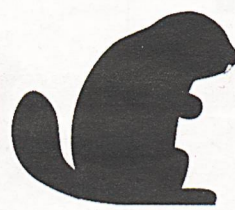
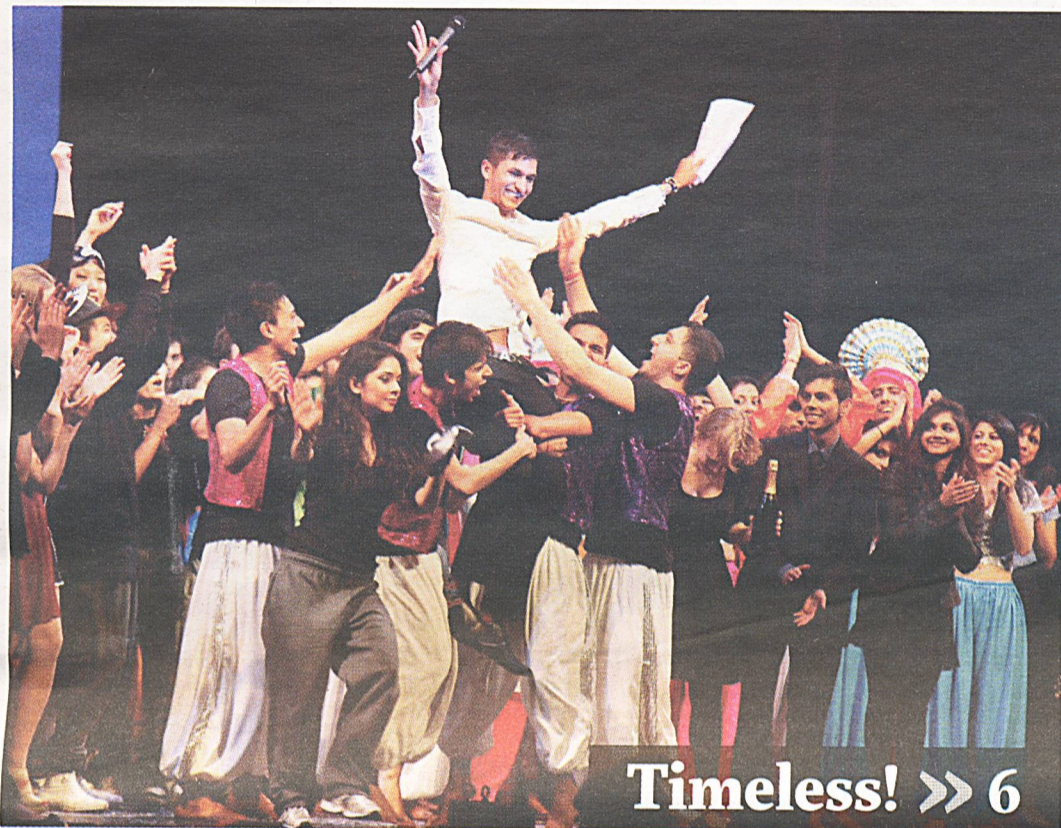


the beaver



14-02-2012
Newspaper of the
LSE Students' Union
FREE

Students petition to bring back suspended course



Shu Hang
Staff Reporter

Ian Rudolph, London School of Economics (LSE) alumnus and graduate teaching assistant, has filed a petition to the Graduate Studies Sub-Committee demanding the reinstatement of the Department of Management course 'OR431: System Dynamics Modeling' for the next academic year. Filed on the 14th December, the petition was signed by forty current students and fifteen alumni. Last summer, the Department of Management announced through its website that the OR431 course would not be available to students during the 2011/2012 academic year. This suspension has caused disappointment and "bewilderment" amongst the alumni of the course, who fear it will eventually be permanently cancelled.

The course's popularity was closely linked to its teacher, David Lane, who in 2005 and 2008, was among the five members of the teaching staff at the LSE to receive an LSE Excellence Teaching award for his instruction of the OR431 course. According to the 'Teaching Award Special Newsletter' published by the School, students have described Lane as an "outstanding" professor who "makes you think more profoundly about everyday phenomena" and has a "rare ability to hold attention and promote curiosity." One student claimed that "his enthusiasm and passion for the subject has inspired me."

According to Rudolph, he and sixteen other students attended a meeting for the MSc program in September, where they "share[d] the impact that OR431 had on their experience and ... express[ed] their disappointment that it had been cancelled." However, the students claim that their input, like the petition, has not been taken seriously and that "no official response has been received."

Michael Fischer, a former MSc Decision Sciences student, expressed his frustration regarding the suspension of the course: "when interviewing for internships with alumni of our program, whenever I mentioned system dynamics, their faces lit up with great memories of OR 431 and David Lane." "It's sad that people won't be able to experience one of the best courses in my program, much less the school, and one of the best professors I've ever had," Fischer added.

Rudolph, who graduated from the LSE with an MSc in Decision Sciences in 2011, claimed that the course has "consistently been one of the most loved courses in the programme," adding that he credited it with "changing my life and the way I think." Rudolph described the course's "sudden disappearance" and possible cancellation as a "mystery."

Alumni of the course are not the only

students to have expressed disappointment over the suspension of the course. Leo Furtado, a current MSc Decision Sciences student, told the Beaver he felt cheated by the department's decision.

"Last year, all my colleagues from my first year of the MSc recommended me to take OR431," he said. "They have raised the fees from last year and taken out OR431! It's like our favourite restaurant eliminating one of the best options of the menu and increasing the price!"

Under School policy, proposals to add or cancel courses must be put forward by individual departments to the Graduate Studies Sub-Committee to be approved. The committee is comprised of LSE academics and a student representative in the form of an elected member of the Taught Graduate Students' Consultative Forum.

The positive feedback the course has received throughout the years has led Rudolph to question the Department of Management's decision. He felt that this incident reflects a bigger problem with student feedback at the LSE. Rudolph, who co-teaches OR405, said that his "feedback as a teaching assistant was emailed to me for me to study or ignore; there was no acknowledgement for above-average performance, nor would I fear sanction had I performed poorly."

"I want to work in an environment where feedback for teachers are valued like marks for students. Exceptional performance should be celebrated for the transformative impact it has in line with LSE's core mission," he added. Amena Amer, the Students' Union Education Officer, expressed similar sentiments, feeling that student's opinion was "ignored" in the decision to suspend OR431. "It is clear that students really enjoyed this course and given my correspondence with students and staff I find it hard to understand how this decision was made," Amer said.

The department has also been criticised for failing to give applicants enough notice period before suspending the course. Amer described the department's actions as "extremely unprofessional."

"I was informed that a message was sent out in July regarding the cancellation of this course for the 2011/12 academic year," she said. "At this point many who have applied had to accept this change given that undoubtedly they had already received their place at the LSE."

Current students were recommended to take MN419: Systems Thinking and Strategic Modelling, as a substitute to OR431. Rudolph, however, felt that the two courses were not interchangeable. "MN419 is aimed at management students and so teaches no formal modelling. Those seeking technical modelling training would have to take a weekend course running £985

Dissatisfaction among Graduate Teaching Assistants

John Armstrong

A recent survey has revealed wide spread discontent among Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) and Guest Teachers at the London School of Economics (LSE). From the 600 members of staff asked to answer to the survey, 123, representing nearly every Department responded. While the survey outlined the various teaching roles and qualifications they possess, it also raised serious questions over workload and insufficient remuneration.

The LSE website states that teachers are expected to work between "three to five hours per week." The current system allows for two of these hours to be assigned to class seminars and lectures, with the rest allocated for preparation and marking. The survey, which was carried out in Michaelmas Term, revealed that 78 per cent of the respondents felt that the two hours assigned for class preparation are inadequate with 42.3 per cent stating that they spent five hours or more

preparing for each course.

Teachers are paid hourly for the estimated hours the School expect them to work. However, almost 76 per cent of GTAs and Guest Teachers agree with the statement, "I am paid for fewer hours than I actually work." For the current projections, teachers are allocated around twenty minutes to mark and give constructive feedback on each essay, yet many feel this is inadequate with one source suggesting that "this is simply not enough time."

Ian Rudolph, LSE alumnus and graduate teaching assistant, said that his "feedback as a teaching assistant was emailed to me for me to study or ignore; there was no acknowledgement for above-average performance, nor would I fear sanction had I performed poorly."

"I want to work in an environment where feedback for teachers are valued like marks for students. Exceptional performance should be celebrated for the transformative impact it has in line with LSE's core mission," he added.

Paul Kirby, Representative of the University and College Union (UCU), outlined the problem of departmen-

tal variation suggesting that "some Departments have been very reluctant to pay for lecture attendance, even though the guidelines say they should when GTAs are required to attend them." Similarly, Kirby highlighted that "some people have even reported being asked to help with lectures and course design for no pay at all."

These recent developments come only one year after teachers at LSE were left unpaid for months. In an article published in the Beaver in February 2011, "a survey of 100 GTAs, across thirteen departments, revealed 34 per cent of those who had taught at the LSE during the 2009-10 academic year had not seen an increase in pay."

Yet similar problems remain prevalent among GTAs this year. The School's policy dictates that pay should rise in accordance with experience each year, regardless of where the experience was obtained. However, this often does not happen and in the survey which is still open to for any GTAs and Guest Teachers, 44.4 per cent of those with previous teaching experience at

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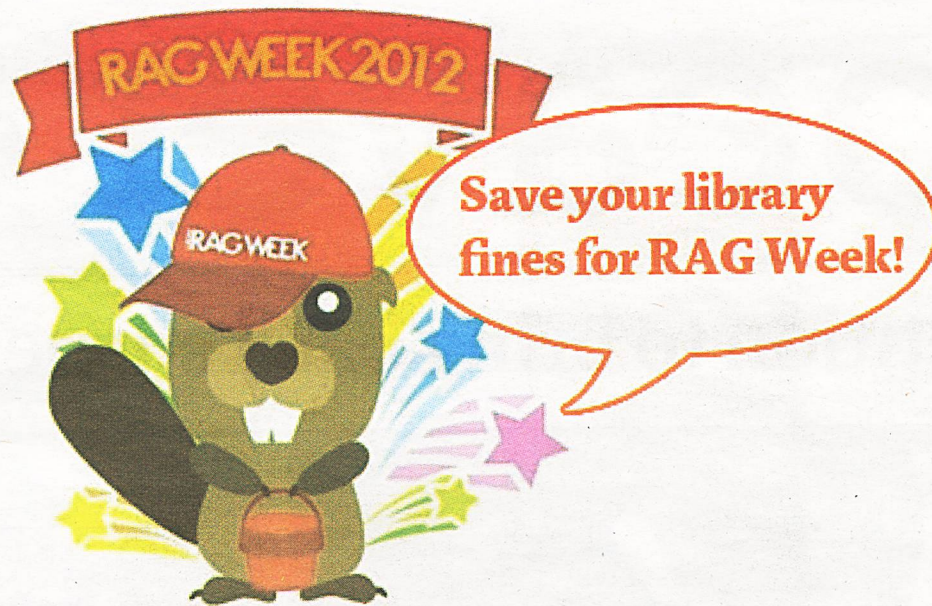


Union Bashō

Fighting Talk

My talent? I write
bad haiku without using
my fingers to count.

Basho is the Beaver's elusive haiku poet. He wonders if any women were consulted about the Mr LSE judging criteria.



the beaver

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Keep charity in mind

This week sees the beginning of RAG week and while charity, rightly, always has an important place on campus it is encouraging to see it given extra attention this week. The week gives all LSE Students' Union societies' members a chance to raise money with their peers and have fun while doing so. There is a veritable menagerie of events that can be perused further within this paper (p.8), including the obligatory "save your fines for library", where all the fines paid for late books to the library are donated to charity. It is an event which this editorial team certainly will be doing.

Last week saw a new Mr LSE crowned on campus; not only is this a CV worthy achievement, but it is a triumph of cooperation between RAG and the Athletics Union, raising money for their charity over the course of the evening - showing that charity can be fun for everyone involved. This hopefully extends to those involved in the AU Wax - the

"de-babooning" of members of the AU for charity - who may not enjoy the waxing itself, but it's all for the cause of charity!

In the wider perspective of the current economic climate, it is important that students and staff band together to help those less fortunate than ourselves; we've got to remember that we're not the only ones being affected by the cuts being made by the government. Families everywhere are feeling the pinch of the Coalition's austerity measures, and worldwide, economic conditions in even modernised economies are showing signs of depression and stagnation. However, charity starts at home, and the LSE must do its part.

It is also encouraging to see the support for RAG from many outlets on campus. The Pulse! broadcast-a-thon is particularly exciting and we hope as many people as possible listen and give generously; Pulse! can be accessed at www.pulse.dj

Furthermore it is worth high-

lighting the pledge for AU members that is currently being offered, in which signatories commit themselves to avoiding discrimination against people on grounds that are unacceptable in modern society such as gender, race and sexual orientation. While, for many, this is how they would normally act, it is still an important gesture and allows for the LSE to remain at the forefront of the debate for equality for all. It is important that people take the time to examine the pledge and have a quick thought about their actions and how they may be perceived by others.

Remaining on this theme it is also the start of LGBT history month, which aims to enlighten about the trials and triumphs of the movement, another social cause that has some of its roots (in the UK) here at the LSE. In addition to the double page spread, events will be held on campus, the details of which will be finalised and released soon.

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collective@thebeaveronline.co.uk

The Beaver would like to thank the LSE students who contributed to this issue.

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The 2012 Mayoral Elections Debate

Representatives from all the LSESU Political Societies will be debating where their party stands on issues in London

Thursday 16th 18:30
NAB 2.04

Beaver Elections

Two positions have become available on the Beaver Editorial Board. Applications have opened for the following positions:

Executive Editor x1

Online Editor x1

Collective chair will email collective members information about these elections.

Those not on Collective can email collective@thebeaveronline.co.uk for more information.

Lecture postponed following student complaints

Sydney Saubestre

Concerns were raised on 6th February regarding a speaker scheduled to partake in a lecture entitled 'Shari'ah: A Moral Code' organised for the next day by the London School of Economics (LSE) Students' Union Islamic Society as part of the Discover Islam Week.

A member of the LSE Students' Union Jewish Society approached the Students' Union with apprehension about one of the two speakers, Haitham al-Haddad, an Islamic scholar who is qualified to deliver religious verdicts with a specialism in Islamic Jurisprudence. Al-Haddad is currently pursuing his PhD in Islamic law at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). The representative of the Jewish Society claims that several members had approached him due to allegedly disturbing content of one of al-Haddad's sermons.

"The alleged comments of Sheikh Al-Haddad are deeply insulting to Jewish students and understandably generated several formal complaints from our member," said Jay Stoll, President of the Jewish Society.

On 4th February, an article was published on Harry's Place, an online blog, claiming that al-Haddad has made antisemitic comments in a speech he delivered at the al-Muntada al-Islami mosque in London. The article claims to have translated the sermon which included such statements as "the devils of mankind are perfectly represented by these Jews" and that measures must be ensured to "prohibit [non-Muslims from] residing in the Arabian Peninsula."

According to Stanley Ellerby-English, Activities and Development Officer, upon receiving the complaints, the Students' Union "immediately contacted the Islamic Society to make them aware of the problem and come to a resolution. The Islamic Society contacted the speaker and provided us with a statement from him. However, it was felt that this did not fully address all concerns raised."

The LSE's website revealed that, as of 2pm on 7th February, "al-Haddad will no longer be speaking at the event." The decision was taken in



Speakers at the 'Shari'ah' lecture | Photo: Matt Worby

conjunction with the Islamic Society, who contacted al-Haddad to ask him to clarify the statements.

Nabeel Moos, President of the Islamic Society, explains, "Sheikh Haitham himself replied to the allegations, denying he believed in any of the accusations levelled at him. However this was not deemed conclusive enough by the Students' Union and hence the Islamic Society agreed to postpone the event."

"Due to the short notice it was felt that there was no opportunity to properly investigate the allegations before the event took place," stated Ellerby-English. "Therefore, the decision was taken by everyone involved to bring in a new speaker and postpone the original speaker event until a proper investigation has been conducted."

Both the Students' Union and the Islamic Society questioned the factual-

ly of Harry's Place, a blog that is known for its biased stance. The Students' Union will further investigate the allegations with the help of the Islamic Society, stating that al-Haddad is not permanently barred from speaking on campus until a conclusive decision has been made. "The speaker was not cancelled," said Alex Peters-Day, "merely delayed." Peters-Day reiterated that the "complaints around the event were not at all to do with the fact that it was on Sharia law - it was entirely due to the allegations made by Harry's Place."

Moos further argued that this incident should be resolved internally and not influenced by unquestioned sources: "the decisions we make regarding events are wholly dictated by the needs and requirements of LSE students - external parties are neither aware of the direct situation and context at LSE nor are they likely

to be fully objective in their 'concerns'. Given that, if it is clear that a speaker invited by any LSESU society is proven to have made discriminatory or racist remarks, the Islamic Society and the whole LSE community should all work together to ensure that these views are not espoused on campus."

Stoll asserted that the Jewish Society was "pleased with how this issue has been resolved. As a Society we are pleased that this has been dealt with so swiftly and professionally by our SU officers. We have worked in cooperation with the Islamic Society through each stage of this incident and it goes without saying that we are completely convinced that his purported views do not reflect the views, or general ethos, of the Islamic Society."

Proposed UK visa reforms continue to attract criticism

Neha Jain

The government's announced successor to the Post Study Work visa scheme has continued to cause a stir at the LSE.

The new amendments, proposed to be introduced in April 2012, stipulate that non-European Union students must have an offer of a graduate job from a licensed employer paying over £20,000, which they must move into before their student visa ends. The plan also calls for the abolition of the Resident Labour Market Test, meaning that employers will no longer have to show that no other EEA national can do the job. This is part of the UK Government's aim to cut net immigration from 215,000 to 100,000 per year by 2015.

The LSE's high number of international students make these proposals particularly concerning.

On the 9th February, the British Council, the organisation charged with promoting British education abroad,

called for an "urgent review" of the proposed changes, which he said will "undermine the economic benefit that higher education as an export sector brings" to the United Kingdom.

The LSE has lobbied the UK Border Agency (UKBA), arguing that "the insistence on licensed sponsors is going to cut out a lot of the smaller, entrepreneurial firms who, as we saw from the survey we did at the LSE last year, make use of the existing PSW scheme."

Concern has also been expressed over the £20,000 threshold as a starting salary, given the current economic climate as well as the variety of fields that LSE students enter upon graduation. In response, the UKBA has insisted that "obtaining a Tier 2 licence is not an onerous process," but it remains open to discussions over the minimum salary requirements, recognising that some students are required to undertake post-graduate work experience before obtaining a professional qualification.

The LSE has now requested a further meeting with the UKBA over concerns that the growing competition for graduate internships in recent years will not incentivise employers to

amend salaries to fit the new regulations, given the already over-subscribed nature of the posts.

The implications of such a scheme are clearly multi-faceted. It is feared that these changes to the Post-Study Work visa scheme will deter international students from pursuing higher education in the United Kingdom. This is in spite of the visa rules for international students generally being more flexible than in the past, and those overseas students gaining admission at the LSE not being restricted from coming by visa restrictions.

American and Australian universities have "learnt the hard way" according to Professor Jo Beall, Director of Education and Society on the British Council, having driven students away by restricting their own visa rules. The International Education Association of Australia released figures last year showing that the value of education exports; fees and goods and services purchased by foreign students had fallen by A\$2.7 billion in the period of 2010-11. This has now prompted a backtracking in Australian visa restrictions. Amena Amer, the Students' Union Education officer, has called for a

similar review of the UK policy, saying that the new visa scheme feeds in to a wider debate about national budget cuts that "will cripple the education sector."

Fears have arisen as to how the new visa scheme may negatively impact the range of international students that will choose to study at the LSE. Priding the LSE for its cultural diversity, Ms. Amer further comments that the international body of students at the LSE creates many benefits as "students gain from learning from one another when coming from such diverse backgrounds."

Jenny Owen, Head of Careers at the LSE, forecasts that certain subject departments at the LSE will be particularly negatively affected. Recognising the Third Sector as having lower starting salaries than in the city, she predicts that those international students from courses such as International Relations and Anthropology will have greater difficulty remaining in the UK post-graduation "than their counterparts in the more numeric disciplines."



RAG WEEK 2012 IS HERE! SUPPORTING NATIONAL AIDS TRUST, ACTION AGAINST HUNGER & WAR CHILD.

Today (Tuesday) the women's hockey team will be taking on the netball girls at netball in Lincoln's Inn Fields at 1pm! Go along to see if netball will be put to shame and support RAG. Get down to Houghton Street to send a Valentine to someone special - it costs just a pound and we will send them a RAG email to let them know that they have a Valentine waiting for them. Also, watch the impressive LSE Rowing team row the distance of London to Amsterdam, beating their row to Calais last year. You'll see them all day on Houghton St so please go along to support them! The Drama Society is performing the new play 'Blake's Doors' - following their opening night last night there are two performances left in the Underground (Tuesday at 7:30pm and Wednesday at 6:30pm). A pound from every ticket will be going to RAG and there's a very limited number available so make sure you get to the Drama stall on Houghton St if you want to see it!

Wednesday night boasts another joint AU event following Mr LSE last week. The AU Chest Wax sees 3 AU boys - 1 football, 1 rugby & 1 hockey getting waxed in the middle of the Tuns, all in the name of charity. The boys will be asking for sponsorship for enduring the pain so please donate generously and come along to see them squirm!

Thursday night is a must for all freshers, who can participate in Battle of the Halls: The Rematch! Taking place at Moonlighting, this is the rematch after Carr Saunders took home the title of Most Social Hall back in September. Will Rosebery step up their game? Will Banksie show? To make sure your hall is represented get your t-shirt from your Halls President or from Houghton Street - costing only ten pounds, your t-shirt will be your ticket.

On Friday, LSE students will have the chance to partake in Tug of Wars. Football will face off against Rugby & Northerners against Southerners - whoever you're supporting make sure you get to Houghton Street to see who wins. Also, on Houghton Street that day we will add up the totals from each Sabb's bucket and Gunge-A-Sabb!

To end RAG week, Sunday we will wish luck to all the SkyDivers jumping out of planes at 13,000 feet. They are raising money for War Child - one of our RAG charities - so do please sponsor them!

Plans for the Hitch Hike to Berlin, in support of Action Against Hunger, are well underway. The hike will commence on Saturday 17 March - another opportunity to sponsor fellow LSE students, so please be generous! This is set to get pretty competitive with prizes greeting the team who raise the most and get to Berlin the fastest.

If you would like to get involved please email su.rag@lse.ac.uk. As always please 'like' our facebook page LSESU RAG, become our friend on facebook by adding LSE SU RAG and join our free mailing list by going to <http://www.lsesu.com/activities/societies/society/rag/>. RAG is proud to be sponsored by Ernst & Young.

GOT A SCOOP?

Got a story that you think we should be printing? Send us an e-mail: news@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Experts debate the merits of free speech

Connor Russell
Staff Reporter

The issue of free speech at university was debated last Wednesday by Sue Mendus, a leading academic in the field, and Nicola Dandridge, the head of Universities UK (UUK). Mendus of the University of York and Dandridge of UUK were invited to speak at the School by the Forum for European Philosophy, and expressed strikingly contrasting views on the topic.

