

Social

God is dead?

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Royal rendezvous

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The Beaver

24 November 2009
Newspaper of the
London School of Economics
Students' Union
thebeaveronline.co.uk

NUS "defrauded" by LSESU

» Amount of subvention given to NUS was deliberately doctored
» NUS happy to "turn the other cheek" for fear of a mass exodus

Sam Tempest Keeping

It has been revealed that the LSESU had, until recently, been underpaying for affiliation to the National Union of Students (NUS) for a number of years.

NUS bases its fees for affiliation on the amount of funding granted by a union's parent institution as well as undergraduate and postgraduate student numbers. During the Union restructuring that took place last year it was uncovered that the SU had been misleading NUS over the true amount of subvention which it had been receiving from the LSE.

LSESU Treasurer Geroge Wetz explained: "We have substantially increased our NUS affiliation fee because LSE Students' Union was underpaying for years. The fee has raised from £9,000 to 32,000." "The Students' Union was defrauding NUS by claiming that its level of subvention was far lower than what it actually was."

Affiliation to NUS has a number of benefits for students. According to their website, these include a national voice to represent student views and discounts for individual students on various products with an NUS Extra card. Furthermore, affiliation can generate major savings for student union bars, cafes and shops as NUS's collective purchasing power can elicit lower prices from major suppliers of, among others, brewed products wines and spirits.

The fees cover affiliation for the period from the 1st June 2009 until the 30th July of the following year. Payment was made in October. When asked why he had not corrected the error earlier SU General

Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher responded: "The error was identified following the management restructure we went through during my first term in office. We made NUS aware of this before my second term of office and made sure that our new payment was correct."

"The no holes barred reform of the Union that I promised during the re-election has, of course, brought up unsavoury issues from the past - but we have dealt with it and have put the structures in place to ensure our finances are never abused like this again."

Wetz also suggested that the LSE was not alone in this unlawful practice. He added that "there is widespread evidence that many Unions did this, and it is understood that NUS was happy to turn the other cheek on those that underpaid as it was facing the prospect of many Unions disaffiliating altogether."

"We now pay the correct affiliation fee, and have confirmation from NUS that there is no longer a liability for the Union's past wrongdoings. The School is also satisfied that this issue is no longer a liability, and is pleased with the Union's financial reforms."

Fisher added: "The School is assured that our new financial arrangements ensure the Union is spending students' and the public's money responsibly. When last year's officers and I came into office last year, the Union's mismanagement was a considered a significant risk for the School. Following deep internal change, I am proud to say that this is no longer the case."

NUS was unavailable for comment at the time of print.



Photo: Chris John



Thieves target campus cash machines

Phyllis Lui
Sam Tempest Keeping

LSE students have become victims to distraction-type theft on campus in the past week.

Three incidents have occurred outside the NatWest cash machines on Houghton Street and Aldwych. The type of distraction-type theft on campus is one where-upon culprits move in on the victim after they have inserted their card and entered their pin number, and distraction takes the form of either a magazine or newspaper. The culprits might also ask the victim for money whilst one of them pressed the cash amount and takes the cash.

"It is all done quickly and leaves the victim in a confused state, only realising what has happened after checking with their bank to see if a transaction has been made," said an LSE spokesman.

The spokesman also warned students that "if anyone approaches you when using cash machines - immediately cancel your transaction and move away from the machine and report the matter to the se-

curity or reception desk at Old Building".

Cash machines at the Aldwych branch have allegedly been targeted by thieves in the past. In 2004 a card skimmer was found attached to the cash machine located on the Aldwych. The device, which is fitted to the card slot on the machine, works by reading the magnetic strip on the card as a user unknowingly places it in the cashpoint. They are often used in conjunction with pinhole cameras which simultaneously read user's PIN numbers as they card details are copied.

Then again in 2007 a King's College professor warned her students that a member of the public had taken legal action to reclaim funds that they believed to have been stolen as a result of having their card details copied at the Aldwych Machine. Claims were made that the cashpoint had again been saddled with a 'skimming' device.

After the Beaver was made aware of this reported scam they approached the bank who denied suggestions that members of the public may have had money illegally removed from their accounts as a result of using the cash machine.



Photo: Cherie Leung

Rob Low's Top 5 Tips for Cash point Safety

1. If anyone approaches you during a transaction, cancel it immediately and move to another cash point.
2. Be aware of your surroundings - if you feel uneasy use another cash point - most banks will have one inside
3. When you have finished a transaction make sure the card is yours
4. Don't keep your PIN in your wallet or phone
5. Always report anything suspicious



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LSE events

Highlights of this week's public lectures and talks

Arbitration's Fluid Universe
Professor Jan Paulsson
Tonight, HKT, 1830-2000

Jihad: the trail of Political Islam
Professor Gilles Kepel
Tuesday, OT, 1830-2000

Colombia is Passion: Building a Successful Country Strategy
H.E. Mauricio Rodriguez, Maria Claudia Lacouture
Wednesday, NAB204, 1800-1900

Managing Risk and Behaviour in Financial Markets
Professor Julia Black, Professor Charles Goodhart, Professor Michael Power, Dr Paul Woolley, Professor Willem Buitter
Wednesday, OT, 1830-2000

Sociology and the Financial Crisis: which crisis, and which sociology?
Professor Michel Wieviorka
Wednesday, HKT, 1830-2000

Who Ended the Cold War?
Andrei Grachev, Professor Mary Kaldor, Jack Matlock, Pavel Seifter, Professor Michael Cox
Thursday, NT, 1830-2000

The Pleasures and Sorrows of Work
Alain de Botton
Thursday, HKT, 1830-2000

Positions of the week

LSE Careers Service's pick of the best jobs

Human Rights Watch
Columbia Researcher, Emergencies Researcher

Barclays Capital
Due Diligence/Political Analyst

Fulbright Commission
Advising Assistant

Medecins du Monde UK
Consultant for Exploratory Mission to Haiti

Business Monitor International
Emerging Markets Analyst

International Journal of Transitional Justice
Editorial Intern

Cancer Research UK
Corporate & Scientific Services Graduate Scheme; Fundraising, Marketing & Communications Graduate Scheme

Catch22
Policy and Public Affairs Internship

Center for Strategic and International Studies
Research Interns, Assistants and Fellows for the Scholl Chair in International Business

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"Impact" assessed in new research framework

Phyllis Lui

LSE is participating in consultations for a new research assessment scheme that has been proposed by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to replace the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE).

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is stated to be a "new process for assessing research" on the HEFCE website. In March 2006, it was announced by the Government that it intended to replace the RAE with "an assessment system based on metrics".

LSE Pro-Director for Research and External Relations Professor Sarah Worthington confirmed that the School will be submitting a response to the HEFCE consultation.

The REF will focus on three elements: outputs, impact and environment. The HEFCE document currently proposes the impact element to form 25% of the assessment; one aspect of this element looks at the impact of research on non-academic audiences: "significant additional recognition will be given where researchers have built on excellent research to deliver demonstrable benefits to the economy, society, public policy, culture or quality of life."

In order to achieve a four-star 'exceptional' rating, "an impact would need to

be 'ground-breaking, transformative or of major value, relevant to a range of situations'. Further, it would be the "submitting unit" as a whole that is to be assessed, as opposed to individual researchers.

The HEFCE is currently running a pilot project to determine how this element will be assessed. Professor Worthington told The Beaver that LSE is part of this project. Further, she commented: "Whether the REF ends up including this element, at this percentage weighting, will no doubt depend on the response to the consultation and the outcome of the pilot."

Other proposed changes include the reductions of "three outputs submitted per person" as opposed to the four in the RAE, and a reduction in the number of main panels to as few as four: Medical and Life Sciences, Physical Sciences, Social Sciences, and Arts and Humanities.

When asked how much of a difference this change in research assessment could affect the research at the LSE, and whether teachers might place priority on research over teaching, Professor Worthington did not believe that to be the case.

"We already get funding from HEFCE for teacher and for research. This dual funding is not changing, merely the possible method of assessing the latter, so I cannot see that there is added pressure on research over teaching at the School," stated Professor Worthington.

LSESU Education and Welfare Officer

Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang said: "Though we are still in the early days of the consultation, the latest proposal by the higher education funding councils is for 25% of the new REF to be assessed according to 'economic and social impact' does raise some concerns. There are questions that remain as yet unanswered such as whether it is productive to make funding for the

best research conditional on its perceived economic and social benefits."

Akpan-Inwang added that he would personally support a funding regime which fosters a spirit of innovative research and where research-led-teaching is a key consideration. The LSESU will be putting forward a consultation on the basis of consultation with students.

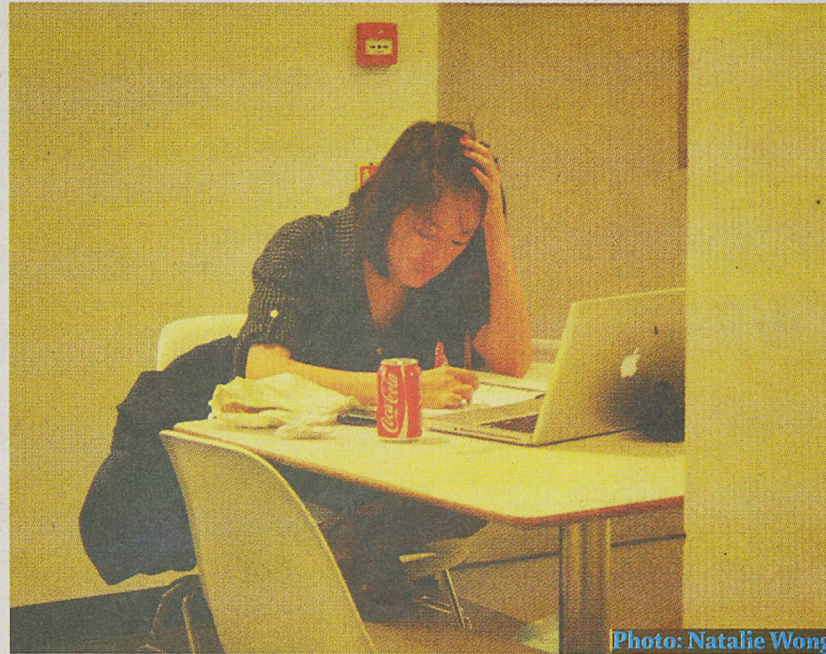
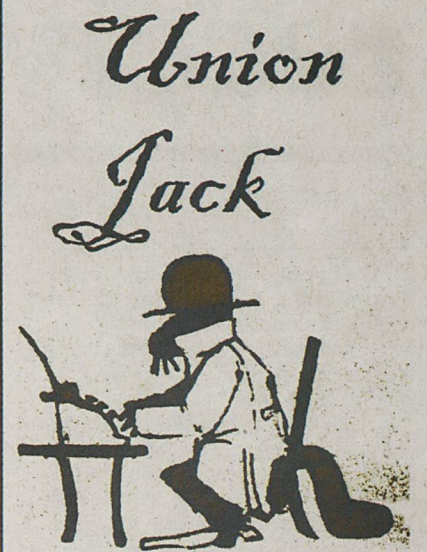


Photo: Natalie Wong

Union Jack UGM sketch



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

WANTED

Plenary session of any representative body to ridicule and generally undermine. Desperately seeking work after past employer went under as a result of poor market performance. Experience includes over ten years in the satire industry and having covered issues from the occupation to the barrel. For credible references please contact Aled Democratic Fissure at su.unstuck@lse.ac.uk.

Apathetic organisations need not apply.

Survival of the Nerdiest



Photo: LSESU

Sanjiv Nanwani

The LSE has selected its team that will represent the School on University Challenge (UC).

Around 250 universities and colleges usually apply for entry into the show, and a tough interview process reduces this to only 28 teams of which the LSE is one.

The LSE, which has appeared on the show six times since it was revived in 1994, has conducted an internal selection exercise in order to field the most knowledgeable candidates for the show. The exercise was led and managed by LSESU General Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher, assisted by LSESU Student Activities Manager Jarlath O'Hara and former UC participant and current MSc Economics student Rajan Patel.

The first round of the exercise was open to all interested LSE students. Students had to complete a written trivia quiz containing questions spanning categories including literature, geography, history, science, mathematics, arts and music.

The 8 best contestants were then placed into teams and had to battle their wits in a format that is identical to the University Challenge programme. A final team of five, including one reserve player, was finally chosen. The team, which consists of three undergraduates and two postgraduates, comprises Ilya Faybisovich

(Captain), Wilson Chew, David Dwyer, Leon Matthias and Pete Mills (reserve).

The highest score on the first round was "around 50%", and this was attributed to the "fiendishly difficult" questions that were set by Patel. Patel was part of the LSE team that reached the quarter finals two years ago.

Fisher said: "There is no formal training process before the UC screenings in the new year, but the team seem keen to meet regularly and do their best to train up."

Teams consist of four members and represent either a single university, or a college of the universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Wales or London.

The series takes a knockout format,

with the 14 first round winners advancing to the second round. Two matches, involving the four highest scoring losing teams from the first round (whose losing scores often exceed the winning scores in other first round matches), fill the remaining places in the second round which involves 16 teams.

From then on, only the winner advances. The pairings for matches are often chosen in order to keep stronger teams apart.

Exact dates for the actual television screenings of the show have not been set, but they have been tentatively scheduled for late in the spring. It will be presented by Jeremy Paxman, who has hosted the show ever since it was revived in 1994.

Sample questions

What meteorological phenomenon is measured by an udometer, a device more familiarly known as a pluviometer?
Rainfall.

In which of Shakespeare's plays is it written on a scroll, "All that glisters is not gold"?
The Merchant of Venice.

Who became Lord Chancellor on the fall of Cardinal Wolsey in 1529?
Thomas More.

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School quotes incorrect fees

Eunice Ng

A student is refusing to pay part of his tuition fees over a dispute with several parts of the School's administration.

The disagreement relates to an incorrect invoice which was distributed to all overseas students with unconditional offers during the summer.

Like many others, the student in question who wished to remain anonymous received an invoice in August quoting their yearly fee as £12,174.60. At the start of term they paid the quoted fee by cheque at the student services centre.

Three weeks ago, however, while checking to ascertain that his cheque had gone through the student discovered via LSEforYou that they had apparently not paid their fees in full.

The student immediately lodged an enquiry at the Fees Office. He was informed that the Undergraduate Admissions Office had quoted him the incorrect fee that the actual amount due was in excess of that which he had already paid. Members of staff on duty in the Fees Office promised the student that they would be notified of the outstanding balance that afternoon or the next morning.

However, the Fees Office failed to follow up on the issue. After five days the student emailed the Fees Office and was finally told that the correct fee was £12,840.00. After factoring in the 1% early payment discount the outstanding balance was determined as £537.

At this point in time the student is yet to pay the difference in fees. Talking to the

Beaver, he expressed his dissatisfaction at the way the Fees Office had handled the situation: "They excuse themselves by stating that the invoice I got was made by the Undergraduate Admissions Office, not the Fees Office, but honestly they should double check the [invoices] they send out - this is definitely not a good enough excuse."

An LSE spokesman told the Beaver that: "Incorrect information relating to the overseas fee invoice was sent to all overseas confirmed unconditional offer holders. Unfortunately it did not include the correct discounted tuition fee."

"We rectified this administrative error as soon as it came to light the following day by emailing all applicable offer holders informing them of the incorrect discounted figure and offering our sincere apologies for the inconvenience. We also assured them of further assistance to provide clarification of the discounted fee amount if needed. Colleagues in Finance were made aware of the issue at the same time."

The student plans to appeal against the fee but is unsure of whether he has any grounds to do so. The Students' Union has been alerted to his situation.

LSESU General Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher said: "It is unbelievable that an oversight of this magnitude has been allowed to happen on an issue of this importance. We will look very carefully at this student's case and others. Given the chaos surrounding national financing arrangements, one would have hoped that LSE would have ensured smooth running of its own processes at a local level"



Photo: Natalie Wong

Orientation Festival receives rave reviews

Shibani Mahtani

The LSE SU has recently conducted a survey to ascertain how successful this year's Orientation Festival was.

Undergraduates made up the bulk of the survey respondents, composing 79.1 per cent of the 358 respondents.

Feedback was generally positive, with 218 students agreeing that orientation was useful in helping them become familiar with all aspects of the LSE. 70 students strongly agreed and 176 students agreed that orientation made them feel more positive about starting on their course.

The survey indicated that the respondents found advertising initiatives before and during LSE Festival, organised by the LSESU, helpful and effective. 310 respondents checked the Orientation Festival website (<http://lsefestival.com>) for updated information on activities and to buy tickets for events, and a further 271 either agreed or strongly agreed that the information on the Orientation Festival website was helpful.

First year LLB student Ahmed Alani echoed these sentiments: "Being in Intercollegiate Halls, I was worried about settling into LSE life, and my course in general, but Orientation Week proved an invaluable opportunity to meet loads of different people. It was packed with

events, but the website was quite useful because it allowed me to pick and choose what I wanted to go to. By the end, I would say I was pretty comfortable at LSE."

However, 1st year undergraduate Gaurav "G-Man" Srivastava said: "Communication through the website was okay, but I'm not sure that everyone got it, and consequently some people may have missed out on the events".

"I also know that many people were put off by some of the events because of their emphasis on alcohol," he added.

For the first time, Festival Fair and registration were held solely in Clement House. 112 respondents disagreed that it was easy to navigate around the building and 127 respondents disagreed that they



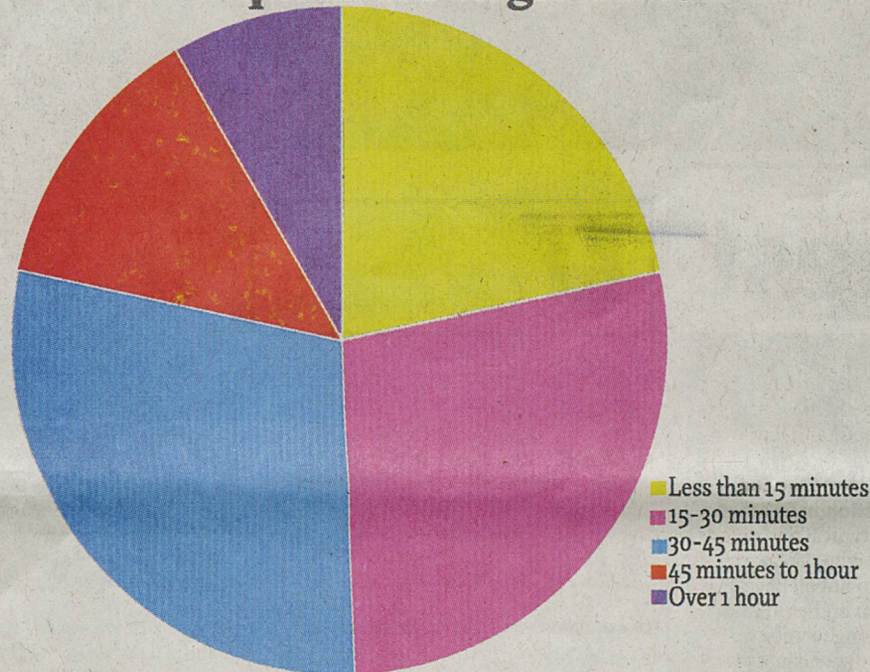
found the stalls they were looking for. This is in line with a survey conducted by The Beaver in the week after Festival Fair, in which 45 per cent of the 242 respondents said they did not find their way around easily.

Only a limited number of post-graduate students responded to the survey conducted by the LSESU. MSc China in comparative perspective student, Andrew Rajanathan said, "Postgraduates are far less likely to get involved and attend such events, but that is not to say they will not get involved in the Students' Union and school life in general. Course loads at the postgraduate level are often far more intense than at the undergraduate level."

LSESU Treasurer George Wetz said: "The results show that most had a positive experience of Orientation, but that we should re-focus and improve for next year. Next year's orientation will take into account the comments and survey data from this year."

"I think that undergrads are more-eager beavers when it comes to feedback surveys; perhaps there was a rather larger sense of excitement about the prize too. It is difficult to draw any conclusions as to general post-graduate involvement with non-academic life based on this survey alone. The survey is going to be put online again, but only postgraduates will be able to complete it."

Please tell us how long you had to queue for Registration



Coming up this week

LSE celebrates Pride

Shibani Mahtani

The London School of Economics Students' Union Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Society has this week launched the first ever LSE Pride Week on campus. Events will be held between Tuesday and Friday of this week, including a queer-themed Crush on Friday, and a Mr/Miss LSE drag competition.

The Week serves to raise awareness of LGBT issues on campus. LSESU LGBT Officer Scott MacDonald said: "Pride Weeks in previous years have been sedated affairs, failing to recognise that the best way to make students take notice of minority issues is to make a major commotion."

At the start and end of Pride Week, the LGBT Society will be conducting surveys of the school population to determine their knowledge and awareness of LGBT issues.

MacDonald said that such awareness is critical for the LGBT community to eventually begin to "campaign on issues and for acceptance" among LSE students.

He added: "We hope to send a clear message that LGBT students are present in all of the situations of every day LSE life. That there is more to being a gay man than clubbing, fashion and having exceptionally clear skin. It was more difficult than we originally thought to find students who would be willing to be outed to everyone on campus, perhaps indicative of the prejudice which creates the inertia that keeps so many students in the closet even on campus."

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4th Floor Restaurant (Old Building)//4th Floor Café Bar (Old Building)//The Garrick (Houghton Street)//Plaza Café (Library Terrace)//Café 54 (NAB) //Mezzanine (NAB) //Café Pepe (Clement House) //George IV (Portugal Street)

Pageants have inner beauty

Sam Tempest Keeping

The organisers of Miss University GB have hit back at claims that students should campaign against the event.

Alison Stallard, an employee of the Joshua Tree Foundation (JTF), has cited the event's charitable intentions in response to comments made by LSESU Women's Officer Jesse Robinson. The JTF is a charity which aims to "provide holidays and experiences for children and their families, where the child is diagnosed with terminal cancer" and is also responsible for organising the competition itself.

Speaking to the Beaver last week regarding the cancellation of Miss LSE, Robinson stated that "unfortunately the Miss University GB final will still be taking place in March, and we will need to continue campaigning against such pageants."

Stallard felt that Robinson had taken the competition out of context. She pointed out that in 2007 the JTF was adopted by an organisation called Vibe Models. The agreement between the two parties was that finalists in Miss Wales/Mr Wales and Miss Universe GB, competitions run by Vibe, would raise money for the JTF.

Over the past two years, finalists in these competitions have raised over £350,000 for the charity. She adds: "This money has been raised by motivated, intelligent and caring individuals who want to do something to make a difference to the lives of families affected by cancer."

"And so in that respect 'beauty pageants' are not simply 'a bit of fun' but are powerful vehicles for spreading the word about good causes and charities like ourselves."

This year, the charity decided to set up Miss University GB as an alternative fundraising option after donations slowed as a result of the recession. Stallard said: "we were given the opportunity to purchase two licenses to run two qualifying rounds for the Miss Universe GB 2010 competition and so we decided to do so."

"We therefore launched our Miss Cheerleader GB and Miss University GB competitions, to which we have had a massive response from young women



Photo: Ben Phillips

across the UK." The Winner of Miss University GB will automatically qualify for Miss Universe GB. They will also receive a £500 cash prize as well as a holiday to Lapland and a place on the JTF's Oz Experience, a trip which sees school children from across the country visit Australia to help with conservation projects.

In the same article Robinson also commented: "As women we are constantly bombarded with images of what we should look like. Women smiling down at us from Billboards, magazines, music videos, all brainwashing us with unachiev-

able images of female 'perfection'."

"This should not be perpetuated in a university environment where we expect to be judged on intelligence and hard work alone."

Again taking exception to the comments, Stallard felt that Robinson's views were somewhat "stereotypical and dated."

"The young women who take part in these competitions do not all have 'perfect' figures and their bodies are not unachievable. These young women are your typical girl next door, who just wants to do something a little different."

Regarding potential contestants, she said: "These women are not expected to undertake any 'role' other than to have fun and raise money for children with terminal cancer. They are certainly not passive recipients at the mercy of male judgement."

"Ironically most of the judges within these competitions are female and 75% of the audience who attend the finals are also female as this is all about celebrating female achievement not their objectification."

Going even further, Stallard criticised

the position taken by NUS on the issue of beauty pageants involving students saying: "I thought the ethos behind university life was all about giving young individuals the freedom of choice and speech."

"The NUS have taken a stand and decided that they do not want this publicised to students which completely contradicts the idea of giving students choice."

UG-empty



Photo: Natalie Wong



Photo: Ben Phillips

News in Brief

Sam Tempest Keeping

Campaign kick off

Last week saw the launch of two of the Union's marquee campaigns for resits and Wednesday afternoons free.

Speaking about the resits campaign, LSESU General Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher said: "Our vision is of an LSE where you can have a resit if you miss an exam in difficult circumstances (where you can get any mark); and that people who fail should have the choice of a resit (capped at a pass) or repeating the year."

"Students can sign the postcards to Heads of Department online at <http://tinyurl.com/resitslse>. They can also pick up postcards in person from any SU office, the Bars, Shop, Help Desk and much more."

Regarding the quest for Wednesday afternoons to be kept free Fisher noted that: "The school's survey of postgraduates has reported back. Of those surveyed, 65.1% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with having Wednesday afternoons free; only 16.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed."

"This shows that there is widespread support for allowing all students, including postgraduates, an opportunity to participate in sport and extra-curricular enrichment activities."

>> Above Right: You can take our Wednesdays but you can never take our freedom

>> Right: Tons of prejudice: Racist remarks have been left on the chalk board located in the Three Tuns bar. The comments were spotted by a Beaver photographer while at Batteries Not Included on Saturday night.

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W
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F

Wednesday
Afternoons
Free

Join the campaign at lsesu.com

LSE STUDENTS' UNION



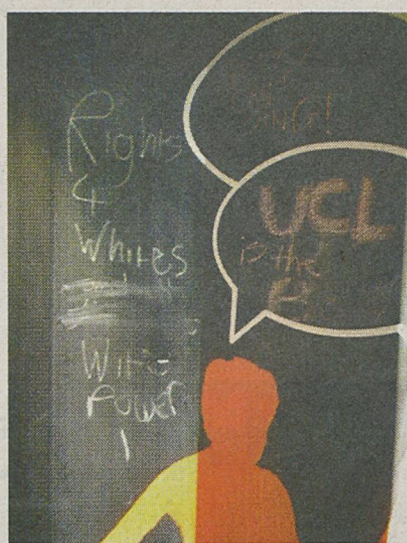
She's no Feminisn't

Are you a loud and proud? An accidental feminist? Or maybe a FUMB (feminist until matrimony beckons)?

Those who have read the Noughtie Girl's Guide to Feminism will be familiar with these terms, as will those who heard the the book's author, Ellie Levenson, speak at the LSE on Monday. The event was organised LSESU Women's Officer Jesse Robinson.

Levenson talked about how she hoped her book would demonstrate that anyone can class themselves a feminist. She said: "feminism is a stand alone idea and one does not need an appreciation of history in order to be a feminist".

She also dealt with such issues as men asking the father for a women's hand in marriage the role of women in politics, calling Margaret Thatcher "the great unsung Heroine of British Politics."



