discussing the delights of dining this week I will be looking at certain ridiculous suggestions on how to avoid the majority, if not all, of food.

The first has a name which is so off putting that it makes me wonder why anyone is tempted to resort to this diet... 'The Cabbage Soup Diet'. As my mum tried this one year I can tell you first hand that the smell of this soup is enough to put you off the diet at once or if you are the determined sort put you off eating much of it at all. Better for weight loss perhaps, though of course



**'New Year means new goals and in this society that often means a new and smaller size.'**

not so great for your overall health which is why even those that promote this diet stress that it can be only done for one week. It is too low in pretty much all the essential food groups (complex carbohydrates, protein, vitamins and minerals) to be done for longer than this.

A second favourite of mine to ridicule is the lemonade diet which involves making a disgusting mixture of lemon juice, maple syrup, cayenne pepper and water. Why it seems sensible to consume nothing but liquid I do not understand as it clearly is an unnatural thing to do. A friend attempted this one and after two days could not stand the sight of the mix so decided to drink only lemonade and then gave up altogether. Not one of her more successful ways to lose weight. Some fun side effects of following this plan are listed as diarrhoea, vomiting and dizziness... enjoy!

The negative calorie diet definitely has the best name, you can practically hear the fat rolling off. Except that as with most fad diets any weight that is quickly lost is equally quick to put back on once you regain your sanity and start eating normal meals. So while for a while eating only vegetables and fruit may let you fit into that little used dress I'm sure that it will not be long until you are craving some carbs or protein... or chocolate!

With all the negative press surrounding such unbalanced eating habits it is surprising that magazines still feature them and people decide to follow them. If the torturous nature of these diets is not enough to stop you attempting them keep in mind that the weight you manage to lose usually ends up back where it started and much of that weight loss is actually from water not fat! It seems clear that a long term change in eating habits combined with regular exercise is the way to go even if you cant show off results within the week.



## GOTTERDAMMERUNG!

THE BEAVER AND MANKIND. ENTWINED IN THEIR FINAL HOURS. BY GARETH LEWIS.

This paper seems to be experiencing a minor apocalypse all of its own. Since the Media Group budget-cut last week, the PartB Cognac allowance has been slashed by a third. We've had to downgrade from a Louis XIII to an 1888 Rabelais. Graeme and Callum, the editors, are inconsolable. Ant and Dec, they used to remind me of. Now its Vladimir and Estragon. Haggard, they pace the office. 'Nothing to be done', I hear Calum murmur. Nothing to be done.

We've all got our own concerns. The cataclysm is a strangely personal experience. The girl who writes Music is worried we'll have to revert back to the lumpy hummus. I console her. The Hummus Society is doing OK. They're holding out. I can't bear to tell her the truth, where the budget's really going. They're garnishing their bagels this year, apparently. With parsley, the bastards.

I can hardly write. Well who could? I've seen fear in a handful of votes from the back. So this is how it feels, to be a survivor. The Last Man, living off the scraps of half-a-page per week. I'm lucky, though. Fortunate indeed. I read *The Road* two weeks back. I saw the film a few days ago. Cormac McCarthy has prepared me

for this torment. The brittle fact of writing less. The cannibalization of one's own words. Be under no illusion, readers. I'm carrying the fire.

We are now after-the-event. I'm announcing it. This is the postscript. Last week, science fiction took us to galaxies far, far away. Today, the blistered veneer of our own planet is the theme. For as the spinning globe, encased in Samaritan ozone, wheels slowly to a halt, so too will your beloved concrete Nexus – the LSE itself – dumb sloppily down. Deprived of a formidable organ through which to cast a caterwaul, the vast and varied diaspora, already

sunk in statistical torpor, will slip silently off the radar. Fortunately, the PartB office hosts a veritable buffet of formidable organs. Banjo-strings intact. Perfect, then, for the anthropophagites among you.

But the end can also be a beginning (usually, the beginning of the bigger, burnier end), *J'espere*. (*Je crois*). Gullied fissures will wind their serpent path down Kingsley Way. Clunking granite chunks will dash their bouldered brains about the place. The entire AU will ejaculate concurrently into one another's greasy palms. There will be flames. Conflagration, though, is fine by us. We're carrying the fire, after all.

And if you do find yourself traipsing through the battlescarred Megiddo, clutching at the loose and limpened pages of a 'battered oil-company roadmap', don't forget to do they very thing you set out to achieve. Cast your vote at the UGM. Say no to Armageddon! Nobody wants a hassle like that. The debris gets everywhere. In the zips of our panda-skin Part-B bomber jackets. In between the toes of our budget-bought cashmere slippers. The temperature will drop, and its cold lazing about on Friday afternoons dressed only in a pair of flame-retardant Beaver-brand boxers. Even if you are holding the torch, carrying the fire.