The event, hosted jointly by the Forum, the Department of Philosophy, Logic and Scientific Method, and the LSE chaplaincy, focused on the role of external speakers on campuses across the country.

Primarily intended to be a "dialogue," the event began with two concise opening speeches from Mendus and Dandridge.

Mendus began by exploring the merits and purpose of free speech, with main reference to John Stuart Mill's 'On Liberty,' which became a cornerstone for the remainder of the debate.

Mendus disagreed with Mill's argument that free speech ultimately delivers truth through open debate in a marketplace, arguing instead that the goal of much controversial speech is to deceive or offend, and that it therefore makes little contribution to the

development of academic thought and knowledge.

She also refuted Mill's other strand of argument, insisting that free speech can often limit people's autonomy rather than expand it, and citing the feminist stance in the 1970s debate on pornography as limiting the autonomy of women. While emphasising the importance of freedom of speech and in no way advocating academic censorship, Mendus argued, "there is already a strong presumption in favour of freedom of speech in universities," and that therefore there is room for debate on the merits and demerits of entirely unrestricted speech.

Dandridge opened her speech with reference to the Detroit Boxing Day bomber of 2009, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, citing the outcome of a review into his radicalisation during his time at University College London, which she claimed concluded that he began to gravitate towards terrorist groups after he had completed his studies in the UK.

Her argument then primarily focused on a report published by UUK on freedom of speech, which purposefully avoided prescriptive codes of practice for universities to follow, instead arguing for discretion on a case-by-case basis. In her own terms, she believes that universities must retain "the primacy of free speech" at the heart of their values. She further argued against attempts to limit free speech based on

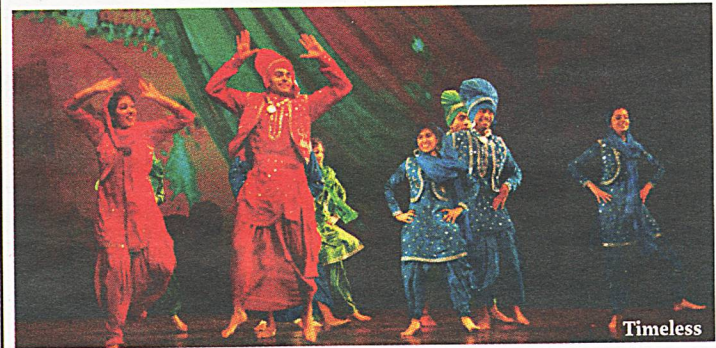
perceived lack of truth, stating that this forms an overly subjective criterion on which to judge whether speech should be accepted.

The divide between the two speakers stirred many questions from the audience, encompassing examples more closely focused on the LSE. For instance, an audience member expressed dissatisfaction with Mendus' treatment of Mill's argument for free speech, citing a challenge raised at the royal opening of the New Academic Building.

This concerned a perceived "neo-classical orthodoxy" amongst economists, and a lack of wider debate around the subject at institutions such as the LSE. The audience member argued that, perhaps ironically, the marketplace of argument in economic study was constrained by a need to fit within particular political bounds, in the same way that freedom of speech in other areas is curbed by social norms.

Another point was raised regarding the distinction between compulsory classes and seminars, and events held by a university or Students' Union society. On this particular point, Mendus and Dandridge agreed that students had the right not to feel degraded by the speech of others when they did not have the opportunity to simply leave.

Timeless a never ending success



Bethany Clarke

1,600 students packed the rows of the Lyceum Theatre for this year's Timeless performance last Monday night. The show featured thirteen dance numbers, ten songs and one magic act.

This year's storyline centred around introverted law student Lilly-Anne, her outgoing friend Alison, and her romantic interest Jack.

Over 150 people were involved in the production of the Timeless performance, including over twelve actors, twelve band members and twelve acapella singers.

Reena Gudka, a first year BSc Economic History student who participated in the show, said: "for me, university life truly began when rehearsals for

Timeless kicked off. I haven't felt this comfortable around a group of such inspirational, talented individuals in a very long time and now I cannot stop thinking about Timeless 2013!"

"Performing at the Lyceum in front of so many people was a pretty awesome experience, especially after all the hard work everybody had put in," said third year BSc Economics student Nupur Mohan.

The show was directed by Evaleen Brinton, coreographed by Ashish Patel. The music was coordinated by Natasha Sellyah.

Timeless was founded in the 2007-2008 academic year by then-LSE undergraduates Seeta Haria and Mikesh Vora, with the first Timeless show held in January 2008 at Her Majesty's Theatre.

Houghton Street coloured green

Goreti Faria

Last week, "Go Green Week" made its presence clear at Houghton Street, The Quad, and the surrounding London School of Economics (LSE) campus. Organised by the LSE Students' Union Environment and Ethics Officer, Lois Clifton, Go Green Week is aimed at enhancing staff and student awareness on various ethical and environmental issues.

Events took place from Monday to Friday, with a particular theme being highlighted each day of the week. The events organised ranged from initiatives aiming at the reduction of meat consumption to activities aimed at promoting cycling as a means of transportation, passing through incentives to recycle and to consume environmentally friendly food.

Meat Free Monday, a tradition that dates back to the first World War, kicked off the week with the aim of reducing meat consumption and explaining the environmental damage triggered by the mass production of meat. The Food Co-Op was one of the initiatives taking place on Monday where students could buy different kinds of dried and environmentally friendly goods as they meandered to class. The food was sold at the break even price - 100 grams of rice could be bought for 35p. The sale was a success according to Clifton, "we nearly sold out!"

Tuesday was the day to "Travel Light," promoting the use of bicycles

as a means of transportation. Small maintenance jobs for bicycles were performed for free on Houghton Street, and from midday onwards, students and staff queued for a free check-up.

In the evening it was time for cycle cinema and the film 'Dive! Living off America's Waste' was shown in The Underground. The screen was powered by the simultaneous cycling of four LSE students. About 25 people attended the film and had a chance to cycle to keep the cinema powered.

"Waste not Wednesday" aimed at "encouraging people to recycle or suggesting ways of turning old products into something new," according to the Go Green Week updates on the Students' Union's website. The Quad was the setting for "ReLove," where unwanted or unused items donated by staff and students could be bought at a low price.

"Switch Off Thursday" focused on reducing electricity consumption, bringing to light how wasteful appliances that are left in standby can be. From 11am to 3pm staff and students could go and have a free smoothie shot at Houghton Street, made by the cycling of a single person. Several students were taking pictures of the green cycle smoothie and trying out the mini smoothies. Jenny Wright, a second year Management student, was clearly enthused by her first Go Green experience: "I think this is awesome, I love smoothies."

Finally, Friday was themed National Day of Action and people could get involved by writing for environmental justice.

Andrew Sudmant, a student of the

MSc Environmental Policy and Regulation, said that "Go Green Week had a lot of exciting events, I hope to get more involved with the organisations I learned about." Sudmant is currently

involved with the Impact Awareness Campaign, which is looking for volunteers.

Lois Clifton was also very pleased with the outcome of Go Green Week,

especially with attendance and success of the several initiatives throughout the week. She also thanked "all the people who helped and took part."



Photo: Matt Worby

Itchy Feet gets in tents

Arisa Manawapat

The London School of Economic's (LSE) travel and backpacking society, the Itchy Feet Society, stayed local last week, declaring it "Itchy Feet Week" at the LSE. With over 260 members, the society creates fascinating opportunities for students to share their travelling experiences through social events and competitions.

Last Monday, Itchy Feet members donned their matching hoodies and energetically promoted their society's mission on Houghton Street, attracting travel-minded students and anyone keen for new experiences.

Itchy Feet's Salsa Night, scheduled for last Tuesday at the Cuban, Camden, was cancelled due to "last-minute dropouts," explained Itchy Feet's trip organiser Mia Briggs.

On Wednesday, Itchy Feet's plan to team up with newly formed LSE Students' Union Cycling Society to organize an outdoor mountain biking trip at Epping Forest was postponed, due to icy weather conditions. Itchy Feet's outdoor trips officer Roz Thomasoo noted that this was "such a shame," as Epping Forest, one of London's largest outdoor areas, would have provided the perfect location for an adventurous day out.

Despite the unforeseen setbacks, Itchy Feet successfully celebrated the launch of "Footprint" on Thursday evening at Kingsway. The society's annual collaborative travel journal includes engaging essays and breathtaking photos submitted by Itchy Feet members. After drinks and the screening of the comedy-drama *Darjeeling Limited*, prizes were distributed to the winners of Itchy Feet's Photo and Travel Article Competition. "We had a great number of entries this year," Vice President Nagehan Tarim remarked,

"it was hard for the committee to pick the winners."

Furthermore, Itchy Feet's Annual Fund enabled the delivery of a thousand pounds worth of necessary equipment for the upcoming camping trip. Tarim congratulates this as "great news for our members, as they will not have to find or buy their own equipment."

Itchy Feet boasts a diverse array of trips, exploring Dublin, Vienna, Berlin, Edinburgh, Venice, Morocco, Slovenia, Turkey, and Croatia. Within the United Kingdom, members partake in trekking, cycling, paint-balling and

sky-diving. Recent highlights include "social nights" at the Three Tuns, trivia nights, and Roller Disco Night.

Tarim appreciates the society's improvements, such as the expansion of Itchy Feet's executive committee. "With the help of extra hands, [we] organised trips to Sweden, Poland, Czech Republic as well as a weekend day trip to Oxford."

Itchy Feet's upcoming trips include the funded camping trip and a weekend getaway to Paris. Members volunteered to organise a trip to Jordan, which received great interest from the society.



Photo: Matt Worby

LSE Nobel Prize winner speaks on the Great Recession

Nona Buckley-Irvine

Christopher Pissarides, Norman Sosnow Chair in Economics at the LSE and recipient of the 2010 Nobel Prize for Economic Sciences, delivered an eagerly anticipated public lecture entitled "OECD Labour Markets in Great Recessions" at the School last Thursday.

Chaired by John Van Reenen, Pissarides' lecture was part of the Economics Phillips lecture series, which is delivered every other year.

The theatre was packed with academics, students and members of the public as they gathered to hear one of the world's most talented economists outline his thesis on the 'Great Recession' and how labour markets change.

Pissarides provided an overview of the impact of the Great Recession on employment and unemployment, shedding light on the nature of employment across countries that are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Large variations were seen in the rates of employment and unemployment across this range of countries: Germany has actually seen an increase in employment since 2007, whereas the United States had seen a severe decrease.

Pissarides revealed that men had suffered more than women with regards to unemployment, with more men losing their jobs than women.

He emphasised the issue of job losses in the service industry, explaining that when the recession took hold

in 2007, OECD economies were in the middle of a shift from jobs in industry to jobs in the service industry. This led to the recession culling job creation in the services industry.

Following an overview of how the American economy had failed to recuperate, Pissarides explained how Germany had succeeded in increasing employment at a time when most countries were suffering the worst economic downturn in decades, describing productivity as a "shock absorber."

Wage subsidies, a job creation scheme and start-up subsidies had ensured that the labour market continued to thrive throughout the economic downturn, he said.

Pissarides explained the system of targeted wage subsidies, which were given to employers to cover fifty per cent of wages for the first twelve months, encouraging employers to continue to hire workers. It was clear that the Nobel Prize winner advocated this approach towards the labour market, as he called it "fiscally rewarding."

Time ran out for Pissarides, who had to draw his lecture to a close before he had had a chance to explain his analysis of the labour markets in Spain to avoid running overtime.

Questions trickled through during the question and answer session, with Van Reenan apologising for the audience being "unusually shy."

William Matcham, a first year BSc Economics student who attended the lecture, said: "It was a very interesting talk. It is fantastic that such brilliant opportunities are available to students and the public."

Athletics' Union crowns Mr LSE 2012

Alex Haigh

The Mr LSE contest returned to the Quad last Wednesday as competitors vied for the top spot through challenges of brain, brawn and charm, and James Broad was named the most eligible man at the LSE.

The contest was split into six rounds; first, an interesting fact; second, a joke; third, a chat-up line; fourth, a talent round; fifth, the underwear round; and finally, a two-man competition of strength.

After each round, the judges - seven distinguished female members of the Athletics' Union (AU) - eliminated a crop of the contestants with pies to the face.

After being beckoned on stage by the co-presenters, Tom Lennon and Brendan Mycock, the nervous contestants jostled for the best location on stage as the judges looked on. The following rounds pitted the competitors' brains against each other to charm the judges. Horrific pick-up lines did not impress and these men were swiftly ejected from the stage via a pie to the face.

Lennon, of the Athletics' Union executive, and Mycock, President of the Athletics' Union, then coaxed the remaining contestants through the talent round, while the crowd - that had filled the Quad - cajoled them through

the underwear round, where the men were covered in oil and paraded on stage.

The talent round saw a cornucopia of unique, pleasing and amusing skills; Charlie Longstaff, a first year 1st XV rugby player, serenaded the audience with his bagpipes; and James Broad, first year 5th XI football player, smashed fruit with his head before drinking the resultant mash, mixed with vodka and blended.

Broad and Longstaff were the eventual finalists, combating head-to-head in an endurance battle, holding buckets filled with water out to their sides. Broad held out the longest and was crowned Mr LSE 2012.

Broad remained modest in victory, claiming that "being thrust into Mr LSE by the FC was a bit of an eye opener for me as I realised that I had no apparent talent whatsoever."

The night was considered a success by its organisers with Mycock declaring "songs were sung, bagpipes were played and innocent fruit was smashed but at least we found our 2012 Mr LSE," the AU president continued. "If this was the turnout for Mr LSE I cannot wait to see the crowd at Fight Night. Some people are calling it the biggest event in London since the Royal wedding."

Broad, continued "Mr LSE is a prime example of the amazing opportunities that the AU offers to anyone who is willing to join."



Photo: Facebook

Academic panel debates poverty reduction strategies



Photo: Arisa Manawapat

Arisa Manawapat

Last Wednesday in the LSE Vera Anstey Suite, a panel of distinguished academics engaged in an intense discussion entitled 'Economic Transformation and Poverty Reduction: How it happened in China, helping it happen in Africa.' The panel examined the findings of the China-Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Study Group, an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) initiative. Highlights included agricultural reform and the essential role national governments must play in creating a consensus for "responsible development."

According to Li Xiao Yun, director of the China-DAC Study Group, the poverty-reducing workshops featured a total of five hundred professionals from China and Africa from 2009 to 2011. The main attraction was China's "life story" – thirty years ago, China's poverty rate was "much higher" than Africa's today. On the other hand, "Africa in the present day is equivalent to China in the 1980s." Li admits that while direct replication of China's policies is impossible, it is important to stress the "learning process" initiated

by the two regions.

Li explained that before capital expansion can occur, Africa must prioritise agriculture as its primary industry. The Chinese Township and Village Enterprises (TVEs) was used as an example of an agricultural foundation for wider socio-economic transformation. Small-scale enterprises enabled room for "experimental policy," as many TVEs restructured into private partnerships, creating the growth of a private sector.

Furthermore, Li favoured the role of China's "strong state" over the ineffective "NGO approach." African nations can draw from the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) "centralisation within decentralisation," in which the central government builds a national consensus for development, while local governments motivate citizens through "merit-based competition."

Wang Xiao Lin, director of the International Poverty Reduction Centre in China (IPRCC), pinpointed the CCP's focus on 140,000 key poverty-stricken villages. With the goal of industrial development, policies primarily focused on the villagers' healthcare and personal security.

In response to the DAC Report, Thandika Mkandawire of the LSE's Department of International Development drew attention to Africa's "weak capacity for learning." The continent's

western-orientated outlook has created "collective amnesia" where the "teacher forgets the problem." Mkandawire criticised the Western approach of "telling us [Africa] what to do," and emphasised a Korean aid agency's strategy of "tell[ing] us what you have done."

The United Kingdom's perspective on the "community of learning" was offered by Anthony Smith, Director of International Relations at the UK Department for International Development. Smith notes that in four years, China's research output will have overtaken the United States' by 760 per cent. Consequently, domestic opinion in the UK will strain bilateral aid, as the question of "Why spend money abroad?" will be increasingly asked by the public. Li responded that while foreign aid is important, it should act as a "catalyst" to complement the central role played by the state.

While most audience members applauded in agreement, a distinct voice was raised by Xiao Qian Liu, PhD Candidate in Anthropology, who dismissed the implementation of Chinese and Western development policies in Africa as "disastrous" and emphasised that "economic development has to be congruent with each particular African culture."

experience should count, and upped my pay."

Despite issues being directly raised with Departments and LSE's Human Relations, and at the termly Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee (JNCC), there has been little practical action carried out by LSE and according to Kirby, "many of the same problems encountered in 2010-2011 have recurred in 2011-2012."

However, the ULU Representative does say "at LSE at least, a major change is coming, which will be the move to a system in which many more PhD students are funded, but where they are expected to carry out a certain amount of work in return."

Yet the growing costs of living and

working in London still remains.

According to Kirby, "no GTA could afford to live in London and conduct their research on a GTA wage alone. Even where GTAs take on as many teaching hours as full time staff, their wage is a fraction of the full-time rate." Similarly in a statement to the Beaver, one GTA said, "I can no longer afford to live in London, with obvious consequences."

LSE have been urged to take greater steps to ensure they follow existing guidelines and so that all GTAs are paid for relevant experience.

"Dr Lane is taking over the teaching of a core course OR202.1, which has over 250 students," said Professor Richard Steinberg, head of the Management Science Group. "This was in part in consideration of the recommendations of the Teaching Task Force that undergraduates should have more contact with senior staff of the department. Consequently, more than five times the number of students now benefit from Dr Lane's teaching."

The department stated that no decision has been made on whether the course would be reinstated for the next academic year, or anytime in the future. Instead, the matter will be discussed "in the broader context of course provision with student representatives at staff/student liaison committees."

Sabbs update UGM on Lent Term plans

Alice Dawson

Although there were no motions raised at this week's Union General Meeting (UGM), held on Thursday 9th February, the Sabbatical and Part Time Officers of the LSE Students' Union gave their reports and shared their weekly activities with those present.

Alex Peters-Day, General Secretary of the LSE Students' Union, was not present at the UGM but, in her report, she announced a "full-scale consultation on all things ethics at the LSE." This consultation will involve a "meeting for all students, staff and academics at LSE."

In addition, Peters-Day announced that she had met with the Department of Alumni Relations in order to plan an exhibition in the Atrium next year. She also highlighted the Students' Union's intention to archive past issues of the Beaver to "ensure our SU's history is properly preserved."

Finally, the General Secretary reported that she had attended the LSE Students' Union's Strategic Plan meeting. She emphasised the importance of reviewing "what we think we're doing right" and "what we're not so great on."

Amena Amer, the Education Officer, spoke about her involvement with the Undergraduate Studies Subcommittee (USSC), the group that deals with the implementation of new courses at the School. She said she "was shocked to see the number of course proposals with 100 per cent exam as their assessment." The Education Officer said that she will be taking up this issue with other people and committees within the School.

Amer was questioned by a member of the audience about whether she had conducted research to see what students prefer. It was suggested that many students may prefer their results to be based solely on their examinations as they dislike coursework. However, the Education Officer retaliated by saying that this issue is "not just about what students prefer." It is also about the skills that are important for students to acquire while at university, such as "writing reports and presen-

tation skills." Amer also raised the issue that students are unlikely to be assessed on their performance at work by examination.

The Community and Welfare Officer, Lukas Slothuus, reported that he is working "to implement the role of adviser to LGBT students alongside the pre-existing advisers to male and female students." He also outlined the LSE Students' Union's intention to "establish a partnership" with Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM), a national charity working to prevent suicide amongst young men. Slothuus told the audience that suicide is the biggest killer of men between eighteen and 34 in the UK.

The Activities and Development Officer, Stanley Ellerby-English, said, "Timeless this Monday was amazing. Everyone involved did a great job and put on an amazing show." He also reported that, following recent interviews, the LSE Students' Union "hope to have found someone by the end of the week" for the role of Societies Development Coordinator.

Robin Burrett, Postgraduate Officer, said that "NUS are messing around with dates for the lobby of Parliament," which "strikes me as being unbelievably bad PR." He added that, while dates are yet to be finalised, "we will be aiming for the maximum possible mobilisation."

One member of the audience questioned why many classes are still held on a Friday afternoon, interfering with Muslim prayer times and the Jewish Shabbat, despite a policy addressing this issue being passed by the Students' Union earlier this year. The Education Officer responded that as timetables were arranged at the start of the year it was "too late notice" to cancel classes on a Friday. She commented that "it's not really anything we can change right now," but added that students affected by Friday classes should have hand-outs, recordings and lecture notes made available to them.

It was also announced that Judith Rees, Interim Director of the LSE, will be speaking at the UGM on Thursday 16th February. Additionally, Liam Burns, President of the National Union of Students (NUS) will be at the UGM as a guest speaker on a date yet to be confirmed.

» continued from page 1

university level did not receive any pay increase with only 16 per cent reporting that they did and the remainder unsure. In addition, 21 per cent of those who had taught at LSE in previous years did not receive any increase and only 32.6 per cent said that they did.

Kirby stated that in his own case he "had to fight for several months, which meant going without pay, before the Department I was working for acknowledged that my previous

» continued from page 1

to learn the software, and few could claim to advise the use of such software better than Dr. Lane," he said. The Department of Management has cited "equity" and "student demand" as reasons of the suspension.



Photo: Matt Worby

Sked discusses national icons in inaugural public lecture

Jack Tindale

Alan Sked gave his inaugural public lecture since his appointment as Professor in the Department of International History at the LSE on Monday 6th February. Speaking to a packed Sheik Zayed Theatre, Sked was introduced by David Stevenson as the "social soul of the department." Sked has spent almost his entire academic career at the LSE and has lectured on a wide scope of subjects in addition to his speciality, the Habsburg monarchy.

Sked's lecture, entitled 'Frederick the Great, Napoleon and Abraham Lincoln: what makes for a national icon?'; engaged a broad comparative framework in a discussion of the nature of national icons.

Taking into account that 2012 marks the 300th birthday of Frederick the Great, the 200th anniversary of the Napoleonic Invasion of Russia, and that last year was the 150th anniversary of the outbreak of the American Civil War, Sked stated that he considered the three figures cited above as being natural sources of inspiration for a nation's psyche.

National icons typically see periods of waxing and waning, although, according to the lecture, such subversion is rarely experienced by those who were the topic of Monday's lecture. Frederick the Great survived the

disestablishment of Prussia to be seen as a hero of modern Germany, while Napoleon has maintained his position as a French national hero. Abraham Lincoln, despite his well-established white supremacist views, is remembered for leading the war to save the Union.

Sked devoted the basis of his speech to the iconoclastic debunking of such myths formed the basis of the talk. According to his opening remarks, Frederick the Great's war-mongering could still be rehabilitated in a way that would be impossible for Hitler or Kaiser Wilhelm II, primarily because Frederick was successful. Equally, despite being directly responsible for the deaths of at least three million men, Napoleon remains a French national icon owing to his legacy as a legal and social reformer.