Amartya Sen speaks about the Idea of Justice

Emily Iwan

Nobel Prize winner Professor Amartya Sen spoke to a packed crowd in the Old Theatre last Friday afternoon addressing topics covered in his new book 'The Idea of Justice'.

Sociology Professor Richard Sennett introduced Sen as an academic who has "transformed the discipline of philosophy and economics" and described 'The Idea of Justice' as "a summation of lifetime of thinking".

Sen, who stayed after the lecture to sign copies of his book for students, said that the "Idea of Justice" is "not a manifesto", rather it is a discussion of contemporary moral debates and issues.

Sen modestly disagreed with Sennett's remark that his new book presented highly original thinking in the way that he contemplated what constitutes injustice before he addressed what exactly justice is. Sen said that he considered himself to be more of a traditional theorist and his work builds on many previous theories about economics and justice, such as those articulated by Marx, Rawls and Smith.

Sen also talked about the way he has been influenced by classical Indian legal thought and his experience with poverty in India. His experience studying famine in India impressed upon him the large gap between happiness and justice.

"I can't think of any time in my life that I saw anyone as happy as when a person suffering famine has had his first meal in two weeks," he said.

He stressed how much more important and telling access to opportunities and education is than feelings of "happiness" when evaluating justice.

He also discussed the deception involved in the notion of fulfillment. There are two aspects of fulfillment he said; whether or not a person feels fulfilled,



Photo: Jaynesh Patel

and objectively looking at and deciding whether the person is fulfilled or not.

"People often declare that they are fulfilled because their expectation is so low," Sen stated.

Sen then discussed the relationship between identity and justice. He discussed the many types of identities that exist within individuals and how dangerous it is to prioritize one identity above all others.

In his book 'Identity and Violence', Sen argued that you can raise an epis-

temic question that there are many ways to identify yourself. He said that violence incited by identity indicates that the perpetrators of violence believe: "only one identity matters, none of the other identities matter anymore".

"Cultivation of violence is done by privileging one identity over the others", he continued.

Sen rejects the idea of just violence based on the singleness of identity and discusses Bangladesh as an example of

an area where multiple identities exist in harmony. "Any kind of reasoning that only allows you to recognize and prioritize one identity is ridiculous, and cannot make violence just," Sen said.

Sen then briefly discussed the Iraq War, which he described as a disgusting and horrible mistake based on the reasoning behind the war.

"You have to cultivate moral sentiment", he said, "and I see my book as a contribution to this. The ultimate undoing

of injustice comes from the fact that people get very upset about it".

He believed there to be many kinds of injustices and not all of them are related to wealth.

"Giving priority to creation of wealth in general and ignoring other virtues in life, especially focusing on your own wealth generates a society in which equality and fairness is difficult to achieve," he stated. "But it is a question of not regarding wealth as a nasty thing, but regarding it as an important instrument in removing deprivation."

Sen then addressed questions from the audience. In response to a student who asked whether there needed to be a single world currency or a world parliament to end injustice: "No. In general I haven't seen anything to indicate that having only one currency will solve most of the reasons for world economic problems".

Sen then addressed questions relating to injustice and the economic crisis.

"Traditionally economics have never been independent of ethics," he said. "As human beings we are interested in trying to create a world in which we are happy to live, and in that context ethics comes into our own thinking".

Sen perceived a combination of factors produced the economic crisis. There was a failure of political ethics, individual ethics, and practical ethics on the economic side, in addition to the fact that the technology was moving ahead so that selling was happening so fast that it was hard to calculate risk.

While Sen identified himself as a "great supporter of Obama" he thinks the stimulus package should have been larger and that unemployment should have been directly addressed. "Being unemployed in Europe is terrible but not as terrible as it is in the US," Sen concluded, because of US weak social security system and lack of a national health service through the lines.

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What next? Surviving the 21st century

Sneha Kotecha

Lord Chris Patten, currently the co-Chair of the International Crisis Group, spoke at the LSE last Wednesday to mark the release of the paperback edition of his book, *What Next? Surviving the 21st Century*.

Professor David Held, the Graham Wallas Professor of Political Science, began the night by asking Patten why he wrote the book. Patten replied that there were two main reasons. Firstly he "blamed" Sir Martin Rees, author of *Our Final Century*, who stated that we have a 50-50 chance of surviving the 21st century. As the grandfather of five under-four year olds, Rees' claim did not settle well with Patten. Secondly, Patten wanted to enforce the point that dealing with the

problems we face today required more global and regional cooperation than ever before.

The intellectual framework on which Patten thinks our approach to global issues should be based is liberal internationalism. According to Patten, a liberal internationalist believes in "pluralism, the strengthening of civil society, accountability, openness, democracy and open economies" but they do not think markets regulate themselves. He argued that there has to be a pragmatic effort to deal with global problems in equity through the use of market instruments and government intervention.

Held went on to ask how this framework could be applied to tackle the various issues facing the world in the 21st century, starting with globalisation. In his book, Patten argues that globalisation is the driver of positive change. He explained

that globalisation is inevitable and beneficial on some levels, but it does not make everyone better off and those without skills or education are "likely to get left behind".

On the financial crisis, Patten stated that the greed of bankers was to blame for aspects of the crisis but that governments also need to take responsibility for their failure to regulate the shadow banking sector. In addition, he argued that "no amount of tinkering of financial institutions or mechanisms can save you from bad macroeconomic policy", which is partly why the US and UK are in the positions they are in.

He then explained that Greenspan's idea that markets would regulate themselves was fundamentally flawed. In Patten's opinion, the implications of the crisis for the future are that countries who borrowed a lot of money will soon undergo a "painful period of adjustment" and that banks will be obliged to "operate in a more restrained environment than...in the past".

The dialogue then turned towards security issues, focussing on 9/11 and how the Bush and Blair administrations could have dealt with the problem differently. Patten firmly claimed that they should not have invaded Iraq. He agreed with invading Afghanistan, but said there should have been enough "boots on the ground", once the Taliban regime had been eliminated, to create stability and provide enough resources for development, instead of invading Iraq straight away.

He thought the question we should ask now is, "what is the political strategy we are trying to operate in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and how can the military support that," placing more pressure on matters of local autonomy and corruption.

Another topic addressed in the book is climate change. Held asked whether a failure to reach a deal at Copenhagen would place the world climate in greater jeopardy, or did Patten agree with Obama that we shouldn't let the search for the perfect be the ending of the world for good. Patten was strongly in favour of the perfect solution and thought that Copenhagen will give us the start to a process which will make the US seriously address its carbon economy and will help differentiate between per capita and aggregate emissions.

Finally, when questioned about global governance and whether the G20 is a move in the right direction to fixing the current dysfunctional system, Patten answered that international institutions need to recognise countries like China and India as global powers, as many of the problems facing the world will not be solved without their cooperation.



Photo: Chris John

Meet the Management

Phyllis Lui

As part of the School's strategy to enhance staff-student communication, a pilot event entitled 'Meet the Management' was held last week.

Adrian Hall, Andy Farrell, Jean Sykes and Simeon Underwood were part of an informal Question and Answer event that was attended by undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD students. Hall, Farrell and Sykes each hold appointments as the heads of the LSE's three service branches, while Underwood serves as the LSE's Academic Registrar.

An email was sent to all students advertising the potentially termly event as "an opportunity directly to interact with the people responsible for the day-to-day operation of everything from residences to human resources, the library to the admissions process". It was also a follow-up to LSE Director Howard Davies' appearance at the Union General Meeting (UGM) last Thursday.

Questions were raised by several students regarding the availability of information regarding services provided, such as computers, laptop plug-ins and printers. These issues were noted by Adrian Hall, the Secretary of the School and Director of Administration. Jean Sykes, the Chief Information Officer, maintained that the statistics show that computer usage has gone down on campus, and that 15 per cent of computers were usually avail-

able for use at any one point of time..

A postgraduate student pointed out the ratio of students to a printer on campus was approximately 250 to 1.

Concern was also expressed about staff-student liaison committees and whether students' suggestions are being taken on board. The postgraduate student also expressed his frustration at how his department was not very receptive to the students' suggestions during these meetings.

PhD students brought up the issue of office relocation, from two offices into one big office, which they felt to be inadequate. Farrell, the Director of Finance and Facilities, replied that there should perhaps be consultations between the Estates Division and students.

As the staircase in Clement House has not been in operation since the beginning of this term, this was also raised, as well as whether the East Building was structurally unsound. Farrell denied the latter, but explained that the closure of the staircase was due to "a member of security [noticing] more vibration than usual" which prompted the investigation into whether the staircase was safe for use. As it was found that they were in fact "structurally unsound", work could only be carried out during nighttime and on weekends. The staircase is due to be in operation again next term.

Hall concluded the session by stating that the concerns raised will be addressed, and that reports will hopefully be made at the next meeting.

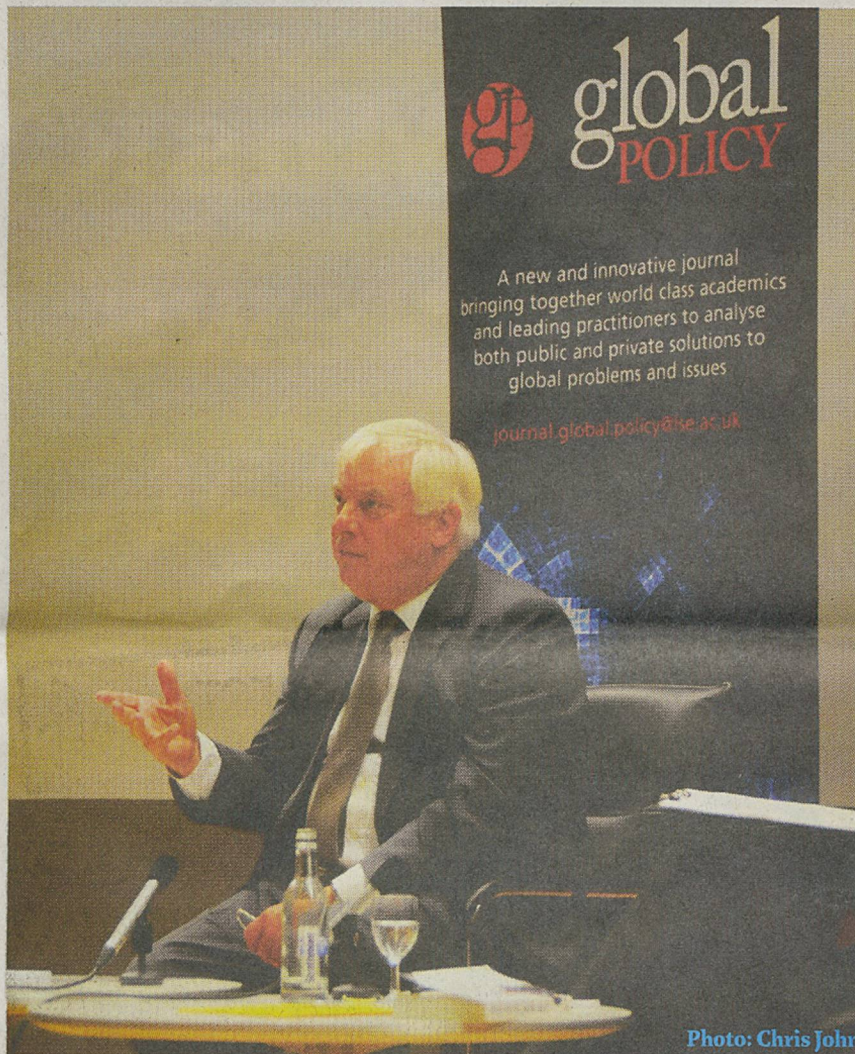


Photo: Chris John

Miliband "not a pessimist" ahead of Copenhagen

» Temporal, causal and geographical distances blamed for climate change inaction

Kerry-Rose O'Donnell

The Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, Ed Miliband gave a talk at the LSE last week about the politics of climate change and his aims in reaching a "comprehensive agreement" at Copenhagen.

Miliband focused on the UK's responsibility in cutting carbon emissions, calling for a shift in politics rather than policies to secure any potential agreement's future success. The Energy and Climate Change Secretary is due to travel with Gordon Brown to the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference next week in the hope of obtaining the "most ambitious agreement" possible.

In a special public lecture as part of the Ralph Miliband Lecture Series, he began by stressing the importance of the approaching December deadline in forcing the world to finalise an international compliance over the challenge. Despite reports in previous weeks suggesting an unlikelihood in reaching a legally binding treaty at the summit, he demonstrated a confidence in realising a "deal which will ensure that global emissions peak by 2020 at the latest". Miliband added that in the past week alone, Russia, Brazil and South Korea have each announced plans for major cuts in carbon emissions, reflecting an optimism surrounding the international mood towards ensuring an extensive agreement next month.

The Climate Change Minister, who

studied an MSc in Economics at the LSE, proceeded by taking the opportunity to look past the Copenhagen conference and explore the type of politics needed for Britain to remain a long term consensus for lasting action in terms of transitional plans, emphasising the importance of an adaption of politics over policies.

Describing the "unprecedented scale" in the challenge of managing climate change, Ed Miliband highlighted his view that the world needs dramatic change that has to be implemented quickly, whilst remaining a permanent feature of the global society. The UK already has legislation in place to guarantee a cut in carbon emissions by 80 per cent and Miliband showed his awareness of the need to get past the "politics of now", which he argued, is "not enough" to overcome the challenges of climate change, and "building and maintaining consent" within the UK to ensure the permanence an agreement.

The Labour Minister argued that without social acceptance of future policies in cutting carbon emissions, the terms of a change would be unsustainable; raising the question over what type of politics is needed to make this happen.

Turning to his proposition of a shift in the UK towards a "politics of the common good" and drawing upon experience from his own constituency, Darlington North, Miliband presented his main proposition in shifting politics in order to create a clear social justice and treat people as citizens rather than consumers. To the value of the audience, he acknowledged that parliament must be must be frank with people about the costs of the low carbon

transition whilst making society aware of a sense of "fairness in the way energy is provided" in order to gain its support.

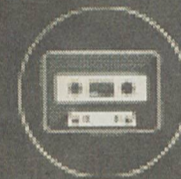
He added that although politicians hold a central role in creating politics which would easily encompass such change, it is the will of the people which has historically, and will continue to "change the world". Referring to the group of young people in the crowd involved in the climate change movement wearing t-shirts saying "how old will you be in 2050?", he reiterated a belief in the public and the self-interest aspect of a politics of common good in that there exists a public desire for change and that "social justice at its heart, we can have a low carbon transition that maintains public support".

Miliband is facing the Copenhagen summit with evident optimism, to the amusement of the audience. He declared that he was "not a pessimist" and did not believe in a negative political outlook in tackling climate change; quoting a fellow politician: "if Martin Luther King said I have a nightmare, nobody would have followed him".

At the close of the lecture, Ed Miliband assured the audience that although climate change is "not a problem that gets solved", "people demanding change has, throughout history, changed the world." He added that: "Nowhere is this more true than in relation to climate change, where the green movement has already moved opinion in so many countries." His energy left a sense that this could be the moment the world finally secures an agreement to work towards reducing the effects of climate change.



Photo: Matthias Kristensen



Music



News



Chat

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One year on, a pageant for feminist progress

This time last year, BSc Accounting and Finance fresher Keelin Gavaghan woke to find her image plastered across the gamut of national newspapers. Lizzie Merrow, the then LGBT Officer of the Students' Union, was seen beaming out of television sets in living rooms everywhere. The reason? Thanks to the enterprising protests of the LSESU Feminist Society, the Miss LSE beauty pageant became the emblem for all that was wrong about attitudes towards women. All across the land, a supposedly benevolent and light-hearted social event organised by LSE alumni captured the fervent sense of injustice felt towards the objectification of women, by feminists and other members of society alike. LSE was not alone in the limelight; similar protests were held at Miss SOAS and Miss King's pageants.

What a difference a year makes. In place of the widespread media coverage and evening news interviews, we are faced with the stony silence of promoters and the prevailing feeling of indifference from the student body. In most other circumstances, we would probably be complaining about the lack of reaction. Instead, the predominant emotion on Houghton Street is that of relief - relief that such an outmoded expression of female beauty has finally found its way to the rubbish heap.

Perhaps this is indicative of a boredom with protest - this was also the week in which Hugo Rifkind commented upon the reality, that "Society's most prominent activists are, when it comes to activism, actually pretty hopeless", after all. Perhaps this year's crop of freshers are too concerned with the perils of essay week, the dissatisfying state of teaching, and the fear of

being quoted on Overheard at LSE.

Whatever the cause, we must all be grateful for the absence of sadness at the passing of an opportunity for leering men to point and cheer, and for impressionable women to bundle feminism fifty years into the past. Perhaps it is the prerogative of hourglass-figured undergraduates amongst us to flaunt their stuff on the runway, and taking a fairly liberal stance, we cannot argue with this. However, many believe that Miss LSE was a morally questionable and intellectually lobomotising stain on the reputation of an institution that prides itself on promulgating socially progressive views. Stunningly, its promoters heralded its charitable intentions as an adequate motivation for parading a selection of Western ideals down a catwalk, before planting in them the idea that "Nobody said you have to look a certain way to take

part", to quote ultimately unsuccessful contestant Sonia Abdul-Rahman.

"Nobody with any self-respect" would take part in a beauty pageant, argued David Robson at the Daily Express a year ago. Since we can never call into doubt the intelligence of students at the LSE, perhaps a more accurate indictment of such dubiously charitable stunts would be that nobody with any self-respect would organise such a competition. With evidence of the total monies given to charity still not forthcoming a whole twelve months on, it is little wonder that an informed public is sufficiently wise not to lament the loss of this wholly disrespectful lowlight of the social calendar.

Thanks to the efforts of last year's barrage of protests and cavalcade of anger, this year's prospective beauty queens have been spared their blushes.

We are certain that the Sam Tempest Keepings of the world, looking for a party and something to ogle at, might shed a little tear, as will the glamorous teen beauty queens in our midst. We, however, will not be doing the same.

The Beaver would like to apologise for the decision taken in last week's Sport section concerning the 'Torso of the Week' feature. Permission was not sought from the owner and subject of the photograph, and the Editorial Board would like to express its sincere regret at any distress its oversight may have caused the individual in question.

Should we be Miss-ing LSE?

In the wake of the promoters' decision to cancel the Miss LSE pageant, we ask whether the decision is a victory for all women, or yet another blow for the under-entertained student body

Pierre Gompertz

It was not until I was asked to write this article that I fully realised that we wouldn't have a Miss LSE this year. This is a shame. Like most other 2nd or 3rd year students (and some 1st years, I imagine) I spend most of my time studying, either in the library or at home. The Miss LSE contest was one of the very rare non-political/fun events going on at the LSE and in my opinion it should not have been cancelled. As I've said, we spend most of our time studying and eating cheap, unhealthy food; and for some of us, the pouches under our eyes make us look scarier than Freddy Krueger on a bad day. What is wrong with a few girls wanting to feel good about themselves?

Please don't tell me they are contributing to the perpetual exploitation of women around the world, etc. The girls (that were) taking part in this contest were all smart - the fact that they got into LSE should be proof enough of that (though some of the comments written on the infamous Facebook group "Overheard at LSE" are starting to make me question this

belief). Last year, I read a whole bunch of comments by disgruntled feminists arguing that students should be judged for their intellectual capabilities and not for their looks, as if exams, essays, coursework and presentations are not enough to assess our intellect.

Furthermore, there is an argument that beauty should remain important, and that is for health reasons. A third of the American population is overweight; England is not doing much better, and the same can be said for most western countries. If people paid a bit more attention to what they eat and exercised a bit more, this wouldn't be such a big problem. I know that being self-conscious can have other serious consequences. But there is nothing bad with wanting to look good or be in shape.

I also find that there is a lot of hypocrisy going on around, with women feeling objectified by men like a lamb by a wolf. Why is it that as soon as we comment upon someone's beauty, there is instantly a feeling of revolution spreading like wildfire through feminists en masse? Is it not just possible to look at someone, consider they suit our taste (because believe it or not, looks are important for most people, whatever they might say), and then move on? However, as soon as there seems to be a minimum of objectification going on, instant shrieks rise up from defenders of feminism. As if objectification is some-

thing reserved for women! The number of comments on Facebook about Robert Pattinson would seem to attest to the fact that women find it right too to stare at men like the wolf stared at Little Red Riding Hood. And why shouldn't they? We're young; we're sick of studying; we're horny - let us stare!

What this comes down to in the end is, have the feminists not better things to do? Salaries between men and women remain unequal; supermodels starve themselves; women are still abused horribly in many parts of the world. Yet, I have not seen a single stall on Houghton Street since the beginning of the year raising awareness about the fact that female genital mutilation is still being practiced, or about eating disorders and their consequences on one's health, or passing a petition to demand that LSE only accept companies on campus which promise equal salaries between men and women.

The Miss LSE contest was an easy target which did not require too much effort on the part of its critics, and they therefore went all out against it. Feminism at LSE is simply a way for insecure women to punish other girls who, if only for a short period during the year, want to feel good about themselves. Girls, get real, rally to fight serious problems and stop promoting "spectator feminism". For the moment, you're worth little more than a bad Jerry Springer show.

or disapproval, ultimately childlike and powerless.

The position of power allocated to pageant judges is in itself indicative of wider trends whereby men are seen as having the authority to judge what women should be, how they should look and behave, even what body parts we should have: in last year's competition, a transgender student was forbidden to partake. And where does this leave the women who aren't crowned? The women who aren't 'woman' enough? Statistics tell us that women are over three times more likely than men to have eating disorders. Crude, superficial interpretations of beauty aren't just a bit of fun, they leave many women with feelings of great pressure and anxiety, having failed to fit these impossibly narrow definitions of what is attractive.

Not only do such pageants create unhealthy ideals for women, it is also completely patronising on men to assume that their judgments of women are quite so shallow. And that the only way they can have relationships is with women a few paces away on a stage. The men who go along to watch must be right lads - maybe they'll even have some banter, a few pints, and get pushed home by the boys in a shopping trolley. A real wild night that will be. Definitely one for the Facebook status.

It's a great achievement that Miss LSE has been cancelled this year, but we should not limit ourselves to only noticing sexism where it is blatantly obvious. The Miss University of London competition was a consequence of current consciousness surrounding women's roles. These beauty pageants don't spring from nowhere, they develop in the fertile soil of sexist practice.

Jessie Robinson

It is a mistake to talk about Miss LSE as 'shocking' and 'abhorrent'. It should be both of these things but it's not. It's not shocking because it's consistent with the objectification and subordination faced by women throughout their lives. Sexism may be more concealed in the boardroom than it is on the runway, but that does not mean it has ceased to exist.

A fellow feminist recently said to me that in spite of herself, she liked the compliment when men whistled at her on the street. I think this sentiment is perhaps what continues to make beauty pageants appealing to some women. Whether its being whistled at or crowned a queen, women are socially honed to expect and subsequently require reassurance from men. Women are constantly bombarded with images of what we should look like. Billboards, newspapers, magazines, and music videos all brain wash us with endless unachievable images of female 'perfection', and we find ourselves stumbling over our ball-gowns to reach these distant goals. Then, when we are whistled at or complimented by men it is no wonder we feel a sense of relief: we believe we have achieved this image of perfection; the billboard goddesses are smiling down on us - thumbs up. The man on the street and the man in the advertising company have worked in an subconscious duo leaving us to feel as though we must expect the judgements of men and in turn strive for their approval. This leaves us feeling like objects - passive recipients of men's praise

The green mile is a dead end

The arguments against capital punishment clearly advocate its demise

Harriet Deane

The US remains one of the few 'developed' countries in the world to retain the death penalty, with 35 states ongoing proponents, 10 having executed one or more defendants so far this year. The capital punishment 'capital', Texas, has accounted for over half of all defendants executed in the US, with a toll of 22 in this year alone. Murmurs of dissent, however, are growing more audible. Former governor Mark White has voiced concerns in relation to the risk of executing the innocent: since 1973, 130 people have been exonerated and released from death row, largely due to DNA evidence of their innocence. A growing body of research since the 1970s has warned of the fallibility of eyewitness evidence, upon which numerous convictions are based. And while conservative opposition to the death penalty is largely based around concerns about false convictions, their faltering may call for a more open, moral debate about the attitudes and beliefs that surround the use of capital punishment.

Research has shown that support for the death penalty is largely based on a desire to be free of crime, presumably due to the deterrence that the threat of death must represent to would-be violent criminals. Yet empirical evidence demonstrates the opposite. US states with the death penalty have a higher average murder rate than those without.

The South, which accounts for over 80 per cent of all executions, also has the highest murder rate in the country. The comparison is most striking in relation to the Northwest, which accounts for less than 1 per cent of all executions and boasts the lowest murder rate in the US. Expert opinion reflects these figures: a recent survey of former and present presidents of American criminological societies found that 88 per cent reject the notion that capital punishment acts as a deterrent for murder. Amnesty International goes as far as to suggest that the death penalty may even propagate violence via a "brutalising effect", endorsing the use of force against others. Nor is it beneficial in terms of cost: in Texas, a death penalty case costs, on average, three times as much as incarceration in a single cell, with the highest level of security, for life.

Other statistics raise concerns about the way in which non-white defendants may be affected by capital punishment. Ethnic minorities in both the UK and the US are over-represented in prison populations; unsurprisingly, they also represent a disproportionate number of US prisoners on death row. Worryingly, research suggests this could be linked to race-of-victim discrimination. A study of the death penalty in North Carolina found that defendants whose victims were white were 3.5 times more likely to receive the death penalty than those with a non-white victim. These results, duplicated in other states, are sickeningly reminiscent of the last century's proliferation of lynching of black men accused of violence against white women. Like capital punishment today, these brutal murders (occasionally in reaction to a consensual relationship between a black man and a white woman)

were condoned by many as a just punishment and an effective deterrent.

A further argument promulgated by death penalty proponents is that of justice for the family of victims. This perspective homogenises the families as universally revengeful, ignoring the significant proportion that are opposed to the death penalty. In the US, they make up the membership of two charities, Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation and Murder Victims' Families for Human Rights. Marietta Jaeger Lane, whose seven-year old daughter was murdered, states that her daughter deserves a "more honourable memorial that pre-meditated state-sanctioned killing", whilst Marie Deans of the MVFHR sensitively points out that capital punishment "creates more victims", alluding to the inevitable harm caused to defendants' innocent family members. Individual members of these organisations frequently point to the complex social and emotional circumstances that may lead someone to commit murder, acknowledging that capital punishment is a simplistic approach to a collection of complex societal and individual problems.

Putting aside issues relating to the fallibility of the criminal justice system, the 'common sense' arguments for capital punishment - that it is crime-reducing, cost-effective and provides justice for victims' families - seem to have little standing in reality. The US is frequently cited by other nations when justifying their own use of the death penalty. Perhaps it is time for the governors of participating states to take a step back and consider whether they should be utilising and endorsing a technique that may brutalise their society, waste valuable resources and provide little relief for the families of victims.



Capital punishment belongs firmly in the past
Photo: flickr user Ingorry

LSE dogged by twin dogmas

The School's unwillingness to accept the uncertainty of supposedly objective subjects is hampering graduates' breadth of thought

Sean Gittins

Before I came to study at the LSE I was aware of its reputation as the City's nursery. The premier place to study the social sciences, it has a prominent role both as a place of learning and as an institution with close ties to the legal, business, media and political professions. There is however a growing tension between these two demands, the result of which means the LSE is sacrificing its role as an intellectual centre in order to maintain strong relations with the City. Many of the courses on offer increasingly focus on teaching a set of ideologies and dogmas aimed at preparing students for careers in the aforementioned professions rather than on in-depth and challenging learning.