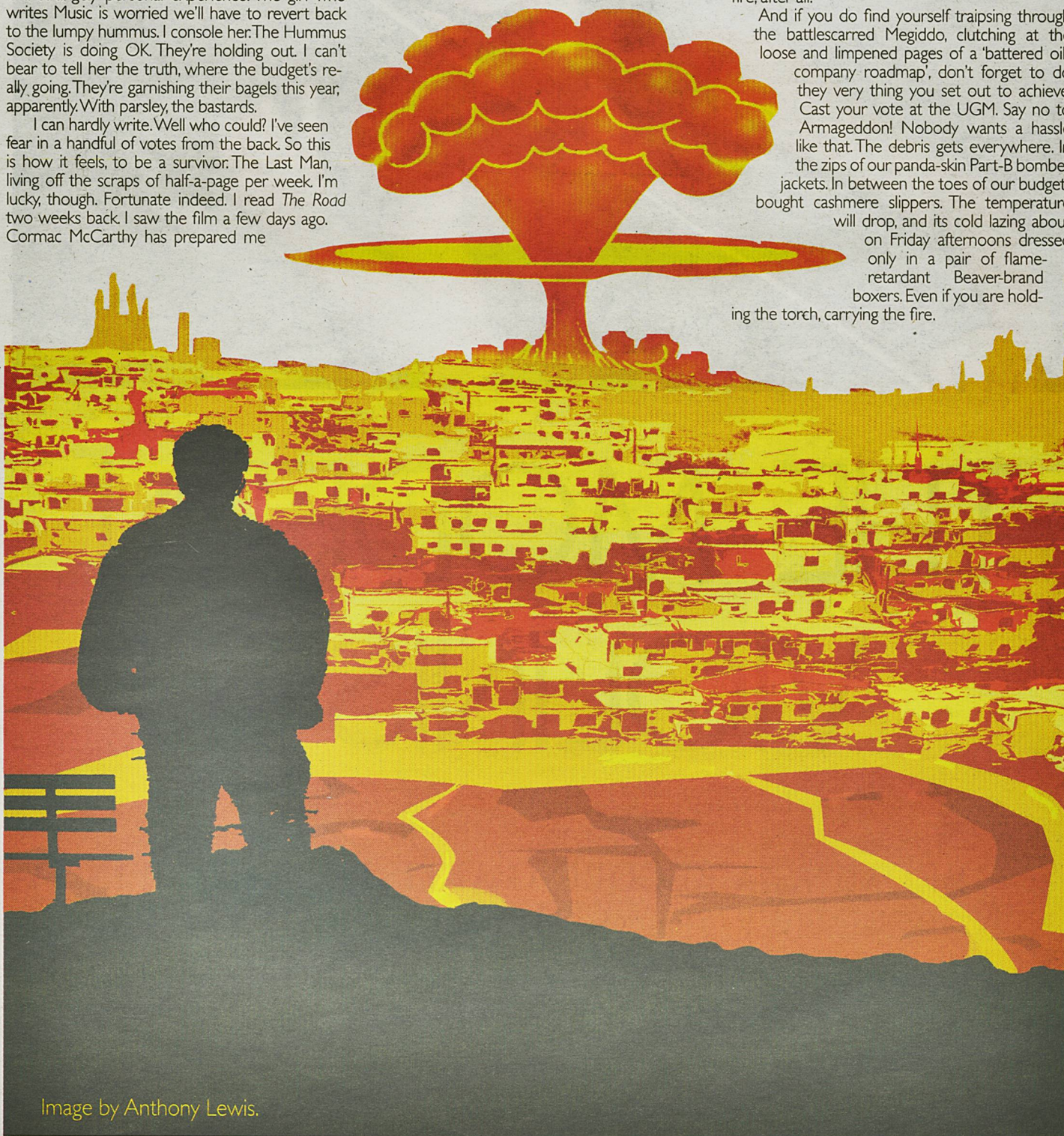
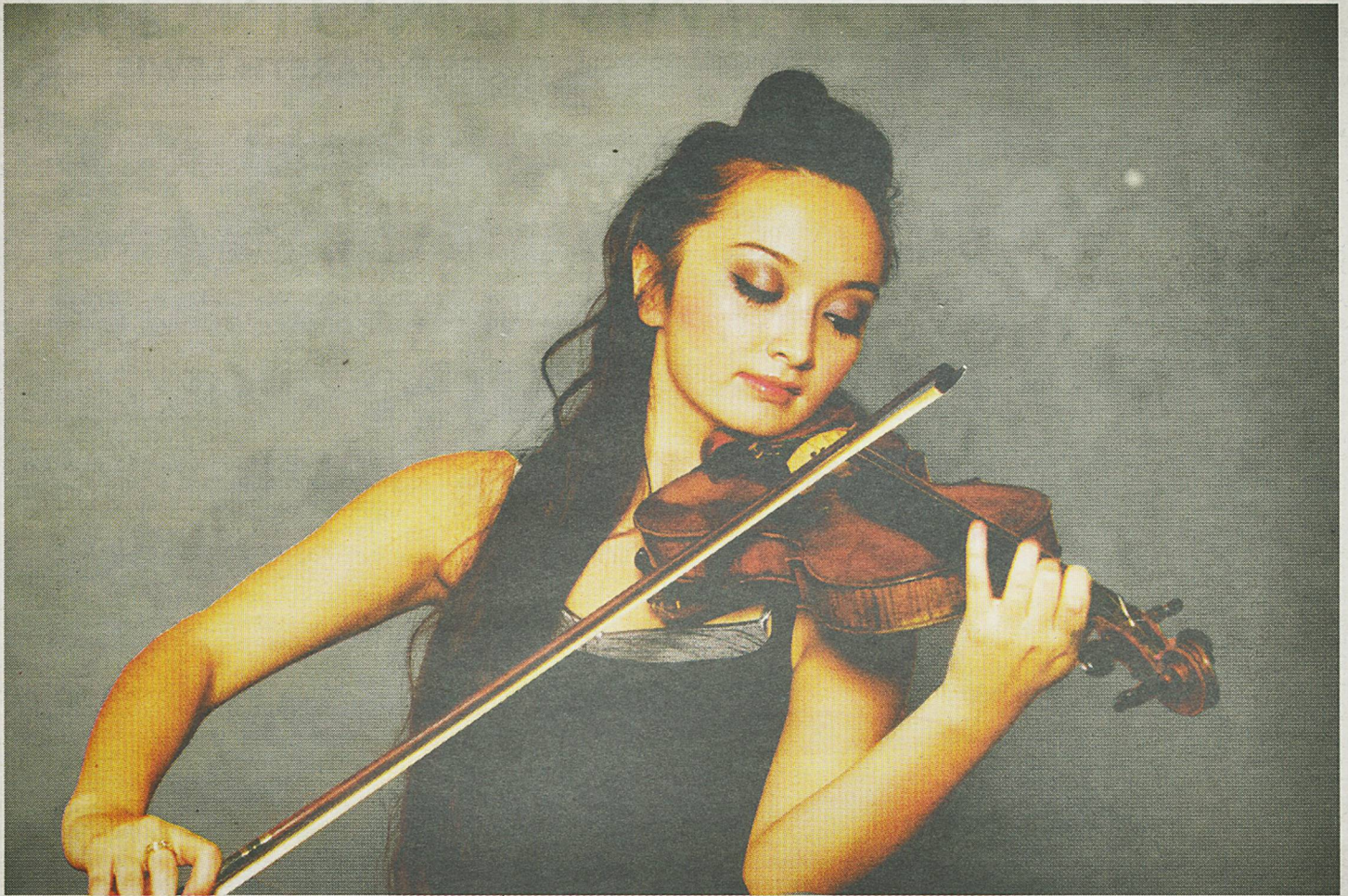


Image by Anthony Lewis.