Grand narratives and the need to ensure the continuation of popular myths explain why history has tended to gloss over the mutual failings of the three men, said Sked. All three expressed varying levels of despotism. All three led wars of aggression against neighbouring powers. All three had complicated sex lives quite at odds with the usual national focus on family values.

According to Sked, the triumvirate lacked much awareness of their purported national heritage. Frederick the Great despised the German language and conversed in French. Napoleon started life as a Corsican patriot prior to morphing towards a more grandiose

aim of world domination. In addition to his aforementioned racial prejudices, Lincoln ignored any recourse to the Supreme Court, deliberately provoked secessionist tendencies in the South and suspended various Constitutional provisions within the Bill of Rights.

The talk prompted several sharp intakes of breath, not least from the large number of American students present.

Following the lecture's conclusion, in which Sked acknowledged the need for national icons while disputing the endemic cult of personality, an engaging question and answer session took place. Many questions queried other possible for "national icons." Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill were both cited as credible candidates, although Sked did question their overall importance to the war effort. The subject of Stalin was also discussed, although, according to one member of the audience, the former Soviet Leader still has enough taboos to warrant a television poll to find the greatest Russian in history being rigged against him. On the subject of British icons, both Robert the Bruce and Elizabeth I were seen as being more Scottish and English respectively, although Sked cited current breakaway ambitions in Edinburgh as a sign that the two figures could come back into vogue.

LSE ranked most 'visible' university on social media sites

Bernadette Chan-Roy

The London School of Economics (LSE) has been ranked the most 'visible' Russell Group university on social media sites, according to an Econsultancy ranking published last week.

The Econsultancy table ranked the LSE as the third most visible university in the nation, with a total score of 286,859 points. First and second positions on the table went to the University of Cambridge and the University of Oxford, which scored 462,823 and 442,758 points respectively.

However, when the overall scores were standardised for the varying sizes of the universities' student bodies, the LSE placed prominently at the top of the chart, with a total score of 22.74. The University of Cambridge was ranked second with 15.48 points, and the University of Oxford placed third with a total of 12.71 points.

The visibility rankings were based on the total number of links a university's website scored on six social media sites: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Delicious and StumbleUpon.

The data estimated that roughly 207,900 links related to content on the websites of Russell Group Universi-

ties are shared every week. This figure refers to the number of links to university's own websites that are Tweeted, 'Liked', or otherwise shared on social networking sites. 80.25 per cent of all links were shared on Facebook, while 19.28 per cent were generated on Twitter.

According to Jane Tinkler, a member of the LSE's Public Policy Group, the size-standardised data demonstrated that the largest universities have had the most difficulty establishing a presence in the social media arena.

"While these results may not be the last word in how one tracks social media, the data is plausible and may be able to give some useful insights," said Tinkler.

The Econsultancy ranking used data from a Searchmetrics analysis conducted by Horst Jeopen to calculate each university's visibility score.

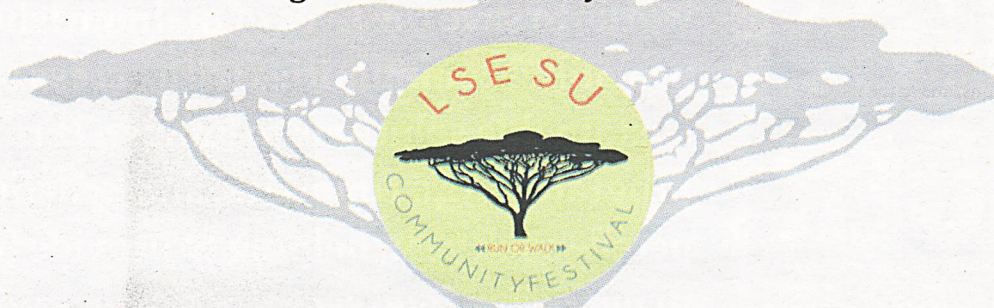
According to Jeopen, CEO of Searchmetrics: "Most universities are very active with numerous social network accounts serving different departments and groups. Obviously much of the content is targeted at the current university population rather than prospective students, but it can provide some interesting insights to those wanting to know a little more about life at a particular institution."

THE LSE COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

Run Whilst Others Walk

Join us for the LSE Community Festival!

Participate in a walk/run for student hardship funds and the Africa Initiative, enjoy live music and performances from student societies and clubs, have fun with your friends, make new friends, and mingle with staff, faculty, and alumni!

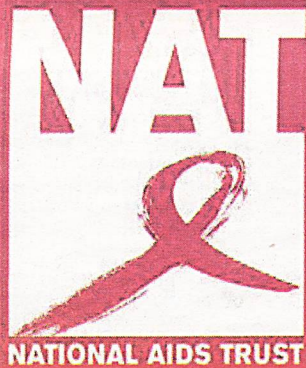


When is it: Sunday, 4th March, 10am - 5pm
Where is it: LSE Campus and Lincoln's Inn Fields

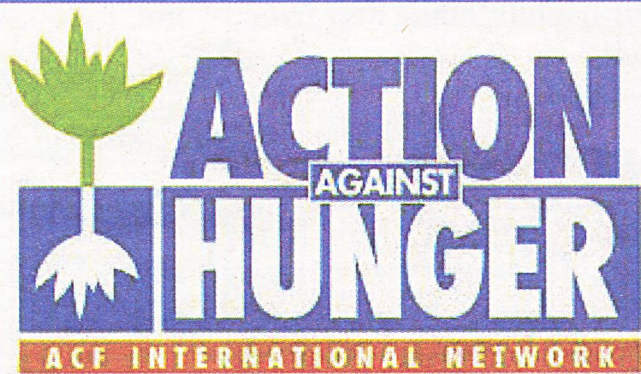
To learn more and to register to participate in the run/walk, please visit www.run-or-walk.org

See you there!

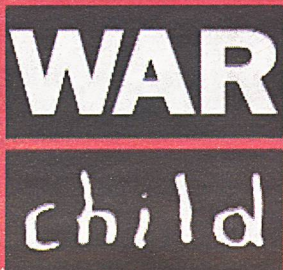
RAG WEEK 2012					
Day/Time	Morning	Afternoon 12-3	Afternoon 3-6	Evening 6-9	Night
Monday 13th	Houghton St Stall / Merchandise / Women For Women International Stall				Blake's Doors - The Underground
		Nail Art - The Quad		Pub Quiz - The Tuns	
Tuesday 14th (Valentines Day)		Timeless Dancers	Music Soc		
		Valentines love hearts - Houghton St			
		Hockey vs. Netball match - Lincolns Inn			
Wednesday 15th		AU Row to Amsterdam - Houghton St			
		Houghton St Stall / Merchandise			Blake's Doors - The Underground
Thursday 16th				AU Wax - The Tuns	
		Houghton St Stall / Merchandise / Development Soc Stall			
Friday 17th					Battle of the Halls - The Rematch
		Houghton St Stall / Merchandise			
		"Gunge-a-Sabb" - Houghton St			
	Tug of War Football vs Rugby - Houghton St				
					Rag Skydive [Sunday]



National AIDS Trust is the UK's leading charity dedicated to transforming society's response to HIV. They work towards creating a world in which people living with HIV are treated as equal citizens with respect, dignity and justice, and receive the highest amount of care possible to ensure early diagnosis and education of the best treatment and protection methods.



Action Against Hunger is an international charity that works to save the lives of malnourished children while providing communities with access to safe water and sustainable solutions to hunger. It runs life saving programs in 40 countries, and benefits five million people each year, helping to provide life saving programs in nutrition, food security, water, sanitation and hygiene.



War Child is a non-governmental organisation founded in the UK in 1993 which focuses on providing assistance to children in areas of conflict and post-conflict. It works to support and rehabilitate child victims of war and address the on-going consequences of conflict on children by working within in the local communities of both conflict and non-conflict areas, to support children and the people they depend on.

Comment

Modern day slavery in the “Land of the Free”

Exposing the exploitation of prisoners in the USA

Tom Heyden



You'd think that a presidential campaign, especially one as drawn out as the USA's, provides the perfect opportunity for open debate about the nation's pressing issues. After all, what is the purpose of an election if it is not to express happiness or displeasure with the status quo? As the presidential campaign ensues, one issue remains - deafening in its silence.

America, the self-proclaimed “Land of the Free” (irony not intended, I'm told), is the world's leading prison state. Forget the “totalitarian nightmares” of China or Russia, or brutal dictatorships in Africa, it is in fact the leaders of the “free world” who lock up more of their citizens proportionally than any other country on the planet.

The US accounts for five per cent of the planet's population, and yet 25 per cent of prisoners worldwide find themselves at the mercy of the American justice system. But mercy is a commodity in seemingly short supply. Fortunately, however, the truly valuable commodity in all of this, the prisoners themselves, appear to be an inexhaustible resource - and one that private companies seem intent to continue exploiting.

The 2.3 million prisoners in America provide companies with a cheap labour force to compete with those overseas. At least they are keeping jobs in the country, the corporations cynically contest. However, the real consequence is that they undercut local companies refusing to plunder the captive workforce while intensifying job competition problems for

non-captive US workers.

Prison labour in America is in itself nothing new. Ever since the chain gangs of the nineteenth century, punitive forced labour has formed a fundamental part of the judicial system. Yet whereas prisoners were previously “employed” only for the benefit of government and public services, the decision in 1999 to make prisoner services available to the private sector has resulted in a fast growing industry in the USA. Together with the increasing privatization of prisons themselves, as well as an explosion in the number of prisoners, prison labour has become a lucrative billion-dollar business.

But when you have a workforce without freedom, coerced to work and used like any other commodity, there is a striking resemblance to the slavery so triumphantly “defeated” over 150 years ago in America. The echoes of slavery only deepen when the ethnographic figures are taken into account. African-Americans constitute a staggering 40 per cent of prisoners, dwarfing their twelve per cent share of the whole population, while Hispanics are also disproportionately represented. A combination of socio-economics and police racial-profiling provide part of the answer for this shocking inequality, reinforced by the prevailing “lock 'em up” ideology that has thus far defeated calls to address the root causes of crime.

The privatisation of the Prison-Industrial Complex (PIC) is the most ominous obstacle to any change of approach. The five private prisons in operation in 2000 have since blossomed into over 100 that now blot the landscape and stain the morality that the US supposedly champions. The incentives for private companies to outsource production to prisons are numerous. Prisoners are paid around 0.17 cents per hour at the lowest range, rising up to about three to four dollars

per day if you're lucky. Moreover, prisoners are unable to strike - that most annoying of worker habits - while it's also unlikely that inconveniences such as vacations, insurance, pensions or maternity leave will surface any time soon. Even tardiness is accounted for!

Although only around eight per cent of the prison population is involved in the PIC - a small but growing element - its development completely removes the rehabilitation of prisoners from the objectives of those running the prisons. Private prisons are paid \$30,000-\$50,000 per inmate to cage them in overcrowded prisons, before maximizing their profits through hawking the services of their captives - deducting money from their “workers” to pay for their room and board.

Anyone who refuses to package boxes or process meat, meanwhile, is typically threatened with solitary confinement. While Europe has largely abandoned this inhumane punishment, the coercive force underpinning America's prison sweatshops, the US continues to totally isolate around 20,000 inmates permanently, and up to 100,000 on any given day. It comes as no surprise that mental health problems are routinely neglected, with an estimated 50 per cent of California inmates needing treatment. These figures include children isolated “for their own safety” because there is nowhere else to put them.

Despite this inadequate care and overpopulation, the penal system has become more of a business than a public service. Accordingly, prison corporations have increased their political funding to “tough on crime” candidates in order to boost their commodity growth. The pernicious style of lobbying is most pertinently revealed by the Corrections Corporations of America (CCA), the country's largest private-prison conglomerate:

“Demand for our facilities and

services could be adversely affected by the relaxation of enforcement efforts, leniency in conviction and sentencing practices...any changes with respect to drugs and other controlled substances and illegal immigration could affect the number of persons arrested, convicted and sentenced, thereby potentially reducing demand for correctional facilities.”

Evidently the objective of these corporations is the complete antithesis

“Together with the increasing privatisation of prisons themselves, as well as an explosion in the number of prisoners, prison labour has become a lucrative million dollar business.”

of rehabilitation. Nevertheless, it must be said that these corporations are reacting to an industry that surfaced only because of the wider US approach to crime and punishment that swelled the prison population and thus created their commodity. Since the 1980s, the dominance of “tough on crime” ensured that politicians of both wings pushed the centre ground spiralling towards the punishment side of the punitive-rehabilitative dynamic in fear of being labelled soft on crime. The outcome has been “three strike” rules,

mandatory minimum sentencing, and diminished parole opportunities - culminating in a 700 per cent increase in imprisonment.

Ultimately, if evidence existed that harsh punishment prevented crime then perhaps there could be at least some justification for the bloated system. In this, the fact that since 1990 violent crime has diminished by some twenty per cent across America certainly obscures the debate. But correlation is not causation. Closer inspection reveals that the decline in violent crime has been nationwide, regardless of the drastic state variation in punitive measures and imprisonment figures. Just as it has been demonstrated that capital punishment is not a sufficient deterrent - a debate for some other time - the answer does not seem to lie with creating an incarcerated population.

Further, over half of inmates are imprisoned for non-violent offences (mostly casualties of the war on drugs) but then become institutionalized rather than rehabilitated. They come out branded as criminals, with substantial life opportunities stripped away from them. Almost invariably, they're also the people who started with fewer opportunities in the first place. It's time to stop the permanent criminalisation of economically and opportunity-deprived Americans and begin to justify the image America paints of itself, rather than the one of hypocrisy that many other countries feel is more appropriate.

Yet with Wall Street firms and investment banks pouring \$35 billion into the publicly-floated prison industry, forgive me for not being optimistic about an imminent turnaround. So, if the prison sweatshops outlined above have not appalled you, then at least I've got a great tip on some profitable shares. ☘

UCAS statistics don't tell the full story

LSE's Head of Recruitment and Admissions explains the recent drop in applications to the School

Catherine Baldwin



Reports of a fall in the number of applications to UK universities (including LSE) are true but - as with most stories based on simple statistics - they overlook a more complex picture.

And while no universities can afford to be complacent about a drop in applications, there are many good reasons why LSE can be confident in continuing demand for our courses from high-quality students around the world.

The first is that our ratio of applications per undergraduate place is 12:1 and higher than almost all our competitors. We have received 15,110 applications so far this year for just over 1,200 places. As every LSE student already knows, it's not easy to win a place here and the competition

means the standard is high.

This helps explain the second reason, that a reduction in applications is concentrated in those areas (Accounting, Government, History, International Relations and Management) where the entry requirements were raised this year to three As at A level in most of the departments. This means that students who might in previous years have hoped to come here are no longer applying because the minimum standard is beyond them. In short, we have lost applicants but the academic quality of those applications we have received is higher than in previous years.

In some areas, applications to LSE have increased so an overall drop in applications of nine per cent, while unwelcome, is not universally reflective of the situation at the School. It is also worth noting that applications to the same subject areas as those taught at LSE have also fallen across the country, including at our key competitors.

On the issue of fees and bursaries I don't believe anyone can be clear

what effects they have on applications. But in any case the point of bursaries is not to try and maintain our overall level of applications but rather to support diversity and encourage UK applicants from low socio-economic and widening participation backgrounds to apply to and take up their offer at LSE. It was with this in mind that LSE decided to offer generous bursaries of up to £3,500 a year (not £2,500 as mentioned in the Beaver) when it set current fee levels.

We are determined to continue to attract the best, brightest and most committed students, regardless of their background or personal circumstances. Our local widening participation activities, national and international recruitment efforts and generous bursary package underpin this aim. While there is always scope for more to be done, the latest application figures and the quality of those applicants show that, even in times that are very challenging for UK higher education, we have considerable success in meeting that aim. ☘



Flickr: munir

Predicting great events

LSE Memes: the School's next big controversy or just an innocent page of satire?

Iain Ramsay



As I sat at my laptop last Tuesday evening and discovered the creation of the "LSE Memes" Facebook group, two things instantly came to mind. Firstly, I knew that my evening of essay writing would have to wait, as I would - and surely did - spend hours laughing hysterically at some of the great memes that fellow LSE students had created, whilst trying my hardest to create some equally witty memes myself. If you're wondering, I did eventually manage to make a fairly average pun out of the word "Saif."

This leads me to my second concern: that many of the memes on the page satirise some of the controversy that has been widely discussed on campus and in this very publication over the past few months. Sure enough, posts about Jason Wong's Bankside campaign, Gaddafi - guilty as charged - and even the infamous Nazi drinking game started appearing on the group page. Not that LSE100 was controversial, but a few pretty funny Jonathan Leape memes popped up too.

Within the first hour of the group's creation, 100 people had joined, and within 24 hours that number was getting close to 1000. It had gone viral. Would exposure to the critical eyes of so many LSE students mean that people would have to be more careful about what they posted? I'm not going to bore you with an article about freedom of speech and press, and

certainly shall not be peppering it with George Orwell quotes, but I am potentially pre-empting the possibility of another LSE scandal. That's right: I'm predicting a great event. Jonathan Leape would be proud.

Just in case this does become a controversy blown out of proportion by some petty LSE students that have nothing better to talk about than minor student politics, I shall open with some disclaimers.

Firstly, I am writing this article on the evening of the 10th February. I am only defending posts that have appeared on the LSE Memes page before now.

Secondly, I don't know what else features in this edition of the Beaver. The pages could be plastered with articles written by every zealot at LSE ranting about how sexist/racist/homophobic/classist the memes are. Alternatively, LSE Memes could have been ignored, forgotten and allowed to satirise freely. I hope that the latter is the case, even if it means that I look like a fool for writing this article.

Now that the necessary disclaimers are out of the way, I can get to the heart of the issue. I am a mere second year, but have already seen that, here at LSE, we are excellent at making a controversy mountain out of what started out as merely a mildly amusing molehill. The smallest misjudgement is turned into many weeks' worth of stories and general hullabaloo swirling around the Beaver, the UGM, and various societies.

You know the stories I'm talking about. The stories where, when you turn the newspaper page and see yet another headline about it, it almost makes you wish you were at Kings - don't worry, I said almost.

This is where satire comes in. If

we don't satirise these stories, they become so hyped up they become almost meaningless. Satire should not offend; it should highlight relevant issues, and make people think about their opinions. If jokes are in poor taste, then so be it; the hype surrounding them creates an atmosphere where people are expected to be offended. Satire, however, purges this atmosphere entirely. Satire challenges people's hypocrisies and opinions, just like those repetitive headlines aim to do, but satire does it in, what I strongly

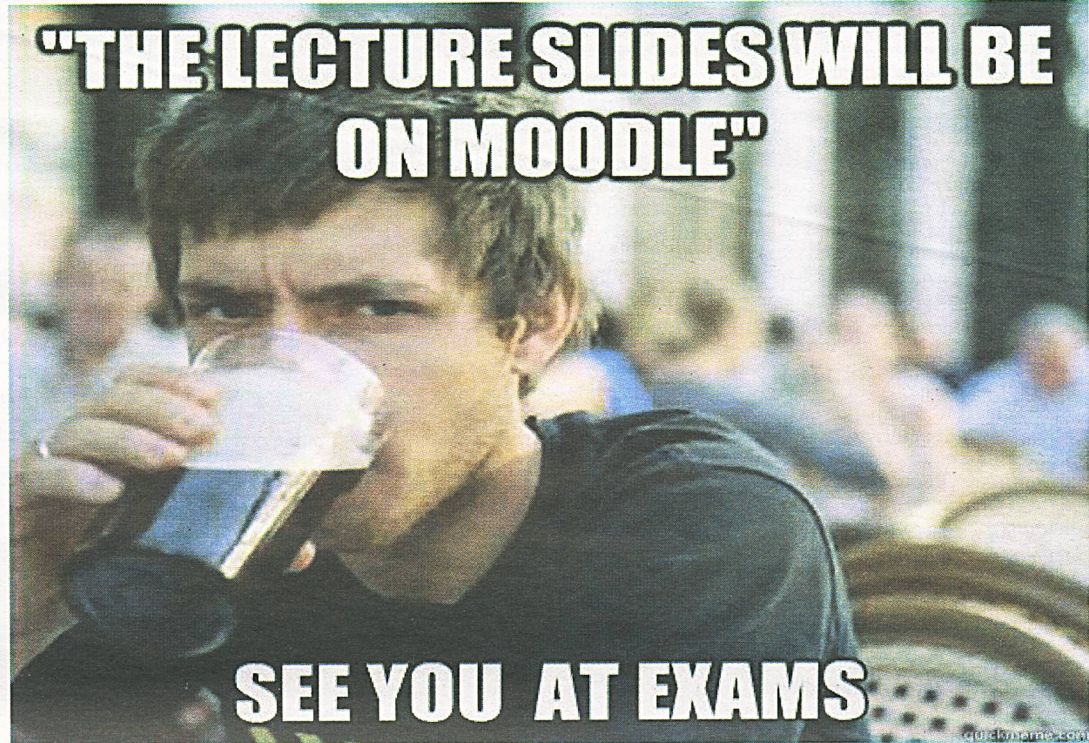
believe, is a far more suitable fashion. The passion and political activism at LSE is admirable but we must not turn every poster and inappropriate joke into a full-blown political scandal. Wikipedia puts it most eloquently: "Although satire is usually meant to be funny, its greater purpose is often constructive social criticism, using wit as a weapon".

So, as I lay down my shovel, prepare my official apology, get ready to lose my summer placement and remove "Education: London School of

Economics" from my CV, I have some final words. I hope I am wrong. I hope that LSE Memes vanishes from the "LSE radar" like a fart in the wind.

I hope no one takes offence. I hope that if they do take offence they simply take it on the chin. But LSE must get past its obsession with controversy and petty politics. I spent a happy evening browsing the fantastic posts on "LSE Memes" and I hope you do too.

Long live satire. ☞



Community votes for community voters

Why we should change the way we vote in the Lent Term elections

Alec Webley



Liberation is about speaking for those who have no voice. At LSE we do this by creating representative officers - a Women's Officer, Mature/Part Time Officer, LGBT Officer and International Students' Officer. Yet presently the communities not in need of liberation have decisive control over the election of our liberation officers. This must change.

Consider our LGBT Officer. He represents a community of a few hundred students at the most. Yet the LGBT election is open to the whole campus. If every single LGBT person voted against a certain candidate, that candidate could still win - and win handily - on the support of straight voters. If every single LGBT person wanted to remove an officer on the grounds of incompetence or malice, they would require the consent of straight students on campus to bring this about.

The same holds true for our other officers. The Women's Officer must campaign for male votes, the Postgraduate Officer must campaign for undergraduate votes and the Interna-

tional Officer must campaign for the British vote. And yet, when they are elected, these officers work with, speak for, and are solely concerned with their own communities, who often formed a minority of those who voted for them.

If we are to have a Women's Officer, the officer is on the Executive Committee to represent women. They ought, therefore, to be elected by women. Men cannot attend the Women's Assembly and men cannot stand as Women's Officer. So why on earth are we allowed to vote - decisively - for such a position? The very existence of

"Community-based voting is fairer, more democratic and simply makes sense."

a Women's Officer requires that such an officer be elected by women.