My studies are wide-ranging, both in content and standard. Some of the courses made up a formal requirement of my choice of study, others I sat in on out of pure interest. Attending courses on geography, economics, philosophy, history, social policy, sociology and mathematics, I noticed almost all of them shared some unique dogmas. The first is what I call the fact versus opinion dogma; the second, I call the truth dogma. Both of these lead to the detriment of a true education as well as fostering intellectual arrogance.

Many of the LSE's lecturers and students seem wedded to the idea that some subjects are facts; others, opinions.

Economics, mathematics and politics are just some of the subjects presented as fact-based and rooted in objective truths. Subjects such as anthropology and sociology are grouped onto the other side of the divide, supposedly grounded in opinion, and therefore subjective.

Economics is far from objective, as even a rudimentary acquaintance with the history of the subject would teach you. The same applies to mathematics and politics. Fostering the belief that economics and other such subjects are objective, and therefore absolute, is dangerous. Priming people to believe they are dealing in theories that are the whole truth provides little flexibility when the theories models are compared and are shown to clash with the real world. History has taught us that on such occasions theory trumps reality, often to the detriment of many.

The history of economic thought, which economics degrees at the LSE do not explore, reveals a long and complex history of ideas that betrays any assumption that the core concepts of the discipline are self-evident. Key terms such as labour, value, price, money, the nature of markets and capitalism itself are all contested. Notably, Smith, Marx and Keynes all grappled with these very problems. These great thinkers thought outside the box whilst simultaneously engaging with the work of their predecessors, and it is to our and the world's detriment that we are not made to study them. That the LSE, a university that is ranked highest in the world for the study of economics, can say it provides the best education in economics while side-stepping these great thinkers borders on paradoxical.

Most tellingly, perhaps, is economics' failure to meet the requirements of any

true science, at the root of which must lay the ability to predict and explain the phenomena with which it is concerned. Economics fails to stand up to these ideals. That we are in an economic crisis that the majority of the world's economists failed to predict is the most damning indictment of its ability on this front.

The tools of the mathematician, which are put to wide and liberal use by current economists, underlies why many believe modern economics to be an objective science. Believed to be the most objective of all human knowledge, the ability to formalise one's theory mathematically is currently seen as a desiderata of whether a theory pertains to truth. However, just as in economics, the real nature of mathematics and mathematical truths is more complex and debatable. There are no conclusive arguments to suggest that mathematics is objective. One of the most interesting intellectual struggles in the twentieth century was a quest to find this certainty for mathematical truths. The philosophers Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell were some of the main players in this fascinating history and their hopes were shattered by Kurt Godel with the publication of his incompleteness theorems in 1931.

Since studying at the LSE, I have heard repeatedly, and both implicitly and explicitly, the assertion that some subjects are objective and others are not. Such a belief is pure rot. There is no reason why someone studying what are pejoratively called subjective subjects such as anthropology and sociology should believe their content of their courses to be less truth-apt or informative than economics or mathematics. Those that preach otherwise are either blinded by pseudo-

Fostering the belief that economics and other such subjects are objective, and therefore absolute, is dangerous

scientific details or ignorant of history. Whilst the LSE can do nothing about the former problem, it is its duty as a world class educational establishment to teach us the history of a subject rather than just one school of thought as the truth.

The study of economic thought goes far beyond what people are taught in Economics B and the other economics courses on offer at the LSE - not just in detail, but in scope and philosophy too. Similarly, the school of philosophical thought taught at the LSE, analytic philosophy, is just one mode of philosophical expression. That we are not taught so undermines our education. We are taught a branch and particular school of economics and philosophy, for example, without being told that these are exactly that, schools of thought on the subject. The absence of such information leads one to the erroneous conclusion that the subject's contents are the whole truth. By the time one realises this it will be extremely difficult to shed the ideological foundations that have been instilled.

What little debate I have found in classes has been within the subject itself rather than about the nature and content of the subject. It has irritated me to see so little discussed outside the narrow framework within which we are taught. It may be objected that gaining employment in the legal, political and business professions requires a grounding in only particular schools of thought. If this is the case, and the LSE gladly goes about producing staff for these professions, it deserves nothing more than to lose its status as an educational and intellectual centre.

Barely a level playing field

Delays in SU budgets have left clubs and societies virtually crippled

Leon Fellas

Our sports teams and societies represent the school to the greater public and with hands being tied by the budget problems, the current system for societies has to be improved. The societies of LSE cannot have the social impact they desire and our sports teams cannot perform at their highest level with the ongoing issues. As it stands there seems to be much confusion as to what is happening behind the scenes with regard to society budgets.

An example we saw last week in the Beaver was of AU teams being constrained in their training by problems with budget allocation. In the example given, the men's basketball team were quoted as only having sufficient funds for two more training sessions, in addition to problems with reimbursement of travel costs. In all likelihood, there may be many more teams struggling to operate with such a lack of funds, and a budget system that is utterly inflexible and unfit for purpose.

It is a shame that the effects of the budget disarray are being felt hard, particularly within the AU. We should be encouraging as many students at LSE to participate in sporting activities. These activities are not only good for people's well-being but provide a community flavour to the campus. With the time cost associated with representing the school at sport, added possibility of journey costs and kit costs could discourage students from getting involved in sport at LSE. Our Athletics Union does a great job on (and off) the field in helping LSE punch above

its weight. We regularly outperform larger universities on the field; it would be a crying shame if we let that go to waste by not giving them the financial backing to keep doing what they do best.

The LSE student body has done a great job of promoting the school through its societies. For such a small university, we have achieved national press coverage many times in the past year, succeeded in vocalising student opinions to the general public and have shown what a wonderfully diverse place LSE is to study at. We need to improve the process at LSE so that our societies can continue to bring enjoyment to many and to start functioning to the utmost. The week nine limit that we have now is not sufficient to service. It is a flaw in the system that ties down efforts till almost halfway through the year.

With over 160 societies all requesting vastly larger amounts of money than the Union can afford to allocate, perhaps we need more transparency, or at the very least, more public awareness, in the budgetary process. With this we can perhaps be in a stronger position to determine society and sport team budgets far quicker than the current system allows.

As a collective body we should be behind any reforms that will help improve the situation, which as it stands is unsatisfactory and not up to scratch. Hopefully the UGM can seek a resolution to the issues we face (although I have my doubts). Perhaps with societies being such a fundamental part of student life we might need to give them greater freedom from UGM regulation.

So here's to having a swift end to the budgetary problems so that we can get things back on track. So our societies can keep up the great work in the LSE community and in the general public. And finally so that our AU teams can keep outperforming the opposition and representing the LSE at the highest level.



When the levy breaks

The NUS's proposed graduate tax is the only choice that is fair for every student

Coren Lass

The issue of the university funding crisis has come to the fore recently, with Lord Browne chairing a review that is widely expected to signal the green light for tuition fees to be raised to £5000 or even £7000 per year. The disastrous implications of this on current and future students does not even need to be outlined: British graduates already start their working lives with an eye-watering £23,000 stack of debt on average, and this price hike would only make this situation worse. I am not questioning the need for universities to attract more funding, but forcing students and their families to pay more than the £3225 in annual fees is not in anybody's interest. Clearly LSE students are not happy with the prospect, and it seems some action will be taken to protest this.

I am hereby proposing that we, as an institution, provide a solution rather than whinging and stamping our feet. The National Union of Students (NUS) has commissioned their own review and have come to the conclusion that we should scrap tuition fees altogether and replace it with a graduate tax. This would mean that those who directly benefit from their degrees such as the quintessential LSE graduate, working at Goldman Sachs, for example, pay the most for the invest-

ment in their education that the state has paid for. It would work on a sliding scale meaning the big winners from university will pay more than those that finish their degrees and end up on low incomes, with many not paying at all. The NUS has made it very clear that these taxes will be of a limited period of twenty years, so graduates won't have to fork out for the degree they finished at the age of twenty-one for the rest of their life.

Scrapping tuition fees completely and replacing them with a graduate tax is the only fair way to fund university. With no fees, everyone is on a level playing field financially and everyone can afford to study at our wonderful academic institutions. If you benefit and are thus in a position to pay for your degree, you will do so. Otherwise you will pay less, which is in stark contrast to the status quo where everyone is stacked with unbelievable levels of debt.

I appeal to LSE students to be constructive. Quit the inevitable whinging about higher tuition fees. We'll be taken more seriously if we approach this head on and provide a solution that is credible and infinitely fairer than the current shambles. Hardly any of us want to be paying £3225 per year, let alone double that. None of us want to be forced into investment banking because of the debt we will have weighing us down. Let's stand united and support the National Union of Students and help create a fairer system for us and those that will be going through university in the future.

Say no to tuition fees, no to unfair debt, and yes to graduate tax, because it is the only fair funding option.

Lewinsky

Estelle Cooch



Belle de Jour's unmasking presents a worrying lack of understanding of the situation facing prostitutes

Last weekend, while spilling her pint across the dance floor, a particularly inebriated friend turned to me and screamed (in what she later termed a complete moment of inspiration) 'Oh my God Estelle, I've just worked it out, men get laid, but WOMEN GET SCREWED.' What had incensed my friend to this extent was the revealing of celebrity 'Belle de Jour' as one Dr. Brooke Magnanti, a currently successful research associate in developmental neurotoxicology at Bristol University. Magnanti made a name for her (anonymous) self by writing *The Intimate Adventures of a London Call Girl* in which she described her quest to fund her PhD by working for two years as a 'high-class prostitute'.

When she revealed her identity last week, she declared, 'What I write about is something every depiction of prostitution in this country in recent years has not

been permitted to say'. Magnanti's writings depict a glamorous and alluring world in which beautiful women have stimulating sexual experiences in expensive hotels interspersed with romantic candle-lit dinners.

I struggle to find a way Magnanti's description could be further from the truth. Her books are not only deceptive, presenting an exceptional image of prostitution, but they are hugely insulting to those women who find themselves trapped in a violent and abusive industry which Magnanti sanitises and presents as a fun game entered into by free choice. Magnanti has become the latest outreach worker for an industry which, put simply, kills women.

A study published in 2003 interviewed 854 working prostitutes (including male and transgender prostitutes) in nine different countries. Out of those interviewed, 60 to 75 per cent had been raped while

working in prostitution; of these more than half said they were 'often raped' and 65 to 95 per cent were sexually abused as children. 68 per cent subsequently developed post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); a figure that is more than double the number of Vietnam war veterans who developed PTSD. An earlier report found that chance of early death is increased by 40 per cent while working in prostitution.

Sex can be many different things. It can be something immensely special between two people. It can be exciting and kinky between twenty people, or it can be depressingly boring if your partner's awareness of the clitoris is as comprehensive as their awareness of nuclear physics. But what it should always be is consensual.

The vast majority of those involved in prostitution have a history of poverty and being sexually abused. Brooke Magnanti laments in her book, 'granted I'm meant

to fuck them regardless of whether they're covered in hairy moles or have a grand total of three teeth ... but it's better than watching the clock until the next scheduled tea break in a dismal staff room'. Personally I would much rather do a vast quantity of mind-numbing jobs and so would the 89% of prostitutes who claim they want to leave the industry.

I am glad that Belle de Jour was not raped, beaten or acquired any of the sexually transmitted diseases that are endemic to the industry, but the representation of prostitution as a safe and rational career choice is offensive. Are we going to congratulate ourselves for our enlightenment while some of the most vulnerable people in our society are subject to continued abuse? Or can we perhaps envisage a better world in which therapy, safe housing, support for children, drug rehabilitation and of course proper funding for education are available to those who have been

most let down by life's opportunities? I hope we can imagine the latter and, in a city where one in every three hundred women is a prostitute, I hope we can imagine it soon.

Currie

David Whitaker



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

It has recently come to light that the Bank of England's MPC (Monetary Policy Committee) showed a three-way split in opinions regarding the Bank's quantitative easing measures, with the Bank's Chief Economist Spencer Dale opposing a further expansion of the programme. Those who support the Bank's quantitative easing programme have claimed that traditional monetary instruments such as interest rate changes are now obsolete; a direct injection of money is needed. The consequences of not acting would be potentially disastrous: a significant fall in the money supply and the destructive effects of deflation. The Conservatives initially found themselves in opposition to this view, with David Cameron espousing his party's ideological opposition to money-printing; Cameron hinted that his party

would pressure the Bank to 'wind down' its quantitative easing by next year.

However, the Conservatives have softened this stance in recent weeks, though the majority of right-wing commentators remain deeply suspicious of the programme. George Osborne, the Shadow Chancellor, has been quick to remind the electorate that the Bank of England can make its decisions independent of the political system, a prerogative enshrined since 1997. "Quantitative easing is a matter for the central bank," Osborne said in a London speech recently, also carefully sidestepping the issue of the Bank's asset purchase measures. Nevertheless, the political Right is certainly not in agreement on the issue. Subscribers to right wing forums such as ConservativeHome have pointed out that the OECD (Organisation of Economic Cooperation and

Development) has told Britain that it must reverse its monetary policies by 2011, as well as reining in its bloated public spending. Clearly Conservatives believe that if printing money must be done, its implementation should be limited to the short run only; however, the painful process of reversing expansionary monetary and fiscal policy is inevitable.

The latent opposition to quantitative easing stems from two simple fears: fear of the unknown and, ironically, fear of inflation. The Right is not alone in acknowledging that the Bank of England is truly heading into terra incognita with its massive injection of money into the economy. If the Bank does not inject enough money, the spiral of deflation will lead to a continuous process of falling incomes and prices, associated with a collapse in aggregate demand. Conversely,

if the Bank's efforts prove excessive, the deluge of money in the economy could not only reverse the situation of deflation but also raise inflation to unprecedented levels in the future. This is what some Conservatives truly fear; the diligent, decade-long work of Thatcher and Major to combat and control inflation undone by profligate monetary policy.

For now, the political Right will fall in line with the current consensus on monetary policy: that the quantitative easing programme is necessary to boost the money supply during the recession and to prevent a situation similar to what happened in the 1930s. The Conservative stance can therefore be summarised as 'nervous support'. Anyhow, The Bank of England has the power to implement the policy regardless of right-wing misgivings. Furthermore, the state of public

finances is receiving greater attention and criticism at this time – the public mood is far clearer on government spending (that it should fall) than it is on monetary affairs. The Conservatives will have to hope that the Bank's massive monetary experiment is successful, and complements their desire to reduce the size of the state from 2010 onwards.

Letters to the Editor

Madam - LSE's disappointing NSS results can be viewed from another perspective. The NSS was designed to help prospective students and parents in choosing a university, and to improve university teaching in the UK. For that purpose, third year students are asked to indicate whether they agree with a number of statements, including "The course is well organised and is running smoothly." In 2009, 83% of LSE respondents indicated they agreed, compared to 79% at UCL. Does this mean our courses are better organised and are running more smoothly than courses at UCL? Of course not. No student is studying both at LSE and UCL, so a comparison of these numbers is meaningless. In Manchester, only 73% of students agreed on this item, a full 10% less than at LSE, so surely their organisation is a mess com-

pared to ours? Unfortunately, we cannot draw this conclusion either, and for the same reason: no student is studying both at LSE and Manchester. LSE jointly tops the list on this item, and we can hope our courses are indeed the best organised in the UK (whatever "best organised" might mean); the point is that the NSS results provide no reliable evidence on differences in quality of courses across universities. Unfortunately, all the questions of the NSS yield equally uninformative numbers.

The NSS wastes both students' time and government money. It is not helpful for prospective students and parents due to the difficulties in interpreting the numbers, and there is no reason to assume it will lead to improved teaching; teaching improvement is a far too costly and inefficient way for universities to boost their

NSS scores. The NSS should be abolished and we should rely more on internal surveys which, if well-designed, are potentially useful. I would encourage the LSESU to follow Cambridge University's SU in actively opposing this pointless exercise which wastes its members' time.

Wicher Bergsma
Senior Lecturer in Statistics

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Features

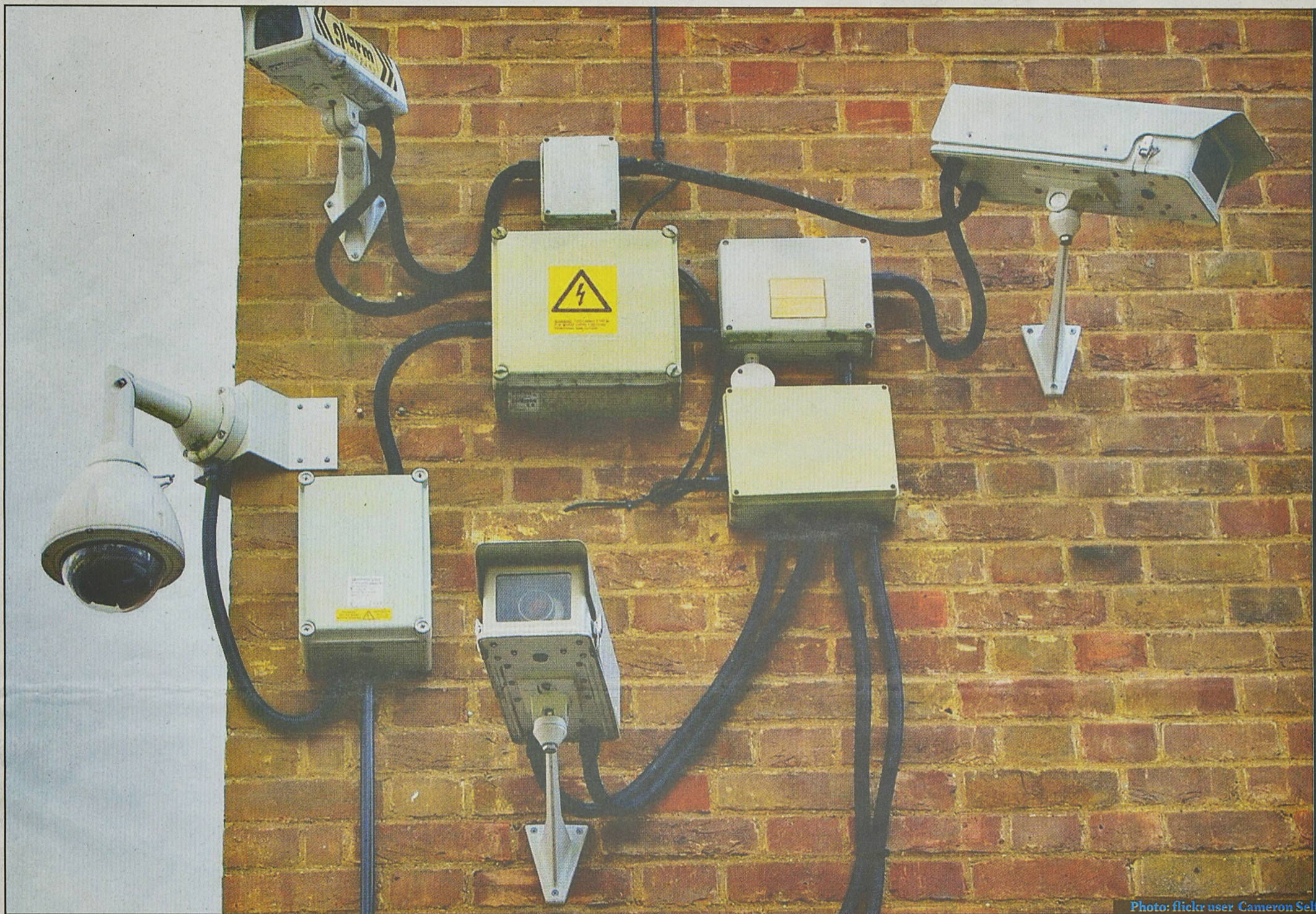


Photo: flickr user Cameron Self

Limiting artistic license

Shibani Mahtani discusses how the arts can be stunted by an over-mighty state

Political repression, limited press freedom and censorship in all its various shapes and forms are synonymous with any illiberal regimes. Standards of judging 'illiberal' regimes are varied, from the Reporters Without Borders press freedom index to The Economist Intelligence Unit's index of democracy. The international community and internal opposition often cries for a less regulated press or greater political participation in these countries but so often, limitations within a sphere that should be sacrosanct and untouched by the powers that be are left unnoticed: the arts.

Limiting our discussion to pure 'dictatorships' is misleading, and gives countries that attempt to masquerade as democracies too much credit. Blatant dictatorships such as the North Korean regime are perhaps few and far between, but many political scientists define systems which are not quite autocratic, but not quite democratic either, as hybrid regimes; or perhaps "flawed democracies", marked often by open economic systems but political systems that remain rigid and in opposition to liberal, democratic values and ideals. These regimes are equally guilty of limiting freedom of expression, for ends that are not necessarily political but fluffier "social" or "cultural" implications.

Singapore is perhaps not the most glaring example when one thinks of a "flawed democracy". Indeed, it is a term the city-state would resent, media outlets

ranging from the Far Eastern Economic Review to the Economist and the International Herald Tribune have been slapped with defamation suits for even hinting at the concept. Yet the fact remains that Singapore is a notorious censor of the arts, something that anyone involved in the arts scene in Singapore would willingly testify to. In 1994, performance artist Josef Ng staged a production after midnight, to a small handful of people, caning slabs of tofu to protest against 12 homosexual men who were arrested and punished by caning. He bared his posterior to the audience and snipped off some of his pubic hair, and for this was charged under obscenity laws, banned for performing in public and had his theatre grants cut by the government. A play about a rape within an Indian Muslim marriage was banned, and a film about an opposition political was withdrawn from the Singapore International Film Festival in the same year. Bodies such as the Media Development Authority have been put into place to regulate the arts, and even though the state has loosened its control on the arts, it is fuelled only by the profitable desire to turn Singapore into a hub for the arts rather than any commitment to values such as freedom of expression. Any progress made in 'fringe' media such as the arts does not translate into the mainstream media, because of the practical fact that mass media reaches a far greater audience and could challenge the 'stability' (read: ruling party's grip on power) of the state in more drastic ways.

There is a perception that the arts grows out of oppression and censorship, but as we are moving further in to the 21st century, it is untenable to continue imposing barriers on artistic freedom

Iran is perhaps unequivocally declared to be an illiberal democracy, as the recent election kerfuffle and the widespread student protests that followed indicated. Following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the Supreme Cultural Revolution Council (SCRC) was founded, eliminating dance as an art form altogether. Ayatollah Khomeini wrote that expressions of Westernisation, 'rape the youth of our country and stifle in them the spirit of virtue and bravery'. All under art forms went under the strict supervision of the department, and Khomeini decreed the SCRC to be the highest body for producing guidelines and making decisions in relation to all cultural, educational and research activities. Bodies such as the Orwellian named Ministry of Culture and Information Guidance creates an elaborate system of councils that regulate and monitor every sphere of artistic expression. An 'artistic license' has become the bane of every photographer, journalist, musician or director's existence and authorization can take weeks, months or years, and can be denied altogether. Using the Qu'ranic verse "The believers, men and women, are guardians of one another; they enjoy the good and forbid the evil," in their Constitution to justify this stringent censorship brings us to another point - how far can religion interfere with the artistic expression in a state, and how far should religion govern politics so strictly as to impinge on expression outside the political? Reform movements since have been limited and with a youthful and ethnically diverse na-

tion that is getting harder to suppress, the Cultural Council still works to ensure that the education and culture of Iran remains "100% Islamic" as Khomeini directed.

In the case of Singapore, states do not need to have explicitly stated guidelines for artistic expression to fall under the jurisdiction of the government, rather than the artist himself. In Iran, articles from the Qu'ran that are central to the very Constitution of the state leads to iron-clad mechanisms that prevent the growth of the arts, and encourages self-censorship which is even more detrimental. There is a perception that the arts grows out of oppression and censorship, but as we are moving further in to the 21st century, it is untenable to continue imposing barriers on artistic freedom when the reach and influence of the mass media is irrepressible.

With bite-sized information and tidbits of news becoming everyone's preferred diet, the state should not restrain a medium that is already on the fringes and has enough risk to its continued relevance to society. In a sphere that has consistently acted as a solace and escape for society and an avenue for human flourish, the state and censorship in any shape of form has no place. After all, as Henry Louis Gates said, "Censorship is to art as lynching is to justice"

ROYAL RENDEZVOUS

SACHIN PATEL and PHYLLIS LUI converse with QUEEN NOOR OF JORDAN about involving the youth in the Global Zero initiative for nuclear disarmament

Queen Noor is the Queen Consort of Jordan and widow of King Hussein of Jordan. She is the current President of the United World Colleges movement and an advocate of the nuclear disarmament group, Global Zero. As Queen Consort she has worked to further the cause of human rights and education in Jordan and across the Arab world. Here she explains why she is in London and what prospects she believes Global Zero has.

What is the purpose of your visit to London, Your Majesty?

It is the opportunity today, which is one that means a great deal to us at Global Zero - to bring the challenge of nuclear disarmament to an academic environment where I imagine you all think very hard. As an international, non-partisan organisation, we are unique in bringing together an increasingly large number of world leaders to discuss nuclear disarmament. Last year, we brought one hundred leaders to our launch in Paris - this coming February, another hundred leaders will be in attendance in Paris, along with youth representatives.

We're placing a great deal of emphasis on students and on our outreach to young people, so that it's a multi-generational, multi-sectoral approach. We'd like to use face to face opportunities such as today, where several of us will be engaging with

We're placing a great deal of emphasis on students and on our outreach to young people, so that it's a multi-generational, multi-sectoral approach

students as well as online media. Today, I'll be talking about our student chapters in the United States, and how we now wish to engage students here in the UK and in all the key nuclear states. We want them to join our movement and help us understand how to reach out effectively to the younger generation. We need your input and we need you to help us mobilise your friends and your communities, to make them understand that alongside climate change, nuclear proliferation is the other great threat facing our security.

What inspired your passionate support for global disarmament?

Well, your generation does not have the memories of what it was like to grow up during the Cold War, but these images were imprinted on my memory during my childhood. Images of Hiroshima were much more part of the consciousness of young people growing up at the time. We (saw) the duck-and-cover drills, and air raid sirens, and bomb shelters. You used to see the symbol everywhere indicating where a bomb shelter was located. All this created a lot of existential fear in young people, and that fear lasted with me for a very long time. And though I don't want to instill that fear in your generation by any means, it's true that those of you who were in London during the 7/7 bombings are already much more aware of the threat facing us. For those people in the key nuclear states, where their leaders must change their policies, they must realise that the

We're reaching a nuclear tipping point, as is believed by many world leaders, which is why we recently passed a UN Security Council resolution calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons

greater the proliferation of nuclear materials in the world, the greater the likelihood of accidents and access by terrorists of unsecured materials - there's great profit in that, as we know with incidents in Pakistan. We're reaching a nuclear tipping point, as is believed by many world leaders, which is why we recently passed a UN Security Council resolution calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons. That's why Obama and Medvedev have made such a big deal of disarmament in the last year, with the president of China calling for their elimination too.