# THE MODERN VIOLINIST

SINCE BECOMING A RECORDING ARTIST AND STAR IN JAPAN IN HER EARLY TEENS, DIANA YUKAWA HAS BEEN ON A MISSION TO CHANGE THE WAY THE WORLD SEES THE VIOLIN. EUNICE NG FINDS OUT HOW.

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It's easy to be cynical about Diana Yukawa. With flowing brown locks and large, almond shaped eyes, the Anglo-Japanese violinist is enviably pretty. And at just 24 years old, she can already boast a nine year recording career. Since her first release at age 15, she has moved away from classical music, and has just released her third album, composed largely of original works.

As if that weren't enough, just take a look at her family history, which effectively launched her career: Diana is the daughter of Akihasa Yukawa, a Japanese banker who died in August 1985, just three weeks before Diana's birth, in an airline plane crash en route from Tokyo to Osaka, still often considered the single worst plane crash in history. In 2000, when she was 13, Diana made a pilgrimage to Mt. Otsuka, the site of her father's plane crash, and played her violin for her father. The resulting broadcast of her performance gained Diana overnight fame in Japan. Shortly after the performance, she released her first album *La Campanella*, a collection of encore pieces for the violin. A second album, *Saint Saens Concerti*, soon followed.

But listening to her first two CDs, it's clear that even at 15, Diana had no lack of either technique or artistry. You can hear every single note in her cadenzas. And then there's that distinctive, wonderful sound; the sweetness and clarity of which is reminiscent of Fritz Kreisler, who also happens to be Diana's greatest musical influence. There is a rich consistency between her upper registers and lower registers, and the poise in her playing is unmistakable.

When I mention this to her in a series of email exchanges, Diana thanks me profusely. "If I do have such a distinctive sound, I think it's probably down to various factors" she explains. "Loving a player like Kreisler has a great influence on your style of playing as you can't really mistake Kreisler's sound! It's also from the teaching I had from a young age. I was always being told to play with soul, play from the heart - that was probably my biggest goal. I always try to be myself, follow my own path and not do what is necessarily expected - so perhaps that has some part to play."

And follow her own path she did. After her initial short burst of fame, Diana disappeared off the scene. Part of it had to do with the fact that she wanted to focus on her musical development. She went to Austria to study with Ruggiero Rucci, renowned violinist and pedagogue. At the same time, she was beginning to realize that she wanted to do much more than just playing classical music.

"I thought to myself that I already had albums of wonderful musicians playing great repertoire and I wasn't that interested in buying new ones, so why should I make them?" says Diana. "My interests were heading elsewhere and creatively I needed to experiment with new things to satisfy me musically."

As she changed her playing, she soon began writing her own music. Recording her own material was given a boost in the form of Andy Wright, the groundbreaking producer who has worked with a range of artists, from Pavarotti to Massive Attack and the two met via an industry contact. The chemistry was instantaneous, and as the album progressed, the two developed a solid working rhythm.

"Normally Andy would get together a short idea or a backing track, I'd have a listen and take it home and begin writing the violin melody. Whenever I was trying to say what I was imagining in my head - he could completely understand

**'I want to continue to try and show that the violin is not purely a classical instrument, but an instrument in which you express your voice, as a singer uses their own voice. My mission is to continue creating new music, good music. I have no idea if people like it - but I'll keep trying.'**

through my waffled explanations!"

The result is *The Butterfly Effect*, a thirteen track album recorded at Abbey Road Studios. Ten tracks are written by Diana. Among them is a cover of *Children* by Robert Miles, a well known techno piece played at clubs around the world (there needed to be at least one piece that people were familiar with, Diana explains). Another piece, *My Instinct*, features a collaboration with a vocalist, Anthea Clarke. There are faintly Eastern influences on several tracks, notably *Sail into the Sunset*, a track Diana wrote for her father. There are jubilant, soaring tracks, such as *3000 A.D.* and the appropriately named *Flying*. Juxtaposed with these are darker, more brooding tracks such as *The Visitor* and *Gone Missing Girl* that both serve to show off Diana's vibrato and command of the violin's lower registers. Each track has a strong violin melody, backed up by everything from a lone piano to techno string arrangements. *The Butterfly Effect* is what you would imagine Craig Armstrong would make if he were a violinist and just starting to make music - you can't pigeonhole the album's style, except to say, well, it's definitely music, and it's definitely good.

Diana explains that in many ways, she finds it harder to play as a contemporary musician. "As a classical player" she explains, "it was all about reading what was written in front of you and trying to perform what you believed the composer wanted. Moving away from classical repertoire, [I] was starting with a blank canvas and then not just finding, but creating the colours and textures on that canvas. It's a different kind of freedom finding what you want to say as a musician; not interpreting what another musician wrote."

Her main influence is still Fritz Kreisler, due to his unmistakable sound and Diana gushes about playing the ex-Kreisler Guarnieri del Gesu violin - "It was the most beautiful violin I have ever played". She now plays an Italian violin that she thinks is just as good, if not better than the del Gesu. She's also been inspired by Craig Armstrong and Ryuichi Sakamoto (who released a brilliant album last year entitled *Out of Noise*), due

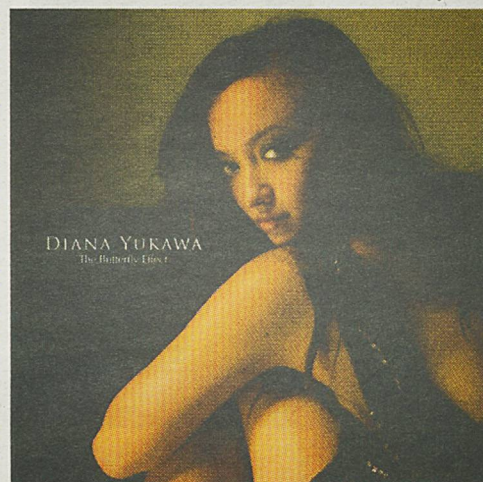
to their seamless incorporation of technology and music.

