

# FRESHERS SPECIAL

# The Beaver

29 September 2009  
Newspaper of the  
London School of Economics  
Students' Union  
thebeaveronline.co.uk

## Union social spaces get £200,000 makeover



**Zeeshan Malik**

The LSE Students' Union facilities have undergone complete refurbishment.

After months of planning and prepara-

tion, the Three Tuns, the Quad and the Underground re-opened with fresh new faces last week.

The project, which was completed last Wednesday, cost the Students' Union a total of £202,677 (£2677 over the estimated budget).

The theme of the new design, according to a Union staff member, is "commu-

nication" - with the use of silhouettes and speech bubbles to emphasise this.

"It's clinical, like being at the doctor's, which is ironic because the LSE doesn't offer medicine!" said 3rd year BSc Accounting and Finance student Donal Taylor.

But the revampment has also received significant positive feedback. A visiting design student from l'Ecole Cantonale

d'art de Lausanne commented, "As a design student, I was very impressed by the chairs used in the tuns, and it is rare that a student's union would be willing to invest in designer chairs".

In response to concerns over budget allocation for the makeover, LSESU Communications Officer Robin Low said "I don't have my calculator with me, but

£200,000 for a four-year period and the amount of LSE students we'll have, it will be more than worth it".

Another student said, "it's new and shiny right now, but with one CRUSH and some wear and tear, we could grow to love it".

## The penguin returns!

**Phyllis Lui**

A new penguin sculpture has been ordered, after its disappearance from Clare Market in March this year.

The 60lb statue by artist Yolanda vanderGaast was wrenched off its base, leaving only the two flippers.

An LSE spokesman had commented that the LSE security team was searching for the penguin, "on the assumption that the theft was an alcohol-related incident".

Within hours of discovering the loss of the penguin, hundreds joined Facebook

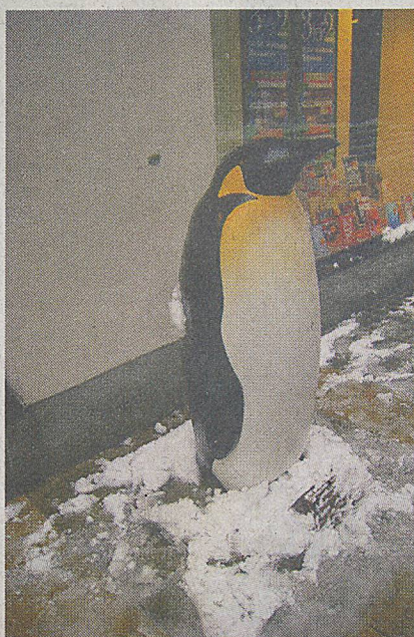
groups dedicated to its memory and demands for its return, whilst international media also took an interest.

A motion was also passed at the Union General Meeting to mandate Sabbatical Officers to undertake a search.

"We will do our best to mend this little dent in the staff and student experience," stated School Secretary Adrian Hall.

Sources indicate that two replacement penguins have been ordered, both made of a lighter grade of aluminium.

The lighter material could make the penguin more susceptible to future acts of vandalism.



## Comment



**Still the dominant race?**  
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## Collective

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# Teaching to improve at LSE?



**Zeeshan Malik**

Measures are being put in place to improve teaching at LSE in response to dropping ranks.

The Teaching Task Force has issued an interim report outlining the progress on implementing measures to improve the quality of teaching at LSE after a drop in its scores in the National Student Survey.

The School ranked last amongst the Russell Group (a group of twenty universities which collectively receive two-thirds of research funding in the UK), with only 76% of students expressing an overall satisfaction with the quality of their course.

The Task Force was set up in 2007 to address student complaints of poor quality of teaching and an excessive focus on staff research at the expense of teaching.

"Our performance in the NSS and in other surveys of student satisfaction is not what we would wish it to be," said LSE Pro Director for Teaching and Learning Professor Janet Hartley. "That was one factor, although not the only factor, behind the setting up of the Teaching Task Force in 2007. The Task Force has some forty recommendations and these are now being implemented."

The interim report classifies the progress of the implementation of the recommended measures into seven different

categories which include measures concerning Graduate Training Assistants, evaluation of teaching as well as matters of staff recruitment, training and support.

In an effort to improve teaching contact and feedback, the Task Force recommended an increase in contact hours between academic staff and undergraduate students, to reduce the class size of postgraduate classes to the size of undergraduate classes and to extend LSEForYou to postgraduates.

Although there has been no increase in contact hours between staff and students so far, the Academic Planning and Resources Committee will appoint 24 new members of staff over three years to reduce the size of postgraduate classes. LSEForYou will also be available to all Masters students at LSE as of this year.

Concerns to improve Teaching and Learning have led to the formation of the Teaching Committee last year particularly to look at "feedback on formative work". The report also outlines the introduction of "LSE100: The LSE Course" - a course aimed to encapsulate the overall social science experience at LSE, which be available to all students from Lent Term 2010. There will be a trial for 400 students to take the course this year.

Last year also saw issues concerning the transparency and consistency of wages as well the quality of teaching of Graduate Teaching Assistants. The report indicates the introduction of new standardised con-

tracts of employment to be implemented from October 2009. Although GTAs will no longer take care of "core" teaching for postgraduate classes, the report made no mention of undergraduate studies.

The Task Force has also aimed to incentivise a higher standard of teaching by increase the value of GTA prizes - a separate teaching prize having been made for the Law department.

LSESU Education and Welfare Officer Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang remarks, "Students come to LSE and Russell Group institutions expecting the best. The gulf between the focus on research and the neglect of teaching needs to be bridged. High quality research should not hinder learning - it should be passed on to students."

Plans for further implementation of recommendations from the interim report are as of yet not known.

**LSE education is based on the principle of exchanging ideas through discussion and argumentation. Teaching quality cannot be criticised if the students do not play their part in this process. The day the students have done all their reading and exploited staff office hours, that can be the day they can start complaining.**

**Pantellis Palividas**

**International Relations and History Student**

## LSE Rankings

Guardian University Guide	
LAST YEAR	THIS YEAR
3	5

Sunday Times University Guide	
LAST YEAR	THIS YEAR
4	9

Times Good University Guide	
LAST YEAR	THIS YEAR
4	7

Complete University Guide	
LAST YEAR	THIS YEAR
=3	4

	Cambridge	Imperial	Kings	UCL	LSE
The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance	59%	58%	63%	60%	56%
I have received detailed comments on my work	71%	42%	51%	57%	56%
Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand	77%	46%	49%	57%	53%
Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices	78%	66%	65%	68%	59%
Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course	91%	85%	83%	87%	76%



# Mismanagement leads to Union restructure

Phyllis Lui

In an attempt to address previous mismanagement, the LSE Students' Union has moved to collaborate with an external students' union.

"Collaboration with SUARTS will enable us to do things we just can't do alone...and it enables us to hire specialist staff we couldn't afford on our own," it was stated in a pamphlet explaining the collaboration between the LSE Students' Union and the Students' Union of the University of the Arts London (SUARTS).

It further claimed that the collaboration involved only the sharing of staff, leading to recruitment of new staff over the holidays.

When questioned about the effectiveness of sharing staff so far, Students' Union Aled Dilwyn Fisher stated, "It is working very well, they spend time where it is needed, which is decided amongst themselves."

This internal staff restructure, following feedback from students, sought to remedy the problematic 'dual line management' structure that was in place. Issues such as lack of an appraisal system, personal development programmes and active performance management were highlighted.

Fisher said that coupled with the high turn-over rate of Sabbatical and Students' Union Executive Officers, the previous management structure had led to a lack of continuity, severe communication breakdown and staffing issues.

The choice of SUARTS was explained to be due to their locality, similarity in size, and "focus on supporting student activities".

The costs of the restructure have not been calculated yet. However, Students' Union Treasurer George Wetz believed that "there would be one-off costs associated with the restructure but will save us money in the long term".

The Students' Union specified that the new structure would bring about benefits such as, "more staff than ever before dedicated to working for students...new administrative staff reducing bureaucracy for officers and other staff".

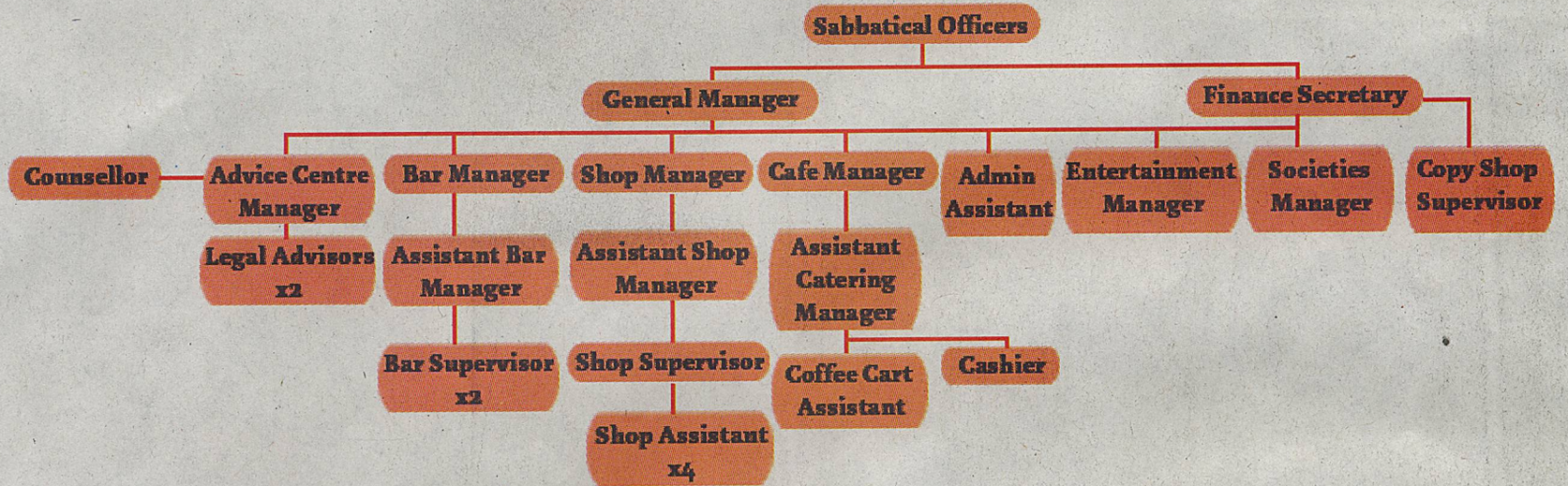
Furthermore, "greater staff support means relieving the burden on officers so that they can focus on developing campaigns and activities".

There was no consultation with students about the collaboration because of the "confidential process" as "employment law means that it was necessary to consult with the staff affected by the restructure in the first instance".

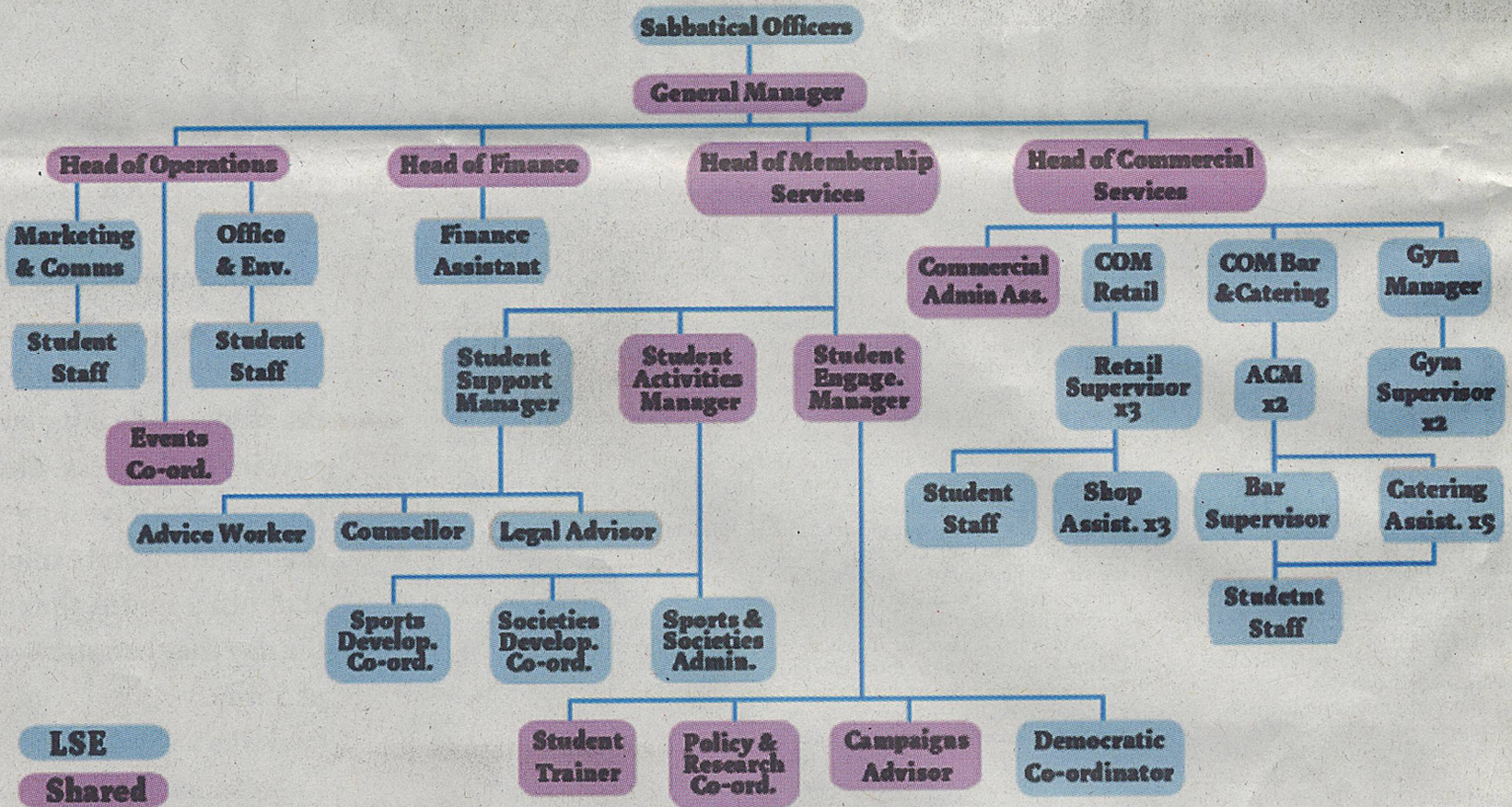
"The trustees shoulder the legal liability for actions taken by on behalf of the Students' Union."

A review procedure, consulting with students and the School, will occur in 12-8 months.

## Old Structure



## New Structure



# Too cool for Skool

Sam Tempest Keeping  
Phyllis Lui

Confusion remains regarding the circumstances in which Exilio, After Skool Club and Chuckle Club have relocated from LSE to King's College London.

Initially, the three external promoters had been informed of the planned refurbishment which was to take place during the summer holidays, leading to a temporary relocation.

However, during late April, a Students' Union staff member informed the After Skool promoter, Glynn Peppiatt, that he should be prepared for a permanent relocation and that a major staff restructuring would take place soon.

In a series of emails obtained by The Beaver, it appears that the new management were unaware of the relocation.

Subsequently, they proved to be unresponsive to After Skool's attempts to further discussions on possible move back to LSE.

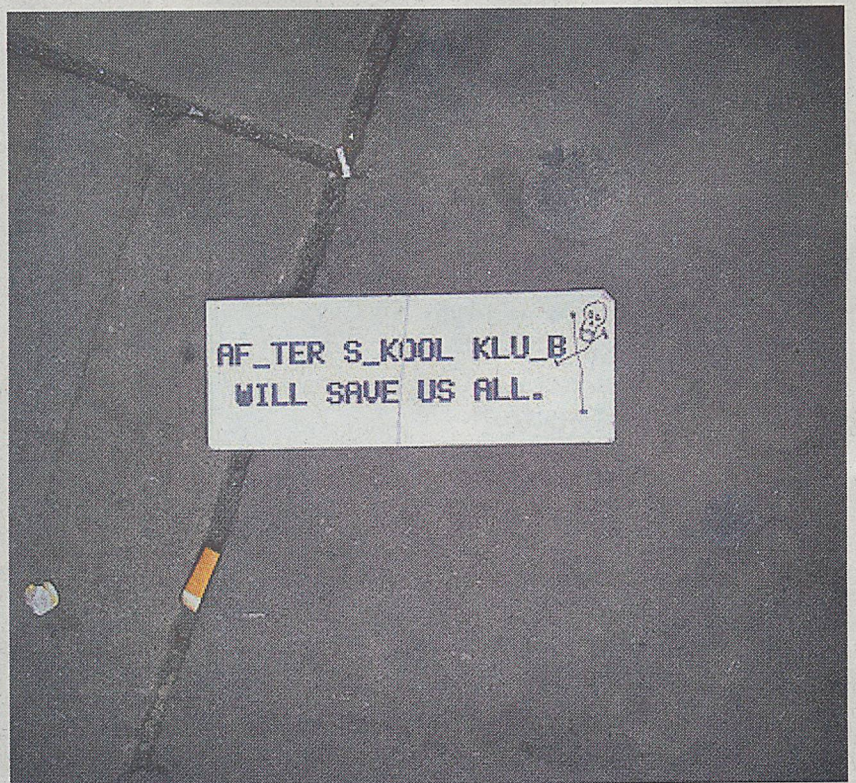
When questioned about After Skool's requests to meet following prior meetings with members of the new management, Students' Union Aled Dilwyn Fisher replied that he was unaware of the meetings nor their intention to return.

He pointed out that King's had already included After Skool and Chuckle Club in their promotional literature, and all parties had signed an agreement.

The King's Sabbatical Officers have declined to comment and the King's Venue Manager could not be reached for comment.

Fisher maintains that "former members of Students' Union staff told Afterskool that they had to leave...staff were never instructed to ask our Saturday night external promoters...to leave."

Whilst the Students' Union has found a new Saturday night promoter, Batters Not Included, Fisher remains hopeful for Chuckle Club's return.





# LSE Squares the Block

David Woodbridge

"Excellent progress" is being made on the new Students' Union building.

LSESU General Secretary Aled Fisher told the Beaver that discussions took place over the summer regarding the basic structure of the building, especially the floor plans, and also with groups to be allocated space within the new building, such as the Media Group and the Islamic Society.

Dublin-based architects O'Donnell & Tuomey were selected from a shortlist to design the building by a panel, chaired by Howard Davies, the Director of the LSE. Staff, students and alumni were invited to vote on their favourite design, although only 972 did so, including just 564 students (from a possible 9,000).

O'Donnell & Tuomey placed second in the results of this vote, though the final decision for the selection rested with the panel. Regarding the decision, Fisher said that the winners were chosen "because they had a design that was practical, logical and aesthetically pleasing" as well as for having "the most ecologically sound design".

Finally, he believed that "the architects showed that they were open to working closely with the Students' Union to develop the designs in line with the needs of students".

There was also an open day for students, staff and alumni to see the designs and speak to architects.

Regarding the involvement of the SU within the whole procedure, Dilwyn Fisher stated that "the Students' Union was fully involved in short-listing the architects and spent detailed discussions with the Estates Division in developing the design brief".

The LSE itself hoped to "enthuse and inspire" with the new building, according to the Director of Planning and Development Julian Robinson. Robinson hoped to "create a piece of architecture that will play a key role in enhancing the student experience at LSE."

Along with the recently unveiled 'Square The Block' sculpture, designed by Richard Wilson for the New Academic Building, the new SU building will represent another step towards what has been termed 'Contemporary Westminster'. The School hopes that the new building will be at the "forefront" of this style.

The new building will be located where St. Philip's currently stands. It is unclear what the fate of the St. Philip's Medical Centre will be.

Construction work is due to begin in July 2010, with a projected completion date of November 2012.

# Freshers' Festival rebranded

Sanjiv Nanwani  
Shibani Mahtani

The Students' Union has re-branded the traditional "Freshers' Fortnight" to "Orientation Festival" for incoming students.

This is one of the major changes implemented by the Sabbatical team for this academic year, along with the introduction of a new Union management structure.

New students have largely reacted positively to the change.

"I really like it. When I think of the word 'orientation', I expected to discover all that I need to know. Besides, just using 'freshers' in the name excludes postgraduate students from the induction process," said Gosia Faber, a new MSc History of International Relations student who hails from Poland.

Second-year LLB Law student Nik Adhia added to the chorus of complimentary feedback. "It promotes diversity and uniquely serves as an integrating force for all new faces on campus. This is much better than the standard piss-up that we usually have," he said.

However, there is criticism from students who wondered whether a cosmetic name change would be sufficient to inject new energy and interest amongst the fresh

faces on campus. Responding to this, LSESU General Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher said that "certain people are always not going to like it, but I assure you that you will receive unanimous agreement that this year's festival is better than what it was before."

LSESU Communications Officer Robin Low added that the change was motivated by a desire to "move away from a traditional British outlook on the first week of university, which tends to be dominated by 18-year-old drunks."

It is hoped that the re-branding will appeal especially to international students at the LSE, who comprise the majority. It is also aimed at getting post-graduate students more involved in the festival, by not promoting it as two weeks catered solely to 18 year-olds looking for the standard drunken freshers' experience.

"We have to look at a lot more than just the name. The re-branding brings along with it a whole new impetus to improve and do what we haven't done before," remarked LSESU Residences' Officer Andrew Wright.







Photos: Nigel Stead, LSE

## Mandelson: "prioritise and economise"

Sanjiv Nanwani

In a speech at the London School of Economics on 14 June, Lord Mandelson called for the Labour government to "do more to take the fight to the Tories" and remain resilient in its public expenditure strategy.

The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, who was recently also appointed to the honorific office of First Secretary of State, noted that the government would need to "prioritise and economise" in order to sustain its investment in the nation's priorities, such as education and healthcare.

Lord Mandelson's speech at the LSE marked the launch of an autumn lecture series by the Progress think tank, which is an independent organisation for Labour party members and trade unionists.

Throughout the speech, Lord Mandelson delivered a spirited and passionate case for the continued delivery of public services despite strong calls for a restraint in public spending. He admitted that the issue represented "the defining question for social democrats".

He rejected those who espoused the notion of a "centralising or controlling state" as the solution to every problem in the economy or in society. "What

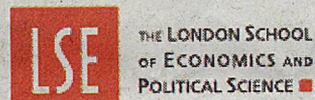
matters is not big or small government, but whether it values opportunity for all, responsibility from all," he argued.

His speech at the London School of Economics came amid debate about how the government is aiming to halve its budget deficit - expected to reach £175 billion this year - within four years.

Attacking the Conservatives, Lord Mandelson said that the party wanted "deep, savage, indiscriminate, across-the-board spending cuts".

He cautioned his fellow party members against falling into the "political traps" that Labour's opponents have set for it, and warned of the "savage" consequences of a Tory government, whose approach to public services was a "direct threat to middle Britain and the services on which families rely."

Lord Mandelson noted that a "clear choice" had now opened up between the parties on key issues of the economy and public services. "Labour will only win this argument by demonstrating its continued commitment to fiscal responsibility and remaining the change-makers in British politics," he added.



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Friday 2 October, 1pm, Sheikh Zayed Theatre

Monday 5 October, 12.10pm, Old Theatre

Tuesday 6 October, 1pm, Old Theatre







# Orientation Festival 2009

Photos: Cherie Leung

## STILL EAGER?

The Bavarian Beerhouse brings Oktoberfest to London!