There is a new movement, which I think is important to share with people of many generations - not just the experts talking about policy, but those who can really effect change through their activism and engagement. I believe you are all central to that, and that's why I believe so passionately in the actions of Global Zero.

What are the realistic prospects for the effects Global Zero can bring about?

I think that engaging with young people will change the equation. To date, talk of disarmament has primarily consisted of conversations between governments, military experts and scientists. There hasn't really been a global popular movement in recent years - it has certainly been an issue that young people have been somewhat divorced from. Accidents can happen; unsecured nuclear materials is a key concern, and so it's in your interests to



Photo: Cherie Leung

prevent these threats. We are presenting young people with facts and information about this issue, that will hopefully mobilise and motivate them to want to get involved. We're trying to provide a platform for you to do that on the website and in student chapters in a multitude of other countries. As far as publicity is concerned, we want to know how to reach out to your generation most effectively and what it is that you think will convince your generation to act.

Related to nuclear weapons is the thorny question of nuclear power. In spite of the risks posed by it, should we be encouraging states to embrace nuclear energy?

Global Zero has a position on nuclear power, which is broadly similar to the international position, that states that nuclear power should be everyone's right. What I personally agree with most passionately is the proposal that the fuel cycle must be internationalised - for me, this is absolutely critical. In other words, you shouldn't have uranium being enriched all over the world. Instead, you should have an international fuel bank, which is something that has been talked about for a very long time, or secure regional fuel banks. The step between storing this material to make energy, and using it to make bombs, is a distance, but not that great a distance. So, nuclear materials must be stored securely. If everyone adheres to this policy, and there are no exceptions, then you have the greatest possible chance of getting

What I personally agree with most passionately is the proposal that the fuel cycle must be internationalised - for me, this is absolutely critical

everyone on board as far as nuclear power is concerned. Fundamentally, the nuclear states already recognise the dangers inherent in the storage of nuclear materials, so it's just a question of convincing everyone else.

Finally, in the context of your role as President of United World Colleges, what do you feel is role of education in instilling in young people a sense of duty to bringing about important changes?

Firstly, as far as the United World Colleges (UWC) are concerned, our students are engaging with Global Zero in a big way: I thought it was a perfect fit because our students come from all over the world - 120 different countries - and we view UWC students as passionate advocates for peace and for constructive social change. What's very interesting is that we've been finding our students to be very focused on climate change and the Copenhagen summit. Right now, Global Zero is competing with the momentum leading up to Copenhagen, but after that we expect that there will be more engagement on the nuclear issue.

The right to education is universally accepted, but the application of that right is, as with so many universal norms, a struggle. Schools should have an emphasis on community work and inspiring conflict resolution, and so we have to bring students from different backgrounds to have access to the best quality of educa-

The right to education is universally accepted, but the application of that right is, as with so many universal norms, a struggle

tion. We want everyone on a level playing field, to create equality.

The tuition fees debate in your country is being addressed from a range of perspectives, but the key thing is that everyone must be able to access a decent system of education, so that they can make a full contribution to their societies. Girls and boys equally, the world over. Though many people wouldn't believe it, it is in fact written in 7th century law, in the Qur'an, that girls must have equal access to education. Many people are confused by that today when they see what happens with regard to the Taliban and so forth, which runs contrary to the original teachings of Islam. But it's also worth bearing in mind that fees are also necessary in order to keep these schools running.

Global Zero is looking for 25 talented and committed university students from around the world to participate in their Paris summit this coming February as student representatives. Students will participate in a two-day student retreat before joining the Global Zero Summit to be held February 2-4. Students will work alongside Global Zero leaders to chart a course for an international public campaign. Travel, room & board, and training will all be provided. Applications are to be submitted at <http://www.globalzero.org/en/world-summit-students> and are due by November 30.



Flickr user: daintee

A different kind of hell

Mariana Graça considers the plight of refugees in South African camps today

According to the UNHCR, South Africa "hosts some 40,000 refugees and over 100,000 asylum-seekers". It is a fact that South Africa has over the years been the host for African immigrants: from Mozambique in the 80's, from Nigeria in the early 90's, from Angola, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi and the Congo in late 90s and most recently from Zimbabwe. These refugees flee in search of a safe haven, and are drawn by the fact that the African country professes to have successfully abolished apartheid and inequality. However, the reality does not seem to coincide with their expectations.

In the same article on their website, the UNHCR claims, "Refugees and asylum-seekers in South Africa enjoy freedom of movement". Afraid, trapped and abandoned at Youngsfield refugee camp for over a year now, the refugees that I found this summer as I worked for Projects Abroad Human Rights Office in Cape Town, may argue differently. The children do not go to school, as they are afraid of stepping outside. Women and men are traumatized, as they were affected both physically and psychologically by the xenophobic attacks in 2008, after already living through a genocide or civil conflict in their home countries. According to

Adar Aboulle, mother of 8, "We come here, we die here. I want to go back to Somalia. They don't let me. If I die I want to die for something...in my land. Here I die for nothing. They are killing us, it's the same thing."

On the 20th of July 2009, residents of Jeffsville, celebrating Mandela's Day, issued an open invitation to refugees to return to the community after the xenophobic attacks of May last year. The capacity of these refugees to generate income in poor communities (mainly townships) is the key factor in determining why they fell victim to the frustration of the local community. This frustration, instead of being directed towards the government, is directed to these foreigners who did not choose their fate. Although some refugees went back and tried to re-build their businesses and lives again, a number are still struggling, their only option being to apply for resettlement through the UN.

For many, the resettlement processes are long and unattainable, but their challenges start long before that. Due to the corruption present in South Africa, just trying to get their asylum seeker's permits or refugee status is an extensive battle. Home Affairs officials exploit the situation to make money and give out fake permits. Refugees, who are required to renew their status every two years, wait

Women and men are traumatized, as they were affected both physically and psychologically by the xenophobic attacks in 2008, after already living through a genocide

long hours, days, weeks, months for their permits, as the system is not efficient. Without these permits they cannot work and provide for their families. In addition, children cannot attend school without the required documents. This corruption and abuse by officials have already led to the suicide of the 22-year-old S'khumbuzo Douglas Mhlongo, who was unable to get a job and support himself after officials tore up his application.

At present, there is an ongoing court case regarding refugees' accommodation. The City of Cape Town wishes to evict refugees because "it requires the land as a recreational facility and holiday resort", while the refugees fear further attacks and so do not want to leave. By setting up the camps after the xenophobic attacks, the South African government did its duty. However, now just expecting whole families that lost everything to live on the streets or find alternative solutions overnight is nonsensical. This is still an unresolved matter and the refugees are awaiting judgment. The Government seems to be waiting for another set of xenophobic attacks: where are the protection measures?

Reflecting this, on 14th of November 2009, xenophobia set in once more as social conflict broke in the De Doorns between local community and Zimba-

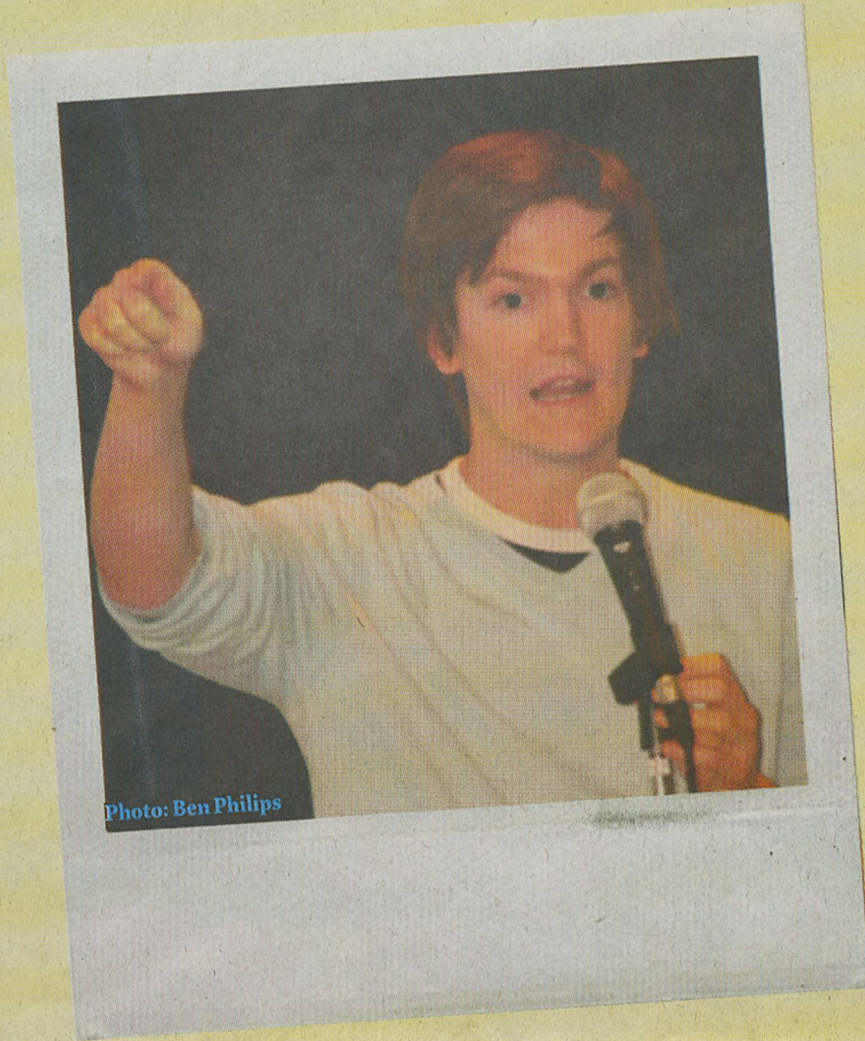
bwean nationals. At this time it is known that a meeting between different agencies is taking place to address the case and re-integrate those affected, who are presently staying at the municipal hall. The re-emergence of xenophobia is something that has been covered in newspapers over the past two months, with reports from incidents mainly in the Western Cape. This shows arguably how South Africa is not prepared to receive and protect the influx of refugees and foreigners. The claim that "they steal our jobs, they steal our wives", professed back in 2008, still seems to be the underlying cause. The deprived citizens of South Africa are targeting the refugees instead of targeting the ones who are indeed responsible for their deprivation. By not provided for their nationals, the government is creating a base of frustration for xenophobia.

They go to South Africa in search for peace; instead what these refugees find is a different kind of hell. In trying to escape from the constant fear of being stabbed or raped, they come to face similar fears and the appalling conditions of refugee life. Yet, these vulnerable human beings are still trying to create a niche for themselves and it is only fair to give them a hand.

LSE Diary

Personal perspective: Being General Secretary

Aled Dilwyn Fisher describes a week in the life of a Sabbatical Officer



Monday 9th November

I get in to the office at around 8.30am. I always try, sometimes successfully, to get in early, clearing the inbox leaves you with a smug warmth with which to greet the rest of the day.

People always assume I get lots of emails, and they're right. Some are, of course, important but around 90 percent is utter dross; it seems that Students' Unions are magnets for rambling emails from the most deranged individuals in society. Recently, I received an email from a resident of South East London, complaining about the noise from "students" who, they suggested, I should lobby to expel. I especially enjoy their 'noise log', which chronicled the horror of occasional loud noises down the street every third week that could only have originated from LSE's notoriously boisterous students.

Over the mountain of emails winds the long, meandering valley of meetings. Today, I have a meeting with members of the School about socially-responsible investment, which involves some quite complex issues of investment strategy and ethics. Later, I meet with members of the Estates Division to discuss the New

Students' Centre; a new building for the Union that I will never see, but will have a big hand in designing.

My job is to be the primary representative of students to the School, and much of the School's structures involve sitting on committees. But representation isn't an end in itself, it is simply the means through which to achieve change. At some meetings, this just means being a forthright advocate of student views; in others, it means putting forward proposals and debating ways of action.

Of course, the real decision-making happens outside of committees. Being a representative is therefore more importantly about building relationships and putting pressure on decision-makers in order to secure what is right for students.

In the evening, we begin a tour of halls that will see me go into every hall in a week with the Residences Officer and the Education and Welfare Officer. Tonight, it's Holborn and Grosvenor halls. No-one turns up at Holborn, which is surprising given the number of people coming the year before. But before I get to Grosvenor, a call from the office - the University Challenge trials are going on but they

need more written tests, which are only on my computer, so I run back to the office to print off more. When I get there, the urgency of my to-do list means I have to miss the meeting at Grosvenor. I leave the office after 10pm, having marked all 118 University Challenge tests and responded to a call to action from NUS, which will shape the rest of my week

Tuesday 10th November

NUS have called an action with two days notice because the government has hastily announced the long-awaited review of tuition fees. The review is unlikely to report back until after the next General election as politicians don't really want to take about such a contentious issue during an election - so NUS is trying to keep the pressure up to make sure the issue doesn't slip their minds.

I contact LSE's local MPs to get them to turn up to discuss the issue of fees.

Much of Tuesday is spent preparing for the rest of the week. In the evening, we venture forth into halls again. First Northumberland House, near Trafalgar Square, followed by a long walk over to Bankside. The problems regarding halls

and the student experience are similar at both halls and we have a lot of issues to work on it. I really enjoy meeting students, especially when there's a nice bar waiting for us in Bankside at the end of a long day. The residents keep us talking until after 10pm, and it's a long journey home!

Wednesday 11th November

This is a big day in all respects. At 11am, I am organising a vigil for Armistice Day. The vigil is well attended. Almost immediately afterwards, it's time to prepare for Parliament. NUS are doing actions around London from 12noon onwards. First a stunt in Parliament Square for the media, then into the Houses of Commons to lobby MPs and hear what they have to say.

Thursday 12th November

Howard Davies is coming to the UGM today and much time is taken preparing.

The UGM also passes a motion to allow referenda outside of election times, so that we can hold a referendum on reforming the Union early next term. The nights in the Halls, along with the Union Reform Consultations that we have been doing out on Houghton Street and in targeted meetings, reinforce for me the need for the Union to change. At the moment, there are very few opportunities, beyond elections, for students to get involved in the Union - and that means there are less opportunities for students to make change in LSE and wider society. We have to do so much more for postgraduates, international students, course representatives and those in halls. This is why, boring and time-consuming though it is, reform is needed. It is also why a lot of my time is taken up by asking students their opinion on the Union.

The halls tour continues with Lillian Knowles and Rosebery in the evening. Being back in my old hall, Rosebery, is lovely. Around 40 residents show up to discuss things and a lot of great ideas and actions come out of it.

Friday 13th November

Friday thirteenth - unlucky for some, luckily void of meetings for me. A day of catching up on emails is followed by our final night in halls. And, despite my fears of doing it on a Friday, a surprisingly good turn out is seen in Carr-Saunders and Passfield halls. And the issues coming up are so important that it was well worth the trip.

At the end of these particularly hectic days, I constantly remind myself how amazing this job is, and how much fun it is to be in such a position immediately after graduation. In no other job will I get to be a campaigner, representative, leader, employer, caseworker, trustee, fundraiser, publisher, and so much more. The only question that remains is: how am I going to leave this place?

WHAT IF...

Homer never was

Priscilla Abishegam

Reading Homer generally does not thrust the modern reader into a rapture of emotions. Stanza after stanza, the Iliad and the Odyssey have classical references to Achilles' childish tempers, Odysseus lost at sea and the terrible beauty of Helen of Troy. I daresay you are thinking: who cares about the Trojan War, these heroes and anti-heroes of antiquity? But I can confidently declare that if not for Homer, the spirit of our literature would be weak and appreciation of the surreal beauty of the world would be diminished.

From this ancient poet's work has blossomed an unfathomable legend of beauty that has spawned some of the most beautiful literature. Without it, how would Marlowe, ask "Was this the face that launched a thousand ships?" And what would become of Edgar Allen Poe's analogy, "Helen thy beauty is to me like those Nicean barks of yore"? Such was Homer's role in preserving the legend, that the 'Helen' has become a unit of measurement for beauty as designated by the Cambridge mathematician W.A.H. Rushton.

This Trojan legend has not become ashes after thousands of years because it is a revelation of human nature - it is our story. In these characters who boast invulnerability, unmatched beauty and the most magnificent war prowess, we see weakness and therefore ourselves. Her face may have 'burnt the topless towers of Ilium' but still Helen of Troy was ruled by lust. We live in a changed world but are all still a product of our emotions, thoughts and feelings - just like them. This is why so many modern authors have reignited the torch of the Trojan War; Margaret George, Barry Strauss and Bettany Hughes to name a few.

In 1885, a painter called Edwin Long painted a portrait called 'The Chosen Five'; it was a picture of five of the most beautiful women imaginable, but in the centre was a blank outline of another woman. That unpainted woman was Helen because her physique was supposedly inconceivable. This can be perceived as a metaphor for our world. We have everything before us and yet we always strive to search for something else, something yet inconceivable. This is our search to understand ourselves and thus facelessness is inspiration to the human mind.

Without Homer, a whole stream of art and literature would have developed very differently, being deprived of a rich reservoir of metaphors. Human nature has cuckolded us into believing that development and progress have changed the essence of our beings, but we are like our predecessors. Without Homer lost would be the roots of the artistic search to uncover ourselves, and though this may not be nation building or freedom winning, it is important for self-realisation. And one must know oneself before changing the world.

Measured musings

The strange death of the Presidential Prime Minister

"Weak, weak, weak" these words echoed through the chamber of the Commons in January 1997, when the Leader of the Opposition, Tony Blair, commented on the position of the then Prime Minister, John Major. Major was a quintessential weak leader. A leader unable to lead, who followed his party and consequently lead them to a landslide defeat. A leader, who told the country what he thought they wanted to hear, in essence, he was a leader who was unwilling to lead. These traits are not unlike those of the current inhabitant of Number 10, the Right Honourable Gordon Brown.

Less than a month after the British National Party (BNP) appeared on Question Time and during the same week that BNP leader Nick Griffin announced his candidacy for the Commons; Brown too began his onslaught on immigration. Having lost the vote of Mondeo Man, Brown

is now chasing the vote of the White Van Man, with a speech that smacked of ignorance of the worst kind. Instead of calling for a more efficient means of resolving Home Office residency applications, Brown called for tighter borders. Instead of questioning the lack of health and care provision for immigrants who have been waiting a decade for a decision from the Home Office, he suggested that immigrants are placing stress on our beloved National Health Service and Council housing. Instead of providing leadership, Brown told the country what he thought they wanted to hear. Essentially, Gordon Brown was scaremongering.

Immigration - as the Prime Minister suggested - should not be a taboo subject, yet nor should it be painted as the source of all evil. Brown's calls to clamp down on those claiming student visas for 'one year courses', smacks of an assault upon not only immigrants, but also students. Britain should be proud of its cultural heritage as a veritable melting pot, and proud too

that students far and wide come to our shores to study, whether it is for a year or three years.

The fear of immigration is a very real problem in the periphery of our society. I say periphery, because immigration is not a fear of the liberal, muesli-eating middle-class of Britain. Immigration is a fear to those who live in overcrowded conditions, it is a fear to those on benefits and who have no job prospects. It is a fear, in essence, of the very poorest in modern Britain. Instead of pandering to these fears, Brown should have made a speech about expanding the stock of local council/social landlord housing or about canceling the debt on overpaid Tax Credits, he should have offered likely BNP voters a reason not to vote BNP. Brown's speech should have shown leadership, instead it showed much of the same sheep mentality that has been witnessed throughout Brown's premiership.

Gordon Brown and his advisers have now allowed the BNP to set the tone of the

debate for the upcoming General Election. It will now be for the politicians to show who is the toughest on immigration, much to the detriment not only of immigrants to the UK, but also the very poorest in society. It will now be for the politicians to show who can beat the BNP at their own game; who can be the most anti-immigration. Brown forgets that winning an election or even a single vote, based upon false promises and morally bankrupt ideas, is no victory.





Flickr user :zpeckler

Producing the consumer

Gregor Titorelli discusses the relationship between education and capitalism

‘What’s in a name?’ begged the Friar, ‘That which we call a rose/ By any other name would smell as sweet!’ Smell as sweet it might, if we were lucky enough to chance upon the rose - the acquisition of which would require some effort. To negotiate such a hurdle, what if we convince ourselves that all we can possibly find in our garden is the rose and, for years and years in fetishistic disavowal, we pick less fragrant flowers? Then we can simply maintain that all we’ve ever picked, and all there is to pick is, in fact, the rose.

So what exactly is in a name? The answer is often, almost everything. Some words are so embedded in the popular consciousness, entwined with the thoughts and feelings aroused by our social conditioning, that they develop a life of their own. The sweet scent of the rose nowhere to be found, we settle for that of the cheap misnomer, and convince ourselves and our fellows of its adequacy. One such name is that we give to the purpose of the institution at which we study: education.

What exactly is the point of education? Does it merely serve to ensure the future thickening of our wallets, or some abstract higher ideal, like fulfilment? Should not true education in itself prompt us to ask these very questions? And what of those inquiries that have motivated educators for millennia, questions of the nature of the Good, Truth and the purpose of human existence? To most students

today such questions are seen as utterly devoid of meaning. Is it not obvious, they answer, that it all “depends”?

Indeed, in all spheres of life, we are encouraged to embrace a destructive and creeping relativism. We are regularly reminded of tyrannies, dictatorships and empires across the world that have, in their dogmatic vision of Truth, Justice and the Good, wreaked immeasurable and untold sufferings on innocent peoples. This goes to show, we are told, that none of these things really exist in perpetuum. But is the failure of such regimes to locate the Good an argument for its non-existence? Or is this merely an excuse: can we simply not be bothered to think about such notions, and so resort to a blind acceptance of heterogeneity? It is certainly a lot easier to proclaim that everyone’s way is the right way than to find the right way for oneself. It is far easier to settle for the fragrance of common flowers than to search desperately for a real rose. Such a stance also allows us to excuse our own moral inadequacies: we are all human, after all!

Sadly, the preservation of the socio-economic system in which we are born and bred depends on relativism: it is not only related to, but contingent upon the dominance of the less desirable flower. Needless to say, societies’ educational systems suit the socioeconomic systems of their time. Just as Sparta created men and women who would blindly serve her cause, capitalism produces automatons to serve it. This is not entirely dissimilar to the function of education in totalitarian states, though capitalism is, of course,

Just as Sparta created men and women who would blindly serve her cause, capitalism produces automatons to serve it

more subtle in its creation of the ‘acceptable, ‘tolerable’ individual.

It would not do to argue that education under capitalism works along exactly the same lines as education in totalitarian states. Spartan education, for example, was undeniably far more rigid and fixed than our own. However, it is exactly on its elasticity that capitalism depends. How could the ubiquitous, all-pervading maxim, ‘Consume! Consume! Consume!’ be maintained in a society full of truly educated, enlightened and self-realised beings, who believe in universal and inviolable socio-moral imperatives?

No. Far better to create stunted human beings, who long only to satisfy an ever-increasing number of ever-increasing wants. Indeed, capitalism depends on the large-scale production of such individuals. There are many who live solely to consume and for whom education is purely instrumental in the quest to secure ‘sufficient’ wealth - though there may be no such thing as sufficiency in such a world. Then there are others who claim to have a conscience, who assert that they shall dedicate their lives towards social justice. These are self-proclaimed “Ches” of the LSE, who forget, of course, the entirely selfless and self-denying dedication the great man demonstrated to his own cause. Yet such people are more often than not driven by pride and vanity, for their existence to be affirmed through the praise and respect of others. This is a curious sort of individual, certainly not the kind glorified by our greatest philosophers and artists. Instead of the self-realised

individual, the expression of the universal in the non-universal, we have crude, stultified and self-seeking maximisers for whom education serves no substantive end in itself.

And so our educational factories echo the opposite (though never countervailing) maxim to ‘Consume! Consume! Consume!’: ‘Produce! Produce! Produce!’, manufacturing young men and women dedicated to the achievement of ‘success’ just as others manufacture the latest appliances and technologies. This is only ‘rational’, we are assured: how can education have the time to meet human needs, to aid the fulfilment of the soul, when it is so busy satisfying the needs of the market?

However, the true purpose of education does not always align with that of the market. Indeed, it often runs directly contrary to it. Should it not lead us to question whether material desires, never desirable in themselves, are ever satiable? Is it not to remind us that our own fulfilment does not always lie in behaving in conformity with the expectations of our peers, or in securing their esteem? And most importantly, ought it not to compel us to ask ourselves exactly where our own eudaimonia lies? The answer to this final question is, in fact, far from clear, and we must spend our lives wrestling with it. Education, by sensitising us to contrary and conflicting points of view, ought to encourage us to take up such a struggle and see it to its end. If it fails to do so, of course the market will flourish - but what of our souls?

Social

In conversation on the God debate

Alizeh Kohari, Alex Wogroly and Siddarth George discuss the possibility of a middle ground

Does God exist? The question has plagued philosophers for centuries, yet its answer remains as elusive as ever. Indeed, perhaps this suggests that the question offers no simple answer. But if you observed the way the debate is presently conducted in the public sphere, you might well get a different impression.

You might, for instance, think that science – or perhaps Science – has finally proved that God does not exist, or, at the least, shown that He is a very improbable Being indeed. You might also think that religion provides no serious input to the discussion, except occasional appeals to faith.

Both statements misrepresent the current state of the debate, which is a stalemate, but a very interesting stalemate nonetheless. Both also illustrate the deep-seated problems with the way the question is approached: a false veneer of certainty dominates it, because its parameters are set by fundamentalists on both sides who, in seeking to be polemical, simplify or caricature the 'other side', and in doing so leave part of the truth unsaid.

On one end of the spectrum stand Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, ardent atheists, who view the question of God's existence as a scientific one, and dismiss all other kinds of reasoning as baseless. They fail to distinguish God from religion, caricaturing the latter's worst elements, and do not engage theologians in conversation. In their view, the archetypal religious person is not Gandhi but Osama; and they reject the idea of a thinking believer.

On the other end stand religious fundamentalists whose unquestioning faith in their spiritual traditions lead them to cling steadfastly – but sometimes irrationally – to what they think their customs hold to be true. Their literal interpretations of holy texts produce a worldview that is at odds with the findings of modern science and what we would now consider moral behaviour.

Consider the first statement. Has

science disproved the God hypothesis? No, because there is much about the world that science still struggles to explain. For instance, while evolutionary biology describes quite lucidly the processes that gave rise to human life, it is not able to explain why there should have been any life on Earth at all. Why is there a universe? How is it that discoverable scientific laws operate in it? Is it merely coincidental that those laws of physics – from which the regularities of chemistry and biology follow – had life-producing character? Indeed, Richard Swinburne, a renowned philosopher of religion, argues that the best answers to these questions are given by the existence of God. The picture of the universe that science gives us is completed by God. But that is just one view.

Debates about God's existence often involve science, because science is considered to be a knowledge generating enterprise, and attaining knowledge is precisely what interests us in a debate about the existence or non-existence of an entity. In deciding whether God exists it might therefore be useful to consider the scientific method. A scientist might ask, what is the empirical evidence for a greater power? In the case of the deistic god, of course, there is none, because he doesn't interfere with the physical universe. For a god of a particular religion who does interfere, there might be empirical evidence, but of the nature of that evidence is remains unclear. Scientific hypotheses are supposed to have a common characteristic – empirical evidence could falsify them. It is questionable whether religious claims share this quality as well; that we could find something that shows them to be false. For this reason, arguments for a god are usually not scientific ones.