Diana maintains that her difficulty was the lack of industry support, which didn't find her work credible, "unless I was going to put beats on classical music." She also rejected advice that she would earn the right to experiment only after she had built her career as classical artist. "I often responded by saying I could get hit by a bus tomorrow - so I just became more determined to make an album I believed in."

She still plays classical repertoire at home, and maintains her technique by doing daily etudes and exercises. She hopes to incorporate more skilled technique into her pieces, but the music always comes first. "I feel there are more technicians out there than people that move me with their performance. I was always being told to play with soul, play from the heart - that was my biggest goal."

*The Butterfly Effect* has already been released in Japan last October but there are hopes for a release of *The Butterfly Effect* in Europe, the Middle East and the US sometime this year. And Diana has already recorded a piece for Japan's latest big blockbuster, *Shizumanu Taiyo*, a movie about the head of the employee's union at a global airline and features Diana's father's accident in the plot. She's performed her new music to sell out audiences in Qatar and Dubai, and is an ambassador for Global Angels, the children's charity founded by Daniel Bedingfield's mother. Ultimately, though, Diana just hopes to keep writing, playing and recording as much as she can. "I want to continue to try and show that the violin is not purely a classical instrument, but an instrument in which you express your voice, as a singer uses their own voice. My mission is to continue creating new music, good music. I have no idea if people like it - but I'll keep trying."

*Recorded at Abbey Road in London and produced by Andy Wright, Diana's new album, The Butterfly Effect, is available online from Sony BMG now.*



# WHY I MISS BEING 15

LIAT TUV REVIEWS PLACEBO @ 02 ARENA 09.12.09

And with the opening strains of "Bitter End" I find the 15-year old within me is screaming along with the lyrics again... "reminds me of the second time"...and I'm transported back to the good old days when shopping in Camden was still cool; when those 'quirky' quotes they put on T-shirts seemed like a good idea for an MSN screen-name; and when the only thing I listened to was **Placebo** and the Buffy the Vampire Slayer soundtrack. Simpler times.

There seems to be some unwritten rule that as you grow up you must make your music choices less on cathartic benefits; all angst and sadness, and more on music's potential for beautiful subtlety. As if these were two discrete, mutually exclusive, categories. You are also meant to have out-grown any superficial interest in image, especially if it concerns something as banal as the band members' haircuts. No one denies that music and visual imagery are intrinsically linked but to get the aesthetics right one must discern what is and isn't relevant. And surely these two categories must be just as clear-cut as catharsis and subtlety?

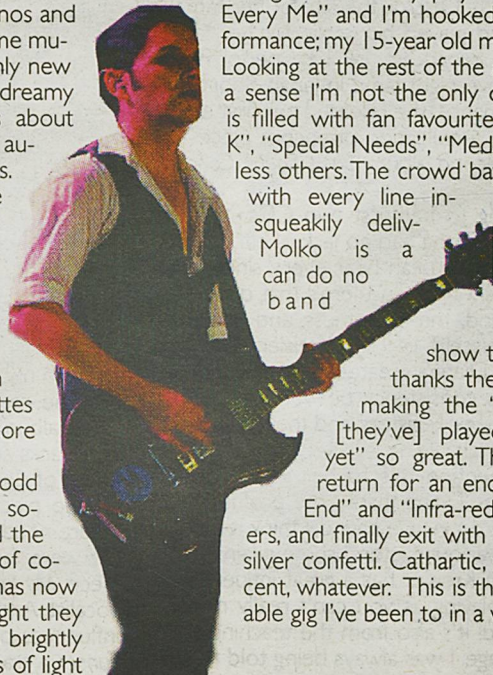
Being 15 allows for a lot of sins we "should've really grown out of by now". Teenage years are all about 'finding yourself', or something equally nauseating, so you're allowed to make those mistakes. I don't mean to condescend the 15-year old - I'm also not saying this stage actually occurs at 15 for everyone without fail. In fact I envy them for this un-cynical approach to music, fashion and generally everything; before big words like 'pretentious' and 'indulgent' ruined my pure enjoyment in something that just, well, sounded nice. And god-

damnit NME, I like Placebo.

No strangers to the archetypal 15-year old fans are support act **The Horrors**; no matter how much of a triumph their second album is (and it really is) it cannot be ignored that their initial success was somewhat driven by this MySpace generation. Initially written off by some for their gothic aesthetic and messy garage-punk (which was still enjoyable to be fair), The Horrors have finally been recognised by music-journos and bloggers alike for actually being of some musical importance. Tonight they play only new material, seamlessly segueing from dreamy songs of mirrors to icier numbers about global-warming or something; from autumnal imagery to disinterested lovers. The aesthetic is still integral to The Horrors of course, it's just that now it's a different aesthetic. The aesthetic of the low-key. One solitary beam of light at centre stage while the rest of the stage is bathed in one primary colour at a time. It leaves the, still monochrome clad, band members in shadow for most of the set; silhouettes collapse into a dream... What is more subtly beautiful than simple lighting?

A short interlude of frankly odd video clips, all with some important social or political message I'm sure, and the stage is set up again. The spectrum of colours that surrounded The Horrors has now unified back into the bright white light they refracted from. The white stage is so brightly lit its almost radioactive; piercing rays of light

sporadically hit the crowd throughout the show; and light even reflects off guitarist Stefan Olsdal, who sports a Ziggy Stardust-style silver suit. The lighting tonight seems to follow the album titles quite literally... Placebo open with 'Battle for the Sun' and continue with a couple of newer tracks. I admit I haven't listened to Placebo since *Meds* and am pretty unaware of their new album bar the singles. Then they play "Every You and Every Me" and I'm hooked into the performance; my 15-year old madness begins. Looking at the rest of the audience I get a sense I'm not the only one. The night is filled with fan favourites like "Special K", "Special Needs", "Medz" and countless others. The crowd bays in euphoria with every line intently and squeakily delivered; Brian Molko is a man that can do no wrong. The band are clearly enjoying the show too and Molko thanks the audience for making the "biggest show [they've] played in England yet" so great. The band then return for an encore of "Bitter End" and "Infra-red", among others, and finally exit with the release of silver confetti. Cathartic, showy, pubescent, whatever. This is the most enjoyable gig I've been to in a while.