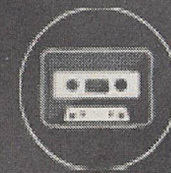
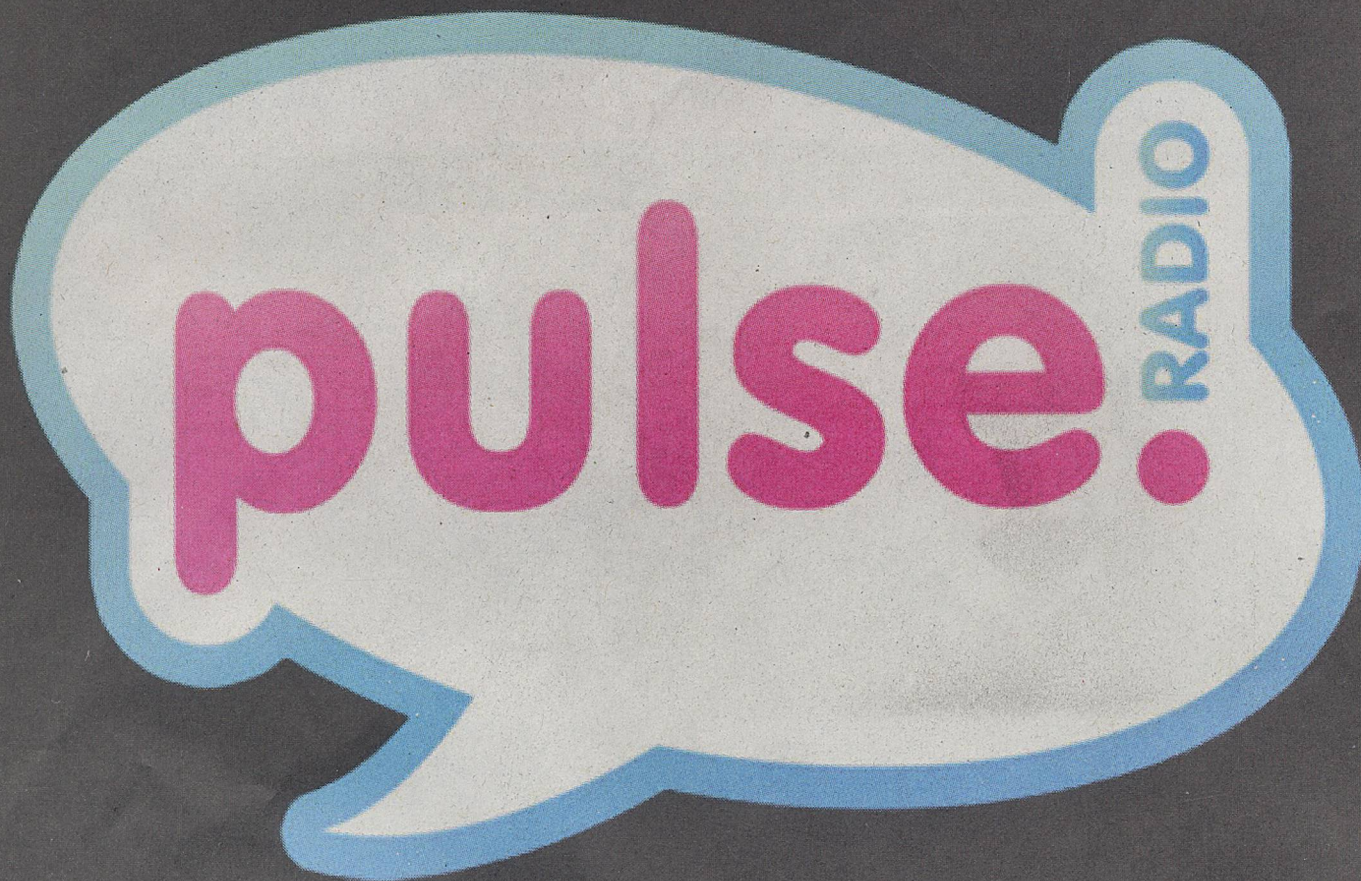
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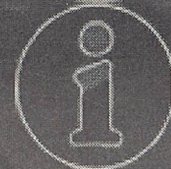




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# Comment



## The Beaver

Established in 1949  
Issue No. 707

Telephone: 0207 955 6705 Email: editor@thebeaveronline.co.uk

### Your(e) right to return

**A**s we sit among the clutter of E204; surrounded by computers and wires, banners and layout plans, the Beaver is poised for the new academic year. With huge changes going on in the Students' Union, and age-old questions of teaching and student satisfaction still unanswered, we can only begin

to imagine what will be hitting Houghton Street in the coming months. More careless remarks by our Director? Trouble in our union? Perhaps, and dare we say it, even another occupation?

Whatever the case - the Beaver still serves to hold the Union and the school to account, and constantly reflect the mood of the student body. We hope to have been there enough in this

capacity last year, and will continue to work on accurate representation of every important issue. While keeping with the new branding of the paper from last year, we hope to reach out to a much wider group of students' in the coming year and widen readership from our usual solid reader base of Union "hacks". We are trying to ensure that all our sections have something to

offer to everyone, and that you can find a place for whatever you want to voice within our humble pages.

The Beaver cannot do this alone. We need your constant participation and feedback; constant enthusiasm to get involved but also to tell us how we are doing. It has been a heartening summer with the constant enthusiastic emails about get-

ting involved, but we are literally nothing without our writers and readers. As we continue to grow in size and in reach, we hope you continue to help us grow into a cornerstone of LSE life.

No year at LSE is without its little bits of drama and controversy, if our short but colourful history is anything to go by. We hope you are as excited as we are.

### A cautious eye over teaching reform

**I**t is week of term, and already the issues of LSE rankings, student satisfaction, teaching quality and the worth of an LSE degree are filling our pages. This is nothing unfamiliar to the seasoned, cynical LSE student for whom no endeavour from the school or the union seems enough. For the freshers, who have spent months working on their A-levels or procuring

undergraduate degrees to attend our prestigious university, this might come as a bit of a surprise.

Before we start fuelling this cynicism and doubt about whether or not students' complaints and feedback over the years are making any difference, we do need to acknowledge the earnest steps taken by the LSE administration to improve student satisfaction. Efforts such as the formation of the Teaching

Committee have only been put in place a year ago. Recommendations from interim reports, feedback and surveys are still not fully known; much remains to be seen.

For a university that prides itself on being at the forefront of research and teaching methods, the suggested reforms are in line with students' expectations, and the gain in reputation that they will afford the university must

surely justify the considerable costs involved.

Equally important in this endeavour is the role of the student - that of taking an active interest in the strides the School is making; that of observing and questioning the decisions made, and that of using the skills that are imparted on us in lectures and classes to actively contribute to the process. In these pages we strive to cut through ambiguity

and to inform our readership of every motion tabled and path chosen, but this is only one point of entry for inquiring minds.

Only once we understand the cause of things, may we also influence their effects. The gravity of the situation demands the immediate attention of all parties, and students will best serve themselves by taking an active role in shaping the teaching ecosystem of the future.



# White supremacy

The subjugation of black communities is still alive and well in the United States



Photo: flickr user seanmcgrath

## Katy Galbraith

On a balmy summer evening in Chicago, the streets are quiet; fearful parents keep children inside. Somewhere across the city, gunshots ring out; the victim will most likely be young and black. It is an occurrence that has become a grim regularity. Over the last year, 42 schoolchildren have been killed, both victims and perpetrators largely concentrated in African American neighbourhoods.

In a small town in Georgia, Taylor County High School prom is taking place. Giggling groups of teenage girls in flamboyant ball gowns pile out of limos, posing for photographs with boys proudly wearing new suits. It seems like an ordinary prom, but in this racially heterogeneous area something is missing. There are no African Americans to be seen

because it is a white-only event, despite the fact that segregation laws have not existed for decades.

Events in these two places belie the claims of a post racial United States. The election of President Obama was seen as a watershed in racial attitudes and rightly so, but the idea that it would lead to the melting away of racism and inequality has proved to be a false hope. At the very top, Obama's position as President is constantly called in to question. Extreme right wing groups are gaining ground as his poll ratings slip and even his legitimacy as a citizen of the United States is doubted.

Looking past a thin veneer of progress that has seen black Americans break through racial barriers to achieve success in every field, the stark reality for many is that the country has retained deeply entrenched inequality. It is estimated almost a third of African American men will serve time in prison at some point during their lives. Black communities are at a disadvantage across the board, from education to employment, and have been harder hit by the recession than their white counterparts, losing homes and jobs at a faster rate. This is not an entirely clear-cut issue:

there is a growing black middle class who have found success and prosperity whilst thousands of white people struggle on an income below the poverty line. However, it is clear that the problems facing black communities are on a far greater scale.

The ubiquity of violence in popular culture, glorified through the hip-hop industry, has been blamed for the unsalable rise in guns and gang violence but it is clear that it goes much deeper than this. The root of the problem lies with the dearth of ambition and sense of utter hopelessness felt by many young black people. On a visit to a school in Chicago, President Obama commented on how happy the children there seemed. The head teacher corrected him, saying that "soon, the laughter in their eyes would begin to fade; that soon, something would shut off inside, as it sunk in that their hopes would not come to pass – not because they weren't smart enough but because, by accident of birth, they didn't have a fair chance in life."

The Durban Conference on racism recently held by the UN in Geneva was an attempt to consider ways to redress this balance. It addressed a growing anger and

sense of injustice by many from African and Caribbean countries who felt that they deserved reparations in order to atone for the losses their forefathers had suffered as a result of slavery. In practice, the conference failed in its aims, not least because it allowed itself to be hijacked by those more interested in pushing forward an anti-Semitic agenda. However, it at least brought to the forefront an increasingly pressing problem that is not going away.

Some commentators perceive the idea of reparations as people wanting lazy money through government handouts, but most advocates of this idea are pressing for group solutions such as an increase in funding for education or more investment in healthcare. Many at Durban argued that western countries owe debts in order to repair the damaging effects of the colonial era, and the slave trade in particular. It seems a logical step to take when it is taken in to consideration that the wealth of many landowners in the United States was created on the back on slave labour. The elegant colonial mansions in the Deep South were built as a direct result of the money made from slaves toiling for years on end in cotton plantations.

This is not merely a question of righting historical injustices, but of addressing the legacy they have left behind which is still very much in evidence today. Wealth and status is something that is accumulated over generations and passed down through families; those who are descended from slaves and have been victimised by racial laws have been left struggling to break free from the deeply rooted inequality that has ensued.

There is some truth in the notion that it may seem patronising to continue to treat these communities differently and define them by what happened hundreds of years ago. However, the bleak facts remain: by the end of the 1990s, the average black American family had a net worth that was one eighth of the national average. Patterns set by history are hard to break out of, and so many families have nothing to pass onto future generations but debt and a sense that it is impossible to change the status quo. Reparations of some kind would at least give the chance to level out the playing field and bring about change that would otherwise seem to be impossible.

# Education: less is more

The government has turned its back on the vocational alternative to the university degree

## Catherine Capone

With the economy taking a battering, it was only a matter of time before students' economic support in England and Wales did too. Last week it was reported that the CBI (Confederation of British Industry) wants university students to bear some of the weight of the situation by facing higher interest rates on their loans, receiving fewer grants and paying elevated tuition fees – the figure suggested was £5000 per year. It is true that the thousands of students currently in higher edu-

cation do put an enormous strain on the economy, but whose fault is that? Labour's goal to get 50 per cent of school leavers into higher education was fatally flawed from the beginning.

The fact is we don't need 50 per cent of people to obtain a degree. We need skilled workers too, but the government has seemed to forget how useful these people are. It is certainly not an inferior option to go down the apprenticeship route. But to make matters worse, due to our economic climate, Labour now reveals that they can't pay for all these people they've encouraged to go to university. The answer to the problem is not to unload the financial strain onto students, but to decrease the number of university places. More competition per place will inevitably mean asking for higher grades. Is there really anything wrong with asking for 3 Bs at A-level to obtain a place, since

a quarter of students this year got 3 As? Fewer students will mean more resources; teachers will be put under less pressure, and there will be smaller classes, resulting in a better study environment.

University was originally the destination for the intellectually talented, and a degree was proof of diligence and ambition. But our standards seem to have slipped. It is ridiculous that some universities ask for such low entrance grades; more ridiculous still that these students can obtain a degree by hardly working at all. I'm sure that there are some students who attend lower-ranking universities who do actually work hard. But there is also a great deal who simply frivol away their three years by getting 'watermeloned' or whatever the new slogan is for getting drunk. They come out with a worthless degree, from a mediocre university with approximately £18,000 of debt.

The job that they then obtain probably doesn't need a degree at all. Just because you have a degree, it doesn't mean that you are necessarily hard-working or intelligent. Once everyone has a degree, what is it worth in the end?

Maybe I've been a bit harsh about the lower-ranking universities, but if they don't produce 'economically viable' graduates, then what was the point of forcing their students into thousands of pounds of debt? Some may argue that lower-ranking universities have their advantages. They allow people from disadvantaged backgrounds who haven't had the same elite education as many, to break their family cycle of unemployment, and obtain an educational qualification – albeit not an exceptional one. This is very important, but there are other ways of tackling these problems. For example, these poor schools should be improved so their students have

a chance of getting into a good university – not a mediocre one. Another argument is that university is essential for life development: to move away from home, become independent and obtain social skills in the big world. True, the university experience often 'makes' a person, but it is certainly not the be all and end all. And especially if you would have been better off doing a skilled apprenticeship instead.

Fewer university places are the answer. Tax-payers' money will then be spent on supporting those who excel academically, and not on those who just want to have a good time. Cuts must be made, but those cuts must not be allowed to infringe on our education, otherwise university will be the destination solely of the rich and advantaged.



# In league with failure

Respected league tables and student surveys show LSE sliding from its pedestal - but to what extent should we believe them?

**Nathan Briant**

Although the LSE's place in the annual national university rankings remains outstanding, its formidable grip on the coveted top positions in such league tables seems to be loosening. In the Sunday Times' University Guide, published in early September, the university dropped from its top four for the first time in twelve years to ninth place, principally because of low student satisfaction results: only three-quarters of LSE students were satisfied with teaching quality; at other universities in the top ten, the same figure was nearer ninety per cent. For similar reasons, the Guardian's ranking of the university fell from third position to fifth.

Whether or not these assessments matter is a question for the governors and those serving in the higher echelons of the university. These rankings can only serve as scrutiny on those with influence to change the university for the better. Arguably, student groups do not always hold this kind of influence; students cannot please themselves by suggesting things be implemented if the people in charge are unwilling or unable to enact such requests.

Last year, when the QS World University rankings saw a considerable drop in the LSE's international status, Howard Davies blamed the change on the methodology, which discriminated against the university's relatively small student population and specialist subject status. Such a change in the way QS calculate the data saw our institution ranked 66th

in the world, as opposed to 11th only four years ago. Similarly, when the Sunday Times reported before the beginning of last academic year it found that "elite universities...have some of the unhappiest students". In response, Professor Janet Hartley, the Pro-Director for Teaching and Learning, recognised there were problems, and pledged to put this right. Noticeable changes are neither visible nor in the pipeline, though, in fairness, students must hold fire before the academic year is fully under way and possible changes have started to make an impact. To argue that the LSE's predicament is unique is misleading - a similar problem plagues Imperial College, another specialist college which is let down on student satisfaction. Furthermore, larger and equally highly-regarded universities such as Manchester and Edinburgh were others named and shamed for the same quandary.

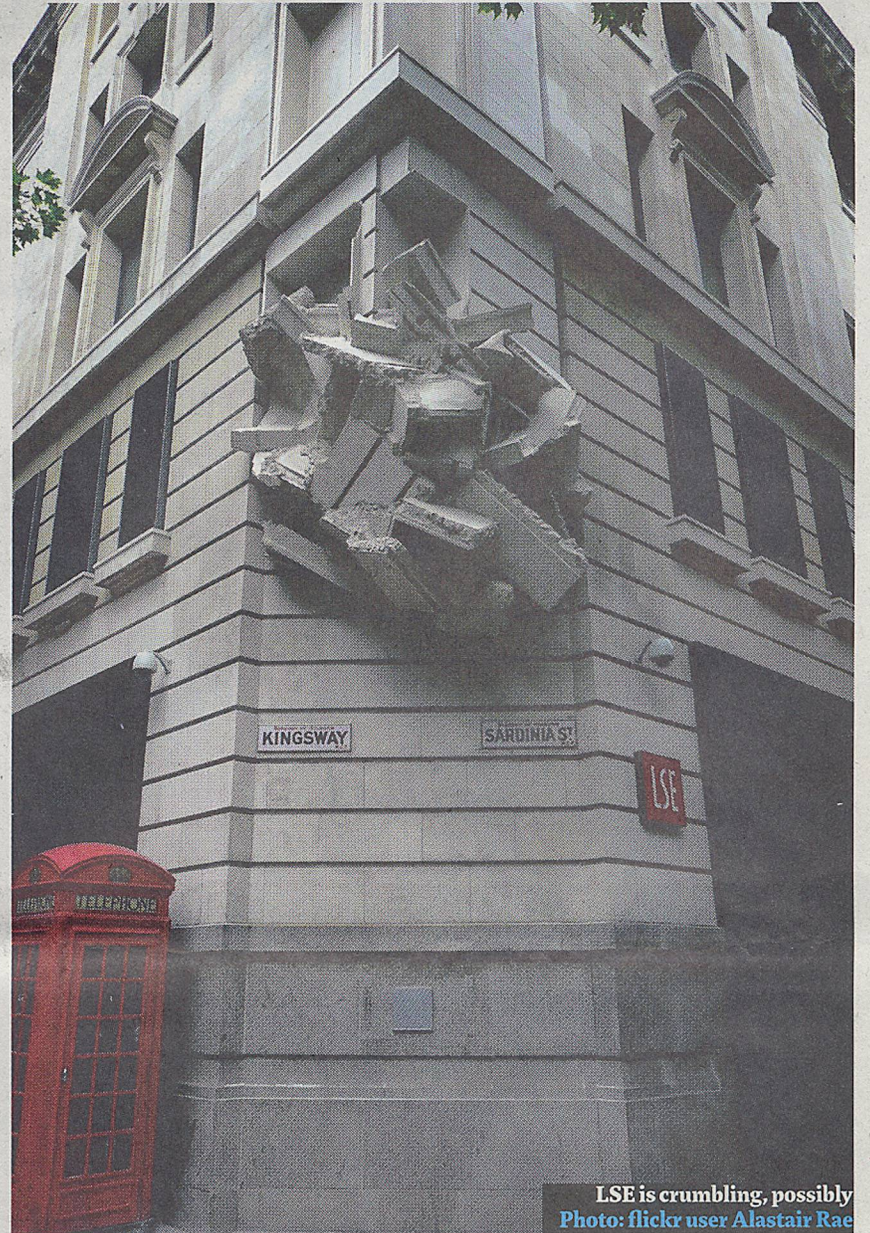
One potential cause of the LSE's problem is that, being located in such a city as London, it is inherently decentralised and cannot compete with the attractions that the city affords students. Regardless, it is clear that these ranking systems often churn out more problems than they produce in helpful analysis. Perhaps it is sensible, since higher education is increasingly becoming a globalised market-place, universities should be clearly labelled as 'well performing' and 'underperforming' for prospective students to choose their preference - in Britain, after all, universities are state-funded and thus should reach or surpass a suggested standard. However, it is conceivable that such a measure could still be deemed misrepresentative and largely predictable. Oxford and Cambridge, perennial mainstays at the top of the tables, surely cannot be the best at everything they try their hand to? A deeper glance at a selection of league tables reveals further inconsistencies too - Bristol University, for instance, is ranked tenth in the Times' rankings, yet does not feature in the the Guardian's

top twenty-five universities. Which table to take seriously is a question that these surveys don't care to answer and, often, the criteria for the rankings are obtuse or incomprehensible.

Moreover, as mentioned earlier, such surveys do not typically take into account various key aspects of student life, such as the local area in which students would expect to live in - in the case of LSE, students are placed in the middle of a city brimming with resources and opportunities to further one's interest in a chosen degree. Even some of the things that are measured can be deemed negligible in many cases: although a person may leave the LSE with a third class degree, it would be facile to suggest that because of their university's reputation they would get a better-paid job - since that is the way these surveys tend to calculate this - than someone that had achieved a first class degree at a university ranked below our own university.

Looking objectively, we are located in the greatest city of the United Kingdom, if not the world, and we are lectured by some of the best academics in the world. Though my bank balance is running worryingly low, I could not imagine myself anywhere else. Despite the fact that last year brought to the surface numerous concerns over the university's direction, there is no proof that I would have been guaranteed anything better elsewhere.

Last year, a lecturer of mine, Janet Coleman, the Professor of Ancient and Medieval Political Thought, said - more succinctly than I will recollect here - that if you come out of a class or lecture more excited and/or enraged than when you went in, then the LSE is the place for you. I certainly experienced that last year, and hope that if you are new to the LSE, you will not have to wait too long for the same experience. And that would certainly provide more satisfaction than any dubious ranking or league table.



LSE is crumbling, possibly  
Photo: flickr user Alastair Rae

# I can't get no teaching satisfaction

Down in the league tables, battered in the polls, LSE attempts a teaching revolution

**Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang**



Saying that teaching at LSE isn't great is like saying a prison cell has substandard room service. It is taken as a given by many students; some would say that it is even an integral part of the LSE experience along with the sense of anomie and the often fruitless search for basic information.

Getting through life at LSE is not an easy experience. Once the hurdles of adapting to life in London have been cleared; once you've made friends, and once you've realised that you don't need to take the Tube to get from Holborn to Covent Garden, the grim reality kicks in. For though you are in one of the foremost academic institutions on earth, the quality of teaching leaves a lot to be desired.

To be confronted with academics who seem happier speaking to whiteboards than to students, or those who love research but treat the prospect of standing at the front of a room filled with eager students with disdain, only exacerbates the difficulty of the maze that is LSE life.

It is little wonder that some students drop out in all but name, and essentially resort to teaching themselves.

Some would say that university is all about learning for yourself; however, this is only partly true - it should also be understood that the university experience should not be a isolated one. A university should be a institution where a generation of academics impart knowledge on a generation of students. If all you do is enrol at the start of the year, and then proceed to consume all the information yourself, then where does all the tuition fee money go? Teaching is an integral part of higher education, clearly.

Sadly, though LSE regularly appears in the top five of university league tables and the Research Assessment Exercise, the same cannot be said of the National Student Survey - a study of all students in the UK who are in the final year of their undergraduate studies. This year, LSE came 132nd out of 145 Higher Education Institutions which, admittedly, is an improvement on last year's position of 133rd. The average level of student satisfaction across the country was 81%, but LSE's satisfaction score actually dropped from 77% to 76%. This is a bad performance, even in comparison to the Russell Group (made up of research-intensive universities) who traditionally do badly. For reference, Cambridge scored 91% overall satisfaction this year. We need to be careful with surface level generic information, how-

ever. Dissecting the results of the survey along departmental lines paints an mixed picture, with some departments showing marked improvements in student satisfaction this year, while in others it fell. But the overall picture is bleak. Following a bad performance in the NSS two years ago, the LSE launched the Teaching Task Force, led by the Pro-Director of Teaching and Learning, Janet Hartley, which looked at the problem in depth and set out a list of proposals for huge improvements over three years. We can only hope that, at the conclusion of the three-year period, the Teaching Task Force's endeavours will bear some fruit.

The Fabians, the founders of our university, had a vision of LSE as a place where the working classes could receive an elite education, sowing the seeds for revolutionary social change. Over a hundred years later, the LSE appears to be a place where elite students come to receive a working class education.

Fortunately, there is hope, for this year marks the beginning of a new era in the academic make-up of LSE that may change the face of the undergraduate degree for years to come. LSE 100, a brand new course that all new students will have to take, is one of the proposals to come out of the Teaching Task Force. Far from being unwelcome extra work, it is set to provide all students with a well-rounded understanding of the social sciences as a whole. Teaching Assistants on the course will

**The LSE appears to be a place where elite students come to receive a working class education**

be specially trained and lectures will be conducted by some of LSE's top academics such as Lord Stern. Howard Davies himself will also step up to deliver a lecture on this course. LSE 100 also utilises new and innovative methods of teaching such as Personal Response Systems - an instant electronic survey of all students in a lecture conducted from a handheld pad.

In the meantime, the reputational repercussions of dissatisfied students are already being felt. This year LSE has dropped several places in league tables due to the fact that student satisfaction is now a criterion in the assessment of a university's stature.

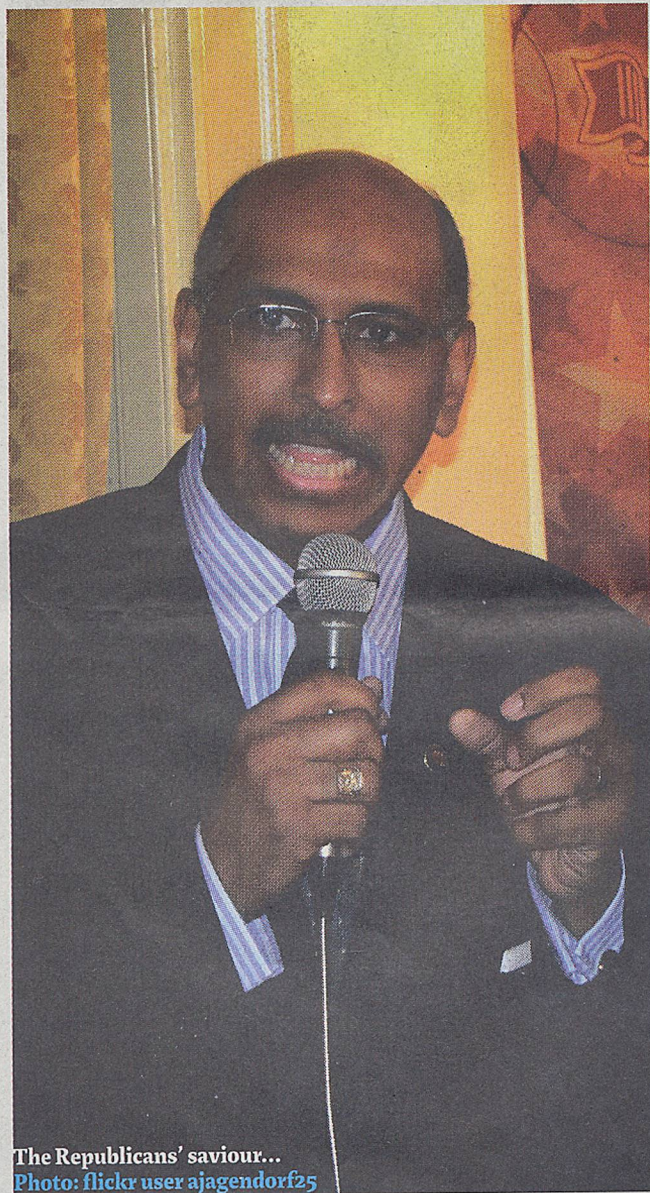
Last year, the School put an extra £2 million into teaching, and will recruit an extra twenty-five Graduate Teaching Assistants - a long overdue but welcome investment. Providing good teaching at LSE will be costly; however, allowing bad teaching to continue will cost more than we can afford.