Another reason science enters the debate is because it makes descriptive claims about the world which are generally considered to be true. If religious claims are descriptive as well, then there is the possibility of a clash between science and religion, and according to most people, religious claims would have to be

abandoned in such a case. But science and religion need not clash, and it is worth remembering that not all arguments asserting the existence of an entity must necessarily be scientific in nature. For example, there are arguments, such as the cosmological proof of god, which use a chain of deductive reasoning to establish its existence. If the logic is correct, the truth of the conclusion depends on the truth of the premises. These premises have been hotly debated in theology and philosophy for centuries without ever resolving the dispute.

Frustration at orthodox religion's unwillingness to engage with these highly pertinent questions is perhaps one reason that explains contemporary British society's antipathy to religion of all stripes. Religion is seen at best as irrational, a nostrum or crutch for the weak; at worst it is a scourge, one of the wellsprings of modern society's problems. But we must distinguish God from religion. God is not religion.

What, then, is 'God'? The word can, and frequently does, denote different things. Adherents of a certain religion will have an entity in mind that satisfies the doctrine they believe in. Doctrines vary from religion to religion therefore "God" should not be used as an umbrella term to refer to them all or to a particular one without making that clear. It is important, therefore, to clarify what we refer to when we say "God".

Recognizing that different religions propose the existence of a different god implies that it is very hard, if not impossible, to argue for all of them. If religious claims are taken to be either true or false, then they can also be logically inconsistent. If one religion asserts that god created the world in 7 days, and another, that god created the world in 100 days, then they cannot both be true. This needs to be kept in mind when attempting to make a case for the truth or falsity of religion in general. That is not to say that some of the major religions could not be interpreted such that they are consistent in

their claims. But that would undoubtedly involve making concessions with regard to their respective doctrines, something firm believers are reluctant to do.

Some times people argue for and against a deistic god instead, an entity that created the universe but does not interfere with it. Other than that, the deistic god remains largely undefined. Arguing for such a god is considerably easier, as it needs not be proved, or shown to be likely, that he is benevolent or possesses any other specific attribute. However, defending a deistic god as opposed to a god of any particular religion also implies, that his existence or non-existence is of no consequence to our everyday life. Morals, values and traditions cannot be justified by appealing to such a god.

The discussion has been hijacked by individuals tucked into the very nooks of both sides of the argument

There are lots of arguments on both sides that fail to take this into account. An atheist claiming that God does not exist because there is so much evil in the world, for example, is just as mistaken as a theist claiming that God does exist because sometimes, people do good things. Those arguments are not necessarily flawed, but they are if 'God' refers to a deistic one. This stresses the importance of defining what one understands by 'God' before engaging in argument and debate.

It seems, then, that the crux of the

problem lies in a failure of imagination, our failure of imagination: we are content to lie cosily, altogether too-comfortably in our cocoons of complacency. And so the grand delusion is not The God Delusion or The Dawkins Delusion: it is our dismissal of the possibility that those who argue against us have anything to say at all.

This 'bumptious-young-barrister syndrome' – the cocky belief that you can bring opposition to its knees despite remaining blissfully ignorant of its strongest case – needs to be done away with if there is ever to be any hope of a more considered, more informed debate on the matter. And that is what we argue for, here, now: not the absence of God, nor the existence of one – but an insistence, rather, that both sides bring to battle their best thinkers, philosophers, scientists, and advocates.

'God once had Bach and Michelangelo on His side; He had Mozart,' quipped Stephen Fry. 'And now who does He have? People with ginger whiskers and tinted spectacles who reduce the glories of theology to a kind of shearing.'

This is, to a great extent, untrue. The God debate has been hijacked by individuals tucked into the very nooks of both ends of the spectrum of argument – and the moderate voices are lost. The notion of a thinking theist is hardly ever even considered by radical atheists such as Hitchens – they are quick, instead, to sketch with deft, well-practiced strokes outrageous caricatures of what they deem to be the average religious individual. No, the average religious individual is not your regular Osama bin Laden, drunk on blind faith and brought up to believe unquestioningly; they cannot all be lumped into, as Terry Eagleton states, the category of 'rednecks who murder abortionists and malign homosexuals'. Think a little. Listen a little. Reconsider a little.

Does it matter that science has no conscience, no manner of ethical reasoning? What percentage of scientists and philosophers actually believe in God?

A perspective on all matters religious

Filipe Martins shows how easily we form stereotypes on different spiritualities

It is not easy to discuss the 'R word,' particularly because it is not something that has been clearly defined throughout the ages. For some, it takes on a more ritualistic meaning, from going to church to chanting pujas. Others choose to annihilate the word from their vocabulary due to the negative connotations which they, or their social context, have attached to it. For me, religion means many things, and yet I am still searching for its true significance – if I ever find it.

Coming from Portugal, a predominantly Catholic country in its own way, I was somewhat disheartened with religion in the way I saw it growing up. Mass was something either elderly people would go to, or where parents would force their teenage children to attend: all in all, it was a 'social Sunday' occasion, to meet your tio or tia (uncle or aunt, i.e. your parents' friends) or distant primo (cousin). In the weekend, this same youth would go out and drink heavily, and in most cases, the abstinence or 'good behaviour' preached in Church would live side by side with twelve-year-olds getting trashed. These discrepancies coexist in a very funny way; it is as if both are acceptable, so long as they are kept in their respective compartments. These are just some micro-realities, and definitely not all that exist across Portugal. Furthermore, I should also point out the many good aspects I think religion has brought to the country, such as certain values of respect for the elders or a sense of community, but then again, these are not exclusive to one religion in particular.

Those who come from countries in

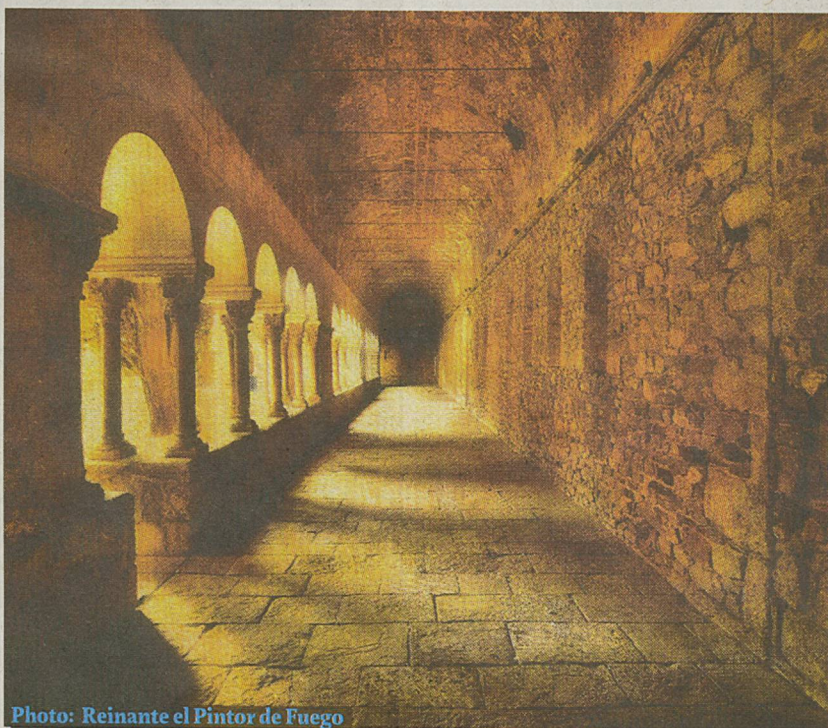


Photo: Reinante el Pintor de Fuego

which a main religion dominates might understand how eye-opening coming to the LSE is. In my case, for example, I had never had the chance to know anyone who was a Hindu, and coming to the LSE changed this. I still remember my religious education teacher in school (a very devout Catholic and a very nice lady indeed), who gave me a very lop-sided account of Hinduism, based on a Western stereotype revolving around forced (note: forced, not arranged) marriages and a

superficial look at the caste system. Unfortunately, she forgot to teach us that like much in life, Hinduism was not black and white. Moreover, she ignored the many similarities between Christianity and certain interpretations of Hinduism; for example, her view was based on idolising deities, when in fact many Hindus have a very similar notion of God as do Christians. For most, there is only one God, or one being, and the Hindu gods can to an extent be compared to Christian

saints. To spice things up a little more, it was only this last summer, when visiting Goa and Kerala, that I discovered that Catholics in India have their own 'castes,' 'Brahmin' and 'Latin' (I would love to see what my RE teacher would have thought of this.) As another point of comparison, the very same culture that will criticise other religions for idolatry will pray to St Anthony for a good marriage. Would this not be comparable to Hindus praying to Lord Ganesh for good luck? I will leave this question unanswered. The truth is that, if you take the time to read the New Testament and the Bhagavad Gita, it will be clear that there are many shared ideas, such as oneness with the world around us, and the maxim of treating every human being with the respect they deserve. Thankfully, these values are not exclusive to these two religions.

For me, however, I am still uncertain about what lies out there. Some days I feel like God's existence – whatever that may be exactly – is certain, while at other times I'm not too sure. One thing I can be sure of, is that there are some events in life I cannot rationalise, and for this reason I often choose the 'easy' route, remarking 'It's life' whenever this happens. Some of us might leave these events up to fate, luck, life, or their version of a supreme being. Most of the times, though, it is good not to have a definite answer, instead choosing to savour the uncertainty of not knowing what lies out there or why things happen as they do. One expression which I may choose to summarise my beliefs (at least at the present moment), and which is purposefully ambiguous, is that "God is in each one of us." This can essentially be

used in many occasions, fitting into many different belief systems. It fits those who don't believe in God as a "supreme" being out there, and who believe we are owners of our own destiny. It also applies to those who believe that there is a God out there, everywhere – which still means God is in "us"! This is why I love this explanation, which answers all questions and none at all, both at the same time.

I was somewhat disheartened with religion the way I saw it growing up

Whatever we believe in, the most important thing ought always to be to understand the "wider" picture. Ultimately, religion in an institutionalised form does not exist in a vacuum and is inherent to its respective culture, be it a specific family, social background or nationality. Having this in mind will always help us see what lies behind a certain custom we might at first consider strange and give us enriching perspectives of how different people choose to lead their lives. In the end, this is what religion should mean to us. Whether it is a "drug" that keeps us interested in life, or a source of inspiration to see the world's more brilliant (or disgusting) aspects, it also represents the fundamental beliefs we live by. So, as the Beatles have advised, let it be.

A happy leap of faith

Marion Koob thinks the Swaminarayan sect is a good business model

One would typically not expect that a theme park boat ride could ever be a spiritual experience. Yet a trip to the world's largest Hindu temple, Ashkardam, near New Delhi proved me wrong.

For many religions, sacred grounds typically breathe with austerity and importance. In a way, this is rightly so; after all, to their followers these are the places where one will seek to commune with the deity in which is entrusted their faith. The ideologies behind the constructions are meant to be as imposing as their architecture. The experience itself, a driving force of life's meaning.

As an atheist, I was nonetheless surprised when during an extended stay in India, I was taken to a Swaminarayan temple. (Swaminarayan is a Hindu sect, estimated to have around 20 million fol-

lowers worldwide, but most prominent in the Indian state of Gujarat). At first, our hosts had not been very clear as to where we were headed; despite a two-hour long drive in the car, all that had been indicated was that our destination was located somewhere on the outskirts of Ahmadabad. A type of park, perhaps, or an ashram; a word, which to me, suggested endless ranks of pilgrims working on their yoga.

However, what we saw upon our arrival was radically new. The entry was bustling with people of all ages, queues at ticket counters, security checks, and the stringent requirement to leave all electronic apparel (ranging from iPod to phone, even including batteries) outside of the gates. I was willing to agree that if one was to focus on pursuits of a religious nature, it would only ever make sense to cut oneself from the distractions of the

outside world entirely.

Yet, my reasoning seemed to be immediately contradicted upon our entrance. A few hundred of meters away, the happy cries of children rung out from whizzing merry-go-rounds and other theme park styled rides. There were several shops which sold pop corn and ice cream, others many varieties of soda drinks. The entire grounds were designed as a park, halved by a large alley which led up to a temple of considerable size. Behind the temple was what I thought to be the most curious of all elements; a museum.

The exhibition felt, again, like more of a joyful, interactive walk-through than a religious endorsement. Visitors moved in small groups from room to room, in which one could find intermingled videos, large photos which explanations on the texts and stories regarding Swaminarayan, the founder, and animated mechanical

puppets enacting scenes from the stories, lighting and water effects included.

The idea was quite different, yet, from a business point of view judicious; what better way to initiate and educate people to religion via means of entertainment? This means certainly sounds more effective in targeting children than sitting in a room around a Bible. It does however, popularize what surely necessitates deeper thought. As the first step towards developing awareness, it is not a bad start, solely from a marketing perspective.

The visit ended with a forty-minute film which told the life story of Swaminarayan. It was colorful, it was dramatic, and full of 'miraculous' happenings. Despite the fact that I could not understand a word of it, it remained entertaining, to say the least.

Instead of angling its focus on death, the ethos of the place seemed to improve the way one's life is led. Doubtless, altering your actions within your lifetime as to suit a code of morality is also an integral part of the three major monotheistic religions - yet, these tend to highlight the advantages and disadvantages which they will provide in the afterlife. In contrast, the entirety of the experience in the Swaminarayan park was cheerful, varied, and slightly - dare we say it? - cheesy. A family day out combined into a religious duty is definitely, profit-wise, a winning combination.

However, I could not but feel uncomfortable at the obvious commercialization of faith. Even if I was to be adopting a religious perspective, having a gift shop by the exit seemed to me to be pushing things much too far. In forbidding distractions for the external world at their entrance, the most essential, perhaps, was overlooked; money - and that is surely to the detriment of their credibility. Even during my later visit to their grandiose temple in Delhi, the sale of tickets for a fireworks show, although in the same spirit of what I had seen before, remained a puzzle. One could comment that like many institutions of a similar nature, Swaminarayans are indeed successful at what they do. Whether this is to bring about followers or generate profit is a compelling question.



Photo: flickr user Mksadu

Are the earth's lungs for sale?

Emmy Smeds wants us to avoid green colonialism

In recent years, buying up rainforest in order to protect it from deforestation has become one of the most popular ideas of climate change mitigation. Rainforest area is being cut down at an alarming rate around the world, often illegally, and as such, preventing deforestation in this way may seem like an inherently good idea. Indeed, in 2005 Swedish businessman Johan Eliasch was hailed as a 'millionaire with a conscience' after buying a 400,000-acre plot of rainforest in the Brazilian Amazon to protect it from logging.

The problem is that Eliasch is not alone: many see these acquisitions by wealthy environmentalists as a growing trend towards 'green colonialism'. The Brazilian government has been increasingly worried over the extent to which foreigners are attempting to buy up the Amazon rainforest, expressed by the Brazilian president's statement that "the world needs to understand that the Amazon has an owner, and that is the Brazilian people." Not only does buying up the rainforest interfere and ignore the government's own conservation strategies, it also often ignores that the acquired areas are not wild jungle devoid of inhabitants, but home to a variety of local populations, many of them indigenous. A report issued by Survival International ('Progress Can Kill'), a human rights organisation campaigning for the rights of tribal peoples, describes how the separation of indigenous communities from their land is extremely detrimental to their lifestyle and culture. The recognition of the indigenous populations right to land is therefore vital to all rainforest conservation efforts, and may even constitute a possible conservation strategy for the future, as some studies have shown that the best barriers to deforestation are actually indigenous reserves and communities.

Fortunately, some organisations have



Photo: flickr user Swamibu

recognised these issues. Cool Earth, the rainforest protection charity co-founded by Eliasch, has made an effort to work with local communities on protecting the rainforest, putting local people in control of the land and working on improving their management of it through training. Nevertheless, there remains many problems associated with the complex procedures of buying up land in foreign countries, arguably illustrated by last year's rather shocking news that Gethal, the bankrupt logging company bought up by Eliasch in 2005, was threatened with a £137 million fine for illegal logging by the Brazilian government. Gethal denied the accusations, claiming that they related to actions decided upon by previous owners.

The most important point is that even though organisations such as Cool Earth are making an admirable, and quite effective, effort to protect the rainforest, this provides no long-term solution to the problem of deforestation. Cool Earth has protected around 120,000 acres of Amazon rainforest, while an estimated 50 mil-

lion acres are cut down annually. Clearly, this does not suffice. In theory wealthy green advocates could perhaps buy up the entire Amazon rainforest, but this is in no way desirable. Thus, as many locals argue, and in my opinion quite rightly, it would be rather less sanctimonious, and more importantly rather more effective, to concentrate on reducing our emissions back home instead of trying to buy up their natural resources. After all, it is widely recognised that when it comes to global CO₂ emissions so far, the best place for us here to look is in the mirror.

Date: Wednesday 25 November 2009
Time: 6.30-8pm
Venue: D502, Clement House
Speaker: John Eliasch

See John Eliasch speak about the controversy surrounding his actions to protect the rainforest, as well as his other work, at a public lecture organised by the Scandinavian Society.

Overheard at LSE...

Sunday night, 8 p.m. LSE library staircase:
Student 1: Oh, you're leaving early?
Student 2: Yeah.

Student: But what is the epsilon for?
Professor: You don't need to know, because I created the theory, and I can't remember.

During a particularly messy EC201 lecture:
Lecturer: My microphone appears to be off.
Student: It's for the best.

A EC221 moment:
Student (ironically): Mate, stats is better for picking up girls than philosophy - I mean, which girl wouldn't blush if you tell them that "their beauty is two standard deviations away from the normal on the positive side"?

In one of the course readings for IR203:
"The most ideal composition of the UN Security Council is a popular subject of discussion, which, by now, could easily be turned into a party game."

Four-year-old kid walking past the bluerain at the library:
"How are we meant to read what it says?"
Spot on.

St Philips medical center, silent crowded waiting room - girl walks in, goes straight to the counter and says:
"I'm here for the sex test!"

Girl: Is it really bad that the main reason I'm happy that the clocks went back is the fact that I got my set text for 25 hours instead of 24, and cheated the library system?

Girl 1: The Financial Times is very factual and in depth
Girl 2: The Wall Street Journal gets straight to the point
Guy 1: The Economist does both in half the time and leaves no mess.

Articles to social@thebeaveronline.co.uk
Advertising to societies@thebeaveronline.co.uk

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RECLAIM THE NIGHT



On the night of 21st November, approximately 2000 women from all around the country gathered in London and marched to demand justice for victims of rape and sexual violence. The fear of safety on the streets at night and the threat of assault led to this annual campaign, which gives an opportunity for women to walk the streets safely for one night and voice their concerns. Reclaim The Night marches started in the 1970s where activists and women's group walked through city streets to emphasise the right to be anywhere without fear and that women should not be blamed for male violence women.

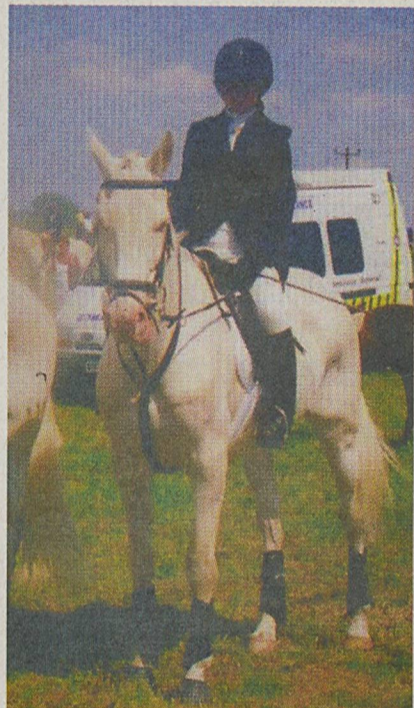
Photos: Natalie Wong



10 Questions

This week we start a new feature giving you an insight into some of the AU's lesser-known clubs

Jess Stubbs: Horse Riding Captain



When did you first start riding?
I started when I was 4.

As a child, did you have a rocking horse? My Little Pony?

I didn't have a rocking horse, but my sister used to put a cushion on my back and rode round the house on me. We had sellotape rolls for stirrups, a cushion for a saddle and a dressing gown chord for reins. I had a deprived childhood! I did however have a collection of 'My Beautiful Horses'...

And when did you get your first horse?

I had a pony called Millie when I was 12, and a horse called Phantom when I was 15. Phantom was incredible; I used to do small competitions and one-day events with him.

What made you start the horse-riding club?

I used to ride in South London on my own, but I really wanted to do it as part of a team. I thought it would be nice for people to ride together and also to give people who have never ridden before a chance to have a go.

What types of riding do you mainly do/enjoy?

My favourite is cross-country. I also like dressage, and I love just going hacking (going for a gallop).

How many ribbons do you have from competing?

I have won a few firsts, seconds and thirds, a couple of trophies at local shows. But nothing big yet...

Have you ever tried to recreate or re-enact famous horse-riding scenes from films (e.g. the Zorro prance)?

No! Me and my friends at home have lined our horses up and filmed ourselves racing once, but apart from that, no.

If you were a horse, who would you most like to ride you?

I did help out at British Eventing in the Summer as a fence judge and there was some definite potential talent, 'Harry Mead' a personal favourite...other than that just Princess Anne.

How does riding fit into your life outside of just being something you do for fun?

At the moment we are working with the AU stars project, looking to get disabled and disadvantaged children from the local community riding. Since I was young, at my local club we've had disadvantaged kids riding with us. We have seen real benefits to the kids, in their self-respect and self worth, giving them a positive responsibility and focus, as well as giving them a support network. It's something I want to get involved in later in life - using activities such as horse-riding to help kids who otherwise would be socially excluded.

Anything you would like to say about the club?

We are entering BUCS, so we are looking for advanced riders to compete in dressage, show jumping and cross-country events in March, so if you are interested get in touch at j.a.stubbs@lse.ac.uk. We ride on Monday nights from 5.30, and advanced classes are at 5.30 and 5.30. We are also arranging some friendlies against UCL.

We also organise lots of socials, occasionally go out to Zoo bar and have club dinners. Our next big social will be going to see War Horse, and later in the year we will be going to Ascot, and are currently organising a weekend riding holiday to Morocco or Madrid.

RIP Walkabout

Chris Cattermole

It's not often I cry, aside from the odd vindaloo or at the end of Braveheart, but when I heard about the closure of Walkabout Shaftesbury Avenue I wept like Ellen MacArthur on a voyage around the galaxy.

For Shaftesbury Avenue was special, housed in an old church it was 3 floors of greatness including the "VIP" basement which sadly we rarely got the chance to use. Unlike Zoo with its overheated, incense-tous and cramped VIP pit making it more reminiscent of the Hanoi Hilton than a club; Walkabout had a big dance floor with tables arranged over 2 ground floor levels. The DJ was where the organ used to be, looking out over the dance floor from the first floor. Like a God he preached a message of the Macarena and the Baywatch theme to his disciples.

On the first floor there was a balcony with more tables and a second bar so you could sit down, play drinking games and check out the talent on the dance floor. Talent there was: Kings, RVC and other poly scum came regularly adding a touch of mystery to the night, where a typical opening line would be "So what uni are you from?" rather than "So which netball team are you in?". Zoo isn't all bad and walkabout wasn't perfect... the queue for the toilets and to get in was usually massive, the metal spiral staircases were also pretty deadly; any random bruises the day after could usually be attributed to them.

As was fitting for the building, I went to it with religious fervour every week in my first year knowing I was guaranteed a good, cheap night with a half decent kebab shop on the way back to halls. So it was a shame when in 2008 the AU exec decided that walkies would alternate with Zoo every AU night. This was the beginning of the end, not many things would tempt me into student politics but this was one of the reasons for my own doomed AU exec campaign. The eventual closure earlier this year was a combination of factors: the recession, the loss of several other uni's AU nights and a reported £1 million a year rent bill. To keep the debt collectors at bay the parent company sold off several sites around the country to cut costs.

But walkies should be remembered for the good times. In particular I remember one Thursday morning facebook update by a current sabbatical officer along the lines of "walkabout: the only place where drinking Reef is morally acceptable". This is in essence the reason why it was so good, it was cheap and cheerful, not trying to be cool, and I know from experience getting thrown out was hard. One great night I remember from my first year was after



I went to it with religious fervour knowing I was guaranteed a good, cheap night with a half decent kebab shop on the way back to halls

the AU ball, which is surprising given the amount of free wine on offer. Most of the AU had made it to walkies from Tower Hill and it was a quite a sight from the balcony seeing everybody in suits and ties either ripping up the dancefloor or slumped and dribbling over alcopop soaked tables. Freshers always peak too soon.

In the end walkies died like Leonardo DiCaprio at the end of Titanic; drowned by the tide of the recession, leaving no trace save for the great memories and countless untagged facebook photos. But amid all the sadness and remembrance... remember the family still lives on and Temple Walkabout will still serve you Reef for £1.50 and a shit DJ until 1am on a Wednesday. So if you get bored of queues 5 people deep and sub-standard karaoke at the tuns give walkies a try as a pre-drinking venue. My team and I have been twice in the past 2 weeks before going to Zoo and the signs are good...the spirit lives on.

MEN'S HOCKEY
LSE 1STS 4-3 UCL
LSE 2NDS 1-6 GREEN WICH

MEN'S FOOTBALL
LSE 1STS 4-1 IMPERIAL
LSE 2NDS 4-1 STBARTS
LSE 3RDS 5-2 ST GEORGES
LSE 4THS 1-2 KINGS
LSE 5THS 3-0 LSE 6THS
LSE 7THS 2-1 SCHOOL OF SLAVONK STUDIES

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL
LSE 4-4 ROYAL FREE

NETBALL
LSE 1STS 34-20 ST GEORGES
LSE 4THS 8-16 IMPERIAL 3RDS

RUNNING
MEN'S TEAM 6TH OUT OF 20 (SCOTT BASTEK 7TH PLACE)
WOMEN'S TEAM 3RD OUT OF 15 (ZOE ANTON 5TH PLACE)

Results

Players of the Week

Emma Heap (WHC) £15m
1 (Tuns)+
1 (Zoo)+
3 (Drunk and disorderly)+
10 (Shag) = **15pts**

Dan Steene (HC) £5m
1 (Tuns)+
2 (Visibly Drunk)+
5 (Pull)+
7 (2nd Base in Walkabout) = **15pts**

Top of the Flops

BJ Watson (FC) £17.5m
1 (Tuns)
1 (Zoo)+
5 (Pull)+
-10 (Not converting) = **-3pts**

Jonny Pornstar (RFC) £17.5m
1 (Tuns)+
1 (Zoo)+
2 (Visibly Drunk)+
5 (Pull)+
-10 (Not Converting)= **-1pts**

Henry hands football a heavy blow

FIFA's inability to respond to clear examples of cheating are to the detriment of the sport

Frank Magennis

On Wednesday last, the Republic of Ireland football team was knocked out of the Fifa World Cup qualifiers by a goal scored in the fourteenth minute of extra time, taking the final aggregate score to 2-1. Thierry Henry, who was offside at the time, handled the ball twice in the Irish penalty area before knocking the ball into range of William Gallas, who converted the cross. The consensus reached in the sports media is that the manner in which Henry touched the ball, scooping it blatantly back into his control from which it had strayed, was an act of deliberate cheating. None of the officials noticed the double foul, and Irish protestations went unheeded.