On a related vein, the Athletics Union President is elected by every single student on campus, including lots of students who have nothing whatsoever to do with the AU. Wait, what? I can think of no good reason for this bizarre inconsistency. Why elect a liberation officer - or an AU President, or the Postgraduate Officer - who cannot be said to speak for those who they seek to represent?

One might well respond that an officer of the Union must reach out beyond a narrow base and appeal to the "majority" of the campus. This is certainly important for, say, the General Secretary, our elected leader, who speaks with one voice on behalf of all students.

But surely if we're not going to allow a non-international student to run for International Students' Officer and if we're only going to allow them to speak on behalf of the international student community rather than "all students," why do we insist nonetheless that they reach out to a community that by definition doesn't share their platform? Why should the AU President, whose administration will only impact AU members, be elected in such a fashion that the student body can override the decision of the community he or she will preside over?

And imagine if a candidate who is clearly not the choice of their constituency but has a powerful campaign organisation wins his or her election. They enter office with no legitimacy. Their platform - if they even had one - will be stymied. The community will fight back, in its own creative way. And a year of potential progress will be lost.

Moreover, one might object to the very idea of liberation officers or special representatives - but when every one of our Sabbatical Officers is elected on a cross-campus ballot, and every one of our trustees is elected

on a cross-campus ballot, and every one of our policies is decided on a cross-campus ballot, it seems to me that our minority communities might at least be allowed to choose their own representatives rather than being subject to the whims of the unoppressed majority.

As far as I can tell, the only reason the LSE Students' Union has not adopted liberation voting is the perceived technical and logistical difficulties in establishing such a system. This is bollocks. For some positions - Postgraduate Officer, AU President, Women's Officer, International Students' Officer - the system already has the data needed to make this work. The Union knows the gender of their students and they know if you're affiliated with the AU; so far, so good.

This leaves, to my reckoning, only the LGBT Officer and possibly the Disabled Students' Officer. Here, the solution is simple: self-identification. Voters when they reach the ballot will be asked whether they identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered, or whether they view themselves as having a disability when voting for the Disabled Students' Officer. Where voters answer in the negative, they will be prevented from voting.

You might well respond that such a system is vulnerable to gaming. I would answer that the vast bulk of non-community voters would respond with "no" to such a question; perhaps

a few votes would get through, but these would hardly be decisive. And, of course, our Democracy Committee should ensure that encouraging this kind of gaming is a violation of election rules.

Community-based voting would not only ensure that our liberation and other representatives truly represented the communities on whose behalf they were elected; such elections would bring communities closer together. LGBT Officer candidates, for instance, would campaign only to LGBT people, and in the process learn more about their community's needs and issues. As a result, the LGBT community would be more engaged with the Union. This would hold true for all of our communities on the LSE campus.

Community-based voting is fairer, more democratic, and simply makes sense. When the Union comes to vote on this topic later this term, every student who cares about LSE's various communities should vote "Yes."

I write as a gay man tired of having to get the consent of straight people to campaign on the issues I care about. I think it is totally right that most of our Union is directly elected by everyone but, in the case of the LGBT Officer, the LGBT community deserves to have its voice heard. Our officer, our voice, our choice. ☞

Commenting on your comment

Lib Dems: Dig your own way out

A response to Jon Allsop's argument for a Lab-Lib pact

Alistair Hughes



Let me begin this article in response to Jon Allsop's "A New Lib-Lab Pact?" (7th February, 2012) by saying I would love to agree with Jon's suggestions. As a Labour member who sits squarely on the liberal wing of the Party, a future coalition with an enthusiastic Liberal Democrat Party should make an exciting and productive government. I also agree that, at the heart of the Lib Dem party, there is considerable potential to throw off a "Cameron lackey" status.

However, the Lib Dems are a bit like Darth Vader. At their core they have some good that may eventually appear in a fight with the Emperor Cameron. But when the public look at the Lib Dems all they see is the evil machine-like Clegg wielding the force in a very "Dark-Side" (Tory) manner. To put it simply, the voters don't see a difference between the Conservatives and the Lib Dems any more.

Creating a new Lib-Lab pact is therefore not a question of changing policy. Jon argued in his article that changing party policy and encouraging Lib Dem involvement is perfectly possible. Instead, I suggest that it's a question of changing perception. Convincing the public (let alone the left wing of the Labour Party) to accept rapprochement with a party which, for the past sixteen months, has been

characterised as callous, ineffectual and disorganised in equal measure would be a PR disaster for the Labour Party. There is only one line Ed Miliband can take and that is the firm stance of opposition.

There is another reason why I disagree with Jon's argument for rapprochement. I feel strongly that the Liberal Democrats should dig their own way out of the hole which they alone have created. They owe it to the many people, particularly students, up and down the country who they have let down with "broken promises" (to use Ed Miliband's favourite phrase). The Lib Dems need to take a moment to reflect after the next election. The Labour Party should not be throwing lifejackets to a party who effectively signed away its own credibility in joining the current coalition.

That is not to say that a future Liberal Democrat Party should not be welcomed by Labour. They are after all, as Jon highlights, our brothers on the progressive wing of British politics. But the Lib Dems should not be encouraged back into a government in the case of a hung parliament in 2015, especially not with the help of the Labour Party. They need to restructure and remake their case for being a large party in Westminster. It is their identity which has been lost in this coalition and it is their identity which they need to regain without the help or interference - depending on where you stand - of the Labour Party.

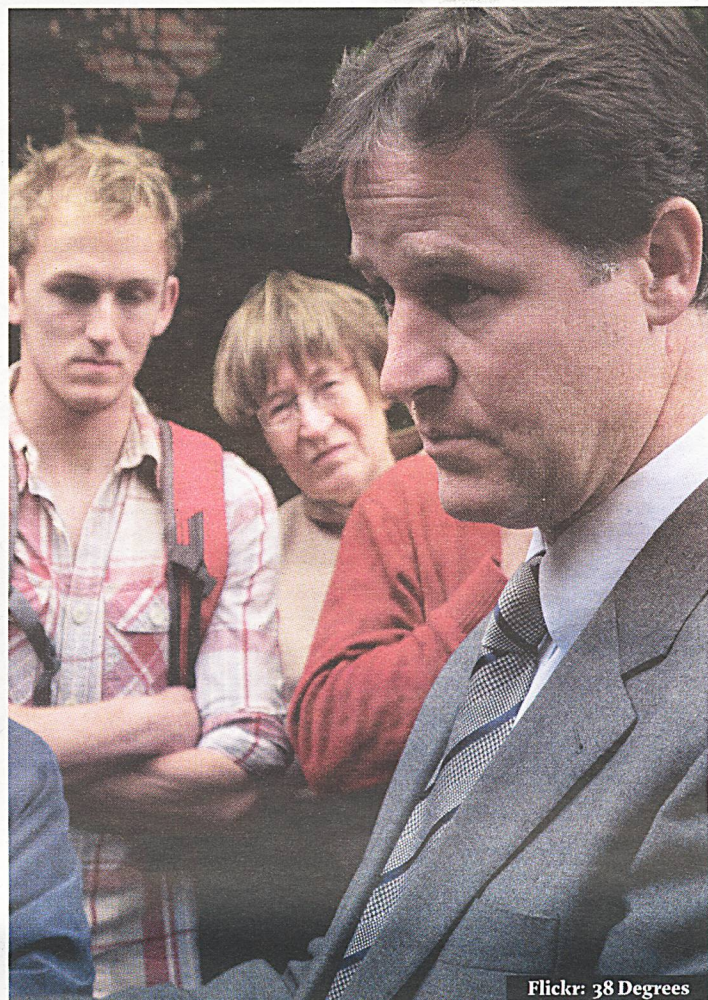
This connects to my next point and another major sticking point with Jon's article. The Labour Party is just beginning what will be a long struggle back to electability. They have chosen,

maybe unwisely, Ed Miliband to lead this charge (yes I do hear you chuckling to yourself quietly).

If Ed is to succeed he needs to define himself. He needs to stand for something, not just in the Labour Party, but for Britain. As David Miliband recently wrote about the Labour Party, "we need to clarify the kind of future we seek for Britain." I think that that vision should revolve around the very essence of what the Labour Party stands for: state involvement to improve the lives of all. Jon highlights in his article that this is very different from the Liberal Democrat political agenda which is far more, well, "liberal."

Focusing on state-led help, not in a socialist, "nationalise everything" sort of way, but as part of a progressive reform-minded manifesto will show Labour's vision of the future clearly to the voters in 2015. Muddying this vision by trying to encourage Liberal Democrats to sidle up alongside will only serve to damage Labour's policy. Just as the Conservatives pursued absolute victory before 2010 and then negotiated afterwards, so should Labour before 2015. Labour should not be thinking in counterfactuals of a hung parliament but believe in the driven aim of a Labour majority.

Jon wrote that he refuses to believe that the Lib Dems have more in common with the Conservatives than Labour. I completely agree. But I fear that Labour must continue a policy of alienation towards the Lib Dems in the face of overwhelming media and political hostility. Otherwise, in Jon's words, "certain defeat beckons once more" for Labour. ☹



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connecting students

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We look forward to hearing from you!

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

I would like to offer a supplementary response to Zachariah Sammour's article in last week's Beaver, entitled: 'Reaction to Technion'. Despite being in total agreement with Zach's rigorous application of logic, I wish to posit a much simpler argument: Why not Israel? If there is an answer to this question beyond, 'because other people are nasty too' then I welcome its elaboration. Until then, I urge the group of irate students to stop searching for some kind of universal moral equivalence, and accept that Israel carries out acts that have negative effects on innocent people, and that this constitutes a wrong that people should, and will, oppose.

Yours Sincerely,
Benedict Sarhangian

The Beaver is looking for a cartoonist!

If you want to contribute your drawings to our weekly issue, please send us an email!

The problem with Pacifism

A response to Ekaterina Daminova's article on the Stop the War coalition

Benjamin Rogers



The EU embargo of Iran's oil exports is, for many, the ominous sign of a march to war with Iran. However, in her article last week, Ekaterina Daminova explained that the embargo has started another march: the Stop the War Coalition. Once again, as in 2003, crowds have taken to the streets to protest against so-called "Western imperialism." In my opinion, it is essentially a bull market for anyone who fancies themselves as a public speaker. So long as they can fit the words "blood" and "oil" into a sentence or, failing that, make a vitriolic pronouncement against Tony Blair or George Bush, then there is plenty of applause on offer.

Daminova concluded by praising the Stop the War coalition's effort and wishing it well. However, I wish to explain why any morally responsible individual should actually be wishing them all the worst as their unrelenting brand of unconditional pacifism is not only morally bankrupt but also has a horrific historical legacy of which many seem blissfully ignorant.

George Orwell, in his tremendous essay entitled "Looking back on the Spanish Civil War," does a fantastic job of laying bare the evils of pacifism as he explains how the rise of fascism in

Europe in the 1930s brought him to the realisation that some forces, namely those of theocracy and totalitarianism, cannot be contained through compromise and tragically will only answer to force. Orwell came to this difficult and sobering decision when he went to Spain to fight against Franco. In a

"Evidently, dialogue alone is not working and we have to make the decision between continued pacifism or the upholding of international law, particularly the non-proliferation of nuclear weaponry."

similar way, Nelson Mandela realised this in the 1960s when he opposed the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Notably, Mandela and other activists turned to violent opposition after first trying to replicate the "passive resistance" practiced by Gandhi in India with disastrous and bloody consequences as, unlike the British,

the apartheid regime did not welcome peaceful negotiations. Even though it is preferable to armed conflict, these events provide an important example of how pacifism is not universally applicable. If it is taken as an unconditional stance, pacifism can lead to greater bloodshed and misery than active opposition. One can only imagine the consequences if Gandhi got his wish in 1942 and the British had left India to oppose a Japanese invasion with "passive resistance," which was Gandhi's expressed desire.

So, coming back to the point in question, we have to recognise that Iran, despite signing agreements with the European Union, the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), has broken every promise it has made in its continual pursuit of nuclear weapons. UN inspector Yukiya Amano is fast showing us that all of Iran's pledges are worth less than the paper that they are written on.

Evidently, dialogue alone is not working and we have to make the decision between continued pacifism or the upholding of international law, particularly the non-proliferation of nuclear weaponry. If this decision is not already a no-brainer then one should also consider Iran's continual backing and arming of terrorist movements in Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Afghanistan which is bound to increase if Iran acquires nuclear weapons. There does not seem to be much talk about a coalition to oppose these acts of war.

Now we must move on to tackle

the inane and glib accusations made by members of the anti-war movement about "Western imperialism" and its thirst for oil. If the West is an oil-craving monster then why on earth is it putting an oil embargo on Iran, consequently endangering its own economic recovery? Furthermore, if the West is only led by its lust for oil then it would have been on the side of Gaddafi, who provided a steady supply of cheap oil, in the Libyan civil war instead of supporting Libya's uncertain and potentially volatile ongoing push for democracy. Clearly there are more concerns at play in Western foreign policy than just black gold.

I believe that a striking and frightening parallel can be drawn between the Stop the War Coalition and the American anti-war movement of the Second World War which, right up until 1945, believed that fighting Nazism was none of America's business and that the war was only fought in the interests of big corporations. Going back to Orwell, the fatuous figure that is Michael Moore has drawn inspiration from 1984 when describing the war on terror as a classic example of an endless war waged for political expediency. However, surely the most interesting insight that can be drawn from Orwell's masterpiece is that the anti-war movement seems to have grasped the power to mask incoherence as it continues to fight its own endless war against the USA.

Next time they go on a march, let's hope it rains. ☘

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Big government is still the answer

Samira responds to Nicolas Bas' criticism and discusses concern for the very poor

Samira Lindner



The US Republican presidential race continues to be one tragically entertaining roller coaster. Recently, aspiring Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney made negative headlines. In an interview following his Florida primary win, he expressed a surprisingly direct lack of concern for the very poor.

This is quite appalling when, according to the Chicago Sun Times, one in three Americans is in poverty and more than seventeen million children live in a household that is "food insecure." The poor in the US are facing foreclosure, unemployment, lack of healthcare and an inability to afford college.

Cynically, we can argue that Mitt Romney's statement is justified. Statistically, the poor are less likely to vote or give campaign donations so there is no strategic reason for politicians to make them an utmost concern. However, morally, socially, and economically, we know that neglecting a large part of the population is wrong.

Mitt Romney and his fellow candidate Newt Gingrich are proposing to increase the slashing of the already tattered social safety net in the US through cutting pro-poor programs such as schools in poor neighborhoods, prenatal care for mothers, college grants for poor youths, affordable housing, etc. This is a cause for major concern.

Mitt Romney's own background serves as an interesting counterpart to his statement on the very poor. Born into an affluent family, he worked for many years in the private sector. In the 1980s, he co-founded the private equity investment firm Bain Capital, which has invested in a vast number of companies and become hugely profit-

"Not only did this person's article veer off into unrelated tangents, it seemed hastily researched and gave the impression of being a personal rampage of someone unable to respect another's viewpoint."

able. The way this profit is acquired, however, is questionable.

For example, Bain Capital borrowed \$30 million in order to acquire the struggling medical company Dade International. Bain Capital then led Dade International's file for bankruptcy and sacking of thousands of people, making a profit of \$345 million in the process. This sort of commonly-prac-

ticed and tolerated vulture capitalism is not exactly what Adam Smith had in mind. We see here that the capitalist system has been rigged by corporate interests. The goal is clearly not personal freedom, in the case of the poor, or a free market with fair competition but a system distorted to favour the few.

Now, let us contrast this with the sort of capitalism we find in a social democratic state like Germany. When you ask most Germans, they will agree that there is a predominant acceptance of a specific role government is to play in both society and the economy. While we may complain about bureaucracy, high taxes and specific government policies, we are also aware of the fact that a big government is necessary. Let me clarify what I mean by "big government." I mean a government that is involved in the socio-economic foundation of its country in order to protect it from the excesses of the free market.

Of course, this approach is not just a figment of my imagination. In fact, this is the basis of what is called the Sozialmarktwirtschaft (for those not fluent in German: social market economy), a concept made popular by the famous Ludwig Erhard who was also responsible for the German post Second World War Wirtschaftswunder (economic miracle).

The purpose of the social market economy is to find a path between socialism and free-market economic liberalism, a so-called "mixed economy." It combines the private sector with government regulation in order to maintain competition, economic growth, high employment, acceptable working conditions, public services and, of course, social welfare.

This concept deliberately distinguishes itself from socialism. It criticizes state-directed economic activity and instead embraces the forces of capitalism.

The social market economy is the backbone of contemporary social democracy and enjoys general political support by mainstream parties in Germany. There have been attempts in the past to reduce social welfare, which have led to an increase in economic inequality (e.g. the Agenda 2010 proposed by former Chancellor and Social Democratic Party head Gerhard Schröder). Nevertheless, Germany continues to hold on to its social market economy as it not only helps create economic growth (by maintaining a fair playing field) but also supports all members of society, even the very poor.

In a way, this system is more "liberal" than the supposedly liberal structure in the US; there is nothing "free" about a system hijacked by corporate interests that allows high unemployment rates and shocking levels of poverty. A social democratic system improves a state's capacity to prevent and diminish the impact of economic crises by protecting citizens and providing stability to markets.

The purpose of this contrast is to respond to an article that I wrote a few weeks ago entitled "Big Government is Good." It was a comment on a recent proposal by President Obama to shrink the federal government in which I argued that, while bureaucratic efficiency is important, we should not give up our belief in the positive potential of a strong and extensive government.

One reader seemed to take my article as a personal offence to his "classical liberal/libertarian" core. This person had a very peculiar interpreta-

tion of my article and seemed to think that I am a fervent anti-capitalist, Leviathan-loving socialist.

Not only did this person's article veer off into unrelated tangents, it also seemed hastily researched and gave the impression of being a personal rampage of someone unable to respect another's viewpoint. Being lumped into some stigmatised and inaccurately generalised group of "socialists and social democrats" and carelessly addressed with "Miss" was not exactly the sort of journalism I expect to read in the Beaver.

The Comment section of the Beaver is a place where people respectfully exchange their ideas, understandings and views in concise, audience-appropriate pieces. The Beaver is not an academic journal where dense topics can be extensively and abstractly discussed. The Beaver is also not a blog or an outlet for frustrations and personal grievances. I am more than happy to hear another person's take on the matter. However, being accused of ignorance, naivety or just plain stupidity is not something I will stand for.

I would like to rest the matter here. I don't believe there is much room for a fruitful and engaging debate. Instead, perhaps I can end on two notes that both of us will probably agree on. Firstly, any government, be it small or big, must be efficient and effective, which is why reform is necessary. Secondly, the sort of capitalism driven and carried out in the US is a perversion of classical liberal capitalism as it is captured by private interests that seek to make it an uneven playing field in their advantage. ☘



Yayoi Kusama | Absent Friends | Laura | World Food: France |
The 2 Bears | Hustle | Collars | Oscar Wilde | Private B

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* * *

Cover

Untitled, 2011

By Vanessa Woo of the LSESU Visual Arts Society

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After a hard week hustling

So it's a Friday night. You've had a busy week, and if like me, you are not out drinking your body weight in alcohol, you might just be at home watching television. Now if you are like me (sadly), you'll be looking for something that isn't too serious, not too heavy or too depressing. Something light, but not too vacuous. Well, there's a programme that fills that slot perfectly. Something between the realms of a serial drama and a comedy, with a plot that'll keep you entertained, but that won't require rapt attention to detail.

It's called *Hustle*. For the last few weeks we've been treated more brilliant episodes, but sadly this has been declared the final series. For those who aren't in the know, *Hustle* has been running annually since 2004 and has quietly accumulated a strong fanbase. It revolves around a group of con artists in London, and each episode is effectively a stand-alone story of a con against a particular mark. It doesn't sound very complex because it isn't. It has had the same formula for the past eight years. The cast has changed slightly with a few alterations after four or five years, but the basic premise of the show hasn't really changed at all. This is a good thing.

One of the greatest strengths of *Hustle* is its predictability. Every time you watch it, you know that they team will find a mark, work out a plan and it'll all end up well with them making lots of money. All you have to do is sit there, and enjoy finding out how they do it. Now that's the clever part. Each episode has an ingenious trick to it, something that is hard to keep up after eight series. It also has a talent for getting outstanding guest stars, in roles far and away from their usual work. This series alone has seen John Barrowman and Paterson Joseph as grotesque marks. *Hustle* also does it in style. It looks absolutely fabulous. Every week we get treated to scenes of glistening glass buildings, penthouses with views across the city and more bits of London than you can shake a stick at.

The characters all look immaculate as well. This is to be expected as they obviously earn massive piles of ludicrously earned cash. This is not an attempt to look gritty and realistic. It's just good old fashioned entertainment. The characters are flash too. Robert Vaughn brings a dash of American class to every episode and Adrian



Robert Glenister as Ash "Three Socks" Morgan, Kelly Adams as Emma Kennedy, Robert Vaughn as Albert Stroller, Adrian Lester as Mickey Bricks and Matt Di Angelo as Sean Kennedy

Lester remains cool in every situation. Robert Glenister's unbelievable character, Ash "Three Socks" Morgan, is practically a caricature of every variant of the classic Londoner. In keeping with its inoffensive appeal, these are characters that you'll enjoy watching but won't feel like you have to fathom deeply after each episode. Sure, the writers have chucked in the odd character development, but you'll have forgotten it by next week.

This is another brilliance of the show. Every week is effectively stand-alone. You can watch it in any order, so long as you vaguely know the line of that series. It also fills a nice niche in the BBC output. The only other show that's similar is *The Real Hustle*, and that wouldn't even exist without its fictional superior. Now, I must admit, I've never seen an episode of *Hustle*

twice. So I really can't comment on the replay value. This is primarily due to the fact that it's only been on TV once, and it is not so amazing that I want to buy the DVDs. But if you have never seen it before, that is not a problem. Any week you like, you can sit yourself down, shut up and enjoy.

Hustle does have a few flaws. Yes, some of the cons are a little similar. Yes, there are some tricks which appear almost completely beyond belief and there is a certain aromatic waft of TV cheese when characters break the fourth wall. But once you realise that this is just the way *Hustle* is, it actually becomes endearing. It is as if the makers of the show don't really care, they're just going to damn well do it anyway. Some of the new characters when first brought in were a bit wooden and a bit too perfect. But since they've been in,

I've practically forgotten the people they replaced.

Despite these few quibbles, it is a great shame that it is coming to an end. Perhaps it is a good thing that it will end on a high. Eight years is probably enough and *Hustle* is the sort of show that could quite easily be flogged for years. Luckily, that hasn't happened yet. It's still fresh, funny, and clever and will be on for another fortnight or so before bowing out. So when you sit down to watch the TV or iPlayer, don't feel like you have to watch another documentary or that you have to watch totally mind-numbing reality TV. There is something that will fill that gaping, shiny, heist-shaped hole in your television appetite. Be quick though, because it won't be around for long.