# ARE YOU CERTAIN OF LOVE?

SACHIN PATEL IS TRANSIXED BY THE DARK MYSTERIES OF SPOON - TRANSFERENCE



It was perhaps inevitable, given **Spoon's** stubbornly indie ways, that their follow-up to follow 2007's *Ga Ga Ga Ga Ga* is willfully ragged, challenging and melody-free. *Transference* is hardly a krautrock behemoth; nonetheless, from the first wavering organ drone of "Before Destruction", over which Britt Daniel growls like a spectator to the end of days, to the atonal tape loops that cut through the closer, "Nobody Gets Me But You", this is a deliberately difficult work.

That's not to say that *Transference* is a bad album - in fact, it's a very good album. Self-produced, and often committed to tape from home recordings and demo tracks, the album veers between acoustic laments targeting primal emotions ("Goodnight Laura", "Out Go The Lights"), and shuffling, dubby funk ("Who Makes Your Money"), in which Daniel's sparse vocals are further obscured by the kind of playful production trickery the band has become known for. In-studio chatter is prevalent in the interstitial few seconds between tracks; on several occasions, songs either end abruptly, or suddenly isolate one instrument

which peters out in a disconcerting fashion.

It's not all shunt and groove, luckily - that would have been somewhat monotonous and overly gloomy. Spoon may have pruned their brand of minimalist art pop down to the bare essentials, but they're still apt to throw a wobbly now and again, as on the barreling, piano-thrashing R&B (in a fifties sense, not à la **Beyoncé**) of "Written In Reverse" which recalls the grander moments of *Gimme Fiction*, or indeed the scratchy lo-fi of "Trouble Comes Running", where the drums and guitars are entirely panned to opposing channels in a defiantly **Pavement**-esque style reminiscent of 1998's *A Series of Sneaks*.

Some will argue that Spoon's relentless infatuation with sparseness and economy has turned to parody on *Transference*. I would argue that the singleness of vision displayed on this album result in a subtle, vaguely creepy sense of cohesion that lend it an understated appeal that resembles a more low-key variant on the midnight ruminations of Spoon's 2002 magnum opus, *Kill The Moonlight*.

# SPARKLESHARK

SOPHIE MARMENT LOOKS AT AN UNDERGROUND PLAY

**S**parkleshark is a one-act comedy following the trials and tribulations of nine school kids – think *Kidulthood* meets *Clueless* with more laughs and less obscenities. This gem of a play by Philip Ridley is being performed in the Student's Union Underground this coming week and so I decided to take a quick peek at what it's all about.

The plot centres around the relationships between the nine characters, each of whom represents one of the stereotyped kids from back in your school days. You know the ones – the geek who spends all lunchtime hiding behind the dustbins, the hottest guy in school who's adored by girls and admired by guys, the *Mean Girls/Clueless* groupies and psychopathic, razorblade-necklace wearing bully. We've all seen them at one time or another. The play focuses on the geek of the story, Jake, who happens to be an amazing teller of tales. When the new girl, Polly, makes friends with him she is soon sucked into his fairytale world and the rest of the characters are too in varying degrees. The whole play takes place on a tower-block roof-top scattered with debris, television aerials and assorted shopping trolleys and discarded microwaves, making for an interesting setting. Whilst for fans of school uniform there's plenty of that to be seen on the costume front!

Philip Ridley is a playwright born and bred in East London. His plays are renowned for be-

ing controversial though he has remarked in interview that he does not write intentionally to shock but rather to push boundaries towards the edge of what human nature will allow. His play *Mercury Fur* which showed in 2005 was an apocalyptic drama centring around the planned sacrifice of a child. It was so shocking that at least ten people a night were said to have left the theatre and his publisher Faber & Faber refused to publish the text. Whilst *Sparkleshark* is one of his less controversial works it displays the same vitality and attention to detail in the construction of his characters.

*Sparkleshark* touches on the usual themes of bullying, bad-parenting and teenage insecurities but what it does really well are the nuanced undertones that run through it. A reference to an abortion had by one of the girls is made through the image of an egg being cracked and it is only in the subtleties of the characters reactions that this is even acknowledged. *Sparkleshark* is a funny and quick paced reflection on what it is to be a teenager and is well worth a watch.

SPARKLESHARK PLAYS AT THE UNDERGROUND, HOUGHTON ST, TUESDAY 19TH & THURSDAY 21ST AT 6.30PM. TICKETS £2/£3 (DRAMA SOCIETY MEMBERS/ NON MEMBERS).



# GENEROUS

SOPHIE MARMENT FOLLOWS UP ON THE FINBOROUGH PLAY

**H**aving interviewed director of the Finborough Theatre's production of *Generous*, Eleanor Rhode, I was keen to see the production myself and I was not disappointed. The Finborough is a charming theatre, situated above a bar near Baron's Court it is a small and intimate venue where you feel as though you are being sucked into the very heart of the play. The play comprises of four two-act plays individually titled, *PMO*, *The Death of the Alberta Report*, *One-Party-Rule* and *Lily*. Each follows characters and storylines from the first act, set fifteen years ago, to the second act in the present day.

Rhodes direction is brilliant, cleverly flicking from one scene to the next with seamless transitions of actors who morph between characters. Meghan Popiel gives a standout performance as Lily, the daughter of a highflying judge, from whom she is estranged and a father who committed suicide. Richard Beanland's performance as Alex Flemming, a naive twenty-six year-old who is having an affair with Lily's mother, the judge, is both hilarious and inexplicably heart-wrenching.

Kim Alwyn and Aimee Sajjan-Servaes', set is simple and versatile, working brilliantly in the small confines of the Finborough stage. Cream painted cardboard boxes are piled cleverly across the matching coloured stage, magically transforming from a storage box in one scene to a fridge in the next.

The play flits between the comical hilarity

of a couple fighting soundlessly over a bucket of chicken as a stunned delivery man stands bewildered and the more meaty scenes in which political farce mixes with bitter irony as an aid falls dead to the floor whilst politicians thrash out their policies oblivious to her plight. *PMO* plays with the political scandals of the Canadian government, though it is noted in the program that this is 'loosely based'. *The Death of the Alberta Report* sees a high-flying business woman's

*Generous* delivers on many levels, the direction is brilliant, the acting is stunning at times but it is the writing that makes this a fantastic play to watch. Healey's words have the strength to make this a story that can be told at an unfunded theatre or on the vast stages of the National. The fear with political plays is that they will age, but this is more about the way in which people behave or as Healey puts it, about "perfect ideals enacted by deeply imperfect people." This is a play that will only continue to grow.