Many of these initiatives are an excellent start that should soon produce considerable improvements. Nevertheless, to really change matters the LSE needs to cultivate a culture where good teaching is an essential part of the progression in an academic's career, and where lecturers take up the staff of inspiration and use it to prod their students along the path of enquiry.



# Ideology and policy in synergy

The hearts and minds of the electorate are there for the Conservatives' taking, should they heed this advice



The Republicans' saviour...  
Photo: flickr user ajagendorf25

## David Whitaker

The year 2009 is proving to be important for the political Right, on both sides of the Atlantic. The following months will see the build-up to the UK general election, and the continued recovery of the Republican Party following its defeat in last year's Presidential contest.

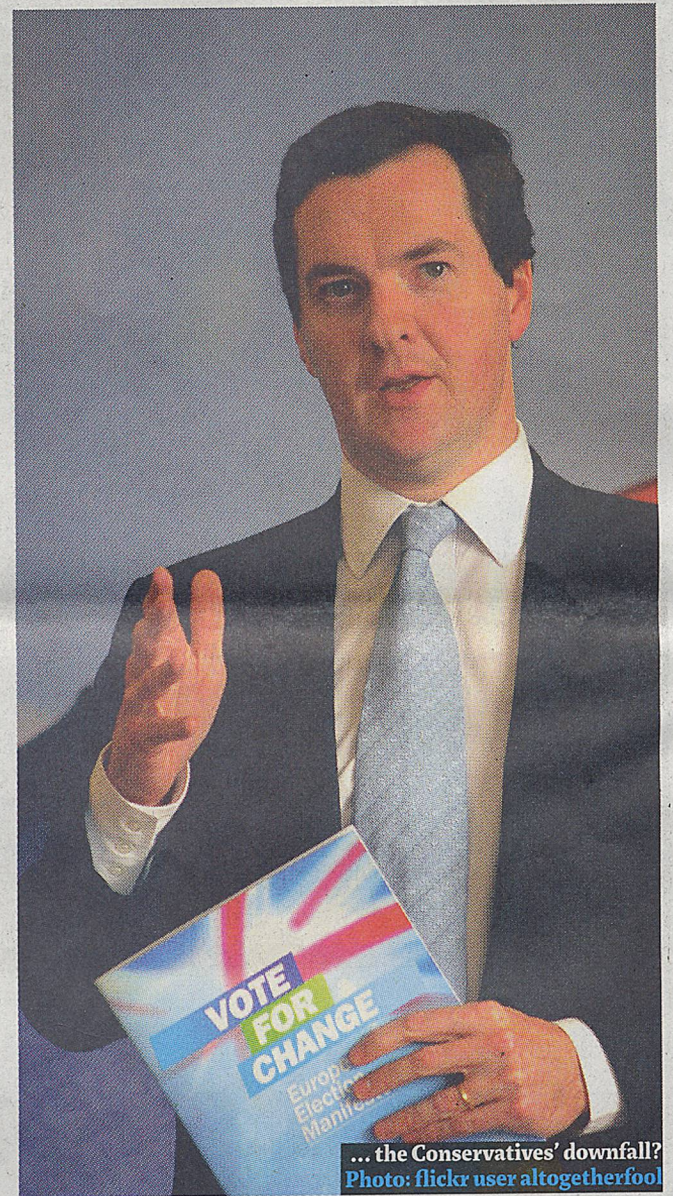
A comparison of these two differing situations reveals a surprising disparity between the fortunes of the Conservatives and Republicans. The Republicans should still be enduring a profound nadir after surrendering so much political capital to the Democrats; in stark contrast, the Conservatives should gradually be bracing themselves for a sweeping return to government in 2010. Instead, we find a suddenly rejuvenated Republican Party galvanised against President Obama's healthcare reforms, and a Conservative opposition which is yet to establish strong support with the electorate.

Many have attributed the Conservatives' modest poll ratings to their apparent lack of policies. This is simplistic. No sensible opposition party will release detailed policies months before an expected election date, only for its opponents to copy ideas, or for its arguments to go stale. Instead, the problem lies with the Conservatives' lack of ability to project a coherent ideology; a set of principles with which voters can identify and associate. Previous Conservative administrations entered government with clear ideologies: Macmillan's government endorsed the mixed economy and Tory corporatism; Heath's tenure is remembered for its pro-EEC stance; and Thatcher sought her

mandate with the backing of the monetarist school of thought, championing state rollback and curbing trade union power. Depressingly, the present Conservative Party has yet to introduce its own 'big idea'. In contrast, the Republicans can base their fervent opposition to Obama on their traditional ideology of small government, and the belief that federal involvement in healthcare should be solely limited to research.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives do not have the luxury of falling back on their own traditional party creed. The old axiom of reducing the size of the state has now been seized upon by all three mainstream parties - Gordon Brown has finally admitted that the public spending deficit must be lowered, and even the Liberal Democrats are talking about 'savage' cuts. The Right's other tenet - that of free markets - has become taboo following the recent collapse of the financial system. Furthermore, the ideological chameleon that is the present Labour Party has made the establishing of a new vision difficult: the days of Clause 4 and 'beer and sandwiches' are long gone. Consequently, a great opportunity beckons for David Cameron to highlight a fresh set of aims for an incoming Conservative government; a new ideology which will provide a welcome contrast to this tired, decrepit Labour Government.

It would be wrong to suggest that the electorate's lukewarm opinion of the Conservatives is purely due to ideological shortcomings. Other factors, such as the expenses scandal and George Osborne's pitiful public image, have not helped. Furthermore, there is still time before the election for the party to set out its stall. However, a strong ideological footing would enhance the party's standing among disillusioned voters, and could be the difference between a hung parliament and a working majority next June.



... the Conservatives' downfall?  
Photo: flickr user altogetherfool

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# Features



Photo: Cherie Leung

## The London School of Elitism?

**Kyle Packer** wonders how far the institution has strayed from its creed

**W**hen Sidney Webb co-drafted the Labour Party's 1917 constitution, specifically the infamous "Clause IV" (a pledge at the centre of Labour Party values, upheld for almost 80 years until Blair's reign, in order to "secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry" upon the basis of "the common ownership of the means of production...") there were few who would have questioned the socialist leanings of the economist and reformer. Indeed, when he co-founded the LSE in August of 1894, it was considered a project to further "the Fabians' aim of bettering society".

As an incoming student, particularly as one facing the prospect of paying around £15,000 for one year's education, I cannot help but wonder whether the school, through need or greed, has changed its direction at some stage. I am not by any means attempting to paint the school's Fabian history a bright shade of red, or to carve an imaginary hammer and sickle above the industrious beaver's head. Rather, history seems to suggest that the founders, through their ambitions for social reform, had specific goals and hopes for our institution. I believe that this is an important issue, because it may lie at the heart of why the modern LSE has such a mixed identity for myself, and many others who attend from less than 'affluent' backgrounds.

I do not deny that there is a certain type of educational prestige that has

**As one facing the prospect of paying around £15,000 for one year's education, I cannot help but wonder whether the school, through need or greed, has changed its direction at some stage.**

arisen from the institution's history, which has been both noble and innovative. Yet there is slightly more than a hint of the banal marketing gimmick that plays on a malevolent desire not to feel secure or learned, but 'superior' in life, which is frankly disappointing. This is where LSE's multiple personality emerges: on the one hand, it holds a rightfully prestigious rank of academic excellence, whilst on the other displaying a snobbery born from the somewhat recent social desire to run absolutely everything as a business.

I speak of more than just tuition fee extortion (and the consequent bias in favour of the rich), in fact for now I will put aside that particular issue. A more pervasive phenomenon can be identified when we look at where LSE might be heading. An increasing number of people consider LSE primarily as a competitive "brand" for competitive students – in fact many students seem obsessed and quite 'thrilled' by this representation. Today the school seems to mostly present itself as a powerful trademark that can complement our names when the time finally comes to sell our labour for the best possible deal. I have no doubt that LSE can be an extremely powerful association to have, but my point is that the school's Latin motto, "Rerum cognoscere causas" (To Understand the Causes of Things), seems to be holding little or no relevance.

People are becoming brainwashed by the 'brand mentality'. Just take a closer look at how some sectors of the school sell themselves to the world and to their

**Today the school seems to mostly present itself as a powerful trademark that can complement our names when the time finally comes to sell our labour for the best possible deal.**

students, especially the post-grads. On September 9th I received an email that discussed my future prospects before I had even registered on my courses, let alone received my degree results. This email grounded LSE's attractiveness not on 'understanding the causes of things', but upon the idea that LSE students are "commercially driven" and "are going to have the knowledge and the expertise to walk into a job at Grant Thornton".

The classical ideas of virtue that the LSE were founded upon are, in reality, vastly different to the modern, 'optimistic' values it promotes today: competitiveness, individual interest, and wealth. The less wealthy amongst us are naturally comforted by the promise of inheriting LSE's meaningful history. But to somehow absorb this noble origin involves a level of self-deceit. Our membership to an exclusive club is justifiable in light of its long-standing existence and supposedly beneficial role in the community, when at face value we are simply purchasing a certificate of "higher academic elitism". If this personality split between past and present is real, then does LSE's double-identity automatically rub off onto its students? Essentially, it makes it possible for each of us to lead two lives: an everyday life for the pursuit of self-interest, and an additional 'superior' take on life that is soothing to our social egos. It is perhaps quite convenient for us that we may be camouflaging our support for, and participation in, the elitist world behind a quest for higher knowledge.



# Your first 100

**Fahad Humayun** says it like it is for the freshers

If Barack Obama can be at the receiving end of a media blitz for his first 100 days in office, then there must certainly be a grain of truth in the proverbial saying 'first impressions matter'. Welcome to your quintessential guide to surviving the LSE (primarily intended for first-years, but also useful as a refresher for our continuing superheroes). Many of you have arrived fresh-faced from small towns and cities, eager to show off you're A Level/IB education. For those of you coming from outside Britain, your first step on Heathrow's tarmac represents a more symbolic coming-of-age. The bubble-wrap has been ceremoniously lifted, and you are now an adult. Amongst you are those stars of high school dreaming of becoming the next Churchill, Mandela, and Kennedy. There is much talk about pulling this country as well as others out of the global recession. You might just stumble across a group of first-year IR students in Houghton Street excitedly expounding impressive ideas for world-peace, who would rather die than admit to each other their inability to operate the washing machines in their respective halls. Altruistic blonde ambition manifests itself in freshers queuing to sign up to societies such as Amnesty, the Red Cross and other humanitarian representations. Economics is being discussed with brazen confidence in the vein of kindergarten students talking about Winnie the Pooh. Solutions to global issues not the least of them being terrorism, climate change and poverty seem to be radiating from the very fingertips of self-assured first years raring to take university by storm.

People clutch topics such as their A Level results, cricket, and José Mourinho's latest sweeping statements in the hope of igniting a friendship, an association,

**The reality is this: you're leaving behind messy high-school politics and popular high-school sweethearts for a taste of deep-water fishing.**

inadvertently finding a new Facebook friend. The reality is this: you're leaving behind messy high-school politics and popular high-school sweethearts for a taste of deep-water fishing. Your school cafeteria is now a quirky underground café called the Quad; your playground is suddenly a singularly individual L-shaped walkway in the shadow of St Clements Building. You're a high-roller now, and the stakes are astounding. The next three years as Howard Davis will undoubtedly tell you at some point will either make you or break you. Your time at the LSE is about much more than simply coming out with a first or second degree honours at the end – it's about finding out who you want to be in this world, and the role you will play in shaping the future, be it from stacking Muller yoghurts in Tesco shelves to sitting in a classy, leather-finished executive suite in Canary Wharf. Your journey as an LSE-er will be one jam-packed with firsts –

your first time away from home, your first 3 am bus ride to Southall for an authentic *desi* breakfast, and your first telling off for trying to swipe into the library using your credit card.

As you're reading this, you're probably overawed by the hustle and bustle of London life, and this sudden independence that has transformed you into mature Londoners. Try not to be consumed by the frenzy of setting up bank accounts and registering with the health department. Take it from a second-year: the first few days pass by in a blur, so try and hang on to every fragment, every moment possible. Google Maps is probably the single most useful tool that you will come across all year round, so milk it for what its worth. And don't throw away the condom your hall has considerably provided for you in your Welcome Pack when you arrive to pick up the keys. Be friendly, the people you meet here at university will be your support-system until you graduate – these are the people you will laugh with, cry with, and tug at your hair during exam time with. Do visit the library, and try and take in as many Introduction Sessions as you possibly can. The useful anger-venting Facebook group 'Next time the fire alarm goes off, something better be f\*\*\*ing burning', should prepare you for countless future Saturday morning fire-drills. Above all, remember that there are three thousand odd others in exactly the same boat as yourself. So make sure you enjoy your First 100, and keep channeling that determined and go-getting spirit, because that's what makes you a Beaver in your own right. In the words of an eye-catching Kirsten Dunst, "Go get 'em Tiger" ... and learn how to operate that washing machine!



Flickr user vermin inc

# Passion for prowling

**Madeeha Ansari** claims you cannot know London until you've seen it on foot

During my first week at Bankside, I could not for the life of me fathom why people chose to travel to LSE on foot. Why would they not wish to spend exactly the same amount of time with legs dangling from the seat of the RV1? The view from Waterloo Bridge was so much better than from Blackfriars. It was when the time came to renew my travelcard that I became sensitive to the advantages of walking it. Giving in to monetary concerns was the best decision I could have taken.

There is no experience that captures the essence of this city more beautifully than crossing the river Thames. With

St Paul's on one side of the bus and the Big Ben on the other, I twirled around in my head chanting: "Yes, this is me, in London!"

The art is to be able to trace the outline of St Paul's with one hand and the Big Ben with the other, while appreciating the expanse of sky above. That is when one can truly say: "Yes, this is me – a part of London."

Integrating with the city means working up the courage to set out, explore and absorb. At least during the first year, getting lost and finding one's way are an essential part of finding one's bearings. As long as your back-pack contains a map of the city and a copy of the Welfare Officer's

**At least during the first year, getting lost and finding one's way are an essential part of finding one's bearings.**

instructions, you're good to go.

One natural route for the LSE explorer to take is the one leading to Covent Garden. With its cobbled streets and quaint market, it's quite the popular haven for tourists looking beyond the conventionality of Oxford Street. It is after treading the tourist path a couple of times that the side streets start sharing their secrets. For instance, if you stand right next to the Paul Smith outlet and look straight up, you might get a bit of a shock. Jutting out from the smooth green surface is a perfectly lobed human organ. To quote the friend who discovered it, "After all, even the walls have ears."

Some may consider that a useless bit of information. I like to think about how long it may have been there and the many kinds of things it may have heard. The voices of fruit-sellers marketing their wares; the muttering of actors rehearsing their lines; Eliza Dolittle singing "Wouldn't it be lovely?" The Covent Garden area has come a long way, from being a notorious slum to a melange of high-street outlets and independent vendors. At the same time, the market presents no compulsion to shop; one can be quite content settling onto the kerb with a jacket potato, watching mimes blink and street-performers create colour and noise.

That was but one example. Every area has a focal point from which branch out threads of culture, art, history, music and alcohol – the basic components of the London tapestry. These focal points differ across the spectrum of student perceptions. My second year was spent at Russell Square, which is a converging place for students from SOAS, UCL, LSE and more. I got a funny little thrill every time I saw one of the blue plaques dotting the area, knowing I was traversing the streets roamed by Virginia Woolf, W.B. Yeats, John M. Keynes, Charles Darwin. Others who have lived in the Bloomsbury area associate it with the British museum, or The Rocket Pub, or gathering outside intercollegiate halls on Friday nights. My personal point of reference is Skoop

Books, a deceptively small second-hand bookstore which is everything a second-hand bookstore should be.

One important pre-requisite to exploring is the ability to navigate online. This does not only mean the ability to follow Google maps – without which, incidentally, survival is difficult – but also the initiative to find out what's happening around town. From the latest gigs in Proud Camden to journalistic events at the Frontline Club, there will be something to cater to all interests. As Samuel Johnson said and perhaps too many quoted, "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford."

Like all big cities, it is true that there is much more to this place than glamour and twinkling lights. It can be overwhelming and create such consciousness of the grittiness of reality that cannot be found at campus universities. It is also true that freshers often harbour a mortal fear of being alone, or being perceived as lonely souls. Travelling in packs is great fun, but when the time feels right it's ok to venture out. Within the limits of safety and social acceptance, a bit of solitary prowling can lead you to surprising conclusions about the "ear-ier" quirk-inspired meanings of old English sayings – as well as your own self.

One way of combing the nooks and crannies of the city in a sociable way, is to book a London Walk. Depending on whether you would rather follow the routes of Jack the Ripper, the Beatles or the literary giants of old, there could be a different theme for every day of the week. For further details, visit

[www.walks.com](http://www.walks.com)



Flickr User annso





Photo: Julian Boys

# Iran at the crossroads

**Julian Boys** recounts his experience of the Islamic Republic, now in its thirtieth year

I never meant to write this article. I travelled to Iran despite the political situation, not because of it. I wanted to visit the birthplace of myriad civilisations and experience Persian culture first hand. Iran is home to some of the best examples of Islamic architecture in the world, and the hospitality of its people is legendary. I wanted to follow in the footsteps of Marco Polo and Robert Byron to a country which still receives few tourists despite the wonders it contains.

My trip was delayed from July because of the protests and violence which followed the presidential election, but by September things had calmed. I entered via the land border with Turkey, allowing me to bypass Tehran, the simmering capital.

My aim to remain apolitical instantly proved naïve - religion is everywhere, and religion is politics in the Islamic Republic. Arriving during Ramadan, I was told it was illegal to eat, drink or smoke in public during daylight hours. Most shocking to me was the publicly funded anti-Israeli propaganda campaign on every street. Signs in Farsi and English read: "The Zionist regime is an infectious gland for the whole world" and the more blunt 'Down with Israel' were displayed in public spots where most cities in the world would have advertising billboards. To my horror, this campaign was most obvious in Naqsh-e Jahan Square, Esfahan, which holds two of the most beautiful buildings in the world: beside the majestic Sheikh Lotfallah Mosque and the staggering Imam Mosque stood messages of hatred. I soon learned

that these were not always present, but were there in preparation for 'Quds Day' the next day. Every year on the last day of Ramadan the Iranian government organises rallies against Israel in major cities, to show solidarity with Palestinians.

Despite major qualms about going to a demonstration denouncing an entire nation, curiosity got the better of me the next morning. The roads leading towards Naqsh-e Jahan Square were blocked by men, women and children holding Iranian and Palestinian flags, alongside signs saying 'down with Israel'. There were several 'down with USA' placards too, but with my British passport in pocket I was relieved not to see any against the 'Little Satan'. Near the square, along Sepah Street, the mood turned from street carnival to hate rally. Riot police stood impassively at intervals along the side of the road. The crowd swelled and chants grew in force becoming more aggressive, with women, legally obliged to remain with their male relatives, chanting most passionately. As their voices grew louder, my hesitant steps drew more stares - this was not a day for tourists. I grew more self-conscious about taking photographs and my instinct proved right when an angry hand covered my camera. This wave seemed about to break.

Away from the epicentre of the fanaticism, I met Mohsen, a Sociology student from Payame Noor University who shed some light on the receding scene. He said that those marching against Israel were mostly members of the Basij militia. This group was formed after the revolution in

**My aim to remain apolitical instantly proved naïve - religion is everywhere, and religion is politics in the Islamic Republic.**

1979, essentially as the ideological army of Khomeini, the religious leader of the revolution whose picture still hangs throughout Iran. There is a Basij group in virtually every Mosque in the country, and in many 'secular' buildings too. During Iran's war with Iraq in the 80s, they became notorious for clearing minefields by sending young people to walk across them, with the promise of instant martyrdom. After the disputed presidential election in June, they were accused of shooting at anti-government protesters in Tehran, and storming halls of residence at night to beat sleeping students.

Because of this ruthless crackdown on protests following the elections, this year's 'Quds Day' took on greater significance. In marching against Israel, those in the crowd were showing support for Ahmedinejad and the current Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei. Perhaps more importantly though, the fact that the government had authorised protests that day allowed the opposition to take to the streets, albeit under the guise of expressing anti Israeli sentiment. In anticipation of this, there was no mobile phone coverage that day in Esfahan, and the blocking of Facebook (put in place after the election) further hindered the organisation of unauthorised protests. Nevertheless Mohsen told me he had been at an anti-government protest that morning in Esfahan, which had been attended not only by radical students, but men and women of all ages. While the anti-Israeli rally was facilitated and encouraged by the authorities, Mohsen told me that the

other protesters that day were beaten and had tear gas used against them. While I was not able to verify this report in the mainstream media due to Iran's expulsion of foreign journalists, it certainly wouldn't be the first time such tactics have been used since the election.

In such an atmosphere Mohsen was understandably afraid to talk further in public, so we retreated to his car. There he compared the current behaviour of the ruling regime to that of the Shah before the revolution. History, it seemed, was repeating itself. He believed the repression tactics were not the actions of a government in control. However, this is not true of all Iranians. Many, especially the rural religious conservatives who form the foundation of Ahmadinejad's support, believe that the election was fair. One cynic even said that many of the students protesting in Tehran were only there to mix with members of the opposite sex in public - nothing seems clear cut in Iran. Although this seems far fetched, this is one rule among many which is strongly resented by the educated urban dwellers in Iran. While some Iranians may still be happy to sacrifice their liberty for the Islamic Republic, the tide is turning.





Flickr user The US Army

# The Afghanistan dilemma

**Stuart Smedley** appreciates the delicacy of the situation while calling for strong action

**T**he quiet streets of a town tucked away in scenic North Wiltshire seem as far away as you can get from the rugged, barren and inhospitable terrain of Afghanistan. However, for the townsfolk of Wootton Bassett – which includes me – the war-torn central Asian nation seems far too close.

Week after week, the town's High Street stands still in an air of sorrow and silence as the heroic fallen from the ongoing war against the Taliban pass through, en-route to their final resting place. To experience it is moving, yet chilling – the harsh realities of war really do hit home hard.

Bassett has become somewhat akin to the crucible of public opinion regarding Britain's ongoing presence in the protracted war in Afghanistan; every time a hearse passes through, the groans calling for Gordon Brown to withdraw all troops are all too audible from those who come to pay their respects. The fury at the waste represented by the coffin draped in the Union Jack is all too apparent.

This contempt is not just reserved for the market town, which was previously unheard of by anyone living over 20 miles away. The striking images that accompany each and every repatriation have increased support for the soldiers situated in Afghanistan, but the pictures of grief-stricken relatives and the crowds packed more than a dozen deep have also led to the brewing of anti-war sentiment

**With the summer just gone, those whose job it is to justify Britain's involvement has grown ever tougher.**

– now according to a poll conducted for The Times, 29% of people surveyed are clamouring for an immediate cessation of participation. With the summer just gone, those whose job it is to justify Britain's involvement has grown ever tougher. A sharp increase in the number of casualties, the scandal surrounding the under-equipped British army, and now, the furore surrounding the supposedly democratic elections, have all contributed to the sceptics' cause. Turnout has reached 102% in some areas, while violence, intimidation and corruption are now comparable to that in Zimbabwe.

At the same time, surely the British and her fellow NATO forces have gone too far in just walking away, leaving the increasingly fragile situation for the shaky Afghan government and army to sort out? The Taliban have proven to be a wily enemy over the eight years of conflict. With their recent resurgence, the idea of leaving the locals to sort themselves out would merely lead to a bloody civil war. The Afghan army may number over 100,000, but the Afghanistan National Army is still an infant organisation compared to the enemy, and therefore it could lead to a return to the pre-9/11 status quo – a situation whose likelihood is enhanced by the lack of legitimacy that the incumbent president, Hamid Karzai, currently possesses.