It is not the fact that the Republic were eliminated that sticks in the throat. Had Henry not fouled the ball or if the goal had been correctly disallowed, it is entirely possible that France would have scored anyway against the tired Irish players, or that Ireland would have been eliminated in a penalty shootout, as happened against Spain in the 2002 World Cup knockout stages. It is instead the ignominious manner in which a desperate France, who had been out-played to a man by a courageous and spirited Irish team, secured their place in South Africa.

The most obvious blame falls on Henry. Perhaps in the split second that the ball first touched his forearm, he could plead it was instinct, but the second touch, with its almost irrefutably deliberate intent, firmly rules the possibility of accident out of the equation at least to my mind. Furthermore, Henry's celebration following the goal, and his blasé comments after the match - 'I'm not the referee' - admitting that it was a handball that took France through but absolving himself of blame, add insult to injury. It is of small consolation for fans of Ireland that Henry's career has been tarnished, to a debatable degree, by his actions.

But the real loser here, aside from the Irish fans, is fair play and its proponents. Henry sent a powerful message to the watching masses that it pays to cheat. The Fédération Internationale de Football Association, through their inaction and refusal to replay the match, have reinforced this impression. This reality is killing the

game. The sole Fifa news article on the match mentions the handball incident in only one sentence, and fails completely to mention the controversy surrounding Henry's goal and the wider ramifications. It is clear that for all Fifa's trumpeting of fair play, it is of only peripheral importance in their calculations, and they are

To hell with determining the outcome by fair, blind chance - the results are skewed before kick-off by an organising body that consistently fails to emphasise fairness

trying to play down the incident.

The bitter aftertaste left in Irish mouths following Henry's shameful misdemeanour is exacerbated by the context in which the match itself was organised. When it transpired that three 'big' teams remained in the qualifiers and hence might be knocked out, Fifa introduced a controversial seeding procedure at the last moment, whereby teams such as France, Portugal, Greece and Russia were prevented from being drawn against each other, thereby increasing the chances that the big names would qualify.

The motivation for this seems clear - Ireland and other small teams have smaller populations, less fans and thus bring in less revenue than the big countries. Hence the large countries' teams must be given preference. To hell with determining the outcome by fair, blind chance - the results are skewed before kick-off by an organising body that consistently fails to



emphasise fairness.

If anything, this incident will increase the already deafening clamour among football fans for the introduction of the video referee present in countless other sports. Readers will notice that I apportioned no blame to the officials, as although they failed in their officiating duties, they remain human and, as such, entirely fallible. A video referee would relieve an enormous amount of pressure from the officials on the pitch and increase

the fairness of the game immensely, without disrupting the flow of play.

Irish calls for a replay, echoed by various influential figures in French society, and in fairness by Henry himself, have fallen on deaf ears, despite precedent at every level including World Cup qualifiers. In any event, Ireland has neither the diplomatic clout nor the reputation as a football team to realise their demands for justice. A Facebook group that has burgeoned to

over 350,000 fans in less than three days entitled 'Petition to have IRELAND Vs FRANCE REPLAYED!!!' is testament to the depth of feeling.

The immense outpouring of sympathy for Ireland and Irish fans in the international media will surely soften the blow, but the incident nevertheless marks a dark day in the history of football that will remain etched on Irish fans' hearts for many years to come.

LEESU RAG

AUChest Wax

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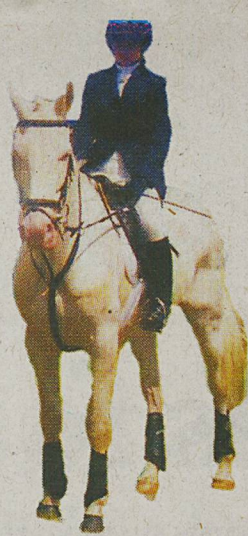


su.rag@lse.ac.uk

**CORFF YR
WYTHINOS**



Sport



Hay Up, it's the
Horse Riding Club
pg22

Men's hockey get battered at Battersea

Shaz Hug

After a two week hiatus from playing hockey and all things AU, the hockey Seconds were looking forward to playing our long overdue cup match against Greenwich Firsts. That was until we discovered that they happened to be in the same league as our First team, who happen to be 6 divisions above us.

Arriving at fort Battersea we quickly realised why they were 6 leagues above us. They wasted little time and started to do drills while our lads were watching a gripping under-10 football match taking place on the neighbouring pitch. After our strenuous warm up, we were ready to become the giant killers of the cup... well almost; some blithering idiot didn't pack the goalkeeper's kit correctly and this meant that our keeper was a pad short. However, in true seconds style we improvised and reassured either an incredibly brave or incredibly gullible Shanak "crack pipe" Tandon that hockey balls "were not that hard" and convinced him that his padless hand would be fine. This claim would ultimately prove to be untrue.

We did not exactly get off to a flying start. Deciding to play a very defensive 5-3-2 formation you would have thought the goals conceded would be at a minimum. Due to defending that would not look out of place in a Benny hill sketch, we were 3 goals down after 10 minutes. Nevertheless, the disorganisation of the back five was getting too much for centre back Joe "Mark Corrigan" Cheng, so we got our act together at the back and were soon arranged as efficiently as his Victorian stamp collection. Despite this they still managed to score one more meaning we entered the break 4-0 down.

Things were not looking good; morale was low and tension within the team was tangible. Captain Ellis "squeaky voice" Savva and Neel "the high priestess of taps" Popat soon resolved this with an inspirational team talk at half time and a fired up team walked on for the second half. The

second period saw our dark (k)night in shining armour, Sindujan Sivasubramanium, working as hard as someone trying to say his full name for the first time. Ever-reliable Izzu Amiruddin continued to control the left side, allowing Ellis Savva to supply the forwards with great effect. We had found our competitive edge and it was Ben "token" Bostock that finally got the long overdue (tap-in) goal that we deserved.

We learned alot from the day; always bring a full keeper kit, don't expect a photo with a celebrity if you insult them, and when you are drunk the world is your toilet

We now had the momentum and our confidence was growing. Raul "Tuberculosis" Shah Medina continued to be our creative dynamo in our midfield going on numerous mazy runs, but alas, his recovery from a potentially fatal disease prevented him from getting on the score sheet. Excuses... Therefore it was up to our "prolific" striker Jin Li Lim to claw another back for us. After a brilliant set of passes Jin had his moment, with just the keeper to beat, but it was not meant to be.

At this point our severe lack of fitness became apparent and we were no longer able to keep them under pressure. As a result they managed to score two more



goals despite defender Krishnan "Krish-topher Robin" Patel's Man of the Match performance. In the dying minutes after conceding a short corner, it soon became clear why goalkeepers need pads. From the short corner, a rocket of a shot hit Shanak's exposed hand breaking this finger. Our keeper was devastated as this meant his crack smoking days were over until further notice. This also meant that we were no longer able to play and the match was called. The game ended Greenwich 6, LSE 1.

While Shanak had to be taken to hospital by Raul, the rest of the lads went to our local to drown our sorrows and award the coveted "dick of the day" award. This

week's prestigious title went to Nikul "Nikulas Nickleby" Shah and was presented with a dirty pint worth a little over £16, which included a plethora of shots ranging from gin to tequila nicely topped off with a hint of horseradish. Puking three times in his attempt to see the behemoth of the pint off, he just about managed. Fresher Arjun Shah decided that in order to fit into the team he needed to follow suit and also puked on numerous occasions throughout the night. Several pitchers of beer and many games of taps later it was time to go to Zoo bar.

So, our drunken group got onto the 344 bus to begin our epic journey, which turned out to be too long for me to wait

to use a toilet (any user of this bus may want to avoid sitting on the back seat of the top deck). After this shameful act we all got spruced up and on the way spotted paparazzi waiting outside a restaurant. On further inspection it turned out to be David Walliams, whom I may add Krishnan called a pussy and then had the audacity to ask for a photo, to which he replied "No, you just called me a pussy!" This was our cue to leave.

We learned a lot from the day; always bring a full keeper kit, don't expect a photo with a celebrity if you insult the, and that when you are drunk the world is your toilet.

Comics seriously outplayed

Old Boys show their age as Students reclaim the Berrylands Cup in the annual Students vs. Comics fixture



Ollie Townsend
Ben Robinson

The Berrylands Cup, possibly the most coveted prize in world rugby (despite existing only in legend), was this week contested in the annual 'Students vs Comics' match. Much was at

stake, partly because the Comics held the Cup going in to the match, but mainly for bragging rights, as several of the students play regularly for the Old Boys and didn't want to give them any more reasons to rib them (on top of the usual 'I have a £70k a year job, and you aren't going to even be able to get a job as a cleaner because of the recession we've caused'). So it was a very focussed and mainly well-rested team that ran out on to the pitch, with most players

opting for a relatively quiet Friday night in preparation of the task ahead. With several of our big players from the season before, plus Jacko, now in the Comics team, we knew it was going to be a tough game. In fact the Comics probably went into the game favourites after last year's win, and with Jacko terrorising our email list with some over zealous chat.

The Old Boys turned up with a reasonably strong line up, though missing some regulars including Boca, Rich Anderson and myself. That said, we were running low on reserves too after Kalra picked up another injury, Reesy damaged his ankle last Wednesday after his altercation with the barman and subsequently the bouncers in Zoo bar, and Boca decided to go for a canny night in Newcastle to celebrate his sister's 18th - why aye man.

The game started off closely contested, with the Comics winning most of the possession and territory. That said, LSE never looked in danger of conceding and seemed to be in control from the off. Ollie "Bottle" Perry tried a big tackle early on against new boy Ollie Cook, but Cookie shrugged it off in his usual style and just hoped he hadn't done anything to offend Perry. The game continued in much the same vein for most of the first half until LSE finally made the breakthrough to score the first try, courtesy of Matty Walker. Will Wilson duly converted and

we went into half time 7-0 up.

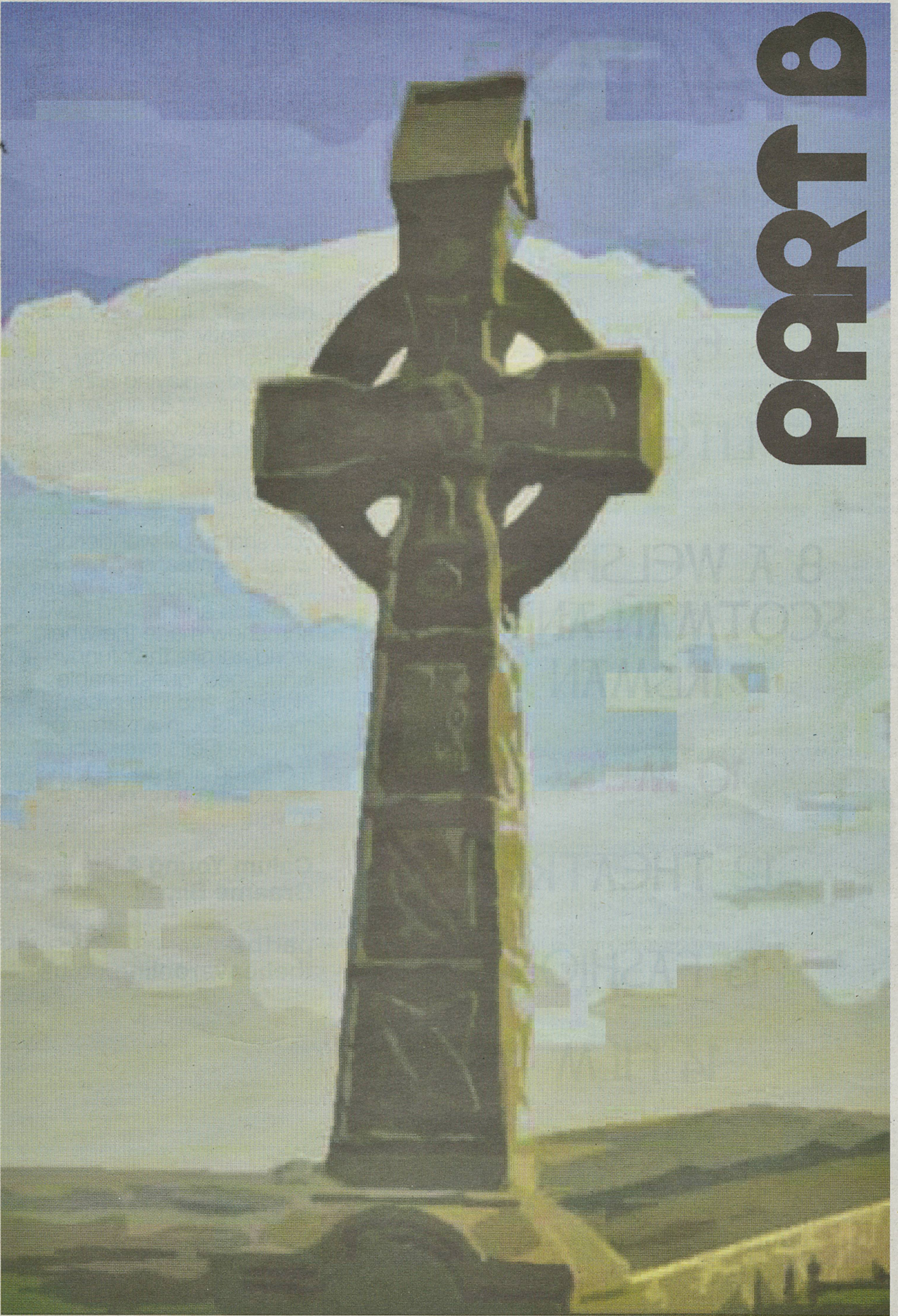
The second half was far less contested as we continued to get into our stride and the Comics got more and more tired. Jacko tried to make up for the lack of contest by throwing punches, stamping and generally trying (but failing) to assert his dominance over his former peers. I should, however, mention a Jonny Wilkinson-esque pass he managed to get away, but then completely ruined by laughing like a little girl and shouting, "Did anyone see that? - Champagne rugby". Cookie also reciprocated an equally meaty tackle on Bottle, who by this point was playing in the centre with Jacko on the wing - what a combination. LSE continued to dominate, especially in the forwards even though man for man we were well below the (over)weight of the Comics. Will Wilson soon struck with a try, which he then converted, before Jonny Jackson (aka Pomstar) cut a nice line to run through the now very tired Comics.

LSE controlled the game from start to finish, mainly through clever play in defence and big commitment from everyone to tackles and the breakdown. The Comics were lacking ideas big time with their best effort trying to target Tom Davies at full-back, but who had no problem dealing with it - probably the best controlled performance I've seen from an LSE team. A special mention should go to those 2nd

team players (3rd team Captain Dewi Evans included) who turned up, especially Russian Greg for some massive hits - he looked almost as happy as when murdering innocent civilians on Call of Duty.

After the game, we all headed down to the Berrylands to grab some food and watch the Internationals. In the half time interval, the Berrylands Cup presentation took place (Ben having bought a cup a few days before, no doubt in anticipation of winning it straight back), and the man-of-the-match and dick-of-the-day awards were made. Man of the Comics went, by unanimous choice, to the Rabbi (no, not the talkative little American chap who graces the student's first team bench), and the student's man of the match was Ollie Cook, who had a stormer.

Dicks of the day both went to the newest members of the Comics team: Ollie Perry for losing while a third year student, and then switching over to the Comics the following year and promptly losing for them too; and to Jacko, for unnecessary aggression (punching, kicking, stamping etc), despite the fact the game was a friendly, and a friendly against a team made up of his mates at that! Following the outcome of the Internationals, everyone headed to the hallowed Comics Saturday night stomping ground, Infernos, and proceeded to have a suitably debauched night to round off a top day.



part 8

24/11/09

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EDITORIAL

Are you Celtic? Here is a little test: Do you use the letter 'y' as a vowel? Do you believe you should have easy access to your scrotum, especially during formal events? Are you angry your 'luck' did nothing to stop Thierry Henry's handball? Finally, and most importantly, are you the biggest fan of whoever England is playing against? If the answer to any of the above questions is 'yes' then you are Celtic.

Now that we have established your Celtic heritage you should be wondering what this means. Why? Because the nations of Wales, Scotland and Ireland have somehow made the whole world admire their funny languages, questionable clothing, and little green theives. So, in an attempt to make Celts everywhere feel loved and adored, this issue of PartB is dedicated to you.

**Calum Young &
Graeme Birrell**

**partb@
thebeaveronline.co.uk**

RV1 to Avalon

By Joan Tay

HE BOARDS THE BUS AT LONDON BRIDGE, AND THE STICKY OVERTURNED CUP OF DRIED, SUSPICIOUS BLACK LIQUID ROLLS UNDER MY CHAIR, TO OBLIVION. I'D BEEN COWERING AWAY FROM WHERE IT CORNERED ME IN MY SEAT, THREATENING TIME AND AGAIN TO ROLL IN MY DIRECTION. IF ITS LINGERING NOXIOUS FUMES BOTHER HIM, HE GIVES NO INDICATION AS HE SITS DOWN NEXT TO ME, ENYA BLASTING IN HIS LIME GREEN IPOD, ORDERING US, IN A VOICE MADE OF DREAMS AND MOONSHINE, TO SAIL AWAY, SAIL AWAY, SAIL AWAY TO THE SHORES OF BABYLON.

I THINK, FOR A MOMENT, THAT HE MUST HAVE HEEDED HER, SURELY HIS BREATHING WAS TOO SHALLOW, EXPRESSION PEACEFUL LIKE A STATUE CRAVED ON A TOMB. BUT THEN HE OPENS HIS EYES, AND THEY'RE ALIVE WITH THE COLOUR OF STORM, GREY AND WHITE AND THE FAINTEST ICY SLIVER OF BLUE, LIKE THE SKY OUTSIDE THE BUS.

LONDON IS RAINING AGAIN.

EXCUSE ME, HE SAYS POLITELY, WHERE IS THIS GOING? COVENT GARDEN, I ANSWER, AND FIDGET WITH MY PHONE. THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT HIM THAT MAKES ME UNCOMFORTABLE. PERHAPS THE WAY HIS HOODIE LOOKS MORE LIKE A DUSTY, WORN COWL CUT INTO HALF-LENGTH TO REVEAL TATTERED JEANS FROM WAIST DOWN.

HE RETURNS A SUITABLY BLANK LOOK. PERHAPS HE IS LOST. PERHAPS HE'S BEEN SO FOR CENTURIES, AND HE SIGHS FAINTLY LIKE THE RUSTLING OF AIR THROUGH ANCIENT TOMES. HIS FACE IS ETERNALLY YOUNG AND TIRED LIKE HE BORE THE WEIGHT OF SUNS.

DOES IT GO TO...CAMELOT? HE MUMBLES AT LAST. I THINK HE MIGHT BE CRAZY. ENYA CHOOSES THAT MOMENT TO TELL US THAT ANYWHERE IS, AND HE WATCHES AS MY EYES FLICKER TO HIS PLAYER AND BACK. VERY GOOD, ISN'T SHE?

I MURMUR A WEAK AFFIRMATION, AND HIS FACE BREAKS OUT INTO A WIDE GRIN.

NOT QUITE AS GOOD AS QUEEN GUINEVERE, HE CHATTERS ON EARNESTLY, BUT NO ONE IS, NOT REALLY. NON PAREIL, AND ALL THAT.

AS WE PASS THE LONDON EYE, I FIND OUT HIS NAME. IT IS NIGH IMPOSSIBLE NOT TO LAUGH, AND DOWNRIGHT SO NOT TO BE SCEPTICAL.

RIGHT, THEN, I MUTTER, WHEN HE INSISTS HE IS HIS NAMESAKE, AND NOT JUST THE PRODUCT OF A MOTHER'S TWISTED SENSE OF HUMOUR. YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE STUCK. IN A TREE.

OAK, HE REPLIES ABSENT-MINDEDLY. THE DRUIDS ASSISTED ME TO FREEDOM AFTER A MILLENNIA OR SO. YOU KNOW HOW THEY ARE WITH EARTH MAGIC.

YOU'RE LYING, I SAY, AND HE INCLINES HIS HEAD AND LAUGHS LIKE THE BLUEBELLS IN THE WOODS THAT WEARY LONE TRAVELLERS FEARED TO HEAR.

PROVE IT, I SAY, AND HE TELLS ME TO GET OFF A STOP EARLY, BECAUSE NIMCIEH WAS GOING TO BLOW THE BUS UP, ANGRY THAT SHE WAS ABOUT HIS ESCAPING HER TREE-HOUSE.

HE'S ON HIS WAY TO FIND AND WAKE THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING. BUCKINGHAM WILL BE THRILLED, I RETORT, AND TELL HIM HE'S NOTHING LIKE LEGEND

GEOFFREY'S GOTTEN IT ALL WRONG, HE REPLIES, EYES OLDER THAN HIS STORIES. THIS IS ME. WHO I WAS, WHO I WILL BE.

AUNT BEVERLY

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

Dear Aunt Beverly,

Recently I've been getting a lot of complaints from my friend's about spending too much time looking in the mirror. What's wrong with wanting to look good and that I appreciate my own efforts to look so delicious? Aren't you agony aunts always telling people to be confident and to love themselves?

GodILookGood, 2nd Year.

Dear Self-Involved,

Indeed 'we agony aunts' are always encouraging others to be confident - it's page four of the manual - but there is a difference between confidence and vanity my dear and you clearly fall into the latter category. Vanity is one of the seven deadly sins; beware the tale of Narcissus. I can't say I blame your friends either. Why have conversations with you if you are more interested in your own reflection than their answer? If you can prise yourself away from the mirror you might stand some chance of retaining your friends, but hurry: they won't be there forever if you keep choosing a reflective surface over them.

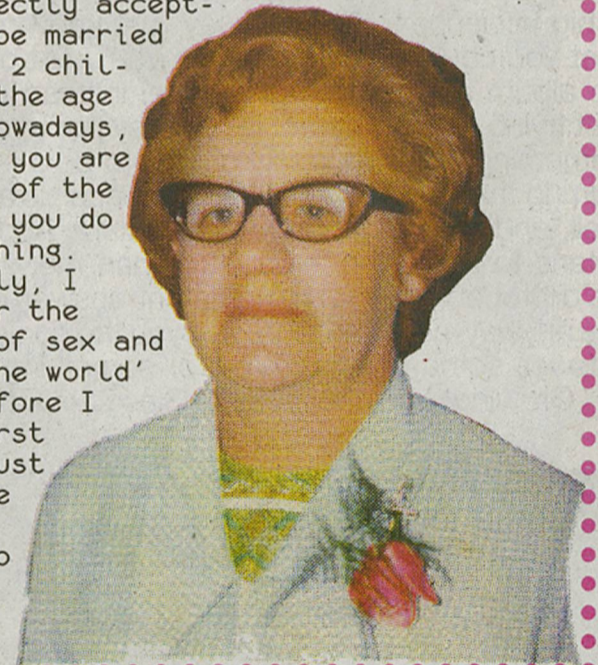
Dear Aunt Beverly,

I'm broody. And not in a 'wow isn't that baby cute, wouldn't it be fun to play dress-up' kind of way. In a 'I want to make a baby so that I can create a human being with my boyfriend and love it forever' kind of way. I have names picked out and I know which catchment area I want to live in. I'm 18. Is it too soon to be thinking like this?

IWantToBeAYummyMummy, 1st Year

Dear HopefulBabyMaker,

Well dear, in my day it was perfectly acceptable to be married and have 2 children by the age of 23, nowadays, it seems you are the scum of the earth if you do such a thing. Personally, I opted for the 'plenty of sex and seeing the world' route before I had my first sprog. Just make sure you can afford to look after your progeny.



The Conquest of Happiness

Ever get that feeling you're just filling space? Well I got to thinking, life's natural state is not happiness. People forget this. Unquestionably, happiness is dependent on achievement; when I do something impressive, I feel pleasure. But we can't all succeed at everything we do, and the majority of our ventures are doomed to failure. This causes unhappiness. Further when we do succeed at something, over-time we incorporate the achievement into our sense of normality. I was exceptionally pleased when I attained a place at the LSE around this time 2 years ago, but over-time that pleasure has faded. Perhaps, as Virginia Woolf said, 'Only when we meet our goals do we become aware of how limited they were'. What, then, can we do to prevent this tacit admonishment of our own lives?

One answer, is to think differently about events. It is not the events in our lives which determine our happiness, but rather the way we perceive them. If we could re-calibrate our expectations, we might all sleep more soundly at night, reflecting on our our lives more positively. And if numerically inclined, one might think about this relationship between Happiness, Achievement and Expectations in mathematical form.

$$\frac{\text{Achievements}}{\text{Expectations}} = \text{Happiness}$$

In the equation, we can maximise our happiness in two ways. The first involves increasing our level of Achievement, the second involves reducing our Expectations. Just a thought.

the twilight sad

After touring the US, becoming mates with Mogwai and coming home to play Glasgow, **The Twilight Sad** have done more than enough to establish themselves as a tour-de-force of Glaswegian melancholic nostalgia. Interview by **Ash Bickford**.

Relatively new to Scotland's world-renowned indie scene are *The Twilight Sad*, pallbearers of melancholy hometown stories interwoven with driving yet complex guitar melodies. The band is James (vocals), Andy (guitar), Craig (bass) and Mark (drums). They've recently released their sophomore album, *Forget The Night Ahead*, on Fat Cat Records and they're finishing off the UK leg of their European tour. At *the Scala*, I notice most of the band out front, due in part to Andy's conspicuously shaved head, a trait he shares with James. They're all smiles and very friendly, cracking jokes and generally upbeat; not very indicative of the darkness and gloom their music is known for. I meet James upstairs and we head backstage for the interview. He's wearing a montage of superhero faces on his t-shirt, tight jeans and trainers. He's totally down to earth and unaffected despite the acclaim the band has received over the last few years. James offers me a beer and starts right into some of his early influences. "I love *The Smiths*, I think *The Smiths* are the best band out there and I was listening to things like *Arab Strap...* and *Monday at the Hug and Pint*, was just a big influence for me anyway, just knowing that you could be as honest as you want on an album and say what you feel instead of just trying to get your act in a glossy photo or something." This modesty proves to be a recurring theme. "The early *Mogwai* records as well, and the Delgados. I mean I think Andy listens to a lot of different stuff than me, so he'd probably give you a different answer to me anyway, he'd probably give you the cooler answer, some obscure band or something."

Growing up just outside Glasgow, *The*

Twilight Sad were inevitably exposed to the music scene there. However, when they started playing gigs they "made the conscious decision of not being one of those bands that constantly goes round the circuit and plays every night, and plays to their friends and their family all the time." Instead, they honed their skills over three years and developed as a band, evolving from an incredibly noisy, experimental group into a more brooding, melodic, but still very loud indie rock band. The transformation paid off in the end. "We're lucky enough just to find that [sound] on our first record, first demo we did, we sent it to FatCat and they signed us."