GENEROUS BY MICHAEL HEALEY PLAYS AT THE FINBOROUGH THEATRE UNTIL 30 JAN 2010.

# FILM

## the road

barbican film

AHMED PEERBUX HITS A FEW POTHOLES ALONG THE WAY



**Director:** John Hillcoat. **Screenplay:** Joe Penhall. **Cast:** Viggo Mortensen, Kodi Smit-McPhee, Guy Pearce, Charlize Theron **Runtime:** 111 min. **Cert:** 15. **Year:** 2009.

**T**he Road is not a road trip. It is a post-apocalyptic film that refuses to barter bitter authenticity for enjoyment. Though hardly a pleasant experience, *The Road* is certainly compelling. And so watching it should be based on that – this is less an ode to humanity's will to survive and more to its latent inhumanity. There is no Roland Emmerich last minute scientific discovery. There is no Morgan Freeman voiceover to comfort us (as in *War of the Worlds*). There is not even any food. There is only cannibalism, the cold, and the fabled coast. Names are no longer important, made entirely redundant in this all against all world. Neither is time; all we know is that "the clocks stopped at one seventeen one morning". Society has collapsed along with the lifeless trees and brittle skyscrapers.

Among the atavistic hordes and deranged landscapes of post-apocalypse America are "the good guys"; a man (Viggo Mortensen) and his boy (Kodi Smit-McPhee). The fact that they are almost devoid of any hope is made evident in the serene, soullessness of Mortensen's narration, chillingly recounting "there has been

cannibalism. Cannibalism is the great fear" with tragic acceptance and desensitization.

The man performs superhuman feats to look after his son, such as diving into an icy cold sea to find something, anything. Though their bizarre determination to survive is inspiring, the grimly logical option of suicide can't help but cling to the audience in this world of rape and rejection, and so the father-son redemptive element doesn't quite satisfactorily pierce as a ray of light through the all-consuming clouds.

Little snippets of brief respite however are given in the dark humour woven into Joe Penhall's thoughtful script. When the boy asks if

**This is less an ode to humanity's will to survive and more to its latent inhumanity**

they would ever eat other people, even if they are starving, his papa replies "we are starving". Dialogue is stilted and sparse, leaving our minds to torturously question and comprehend such an event. Asked how many are still alive, his father replies "In the world? Not very many."

Visually *The Road* faithfully recreates the

nightmare envisioned in Cormac McCarthy's novel. John Hillcoat has directed a relentless bombardment of visceral hyper-reality, and could not make calamity more beautiful. The man confides "when I have nothing else, I try to dream the dreams of a child's imaginings", which is followed by a cut to the muck and mire on which he must dream his dreams. Sapped of colour, every landscape and every shot is ashen and grey. This is made even more apparent when contrasted with the warm, yellowy flashbacks of his wife (Charlize Theron) and life before the catastrophe. Where there is colour there is only red; not a red of passion, and love, but of wanton destruction. The film is rather stripped, and not over-sexed with CGI. Likewise, the soundtrack isn't too intrusive. Abandoned cars, crumbling houses and harrowing piano refrains are aptly scattered to chilling effect.

*The Road* is a film that says enough is enough to the archetypal studio disaster movie. In its poignant protest, it unfortunately pushes viewers too far into morbidly bleak territory. Though not quite hitting the mark with its intended unshakable humanity in the face of doom, John Hillcoat trudges us down the road of disconcerting questions; what would we do in this situation? Before we can answer, *The Road* tells us with an acerbic and savage honesty, leaving us, if nothing else, to dwell and cling hard on to someone.

THE ROAD IS IN CINEMAS NOW

# sex & drugs & rock & roll

... IS VERY GOOD INDEED, ACCORDING TO NATHAN BRIANT



**Director:** Mat Whitecross. **Screenplay:** Paul Viragh. **Cast:** Andy Serkis, Olivia Williams, Naome Harris, Bill Milner. **Runtime:** 115 min. **Cert:** 15. **Year:** 2010.

an Dury's time at the top as a nationally-recognised pop star in the late '70s and early '80s with his band, The Blockheads, is well documented in *Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll*.

Best known for his frequently lewd rhyming couplets and his bout with polio as a child, there is no hiding this in *Sex*. To put it bluntly *Sex* is a whirlwind of such ingredients. Dury wasn't the best father to his son and daughter. At the time of his son's birth, he felt a band rehearsal with his amateur band was more pressing. His life - leaving his family home and moving in with a nineteen-year-old girlfriend - tended to

**The montages are breathtaking and provide a great backdrop to the ultimately outrageous story**

sag from miserable lows up to ecstatic highs. There is little wrong with the film. Although Andy Serkis, who plays Dury, makes a better job of Aaron Johnson did as a young John Lennon in *Nowhere Boy*, it occasionally feels as if the film's producers are jamming in songs



for the benefit of the film's soundtrack release.

The cast is excellent. Serkis plays Dury to perfection, and Olivia Williams and Naomie Harris are impressive support. Special praise must also go to the superb Bill Milner who plays Dury's son, Baxter. Also, providing hearty backup is Ray Winstone's brief appearance as Dury's father, and more significantly through the film, Ralph Ineson (*The Office*) as the singer's drugged-up live-in helper and friend, the Sulphate Strangler. The film also excels in exploring Dury's

artistic background. The montages at the start and end of the film, created by Dury's former tutor and designer of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* record sleeve, Peter Blake, are breathtaking and provide a great backdrop to the ultimately outrageous story.

The thing to take away is the film's stellar cast and good story if you're into shouty early '80s New Wave. If they could just tone down the musical acting a bit I'd have been more satisfied.

SEX... IS IN CINEMAS NOW

# I Don't Even believe in Gbus

**JONATHAN STOREY** EXAMINES THE LACK OF ATHEISM IN TELEVISION

It's hard to think of many truly atheistic television characters. The one that comes to mind is the obvious – Richard Dawkins – but, sadly, he is a real person and not just a character, to the chagrin of many. Even television characters showcased as "science-y" are still relegated to simply being non-religious, like the vast majority of television characters, or having some spirituality (like Lisa Simpson's Buddhism).