The ongoing dire financial situation on those shores hinders potential action, with the pending general election refocus-

**Piecemeal measures do not enhance democracy, and that has been evident with the Afghan mission.**

ing voters' minds to matters closer to home. However, it is obvious that a scaling up of operations is a requisite need, not a tails-between-our-legs withdrawal. This is the cry emanating from the Americans who, under the leadership of General David Petraeus, are looking to re-enact the model that has been used with considerable success in Iraq. That would entail an increase in the number of troops on the ground and an increase in the already ongoing efforts to win over the hearts and minds of the local population – something the British have struggled to do in an increasingly sceptical Helmand Province. If the Labour government was sensible, it would follow suit, even if it means alienating an increasingly withering support base; it would be a move worth making for the future of Afghanistan, as well as her neighbours. Of course, alongside this, supplying troops with substantially better equipment is necessary too, although to do so would cause a deterioration in the national debt.

Piecemeal measures do not enhance democracy, and that has been evident with the Afghan mission. If they did, surely we would find ourselves in a situation where the Taliban have been contained, and possibly defeated, and where democracy is flourishing. Sadly, Wootton Bassett will see more bodies passing through town if Britain is to finish its job. However, what the residents of the town will know is that those who paid ultimate sacrifice did not do so in vain.



## From Right to Left: the political columns

### Director's diatribe

Howard Davies  
 Director, LSE



Apart from the opportunities provided by its location in London city, one of the unique advantages offered by the LSE is the public lecture programme. Last year we hosted, among others, Ben Bernanke of the Federal Reserve, President Medvedev of Russia, President Bachelet of Chile and the eminent economist George Soros.

Sometimes people invite themselves, especially if they have a book to sell. Other need to be coaxed here. The Conference Office under Alan Revel conducts a great deal of careful planning to identify the big issues which people will find of most interest during the year.

It is not always easy to pre-empt the "hot" topics; being social scientists, we can only react to the changing world. This year, however, two issues stood out: what may be loosely called the problem of post-crisis capitalism, and climate change.

The financial crisis challenged many previously held assumptions about the system and the dynamics of capitalism itself, while also highlighting income inequality. Even the Chairman of Goldman Sachs, Lloyd Blankfein, acknowledged that the industry let growth in new instruments 'outstrip their economic and social utility'.

Much of the diagnosis of what went wrong in financial markets is now broadly agreed upon - there are G20 communiqués to prove it. However, there is far less consensus on the nature of financial intermediation in future, as well as the structure of capitalism. The plan is to organise a series of events which address those issues from different perspectives including that of Justin Lin, the Chinese chief economist of the World Bank; Robert Skidelsky, Keynes' biographer; and Will Hutton of the Observer.

When it comes to climate change, the Copenhagen Summit is an important consideration. The Chinese are sounding more serious about making a commitment to restrict greenhouse gases, but so far President Obama has been expending more political capital on healthcare and the Middle East than on the environment.

Professor Nick Stern of the LSE is centrally involved in the negotiations, and we have a new Grantham centre on the economics of climate change which is active in the debate. We will also hear from Ed Miliband, the British Government's representative and from Graciela Chichilnisky of Columbia, who has just published a book called 'Saving Kyoto'.

Of course there are endless other subjects for debate. Noam Chomsky will be invited to talk about human rights, Tariq Ramadan on Islam. Continued conflict in the Middle East remains an important problem of international relations. Personally, I am particularly looking forward to a lecture late in the term entitled 'The End of Lawyers'. We may not find all the answers and may leave you more confused, but at least we'll get you thinking.

### Hayek

Jonathan Damsgaard

## The battle lines are emerging

For most of the year the Prime Minister has trumpeted the government's role in achieving growth, attempting to borrow his way out of the recession. Brown argues that only if we achieve growth can we afford to pay for services. What Brown does not readily acknowledge is that New Labour has reigned over a decade in which the public sector growth has outpaced much of the private economy.

While the Prime Minister avoided using the politically charged word 'cuts' for most of the summer, reality has finally caught up with him, and he was forced to backtrack on his spending commitment. Admitting in his speech to the Trade Union Congress (TUC) that cuts would be necessary. Obviously, he added, Labour, the economically 'responsible' party would not cut as discriminately as the Conservatives. Rather, Labour will 'prioritise'. As Peter Mandelson indicated in his speech at the LSE on the 14th of September, this is going to be the issue

that will dominate the next election: which party can make the appropriate cuts to spending, with the least damage to services. Despite Gordon Brown's adamant defence of their commitment to public services, a leaked Treasury document has been further undermined the government's credibility by showing plans for departmental cuts of 9.3 per cent over four years. This is a negligible 0.7 per cent away from the proposed Conservative cuts of 10 per cent.

However, the difference between 9.3 per cent and 10 per cent is not a battle drawn on purely partisan lines or semantic electioneering. There are fundamental ideological differences. Labour undoubtedly prefers not to cut any public services and would, if allowed, perpetually borrow their way out of the recession. Not exactly the most sustainable, nor 'responsible', recovery. Thus it is slowly becoming apparent that no one believes the government's plan to ensure that economic growth outpaces the mountain of debt.

It should be said I am not arguing for a complete withdrawal of the state from public services. What is the plausible answer then? Lets consider, for a moment, the possibility of maintaining and improving public services while simultaneously reducing their cost. Labour activists generally believe this combination to be logically impossible. In their ideologically dogmatic approach to government, any reduction in spending represents equivalent cuts in the quality of services. Anyone in the private sector would find this position laughable. The fiscally responsible move is spending constraints. Lets start by capping the salaries of civil servants, and putting more pressure on the unions. It is entirely unrealistic to be calling for wage increases when most of the population is worried about job security. Faced with the economic realities of a post-crisis fiscal disaster, cuts are to be expected and should be welcomed.

### Laski

Estelle Cooch

## The choice is yours

Last week a friend asked me what I thought of LSE. I think a lot of things about LSE, most of them certainly not acceptable for printing in a respectable student newspaper. LSE is not like other universities. Whether you've just started or somehow tumbled into another year of your course, it won't have taken you long to realise there are few places like it. There are few universities where the words 'welfare state' ignites in many the same look of fear and disgust that most people have for exams. And there are few universities where the Director is accused of causing the recession (in his former capacity as Chairman of the Financial Services Authority).

All of this puts LSE students and staff at a crossroads. There is the side of LSE that says that all roads lead to the free market, who are advocates of Margaret Thatcher's philosophy that 'There Is No Alternative' but the market. Despite this, there is another side of LSE - a side that 6 years ago protested against the war in Iraq, a side that has organised to get campus cleaners the Living Wage, the nearly 500 students who signed a petition against the business oriented direction of

LSE and those who occupied the Old Theatre against the Israeli massacre in Gaza.

Let's consider for a moment the state of British politics. Peter Mandelson, a man with more come-back power than a boomerang, last week declared that the recession will lead Labour to switch 'resources from lower to higher priority areas'. Alongside him, Ed Balls and Andy Burnham, education and health secretaries (respectively), have announced the intention to cut their departmental budgets by billions. Of course, David Cameron has long admitted that the Tories are baying to attack public services. Last week, the Liberal Democrats also dropped their commitment to ending university tuition fees. The three main parties reached a cosy consensus: that the only way out of the recession is to attack the wages and public services of the most vulnerable people in society.

In light of this, we have two choices. There are those who say, out of fear that the Conservatives will win the next election, that ordinary people should put up and shut up, and that any criticism of Labour simply plays into the hands of David Cameron. This argument misunderstands why the Tories would win the next elec-

tion. In reality, the Tories are hardly any more popular than they were a decade ago. Their vote has barely increased. Rather, they are succeeding electorally because of the complete collapse of the Labour vote. The only way Labour can win the next election is if the resistance to their willingness to get into bed with big business is enough to make them backtrack.

Thankfully over the summer we have seen the beginning of a fight-back. After over a decade of Labour government, workers across Britain have started to resist. For the first time since the early 1990s we have seen factory occupations and indefinite strike action.

The coming year is crucial. For the first time the neoliberal paradigm has been smashed and the return to Keynesian economics is failing. The BNP have now become the largest fascist party in British history and the two main parties are completely delegitimised in the eyes of ordinary people. Either workers and students unite to resist or we face a decade of rising unemployment, cuts to services and student poverty incited by all three parties. This is your chance to have your voice heard!

## Measured musings



Brighton has been the scene of many political tragedies. The IRA bombing and the trip taken by former Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock, straight into the sea being the most notable. With this in mind, I attended this autumn's Labour Party conference, the last before the next General Election. The mood of the conference was, perhaps surprisingly, positive. Positive about the future, despite what is presumed to be the first Conservative election victory since 1992. Thus the positivity of the future is offset by the defeatism of the present.

No one debated how to overturn the Conservative majority in almost every poll published since November 2007. Delegates, hacks and the Labour faithful discussed how to unite the left and progressive forces in British politics. They discussed proportional representation and increasing representation of women

and ethnic minorities. They discussed everything, except the election which now must take place in 2010.

Grandiose plans for reforming the electoral system sound empty and meaningless when they come from a party which, it is reported, have lost the will to live. They sound like grandstanding when calls for a more representative politics come from a cabinet full of peerages and where women's role has (as claimed by Caroline Flint, former Minister for Europe) been reduced to 'window dressing'. The time for change is not 2014. It is not post a Cameron Government. It is now.

Labour needs to abandon not only its partisan past, but also its self-centred self belief. This means moving beyond the superficial plans for a 'Government of all the talents'. It means learning from both the successes and mistakes of 1997. It means finding common ground with the Liberal Democrats. Consensus on issues must be

built, not declared by a suited Whitehall lackey. Labour must build new bridges and repair old ones.

Yet this will not happen, for a very simple reason - the conference is indicative of a far wider problem. The Labour Party is a club. And people like clubs and so they accept (and blindly follow) the party lines or club rules. Conference is a celebration of the club, a symbolic pat on the back. A chance to regale the faithful congregation with your stories from the campaign trail.

Delegates who sing the praises of the party have little support for the politics of change, because they thrive on the politics of continuation. The politics of the career ladder, where every young member knows that one day, he or she (predominantly he) will be the PM. Or at the very least they'll sit on the green leather chairs of the house. Change is a by-product. A good by-product, but nonetheless peripheral to

the whole process. Thus the only change that conference could ever make, would be if it was cancelled.





Flickr user sk

# Food for thought

**Georgina Butler** considers the power of food in a world of the Wii Fit, obesity and malnutrition

**T**he recent deaths of 19 women in a stampede to collect free food during Ramadan in Karachi, Pakistan, and the subsequent news coverage of the food distribution process served to remind me how food pervades all aspects of our lives. Essential for sustenance but equally fundamental as a part of popular culture, food is central to our very existence. As an entity, food is crucial in building and maintaining social and political relationships and sustaining cultural rituals, not only on an individual level but for whole societal groups.

The holy month of Ramadan is just one example of how religious teachings can offer guidance and customs related to food which are followed by large groups in society. Followers of orthodox Islam consume only Halal meat and no pork and the fasting during Ramadan is a time for reflection and worshipping Allah. Judaism too has fasting during Yom Kippur and Jewish individuals eat Kosher meat and no pork. Hinduism, meanwhile, instructs followers to avoid eating beef. During Lent in the Christian calendar, many people give up meat or treats. Such practices around food reinforce the strong association between food and religion and the omnipresent nature of food.

Beyond religion, food is also pertinent in popular culture - to eat in a certain way

is to subscribe to a certain lifestyle. One cannot spend a day without food taking a starring role. With news and advertising focused on cuisine and supermarkets that are open twenty-four hours, seven-days a week, we face a plethora of advice, caution and concern from those in positions of power regarding what we eat.

The new film 'Cloudy With A Chance Of Meatballs' sees a crazy inventor create a food-making machine that makes grub fall from the sky. Such a narrative illustrates the significance of food in society and highlights the general acceptance that people are aware of the inequalities surrounding food and its availability - certainly most people would acknowledge that such an invention would be ideal for many societies where famine is a harsh reality. As a film intended for children, the basic premise of the plot could be used to broach the subject of world hunger and reinforce the tried and tested adage: "clear your plate because there are children elsewhere in the world who will have to go without any dinner tonight".

For most people in societies where food is plentiful, the weekly visit to the supermarket to stock up on groceries is an established ritual. Food - its availability, purchase, preparation and ensuing consumption - structures our schedules and dominates each day. In societies where there is plenty, food is an easy indulgence. A busy day at work will more than likely be punctuated by a couple of coffee breaks and the beverage is best accompanied by a sweet treat. Meanwhile, in societies where there is a lack of food, the effort expended on attaining provisions will be top of the agenda for each day.

Echoing our ancestors and the fight

**The moral panic of obesity - particularly in the United States of America and the United Kingdom but also across Europe - is only matched by a similar obsession with targeting eating disorders.**

for survival it is only right that food should be so focal. Nonetheless, where food is plentiful, new issues are developing. A word regularly touted around is "balance". We are advised to achieve a balanced diet as individuals. To ensure good health we are recommended to aim for a balance between food and exercise. This message is relayed to us as consumers in popular culture more than can be quantified - from advertisements on television to posters in the supermarket; books to computer games (Wii Fit has seen a surge in interest from all sorts of otherwise "couch potatoes"); the back of cereal packets to campaigns launched in schools. Balance is perceived as key in safeguarding against the threat food poses if consumed in dangerous quantities with little or no exercise. Couple this with the fact that food is essential and desired and we have the paradox of food in societies where copious amounts are instantly available. Equally, the danger of under-eating (whether through famine as a result of food shortages or through disordered eating on the part of the individual) is increasingly being hailed as an issue to be tackled.

This need to tackle perceived problems via the creation of moral panic is in part driven by both the media and politics. The media offers with one hand whilst taking away with the other - presenting us with advertisements fostering delight in food whilst simultaneously being used as a medium to lecture the masses about healthy eating. Politics are creeping more and more into the subject as the "nanny state" furthers the policing of food. Caloric content of almost everything is now displayed on food packaging as the figures of authority interfere in what and how

much we eat more than ever before.

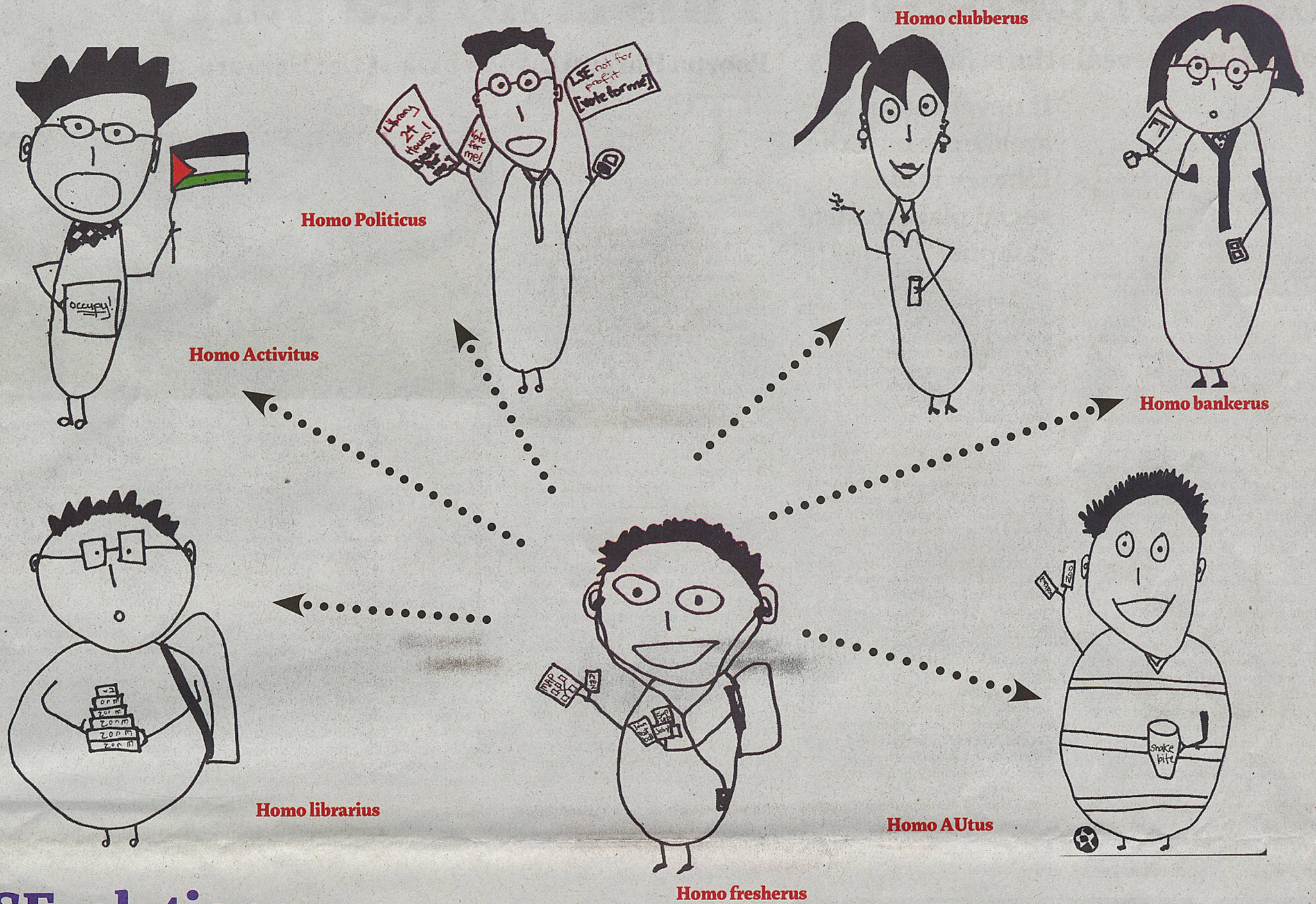
The moral panic of obesity - particularly in the United States of America and the United Kingdom but also across Europe - is only matched by a similar obsession with targeting eating disorders. Campaigns are fuelled by those against fashion models and the "size zero" which has become so ubiquitous and controversial of late in the media.

Hence, food as an issue goes beyond the act of eating to live, encompassing the very act of living itself. Food is prominent in religion and popular culture and through the media which can be used as a tool by the government to relay particular messages. Whilst many are able to indulge themselves, others are struggling to survive at all due to the crisis of food shortage. The notion of balance goes beyond the idea of ensuring individuals get enough exercise to counterbalance the food they consume - it is vital in trying to combat crises in the global food system. UN World Food Programme Executive Director, Josette Sheeran, states that 'there are more hungry people in the world and less food aid than ever before'. Inequality in the world - the conflict of the "have foods" and the "have no foods" - ultimately requires a balance. Global leaders must ensure that everyone has the resources they need so that no one misses out but, by the same token, no one overindulges. Food as a fundamental unit needs to be respected for its part in biological and social preservation. To guard against future incidents involving desperately hungry or gluttony-induced diseased people, balance and respect is the best place from which to begin to ensure that the global food crisis can be addressed.



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## LSEvolution

Graphics: Judith Jacob

# The Wrangling of Minds

**Alizeh Kohari** explains how London makes philosophers of us all

**W**hen, with a single solitary flick, the two hands on the clock become one and the demand and supply lines begin to blur into each other, I shut my textbook and call up a friend. By the time the clock hands have stretched as far away from each other as they possibly can, we are sitting by the river, on the South Bank, eating lunch.

'My head is cluttered with Plato,' she says. 'Mine with regression lines,' I groan. 'Let's talk about something else.'

We are economists-in-training with a love for books and so, our conversation skips from one to another. Watching gaggle after gaggle of insufferably cheery tourists float by, I tell her how in a book I am currently reading, a character declares that she knows a trick for the perfect picture: 'you must look into the camera and say 'La petite pomme.' I stumble over the French; her tongue flies over it with enviable ease. We repeat the words together - 'La petite pomme!' - and freeze for a moment, two (usually serious-looking) girls with pretend pouts. We look at each other from the corners of our eyes, confirm how absurd we look, and convulse into helpless laughter.

Another friend joins us. He is livid: on the way back from the LSE, he saw a bus that stated, proudly, boldly, that 'There's probably no God, so stop worrying and have a good day'. 'To assume the absence of a God,' he seethes, biting angrily into an apple, 'to just assume it so nonchalantly, I mean, come on' - with a vehement gesture towards the river and the sky - 'how could there not be a God?'

And another friend points at my copy of the Economist, which shows a child in Africa, hollow eyes on a gaunt face, and says quietly, 'How could there be one?'

And so it goes, the wrangling of minds. We sit by the water and debate the

**We refuse to be each other. And, that, although it spawns many quarrels, is the best part of it all.**

existence of God, St Paul's slender steeple on one side of the river, the Tate's fat finger on the other. Yesterday, a squabble ensued over the independence of the subcontinent ('We only left because we wanted to, because it was in our interests,' said an English friend and the Indians and Pakistanis amongst us, staunch patriots, pounced on him, our hackles raised.) We ponder over the secret feminism in Shakespeare's *A Taming of the Shrew*, watch *Oedipus* at the National Theatre and wonder why he, *Oedipus*, felt the need to gorge his eyes out - after all, he didn't know he was marrying his mother, did he now? Economics geeks, we discuss the world in terms of opportunity cost, marginal utility, negotiation costs. We point at the Hare Krishna cart that parks itself on Houghton Street every single day and joke again and again, always laughing, never tiring: 'But there's no such thing as a free lunch!'

We are from all over the world, with

ideas diametrically opposed, tempers dangerously similar; we argue, debate, discuss, dissect, try to know the causes of things. We refuse to be each other. And that, though it spawns so many quarrels, is the best part of it all.

London will do that to you: it will turn over and annihilate ideas that you have carefully nurtured in rooms sheltered from the light of experience. And even as those long-cherished views are twisted and crushed, even as they begin to appear so - silly, we find ourselves emboldened by London, by all that has taken place within its fold, by all that can still take place - perhaps, by our hands. Less than half a mile away from the LSE, in ramshackle Soho quarters, Karl Marx once weaved plans of a revolution. Just off the Embankment, Samuel Pepys resided; across the street, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Virginia

**In London and in its past, we are in good company.**

Woolf lived in Bloomsbury, stringing words into sentences of staggering beauty (of Big Ben: 'the leaden circles dissolved in the air'). And near Charing Cross, in a boot-blackening factory, Dickens began his career.

George Bernard Shaw and Bertrand Russell, Charlie Chaplin and Shakespeare,



of course - in London and in its past, we find ourselves in extremely good company. And this proximity to power, and to greatness, is why so many of us rush to lectures every day, sticky-eyed and crusty-lashed, dodging runners along the Embankment or elbowing through the early morning crush outside Holborn Station; why, as exams near, the School is flurried with textbook-poring, knowledge-chugging, no one caring when the day sky darkens to dusk. We want to be one of them. Whether it is towards the City that we turn our faces, or Downing Street, or the Royal Courts of Justice right next door

- or towards something infinitely more abstract like 'World Peace' or 'The Great Modern Novel' - we know that it is possible. London has taught us so.



# LSE Undercover

**Falak Ghor** reveals the school secrets

I have spent more than 2 years on Houghton Street, loitering outside the Peacock Theatre and sprinting across floors for Library PC space. Yet I still wouldn't dare to label myself as an absolute LSE insider, or think of myself as the one to know what really goes down in these two-and-a-half streets.

However, my time here has not gone by in oblivious stupor (natural or induced) and hence, I would like to detail out some observations I've gathered within the grounds of our beloved LSE.

For instance, it never ceases to amaze me how the Library is the most social place in all of campus. Whether you have studying to get done, just want to check your Facebook, or even meet people you haven't seen for a while, you will find yourself making your way down to the bookshelves. Yes - the library! It really is no wonder half of London is convinced that we're a workaholic bunch churned out at high speed to queue outside the futuristic Canary Wharf Station. Sadly, little do they know of the Spiral Staircase. Although you feel ridiculous teetering, tottering and trudging on its steps, I've never actually seen anyone take a tumble. Perhaps the architect did know what he was doing. But yes, the Staircase is definitely one of the most "It" places to be seen on campus. Not only does it offer an all-encompassing view of the building, but it also allows to be seen by practically everyone else too. Many of my friends shun the elevator and claim "exercise" as their solid reason for climbing up and down four flights of stairs. No, really. So popular are these spiraling wonders that they compete heavily with the most prized item of furniture on all of Kingsway - the worn out, coffee stained but incredibly comfy sofas right at the back of Starbucks at 4 o'clock sharp.

On another note, had you noticed that although the LSE proudly proclaims that it represents more nationalities than

## It never ceases to amaze me how the Library is most social place in all of campus.

the United Nations itself, the students are remarkably cliquish? And unfortunately, yours truly is no different (I can count the nationalities of my closest friends on my fingers. Okay, maybe even less than half my fingers.) So, a word of wisdom to Freshers: Please break out of this unwanted tradition and venture out of your bubble into international territory. And although active involvement in Freshers' week is highly recommended for you to make yourself home, manic friend-finding frenzy is not. You won't remember their faces, let alone their names a year down the road whilst scrolling through your Facebook Friendlist.