Laurence Atchison

TV Picks of the Week

Big Fat Gypsy Weddings

Channel 4, 21:00, Tuesdays

The only show about modern British gypsies and travellers returns with an exploration of the importance of fashion to members of the community, and the lengths they go to in order to perfect their appearance. Pineapple and palm tree-themed dresses feature at Dolores Quilligan's flamboyant wedding in Co Limerick, 16-year-old Sammy Jo takes part in a traveller-only beauty pageant and four cousins compete to have the most memorable outfit at their first Holy Communion.

Lowdown

BBC Four, 22:30, Wednesdays

Comedy following the adventures of an Australian showbiz journalist hunting for headline-grabbing celebrity scoops. In the first episode, Alex secures an interview with a major rock star - only to discover the main topic he wants to cover is something his subject has ruled out of bounds. Starring Adam Zwar, the co-creator of Wilfred, with narration by Geoffrey Rush and a guest appearance by Craig McLachlan.

Daddy Daycare

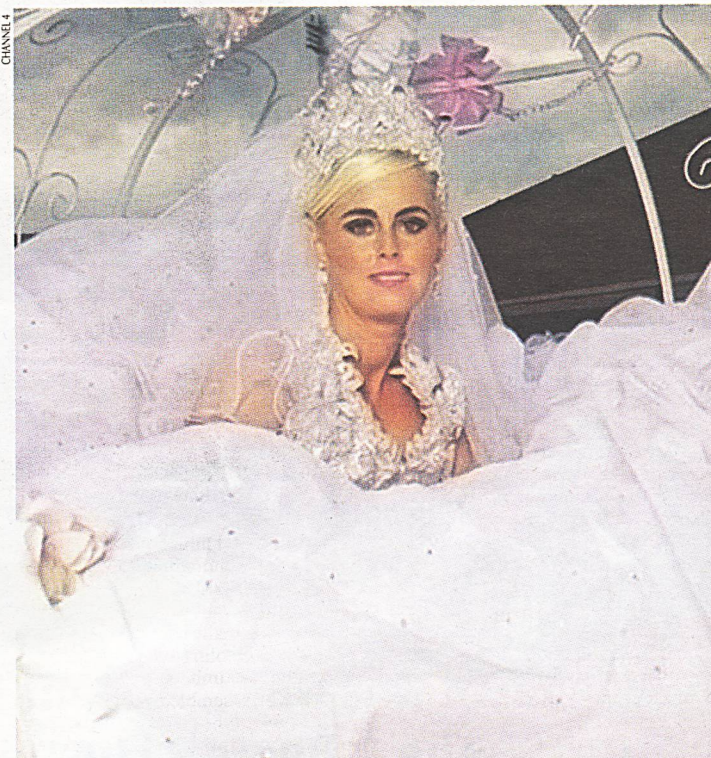
Channel 4, 21:00, Wednesdays

Nine men with limited childcare experience, who are either fathers or hope to have children soon, try to improve their skills by working in nurseries, taking on a variety of tasks such as nappy changing and supervising playtime. The first edition follows the efforts of three participants at a south London nursery - Garry, a workaholic whose wife thinks he does not have the patience to look after children, ex-military man Stefan, who takes a tough-love approach, and reluctant father-of-one Jay.

Parenthood

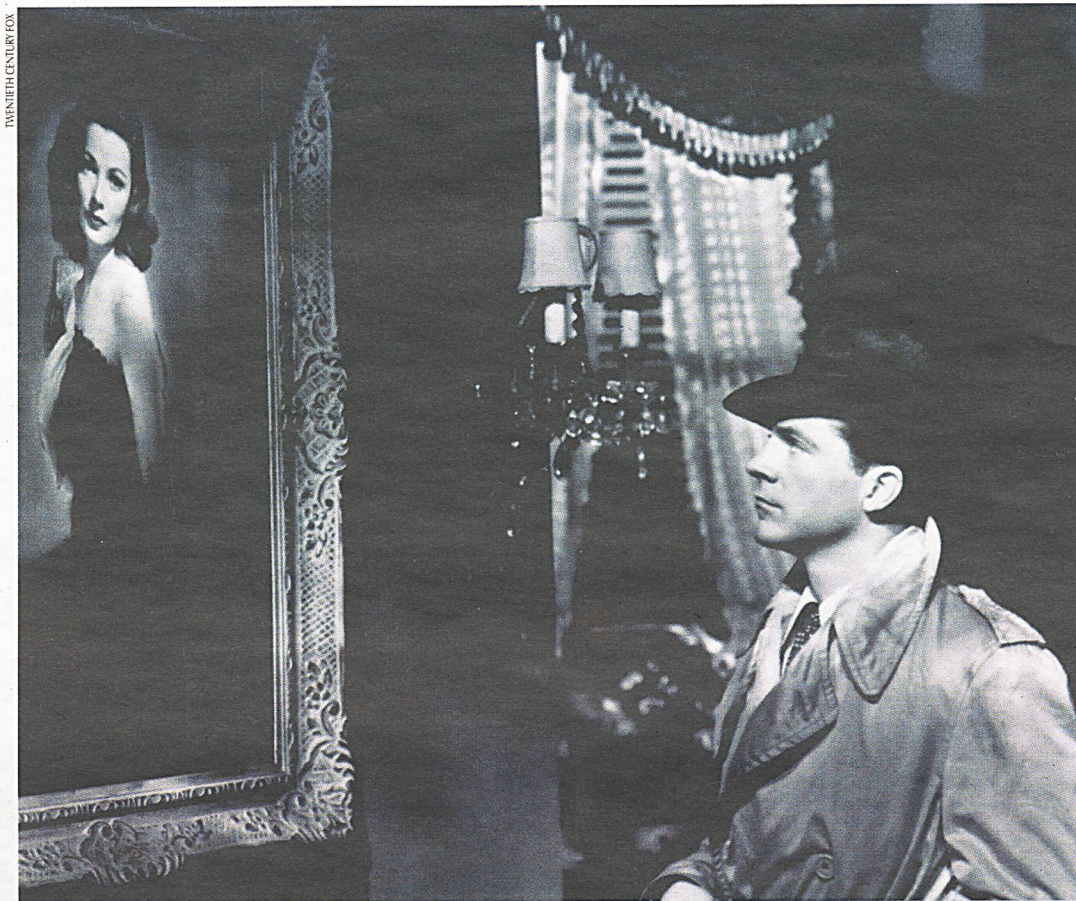
5*, 22:00, Thursdays

Camille and Zeek continue their efforts to rebuild their relationship. Adam overhears Sarah's idea for children's footwear and pitches it to his boss as his own, while Joel and Julia have trouble providing answers to Sydney's increasingly difficult questions. Comedy drama, starring Lauren Graham.



Big Fat Gypsy Weddings

Laura



Detective McPherson (Dana Andrews) looking at Laura's portrait



Director: Otto Preminger
Screenplay: Jay Dratler, Samuel Hoffenstein, Betty Reinhardt
Key cast: Gene Tierney, Dana Andrews, Clifton Webb, Vincent Price
Year: 1944
Runtime: 88 minutes
At BFI Southbank from 24 February to 23 March 2012

Before I saw this film I already knew that it was a classic. Afterwards, I see why it is considered one: this is a marvellous film.

Gene Tierney plays the eponymous Laura, whose violent death provides the catalyst for Detective Mark McPherson's (Dana Andrews) murder investigation in the world of New York high society. Laura is one of those women who only seem to exist in noir films. She is not just charming and clever and sensationally beautiful, but possesses that rare intangible and indefinite quality that makes her utterly irresistible to every man she encounters.

Despite the film's age, Laura as a character is refreshingly modern; she works for an advertising agency and uses her influence to get her future fiancé a job. Laura's life is illustrated for McPherson in suspect testimonies, but it is the stunning portrait on the wall of her apartment that truly grabs his attention. It is enough to lure him away from his professional objectivity when he is investigating her death.

The three male characters all fall for her seductive allure, and the question the film poses is simple: for which of the suspects would this passion inspire murder?

Do not let my eulogising make you think that Gene Tierney is the only reason to see this film, although it would be a more than sufficient reason. McPherson as a lead character is surprisingly unsympathetic, and it would not be unnatural to prefer one of the suspects. Waldo Lydecker (Clifton Webb) is by far more interesting: a famous newspaper columnist who has a stinging put-down and a cynical remark for every occasion. He falls for Laura and watches her choose the less brilliant, less intelligent Shelby Carpenter

(Vincent Price) in his stead. Director Otto Preminger had to fight to cast Webb because he was a stage actor and his homosexuality was not quite tolerable enough for old Hollywood. Thankfully reason prevailed because Webb – albeit helped by a razor sharp script – contributes a brilliant performance that was rightly nominated for an Oscar. I hesitate to say that he steals the scenes he is in, because that would suggest a deficit on behalf of his colleagues.

The direction is effortless, Preminger's style is never overbearing and his mise-

en-scène subtle. He recognises the ambiguities of characters, letting the camera roam impartially to allow the audience to absorb every element of the film and suspense is built without being forced. Yet, it perhaps lacks a little of the visual flair of Preminger's other noir contemporaries such as Fritz Lang and Billy Wilder. But the distinctive mood of a film noir is expertly captured in characteristic dark shadows and the famous score.

Laura was a surprise success and there is no wonder why it has become an

enduring favourite. The film is a classic in so many ways: the natural and witty writing, the array of strong performances, and the atmospheric cinematography. The dialogue is consistently good, and is sharper and more eloquent than many modern films. Vincent Price's easy charm and Webb's biting wit create compelling characters. And, of course, Gene Tierney's beauty brings Laura to life. All of these factors add up to a truly marvellous film.

└ Miles MacAllister

Events

Citizen Kane

21 and 27 Feb at BFI Southbank
 A masterpiece from a precocious Orson Welles, who made it aged just 26. Regularly voted by critics as the greatest film ever made, *Citizen Kane* is a landmark in the history of cinema.

Hadewijch

16 Feb at BFI Southbank
 A special preview of Bruno Dumont's exploration of faith and fanaticism. A novice nun is kicked out of the order due to her fervent blind faith and subsequently meets a banlieue Islamist.

Inland Empire

21 Feb at BFI Southbank
 David Lynch's last feature film to date. It is 3 hours of characteristic Lynchian surrealism. Laura Dern is an actress who realises her life is imitating art, the fictional film she is in. Jeremy Irons also stars.

The Children's Hour

21 Feb at Ritzy Picturehouse
 William Wyler's adaptation of Lillian Hellman's critically acclaimed play of the same name. Audrey Hepburn and Shirley MacLaine are best friends who face accusations of lesbianism from a malicious student of theirs. This trail-blazing film was almost censored for its homosexual implications.

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

21 Feb at Prince Charles Cinema
 Sergio Leone's conclusion to his *Man With No Name* Trilogy is the quintessential spaghetti western that immortalised Clint Eastwood's tall, dark, lone cowboy image. Ennio Morricone's score has come to epitomise western film soundtracks. Plus, the most iconic Mexican standoff in film history.

The Vagabond (Awaara)

15 and 23 Feb at BFI Southbank
 Widely regarded as one of the greatest Indian film ever made. Raj Kapoor – who also directed and produced in addition to being in the lead role – shot to stardom after the success of this classic.

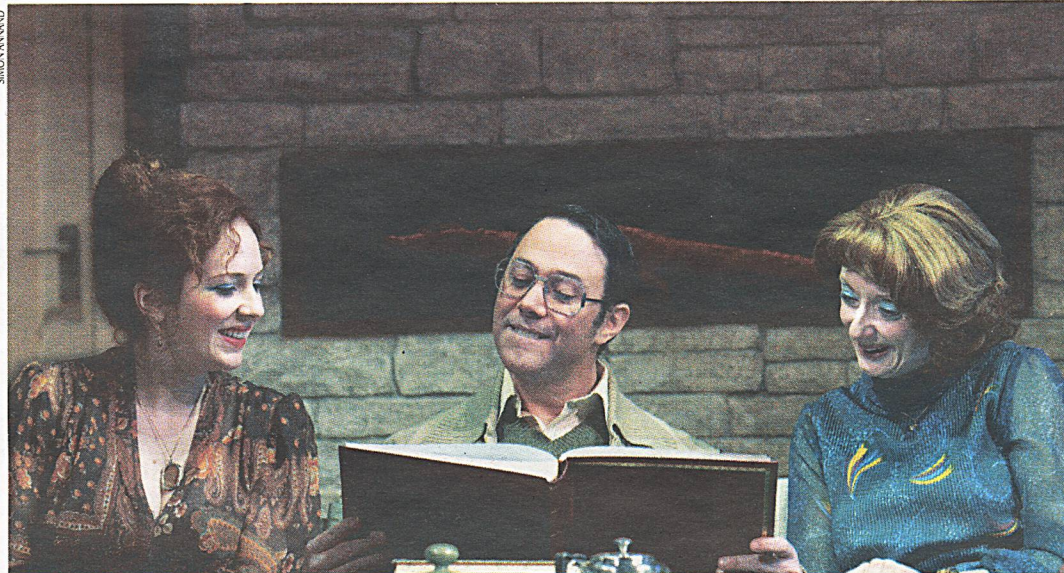
Absent Friends, Harold Pinter Theatre



Director: Jeremy Herring
Playwright: Alan Ayckbourn
Key cast: David Armand, Elizabeth Berrington, Katherine Parkinson, Steffan Rhodri, Reece Shearsmith, Kara Tointon
At Harold Pinter Theatre until 14 April 2012

Absent Friends is one of Alan Ayckbourn's lesser known works. Written in 1974, it reflects the period through the cross-gender relationships as well as the notion of the tea party itself, the event around which the piece revolves. This tea party, arranged in order to support a friend who has recently lost his fiancé, is based on a similar experience by the playwright himself. Played out in real time, it is a great commentary on our reactions to death, the bereaved and the resulting effects on relationships. We continually tread the line between tears and hysterics as the script, scattered generously with black humour and awkward silences, leads us through the hell of a social situation that each character feels obliged to endure.

Tension between our hosts, the unhappily married Diana (Katherine Parkinson) and Paul (Steffan Rhodri) is high from the outset as it becomes clear that Paul has been unfaithful with, amongst others, young mother Evelyn (Kara Tointon), another invitee who is sulkily on hand to throw in the odd remark relating to the magazine she rarely looks up from. Her fidgeting and high



Katherine Parkinson as Diana, Reece Shearsmith as Colin and Elizabeth Berrington as Marge

energy husband John (David Armand), the motherly though childless Marge (Elizabeth Berrington) who receives regular phone calls from ailing husband Gordon, and finally bereaved yet relentlessly cheery Colin (Reece Shearsmith) make up the numbers.

With all assembled, the group commence to skirt the elephant in the room until the well intentioned Diana offers apologies on behalf of all, in order to get that over with and return to usual

conversation. Unexpectedly and regretfully for all concerned, Colin almost insensitively proceeds to turn all conversation towards the topic of drowned fiancé Carol, bringing out photo albums and even suggesting that she is there with them in some spiritual sense. Such an unanticipated reaction is difficult for all, but for John in particular, who struggles even with the mention of death. The misunderstanding and misinterpretation is not one way however,

as Colin continues to make reference to past misadventures and their current relationships as though no time had passed and nothing changed since their last meeting.

Laughs come continually with the awkwardness of the situation and blackly comic moments such as when Marge, asked about the strength of her tea, promptly exclaims "Don't drown it!" and later, when discussing sickly husband Gordon, that "He ain't dead yet." The

perfectly timed silences that follow have the audience laughing before they quite realise what it is they are laughing at.

The intentional staging of the play in the era in which it was written brings out the tragedy in the female characters. Marge and Di, less so with the younger Evelyn, are women that give the feeling that they would have really been something more if they had only been born a generation later. Trapped into marriages, one with a husband who is forever ill and apparently hopeless with even the most basic of tasks, the other with a man who is unfaithful and generally quite unpleasant, the pair are simply making do, putting up with it. Ultimately it is less for the bereaved Colin that we end up feeling but for these trapped women.

The performances throughout are excellent, Katherine Parkinson portrays a gradually crumbling Diana beautifully whilst Kara Tointon as Evelyn has wonderful comic timing. The men, though generally less affable, are no less well played. David Armand in particular has a great physicality as the increasingly edgy John and this does ultimately feel like an ensemble piece.

Ayckbourn appears to be growing in popularity, what with the recent run of *Season's Greetings* at the National and now this revival of *Absent Friends* – with Katherine Parkinson appearing in both. If the standard is to remain this high, then I certainly will not be sorry for the rise.

└ Hannah Payne

Greatest Voice of All



Whitney Houston sings the National Anthem prior to Super Bowl XXV, 1991

The time is 02:12 on Saturday 12 February and I am putting together this issue of PartB. I've had the window open and it is a bitterly cold night. I want to know how far the mercury has plummeted, so I go to the BBC homepage. Whitney Houston is dead, aged 48. Causes unknown.

The plan changes. I probably won't sleep at all tonight, but as I put on my headphones and press play, (sleep) deprivation could not be more inaccurate as a description of my situation. Additionally, this paper will go to print on Valentine's Day, and while I despise the occasion only slightly less than the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice in Saudi Arabia, every love song compilation worth its salt will contain at least one of her hits.

The tributes will have poured in by the time you read this, I'm sure. They'll be far more eloquent and there'll be a greater sense of loss in most of them (I say again, the only way to respond

to *The Bodyguard* is to scoff). I know very little about Whitney the woman. I will read her Wikipedia entry only after I finish this. I don't particularly care about how she died, or how she chose to live her life.

You can get annoyed by other songstress, or dispute their appeal and the wonder of their voices, but not Whitney. Celine Dion comes to mind, less because she is comparable than because I happened to play the *Titanic* soundtrack earlier in the evening (for reasons you could not guess), taking care to avoid a certain song. While I can't say that I am a fan - too many climaxes make you sore - it is beyond dispute that the lady is talented. Likewise Mariah Carey, whom I also dislike musically, and much less, the late Amy Winehouse. They are all dwarfed by Whitney.

Hers is the voice that dwarfs all others. She was that good. For proof, listen to any cover version of "I Will Always Love You," or indeed Dolly Parton's

original (if you thought Jimi Hendrix and Johnny Cash made a cover their own...); they all seem pitiful in comparison. Listening to her is, like a voice worthy of being mentioned in the same breath that became silent in September 2007, regularly and unavoidably spine-tingling. To mesmerise like Whitney or Pavarotti takes more than vocal excellence: it takes supreme passion. They magnificently convey the music rather than relay the notes.

To conclude, I want to pre-empt (for my own part, given when you will read this) the dross that is sure to be attached to tributes. Do not call her a squandered talent. In any case, the talent was hers to squander, and hers alone. Society is not owed consistent long-term fulfilment of talent. Appreciate and seek its cultivation, yes, but do not mourn its reluctance to take the path you desire. To do so is to take a step back from appreciation, the span of which is heaven.

└ Aameer Patel

The 2 Bears – Be Strong

The 2 Bears, the side project of Hot Chip's Joe Goddard and Raf Rundell, is an homage to both gay subculture (Goddard and Rundell, who are both straight, fit the "bear" description) and to the classic house music that has influenced and inspired them. *Be Strong* is a strong collection of house and two-step anthems that sometimes oversteps its bounds into kitsch territory, but otherwise holds its own among its peers owing to its creators' obvious affection for their influences. Through its 12 tracks, the album takes stops in Chicago, Detroit and the Caribbean, and is a statement about the healing, loving and positive nature of dance music. But first and foremost it is a fun, frisky record. While still a side project, this is no off-the-cuff throwaway. You can feel the tenderness and affection put into each track.

The album begins with a bit of a bait and switch, with the sunny, Caribbean rhythms of "The Birds & The Bees," floating under a bed of xylophones,

horns and chirpy electronics. Its slow build getting more and more insistent as the track progresses. The subtlety of the track becomes a bit of a head scratcher once it fades into the brilliant triad of "Be Strong," "Bear Hug" and "Work." "Be Strong," about the healing power of music, is a glorious mash of pounding drums and whirring synths, and Goddard's deadpan baritone playing against Rundell's deep bass.

Yes, "Bear Hug" has some of the silliest lyrics I have heard in a while, but it's such an infectious slab of fun it is easy to overlook and just give into the beat. "Work" uses old school house piano rolls, disco percussion, and rising strings, all coming to a head with a Detroit techno breakdown at the end.

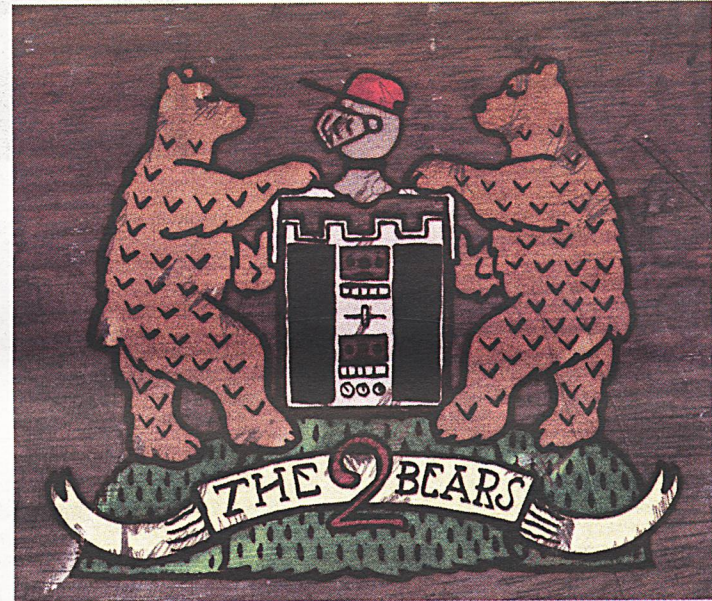
Be Strong could have been just one house track after another, bleeding into each other, and having no real pacing or variety, however, Goddard and Rundell are smart enough to structure the album more like a pop record, allowing for palate cleansers between the house

bangers, like the breezy Soul II Soul-esque "Warm & Easy," acoustic guitar driven "Time In Mind," and the reggae tinged 2-step of "Heart of the Congos."

Of course, the focus of the album is the dance floor, and it is virtually impossible to stop yourself from bobbing your head, shaking your ass, or tapping your feet to these tracks. From the driving house of "Get Together," "horn punctuated disco fury of "Ghosts & Zombies", and the throbbing pulse of "Take A Look Around," *Be Strong* gets the blood pumping and heart rate thumping.

Be Strong just made me smile. Its party-vibe is too infectious for you to otherwise. You can tell Goddard and Rundell had a blast making these tracks, and the love and care given to them is very evident. Sometimes an album doesn't have to be profound or genre-busting, it can just be a well-constructed set of songs that does what it sets out to do. *Be Strong* does this in spades.