Their popularity was immediate in the US, prompting a North American tour despite the meagre three live shows under the band's belt. "We were four friends that were just getting chucked over to America and toured... and we were just like, 'What the fuck is going on?'" Learning along the way, the band has already toured with heavyweights *Mogwai*, *Smashing Pumpkins* and *Snow Patrol*. James excitedly tells me his favourite band to tour with is "Mogwai without a doubt...Mogwai are some of our best friends so it's like getting to tour with your friends and see them every night. They are the best live band." He mentions too, a tour with *Beirut* plagued by illness. Only two dates saw them play together. Each band is a fan of the other and James expresses interest in collaborating. "We'd like to work with Zack from *Beirut*." I ask him what he thinks of playing Glasgow after touring all over the world and how it compares to other cities. "I love playing in Glasgow. It's a lot more nerveracking in Glasgow though... the show in *Bowery Ballroom* was pretty special. It was one of those ones where you're

just like "shit I'm actually playing this venue. This is one the best venues in the world."

Despite their international adoration, James explains that he always comes back home to write new songs. He feels that Scotland subconsciously influences his songwriting. "I always write when I'm at home because the songs, the stories are about where I'm from, the people I know...I think if we went to Hawaii, we would write a different kind of album, it would be all sunshine and stuff."

The Twilight Sad's first album, *Fourteen Autumns & Fifteen Winters*, while dark, is considered to focus on youth and the album artwork reflects this. The new album seems to take on an even more macabre tone and the artwork follows suit. "When we've got the lyrics finished, I'll send that to Dave who does our artwork. Andy and him work together. Andy says "I'm into this kind of thing right now." ...films like *Blow Up* or *Brown Bunny*, things like that, more of a 50s style. Then [Dave] seemed to combine the two. He took from my lyrics exactly what I was thinking in my head. The first record it seems was...based around like children and youth and stuff like that but this one's maybe focused more on the feminine perspective...Like we always think that things seem worse if it happens to a kid or a woman...I suppose the term "women and children first" kinda thing. Like if you read something in the newspaper and it happens to a woman or a child it seems to be a lot more shocking... and we're not out to shock but we're out just to make an impression on people."

This basic attitude of sympathy and concern which is evident through the gloom arguably comes from the solid homes the band members come from, a fact which was ini-



tially surprising to critics who contested that such lamenting lyrics could only be the result of a damaged childhood. In fact, "Back home we do come from really good places. We focus on the dark side of things because it's more interesting than somebody bashing on about how great their life is. I think people can really relate to the darker side more because if [they] listen to a song and think - maybe they were in that place at one time - and if they're through that now they can hear a song and go "shit, that's what it was, I'm so glad to be out of that now." That's how I write anyway. I write about the stuff that's been pretty bad. I suppose it's therapeutic."

Apart from his aptitude in songwriting,

James has a passion for film. He took electrical engineering in college but says "I was more into film and I always wanted to do film editing...so it was really Andy that pushed me into the direction of being in a band." This is evidenced by the song *That Summer, At Home I Had Become The Invisible Boy* and the EP *Here, It Never Snowed. Afterwards It Did*, lines taken from *Stand By Me* and *Edward Scissorhands* respectively. Interestingly, Andy also shares this interest. "Film, Andy writes to films. Like he puts a film on and turns the sound off - or I dunno if he turns the sound off - but he just sits and writes songs to that...He did that more on this album than he did the last one. He was watching films

like *Dead Man's Shoes* and things like that."

The Twilight Sad, and James more specifically, have gained a certain notoriety concerning the meanings of their songs. James never talks about what they mean, and in his defense, sometimes, he admits, he doesn't know. "I remember the first song on the last record...I didn't know what it was about until a year after playing it. It was just subconsciously, the words seemed to fit together, and then singing it one night when we were away from home I was just like "ah for fuck's sake, that's what that's about, fuckin hell."



LEPRESCORN

THERE'S NOTHING OVER THE RAINBOW FOR **ALEX WHITE**

I bloody hate leprechauns. Little green dissembling bastards, ruining my life in the most impish of ways. Too long have they run about in their self-cobbled shoes, hob-nobbing with Dorothy over the rainbow, and stockpiling the world's diminishing gold reserves. It is time, comrades, that the world at large should know about the world of small.

Our key and most poignant criticism of these fauna-fabricated fuckers: oh, such shady financial dealings. 'Have they never heard of banks?', I hear you call. Indeed not, and terrible it has been too. Recently *the Financial Times* reported that the recession in which we find ourselves was caused single handedly by the preposterous leprechaun population and their doleful mistrust of Halifax. As a side note H. Dizzle, you're off the hook, even if you do look like a large gnome, which everyone knows is kind of like a leprechaun but less Irish and more stationary.

Even when they are not causing a global meltdown of monetary services, their promised pots of gold at the end of the rainbow are no more than a hoax to lure you

in. I beg of you, dear reader, next time you find yourself with the means and the opportunity to ensnare one of these magical little men, read the small print. All card-carrying leprechauns (understand, any creature of magical and non-human origins must be approved by the Folklore Agency and Imp Recognition Yurt, so as to differentiate between your grass root elves and your Lolitine nymphs, who to be fair, look pretty similar after a few bottles of buckfast) are contractually obliged to give you the small print when they tell you you'll get a pot of gold for catching them.

The small print reads: 'whattareyeh a fekkinn MADMAN or something of bloody course yeh 'ain't gettin' no free money, if anything when you caught me yer bonus was herpes!'. This I discovered to my detriment, a story that's between me, the leprechaun and my gynaecologist. But for the record, lying about the gold? Uncool little dude, uncool, like wasting your summer at a shit investment bank and getting no job offer at the end of it.

General Mills once managed to capture one of those stupid tiny liars and rather than a pot of gold, found a mine of extortion. Preying on the childish love of the supernatural and an overarching desire for E-numbers galore, an international food conglomeration and a wee little green wanker hopped into bed to-



ey-grabbing children from my neighbourhood and together we searched for the promised land. I attribute a lifetime of disappointment and a dodgy knee to our little leprechaun 'friends'.

Perhaps I am wrong and you respect their rainbows and their incredibly well-packaged cereal boxes, but I promise that I am not a lone woman in a sea of St. Paddy's day green. Nay, there are others besides me. www.dickipedia.com leads an interesting discussion on the multitude of ways that leprechauns suck. Wikihow also offers some good tips on leprechaun hunting. I propose that armed with this knowledge we should root out the elvin scrotes one by one and bring them to justice.

Even if you were to believe their spin (I hear Alastair Campbell's on staff), and decide to go ahead and find them endearing, it seems wildly unfortunate to me that a small green hairy lying creature with a talent for practical tomfoolery should be so strongly associated with the Irish people and culture. Clearly, there must be better symbols of Ireland, so I call upon my Irish readers, the Irish tourism board, and those of you who just enjoy targeting sections of society to rise up with me to our full height, and free the world from the shackles of these prickish lepre-

gether and created *Lucky Charms*™, surely the most putrid and evil of all cereal foods ever to have been created.

Made up of 25 per cent marshmallowy anonymities, Lucky, the insidious runt paraded his naughtiness and lies around as sugar coated breakfast fun, resulting in generations of degenerate violent children with Attention Deficit Disorder and obesity. These tales may tell you of cheeky pint-sized characters with a penchant for practical jokes, but were you to come face-to-face with one, you too would recognise their sinister natures.

A large amount of my leprecepticism roots from my formative years. Those Machievellian dweebs bent the laws of physics and dimensions in my befuddled and malleable developing mind. Fat from the marshmallows as I was, I ran and I ran, through equal parts rain and shine to find the end of the rainbow, to no avail. Like the bastard love child of *Forest Gump* and the Pied Piper, I gathered all the chubby mon-

DISCLAIMERS
THE FINANCIAL TIMES NEVER SAID THAT I DON'T HAVE HERPES FROM A LEPRECHAUN. CAMPBELL DID HAVE A MENTAL BREAKDOWN. SO FOR ALL I KNOW HE MAY WELL WORK FOR THE LEPRECHAUNS
WWW.DICKIPEDIA.COM REALLY DOES EXIST

IRISH I WASNT IRISH

GARETH LEWIS ON HOW THE IRISH ARE HELPING THEMSELVES

What Gok Wan has done for a generation of glum, jellied women, Guy Ritchie has for a generation of gymming twenty-something males who refuse to be disenchanted by perennial mediocrity: he has inspired. Contouring minds and bodies simultaneously, Guy can bring out the best in you: testosterone, tattoos and temper tantrums. Fortunately, he's had, at best, a minimum impact on my own orientation towards the world. Nevertheless, he's the (Fairtrade) adoptive father of at least one sinister Celtic suspicion I have, namely, that the Irish are *nutters*. This, after all, appears to be the only lesson in *Snatch* (an inverted pedagogical nightmare, incidentally, where all the miscreants who skipped school and failed their GCSE's grow up and start teaching people 'lessons they won't forget'). Thanks to Guy, I'm conscious of the risks involved in writing this, and the growling imperative to do the Irish canon justice. I wouldn't want to unsettle the vast and violent diaspora.

But where to start? The Irish have Swift and Joyce, Beckett and even Bram Stoker ('Bram' being a name that sadly perished alongside the centuried Count himself, though which seems to be enjoying a sibling renaissance in the cereal category). And yet, when I started looking for Irish fiction to gulp down with an extra-extra-cold goblet of the black-stuff (so frigid, if I had it my way, that temperature and taste would become interchangeable measurements of judgement), I began to notice a trend quite literally *pleading* for attention. It's not Irish fiction that demands our time, but Irish non-fiction (though non-Irish fiction is always going to be a tempting alternative), specifically, Irish Self-Help.

Curiously, the Irish seem to have a self-help section all to themselves. The symptom here – the unstable kernel at the heart of this blossoming market – is what can only be described as 'Irishness'. One doesn't 'lack' Irishness in the same way that you might let Paul McKenna fiddle with you during your sleep if you 'lacked' confidence. Neither is this a physical thing: you don't want to 'lose' Irishness like you want, typically, to 'lose' weight. Nor, I should say, do you want to 'awaken the Irishness within yourself' (here the parallel lies with jumbo American Man Anthony Robbins, who urges us to *Awaken The Giant Within*. This is a giveaway seeing as he's so tall. He basically wants us to wake up and find *him* 'in us', something that would obviously be rapidly terrifying).

No – this affliction is inescapable, innate, inherited. You are born into 'a state of Irishness', a psychological calamity which you spend the

rest of your life trying hopelessly to cope with. Titles in this area include: *Help Me I'm Irish* (by Ray Hamill), *Help Me, I'm An Irish Innkeeper* (by Maureen Erde) and the unconvincing *'Tis A Blessing to Be Irish: Elf Self-Help* (by Sharon McCullough and Rosemary Purdy). What's

stand in place for a Nietzschean moment of grammatical usurpation. Would you?

Though a disorientating wonder to behold, discovering the emporium of doom and gloom that is the 'Irish Self-Help' marketplace has also been oddly clarifying. The hats, t-shirts and mugs I've always wondered about, the ones that say (delete as appropriate) 'Kiss / Blow / Hug / Squeeze / Poke / Finger Me, I'm Irish!' now make a certain kind of horrifying sense. What they clearly translate to is (again, delete as appropriate): "Help / Assist / Aid / Please explain to / Rescue / Guide / Comfort / Save / Kill Me, I'm Irish!" The irony is, that having figured all this out I want to give the vicious little brutes a hug more than ever.

Nearby the Irish Self-Help section you'll find the Irish Spiritual-Salvation block. I happen to think that the only way out of this whole mess is through a kind of Hegelian dialectic: the bringing together of these unruly problems and the breached delivery of an amniotic, screaming synthesis. Books in this second area include the irritating *A Wee Bit of Irish Widsom* (by Jim Gallery) and the much more Ginsbergian *The Celtic Way of Seeing: Meditations On The Irish Spirit Wheel* (by Frank Henderson Macceowen). To be sure to be sure, there's a kind of proletarian spiritualism worth mining in the affective, enchanting (and gory) history of Island. That said, I'm not sure you'll find it hidden amongst the four pillars of these texts: headscarves, bangles, incense and hemp flip-flops.

And yet, what we really want to know is *why*? Why the national angst, the traumatic squeal for stability? I've noticed (haven't you?) that out of the five books mentioned, three are written by men. Coincidence? Hardly. There's little room for fortuity in a 60/40 split, readers. The men are more muddled than the madams.

It comes down to the Irish accent. In no land on earth is there a greater disparity between the cadence of its male and female populations. Whilst Irish men are, typically, very funny – Dara O'Briain and Ed Byrne, for example – when they speak the noise that comes out is somewhere between a seagull's squawk and a rusty tinwhistle's squeak. Every exhalation is a catastrophe: the male Irish accent does to speech what a randy bull might to a shipment of ceramic urinals in an Armitage Shanks warehouse. Conversely, Irish women have an inflection able, in a honeyed swoop, to reassemble those spermatozoid fragments and make everything right again. I can only conclude that this schism in timbre is the traumatic core of the overwhelmingly male (see statistics above) Irish Self-Help market. But then I would make this claim, being a bloke, and a Welshman.



most annoying about the latter is the 'Elf Self-Help' bit. Did they think people wouldn't 'get it' if they just called it 'Elf-Help' (I mean, isn't *that* the joke here?). I wouldn't take advice from anyone who allowed the penury of rhyme to

Every exhalation is a catastrophe: the male Irish accent does to speech what a randy bull might to a shipment of ceramic urinals in an Armitage Shanks warehouse.

A WELSHMAN, AN IRISHMAN, AND A SCOTSMAN...

A WELSHMAN, AN IRISHMAN AND A SCOTSMAN WERE CONFESSING THEIR SECRET VICES TO EACH OTHER.

'I'M A TERRIBLE GAMBLER,' SAID THE WELSHMAN.

'I'M A TERRIBLE DRINKER,' SAID THE SCOTSMAN.

'MY VICE IS MUCH LESS SERIOUS,' SAID THE IRISHMAN, 'I JUST LIKE TO TELL TALES ABOUT MY FRIENDS.'



A WELSHMAN, A SCOTSMAN AND AN IRISHMAN ARE DRIVING THROUGH THE DESERT WHEN THEIR CAR BREAKS DOWN. SO THEY HAVE TO GET OUT.

THE WELSHMAN TAKES A BOTTLE OF WINE WITH HIM, THE SCOTSMAN TAKES AN UMBRELLA AND THE IRISHMAN TAKES A CAR DOOR.

ON THE WAY THEY MEET A LOCAL. HE SAYS TO THE WELSHMAN "I KNOW WHY YOU'VE GOT THE WINE SO YOU CAN HAVE A DRINK WHEN YOUR THIRSTY", HE SAYS TO THE SCOTSMAN "I KNOW WHY YOU'VE GOT THE UMBRELLA TO KEEP THE SUN OFF YOU", "BUT" HE SAYS TO THE IRISHMAN "WHY HAVE YOU GOT THE CAR DOOR?" THE IRISHMAN REPLIES "IF I GET HOT I CAN WIND THE WINDOW DOWN!"

AN ENGLISHMAN, IRISHMAN, WELSHMAN, SCOTSMAN WERE CAPTURED WHILE FIGHTING IN A FAR-OFF FOREIGN LAND, AND THE LEADER OF THE CAPTORS SAID, 'WE'RE GOING TO LINE YOU UP IN FRONT OF A FIRING SQUAD AND SHOOT YOU ALL IN TURN. BUT FIRST, YOU EACH CAN MAKE A FINAL WISH.'

THE ENGLISHMAN RESPONDS, 'I'D LIKE TO HEAR "GOD SAVE THE QUEEN" JUST ONE MORE TIME TO REMIND ME OF THE AULD COUNTRY, PLAYED BY THE LONDON ALL BOYS CHOIR. WITH MORRIS DANCERS DANCING TO THE TUNE.'

THE IRISHMAN REPLIES, 'I'D LIKE TO HEAR "DANNY BOY" JUST ONE MORE TIME TO REMIND ME OF THE AULD COUNTRY, SUNG IN THE STYLE OF DANIEL O'DONNELL, WITH RIVERDANCE DANCERS SKIPPING GAILY TO THE TUNE.'

THE WELSHMAN ANSWERS, 'I'D LIKE TO HEAR "MEN OF HARLECH" JUST ONE MORE TIME TO REMIND ME OF THE COUNTRY, SUNG AS IF BY THE TREORCHY MALE VOICE CHOIR.'

THE SCOTSMAN SAYS QUICKLY, 'I'D LIKE TO BE SHOT FIRST.'

THERE'S A WELSHMAN, IRISHMAN, AND SCOTSMAN ALL TALKING ABOUT THEIR TEENAGE DAUGHTERS.

THE WELSHMAN SAYS: " I WAS CLEANING MY DAUGHTER'S ROOM THE OTHER DAY & I FOUND A PACKET OF CIGARETTES. I WAS REALLY SHOCKED AS I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW SHE SMOKES!

THE SCOTSMAN SAYS: "THAT'S NOTHING. I WAS CLEANING MY DAUGHTER'S ROOM THE OTHER DAYS WHEN I FOUND A HALF FULL BOTTLE OF VODKA. I WAS REALLY SHOCKED AS I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW SHE DRANK!"

WITH THAT THE IRISHMAN SAYS: "BOTH OF YOU HAVE GOT NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT. I WAS CLEANING MY DAUGHTER'S ROOM THE OTHER DAY WHEN I FOUND A PACKET OF CONDOMS. I WAS REALLY SHOCKED. I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW SHE HAD A WILLY!"

MUSIC

ARCTIC MONKEYS @ WEMBLEY 17/11

AARRON GAMMALLIERE

Not much went through my mind, upon being asked whether I wanted a free guestlist ticket to see the *Arctic Monkeys* at Wembley Arena, besides 'Hell, yeah.' A fan I am, yes, but I regard my relationship with the band as more of a supporter. I know every song, I like most of them, yet have never made an effort to see them. Though I blame this purely on a reluctance to find myself absorbed by the *zeitgeist* that gripped alternative music some four years ago, I nevertheless hold the Northern four in high esteem. Anyway, I digress.

So, a peaceful trip from my abode in Warwick Avenue (not digs, losers, I'm a Londoner!) down the Bakerloo to Wembley Central, I find myself getting rather excited. A band I've liked for ages, and a venue I've never been to before. Yes, that's right, I am a Wembley Arena virgin. Naturally, then, I have high hopes. I pass the mugs in the queue that paid, pass the stewards, neanderthal as ever, and to the 'guest' box-office. (Did I mention I've never been on the guestlist for a proper gig before? And I don't care what you say, '+1' still counts.) The first surprise came thusly; the woman behind the stupid perspex glass with little holes sermonises me, claiming that, despite the 'guest' in 'guestlist ticket', *Arctic Monkeys* 'insist' on guests charitably giving a £5 pound donation to the Teenage Cancer Trust. Now, I am more than happy to give money to a cause that I have a personal affinity with. However, due to the lack of a heads up, I have come with all but two quid of fare money, and feel poor, tight, and thoroughly ashamed. A blameless hiccup, maybe, but not the best of starts. I soldier on, however, picking my ego up off the floor as I go to my seat.

The seats, for want of a better (and less painfully apt) word, rocked. Side view, as close as I could really be without smelling the armpits of the sound-tech guys, and just enough to make my ears bleed from the speakers. Before a note is played, the gig is going better than some I've attended in the past. Looking down at the pulsing bodies below, and the more refined fans that sit around me, all are jolly and psyched. Fever-pitch mounts to the point of proverbial orgasm as the lights fade, and four goons start to play instruments.

The *Arctic Monkeys* open with a song I, and by the looks of things, many more, aren't completely familiar with. *Humbug*, the band's third album, is still relatively new, and the frustrating habit of bands playing their new material from the off makes no exceptions in Wembley tonight. I wait, however, for the second onslaught, which is, thankfully a song that gets people moving, strobe lights flash-

ing and epileptics hiding. *Brianstorm*, a song fuelled with as much irony and ambivalence as it is galloping drumming and ear-piercing chords electrifies north-west London, and the masses ebb to Alex Turner's every word. Why they didn't open the set with this is a mystery. Musically, *Arctic Monkeys* are flawless. Sure, their sound is essentially indie-garage rock, which is, admittedly, not a challenge to recreate, but the precision with which the songs are executed is a genuine marvel.



The set progresses, treating fans to songs old and new alike, playing the radioed-to-death hits of '*I Bet You Look Good On The Dancefloor*', '*A View From The Afternoon*', and the new fan favourite (and oddly haunting) '*Crying Lightning*'. The pace of songs, and the quick succession with which they are show-cased, is highly fitting for not only the mood of the rampant audience, but the night as a whole. All feel that this is a night of not caring, and dancing like an idiot, and so the band oblige fevered impatience; pausing between their impressive catalogue only to change kit, or to utter the customary pleasantries to the spectators (Think, "Evening, Wembley" in a whining Northern lilt.) The set goes on, surprising me as it does, featuring B-side '*Sketchhead*', not unlike a skit; rough and hard, and their latest release, '*Cornerstone*', a beautifully melancholic ode to love and loneliness, that leaves me, and I believe a lot more in the crowd, sombre and introspective; an emotion testament to both Turner's songwriting abilities and cleverly structured polemic, and the band's sensitive musicianship.

For all my praise, however, one drawback stays with me throughout what is, un-

deniably, a good night. Yes, the *Arctic Monkeys* play well enough to have you believe you're listening to your iPod, and the set-list is both nostalgic and contemporary. When I go to a gig, though, I go not to listen to music, but to see a performance. Watching *Arctic Monkeys* flex their muscles from song to song on this most grand of stages, however, has none of the entertainment or showmanship one would expect from a famous and decent band. Here are four guys from Shef-

field, playing in arguably the most prestigious venue there is; a venue that every band, from California to Cambodia, dreams of playing, and yet none of the band lift their heads for more than two seconds. The shoe-gazing is made all the more frustrating when I witness 20 million people (I think it was that many; I lost count at 15) sing Turner's lyrics back at him, while he simply stares back at us, gormless. Here is a man living the dream - my dream, at least - yet he resonates nothing to the awe-inspired crowd. Blame it on the fame, the money, or the new hair-cuts. Either way, the band's too-cool-for-school indifference to the spectacle is not only off-putting, but disheartening. Further evidence of charisma-deficiency is seen when Turner abandons his guitar, and takes to singing alone. An immobile, even awkward figure graces the stage, shrinking with every line he unleashes. My disappointment annoys me, but I just can't help but feel let down.

With this said, the mild-mannered (to put it very politely) nature of the bad only emphasises the raw aggression and emotion that drummer Matt Helders captures with his every stroke. Reminiscent of a young John Bonham, Helders manouevres around the kit effortlessly, stealing every single song, and, in my opinion, fronting the band. The passive watchers stare at Turner. Everybody else's eyes are fixed solely on Helder. Undeniably, he rectifies what could often be cited as a boring, if brilliant, band performance.

So I left Wembley very content with what I had experienced. A new venue did I behold, another band did I see, and another ticket for my memory-box did I retrieve (don't tell anyone I have a memory-box). I had experienced a massive band on a massive scale, and was thoroughly impressed, all the more happy that it was free, and went back home feeling, besides very hungry, humbled by just how successful a little band can become, with the right talent (and coverage). Say what you will, but the skill and craft of the *Arctic Monkeys* is something that can't be ignored. Not that I ever did.

JACK ASHFORD @ JAZZ CAFÉ 11/11

EMMA KELLY

Jack Ashford is probably one of the best artistes you've never heard of. Except you will have definitely heard him, perhaps without realising it, as no single musician has ever featured on more records. In all *Jack Ashford* sessions on a staggering 90 plus number one hits. He is, of course, one of the *Funk Brothers*, the original backing band at Motown records who played on every single track that came out of the famous *Hitsville USA* studios in Detroit.

I was lucky enough to see the double-Grammy winner, best known as a percussionist, play live last week at the *Jazz Café* in Camden. For a hard-core Motown fan this was a big deal, particularly as there are few original *Funk Brothers* still alive. Now aged 75 this was indeed a rare visit to the UK by *Jack*.

The concert kicked off with a magnificent run through of several classic Motown hits.

There was a stunning version of the classic *Temptations* song *Papa was a Rollin' Stone* which sounded just as good live as it does on the original recording, something that I wouldn't have believed possible. The band also played memorable songs such as *Heatwave* and *I Heard It Through The Grapevine*, before launching into *Superstitions*. All these songs were interspersed with tales of *Jack's* time at Motown, from recording with *Marvin Gaye*, to tales of *Stevie Wonder* breaking his tambourine.

The band then took a break only to come back on stage joined by some original Motown recording artistes. *Mable John*, the first female vocalist signed by *Berry Gordy* to Motown's *Tamla* label, not only performed sublimely, particularly on *My Name is Mable* but left the audience opened mouthed when she announced, as she danced around the stage, that she would be celebrating her eightieth birthday in 2010.

Sets and stories from *Chris Clark* - *Tamla Motown's* first white female soul singer and one time girlfriend of *Gordy* - and *Brenda Holloway*, a long-time favourite of the *Northern Soul Scene* - only added to the reminiscences of the Detroit label.

The night reminded you of how Motown seemed to release hit after hit in the 60s and 70s backed by the astonishing *Funk Brothers* and is still worthy of the title of the greatest ever record label. In this, the 50th anniversary of its birth I would encourage everyone to abandon modern music and the charts, at least for a little while, and go and buy a Motown compilation as a starting point. Follow it up with a viewing of the 2002 documentary *Standing in the Shadows of Motown* which gave due recognition to the *Funk Brothers* and you may begin to capture the true magic of Motown.



Take That//The Greatest Day Due for release 30/11

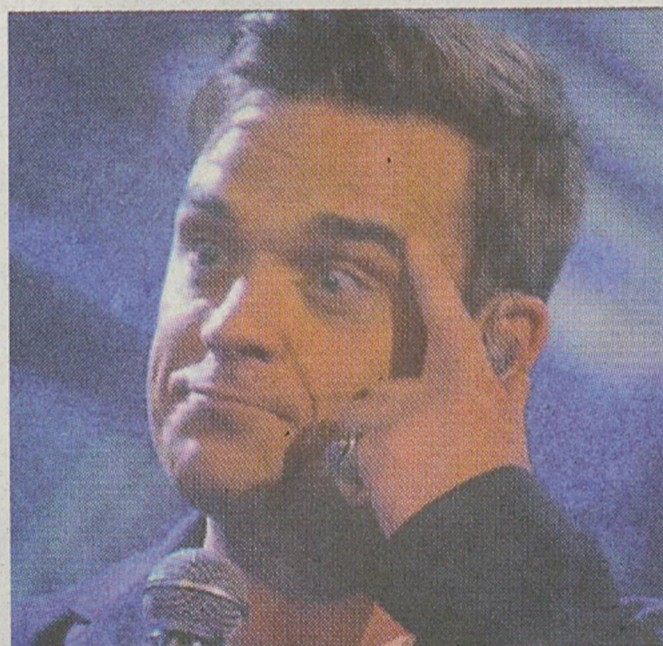
If I'm honest, I can't find anything notably offensive about *Take That's* recent Robbie-free effort at music business success, and from the hoards of adolescent girls and menopausal women that seem to be shrieking all over any live recordings I've seen, they've had a reasonably good try.

Why anyone would want what is guaranteed to be an exact copy of the studio album *"The Circus"* but with bonus clapping, I don't know. [Although having said that, if they'd edit in the bit on the X-factor when Dermot (God) had a brief chat with Robbie (creepy and bizarre) it would make my day.]

But, I expect *"The Greatest Day - Take That Present: The Circus Live"* will be a decent, if marginally monotonous, attempt at live pop recordings. And just in time for Christmas too, how lovely.