Another trivial but important observation: the inherent uselessness of the padlocks, and keys which you are naively coerced into grabbing in order to use the lockers located in the basement of the Old Building. Firstly, the place is a maze and makes me want to run out screaming for daylight - and I'm not even claustrophobic. Secondly, I don't know anyone who carries enough around to need a locker or has the motivation to go underground to find one.

Finally, contrary to what most people believe about LSE students, not all of us are in it for the money. Some do want to be the change they want to see in the world, to quote Mahatma Gandhi. As for the banking-obsessed crowd, do try to keep them as far away from Houghton Street as possible (the air here is infectious you see).

# This is no tea party

**Poorna Harjani** takes a look at the Harvard night scene

The essence of a good social scene is made up of two variables which cannot be mutually exclusive - the venue and its people. After all, what's an enthused or zealous crowd if there is nowhere hip to party? And likewise, what a shame if a swanky venue is brought down by an unruly crowd. This summer took me on adventures across the Atlantic to uncover the truths of social life at Harvard, which allows me to say what really makes a good night out on the student scene.

The Porcelain, Harvard's most iconic club's motto is 'Dum Vivimus, vivamus' - 'while we live, let's live'. Would I there have a chance of winning my way into an American secret society like 'Chuck' in Gossip girl and experience the notorious party reputation of 'spoilt international students'? Or, as rumor has it, is the social life in the US so appalling that Mark Zuckerberg had to create a Facebook account in order to connect with girls?

The reality is that Harvard's diverse social scene is a world away from the LSE's. The culture is one of bars, beer pong, house parties and road trips. Nightclubs in Boston close at 2am and there are no late licensed after-party venues. And in order to hold a dorm party, one has to even fill out a form informing the House Master.

The ultra-ambitious environment is visible in every class where participation marks are given, warranting a rarity in hangovers and sleepiness. The average British student would be surprised with the rigorous watch kept on attendance. Classes are three hour blocks which go on during mid-terms and even finals during summer. Hence, while on-campus events proliferate during the week, the main clubbing parties tend to occur towards the weekend.

Week nights consist of sitting in Harvard's lit up, spectacular stadium which is built like a Roman amphitheatre. There



Flickr: Aaron Frutman

are late night ballroom dances, American Diner styled karaokes, and communal dining in the famous Memorial Hall. Otherwise, the student is offered a choice of practically any cuisine on campus, ranging from Indian Brasseries, Italian delis, Chinese takeouts and even a 4am falafel eatery. Students also often congregate for the latest blockbuster at Harvard's very own cinema.

Being the apple of the world's scholarly eyes, Harvard Summer School attracts students from every corner of the world: Brazil, Nairobi, Burma, as well as numerous Americans themselves. So which nationality dominated the party scene? Yes, you've guessed right, none other than the British. This is partly due to the fact that American credits cannot be transferred to the UK. Thus, British students have even greater incentive to experience the American student life the media so fascinatingly portrays.

A trick which British students quickly learnt is that Americans read the day and month opposite to the UK on a Driver's license. For example, my birthday is 4/12/88. This to us natively would read 4th

December. However, Americans read this as 12th of April. Therefore, in Britain I am 20 years of age, but in America I am already 21. Hence, those on the borderline of the legal age are able to fool American bouncers upon entrance into clubs and bars. To me, this not only shows the lengths British students go to in order to ensure themselves a good time, but also that we may be too fixated on associating a good night out with clubbing.

The final verdict is that Americans are more open-minded to forms of socializing aside from clubbing which, in turn, makes them more extroverted. The variety of venues beats anything LSE has to offer, providing a better rounded university experience. However, Freshers should feel fortunate that it is possible to party from Monday through till Sunday - and after party at that too by having London as our campus. This is one category in the Leagues that even a place like Harvard has no chance of topping.

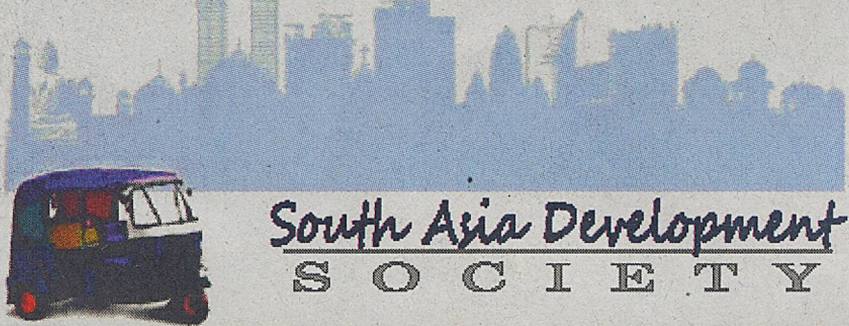
## SOCIETIES!

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Articles to [social@thebeaveronline.co.uk](mailto:social@thebeaveronline.co.uk)

Advertising to [societies@thebeaveronline.co.uk](mailto:societies@thebeaveronline.co.uk)

Check out our stall at the Freshers' Fayre or email us to become a member!



South Asia Development  
SOCIETY

The SOUTH ASIA DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY is all about trying to find SOLUTIONS to the BIG PROBLEMS that our region faces. DEBATES featuring EXPERTS in INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, POLITICS, LAW and ECONOMICS and DEBATE COMPETITIONS involving YOU will help us at the LSE understand the issues that matter to 1.5 billion people. Even more importantly YEARLY ACTION EVENTS in South Asia will help us be a part of the SOLUTION to these problems. JUST REMEMBER:

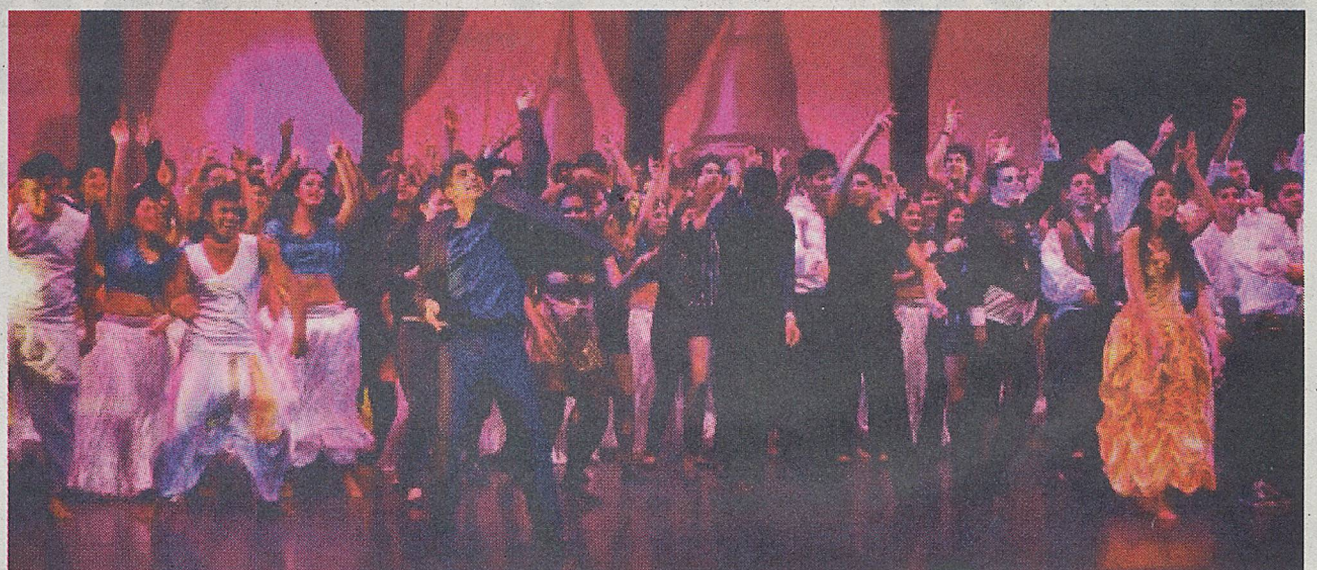
JUST A FEW FACTS:

- 1 of us has a third of the world's POOREST PEOPLE WITHIN THEIR BORDERS.
- 2 of us are more likely to see NUCLEAR WAR than any other country in the world.
- 4 of us are on alert for being FAILED STATES.

Our development is in our hands

Email us at [development@southasia.org](mailto:development@southasia.org) or search for us on Facebook!

# Make time for Timeless



**Filipe Martin** steps onto a global stage

This extraordinary event has been taking place for the past three years at the LSE, where undergrads, postgrads and staff pool their efforts to create a magical performance in one of London's mega-theatres; and for many of those who take part, this is a life-changing experience.

Being part of a project of such scale, uniting as many cultures as possible under the umbrella of a musical, is probably not what most people had in mind when coming to LSE. Some might have thought of joining the Finance Society, and seeking an internship only a month after setting foot in London. Others may have planned to spend their time raving, and skipping as many lectures as possible. Or some may even decide to lock themselves in their rooms in order to write their thesis. Whichever the case, they are underestimating themselves.

You may be one of many who think - like I used to - that there is little space or enthusiasm for artistic expression at the LSE. Or even worse, you may believe that if it's artistic, you can't possibly have anything to contribute. I kid you not - you

are wrong.

Having been unfortunate enough not to take part in last year's TIMELESS!, I couldn't understand what all the buzz was about - the orange (now purple) hoodies, friends whom were taken up by rehearsals - until I finally watched the show at Sadlers' Wells Theatre. If anything, the excitement of all those taking part was euphemistic. Witnessing this display of sheer talent and brilliance within the LSE convinced me, and many others that this show was a gem to be revered and brought to the spotlight where it belongs.

A great part of the LSE is made of micro-cultures, in other words, groups of friends that have far too many things in common. In our efforts to fit in, many of us will inherently (and somewhat unknowingly) associate ourselves with those from a similar background - by sharing the same nationality, heritage, or sometimes even more inconspicuously, by joining groups where we are likely to find like-minded people, be it the Rugby or the European Society. While this is a natural behaviour, by doing this we often forget the simple things that unite us. We fail to consider the context of each individual,

and how underneath that very context we are still only people, each with our own histories, dreams and aspirations.

This is where the timelessness of TIMELESS! sets in. By bringing its participants out of their comfort zones and making them perform in the spotlight, it gives them the opportunity to "branch out" and learn from themselves.

Your hidden talent is dancing the kizomba or singing the blues? You think you'd be too scared to get up on stage? You are an expert salesman? If you want to get up from your seat and contribute to this unique experience - this is for you.

If you are interested in getting involved, just get hold of anyone wearing a purple t-shirt or hoodie around LSE, sign up to find out more about TIMELESS!, join the Facebook group, or more importantly, come to find out more on Thursday 8th October at 6pm in D302 on when to audition and how to get involved.





Cherie Leung and Ronan Haughton present the newly refurbished **Quad**, **Tuns** and the **Underground**.



SHABBY!

## YOUR BRAND NEW UNION HANG OUT



SPANKING NEW!



Ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country

Are you an aspiring **photojournalist** or budding **paparazzo**?

Email **photo@thebeaveronline.co.uk**



**AU Top Trumps**      **How To Play**


To effectively sum up the AU in words would take a level of literary talent far in excess of that possessed by your humble editors. Thus we have plumped for a format which has successfully delivered nuggets of useless information to people across the world for nearly forty years.

The game is simple. Deal out the cards, each player having an equal share. The L.A.D #\* is used to decide who begins. The person with the highest L.A.D score on the card which finds itself at the top of their pile is free to pick a category from the remaining four. The person with the highest score in said category retains their own card and takes that of their opponent, these are then placed at the bottom of their pile. This player can then choose the next category which will be contested. The game is over when one player possesses all the cards.


\* L.A.D stands for Lovely Athletic Daughter in homage to Caster Semenya's incredible performance in the 800m at the World Athletics Championships.

Enjoy!

**Charlie Glyn**      **President**



Former netball 1st team captain of German descent. Given she has just returned from China expect an authoritarian regime.

Banter	9
Intellect	5
Sporting Prowess	10
Bangability	8
L.A.D #	

**Nadir Gohar**      **Secretary**



Carrying out the AU degree after failing his first year due to time spent promoting various R n B nights. Watch out for Leading 1.

Banter	10
Intellect	1
Sporting Prowess	10
Bangability	10
L.A.D #	

**The Tuns**      **SU Bar/Big Brother Set**



Has undergone a revamp over the summer which features a chalk board and Ikea furniture. AU Legends abound; Gully and Bondy.

Banter	10
Intellect	5
Sporting Prowess	3
Bangability	0
L.A.D #	


**Reef**      **Alcopop**




Great tippie whether you've gone for the bottle or the pint. The symbol of everything great about wednesday nights

Banter	8
Intellect	3
Sporting Prowess	2
Bangability	5
L.A.D #	


**Berrylands**      **Fortress**




Where dreams are made and shattered. Look out for groundsman Steve and his Rupert Grintesq helper.

Banter	10
Intellect	1
Sporting Prowess	5
Bangability	2
L.A.D #	

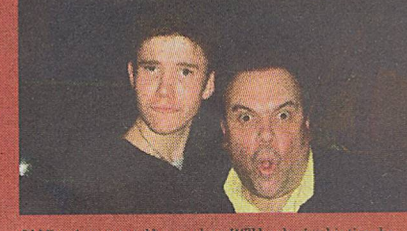
**Rees Sutton**      **Social Secretary**




Winner of the inaugural Mr LSE beauty pageant. Owner of the finest abbs and fastest legs in the entire AU.

Banter	7
Intellect	8
Sporting Prowess	9
Bangability	10
L.A.D #	

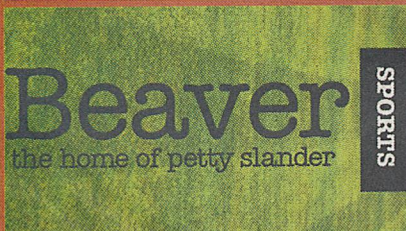
**Tom Jacques**      **Treasurer**




Old Etonian east end barrow boy. Will be sharing his time between managing AU coffers and stewarding the Football 1st.

Banter	10
Intellect	7
Sporting Prowess	9
Bangability	6
L.A.D #	


**Beaver Sports**      **Banter Merchant**



Commonly regarded as the most esoteric and controversial sports section of any student newspaper.

Banter	10
Intellect	10
Sporting Prowess	2
Bangability	10
L.A.D #	

**Robin Lowe**      **SU Comms/Oath**



Did a Harry Redknapp by defecting from the AU to the SU. Generally incompetent.

Banter	0
Intellect	0
Sporting Prowess	0
Bangability	0
L.A.D #	

**Hannah Davies**      **Liaisons**




This blonde brummy bombshell is responsible for inter club relations. Works very closely with the AU Comms officer.

Banter	8
Intellect	6
Sporting Prowess	9
Bangability	8
L.A.D #	

**Zoo Bar**      **Nightclub**



Named due to its tendency to attract animals of all kinds. Jury is still out on whether it trumps Walkabout.

Banter	10
Intellect	1
Sporting Prowess	1
Bangability	10
L.A.D #	

**Rob Fenton**      **Communications**



Not the most incompetent Rob with the word communications in their job title, although it's very close. Popularly known as Fents.

Banter	2
Intellect	4
Sporting Prowess	8
Bangability	3
L.A.D #	


**Walkabout**      **Nightclub**




Replaced by Zoo Bar as the Wednesday night venue of choice by the 08/09 AU Exec. Pint of Reef is a must have for all revellers.

Banter	9
Intellect	4
Sporting Prowess	6
Bangability	8
L.A.D #	

**St Phillips**      **Medical Centre**



The place to go to get your regular STI check up, essential if you go bareback with any of women's rugby.

Banter	2
Intellect	10
Sporting Prowess	3
Bangability	1
L.A.D #	

**John & Rudy**      **Karaoke Specialists**



Provide endless entertainment every Wednesday in the Tuns. Rumours of paedophilia remain unsubstantiated.

Banter	7
Intellect	2
Sporting Prowess	2
Bangability	2
L.A.D #	



# Sport



## Football 1sts Earn Big Bucs

Hot favourites Brighton are undone by the team now being dubbed the Holborn Heroes

Rob Fenton  
LSEFC Club Captain

Wednesday 25th March. A crisp morning met the LSE 1st XI as they congregated outside Wrights Bar with a healthy spread of bacon sandwiches, washed down with Lucozade. Tension was in the air as they awaited their vessel to ferry them to the inaugural BUCS Southeast Cup Final. The last game of the season for the LSE 1st XI saw them take on hot favourites Brighton at the Sussex County Football Ground.

They were coming up against a team from the league above who had yet to taste the bitterness of defeat in any competition. The odds were further stacked against the team as they arrived at the ground to find that Brighton had brought a large crowd of support, predominantly made up of BA Grass with Football Studies students who were out on a "Fieldwork" course. With only a few WAGS and family members in attendance for the LSE boys, it was sure to be an uphill struggle. However, despite the Brighton contingent looking suitably professional in their coordinated tracksuits, the first team's immaculate suits were winning a smattering of defectors.

A typically rousing speech from skipper Edward Healy preceded the game which incited such memorable giant killing acts as when Wimbledon defeated Liverpool in 1988 and when a small boy called David picked up a sling. The team went out full of belief, hope, and desire, safe in the knowledge that the non-English speaking central midfielder Alex Casimo was at least 200 miles away.

Three o'clock arrived and the match finally kicked off. Immediately evident was that the midfield battle was going to be decisive, whichever side produced the greater grit and determination in the middle of the pitch was surely going to prove victorious (Casimo's absence was praised once more).

The ground was hard making the pitch difficult to play on and this together with a strong wind caused the football to be edgy at best for both teams. However, with two minutes to go in the first half, centre back Rob Low clearly thought the game

was a little too comfortable and needed to be spiced up. So he gave away a penalty. Thankfully Lowster's blushes were spared as the penalty was skewed wide.

At half time there was a real sense that we could win the cup. The team were buoyed by the feeling that there was not just the trophy at stake, but the Healy family's footballing legacy. There was thus a duty to perform. And we did.

Fantastic effort and commitment from every single player on the pitch meant we edged ever closer to extra-time with the scores still even. Both teams appeared keen to avoid the overtime period at the end of a long season and every ounce of energy was expounded in attempting to finish the bout in regulation.

A well won penalty from Brazilian import Tiago gave top scorer Tricky Dicky Roberts the chance to score and surely send the dazzling trophy to Holborn. As the ball nestled in the net the home fans fell silent while the travelling support burst into raptures, cheering with the effect of thousands.

Despite Brighton's chivalrous efforts, the strong mentality and an unprecedented team spirit forged by the passion of our captain (call me Ed) Healy meant the trophy was LSE's.

The tournament victory was the icing on the cake for the season and a perfect way to bid farewell to such first team stalwarts as Joseph Knoertzer and Michael Maynard (the loss of his member has left a hole that no man can fill, except maybe Chris Liu).

Don't ask me to recount tales of our celebrations, for I can't remember as needless to say I was lashed.

The LSEFC is not just a football club, at LSE it is a way of life. It will lead you to form some of your strongest friendships and it will also bring some welcome escape from the confines of the LSE library.

Don't fret that the facilities at Berrylands are located outside the city. The journey there is simply all part of the experience and the facilities are fantastic.

I guarantee that by the end of your three years at LSE you will find the football, the lash, and the banter more rewarding than a whole three years of lectures. By becoming a member of the Football Club, you would be joining the most prestigious group of LSE students at this university.



Photo: Monika Hargitai

**Champions:** (Above, from left to right) Rugeroni, Tiago, Todorov, Frenchie, Fisher, Farrar, Monty, Jacquesy, Maynard, Healy, Low, Fenton, Liu, Roberts, Knoertzer, Gurpreet. Brian Healy (right) was too emotional to join in the celebrations.

If you are adamant that opposition universities can't afford you, that their mothers clean for yours, and if you really, really hate Holloway, then this is for you. By joining you are agreeing to enjoy the best banter and the best lash available in the UK. And, of course, the loveliest girls will be chomping at the bit (literally) to be seen with a member of the FC.

Come and check our stall out at the Orientation Fair on Tuesday or Wednesday to find out more about the club, and when our trials take place. If you have any queries please contact me by email at [r.j.fenton@lse.ac.uk](mailto:r.j.fenton@lse.ac.uk) or on my mobile 07506744869. Remember... 7 teams 1 FC.



## Reasons to join the AU

Alice Pelton  
Sports Editor

1. Initiations and Welcome party - this will be in the next few weeks, and will provide ample opportunity to scout out any fresh talent. The initiations aren't anything too scary - the hockey girls try a bit of apple-bobbing in vodka. Then everyone gets into fancy dress and you spend the night meeting people that you'll probably never see again.

2. Karaoke - not only does the AU get total domination over the Tuns every Wednesday, but two blokes by the names of Rudy and John set up a little karaoke machine. Rob Low's demolition of 'Never ever' by All Saints instantly comes to mind.

3. The men are fit - where else at LSE do you find 'the lads'? If you're looking to date a footballer make sure you secure a spot in one of the many netball teams.

4. The girls are fit - One word: Spitroast.

5. The Carol - this is a special Christmas piss-up at the end of term. Rumour has it this age-old LSE tradition began with Sir Howard Davies himself dutifully being tied to the youngest Rugby fresher, downing a pint on stage in the Quad, and then running all over campus, whilst being hotly pursued by the whole of the AU. Then, a few years back something awkward happened at Kings - so these days, the Carol is a slightly more timid affair - all the teams

dress up and converge on a dirty bondage club. Drinking tends to start at 10am.

6. Au Ball - usually turns out to be like any other Wednesday night. Only this time you end up grinding someone wearing a pretty dress.

7. Calella - This is the AU's annual Easter holiday trip to Spain, where hundreds of students converge upon a desolate shit hole just outside of Barcelona, and indulge in unlimited, yes unlimited, drinking for 4 nights. If you can survive the coach journey down there then Calella is definitely worth a visit.

8. Hustings - As the year draws to a close, various AU members will start battling it out to be your new 'Exec'. Watch in horror as they get up on stage and do practically anything to secure your vote including shouting at their opponents (Effy Osoba).

9. Family - Once you've joined the AU you will spend the next few years suckling at the teet of its proverbial boob. Speak to anyone who's in the AU and all will speak of how in a city of millions, and a university of...well not that many interesting/normal people... the AU provides a welcome sanctuary.

10. Oh yeah, the sport. We may be an inner-city, small and albeit under-funded cohort of this grand institution, but our sports teams actually manage to win something every now and then. Join the AU now, and be a part of something to be proud of.

## Going The Extra Mile

Sam Tempest Keeping  
Sports Editor

This summer break an LSE Student has demonstrated how even the coldest and most adverse conditions are no match for those with a warm heart.

MSc Politics and Communication graduate Kyle Taylor demonstrated both mental and physical fortitude as he braved icy temperatures in the waters of Dover harbour, completing a marathon 25 mile swim. The undertaking was in aid of the Harvey Parry Appeal Fund. Harvey was left severely disabled after contracting meningitis in 2006 when he was a mere 15 months old. The fund aims to raise money in order to allow Harvey to live "the fullest and most complete life possible".

The event was not without its hitches. Originally the plan was for Kyle to swim across the Channel to Calais, accompanied all the while by his support team in a pilot vessel. Alas the weather gods conspired against the group as strong winds prevented them from taking to the water.

Unfortunately the next scheduled date which would've provided the correct circumstances for another attempt fell a full month away. Unperturbed Kyle opted to swim an equivalent distance around the

harbour, sacrificing the glory of becoming one of just over 800 people to swim this famous stretch of water, and in the process raising an extra \$3000 for the Appeal Fund.

However we should not underestimate the magnitude of this undertaking. He had to spend a full nine hours in the water as the temperature dipped below 15° Celsius. Winds also reached nearly forty miles an hour at some points. And as Kyle rightly says the only difference from swimming the Channel was that "he started, and finished, on a beach in England."

Speaking after the event Kyle exclaimed "It was so amazing to do it surrounded by family and friends. As many Channel swim regulars have said: this whole experience can be life-changing, and it has been for me as well." "Somewhere along the way it stopped being about getting to France for me and started being about sharing this journey with everyone in my life, beating the cold water and doing all I could to help Harvey run."

The swim raised a total of \$10,000 which will go to ensuring that Harvey can share in most basic acts, such as walking and running, that we all sometimes take for granted.

If you would like to donate to the Appeal Fund yourself then please visit <http://www.harveyparry-appealfund.com>.

the home of petty slander

# BEAVER

SPORTS





**PART 8**



# 29.09.09

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# EDITORIAL

Welcome to the first PartB of the new year! With a new co-editor, new ideas, and a healthy dose of happiness the PartB team is refreshed, rejuvenated, and ready to go - fresh from our summer holidays. (We say we - what we really mean is that Graeme made it back to London, Julian is still 'on the beach' somewhere in Iran or Turkey as "we" write this).