└ Russell Beets



This week's live highlights

14 Feb: **The Twilight Sad** – Cargo

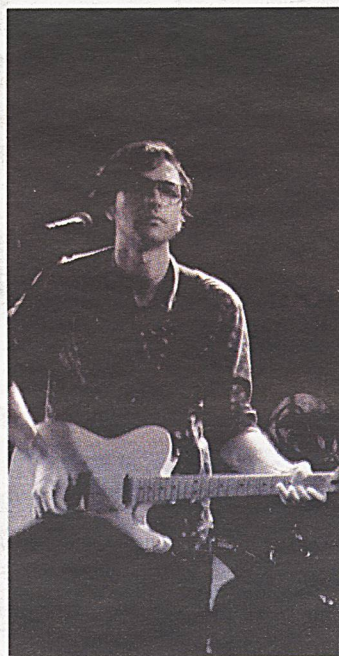
15 Feb: **tUnE-YaRds** – O2 Shepherd's Bush

16 Feb: **M83** – O2 Shepherd's Bush Empire

18 Feb: **Four Tet** – Plastic People

19 Feb: **Gangrene** – Jazz Cafe

20 Feb: **Real Estate** – Sebright Arms



Real Estate, Live at Slim's

PartBeat

The office playlist this week...

Sweat It Out

The-Dream: *Love vs. Money* (2009)

Greatest Love of All

Whitney Houston: *Whitney Houston* (1986)

Never Meant

American Football: *American Football* (1999)

Destiny (feat. Pional)

John Talabot: *fIN* (2012)

Soul Flower (Remix)

The Pharcyde: *Bizarre Ride II The Pharcyde* (1992)

Old Man

Neil Young: *Harvest Moon* (1972)



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Yayoi Kusama at Tate Modern

The 82 years of the Japanese artist's life have witnessed a relentless reinvention of style; the fourteen room show at Tate Modern chronicles the transition through the wealth of media she has worked in, from expansive canvases and photography to immersive installation.

The metamorphosis of Kusama's project is inseparable from the ordeals of her life. Since childhood she has suffered vivid, disturbing hallucinations, which have had a strong impression on her creations. The exhibition begins with a collection of watercolours on paper. The works hint at her eccentricity; they are riddled with fluorescent colours and begin to explore her trademark dotted patterns. Yet at this stage, the work seems constrained by the formal instruction Kusama received in the traditional Nihonga style of painting, a style strongly associated with Japanese nationalism at the time of the Second World War.

Such paintings are sharply contrasted with the Infinity Net paintings, which fill an entire room. The discord between the styles serves as an immediate reminder of what has been arguably Kusama's greatest strength: her ability to successfully alter her style and her medium in order to remain a benchmark for creativity through the duration of her career.

The *Infinity Net* series was painted at the beginning of her stay in the USA, in the 1950s. They represent a departure from paper and a move to expansive canvases, covered in undulating, constantly repeating strokes of the brush. Kusama's reference to infinity in the title of the series alludes to the inherent paradox that its paintings portray, they convey both solitude in the constrained space of the canvas, and infinitude in the endless repetitions of the scalloped paint.

Just as her dot patterns predated Damien Hirst by decades, so her work in New York was revolutionary in its political and sexual activism. Kusama made headlines for staging a theatrical gay wedding in New York in 1968. She organised performances and orgies that confronted the conformist male-dominated society that she existed in, and reflected her own strained relationship with her sexuality.

Drawing strongly on such themes, the *Accumulation* series occupies the



Yayoi Kusama, *The Passing Winter*, 2005

middle of the exhibition. The sculptures display objects such as tables, chairs and high heels that sprout white stuffed fabric phalluses. In the interview that Kusama gave at Tate Modern, she was asked whether she was afraid of men, and answered in the affirmative. The infinite repetitions wash away the connotations of eroticism from the stuffed forms, and their fabric construction condemns them to impotence.

The New York art world indubitably took its toll on Kusama's mental health; in 1973 she admitted herself to a psychiatric ward, and in 1977 moved herself to an open unit where she has lived ever since. Kusama commented that she painted too much, and it made her

ill. Upon re-entering her native Japan, she began from scratch once again; the reputation that she had garnered in New York did not follow her home. The work on display in the rest of the exhibition was conceived in her large studio where she works daily, located across from the unit in which she lives.

It is her installations from the 1990s that have received the most attention in Tate Modern's show, since they offer a door into the disquieting hallucinations of the artist. *I'm Here, but Nothing* is a living room pock-marked with multi-coloured fluorescent polka dots. The dizzying pattern breaks the boundaries of space and makes it impossible to focus on the humdrum objects arranged in

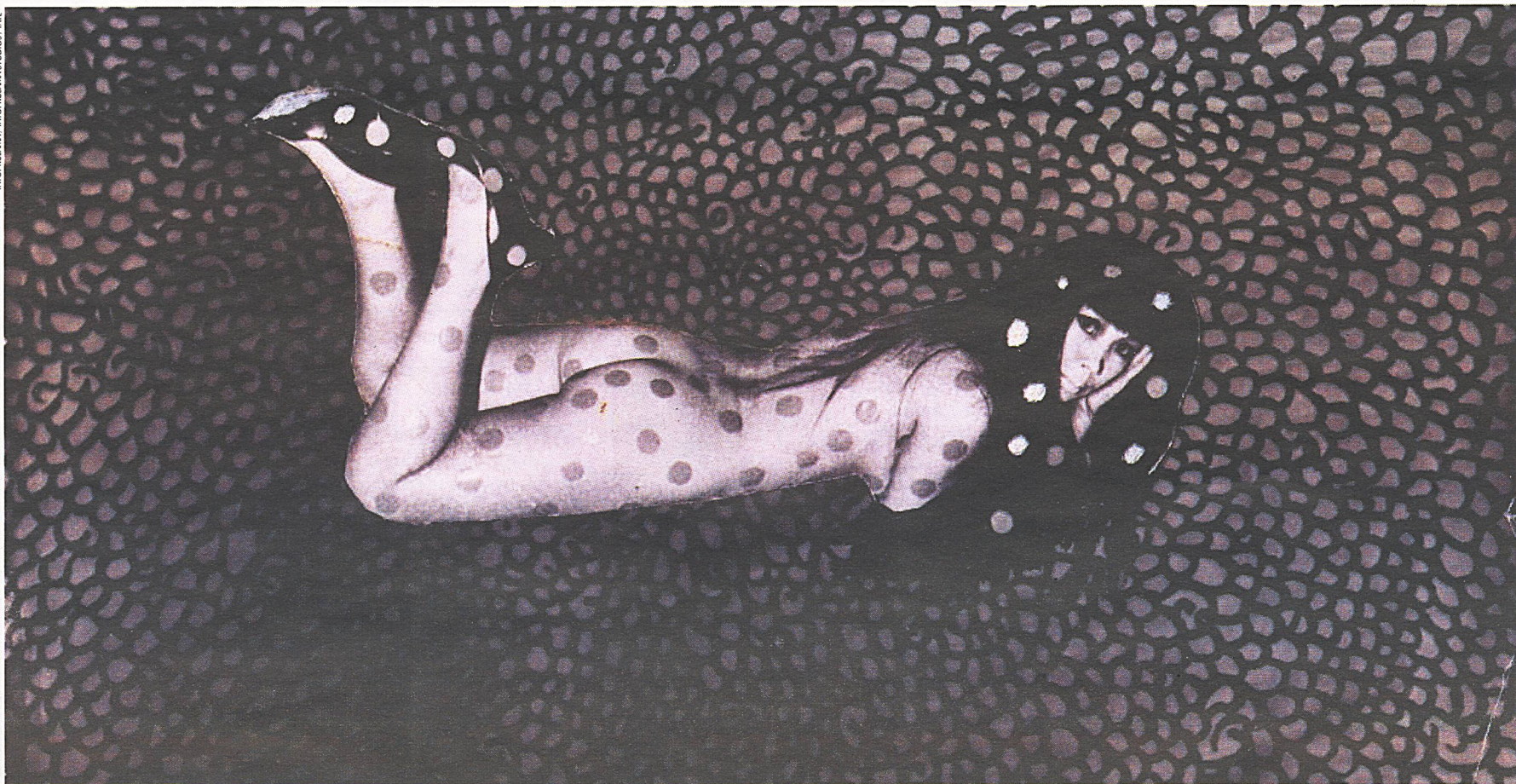
the room. It seems to comment on her conscious rejection of an ordinary life and simultaneously the impossibility of her existence within the confines of structured society due to her condition.

The climax of the retrospective is *Infinity Mirrored Room*, a dark space with lights dangling from the top, reflected by mirrors on all sides. As the lights change colour, they evoke images of the formation of the stars or galaxies. Kusama refers to the experience of her hallucinations as "self obliteration," in which the boundary between herself and the universe melts into non-existence. The room is arresting display that transforms the artist's psychotic visions into an experience of awe for its visitors.

The exhibition's curator, Frances Morris, remarked that "Kusama has been ahead of the game almost continuously in different ways," but that she hasn't achieved fame because she "never hung around at those moments, she doesn't embed herself as the key player. She never stayed in one place long enough for that accrual of status and connectivity." The exhibition celebrates Kusama's relentless commitment to change and renewal, but a retrospective of such an unprecedented scale may unwittingly serve to decelerate the process.

↳ Shyam Desai

Yayoi Kusama is at Tate Modern until 5 June 2012



Yayoi Kusama, *Self-Obliteration (Net Obsession Series)*, 1966

White Collar Status

A great number of phenomena we observe in the world today can be attributed to Alexa Chung: the popularisation of the Barbour jacket, the ubiquity of girls in denim cut-offs and the return of school-yard staples from satchels to chunky loafers. Whether you love her or hate her, there is no denying her style influence. Now there is another phenomenon we can thank her for: the collar.

Ms Chung is not the first person to wear a collar, nor will she be the last, but up until the fortuitous conspiracy between her and trendy French label Carven to turn the collar into a must-have accessory, it had been but a minor component on many a shirt, blouse, coat or dress.

This changed in 2010, when Carven brought out a detachable collar with bib, of a kind probably favoured by butlers and maître ds. However, this was all that was needed to elevate this humble accessory to rock star status. The versatility of the collar is where its hidden power lies;

the transformative effect of a white cuff around the base of the neck should never be underestimated. A sharp white collar over a slouchy jumper, a look championed by Ms Chung, immediately pulls the whole ensemble together, no matter how lazy you feel. On a tight body con dress, a peter pan collar keeps the look sweet yet modern and the contrast collar adds a playful accent to an otherwise uniform outfit.

For readers who think this a mere passing fad, consider the practicalities of the detachable collar and you'll understand why it's here to stay. The tromp l'oeil effect of a crisp shirt underneath, achieved without a crumple in sight. On a basic palette of blacks, navies and greys, a change of collar can be as good as changing an outfit and can certainly carry you from day to night and through this winter of otherwise sombre colours and high necklines. With your pick of throat ornamentation in shops now, it's time to stock up and get collaring.

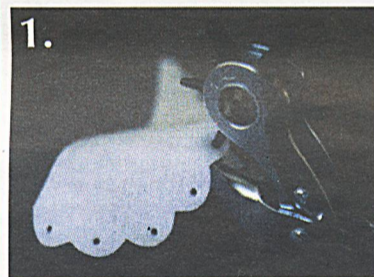


Alexa Chung showcasing a variety of collar styles

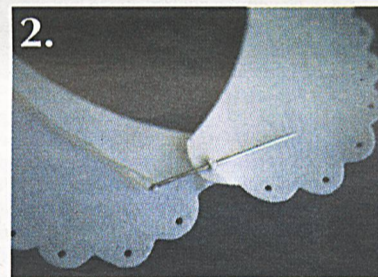
DIY: Peter Pan Collar

What you'll need:

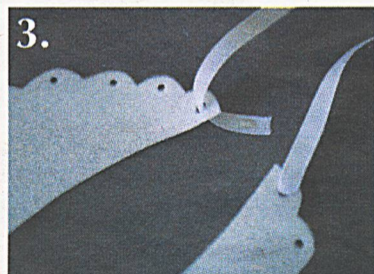
- 2 scalloped edged collar pieces cut from white felt
- A single hole punch or leather rotary hole punch
- 1 yard of white ribbon
- A needle and thread
- Hot glue gun
- A button



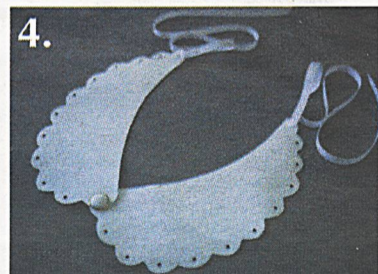
1. Cut out the two collar pieces. Create small holes between each scallop, using the hole punch.



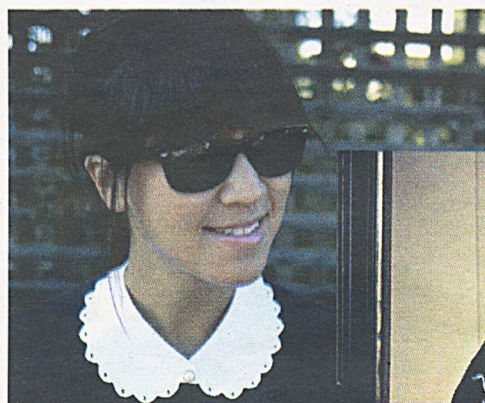
2. Overlap the two wider end pieces and push a button through the last two aligning holes. Sew the button in place from the backside.



3. Cut the ribbon into two half-yard lengths. Thread the ribbon through the last hole on the tapered end, place a drop of glue at the tip, and fold it closed.



4. Wrap the collar around your neck and tie it into a bow.



Et voila! Your Louis Vuitton-inspired collar is ready!



Louis Vuitton Autumn/Winter 2011

Tutorial and images courtesy of www.honestlywtf.com. Visit their website for more DIY tutorials.

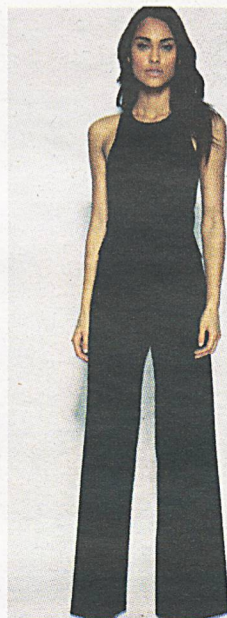
Five Ways to Rock a Collar



Carven, Spring/Summer 2012

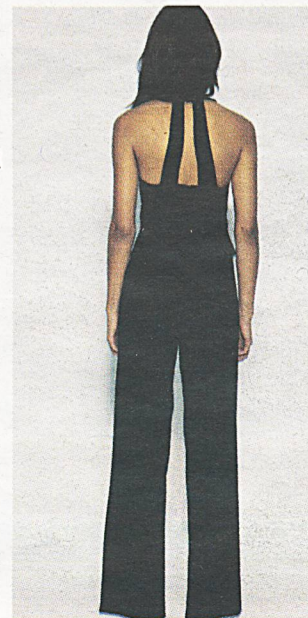
Clockwise from top left: Zara Sequined Collar, £17.99, www.zara.com; Topshop Embellished Collar, £15, www.topshop.co.uk; ASOS Swallow Collar Tips, £10, www.asos.com; COS Metal Collar Necklace, £25, www.cosstores.co.uk; Zara Peter Pan Collar, £15.99, www.zara.com

Pick of the week



Originally a wardrobe staple of parachutists and prison inmates, jumpsuits can be a tricky fashion statement to pull off. If you've got the attitude and are not afraid of the tricky bathroom arrangements, however, then stand out from the party crowd in this Yves Saint Laurent-esque jumpsuit with its sleek silhouette and sharp tailoring. Pair with some chunky gold bracelets and sky-high wedges to complete the look.

ASOS Tailored Tux Halter Wide Leg Jumpsuit, £38, www.asos.com



Campus Style

Name: Laura Randle

Programme: Criminal Justice Policy, MSc

What are you wearing right now?

My suit jacket is by a brand called Gestuz. It's a Scandinavian brand, a bit like All Saints. It's high-end high street; I think you have to go to ASOS to get it. Underneath, I'm wearing a basic Topshop top and a leather tie. The tie might actually be from Mango, a few years ago. I love leather. I wear a lot of leather. These are very battered old Topshop shoes. I like an aged look, when you wear something in. Scruffy, chic.

Tell me about your sunglasses.

They're Chanel. I got them in New York. They're a timeless sort of piece - I try to buy things that age gracefully.

How did you decide on your outfit today?

I'm going to the South London Business Awards later. I'm expecting men in business suits and I don't have a suit. So (I thought) how can I look mildly eccentric while also staying on trend.

How about your bag?

It's Anya Hindmarch. She's a British designer. I bought it in Notting Hall at a designer exchange place. I'm always one for a good deal.

Where are your favourite places to shop in London?

All Saints, the design exchange stores at Notting Hill Gate. I

also go to a lot of sample sales in Mayfair because you get a lot of things for 80 per cent off.

Your haircut is pretty unique too.

I used to do hair modelling for Toni & Guy so I had a succession of asymmetric funky haircuts. Ever since, I kept it the same. It's what I kept reverting to after they gave me very weird haircuts. I get asked if it's a wig a lot of the time, so it's a bit like a backhanded compliment.

What do you look for when you're shopping?

Finding something that's different. But I like going into shops because they have beautiful pieces, and I just like looking at them.

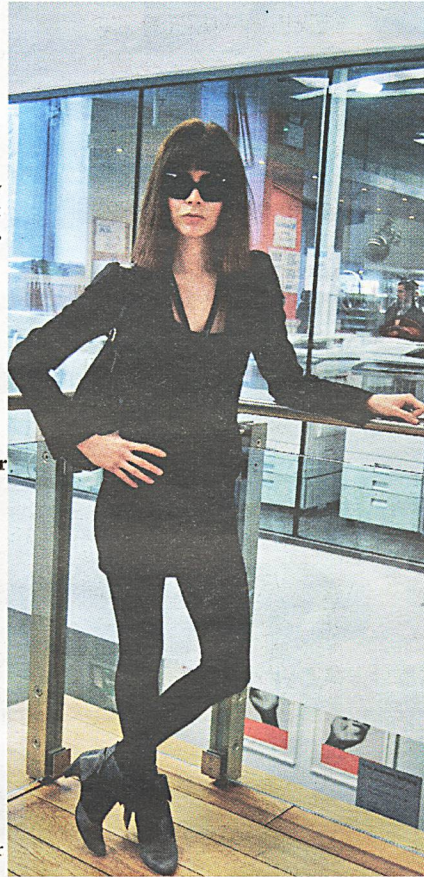
How would you describe your style?

Paying homage to a bygone era. Stylistically, harking back to the 80s and an adoration for that New Wave, New Romantics era in music.

How do you decide what to wear in the morning?

London is so hectic and exciting. It's all about what you're doing in the evening after class. If you're going to a networking event, it's better to stick with something that will take you from afternoon to evening. Mostly, I stick with smart casual.

Want to nominate someone for Campus Style?
Send details to Jennifer at J.Fong1@lse.ac.uk



World Food: France

Main Coq au Vin

While it may be slightly labour intensive, this is an amazing way to cook delicious food for a lot of people with ease. And it can all be made in advance. Serves many.

Ingredients

30 pearl onions
4 chicken thighs
½ cup all-purpose flour
6 oz slab bacon
8 oz button mushrooms
1 tablespoon butter
1 bottle pinot noir
2 tablespoons tomato paste
1 medium onion, quartered
2 stalks celery, roughly chopped
2 carrots, roughly chopped
8 sprigs fresh thyme
1 bay leaf
Salt and pepper
2 cups chicken stock

Method

1. Peel pearl onions. If it is difficult, make an X at the root of each one and then boil for 1 minute to make it easier to peel.
2. Pour your flour into a zip lock bag, and then season with salt and pepper. Put the chicken into the bag and shake until the chicken is fully coated.
3. Cook bacon until brown and crispy. Remove and set aside. Using the same pan, with the fat still inside, sauté pearl onions until light brown. Set aside.
4. Sauté mushrooms with a knob of butter. Using a fresh pan, add oil and brown your chicken. Make sure not to overfill the pan. Remember only to brown and not to cook.
5. Pour off excess fat and deglaze pan. Pour your pan sauce, tomato paste, wine, stock, onion, celery, and carrot into a deep oven proof dish.
6. Preheat oven to gas mark 5 (375°F). Place chicken in the oven for 2 to 2 and half hours, stirring occasionally until the chicken is tender and cooked.
7. Once chicken is cooked, remove it and set aside. Strain everything, keeping the liquid. Place into a saucepan and reduce until it coats a spoon.
8. Reheat chicken and then serve on top of mashed potatoes, being generous with the sauce.

This week's recipes are from France, via Max Jenkins. Despite what you might think about French cooking, both are really easy.

Dessert

Profiteroles

Surprisingly easy to knock up, with the added benefit of being very tasty. Serves many.

Ingredients

Choux pastry:
250 ml water
125 g butter
125 g plain flour
¼ teaspoon salt
4 eggs

Filling:

450 ml double cream
1 tablespoon caster sugar
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
100 g dark chocolate

Method

1. Preheat oven to gas mark 8 (450°F).
2. Boil water, melt in butter and return to boil. Add flour, salt and mix to form a ball. Remove from heat and add eggs, until smooth. Stir until smooth.
3. Drop heaped tablespoons onto baking tray, leaving a couple of inches of space between them.
4. Bake for 15 minutes at to gas mark 8 (230°F) and then reduce to gas mark 3 (325°F) and bake for a further 25 minutes. Remove from oven.
5. Carefully split and remove soft dough from the cores. Place on a wire rack and allow to cool.
6. Whip cream in a bowl to form stiff peaks. Stir in sugar and vanilla.
7. Fill profiteroles with whipped cream. Drizzle with melted dark chocolate and serve immediately.

What you don't know

Before arriving at the technical problem of how, writers are confronted with the potentially debilitating question of what. What should I write?

In *Little Women*, Louisa May Alcott articulated a response which ever since, slurs from the poetically distinguished lips of creative writing teachers or burdens the would-be writer with guilt verging on the religious: write what you know. Simply speaking, how can you describe an experience you have never had? How can an author elicit empathy, joy, despair, from his reader, without actually knowing how they feel as they relate to his work?

The creative evolution of any artist is concerned foremost with finding an identity. A set of values, and mode of expression wherein the artist finds his purpose and subsequently, reason for existence. For Picasso it was cubism, for Dali it was surrealism, for Joyce the disintegration of narrative into a stream of consciousness, for Bukowski it was cuss words, whisky and dead composers.

It isn't particularly insightful to note that identifying their art can prove fatal or immortalising for authors, and that such a weighty decision for Shakespeare, or Huxley, or Poe, should be reduced to the mere "what you know" seems like a bit of



Louisa May Alcott

a party pooper. What did they know, anyway, more than anyone else? How much more human can a human being really be, than any other?

In his essay "The Decay of Lying" Oscar Wilde sets out explicitly to attack the spread of realism in art. He argues that "The proper school to learn art is not life but art," furthermore that "life imitates art far more than art imitates life." So, the fogs of London did not exist until art revealed them to us, and Lady Gaga was just a skinny pole dancer with a weird fashion sense until art made her an idea.

Wilde is one of my favourite writers and very quotable, but it is difficult for me to accept absolutes. Where does "art" exist? If it does exist somewhere, why can't we all interact with it? If we can, why are there artists? If there are especially ordained artists, isn't it simply some sort of narrow doctrine? Doesn't it just all end up in galleries or cool underground scenes with pretentious girls and boys wearing the same alternative clothes?