Whilst not as surprising in American television, where a Gallup poll revealed that 53% of the public would categorically not vote for an atheistic President, it is more surprising that there are very few 'out' atheists in British television, where atheism is much more prevalent. That's not to say that TV stars aren't atheist, but very few publicly express this or play characters that reflect their lack of religious beliefs. Ones that do aren't normally given centre stage on the broadcaster's schedule (for example, see the scheduling of TV shows by Charlie Brooker).

Indeed, when a television character does 'come out' of the religious closet, it usually has harrowing results. In the *Family Guy* episode 'Not All Dogs Go to Heaven', it was revealed that Brian the dog is an atheist, and not simply non-religious like the rest of television. In turn, this made him a social outcast. Upon being made a pariah, Brian was banned from every bar and convenience store in Quahog, and it was only after he insulted the newly devout Meg by saying a loving God wouldn't have given her such an ugly face that tensions were removed. Comparing the situation faced by atheists to that of the civil rights struggle

or discrimination against LGBTs is probably a step too far: there will be nothing like Little Rock or Stonewall for atheists, but it does show that there is discrimination present in the broader culture.

Another 'out' atheist seems to present the opposite scenario: the eponymous Dr. Gregory House. Openly and relentlessly mocking colleagues and patients who express any belief in religion, he doesn't believe in an afterlife because he finds it's better to believe that life "isn't just a test". While not all television atheists have to be so Dawkinsian about their beliefs, the fact that there are occasional outlets for such explicit beliefs is certainly a step in the right direction.

For me personally, the best example of atheism in television came (as the best example of most things in television do) in the form of a *South Park* episode. Oh-so-wittily entitled 'Red Hot Catholic Love', the parents of *South Park* decide en masse to convert to atheism after hearing about the molestation crises happening in the Catholic Church. In a separate plot development, these same parents end up spewing faeces out of their mouths because of a health craze called interorectogestion. The two become linked finally due to a priest

arguing that that "when people have no mythology to live their lives by, they just start spewing a bunch of crap out of their mouths." The residents then realise that the whole of the Catholic church isn't a group of child molesters, and that spewing crap out of one's mouth is as socially bad as it is disgusting.

What's good about the *South Park* portrayal is that it presents atheists not as snarky one-liners or smug liberal douchebags, but as human beings capable of both doubt and change of their beliefs. Out of all the presentations of atheism on television, as few and far between as they are, this is the view I would like to see more of, as disgusting and depraved as it is!

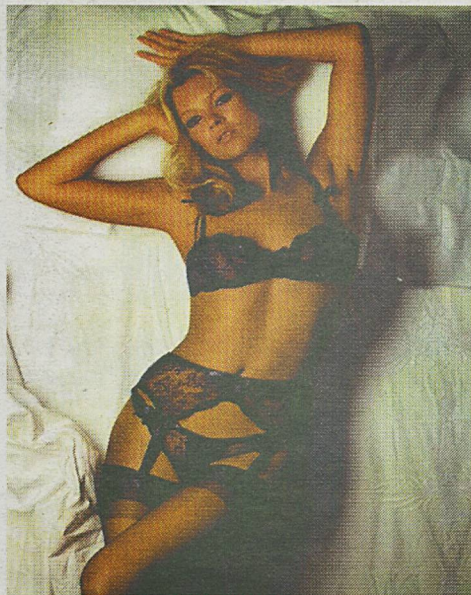


## WEAR YOUR UNDIES OUT-Y

**IMO OTORO** TALKS ABOUT GOING UNDER...DOWN UNDER.

For those of you not in the know, the term 'undies' refers to under-garments; clothes worn under clothes that keep us nipped, tucked and sucked, generally ensuring our wobbly bits are kept in place and stay in place.

Sumptuous textures of lace, silk, charmeuse and chiffon have been hidden for far too long! Literally concealed under layers and layers of polyester, cotton or other frightful materials, only



to be revealed 'when the time is nigh' but even then it is quickly discarded, strewn upon the back of a plastic Ikea chair.

Why so I say? I am not suggesting we all go out boasting our favoured under garments, I am simply suggesting we take the textures and style of the under garment and wear it, well on the outside?

Underwear as fashion became popular around the 1970's. Forget durability and comfort! Designers such as Dolce and Gabbana cried, instead this impeccable duo insisted that this fashion statement evoke sex appeal and edge, whilst maintaining a flirty tone. I for one absolutely love lingerie; so much so that I would genuinely enjoy wearing it just on its own, no longer hidden behind multiple layers of clothing, but exposed for the whole world and its dog to have a gander.

Alas, this poses many a problem, as this behaviour may be construed as indecent exposure in many parts of the sane world. But fear not dear readers, as today I will reveal to you my cunning and brilliant plan that allows us under-garment fanatics to wear our beloved undies as outerwear.

Introducing, 'editorial dressing' under wear and lingerie inspired pieces that can be worn as clothing. Forget about the Cyndi Lauper, Madonna style take on this trend, whereby under garments are worn on top of clothes eww! Instead wear underwear AS clothes.

The high street and designers serve an abundant offering of underwear inspired clothing for you to take advantage of. At the moment I am seeing negligees that pose as flirty feminine dresses, bustiers posing as tops a la Lady Gaga

and finally 1950's style high-waisted knickers that pose as shorts. Please so not mistake the latter for the 'granny pant' as this style could not be further from the fashion described. These are all examples of underwear being made to wear on its own as a fashion statement.

Here are my tips and tricks to achieve this look seamlessly. For the utterly shameless individuals amongst you, discard all knowledge and discredit all advice, as you my friends have no problems wearing your undies out.

### For the traditionalists:

-When looking for garments that reflect the delicate, intricate and sensuous feel of lingerie, think romance, think lace and think flirty. Combine all these elements to select clothing that is feminine, graceful and resembles a La Perla look book.

-In terms of colour, go for creams, peaches, powder pinks and lacy fabrics that are both delicate and feminine. Dynamic duo Meadham Kirchoff, featured floaty, fancy textures and fabrics in their Spring Summer 2010 show, so go for Bohemian Chic with a light flirty edge.