As for the first issue, some major shout outs are definitely in order to recognise those lovely people who gave up a small chunk of their summers to get this show on the road. In no particular order: Calum Young, Andreas Demetri, Angela Chow, Liam McLaughlin, Cathy Druce, Sophie Marmott, Louisa Evans, Marion Koob, Amie Rogers, Ahmed Peerbux, Ruby Buckley, Megan Jones - you are all beautiful. A major high-five is in the post to each of you. Finally, a big thank you to PartB defector Sachin Patel for answering all the ridiculous questions that new editors can have. Sachin, there is a pat on the back in the post alongside your high-five.

We've got quite a few section editorial positions open at the moment, and we're constantly looking for enthusiastic, lovely people to contribute and write for us. Drop us a note at [thebeaver.partb@googlemail.com](mailto:thebeaver.partb@googlemail.com) and get involved.

Much love,

Graeme Birrell & Julian Boys

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# LETTERS

Dear Julian and Graeme,

I'm worried about starting uni at LSE. I went on holiday to Tenerife this summer with my friends, and on the last day I fell asleep on the beach in the sun. My 'mates' decided it would be funny to only put suntan cream on one side of my face. Now I look like a cross between Two-Face from Batman, and a botched plastic surgery job and I'm worried about how this will cause people to react during Fresher's Week. Do you have any advice for me? Or alternatively can I just curl up in a ball and live in the sanctuary that is the space under the PartB desk until this tan fades?

Please help,

Mitchell McMitchellson



# YOU ARE A SPONGE

MARION KOOB CAN SUM UP YOUR LIFE IN ONE PAGE

The reasons are fairly clear. The London School of Economics is after all a viable ecosystem in the dimensions of habitat and nourishment. Unfortunately, as in all places, many predators roam about. Resisting them- and those who have turned to the dark side of the sponge world is and will be for most a priority during their time at LSE.

By the term sponge, I refer to your brain; aside that the textures in physical terms are somewhat resembling (screams of indignation from those with a medical interest), the functions also parallel. Whilst a sponge soaks up nutrients and liquids, your brain absorbs knowledge and skills, which enable you to grow as a human being (amphibious creature).

But why bother utilizing these functions? As mentioned above, London is full of predating distractions and discouragements. And why the use of a bizarre metaphor to convey a moralistic (and much heard before) message?

Because the LSE shoal is suffering from a severe virus, known as careeritus. This causes irremediable damage to knowledge's sex-appeal. The effects of careeritus show themselves through many symptoms, including an unquenchable passion for the banking sector, a sentiment of religious fervor towards Goldman-Sachs, an obsession for wordy positions and titles in the SU or any society, and the tendency to see all social interaction as networking.

The symptoms of careeritus are not the elements which make LSE life unique, as the illness may mislead you to believe. On the contrary, these symptoms seem to spread at an ever faster rate across academic environments- the LSE is only one of the worst hit areas. To narrow down its definition, careeritus is the loss of focus in sponge nurture in favor of these alternative activities. Students no longer seek to learn as a goal, but rather, as a means or an excuse to attain the terminal condition of careeritus: the gold-digging job. In very severe clinical cases, this employment is neither enjoyed nor fulfilling; it simply earns cash.

Hence, the reefs of the library are not inhabited because of an unstoppable will to enrich your s p o n g y

substance, but rather to seek the quick satisfactions which this virus provides. In the activity of networking, for instance, the feeling of success brushing you by becomes addictive. The intent to grab onto it, and never let it go only grows as one progress through the stages of the disease. In essence, careeritus distracts you from the reason as to why you are here in the first place; to learn.

And in my exhortation against Careeritus, I shall show you how, by ridding yourself of the disease, you will be a much happier and fulfilled individual.

Primarily, these are the last years in your life during which your brain has the opportunity to exert its absorption capacities to the fullest extent. Never again (unless you become an academic) will your day to day 'official' purpose be to enrich your mind. In other words, these years are your last chance to dedicate entirely to the improvement of your person. In future times, this will be forced onto the side of your working life.

(As an aspiring social scientist, I now require an ethical parenthesis. I must here list my assumptions; that you will not resume your studies in mid-life, and that your financial conditions will require to you work until your sixties... etc. Let us agree that for most of us this will not be the case.)

Secondly, seeing the whole world as a means to an end (and the question should well be, which end?) and calculating one's moves on the basis of what a relationship can bring you and how much credit you will obtain by doing something on your resume- is a rather depressing way of considering life. It indeed may lead to a form of satisfaction likely to be temporary, and complacency towards your ability to work the universe in your favor. Yet in the end by disregarding everything to build yourself a shimmering career, you will become disillusioned. If relationships, hobbies and studying are there only to be used, is anything of true worth? The lonely cynic is not a place

which many would envy.

Third, why should your mind be devoted during your student life towards a task (a job in the banking sector) which you will spend many years of your life doing anyhow? In choosing to opt out of Careeritus, your behavior can remain the same- or very similar. Indeed, we all need to prepare ourselves for future employment and the labour market's selection process. But on the other hand, it is also possible to reconcile with the fact that your time at university is a time to acquire knowledge- and instead of just passing exams, you should gobble up as much as you can, whilst you can. Take your experiences for what they are, not what they may be used for.

However, it must be said that I am a rather idealistic sponge. Perhaps, my knowledge-embracing outlook is a waste of time; after all, it may be argued that what is of no practical use to you has no worth. Naturally, this doesn't stand; the case of Art being only the most blatant example. What's more, idealistic is what students are supposed to be. We are meant to want to change the world overnight, to yearn for peace and a green planet. If the young already give up the fight in the name of money, then who will take it on? Careeritus steals this precious determination from us and tosses it aside as soon as investment banks set stall on Houghton street.

The LSE ecosystem, and indeed, the university context in general are wonderful for all that it imparts: life-skills, interesting experiences, a chance to interact with individuals from all over the world, and a solid preparation to the 'beyond' of work.

Take advantage of it, and soak the knowledge up.





# AGAINST SINISTER PERFECTIONISM

CALUM YOUNG IS ON THE HUNT FOR A UTOPIAN SOCIETY

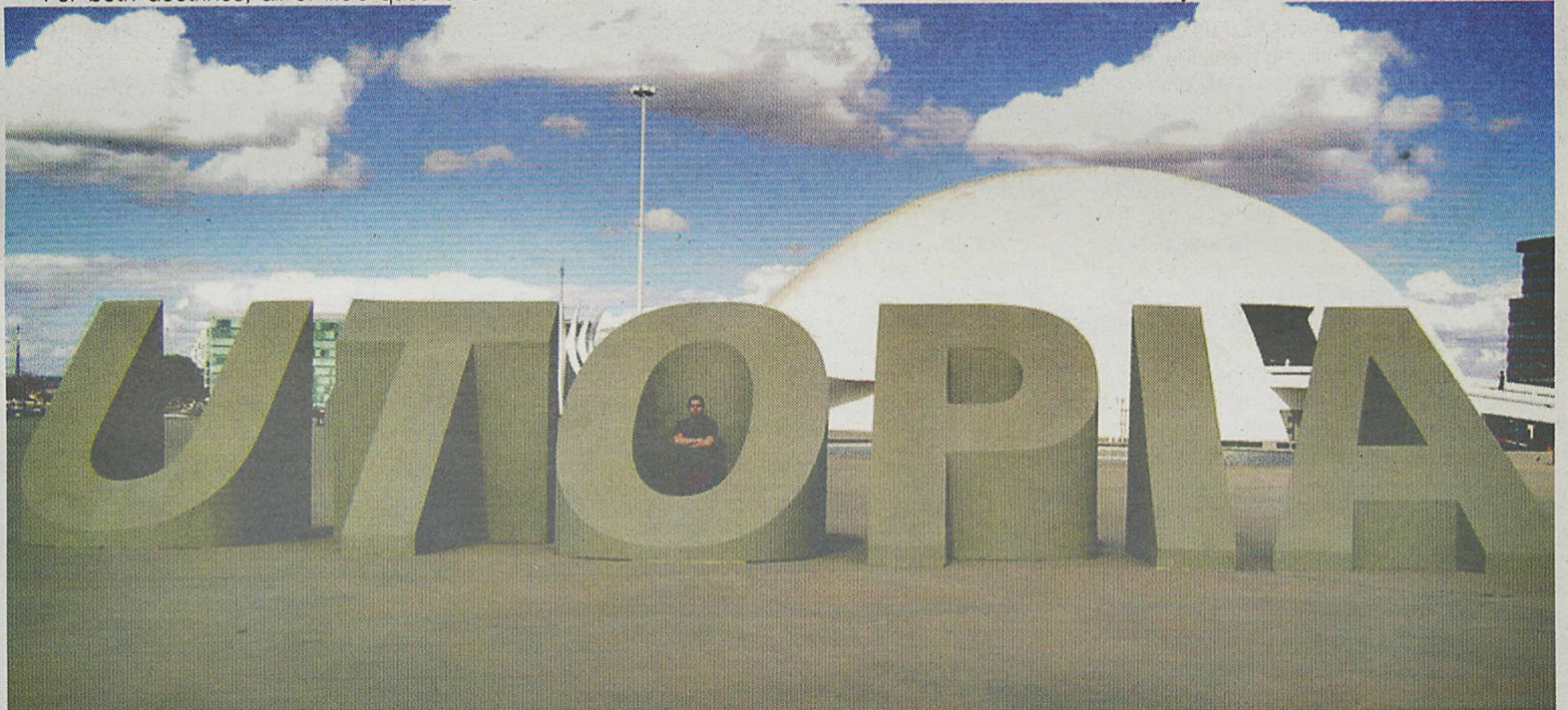
The last century was dominated by two ideologies which claimed they knew how to obtain perfection within human societies. Both Fascism and Communism offered devotees an idyllic synthesis which would eradicate our mundane problems and ultimately free us to live happy lives. In the societies they promised, all members would live in peace, love one another and be free from physical danger. Men and women would escape work of a degrading nature and want of any kind, whilst injustice and frustration would be conspicuously absent.

For both doctrines, all of life's questions

age suggests that mankind has regressed from the ideal to the imperfect. Scholars in the 19th century held classical studies in the highest esteem because they felt since the Greeks mankind had regressed. Christianity and Judaism also held that perfection existed before some great flood or an act of original sin. It has been argued that the high take-up of Marxism amongst Jewish intellectuals was the result of a displaced messianic impulse which Judaism and Marxism have in common. What is important here is not whether Utopia was present in the past, or to be realised in the future, but rather that it was in principle possible.

ideas are merely incompatible.

This is the crux of the perfectionist's dilemma. There are many different ends that men may seek and still be rational yet which cannot coexist. For example, a society may seek to provide liberty for its citizens and social justice. Two noble goals, yet are they not mutually exclusive? Indeed, total liberty for the gifted and powerful is not compatible with a decent existence for the weak and unfortunate. In real terms this might mean an increase in taxes on the few in return for greater social justice for the many. However it would be a perversion of language to believe that no one's liberty would suffer as a result.



had one true answer. It was as if all the pieces of a desirable society could be fitted together as though assembling a great cosmic jigsaw, with the end result constituting perfection. As such those who believe in a socio-political system which perfects humanity reduce political philosophy to a mathematical equation or a grand scientific experiment. For the perfectionist political institutions, economic systems and modes of being can all be calibrated to produce one ideal. The great question - how do we organise societies? - has one answer.

This belief in a form of societal perfection was far from new. Plato, of whom it is said all western Philosophy is footnotes, argued that giving the most intellectually able members of society control could create an ideal world. Similarly the metaphysical thinkers of the 17th century maintained that through looking beyond the human sphere we could find the answers to it. Whilst 18th century empiricists felt through using natural sciences and reason we could order the pieces of society, ultimately one correct whole.

Interestingly whilst the aforementioned philosophers thought the perfect society lay in the future, other thinkers felt it resided in the past. Rousseau's homage to the noble sav-

As well as being contagious, perfectionism is also sinister. If, as in the sciences all of life's questions have one true answer, the other ways of being must be necessarily errors. This logical step underlines the illiberal nature of belief in the ideal. The totalitarian mindset is prepared to maintain grave injustices in the present, under the illusion that ultimate happiness will result. Those whose world view does not coexist with the one right answer, as most surely would not, should accordingly be silenced. An ideal society, in which all members are liberated, is the necessary precondition for 'forcing people to be free'. The epithet which starts the manifesto of every tyrant.

For the most part philosophers differed in their path towards the ideal, but not in its belief. However, another current of thought, holds that there is no single correct answer to the way we should live, rather that there are multiple different rational and good societies. The providence of this idea is difficult to track down. However it can be found in the text of Machiavelli. Looking beyond his power politics and the self-help guide to leadership, Machiavelli points out that Christian values and realpolitik are incompatible, yet he condemns neither. Rather he acknowledges that the two

This was a revolution in thought and it shattered the perfectionists' ideal. Everything is what it is; justice is justice, equality is equality, democracy is democracy and liberty is liberty. These may all be desirable characteristics to have in a society, yet they cannot all coexist. It is as though the jigsaw which the perfectionist saw as fitting together neatly, in fact has pieces which do not fit with others. An ideal world is thus impossibility.

At the core of this philosophy is the acknowledgement that all serious political choice is painful. In the real world all good things do not coexist and we are doomed to choose, suffering irreparable loss as we do so. The acceptance of these trade-offs and the acceptance of the genuine sacrifice involved in building a society was brought to philosophical maturity by Isaiah Berlin, who termed it Pluralism. Put simply, Berlin argued that there are many reasonable ways that a society can be constructed; there is no one right answer. In view of the sinister side of perfectionism it's no surprise that Berlin as well as demolishing the possibility of the ideal was also one of the foremost advocates of liberalism throughout the later 20th century.



# FUTURISM

## CALUM YOUNG HAS AN ENTHUSIASM FOR THE ABYSS

Ultimately time normalises everything and we become accustomed all that we have. The worst excesses of our lives become accepted and the very best and happiest developments become boring and mundane. Sometimes, even increasing material comfort, stability and reason fall out of fashion in favour of violence, instinct and explosion. 'Only war' wrote the Italian Futurist Filippo Marinetti 'knows how to rejuvenate, accelerate and sharpen the human intelligence, to make more joyful and air the nerves, to liberate us from the weight of daily burdens, to give savour to life and talent to imbeciles'. That same individual penned the Futurist manifesto in 1909, which gave rise to an artistic movement which encompassed architecture, painting and Sculpture. Futurism went on to influence the art we now call 'modern' throughout the rest of the century, but as an art movement it was also politicised in its early days. It went on to form incestuous links through its people and ideas to European Fascism.

The Futurist- Fascist relationship was easily struck. Futurism was a violent reaction against history, tradition and nature. It celebrated man's boldness and his ability to create intellectually and physically what radically differed from the natural world. Violence and energy were in, compassion and idleness were out. Futurism was fundamentally about doing rather than thinking, it was a school of art which glorified in output and outward signs of greatness. As a movement it was only interested in man at his greatest, that is when he was able to look down on those around him and realise he had 'achieved more'. This view was articulated beautifully by the writer the later Libertarian writer Ayn Rand when she said 'it is precisely

because I love man so much, that I hate the vast weak majority of our species'. Outward me - diocrity was a definite no-no.

Thus War, for the Futurists, as well as for an increasing part of Europe's youthful bourgeoisie in the early 20th century was something looked upon enthusiastically. It gave the strong the opportunity to rise, and implored man to be at his most active and aggressive. Presumably, it was this same group which cheered in 1914, and which lay silenced, like satiated Vampires, at the eventual torrents of blood which were spilled by that conflict. Certainly, when Italy joined the war in 1915, young Futurists from the movement's spiritual home rushed to enlist. They were only too eager to end the passivity of routine. Likewise following the conflict, in Italy Marinetti's futurist political party was absorbed willingly into Benito Mussolini's Fasci's de Combattimento. It must be one of history's greatest regrets that Fascists did not allow themselves to be stylised by futurists -the Gestapo could have benefited from a brighter wardrobe.

So what led an otherwise nice set of European boys to call for the destruction of the social and political system they lived in? That is after-all, what a desire for war is. Whatever it was, it was not material hardship. The pre-war decades were kind to Europe's bourgeoisie; they enjoyed new found social mobility and new employment opportunities within the rapidly expanding tertiary sector. Whilst for those at the top of society business was also booming. This was the belle-epoque for multi-millionaires, characterised by John D Rockefeller's apocryphal remark when told JP Morgan had left \$80Million, 'And we all thought he was rich'.

If not inspired by material discomfort, the desire for destruction within the European bourgeois world can be explained by Germany's new found prominence within the early 20th century world. Following unification it enjoyed a 'second industrial revolution' replete with massive urbanisation and economic growth. Just as German goods entered foreign markets its cultural ideas also flooded into Europe. Its middle class culture had never been liberal. Germany never saw eye-to-eye with the rational stability of the French enlightenment and reacted against with its own intellectual movement Romanticism. All this from a state which had been formed by war in 1871 and which thus thought of war in terms of birth rather than death. German ideals were centred on emotion rather

than reason and the intemperate power of human will; in short, ideas which

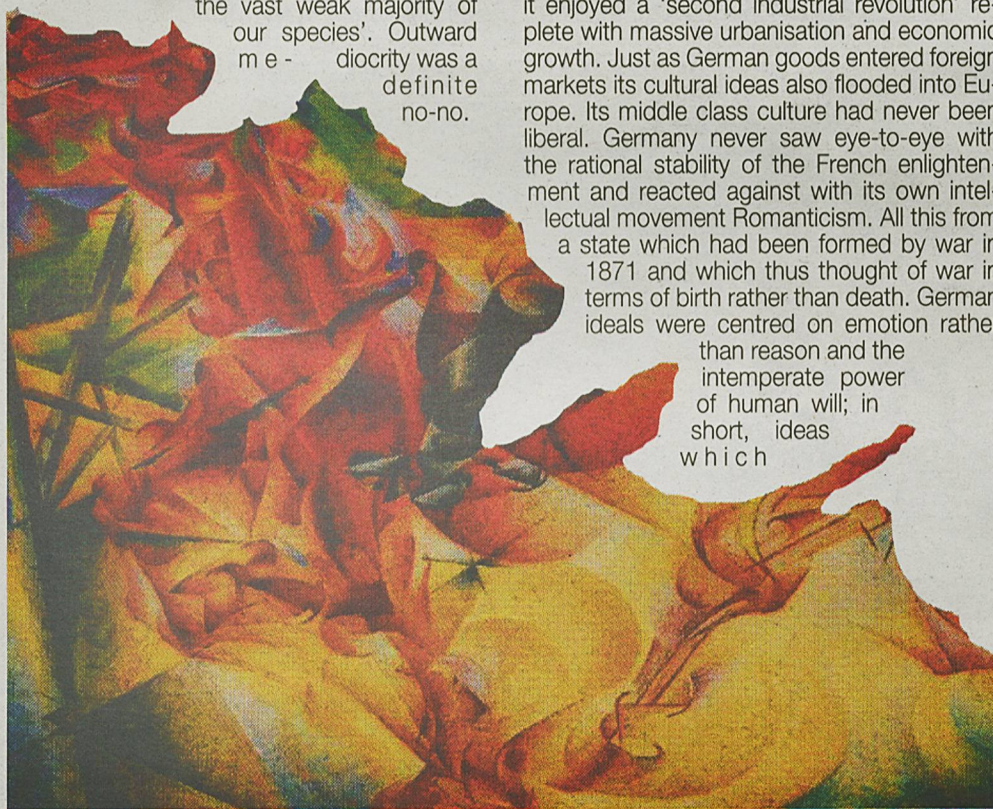
were a product of the Romantic age not the Enlightenment.

From these roots Futurism came to maintain that brutality and progress are natural bedfellows. Thus it shares a great deal in common with Marx, he of the eternal platitude that 'war is the locomotive of change'. But progress is not always violent or brutal, nor need it be. History, and in particular British History, is marked by revolutions which were peaceful. It cannot be said that peaceful change denotes evolution whilst violence indicates revolution. Indeed, it is one of the hallmarks of Democracy that vast sudden change can take place without loss of life, a point the futurists never grasped.

Futurism's belief in the power of man is well founded, yet its understanding of what makes man great is warped. Certainly, man's greatest gift is the ability to think. And thought is an intensely private and solitary occupation, no great thinker worked as part of a team or a community. Yet moments of individual genius are only part of man's brilliance. Rather we can look to our compassion, and ability to relate to our fellow man as achievements which are just as great as those of individual triumph. This is a different type of thought and a different example of excellence to that which the Futurists idealise.

Futurism's failings in philosophy are also its failings in art. No Futurist work attempts to capture human emotion or what it really is that makes us who we are. Its ideas of greatness are not even skin deep, as a style of art futurism finishes where the skin begins. This is because it is interested solely in what people do rather than who they are. As such Futurism is inherently incapable of producing great art because emotion is art's foremost duty. It should distil what we feel, whether it be hate, love, avarice or terror. Futurism in contrast is solely concerned with outward displays of greatness. Unlike a Rembrandt say, it is not bothered with the squalor of self or the collection of weaknesses which make up every human being. Rather Futurism's greatest compliment to man is to depict him as a successful machine, which is purposeful and powerful - but not necessarily complex or vexed by existence. Perhaps this is what success entails in its purest form, the annihilation of thought, but if it is, then it is a counterpoint to our humanity not its apotheosis.

Futurism also poses the question, is war a natural human state? Known History would seem to suggest that it is. That there are always conflicts, over resources, over religion, or and this is the Futurists' wider point, because it is something individuals find invigorating. But if this is so, we are on a remarkably good run at the moment. For European citizens there has rarely been a more peaceful period of history, we have basked in the stability and reason which the Futurists came to despise. My generation and my parent's generation have never experienced the all consuming terror of total war. The end of the 20th century and the early 21st century has so far been a time of unmatched peace and prosperity, whilst at the same time secure representative government has been enjoyed. This is a reality which, whilst mundane, is still a cause for applause.





# THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

MEGAN JONES ASKS WHAT WAR CAN DO FOR ART

The most well-known artistic reaction to the horrors of the Spanish Civil War is Picasso's *Guernica*. Picasso who had publicly sided with the Republican cause, sought to convey the destruction inflicted upon the Basque town of Guernica by the German and Italian warplanes in support of Franco. There are numerous varying interpretations of Picasso's *Guernica*: the use of sombre colours to express pain and chaos, flaming buildings and crumbling walls, that not only express the destruction of Guernica, but also the destructive power of civil war, and the broken sword in the painting symbolising the defeat of the people at the hand of their tormentors. However, although *Guernica* was painted as a reaction to the suffering inflicted upon innocent people in Guernica, it has become much more than that. *Guernica* expresses the tragedies of war and the suffering it inflicts upon individuals, especially innocent civilians. It is a painting that has gained a monumental status, becoming a perpetual reminder of the tragedies of war and an embodiment of peace.

Salvador Dalí also turned his attention to the social and political tragedy that had beset his homeland in paintings such as *Autumn Cannibalism* and *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans (Premonition of Civil War)*. In these paintings Dalí updated his earlier obsessions with cannibalistic mutilation and putrefaction to conjure up his own nightmarish vision of Spain on the brink of self-destruction. However, Dalí's response to the Spanish Civil War was very different to that of Picasso: Dalí's message is far more ambiguous and apolitical, reflecting his belief that the Spanish Civil War was an inevitable occurrence involving instinctual forces, a "phenomenon of natural history",

rather than a political event in which one had to take sides. Dalí adopted the clinical detachment of a scientist or neutral observer who does not flinch from representing the rotting stench of a decomposing body as a metaphor for his country's inexorable slide into internecine combat. The artist believed that his savage image of Spain ripping itself apart foretold the reciprocal killings on both sides in this bloody conflict, as he later explained: "the Spanish corpse was soon to let the world know what its guts smelled like."

However not all artists were willing to remain neutral whilst Franco increased his Fascist stranglehold on Spain: Joan Miró produced a powerful series of eight small scale etchings known as the "Black and Red Series", in response to the agonies and horrors of the Civil War. The series, signs and symbols in black and blood red on white backgrounds, conveys the forces of war and oppression. The second print, and one of the closest to realism, depicts a family of three fragile figures, menaced by an ogre's head, an icon of Franco with what seem to be horns for ears. Whilst the rest of the series is more complex: the horizontal and vertical plates are manipulated to create a bewildering web of biomorphic forms that reflect the horror and mutilation in a manner not dissimilar to that of Goya's "Disasters of War" almost 200 years earlier. However, Miró also took part in more direct propaganda for the Republican cause: in 1937 he produced a poster, showing a Catalan peasant raising a defiant fist with the slogan "Help Spain", to raise money for the Republicans.