Yet Wilde's conception of art is very different to the societal construct I have just illustrated. It has nothing to do with social trends or conceit. On Wilde's account, it is conceivable that any one may invent art. He writes of a nationhood of dull dreams which can be cured, not one or two stray sheep.

Nonetheless, the artist is egotistic - but this may have very little to do with "being cool." Wilde suggests that Wordsworth found in the stones and lakes he wrote of, poems he had already hidden there. Wordsworth's work did not give a voice to inanimate landscape, only materialised more of its author. While the artist may be self-obsessed, he is not necessarily obsessed by reputation. Similarly, where art is egocentric, an artist need not grasp after a universe he has no experience of.

Is this the same thing as "writing what you know?" It depends on how we define "know." Is the information my brain processes subconsciously information I know? It may be information I am compelled by, but where knowledge refers to some sort of direct,



Oscar Wilde

conscious engagement - the dreams I can't remember are not something I know. Art may not and probably should not be wholly intuitive, and Similarly I would argue that it should not be wholly emotional. Nonetheless, the idea of accessing an unknown region of ourselves does not seem like such beret-wearing absolutist talk when we accept that much of our experience is informed by information we do not explicitly know.

Yet it does seem undeniable that Wilde is referring to some sort of distinct comprehensive historical entity. He must be, if a nation of individuals could collectively seek to emulate art in the literal sense that he uses. He attests that art has "flowers no forests know of, birds that no woodland possesses." And really, where do we get ideas we have never seen or heard of?

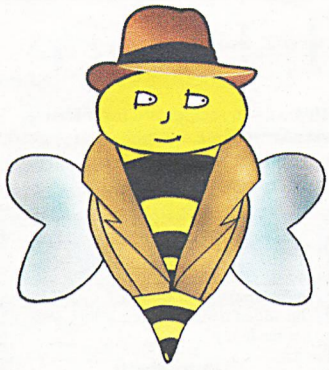
Human beings are invested with a particular ability to reassign concept properties, such that I can characterise something like a human being with properties belonging to something like an animal or building. For example, the stately queen, his voice barked, the chocolate cake was gorgeous and inviting. Therefore it is foreseeable, that underlying the most imaginative of constructs is merely an elaborate reorganisation of experience - that mermaids are just pretty girls combined with fish.

But I believe Wilde really refuses to accept that art should be based on experience, in a very meaningful way he suggests that the artist is tapping something that does not exist on earth. It may exist in our minds, but has no origin in what we know, no function, and no use.

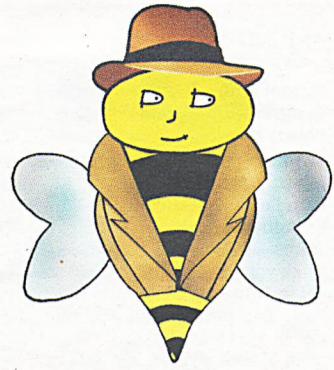
However, such metaphysical talk seems to be the rightful domain of exceptionally talented people. Ask any great author, singer, artist, indeed anyone with a "calling" in life, why they chose that route, and they are likely to refer to some vague term. Attempting to provide these romanticisms with a factual basis is precisely what Wilde deems responsible for the deterioration of art. He reveres the potency of greek tragedy, referring to a culture wherein reverence of the gods and fear of the inexplicable added salt to life and drama - when a realm of art was preserved in the universe.

Perhaps we would all be a bit less dull, and our writing a bit brighter, if we believed in these things simply for the sake of believing, rather than writing what we understand, or "know."

↳ Rachel Holmes



PRIVATE B



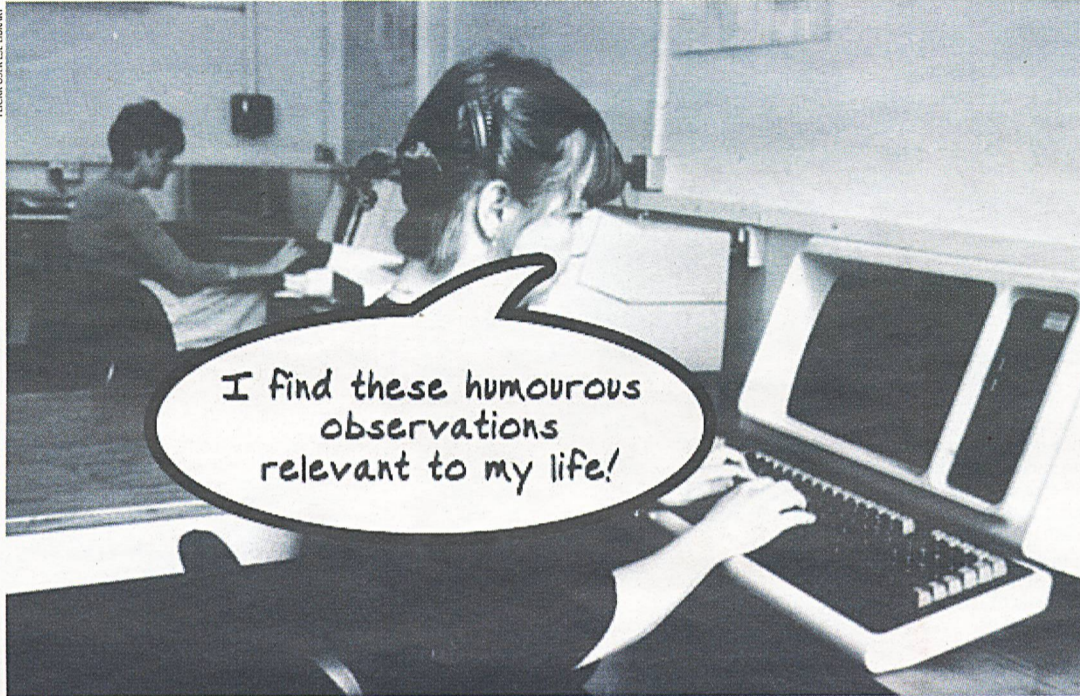
LSE Students Discover "Popular Culture"

A week excuse for a weak union

Following a double-booking of Monday, in which "Meat-Free" and "Steakholders of Financial Institutions" were erroneously prefixed, the LSE Students' Union announced that a referendum is to be held on the establishment of a new Part-Time Officer, with a remit of being in charge of days of the week.

Speaking exclusively to the B, the Pengrinandbareit and the People's Daily, General Secretary Alex Stockwell-Day stated that "the establishment of a part-time member of the Students' Union will be vital in ensuring that such a catastrophic occurrence never happens again." The General Secretary expressed her delight at the cost-effectiveness of the move, also claiming that "fundamentally, it makes a transfer of power that almost makes my own position irrelevant" prior to censuring herself.

The "Weekdays Officer" will be required to attend the Union General Meeting and give reports on various



I find these humorous observations relevant to my life!

themed days and cultural weeks. This proviso would only be invoked in the event of the Officer deciding that on any particular week that Thursdays will take

place on a different day. Conceivably, the Officer could be standing to an totally empty Old Theatre on a Saturday, something not dissimilar to current

UGM arrangements.

Despite criticism that the aforementioned arrangements could lead to mass confusion, the Students' Union has

expressed "full faith" in the School's Academic Departments to effectively inform the student population where they should be and when.

A representative from Timetables got the wrong date for a telephone interview with Arrears Petal.

The new position is to form part of a wider campaign instituted by Thrush Beret for the liberation of days and weeks from oppressive market forces. In addition to the Weekdays Officer, a second Part-Time Sabbatical position is also to be put forward in the referendum. If established, the figure would be placed in charge of the Students' Union campaigns, currently changed on a fortnightly basis.

The constitutional changes were proposed following LSESU expressions of "disappointment" on Monday with revelations that all "theme" weeks had been claimed by various societies and campaigns until 16 March 2017. The Weekdays Officer will be in charge of co-ordinating weekly campaigns so that the students can be best informed about which cause they should be caring about that particular set of five days.

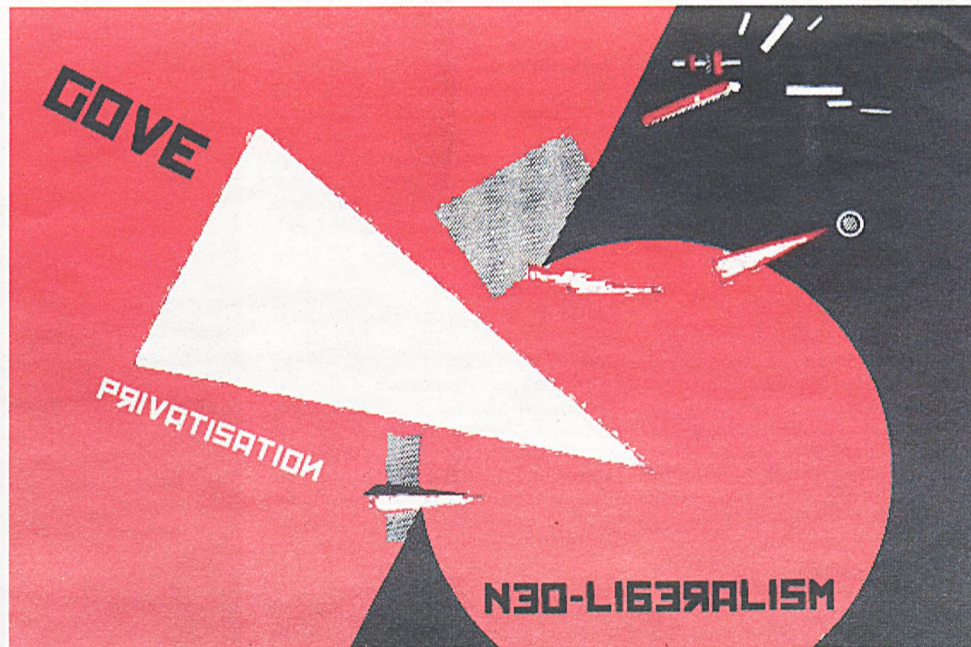
The print deadline for this edition passed as I wrote this sentence.

L Tanned Ale

From the desk of Rolex Young, Contents Editor of the Clare Market Review

Date: The Thirteenth Cycle of the Ninth Era of Presupposition
At: Anytime when everyone aside Sport can turn up
Where: The Writestag Apologies-Innumerable

- 4:00PM: Arrears Petal arrives early to hold PartB meeting by himself.
- 4:19PM: Arrears Petal covertly emails Conrad Black to advise on newspaper.
- 5:10PM: Meeting opened with Duncan McCain calling for minutes of the previous meeting.
- 5:11PM: McCain realises pointlessness of aforementioned request.
- 5:15PM: Editorial Board discussed recent events within the LSE Community worthy of being incorporated into the news agenda.
- 5:17PM: Extended period of silence broken by occasional coughing.
- 5:24PM: Lion Balm remembered seeing Finance Society stall the previous Thursday.
- 5:36PM: Weekly frontpage redesign was proposed to draw attention away from a lack of content.
- 5:41PM: Ginger Whoreby read on Flickr about a former MSc. Economist student leading a coup in The Comoros.
- 4:44PM: Collective sigh of relief.
- 5:52PM: Request from Kester the Friendly Ghost to discuss Features.
- 5:53PM: Meeting adjourned (Tuns)



That "Horrendously Right Wing" ULU Election Poster in Full...

The Union General Meeting: An Apology

In common to all members of the Students' Union, The B may have inadvertently given the impression that removing online voting would somehow contribute to a rise in political awareness on campus of major issues. Headlines such as "Bring Back Democracy", "On-time, not Online" and "Can't we Get Rid of this Vile Aberration?" may have contributed to this. Given the current state of affairs (seen below), the B wishes to disassociate itself from this stance, having now realised that the attempts by an extremist minority to hijack an agenda is nothing more than typical far-left 'Democratic' Centralism of the worst kind and that... [Cont. *Ad infinitum*]



Left: Before
Right: After

(Or the other way around)



Features

A royal descent?

Nona Buckley-Irvine questions the relevance of the monarchy



Flickr: Scazon

The biggest wedding of 2011 was watched by 24.5 million Britons. The world was watching too: New Yorkers gathered in Times Square to see Kate and William make their vows. In a Guardian/ICM poll taken earlier in 2011, 47 per cent of people classified the institution of the monarchy in Britain as an institution that unifies all Britons, in spite of their differences.

So, as the Queen celebrates her Diamond Jubilee this week, celebrat-

ing 60 years in power, it seems that the British monarchy remains as popular as ever. However, in an age where power is continually being challenged by the people, debate remains as to whether the monarchy is truly relevant. Amid what some perceive as drastic cuts in government expenditure, the Queen still receives around £30 million from the government in order to fund the maintenance of the Palace, carry out governmental duties and state visits. Some argue that this

is inappropriate in the age of austerity, and out of step with the taxpayer.

But what about the history of the monarchy? Many see it as integral to British history and the essence of "Britishness". The British monarchy has been in existence since 400AD. The period featured the English Monarchs, the Anglo-Saxon kings, the Normans, the Angevins, the Plantagenets, the Lancastrians, the Yorkists and the Tudors. Since then, Britain has been led by the Stuarts, the Hanoveri-

ans, Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and now the House of Windsor.

There is a wealth of history – the monarchy was source of a civil war when Oliver Cromwell overthrew King Charles I in the seventeenth century. Henry VIII instigated the separation of the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church. George VI, recently depicted by Colin Firth in "The King's Speech", was fundamental in leading the country during World War Two.

Nowadays the monarchy seems to be much less important in everyday life, this mainly due to the modification of the monarchy to a more constitutional role. Prior to the Glorious

"A history of wealth, privilege and immense opportunity surrounds the Royal Family, something alien to most Britons."

Revolution of 1688, the King or Queen had extensive, unrestrained political power.

Following 1688, the Bill of Rights (1689) and the Act of Settlement (1701) saw power allocated to the ruling political class and the power of the monarch becoming more and more redundant.

Fundamentally, this forms part of the reason why Brits love the monarchy. The constitutional monarchy fits in well with today's political landscape: power resides with Houses of Parliament and all the monarch has to do is represent Britain as Head of State and give Royal Assent to bills passed by Parliament.

Instead, the Queen represents Britain as a cultural figure who attracts masses of tourism. In 2010, it was estimated that the British monarchy brings in £500 million a year from tourism. Taxpayers' money represents 6% of that amount: clearly, funding the monarchy pays dividends.

It is indisputable that our monarchy contributes money towards the economy. However, there are still political issues that concern the monarchy and whether Britain should continue to fund it.

One pressure group, Republic, is campaigning for the replacement of the constitutional monarchy with a republic like Ireland. They envisage keeping parliamentary democracy and opting for a "directly elected, ceremonial head of state."

This underlines the fact that the Queen does have some powers: she has to grant Royal Assent to each piece of legislation passed by the Houses of Parliament, and has the potential to veto legislation. Republic, and other people against the monarchy, argue that the monarchy is the "key flaw in British democracy" – hence the demands for a directly elected head of state.

The power to veto, however, has not been used since the reign of Queen Anne. This very fact leads to questions on whether the constitutional powers assigned to the Queen are of particular significance.

Other issues surrounding the monarchy such as "elitism, exclusive privilege, and hereditary public office" are cited by Republic. In a day and age where people are calling for a directly elected House of Lords, it is certain that the hereditary nature of this seems outdated and undemocratic.

Privilege also surrounds the Royal Family: Prince William and Prince Harry both attended Eton College, the supreme independent boys school in the country. A history of wealth, privilege and immense opportunity surrounds the Royal Family, something alien to most Britons.

Criticism focusing on the way in which taxpayers' money is used to fund the Royal Family is not unfounded. Over £35 million is spent funding the monarchy each year, from running Buckingham Palace, to funding state visits across the globe. In the current recession, the legitimacy of this can be seen to be somewhat questionable.

Controversy has surrounded the use of taxpayers' money on one particular occasion in September 2010. The government has in place a state poverty fund which grants people from low-income households money for heating programmes, it was revealed that the Queen had attempted to use the state poverty fund to pay the heating bills of Buckingham Palace, despite having access to more than £15 million for the upkeep of the estate. Some would argue that this is a case of the Royal Family using their status and

"Interestingly, 64 per cent of people agree to calling a member of the Royal Family "Your Highness". It seems that the love for the British monarchy is as alive as ever."

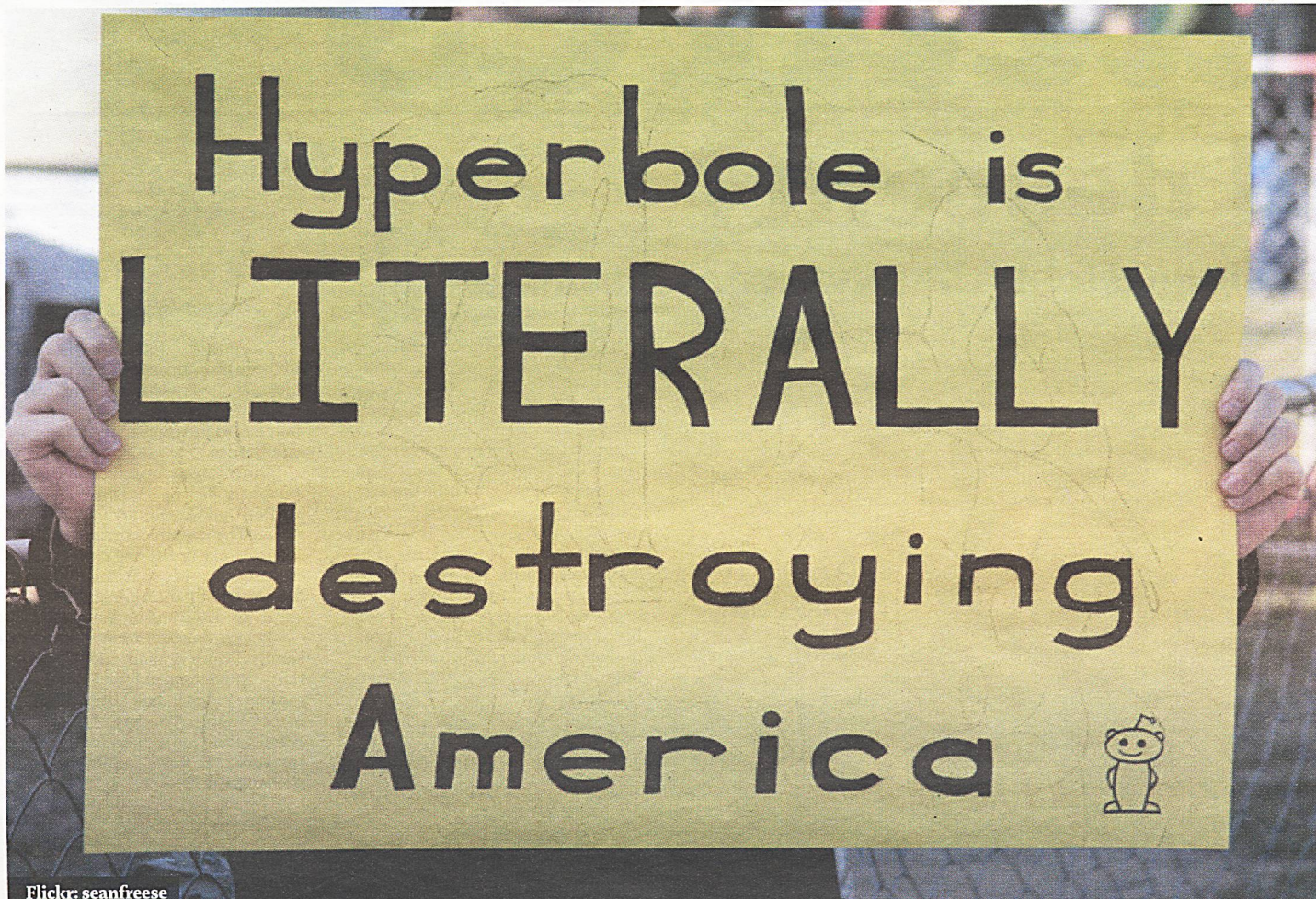
privilege to gain access to more state money.

Although Republic puts forward some compelling arguments for the demolition of the constitutional monarchy, it seems that the majority of Britons have favourable attitudes towards the monarchy. A fellow student described to me the national pride that it brings, and how it unites England. This seems to be true when 47 per cent of people polled by Guardian/ICM believe the monarchy is unifying, against 36 per cent who do not.

Interestingly, 64 per cent of people agree to calling a member of the Royal Family "Your Highness". It seems that the love for the British monarchy is as alive as ever. ☺

Hyperbole and the media

Edward Larkin examines widespread media sensationalism



Flickr: seanfreese

The magazine covers in the grocery store check-out line are a fascinating case study in capitalism. They're colourful, attractive, and eye-catching. The lifestyle magazines – GQ, Elle, Cosmopolitan, Esquire – rely on sex appeal (often to great effect), while tabloids promote tawdry sensationalism. This puts the adjacent news magazines in a tough position – they must have covers provocative enough to wrench our eyes from scantily clad members of the opposite sex onto more serious issues, like the troubles of the Eurozone or the American presidential election.

It's interesting to take a step back from each individual cover and think about how news magazines as a group make their appeal. On the face of it, these appeals are more pressing now than ever, as almost every print outfit struggles to turn a profit. The long-term outlook is bleak at best – they're pitted in competition not only with their fellows but also myriad free, up-to-date sources of information online. There thus needs to be a truly special reason to purchase a news magazine.

One salient quality of their appeal is fear. A recent "Bloomberg Businessweek" depicts a book on fire with the headline "Amazon wants to burn the book business" in thick capital letters. The latest "WIRED" features an ominous, muscular robot hand clutching a gearshift and asserts "Your next car will drive itself." The wonkish "Foreign Affairs" even feels compelled to join the fray – "Is America Over?" is splashed in large typeface on the front of the final 2011 issue. "The Economist" has had so many covers over the past year featuring one euro coins breaking, crashing, cracking, collapsing, falling, or otherwise generally deteriorating that if added up, they'd probably be enough cash to put Greece back on track.

However, the fact that magazine covers are often wildly hyperbolic is not the problem. Feeling impelled to buy a magazine must rely in no small part on the fear that if you don't read it, you're at a competitive

disadvantage. The real problem is that the actual content itself, especially opinion columns in newspapers and magazines, is similarly hyperbolic. And these columns aren't simple marketing tools; they're the raw fuel that propels our worldviews and outlook.

Consider this recent example of the "Wall Street Journal" stumbling over itself to exaggerate the impact of the "individual mandate" in President Obama's 2010 health care bill.

First, a bit of context. The individual mandate is a provision of Obamacare that seeks to reduce the number of Americans without health insurance (~50 million) by making insurance purchase obligatory. The mandate is far from a purely liberal concept – Newt Gingrich and the conservative Heritage Foundation were peddling it in the '90s, and Mitt Romney passed a state-level mandate in his Massachusetts health law in 2006 (which he presumably regrets now, but still).

Thus, the individual mandate has enjoyed a smattering of support on both sides of the aisle over the past few decades. The Wall Street Journal, however, seems to see it as a world-historical Orwellian nightmare, saying that,

"The Obama Administration's legal defense of the mandate to buy insurance or else pay a penalty is that the mere fact of being alive gives the government the right to regulate all Americans at every point in their lives."