### For the innovators, rule breakers and motivators:

-Keep the structure and style of lingerie and change the texture. Look towards the designs of Thierry Mugler and embrace underwear with an edge. Conical cups, metal boning and shiny surfaces are all features of his signature pieces.

-Beyonce, Lady Gaga and Kylie have all done his designs and they look pretty damn good in them too! If you can pull it off go for it if you cannot, go home.

## SEX IN THE SHITTY

ALICE PELTON HATES BEING ANALLY RETENTIVE

Everyone, no matter who they are or where they're from, has a mate who knows someone, who has accidentally got fingered in the bum. It's the classic tale of a Lynx-coated adolescent boy beset by the failings that accompany the first teenage forays into foreplay.\* Just the thought of it makes me laugh; I almost take pleasure in the fact that these things can, and do, go wrong. I will never forget a classmate in my Sixth form remarking on his confusion at the fact that women have three - yes, three - holes down there.

On the topic of adolescence, I often think that the perfect sex partners would be a middle-aged woman and a 17 year old boy. The middle-aged woman, finally reaching her sexual peak, longs for the build up of slow sensuous foreplay, instead of the standard 'rub and go' technique she has had to endure for the past 20 years. Meanwhile the 17 year old boy just wants to play with pussy. Forever. He wants to figure out exactly where that wretched hole is, and, like his Year 11 hiking trips to the Brecon Beacons, explore the beautiful geography and terrain of his girl's inner and outer labia.

Anyway, this week I thought I'd talk about anal sex. Now, as well as knowing people who have got fingered in the bum, I also know a lot of people who have boyfriends who have 'accidentally' shoved it in their butty whilst in the throes of ecstasy. This is a fantastic way to introduce a new aspect into your sex life and I encourage it entirely. The girl may be totally taken aback, but that's the point - she'll secretly love the fact you were being spontaneous and will beg you for anal sex every day.

This may seem off-topic, but bear with me. A few years ago I went sailing a lot, on big ships around Europe. I was at sea for weeks at a time, drugged up to my eyeballs on Stugeron, which unfortunately led to frequent hallucinations about jam sandwiches. I on a watch-system with a lovely guy called Sam, who was about 25. We spent hours sat up on deck pretending to care about shipping lanes and compass bearings, but instead chatting away and imparting wisdom into each other's lives.

He was dreadfully upset about his recent breakup with his girlfriend of 5 years. This was one of those horrific divorce-like breakups that leaves one doing the whole 'I'm gonna sleep around and that will make the pain go away instantaneously' thing. We often discussed how he felt and who he should tactically and pointlessly fuck next. Then, out of nowhere he turned to me, and said

'Alice, it's ok, I'm fine though'

'Really? I mean you don't seem 'fine' to me'

'No Alice, it's ok, I fucked her in the ass. I don't really care. Remember this: If you fucked her in the ass, you will always have that power over her. She let you fuck her in the ass. End of.'

This got me thinking. Perhaps I should start trying to shove something up men's asses? Then, when they cheat on me with my best

mate and don't tell me for 8 months, I would have something to fall back on? The saying 'if I knew then what I know now' springs to mind. The possibilities are tantamount...

I almost got fucked in the ass recently. It happened whilst I was working at a kid's camp in America over the summer, where I met my current love interest Chad. He is a lovely handsome chap, who I get on very well with, in an endearing 'goofing around together and can still have mind-blowing sex' way.

**'I know I'll probably lose the ability to control my bladder function in about 50 years time, but the thought of losing my rim-tightening capacities at the age of 21, horrifies me.'**

So it was the last night of camp, all the kids had finally left and all the counsellors were sat around getting ridiculously drunk, slumped into a haze of smoke and Keystone Light induced coma. My only recollection of the evening was receiving a text from Chad saying 'Alllrighty then,' and him looking at me, grinning like goon. I remember thinking that was all a bit odd, but I brushed it off in my state of incoherence, and smiled back at him politely.

Fast forward two hours, and we're both copulating in his cabin, when, suddenly I feel his hands going somewhere I would rather they weren't. My suspicions were confirmed and I sat up and burst out with,

'What the hell are you DOING?!

'You know what I'm doing...'

'No I really...don't Chad? Could you please explain?'

I demanded sternly.

'You know...'

'No...I really don't know'

'But...the text?'

'What?!'

'The text you sent me!'

I put two and two together and soon I was in hysterics. My phone had been stolen by our friend Matt, and off it he'd sent Chad the message 'I want it in the butt tonight!'

I mean what sort of man thinks that if I wanted to have anal sex with him, I would let him know over text message? More worryingly was the fact that Chad assumed that the response 'Alllrighty then!' was an appropriate rejoinder to my request. I love men, but quoting Ace Ventura at that point was, frankly, highly inappropriate.

Apparently anal sex can hurt. You also need lots of lube. I know this because I once came home after a night out to find my own bedsheets soaked in baby oil, after one of my mates decided to go home early to 'experiment' with her boyfriend. She later told me that anal sex causes you to lose control of your anus slightly, to the extent that you fart unexpectedly and uncontrollably for a few days afterwards. I know I'll probably lose the ability to control my bladder function in about 50 years time, but the thought of losing my rim-tightening capacities at the age of 21, horrifies me.

That's not to say you shouldn't try it. You'd be surprised at how many people have done it. Even the most coy 'I-love-cuddles-and-trips-to-watch-chick-flicks-at-the-cinema' girls have done it. I did a straw poll on my mates and discovered one of them has a Butt Plug which is so big she also uses it as a door-stopper. Another mate told me excitedly how it takes about 30 minutes of back massaging for her boyfriend to successfully relax her enough to attempt entry.

Probably the worst anal-sex related story I've ever heard happened to one of my mates, who was getting done up the bum by her boyfriend, when she suddenly pooped herself in full view of him. This, in turn, made her boyfriend throw up all over her back. The thought of them shitting and spewing everywhere is not a pretty one, so if I were you, I'd think twice before entering that back door, and ask your partner nicely before you try anything.

*\*Please don't take this as a sign that I am reinforcing the ever-present, and completely bullshit myth that bad sex is always the man's fault. Girls give crap hand jobs too. I know.*