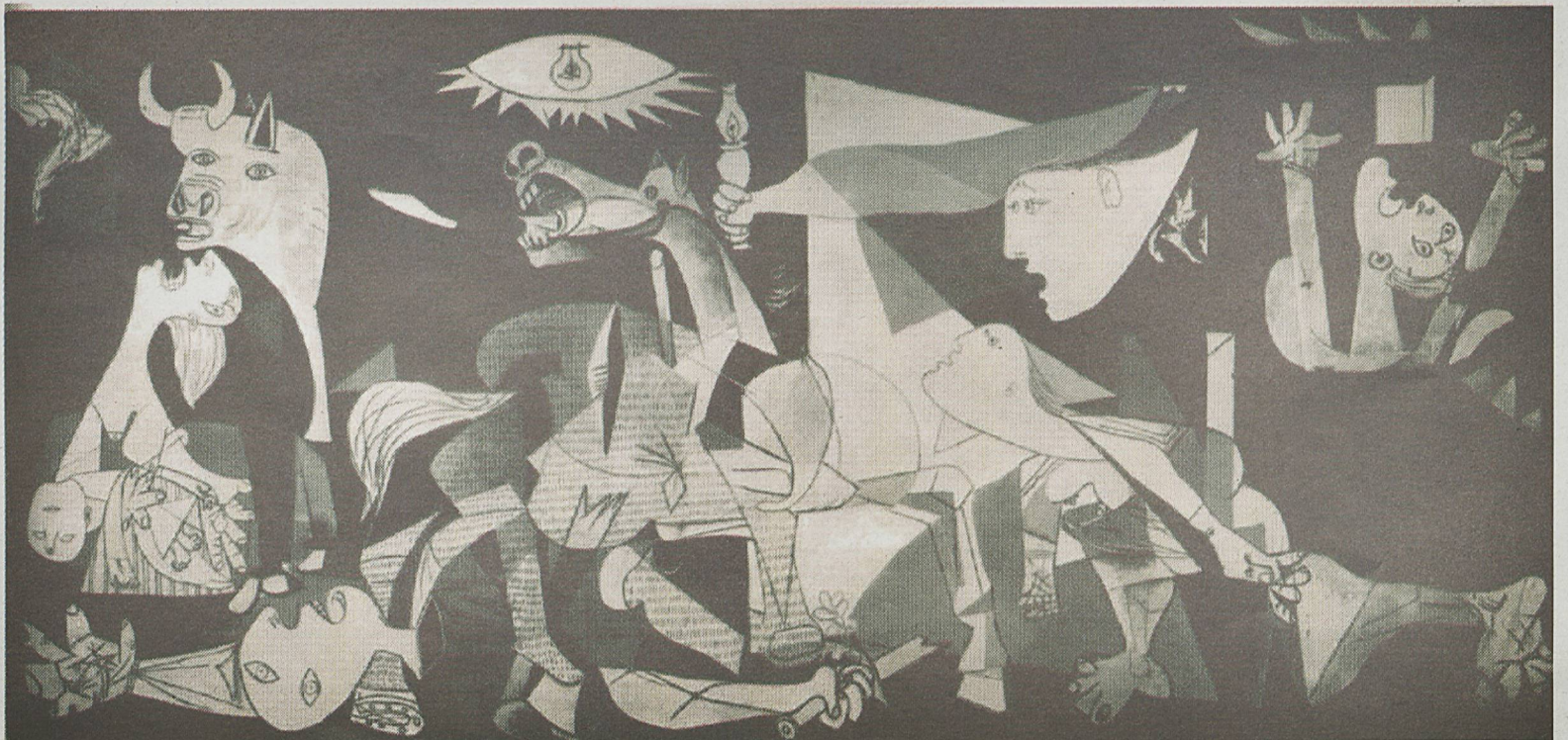
Many artists, not merely Miró alone, volunteered their skills for the Ministry of Propaganda and the Committee for the De-

fence of Madrid.

George Orwell commented in his first hand account of the Spanish Civil War, *Homage to Catalonia*, that on his arrival in Barcelona: "The revolutionary posters were everywhere, flaming from the walls in clean reds and blues that made the few remaining advertisements look like daubs of mud."

The Catalan poster artist Carles Fontseré described how the artists' union would meet with the militias while fighting continued on the streets of Barcelona. The artists who volunteered their labour designed posters without interference from the militias, political parties or trade unions, who merely added their initials, emblems or slogans before sending the finished product to the printing presses. The Republican government used posters printed in Spanish, French and English to advertise the desperate plight of the Republic, encouraging volunteers from outside Spain to join the International Brigade and fight Fascism. These posters by pre-eminent artists such as the Communist artist Josep Renau, illustrate the dynamics of a debate about the efficacy of a committed political art that was as aware of avant-garde, expressionist and popular models as it was of Soviet socialist realism. However, the most important aspect of the posters of the Spanish Civil War was that they lasted after the war had ended. Members of the International Brigade collected them and took them home, or sent them home as postcards, whilst the Republican government gave the posters to visiting dignitaries, and they were also frequently reproduced in the press.

Therefore, art has ensured that the Spanish Civil War- its horrors and tragedies - lives on, not only in history books, but also in the visionary work that it inspired.





# I KNOW WHAT YOU DID THIS SUMMER

LOUISA EVANS LOVES THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS

Britons are fab. Despite reliably awful weather each and every year, we always believe the weatherman's promise that this year is going to be one long, hot barbeque summer. And who can blame us? It always starts out so well, although for the exam-bound population this merely adds insult to injury. Since I was 16, fabulous weather, afternoon games of donkey, barbeques and Pimms have unfortunately been laced with guilt. Having a sun-tan in early June clearly announces to all, 'no I don't have the chapter on water transport in plants memorised, but don't you like my amber hue?' Alas, as exams roll to an end so too does the promised heat wave

Mrs 'I-don't-care-where-it-is-just-get-me-away-from-here' - our lassie here, depressed at the thought of a whole summer working, frantically scours the internet into the wee hours of the morning for bargain holiday packages to either tourist ravaged Disney World or possibly Amsterdam if she's looking for a real piece of 'escapism'. If all else fails, our lass will take the website's recommendation that Tajikistan is the new up and coming tourist destination; it happened with Croatia and Estonia after all. These holidays inevitably end up costing

in-search-of-a-tan-while-I-was-deworming-orphans-in-Somalia - pretty self explanatory and a generally annoying specimen. To further complicate things, I have identified two sub-categories: A. those who have decided that they should jump on the self-discovery bandwagon and are headed off somewhere simply divine like India; and B. those who are going to distribute medical supplies in Outer Mongolia and, to give them their due, may actually have fabulously good intentions. Life-



and once again we have to settle for the odd delightful and surprisingly glorious summer day among weeks of grey skies and feeble rays of sunshine. How we each spend the interlude between fair-weather June and the crisp autumnal feeling of late September is yet another interesting insight into a person's character for the nosy and bizarrely observant of us. So, I've given this some thought and I reckon there are 5 basic categories of holiday goers and based on this highly scientific selection process, anyone can be slotted into at least one if not two of the following categories.

Mr 'Everyone-knows-the-best-deals-are-before-the-season-so-I've-had-my-tickets-and-itinerary-for-4-months-now' - this fellow booked his time off at the same time as his Christmas vacation. After perusing the internet for an un-Godly period of time, he deducted the optimum window for a holiday that would be just the right temperature, not too many tourists and the least likely chance of being caught in a seasonal hurricane. He also has a few special tours booked courtesy of the incredibly helpful chap at the bespoke travel agency. Most likely places to visit: Tuscany, Boston or a totally fabulous cruise taking in the Norwegian fjords.

far more than the projected budget of a few hundred pounds, losing luggage and getting drunk in a random bar with a local after realising your pidgin French is going to get you nowhere in this country and realising that you are, indeed lost.

Mr 'Let's-get-lashed-and-find-fit-foreign-birds' - actually if the first part of the holiday goes to plan, the birds need not be fit nor foreign. And, unfortunately, in this politically correct and ever-increasing sexually equal world, women are as likely to go on these 'pulling holidays' as men. The toughest choice for these culture-seeking \*cough\* vermin, is which of the Balearic Islands to plunder.

Miss 'That-was-awesome-let's-do-it-again!' - this lucky lady has not only the money to go on more than one holiday in one vacation period, but also enough friends to warrant multiple trips. In fact such is the extent of her travelling; this lady may actually fall into all 5 categories. Of all holiday goers, this is the one that will make you wonder what the heck it was that you were doing all summer, albeit in a much less offensive manner than category number 5 (see below).

Mr 'I'm-going-to-get-a-new-perspective-on-life-and-judge-anyone-who-only-went-

altering holidays are fine and dandy but what this lad often forgets is that some people have a pretty damn good perspective on their lives as it is thank you very much. However annoying it may be listening to these intrepid travellers' tales, it is probably a bit of a bugger for them too. After all the time spent away from home and western civilisation, I'm sure arriving back into the bosom of their families and friends (who believe it or not have got on with their lives whilst said loved one has been away) is something of an anti-climax. For this chap, it would be all too easy to simply revert back to his old ways and thus undo all the 'good' of the trip. He will then proceed to have a lengthy internal debate before arriving at some bizarre compromise where he will only eat organic but will use the car to get to the supermarket down the road.

Clearly, as I have had the time available to mull over these categories, I fit into mystery holiday-goer-category-number- 6: Miss I've-got-no-money-so-have-had-no-holidays-but-I'm-not-bitter-in-the-slightest.

Sigh. At least I can console myself with a good deal of back to school stationery shopping.







only great Dub-step nights but also Drum 'n Bass, Reggae, Dub, Breakcore, Electro, Techno, and many weird branches of electronic music which haven't got names yet.

-Apart from the obvious major galleries, there is a whole world of modern contemporary art to explore in London. Ynner street near Bethnal Green is host to many small but well curated galleries, like Nettie Horn. The Killemaker's Gallery and Haunch of Venison are excellent central galleries, a short walk from LSE while White Cube on Hoxton Square is also worth a visit.

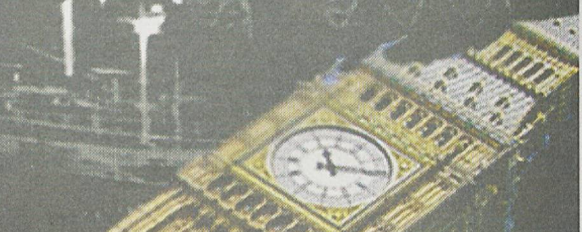
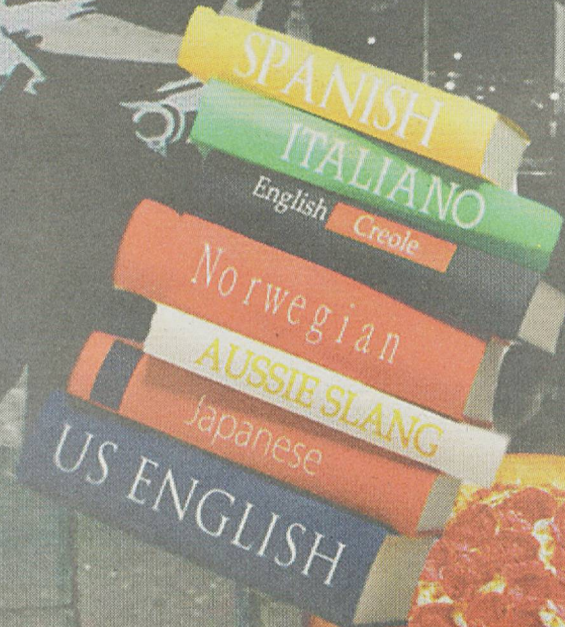
-A free and easy way to improve your foreign language skills is to find a local discussion group or speaking partner on a website like [www.gumtree.com](http://www.gumtree.com). Just place an ad along the lines of 'my Spanish for your German'. This is more flexible and a hell of a lot cheaper than a language course with university, and allows you to concentrate on practical oral ability for travel or work abroad.

-If you seek intellectual stimulation outside your course, take advantage of the many public lectures taking place daily in London. Apart from the many offered by LSE, look at [www.lecturelist.org](http://www.lecturelist.org) for a wider range of subject matter offered by various institutions. Most are free, and there's enough choice to blow your mind.

-It's comforting that people have found a way to live in London without paying rent, and to make sure you don't get too jealous many squats brand themselves 'social centres' and put on free events. Check out the latest events listings at [www.intoursura.co.uk](http://www.intoursura.co.uk) - there are things like film nights, free Capoeira and language classes, poetry workshops and a shop where everything is free! Seriously economists, it exists.

-The Prince Charles Cinema off Leicester Square shows classic independent and cult films on its downstairs screens, for only £4 on weekday afternoons. Perfect after (or instead of) lectures. The British Film Institute (BFI) on the South Bank always have themed seasons running, showing the best films from various genres, countries and eras.

-Franco Manca is a delicious, cheap pizza restaurant in Brixton. It's wedged between Afro-Caribbean food shops (pick up some chilli plantain crisps while you're there) and serves perfect organic sourdough pizzas from £4. Directions and menu at [www.francomanca.co.uk](http://www.francomanca.co.uk)





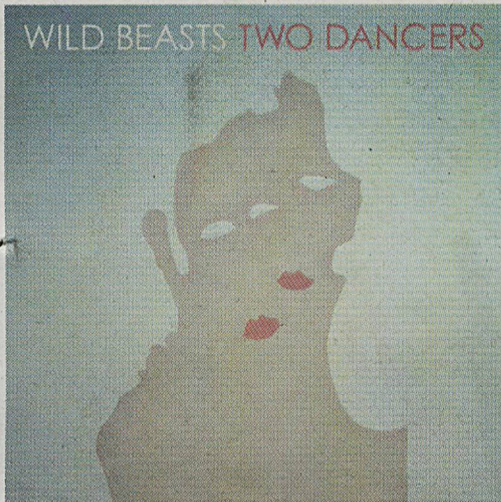
# MUSICAL REFRESHMENT

MUSIC EDITORS **LIAM MCLAUGHLIN** AND **CATHY DRUCE** GIVE A ROUND-UP OF SUMMER MUSIC

**Hello. PartB has not been around during summer. It went to Thailand. Music didn't.**

**Here are some reviews of what music did do.**

## WILD BEASTS - TWO DANCERS



The irritatingly shrilly falsettos that characterised 'Limbo, Panto' stopped me from crediting this band as being anything other than a pretentiously 'edgy' and annoyingly 'art-pop' quartet. The new album 'Two Dancers' has given me a chance to re-assess. And it's not all bad.

Over-hyped reviews claim this band to be 'unique' and certainly Hayden Thorpe's shrieking falsettos are unusual. And needless to say possibly not to everyone's taste - particularly when they come in three minute bursts for a full album.

However, where listening to 'Limbo, Panto' was nothing short of audible torture in some places (through the band's first single 'Brave Bulging Buoyant Clairvoyants' the sound of Thorpe's hoarse raw wailing vocal chords are the equivalent of nails on a blackboard) 'Two Dancers' holds a sound that is altogether more worthy of their excellent reviews.

The better tracks on the album are in fact the ones where Thorpe's shrilly cries are demoted to a sporadic background sound, which, in it's right place, is striking; interesting, dare I say, unique. Thorpe's trully original voice, when used sparingly, is an asset adding a new dimension to this music.

The carrying sound of the best tracks is the mellow, deep projection of Tom Fleming, the band's bassist. His voice is, not only less painful on the ear holes, but a canvas upon which the chimy guitar and the rhythm of the band's sound find themselves much better placed. Against Thrope's incessant shrieking this mystifying sound was lost.

So, 'Two Dancers' certainly represents a toning-down of 'Limbo, Panto' - from a unique but irritating noise to a more accessible, enjoyable one.

## JJ - JJ no. 2



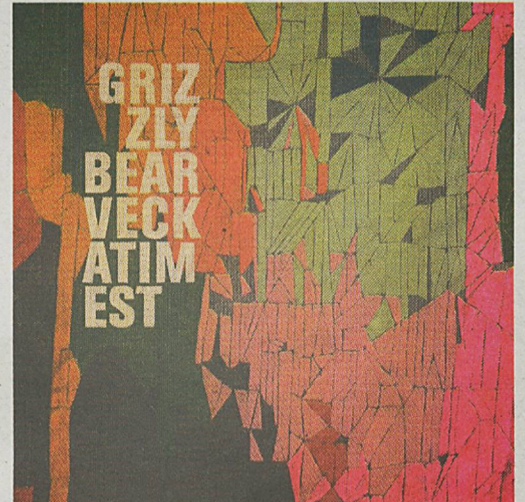
JJ are an elusive musical specimen. They released their debut album, 'jj no\*2' this year through 'Sincerely Yours' (a tiny Swedish label, which is owned by The Tough Alliance) who are also responsible for the excellent "Air France" among handful of other bands.

Other than that shred of information, little else is known about who is responsible for this fantastic LP.

This album is instantly likeable, the first track manages somehow to knit together a bouncy calypso rhythm with ambient synth and echoey vocals. Theoretically it sounds like a mess, but "Things will never be the same again" sets the tone for eight tracks that follow, the perfect pop music album which effortlessly blends qualities from various genres into a catchy but chilled out sound. Easy on the ears, but by no means is this album background noise.

"Are you still in Vallda?" has a relaxed almost folksy sound, "Ecstasy" has a background of rainforest sounds, the variety of influences on this album are all recognizable, but all have been knitted faultlessly to a rhythmic easy-listening ambient pop sound. JJ craft perfectly pure pop music, with soft strokes of all manner of influence, carried by a beautifully melodic signature sound.

## GRIZZLY BEAR - VECKATIMEST

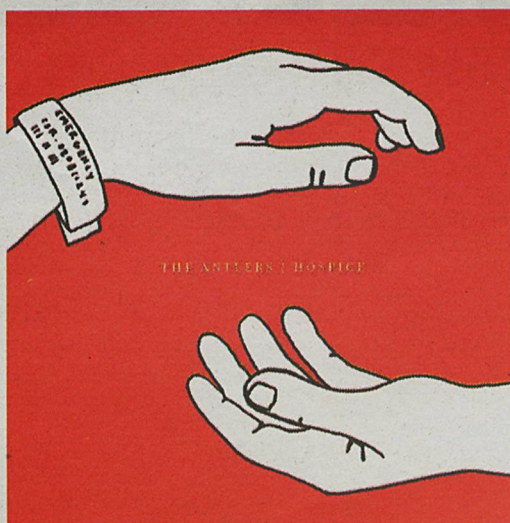


This is the Brooklyn indie darlings' third record and arguably their most consummate and accessible yet. While its predecessor 'Yellow House' had moments of greatness, its dense sprawl meant that much of it could easily be lost on the listener.

Admittedly 'Veckatimest' is also typically dense but unlike their previous work, manages to maintain more of a strong melodic thread throughout much of the album. Amidst rich vocal harmonies and languid acoustic guitars lie some of the best indie-folk songs of the year; equal parts challenging and memorable. Much of the appeal of the album stems from the contrast between songs written by Daniel Rossen, which tend to unfold from tender sketches before radically changing direction, and those penned by Ed Droste, which are some of the most perfect pop gems to be unleashed on the public in years. However, after a few listens, the record begins to feel over-long, with much of the second half of it drifting off into hazy twilight reverb and the songs themselves passing by almost unnoticeably. Fortunately, the band pulls it together to the closing pair of songs, which are alternately euphoric and emotionally draining. Still, despite the need for judicious editing, 'Veckatimest' is really a very good record.



THE ANTLERS -  
HOSPICE



**M**ore hushed, breathy indie-folk music from Brooklyn, New York. Whilst being gently subtle with dreamy acoustic guitars and shy vocals dominating the album, 'Hospice' also has a more epic side, utilising simple yet grandiose crescendos in the vein of the Arcade Fire or Bon Iver. This results in The Antlers making their point more quickly and accessibly than other ponderous indie-folk acts without losing the core value of their music. Through crackly keyboards and ghostly drones The Antlers work their mournful and delicate magic. Understated but definitely a winner.

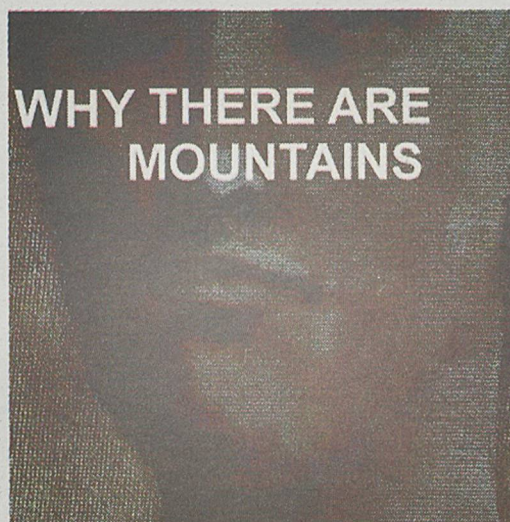
THE HORRORS -  
PRIMARY COLOURS

**L**istening to this is like witnessing a musical epiphany. First check out The Horrors' debut album 'Strange House' and cringe at the trashy sub-Libertines indie. Urgh. Then listen to 'Primary Colours' and be shocked at how a formerly gimmicky, identikit, flavour-of-the-month band have evolved into some sort of cross between Interpol and My Bloody Valentine. Wow. Feel the basslines pump into your veins, see the dense tapestries of guitar glide and buzz in and out of your consciousness, marvel at the great songs and confident delivery from accomplished musicians. The Horrors: from utter shit to pretentiousness. Could it be any worse? Or maybe it couldn't be any better?



CYMBALS EAT  
GUITARS - WHY  
THERE ARE  
MOUNTAINS

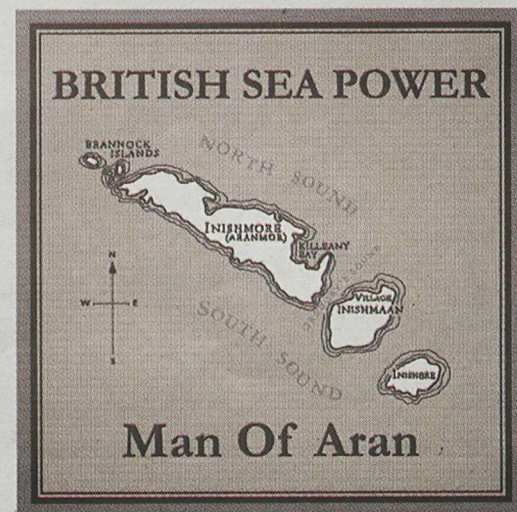
WHY THERE ARE  
MOUNTAINS



**R**amshackle American indie. On first listen the record maintains a nice continuity between lyrics and music from song to song with inter-linked themes, splashing guitars and ambient keyboards adding extra textural depth to the band's palette. As a result the sound of this record is really appealing in its organic and loose style. However, after a few listens the songs really begin to lose their appeal and become boring and tacky rather than the progressive indie classics you thought they were when you heard them first. Perhaps a good example of style over substance?

BRITISH SEA POWER  
- MAN OF ARAN

**L**argely instrumental album to be listened to along with the accompanying DVD of 1934 fictional documentary 'Man of Aran' by Robert J. Flaherty. The music evokes the grainy old island life portrayed in the film brilliantly by employing stormy passages of raging instrumentation then suddenly switching to guitar/string textures which lap gently against cymbal shimmers and dusty keyboard motifs like the sun glinting through broken clouds. Indeed British Sea Power's musical range is grandiose enough to cover the human emotion and rawness of nature which the documentary itself sought to show and so, Man of Aran is definitely a very successful piece of visual/sound art and a great album in its own right.





# A CATALAN CALLING

ANDREAS DEMETRI EXPLORES BARCELONA

Recently, it seems everyone I speak to; young, old, xenophobes, have ventured into the Catalan city of Barcelona. This includes myself. Taking a short trip with the familiar no frills orange and white planes that crowd our European sky, my mini-adventure began at the beginning of July.

We landed on a typical humid Catalan evening, and were welcomed by a broken bus ticket machine. This was no issue as you could purchase a ticket on the bus. Who would've thought? The vociferous bus driver lady having grasped no language other than Spanish hurried the queue a long with shouts of "UNA!" or "DOS!" and waiting expectantly for the nods and payments from the newly arrived tourists.

A comfortable journey to our hostel was followed, and this comfort would be consistent on all of Barcelona's public transport. The Metro, the underground system, was fully air conditioned and had ample seating. If you were stuck for whatever reason, strong mobile phone reception meant you could call your loved ones to explain why you're going to be late. As a frequent commuter on London's tubes and buses, I was in amazement that I could be in a packed carriage not sweating! I yearn for the days when these innovations hopefully get installed on the London underground.

The transport system, however, is far from the best thing in this stunning city. Architecturally awesome and artistically astounding is one way to categorise Barcelona. One example is Park Guell, the famous Gaudi's attempt at landscape gardening. This is where you can catch a cracking view of the city's skyline as well as the unusual mosaic reptiles. This does require you to climb up a staggeringly steep hill, which feels like it goes on forever, but with the aid of some outdoor escalators, this shouldn't be too much of an ordeal. My favourite Gaudi though was La Sagrada Família. An exceptionally unique, unfinished cathedral that illustrates this man's genius, through

his naturalistic designs such as the towers with swelling

outlines that are inspired by the weird peaks of the mountain Montserrat. This is compulsory viewing if you ever visit Barcelona.