Mum, if you're reading this, I still prefer the *Backstreet Boys*.

ALBUMS THAT WE DON'T WANT FOR CHRISTMAS



Robbie Williams//Reality Killed the Video Star

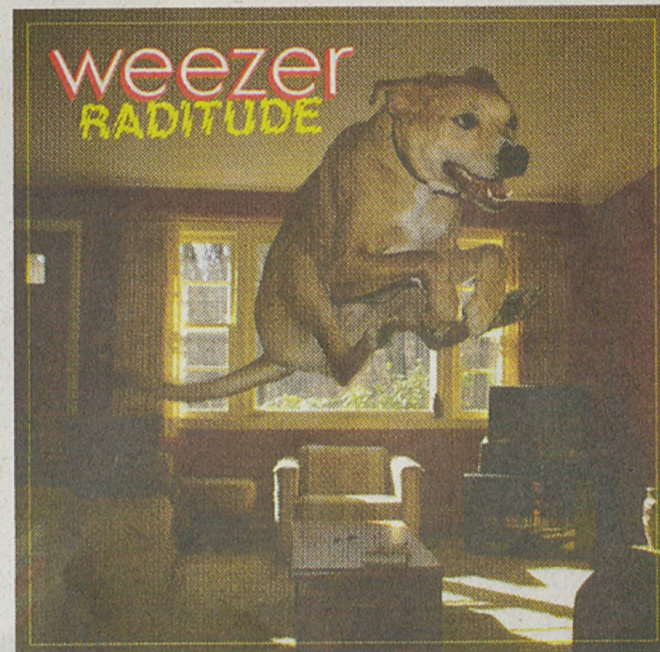
I thought I may as well, considering I did the *Take That* thing.

Robbie's new album of ungainly and awkward pop was made worse only by the fact that he is now, in real life, a very strange man. See previous X-factor comments; I'm just not sure the 'wide-eyed wino' look works for him.

I quite liked that swing album that he did in 2001, before and since then, I did/do not need *Robbie Williams* in my life; he is the bastard child of mediocre pop and large egos.

On Amazon in the 'customers who bought this, also bought...' part, it said 'J.L.S'.

What does that say to you?



Weezer//Raditude

This album is fucking awful; the garish, sickly yellow design and the stupid picture of a stupid dog stupid jumping on the stupid cover. Then the music comes on. With track names like *"I'm Your Daddy"*, *"She Got Hot"* and *"In The Mall"*, I don't think I need to talk about the twee power pop, the derivative lyrics or the saccharine sheen to the production. Santa, don't bother.



Susan Boyle//I Dreamed a Dream

I bet this album will be a triumph. Word on the street is that she broke the Amazon pre-order record. Already.

Susan Boyle, I love you. You have a nice voice (for an ugly person).

THE SCOTTISH PLAY

SOPHIE MARMENT TAKES A WEE SHIFTY AT RECENT ENACTMENTS

The Tragedy of *Macbeth*, whilst written by an English author is probably the play most widely affiliated with Scotland, having been aptly dubbed 'The Scottish Play'. In many theatrical circles the play is only referred to by the aforementioned name as the play is believed to be cursed and many are fearful of uttering the name 'Macbeth' out loud. The play opens with the Three Witches, convening amidst thunder and lightning who ominously prophesise that *Macbeth* will be "King hereafter." The murderous plot sees the slaughter of King Duncan by Macbeth at Lady Macbeth's insistence, followed swiftly by the assassination of Banquo, for fear his heirs will take Macbeth's throne as prophesised by the Witches. The suicide of Lady Macbeth, racked by guilt at her crimes is then followed by the beheading of Macbeth himself by Macduff, come to seek revenge for the crimes Macbeth has committed.

This plot of murder and regicide has become one of Shakespeare's most popular plays and has experienced a particular wave of popularity in the last few years with Patrick Stewart taking the title role at the Gielgud Theatre in 2007. This much-acclaimed production was then moved to Broadway in early 2008. Descriptions of this production as 'historic' and 'definitive' have not, however, turned the tide against those eager to tackle the Scottish play. Below is a brief snapshot of a 2009 staging of *Macbeth* at the National and a look at an upcoming production at Regent Park's Open Air theatre next year.

Macbeth: Who is that Bloodied Man? Performed

by Teatr Biuro Podròy

This summer saw an open-air performance of *Macbeth* by Poland's foremost outdoor theatre company Teatr Biuro Podròy. Atmospherically reworked for the outside space at the National Theatre, the performance featured uniformed armies on motorbikes, witches on stilts and castle which became a burning bonfire at the close of the play. Though the performance was largely visual, there were snippets of the original text interjected through out, read by a bodiless voice in a heavy Polish accent. This added little to the actual performance but was an attempt to stay true to Shakespeare's work. Perhaps more successful was the use of an operatic singer, who trilled her way through the majority of the play from a platform raised high above the audience. The most visually disturbing contribution was the portrayal of the Witches, garbed in full length black gowns, faces masked by long pieces of gauze material and a-top stilts, they loped around the stage in a truly eery and terrifying manner. Add to this the fact they carried whirring wooden percussion instruments which sent a hideous clacking noise echoing through the outdoor space and you have a truly memorable and horrifying spectacle. Performed at midnight by the light of burning torches and wreathed in plumes of smoke this was a visual spectacular and a fantastic rework of a Shakespearean class. Though the story was hugely condensed and largely dialogue free it was possible to see the key scenes of the work and, rather inevitably, the pyrotechnics and midnight setting won-over any skeptics in the audience.

Macbeth: Who is that Bloodied Man? ended on 8th August at midnight.



**Future Performances
Regent's Park Open Air Theatre
3-31 July 2010**

Directed by Steve Marmion whose grounding comes from the RSC and who recently transferred Rupert Goold's much acclaimed *Macbeth* to Broadway, this is set to be a big hit next summer. Re-imagined for everyone age six and over, it looks like this could be a new and more manageable rework of the Scottish Play. Initial publicity features monochrome images of a woman with the head of a black swan, clean and striking, this bodes well for the continued popularity of *Macbeth* in the coming year. Booking opens 1 December

Macbeth plays at Regent's Open Air Theatre from 3-31 July 2010. Booking opens 1 December 2009

PICK OF THE WEEK

Endgame

By the Irish writer Samuel Beckett. Directed by Stephen McBurney and starring Mark Rylance, this classic Beckett play gets a new rework.

Duchess Theatre until 5 Dec.
www.duchesstheatre.co.uk

The Kreutzer Sonata

Starring Scottish actor Hilton McCrae, this is the world premiere of Tolstoy's short tale of a man who commits a terrible crime, for which he holds Beethoven's Kreutzer Sonata responsible.

Gate Theatre, 5 Nov-19 Dec
Box Office 020 7229 0706



TARTAN MAD

ADETOUN & JACQUI APPRECIATE SCOTTISH NATIONAL DRESS

As we all know, fashion is periodic; subject to time, place, culture and tradition. This is true for countries and continents all over the world each giving the fashion world a magnificent souvenir to hold on to. France gave us the beret; which we are sincerely grateful for, especially when a bad hair day is at bay. Africa presented to us the concept of tribal prints and inspired custom wooden accessories; India provided divine colours and materials all wrapped into a single Pashmina. And ye behold, Scotland grants us the privilege of its most prized possession (hypothetically speaking): the infamous tartan fabric which has taken the world by storm. At the risk of sounding eccentric and overly dramatic, we would like to remind you that this is a fashion page.

You'd be surprised just how far the national Scottish dress has stretched; from maintaining its place as the signature fabric at fashion house *Mulberry*, to obtaining its own national holiday for Scottish Americans in 1998, the influence of tartan continues to feed the fashion industry. Tartan has won its place as a fashion staple for its chameleon qualities. It is used for every garment of clothing even accessories; who doesn't have a tartan scarf lurking around somewhere? And how could we fail to mention cashmere jumpers in tartan. This staple Scottish garment has filtered through the high street, while also continuing to make waves in more elitist yet popular circles such as Hollywood; Jenny Humphrey anyone? The star of the much loved American sitcom *Gossip Girl*, has worn more tartan than anyone on screen, in a long time. The skirts, the long boyfriend shirts, even the accessories: Lil' J really does love her tartan!. Not everyone is a fan of gossip girl, but no one can forget the red carpet appearances of Mel Gibson in tartan for his movie 'Braveheart' or Gerald Butler rocking his grey and black Kilt for his movie premiere 'Law Abiding Citizen' in Glasgow.

From popular American movie stars to the epitome of the class: the aristocracy, tartan has again made delightful appearances. Prince Charles, his sons, William and Harry, and countless other royals have all sported the famous fabric, and made it look good (I must say William). The essence of tartan is based on tradition and versatility, travelling far and wide. It is not only a mode of dress exuding National pride, as seen by ceremonial function it plays in it Scotland as expressed through the Scottish Battalion, it even stretches as far as reaching the other side of the South Atlantic ocean, in africa, as seen in the movie *The Last King of Scotland*. It is not restricted to western culture form which it originates, like the French beret, African prints and Indian pashminas, it has transcended issues like culture, language barriers and have become entities of their own outside their territorial borders. From 'Men in Skirts' to girls in Tartan Military jackets, tartan has essentially become a universal entity, it can be found, as mentioned

Scotland grants us the privilege of its most prized possession: the infamous Tartan fabric, which has taken the world by storm

before across borders, on the back of the Royal family or on in your bedroom as your bed or cushion covers.

Why not pick up something Tartan today? You will not only be aiding Scottish national pride, you will look good in it too. Here

are a few retailers that will happily assist your tartan indulgence. Osborne and Little (020 7352 1456) or (Osborneandlittle.com) a series of vibrant tartan materials from £74 a metre, so you can explore the possibilities and create, perhaps some of your favourite garments in tartan! Alternatively you could opt for the cheaper option and purchase a tartan print at you local fabric retailer, you may lose the rich, thick texture of the woven material but you sure won't lose the print! If you want a more domestic use for the tartan print, Interior designer Joanna Wood (020 7730 5064) or (Joannawood.co.uk) can be of help, she offers a range of mixtures of tartan with other types of patterns for the perfect finish. Alternatively, have a look at John Lewis home department for a tartan inspired home. Don't let the tartan pass you by - on your next spree, why not pick up a kilt!



PARANORMAL ACTIVITY

PAUL REES JONES SEES WHAT ALL THE FUSS IS ABOUT...



Director: Oren Peli. **Screenplay:** Oren Peli.
Cast: Katie Featherston, Micah Sloat. **Runtime:** 86 minutes. **Year:** 2009. **Cert.:** 15

Paranormal Activity, the much hyped budget horror film hits UK cinemas this Wednesday. A triumph of marketing, the film has grossed over \$100 million in the US and was made for a mere \$15,000. It tells the story of Katie Featherstone and Micah Sloat who set out to film paranormal activity within their home after Katie reveals she has been haunted from the age of 8. In the same vein as the *Blair Witch Project*, the film bills itself as found footage and subsequently the actors names are unchanged and there are no credits to the film.

The setting of the film creates an extremely claustrophobic environment. Staged entirely within one house, *Paranormal Activity* manufactures a sense that the terror is inescapable for the audience as well as the couple. It is also a perfectly

paced piece; it adds layer upon layer of suspense which eventually crashes down in a crescendo that will have even the bravest jumping from their seat.

The intensity of the piece is made possible by the cinematography. The film shifts between the daytime where the couple examine the footage, to night where a fixed camera in their room records the unearthly

Staged entirely within one house, Paranormal Activity manufactures a sense that terror is inescapable

occurrences. The still camera for the night shots is hugely effective at focusing the attention of the viewer on every minor detail in the room. You notice as the presence subtly casts a shadow over the door, turns the downstairs light on and moves the door slightly. This is not your usual thrills and spills horror film (*Saw*, *Drag Me To Hell*), its strength lies in using little jumps to break-

down the viewers senses so that when the action intensifies the audience is much more susceptible to being scared.

Sadly the acting doesn't live up to the quality of the rest of the film. This is understandable considering the meagre budget of the piece but still lessens the overall viewing experience. Katie Featherstone overacts to the extent where it is hard to feel empathy towards her, whilst Micah Sloat produces a strangely comic performance interjecting frequently with snipes in the direction of his girlfriend. Whilst these were genuinely funny comments (and an original angle for a horror movie to take) it was not entirely suitable for the film.

This is not 'the scariest film of all time', it is however an expertly crafted intense piece of film making. It also has one of the greatest endings in a horror film, and director (Oren Peli) has Spielberg to thank for this, after the veteran director invented this thrilling finale to the film. *Paranormal Activity* stands as inspiration to rookie film makers that with good creative vision and excellent marketing you can achieve box office success.

BUNNY AND THE BULL

AHMED PEERBUX GETS A BIT SURREAL



Director: Paul King. **Screenplay:** Paul King.
Cast: Simon Farnaby, Edward Hogg, Veronica Echegui. **Runtime:** 101 minutes. **Year:** 2009. **Cert.:** 15

Calling all *Boosh* heads; Paul King makes his feature debut in the paper-mache shapen *Bunny and the Bull*, following Stephen Turnbull (Hogg), a nice guy who typifies 'brother rather than boyfriend' syndrome, and his best mate Bunny (Farnaby), a pissed-up lothario who only has a single solitary thing in common with his chum: a penchant for gambling. After cashing in at the bookies, Bunny manages to persuade Stephen to hop on the Eurostar and travel round Europe. Stephens idea of a road trip to remember (or not, if they get too carried away) is visiting obscure museums like the Shoe Museum of Poland, or the German Museum of Cutlery. Bunny of course is only interested in stamping more girls onto his passport, that is, if he hasn't managed to lose it in a bet.

But here's the quirk. *Bunny and the Bull* is a road movie set entirely in a flat. It turns out Stephen is agoraphobic; unable to leave the house due to the tragic climax of their euro-excursion. Everything we see is a foggy, patched memory, aided along the way with household objects like cutlery and newspapers.

Certainly for this reason, *Bunny and the Bull* looks gorgeous. The drawn on backdrops, innovative use of everyday objects and stop-motion animation is a thrilling spectacle that looks like a Central Saint



Martins student's opus. The result is an ambitious, visionary debut, which recalls the giddy heights of Gondry, Jonze and Gilliam.

The aforementioned *Boosh* heads however might be in for a disappointment. The billing of Noel Fielding and Julian Barrett shouldn't overexcite fans; there's nothing Old Gregg or Hitcher-esque in sight. Their cameos are nonetheless hilarious; Barrett's appearance as a bestial Polish tramp who swigs dogs milk is easily one of the films most enduring and contagious laughs, as is Fielding's pop-up as Javier, a Spanish bull fighter whose accent sounds more Oui Oui than Olé; 'get out ze way of ze bull you idiot'!

But King never set out to make a *Boosh* movie in *Bunny*. The characters and the

story here are more real, occasionally hitting a raw nerve in raising issues and situations we're all too familiar with. *Bunny* deals with the best of friendships as they really are; fraught with complications and contradictions, yet ultimately a paradoxical magnetism and sense of compelling.

In the BBC Three sketch show *Horne and Corden*, Corden's Brentesque take on Ricky Gervais quipped that doing *The Karate Kid 14* was "better than doing a British movie". Thankfully, *Bunny* secures itself in the exalted ranks of *Shaun of the Dead*, steering well clear of the British comedy National-Lottery funded bargain bin that's home to *Lesbian Vampire Killers* and the like.

DO YOU WANT A CUP OF TEA FATHER?

JONATHAN STOREY REAPPRAISES 'FATHER TED'

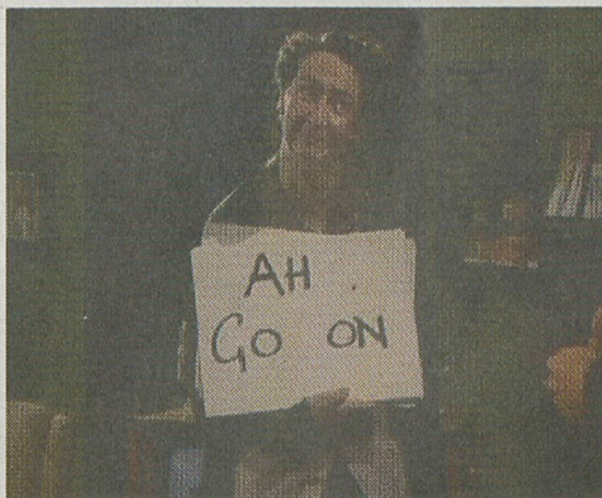
It's slightly surprising that it's been over 10 years since the demise of *Father Ted*, both the character and the show. Like many British comedies, its relatively short run is masked by its almost fervid fan base to create the impression that it's perpetually on our TV screens. The fact that it's repeated on More4 constantly does nothing to dissuade this illusion. Yet, in its absence, its influence has been profound not only on Irish comedy, but the English comedic landscape as well.

Father Ted follows the exploits of three Roman Catholic priests who preside over a parish on Craggy Island, a British dumping ground of nuclear waste located off the west coast of Ireland. Sent there for "unpriest-like behaviour", the trio consists of the eponymous Father Ted Crilly (Dermot Morgan), the relatively "normal" one, Father Dougal McGuire (Ardal O'Hanlon), whose inability to grasp the simplest of everyday concepts provides the majority of the humour in the show, and Father Jack Hackett (Frank Kelly), an alcoholic, lecherous, violent and foul-mouthed old priest. Add into this already eclectic mix an eccentric tea-obsessed housekeeper named Mrs. Doyle (Pauline McLynn) and let the hilarity ensue!

Home to several sublime plotlines, including the Christmas special which saw

Ted lead an almost military-like operation to try and help a group of confused priests out of a department store lingerie section (Ireland's largest, one scared priest kept muttering), its finest achievement was the second series episode entitled "A Song for Europe".

Based on a real-life controversy in Ireland, "A Song for Europe" focused on the attempts by Dougal to become Ireland's entry in the Eurosong Contest (an obvious parody of Eurovision). Through a series of unfortunate events, they end up producing the wonderfully awful ditty: "My Lovely Horse". Containing such poetry as "I want to shower you with sugar lumps/And ride you



over fences/Polish your hooves every single day/And take you to the horse dentist", the song unbelievably ended up winning, as the head judge wanted to guarantee Ireland would lose the main competition, since it is too expensive for Ireland to host the competition every year (Ireland have been historically successful in the real Eurovision, much to the chagrin of their economy).

Despite its 11-year absence, *Father Ted* has had a profound impact on the comedy landscape. "Feck off" and "DRINK!" are popular catchphrases in mainland Britain; Ardal O'Hanlon went on to star in the extremely successful *My Hero*; Pauline McLynn stars in the BBC dramedy *Jam and Jerusalem* (which my mum likes); Graham Norton, who occasionally cameoed as a ridiculous closeted gay priest, is now enormously popular; and the creator, Graham Lineham, went on to make the brilliant *Black Books* and the not-so-brilliant-but-still-very-good *The IT Crowd*.

Not bad for a group of priests who couldn't get their way out of a department lingerie store!

FATHER TED CURRENTLY AIRS ON SUNDAY EVENINGS ON MORE4

SPEAKING WITH VIM

NATHAN BRIANT LOVES ALAN BENNETT (BUT NOT IN A GAY WAY)

Resuming the BBC radio love-in as of last week, *Front Row* (BBC Radio 4, weekdays) is, (despite its (nearly) omnipresent presenter, Mark Lawson, having one of the most nasal voices in radio), the best regular cultural slot on British radio; other various entries from *Radio 3* falling slightly short.

On Tuesday's edition the whole programme was dedicated to promotion for Alan Bennett's new play, *The Habit of Art* - and understandably. If there's anything *Front Row* does particularly well then it's these half-hour long specials. If anyone of importance in the reasonably respectable cultural world - Bennett, Stephen Fry (albeit possibly not since the dawn of Twitter) etc. wants to spill their heart out it'll be to *Front Row*, however nominally over the presenters of *Live at Studio Five*.

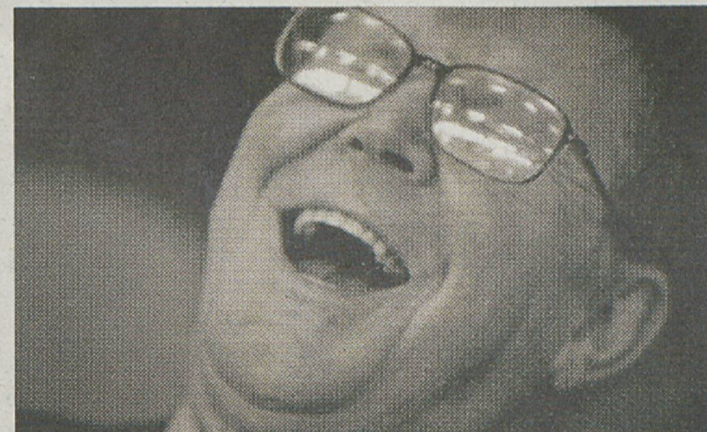
The Habit of Art was discussed in depth, somewhat predictably, first. Based on a hypothetical meeting and subsequent collaboration between W H Auden and Benjamin Britten in the later stages of their lives, once the details were given out, and Bennett's ode to the National Theatre for staging his play, the playwright was talking about *Beyond the Fringe*.

I would typically attempt to use this space to attempt to be witty - at editorial want - and harp on about Bennett's possible inadequacies, but he speaks with such vim and honesty that it'd be wrong to criticise. Of course, with respect to last week's subject Richard Bacon and Alan Bennett are clearly in different leagues. The stuff Bennett was leafleting out to the gathered wireless congregation was comedy (knowledge) gold. Where would one find out about an alleged affair between Peter Cook and Jackie Kennedy (except for a decent Cook biography)? And reference to Bennett's brilliant quote in which he referred to revealing his sexuality: '[it'd be] like asking a man crawling across the desert whether he wanted Malvern or Perrier Water' (other than those books of quotations you can buy for a quid at the Works)?

Bennett wasn't short on revealing true feelings towards the end of the interview: Bennett goes political. Past unabated anger regarding tabloid newspaper attitudes towards chat show host Russell Harty's treatment for hepatitis left Bennett with 'a hate' for the Murdoch press. Alan 1, Rupert 0. He didn't stop there - 'How Murdoch Junior can go up

to Edinburgh and lecture the BBC...' surely lead to 'ere 'eres from hundreds of thousands of listeners.

But Bennett's most politicised side was brought to the fore by the issue of public schools. This was where he was, despite clear fixation of the topics discussed, at his most sincere. He's clearly of the left, and is proud of it, but refers to the Labour government as 'them' - a possible show of contempt? There's certainly an air of disappointment lingering here. Lawson acts as a truly excellent interviewer by extracting out such views from such a clearly reserved man.



A STAND AGAINST YEARS OF OPPRESSION

LOUIS DAILLENCOURT RECLAIMS HIS PENIS

Hello, My name is Louis and I'm taking over. This sex and gender column, jewel of the crown of the Beaver which is part B, has recently been overrun by feminist of all kinds. Some articles have been good. Some have been terrible: this column has over the last few months turned out to be a very good excuse for a bunch of horny girls to hint about their sex lives. I say: no more.

First, a bit of debate on the whole issue. There has been talk recently of the relevance of having a Women's officer when there is no male counterpart. I mean, we live in an equal society, undiscriminating amongst people with common sense; parity is now an acceptable feature of domestic politics. Why should there be a biased parity towards women and "just a little bit less parity for men" on the grounds that we're have a moral obligation to make up for historical discrimination? This is a small example that shows that feminism, as we see it at LSE and in many other places, is an outdated debate.

This is very much seen through recent articles referring to the use or misuse of the address to women: Miss, Mrs, or Ms, making the case that the latter should be preferred to the two former because it doesn't discriminate women on the basis of their marital status. Is this what feminism has gone down to? Nit picking on such trivial issues? Have you ever heard a man complain that he was being addressed as Mister instead of Master, which would be the correct term for a single man? Utterly deceptive twaddle speak, says I. (Many thanks to Jack Sparrow for the quote).

What's more, to come back on the women's officer issue, has anyone heard of a more useless job? And I mean the term "useless". Who discriminates against women at LSE? Being a militant feminist these days at this Uni is a bit like being a third year Econ student a couple days before exams at a Jay-Z concert, it's just not relevant.

One can equate not being a feminist with being a racist - I have heard that type of argument before. But it doesn't stand, because when you're a racist you're effectively making a stand against something when being a "feminist" means being pro-something. Not being a feminist therefore does not mean being against women but merely neutral. But, seriously, this word game isn't relevant, more on what feminism is later.

One terribly annoying thing to see is that activists really don't help themselves. If they think all women should not be discriminated against, they should probably begin by stopping discriminating themselves by creating women-only position and writing arguably laughable articles about how many times people have sex at LSE every year on average and how good(/or bad? I'm not so good at detecting concealed pride in other people's words) they feel about being so far above the average. Who cares about random people's sex lives? Good relations between both sexes are about mutual respect, not over-compensating for a dubious imbalance. Please, move on!

Moving on...I don't mean to minimise the work of everyday feminists who defend the

cause of women where women's rights are being disregarded. Their work is crucial. But some just pick the wrong fight at the wrong place and fight the wrong way. This happens especially in this university where there is a somewhat healthy but mostly irritating tradition to burst out opinions like anyone actually cares and politicise everything. (You may say I'm doing that just now, but I'm merely reacting).

You know what, I'll bundle everyone together: I think the feminists should team-up with a bunch of arrogant societies, our over-politicised

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Students' Union, the Socialist Worker megaphone-holding people and a few others cheerful to create the United Front for Mildly Irritating Things at LSE, the UNIFORMITI, so they can all celebrate together boring most of us to the very core. That would be fun. I like my idea. (For death threats, please e-mail lou967@msn.com).

Previous articles have been pretty entertaining. One was about vaginas and the mis-use of the term "pussy", and the only serious point the author managed to get across is that she has extensive knowledge of the vocabulary available in English describing her ***what you should I use? I'll go for sex...*** sex. Oh, and I'll stop calling a chicken "pussy" when they'll stop calling me a "dick" because I'm stupid.

Exactly. I won't stop. You know what feminism has done to me? They make me feel so bad about being a man that I recently surprised myself browsing for penis reduction medication on the internet. They made me feel so guilty I seriously considered joining the Women in Business society, when I'm neither a former, not interested in the latter.

It's a bit weird for anyone to claim to be a feminist when at the same time as they hint about their sex-lives in the paper and use 143 different words for "pussy"; denounce boys "objectifying women" as they did by blocking the Miss LSE contests on the grounds of... (what was it again?). It just doesn't really work, because they contribute to the movement and way of thinking they seek to overhaul. Bad rhetoric. Feminism's call for equality should be social and political, this is not about over-compensating for the past, and it's about making the future better for them.

Damn, I treat my darling well, I'm a feminist too, you know. Everyone with a bit of common sense, who believes that all humans are born equal is a feminist. And my girlfriend calls me "sweetie"; maybe I should call the man's officer and complain about being disgraced/objectified/put down/insert as appropriate by the nickname? Wait a minute.... And I like being called that, everyman had to accept the part of feminism he has in him, and girls the opposite, and then everyone will be happy and we can all go have a pint at the tuns.

Next time I read another awkward article on this column written by someone who wished she had a penis, I'll nod politely and smile to myself.