The Església de Santa Maria del Mar, a humbling Gothic church and the Palau de la Música Catalana, the Palace of Catalan Music are other additions to Barcelona's grand buildings, however, they were well hidden down the narrow backstreets, which are a common feature, making it easy to miss an opportunity to see these gems, even with a trusty travel guide map.

Art is proudly displayed in the numerous galleries. One of the highlights includes The Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya which is in the National Palace where the collection is mostly Catalan art spanning the early Middle Ages to the early 20th Century. Also, another highlight is the Museu de Picasso, which contains the early works of the world renowned Cubist artist, Pablo Picasso, which provides an interesting insight in the man's early artistic developments.

However, the artistic merits of the Barcelona didn't really apply to our hostel, hidden deep in the Barri Gotic region, it would at least suffice as a place to sleep in. It did provide a source of comic relief when a loud local drunkard was having buckets of water dumped on him to silence his early morning rant. Located near many boutique shops and small cafes, the region had much to explore. Just round the corner was La Rambla, a bustling high street lined with lusciously green trees. It's filled with numerous street acts such as the hidden vampires that jump out at you, golden statues and football tricksters doing kick ups whilst climbing up ladders. There was plenty to keep you entertained on quick shopping trip or a stroll on the pedestrianised walkway.

The beaches at Barcelona met expectations. Sand - yes, sea - yes, hundreds of tourists - yes, club promoters - yes. It was a great place to relax in the time between being sold drinks, sunglasses and massages. Giant sand castles would be constructed during the day in the shape of crocodiles or the lynxes of Egypt pro-

vided spectacles to those passing pasting by. These beaches, being artificially created to boost tourism did give rise to a new experience; having to scarp from the beach front at night as trucks and tractors would invade the beach front to spray steriliser on the sand. We never understood whether this was due to obsessive cleanliness or just a neat strategy to usher away the stray clubbers who wandered onto the beach after a heavy night out.

At night there was plenty to do. The city is littered with a vast array of bars and clubs suited to all types of people and tastes. This probably explains why it's a popular destination for hen and stag nights. The most memorable thing about the nights though are the army of illegal street merchants trying to sell you Barcelona's most popular lager, Estrella Damm, which isn't too bad actually. "Cerveza?!" was instantaneously responded to with "No!". This brief conversation occurs so frequently that it became a natural reflex.

The food was also exceptional. Maybe not for those that don't enjoy food from the sea, but for everyone else, fresh seafood awaits you. A typical restaurant will offer the 'Menu del Dia', which puts a 3 course meal with a drink in front of you for about €15. So you can enjoy the Catalan diet at great value for money. The same can't be said to the familiar franchises from across the Atlantic, for example a Big Mac meal will easily cost you over €6! I'd recommend trying the delicious paellas, especially those that are mixed with muscles, prawns and crayfish.

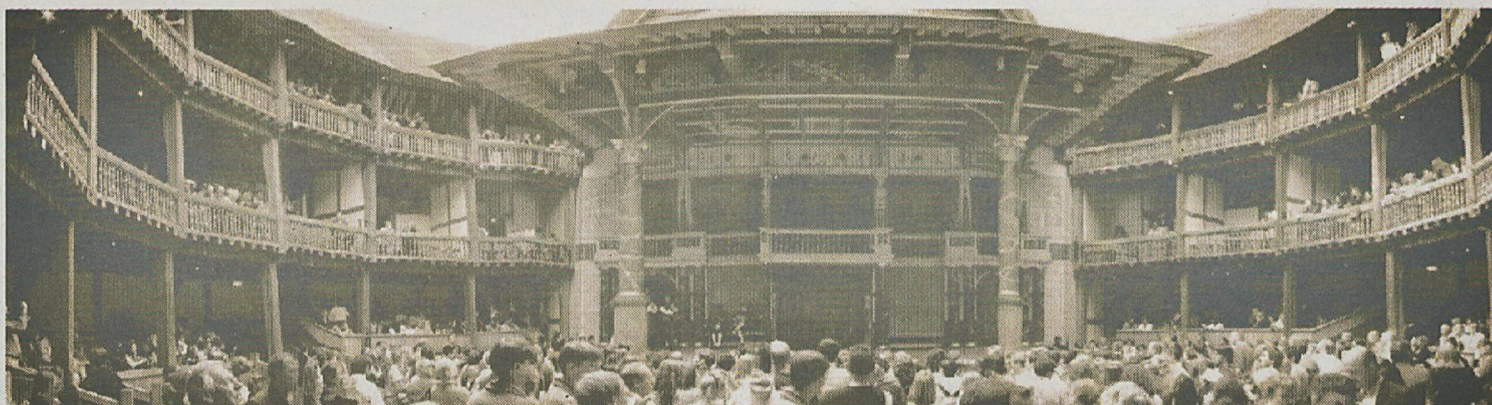
So overall, Barcelona was a great place to visit, and I'd highly recommend it. With a unique culture from the rest of Spain due to deep pride in the city's Catalan roots, that going to Barcelona is not representative of the whole of Spain. The differences are so much that on most information signs there's a translation for Spanish, English and Catalan. You could easily do all the main attractions within a week or over a weekend if you jump on the bus tours. Most of the galleries are free, especially on the first Sunday of the month. So take that into consideration when booking your flights.





# AS YOU LIKE IT

SACHIN PATEL TAKES A LOOK AT THE NEW GLOBE SEASON



There's always something of the pantomime about a trip to Shakespeare's Globe. Every ounce of black comedy is eked out of his tragedies; even his most lightweight of comedies descend into bucolic farce. *As You Like It*, a play stuck in limbo between comedy and tragedy with some limp moralising on marriage, benefits from a treatment at the Globe and offers a chance to definitively side with the play's comedic aspects; turning the feel-good knob up to eleven.

Thea Sharrock's production does not disappoint on this level - her cast, led ably by Jack Laskey's Orlando and Naomi Frederick's Rosalind, eat up the scenery in a performance that exudes panto-levels of energy. Of the supporting cast, Dominic Rowan carries on the great tradition of strong Touchstones (it's easy to forget that David Tennant made his name in this role, performing for the RSC) with a selection of quips and audience cajoling that crosses trivialities like linear time.

*As You Like It* is not an easy play to stage right; the RSC's own book on productions of the play bears testament to this, with some directors favouring themes of Arcadia and the bucolic, while others riff off the play's gender-bending confusion. When we are faced with a comedy about two warring pairs of brothers, involving betrayal and deposition, and the search for true love in a politically tempestuous environment, it is not difficult to understand why difficult decisions of prioritising must be taken. Sharrock's answer is to let love take over - even as Rosalind takes on multiple identities in her quest to capture the heart of Orlando in the most convoluted manner, there is a veritable cloud of barely hidden emotion that invades the air. When Orlando decides to put his feelings into words, this cloud unleashes a romantic downpour of doggerel poetry on scraps of coffee-stained paper, which descends on audience and players alike.

Even the fight scenes, so often the source of tension and malice in productions of *As You Like It*, unfold like exuberant bar brawls, with Charles (Sean Kern) the wrestler lending these moments an expansive feel. Love, it seems, is everywhere, as evidenced not only by Rosalind's wry and winking bewitching of lovesick Orlando, thrown out of his family home by scheming older brother Oliver, but also by the scenes involving the exiled Duke Senior, recently usurped by the younger Duke Frederick.

For Duke Senior, the allure of the pastoral conquers all nostalgia for the corrupt court, and he and his fellow exiles wander through the forest of Arden with the abandon of tramps who have chanced upon a fortune. When they light a fire on stage and begin roasting a non-specific dead animal, it is not only the flames that provide warmth, but also the depth of their companionship.

Fittingly, then, the end of the play, a multiple wedding scene involving some degree of suspension of disbelief, is delivered in an irreverently overjoyful style. The choreography of Fin Walker combines with Dick Bird's sumptuous costumes; the cast, including an inspired cameo turn from Ewart James Walters as Hymen (god of marriage), frolics gaily to the now-ubiquitous period musicians, and the virtuous qualities of marriage are preached to the audience in a surprisingly palatable manner. Not even the downbeat melancholy of Tim McMullan's Jaques (doing his best impression of Alan Rickman, it would appear) can spoil the euphoria of Shakespeare's resolution to the play.

Sharrock's production of *As You Like It* is far from perfect - it removes key themes of the play that could have lent it a more sophisticated air - but, in the resonant style of previous Globe seasons, the audience cannot fail to be carried away on a wave of innocent excitement.

*As You Like It* plays at Shakespeare's Globe until 10th October.

## PICK OF THE WEEK

### **Inherit the Wind**

Starring Kevin Spacey and David Troughton, this tackles the case of a schoolteacher in 1925, arrested for teaching Darwin in the American Bible-Belt. The Old Vic until 20 December  
Box Office 0844 8717628

### **The Power of Yes**

David Hare's new piece on the financial crisis. An exposition of the financial sector and what caused the crash. The National until 23 November  
Box Office 020 7452 3000

### **A Streetcar Named Desire**

Southern Belle Blanche DuBois (Rachel Weisz) finds reality hard to take in Tennessee William's classic New Orleans drama. Donmar Warehouse until 3 October  
Box Office 0844 8717624

## LSE THEATRE

If you're interested in being involved in theatre at LSE why not join one of the following at this week's LSE Festival: Drama Society, Film Society, LooseTV.

Look out for the Language Centre's 'How the Arts Made the Velvet Revolution' event at the end of October, including performances from, Beckett's 'Catastrophe', Havel's 'Largo Desolato', and Stoppard's 'Rock'N'Roll'.



# WATCH WHAT YOU WEAR

JULIA CHIA IS WATCHING THE FASHION CHANNEL

Are you one of those people who believe they have individualistic style? Well, think again because that might just be you (as with all other couch potatoes) being influenced by what is seen on the television.

That's right - like it or not, the telly does affect and influence our fashion in one way or another, be it through reality shows, style consultancy programmes or even your daily soap drama. Well, this category may not extend as far as to include Eastenders but you get where I am coming from anyhow.

Cutting straight to the chase, I am sure many of us do wonder about the fabulous fashion pieces worn by certain TV characters as chosen by their respective costume designers or stylists. The clothes make the character and builds on how one may perceive his or her personality projected in the

show to be. Sadly, many follow blindly and rip off looks rather than choosing and applying those that exude who they really are. This just goes to show how many a time, having their clothes captured on TV series are a far more effective mode of advertisement than those found in our written media.

A prime example is that of Gossip Girl. Try googling "Gossip Girl Style" and just gaze in awe at the wondrous number of sites that are listed (accurate, legitimate ones, no less). This very show single-handedly brought back preppy-chic into fashion, in particular, thick satin headbands and white leggings. See the profound influence that innocent black box has had on our sense of style, be it consciously or otherwise?

If that's not enough proof, shows like Gossip Girl and even Lipstick Jungle has catapulted anonymous designers or rarely-heard big designers (in other words, those with clothing lines ordinary people as us wouldn't be able to buy without feeling the pinch) into stardom. Okay, stardom's an exaggeration but people did start walking into stores such as that of Nanette Lepore's requesting for "that dress" that was seen on the show. Even a hippie beaded top worn by Georgina in the latest season of Gossip Girl (the top probably only had mere minutes of screening) was identified on multiple fashion blogs as belonging to a Joie Alexandra collection.

Sex and the City, on the other hand, has affirmed the status of various big-shot names and further increased the desirability of certain products such as Alexander McQueen's Elvie Croco bag in platinum or the really pretty Fendi logo clutch in orange.

However, even with as much persuasiveness a show might have, I would like to believe that people would still follow their heart (and mind), saying "no" to styles that look so absurd, you wonder why anyone would even design such a catastrophe. Just look to Carrie Bradshaw's character in Sex and the City - was that oversized corsage really necessary? You would expect years of being in such a fashion-forward cast to have rubbed off Sarah Jessica Parker. Well, apparently not, as seen in that thing that was on her head while at the London premiere of the movie. Just in case you forgot, it contained green roses

and yellow butterflies. Maybe TV didn't have that much of an impact on her. Well, one can only pray that the sequel will not commit a similar mistake.

Other shows such as What Not To Wear do have an effect on the general public by educating us on literally, what to and not to wear. "If you're wide, don't pick blouses with horizontal lines", "Do not wear a single colour from top to toe" - these are the sort of rules being taught on shows as such. Truthfully, I commend programmes like these. They pass on such fundamental laws on style. In an ideal world, people would follow them to a tee. Disappointedly, they don't. Like they say, bad habits die hard and well, good habits are just difficult to cultivate.

Then again, it's not just what you see on the telly that influences the person. It's the red carpet fashion. No wait, even what celebrities wear on a day-to-day basis gets noticed. That Joie Alexandra beaded top I mentioned earlier? It caught the attention of many even before its appearance on the show, when it was first worn by Lauren Conrad while she was (cue drum rolls) taking a shopping trip in LA.

The Chanel 2.55 is a prime example of how movie stars influence fashion too. This much-sought-after bag has been spotted in photos all over the place showing many celebrities carrying it all over London and Hollywood. Thankfully, our trusty High Street brands such as Topshop and Dorothy Perkins are there to make trends accessible to those on tight budgets. They frequently manufacture items that can easily be passed off as products of luxury brands. I'm not referring to the quality (Wouldn't they be happy if I were to insinuate that?) but the design of products seen dangling from their sales racks. Well, you can't blame them for trying to cash in on whatever's profitable. So what initiated the trend, you may ask? I would definitely name the recent movie, *Coco Avant Chanel* as a contributing factor to the hike in interest regarding all things Chanel.

To conclude, I believe it is all but a vicious cycle. As much as fashion trends on the runway and magazines affect fashion being portrayed on the telly, so do costumes on sets make their way into the minds of those who watch the shows (namely, us, the consumers). We then, fund designers by buying their merchandise and this whole procedure carries on so on so forth.

Some shows like Gok Wan's *How to Look Good Naked* encourage rather exhibitionist behaviour. I do hope no one gets influenced by that as it would be a criminal offence of indecent exposure. Besides that, gladly be influenced by the telly all in a bid to create a well-dressed population!





# TUNA MUFFIN OR COMEDY KING?

AHMED PEERBUX PONDERES THE CAREER OF ADAM SANDLER

Being a student at LSE, you perhaps expect what you read in the campus paper to be balanced, nuanced and thought provoking. For the most part, this is true. Really though I'd just like to deal with Sandler haters in the way he would as Billy Madison:

**Kid: Donkey Kong sucks.**

**Billy Madison: You know something? YOU SUCK!**

Adam Sandler certainly is controversial. Indeed, on Urban Dictionary (an invaluable source of knowledge), his name is tagged under 'Penis', 'Cock', 'Balls' and bizarrely, 'Tuna Muffin'. On Rotten Tomatoes (a review aggregator) he has a meagre rating of 11%. What did the Guardian have to say of one of his films - Mr Deeds? - 'Orphanage fires are funnier'.

Early in his career Sandler was a writer for SNL, eventually making a transition onto the big screen. His films 'Billy Madison' (1995) and 'Happy Gilmore' (1996) are often thought to be his funniest, and it is from these that he named his production company Happy Madison. Though the comedy films that followed were commercial hits ('Mr Deeds', 'Click' etc.), they were largely considered to have deteriorated in quality from his mid-nineties heyday.

Critics will tell you he only plays the one role, which he exhausted many years ago; essentially a whacky, nice-but-misunderstood kinda guy who's taken way out of his element. In 'Happy Gilmore' he's an aggressive hockey player who's forced to play the more sedate game of golf, in 'Chuck and Larry' he's a masculine fire-fighter who's forced to masquerade in a gay marriage, in 'The Waterboy' he's a timid Cajun-squirrel who becomes a linebacker in college football, and in 'Big Daddy' he's a care-free bachelor who's forced to take on adult responsibilities by looking after a child.

They will tell you his comedy is juvenile, moronic and predictable; that it is laden with crass innuendo and double-entendre, and that it relies on the presumption that foreign accents and speech impediments are funny (Zohan Dvir, Little Nicky).

Much of this is true. But it is precisely many of these things

critics disparage that I love Adam Sandler for. However there's little credence in the 'he only does the one role' argument. If he does the one role very well, so what? Look at Bill Murray's schtick: dry and deadpan, whether it's in the context of him getting slimed in Ghostbusters or doing whiskey adverts in Lost in Translation. Then there's Ricky Gervais with his cringeworthy half-finished, painfully-awkward-sentences schtick. Clint Eastwood as The Man with No Name, Harry Callaghan, William Munny or Walt Kowalski was uncompromising, brooding and alienated, yet this oft repeated persona of his is among the most imitated and iconic in cinema history.

More importantly, he doesn't just play the one role. In P T Andersons 'Punch Drunk Love' and Mike Binders 'Reign Over Me' Sandler delivers performances in an altogether different vein from funny accents and Rob Schneider cameos. In 'Reign Over Me' Sandler's portrayal of a man whose family were killed on 9/11 has no time for fist fights with Bob Barker or lines like 'can I wash my

winky in  
y o u r  
kitchen  
sinky'  
a s  
h e

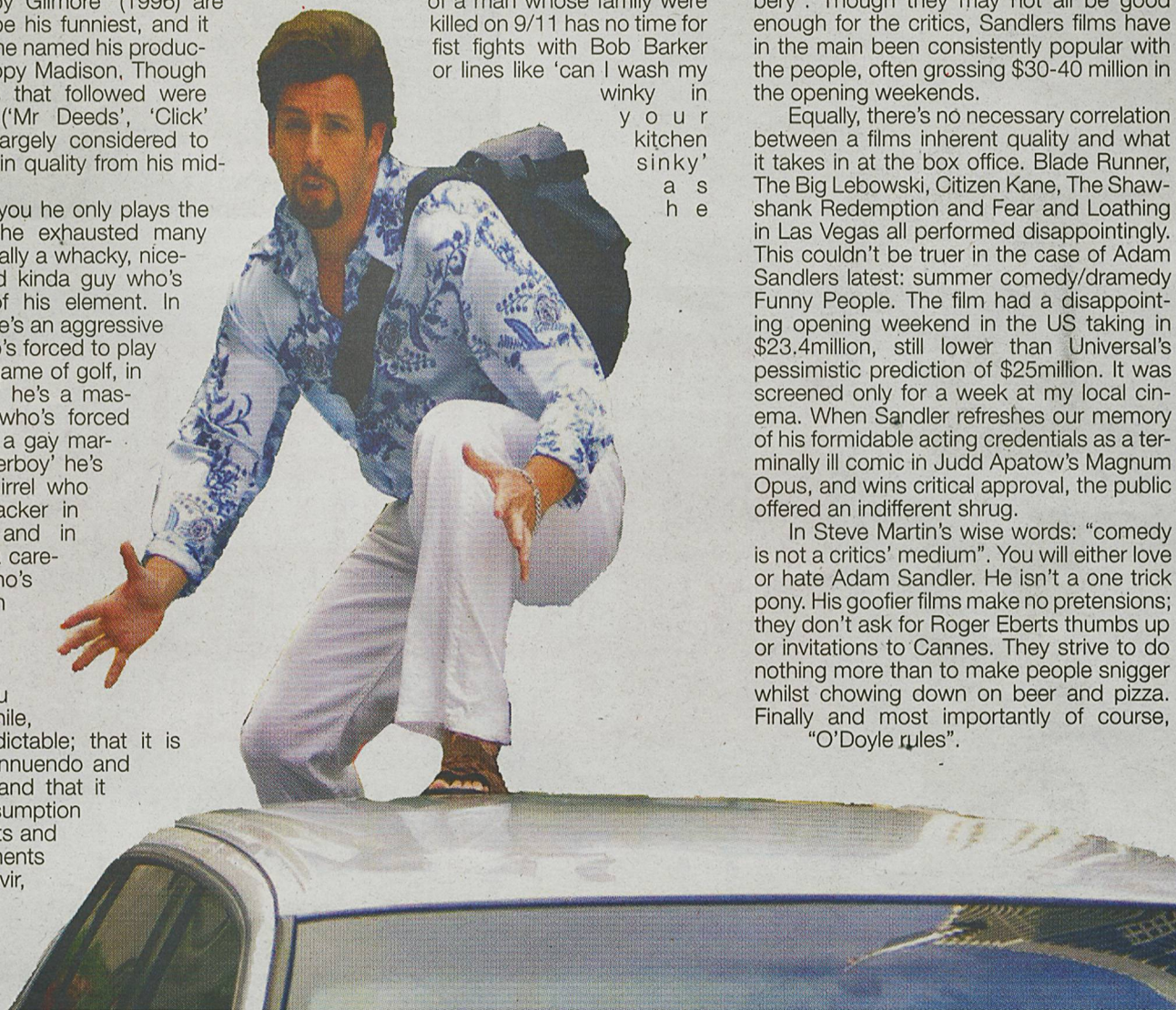
does in Happy Gilmore.

Also, Sandler's influence on comedy must be acknowledged. Loveable man-teddy Seth Rogen cites Sandler's 1993 album 'They're all gonna laugh at you!' as the funniest thing he had ever heard, paying especially close homage to the track 'At a Medium Pace', which (to pick a more moderate lyric) chronicles Sandler asking his girlfriend to "shave off my pubes/ and punch me in the face". Without Sandler, perhaps the dick-joke comedy just wouldn't be the same.

Reviews and critics aren't to be treated as gospel, and they certainly shouldn't deter one from watching a film. Look at Steve Martin's 'The Jerk'; upon its release it was universally derided by critics in America, yet today it is regarded as one of his most enduring roles. Kevin Smith films are often badly reviewed, yet he boasts a huge cult following. Steve Martin insists that "comedies always have to overcome critical snobbery". Though they may not all be good enough for the critics, Sandler's films have in the main been consistently popular with the people, often grossing \$30-40 million in the opening weekends.

Equally, there's no necessary correlation between a film's inherent quality and what it takes in at the box office. Blade Runner, The Big Lebowski, Citizen Kane, The Shawshank Redemption and Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas all performed disappointingly. This couldn't be truer in the case of Adam Sandler's latest: summer comedy/dramedy Funny People. The film had a disappointing opening weekend in the US taking in \$23.4million, still lower than Universal's pessimistic prediction of \$25million. It was screened only for a week at my local cinema. When Sandler refreshes our memory of his formidable acting credentials as a terminally ill comic in Judd Apatow's Magnum Opus, and wins critical approval, the public offered an indifferent shrug.

In Steve Martin's wise words: "comedy is not a critics' medium". You will either love or hate Adam Sandler. He isn't a one trick pony. His goofier films make no pretensions; they don't ask for Roger Ebert's thumbs up or invitations to Cannes. They strive to do nothing more than to make people snigger whilst chowing down on beer and pizza. Finally and most importantly of course, "O'Doyle rules".





# WHAT'S IN A TITLE?

THAT'S MS. **RUBY BUCKLEY** TO YOU

**M**arital status single? Then I'm talking to you, Ms!

It's Freshers', nay Orientation week, so don your hiking boots and grab your maps – it's time to get organised! You'll be signing up for student oysters cards, opening bank accounts or getting that iPhone. With all these forms being filled out, I thought I'd take advantage of the opportunity to advance the case of my favourite honorific "Ms".

But Ms means you're widowed, right? You have to be old or divorced to use it? But this subtle, potentially revolutionary abbreviation, is not just for the lonely over 50s, it's a statement which you should make too.

Lets see what this "Ms" really means. "Mr" is easy, it's used of men regardless of age or marital status. But us females get divided into those who are single and there to be snapped up for marital bliss, and those who are already fetching his slippers and cooking his tea. Having to choose between Miss or Mrs is, for me, an attack on my independence. Why should I have to define myself in terms of my relationship to men? Ms is just right; non-sexist and forward thinking. Just how I like things.

And no, I'm not playing down the role of marriage. If the time comes to say "I do", there is nothing stopping you being referred to as "Mrs John Smith". Hmm. Anyway, the

distinction between "Miss" and "Mrs" is an archaic one, so no wonder that the criticism which is levelled at us emancipated women comes from the Tories of the world. Renowned for their forward thinking, I think not! According to Miss Ann Widdecombe, and I quote, there is no point as it is not an issue. I do love a good liberal mind.

Back again to those forms. Why not put a cross in that box next to "Ms"? Beware, there have been times when I have done so and I have still been referred to as "Miss" in letters or on ID cards. Make a fuss, explain why it can be construed as being offensive. That's how change happens anyway, very gradually with little steps like this.



**part b**

**WOULD LIKE TO MEET  
WRITERS  
SECTION EDITORS  
& DESIGN EDITORS**

**TO MAKE HIM HAPPY, EMAIL  
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