I would say that it's unfortunate that such grotesquely overwritten, fear mongering, conspiratorial drivel makes it into one of the world's most prestigious newspapers, but writing a column about hyperbole makes me extra sensitive about making hyperbolic statements myself. So instead I invite you to read the quote again and ask yourself whether Barack Obama and his administration really think that "the mere fact of being alive" gives the government the power to "regulate all Americans at every point in their life."

My guess would be no. And I

would further say that if they make this argument in the Supreme Court case challenging the constitutionality of the mandate, Obamacare will be summarily struck down.

This isn't to diminish the importance of the major philosophical and constitutional issues surrounding the individual mandate. But this sort of fulminating outrage doesn't add anything to the debate whatsoever – it alienates liberals who favour the mandate and ossifies conservative sentiment against it. The effect is purely emotional – neither side learns anything in the process. Notice that there's no discussion whatsoever of either the purported *raison d'être* of the mandate or the actual consequences of not buying insurance (which are quite modest).

What would a more levelheaded conservative discussion sound like? Something like this:

"We as a society have made the value judgment that we will provide

"Articles that actually discuss the complexity of policy initiatives don't conform to our prejudices and reinforce our worldviews."

necessary medical care in the emergency room to all people, regardless of whether they have insurance or can pay. Hospitals understand that they're never going to get reimbursed for most of these costs, so they shift the costs to you and me – people who are already privately insured. The individual mandate requires everyone to buy insurance to avoid the 'free-rider problem' – not buying insurance but still able to get care and have

others foot the bill. We disagree with this approach because we think that the free-rider problem in health care is not important enough to violate the commerce clause of the Constitution and impinge on our freedom to voluntarily engage in private transactions."

Unfortunately, not very sexy reading. Not very sexy reading because it requires work. It requires work to digest the information, it requires work to consider an emotional reaction to that information without being supplied one, and it requires work to then reflect on that emotional reaction and ask oneself whether it's rational or not.

Articles that actually discuss the complexity of policy initiatives don't conform to our prejudices and reinforce our worldviews. Issues all of a sudden become an inconveniently muddled shade of gray rather than starkly painted black and white narratives. Health policy ceases to be the front of an exciting battle to maintain liberty and becomes the mind-numbingly dull wonkish subject that it is.

And so these columns are rarely written and even more rarely read.

But why? Most columnists are thoughtful, incredibly well-read, and graduated from elite universities. Why is their world black and white?

One reason is the beguiling power of good vs. evil stories. We all believe in them – in-group/out-group notions are evolutionarily stamped into the deepest parts of our psyche, and we define ourselves against "the other" – believers, atheists, oil companies, environmentalists, liberals, conservatives, prudes, sluts, gunners, slackers, the 1 per cent, the 99 per cent, etc.

The consequence is that we all inherently assume that other people's motivations are extremely simplistic. And this is almost always untrue. As economist Tyler Cowen said in a recent TED talk, "every time you tell yourself a good vs. evil story, you're basically lowering your IQ by 10 points."

Sit down sometime and think about how incredibly paper-thin are

the motives we typically ascribe to other people. You'll likely be surprised, as I was. Think about all the times we assume people are doing things for 2-D reasons like "greed" and "popularity," how often we assume politicians are simply "in bed with lobbyists," or "don't care about poor people." If anyone accused us of these things, we'd likely be deeply offended, because we know that our goals are much more complicated, our motivations rarely reducible to single words.

Yet somehow we never make the leap and realize that the other guy – the one who we're castigating as shallow – is obviously thinking the exact same thing.

Even the best minds are beset by underestimation of other people's motives. Paul Krugman of the "New York Times" is an excellent example. He's a Nobel Prize winning economist and a professor at Princeton. Yet the way he portrays his antagonists is startlingly superficial, endowing conservative politicians with sub-hominid level motives and bashing distinguished *lassiez-faire* economists for making "fail-an-undergrad-level-quiz errors."

Newspapers are the tip of the iceberg. The printed word is actually a remarkably unsentimental art form. If it is possible to consider any sort of media unemotionally, it should be print. Faulty assertions printed on a page can be checked and re-checked, there's no ominous music or disturbing images to reinforce the points.

TV, on the other hand, is a media ripe for deception, and it certainly doesn't suffer from want of viewers – the average American adult watches 4.5 hours a day. TV often feels no compunction about deploying the aforementioned ominous music and disturbing images to their best use in shaping opinion.

This is why I'm wary of any documentary I watch – I end up agreeing with all of them. At the end of "Inside Job" (blaming Wall Street for the financial crisis) or "Jesus Camp" (exposing the horrors of Christian fundamentalist education of children), I feel outraged, as if I've been missing some horrible truth in plain sight. In reality it probably hasn't – it has just been edited well. I always get a vague feeling that I'd feel the same way even if I watched a hypothetical "Outside Job" about how bankers are unfairly blamed for the crisis or a "Dawkins Camp" about raising children as atheists.

As we advance further into the infotainment age, it will be crucial to develop a critical awareness of our vulnerability to hyperbole in both print and (especially) visual media. In fact, TV analysis is probably as important in today's universities as textual analysis, at least in utilitarian terms. This dignifies the medium as worthy of learned study, but that's perhaps a price worth paying.

In my personal opinion, the necessity of literature looms large in helping us overcome our automatic tendencies toward solipsism. It's an outmoded art form, but it could be the antidote to papier-mâché figures in screeching columns, evocative news reports, and reality TV shows. More so than anything else, literature allows us to occupy the consciousness of another person. To let us know what and how they think – and perhaps most importantly, that they do think. Deeply. It causes us to sympathize with even the most outwardly grotesque characters – Humbert Humbert in Nabokov's "Lolita", Mersault in Camus's "The Stranger", Raskolnikov in Dostoevsky's "Crime and Punishment".

This might not be convenient or pleasing or especially fun, but it is important.

The thrills of Neuroscience

Tom Besley explores the wonders of the human brain

Consciousness is new. Estimates of behavioural modernity – that is the set of traits that distinguishes Homo Sapiens from our closest primate relatives – hover 50,000 years in our evolutionary past. In this time we have migrated from Africa, hewn ourselves from within the natural order, overpopulated the world and left a trail of lottery tickets, cod-pieces and operas in our wake. All the while, the apparatus that gave rise to our great achievements has remained shrouded in mystery. This is perhaps due to the influence of theistic religion on our thinking and certainly due to an absence of technology sophisticated enough to take on the challenge of scientifically explaining this fundamental feature of human nature. Philosophers have provided some insights in this field but arguably the greatest philosophical advances in understanding the mind have come from non-philosophers. No more is this true than in the present, as psychologists, philosophers, linguists, computer programmers and mathematicians collaborate with neuroscientists to map the body's sexiest organ: the brain.

By studying the brain, we are looking into aspects unique to the species – to our species. We might want to make a claim that we are studying universal things that we have in common with every human being that has walked the planet. I am not making this claim, but it does seem that these kinds of motivations are at play. Hippocrates long ago recognized what was at stake: “from nothing else,” he wrote, “but the brain, come joys, delights, laughter and sports, and sorrows, griefs, despondency, and lamentations.”

Having a brain enables us to create worlds and to strive for an understanding of them. Although there are plentiful examples of ingenuity displayed by organisms without a central nervous system (the caddis fly larva, for example, catches food by constructing a trap remarkably similar in design to a lobster cage) outside our species there are scarce examples of ingenuity that require an understanding of what constitutes the ingenuity of a given behaviour (the caddis fly larva need not and does not understand how the trap works, or why it is the best way to catch food).

Neuroscience is heading us towards such scientific descriptions of these intrinsically human characteristics. It is so thrilling because it imparts knowledge about the conscious, highly intelligent creatures that we all are. This understanding is very different to knowing how our DNA replicates, a bit like learning how ears keep us balanced and a lot like finding out what makes us individually happy. It provides insight into the tacit coping mechanisms that constitute our awareness of the world. Science is no longer only focusing on the objects of awareness, but on awareness itself.

Here's some science to back it up. Two recent experiments opened the way for a new understanding of the functioning of the brain, allowing us to recreate dynamic perceptions. The first experiment was reported last year at UC Berkeley in the Gallant Lab and deals with visual perception. Psychologists created an apparatus that translates brain activity in the visual cortex of subjects watching movie trailers into video collages of YouTube clips which bear a close resemblance to the original movie trailers. Researchers were thus able to watch in real time a composite video that looked like a shadowy, high contrast version of what the subject was watching.

Reconstructing dynamic perception was a big hurdle for the scientists to overcome, as previously only static images could be reliably reconstructed.

This is due to the coarse nature of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) data. fMRI takes as its unit of analysis small volumes of brain tissues called voxels, which are roughly 2.0 x 2.0 x 2.5mm. The hemodynamics of each voxel, that is the changes in blood flow, blood volume and blood oxygenation, are analysed to give an impression of brain activity. However, these processes work several orders of magnitude slower than the electrical activity of neurons. Because of this, they give a very coarse impression of the life of the brain, as analysis of the hemodynamics of one voxel effectively reduces the activity of hundreds of thousands of neurons to a single value.

To overcome this, Gallant and his team constructed a two-stage model. The first stage modelled the behaviour of thousands of individual motion-energy sensors in the brain as they respond to the shapes, edges and motion of objects in film trailers. This provided the fine-grained, dynamic neural world-to-brain mapping that is not available from fMRI. They then fed this information into a second model that describes how neural behaviour impacts on hemodynamics, which can

be read by the fMRI. This model was then used to build dictionaries that translated shapes, edges and motion in any YouTube video into fMRI data. And so, by reverse engineering the model, it was possible to watch a reconstructed image of what the subject

“It is so thrilling because it imparts knowledge about the conscious, highly intelligent creatures that we all are. individually happy.”

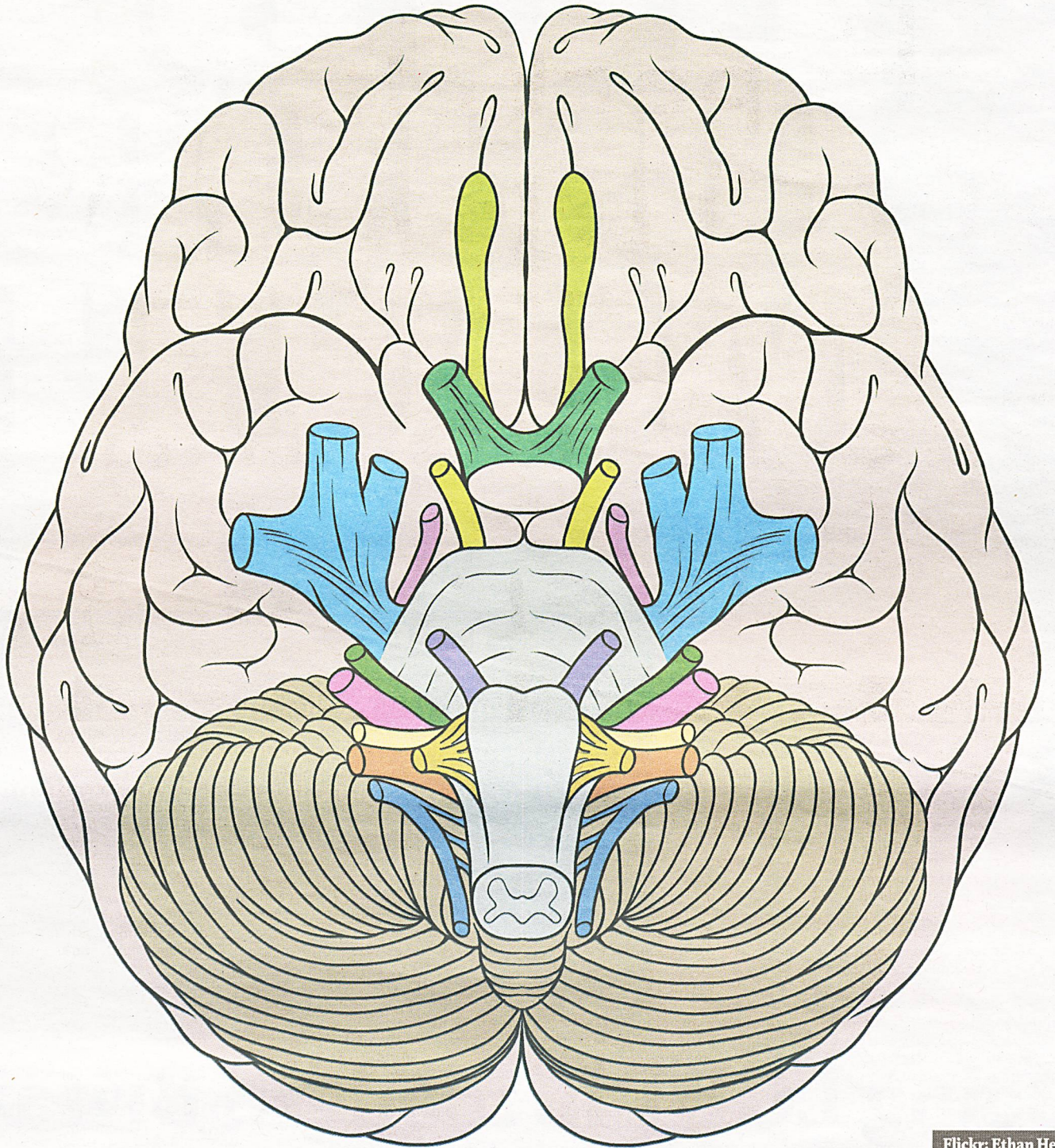
was watching by taking a feed directly from the brain.

Recently PLoS (a non-profit scientific publisher) published a paper by UC Berkeley based neuroscientists

who have successfully reconstructed continuous auditory representations of words from measured neural signals. They measured the action potential across the surface of the auditory cortex of 15 subjects as they listened to individual words being spoken. It is important to note that the subjects had all undergone invasive surgery as treatment for epilepsy, which meant researchers were able to directly gather electrical data describing the activity of neurons, instead of inferring it using the usual technique of fMRI.

This neural information was then applied to a model, the output of which was a spectrogram. This spectrogram was in turn fed to a spectrograph, an instrument that generates visual representations of sound waves and are used for example by cetologists to analyze whale calls. They have also been reversed engineered by composers like Aphex Twin to turn images (in his case a self-portrait) into music. Once the apparatus was properly calibrated, these spectrograms were accurate enough that a computer could read them and the resulting sound would be recognisable as the word originally heard by the subject.

The two above mentioned experiments gave us a new understanding of the functioning of the brain, allowing us to recreate dynamic perceptions, and the fun part is thinking about the possible applications of this kind of technology. The first thing that jumps to mind is being able to plug ourselves into a programme that reproduces our visual thoughts and dreams on a screen. We could wake up in the morning and watch the dream we just had either for entertainment or to learn about something about ourselves. There are other, less fanciful applications. For example, this kind of technology could be applied to people with locked in syndrome, or those in a vegetative state, in order to assess their brain activity and, where possible, assist them in communicating. It could also be used in brain-machine interfaces, which allow users to control machinery – everything from prosthetic limbs to music composition software – with their brain. All these applications are for the good and in general with cognitive science, there isn't much bad that can come of it. No atom bombs, no anthrax, nothing like that. So far. 🐻



Flickr: Ethan Hein

LGBT HISTORY MONTH

LGBT THROUGH THE AGES

1500s

1533 – Henry VIII passes Buggery Act making male-male sexual acts punishable by death

1700s

1791 – France becomes first European nation to decriminalize homosexual acts

18
mo

18
sex

Being LGBT in modern Britain

Benjamin Butterworth explains why LGBT history remains very relevant

This February marks the UK's seventh annual LGBT History Month, highlighting the long struggle for equality felt by lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people. It's a struggle which has been felt in every country, in every continent, by every LGBT person. And so often it's a challenge our politics makes much more difficult. The UK's LGBT History Month was founded as a celebration of the abolition of Section 28; a law which banned the "promotion" of homosexuality in schools from 1988 until 2003. And in the US it was a radical Missouri high school teacher, who insisted his students were to be educated on all the struggles of history, not just the politically palatable.

However, it is with regret that

the struggle felt by LGBT people, the world over, is not yet an issue only for the archives of history. In 2012, there are 82 nations where to engage in a homosexual act is a criminal offence. And in seven of those, it is punishable by death. The acrid reality is that we live in a world where almost half the countries have far further to go on equal rights, than has been travelled already. And it is not just the 82 nation states which have legislated that there exists chronic prejudice: for millions more in apparently liberal countries, LGBT people live on the jagged edges of their families and communities.

In Britain, we have come a long way down the path to equality. Explicit legislation preventing discrimination based on your sexual or gender orientation has made big steps

to a cultural shift. But this isn't something to be grateful about. Equal rights for people of all orientations is a basic, not a gift, and yet there are only eight countries recognised to have full equality in law. That means that in 187 countries, citizens are deprived of some of the basic expectations we hold from the state. They are, by law, unequal. If I wish to get married, I cannot. If I wish to donate blood to save a fellow citizen's life, I may not, short of one year's abstinence. If I want to go on holiday with my loved one, I have to consider that I may be breaking that country's law by engaging in a regular adult relationship.

And for many the realities of being LGBT are issues tackled whilst at university. The adjustment into adulthood can be a challenging for most people, but

being gay puts a whole new dimension into that. And because of the prejudice and discrimination which remains within our society, there too remains young LGBT people who go without opportunities and chances because of who they are. The Equality Challenge Unit found that 8 per cent of out LGBT students are either estranged from their family, or refused support from them. And that figure rises to 16 per cent for out trans students. Amongst students not open about their true sexuality and/or gender, 35 per cent fear they would be estranged from their families if they came out.

These contentious realities are not said to fear monger. In the UK there are a vast number of LGBT people who lead entirely "normal" lives: they are in the same workplaces during the

week, the same bars on a Friday night, the same trains in the morning. And many of those I have spoken to whilst LGBT Officer tell the same story: the fear and personal turmoil at hiding the truth, the careful steps to that first time they told someone, and then the enormous relief and sense of accomplishment when it's done. I haven't heard a single example of friends turning their back on someone because of which gender they fancy, or what gender they identify as. But this isn't the case through all generations, and certainly not through all of the world. It is not a problem of a single culture, religion or group, it is a problem of us all, and we must all be committed to tackling prejudice – however it manifests.

Rainbows, apples and cyanide

John Peart ponders the rise and fall of Alan Turing

Take a quick look around you the next time you're sat in the Library, the Three Tuns or anywhere filled with students in the majority of the Western world and you'll see the greatest, accidental symbol of remembrance to a single person in the history of mankind. On the back of laptops, smartphones and music players. Just a single symbol that acts as a reminder of, possibly, the greatest man that ever lived. And most of the time, that man's story goes unnoticed.

I'm talking about the logo of one of the most valuable companies in the world. Apple. Look back 20 years ago, and that logo looked very different. Rather than a shiny black or silver emblem, that image was emblazoned with a colourful rainbow. And that image, unintentionally, tells the story of the gay man that broke the code that saved the war and then broke a social code that led him to his death.

From an early age, a love of mathematics and science set Alan Turing apart from others. His teachers believed the only "proper" education was that of the classics and showed disdain for his aptitude, so much so that his headmaster wrote to his parents, stating: "I hope he will not fall between two stools. If he is to stay at public school, he must aim at becoming

educated. If he is to be solely a 'Scientific Specialist', he is wasting his time at a public school." Undeterred, he continued to pursue the field, eventually studying at King's College, Cambridge, graduating with first-class honours in Mathematics, going on to become a fellow and obtain his PhD from Princeton University.

Turing is considered the father of modern computing. His work, which mostly centered around hypothetical models, explained the functioning and the limits of computer algorithms. His work is so influential that the terms "Turing equivalent" and "Turing compatible" are still used today as a benchmark of technology development.

Turing is also considered the father of "Machine Intelligence" as we know it. He was the first to develop the theory that computers were - like humans - capable of absorbing information and thus, capable of learning. He theorized that this learning process could be the foundation of a computer's ability to converse with humans and become sentient. At that point, he even considered that turning off the machine would be equivalent to murder. Today, Turing's theories of Machine Intelligence are still being played out and, to this day, no one has been able to match his conditions.

But Turing's formal academic

achievements were just the beginning of the story. During the early part of the war, the Nazis developed a machine that could be used to encode transmissions to their army and naval forces, the Enigma Machine. This machine, originally developed before the war in order to keep business transactions secure as globalisation began to take hold, was being used to send messages to German naval submarines in order to strangle the supply shipments to the UK and other Allied nations. Turing and a team of academics at the British military's most secret base, Bletchley Park, were instrumental in cracking the code and using the Enigma machine against the Nazis.

Whilst this feat doesn't sound very impressive - after all, many people cracked codes in the war - consider the scale of the problem a little more closely. The Enigma Machine wasn't just any cypher-encryption machine; any message could be encrypted (and subsequently decrypted) using only one of over 150,000,000,000,000,000,000 (150 million million million) different set ups and the exact set-up was changed every 24 hours. The Enigma Code was so complex to break, that you could give the enemy a working Enigma Machine and they still couldn't figure out the code fast enough - or so the

Nazis thought.

Turing and the team at Bletchley Park never discovered how to break the Enigma Code - the process had already been discovered by Polish academics some years before. Their contribution was to speed up the process. Deciphering Enigma messages was taking weeks and, in many cases, the Allies would be far too late to defend against any plans the Germans sent across the airwaves. It was Turing's mathematical genius and subtle flaws in the Enigma system, that led to the development of the Bombe machine. A process that took human code-breakers weeks now took a matter of hours. Countless lives were saved over the course of the rest of the war.

Alan Turing was one of the most forward thinking men of the last 100 years. He was trusted by governments, admired by Winston Churchill and owed a great debt. But for all his achievements, he was shunned by the people that put him on a pedestal because he broke what was, at the time, an unbreakable social code by being gay.

In 1952, Turing was robbed. During the investigation, details of his homosexuality became known to the authorities and Turing was charged for Gross Indecency under Section 11 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act

of 1885. His security clearance was revoked, he was fired from his position at the Government's Communications Headquarters in Bletchley and he was laid to waste by the country that he had worked to save during the war.

As part of his sentencing, Turing was given the choice between a prison sentence or chemical castration through oestrogen injections - the 1950s equivalent of a "cure" for homosexuality that reduced the libido; he opted for the latter.

Two years later, on 8th June 1954, Turing was found dead in his apartment by his cleaner. The post-mortem examination confirmed that he had died from cyanide poisoning. Beside his body lay a half-eaten apple. Whilst this apple was never actually tested, it's believed that this was the mechanism by which he administered the lethal dose.

Alan Turing soared so very high and then fell further than he should ever have been allowed. We owe him a great debt for his work, and his story reminds us of the great debt we owe the LGBT community for their contribution to society. We owe it to his memory to never again persecute someone based on their sexuality. ☹

1800s

– Last execution for homosexual acts in Great Britain

– England's first homosexual rights group founded

1900s

1933 – Nazi Germany sends all known homosexuals to concentration camps

1967 – Homosexual acts legalised in England and Wales

1984 – Labour MP Chris Smith becomes UK's first open gay MP

2000s

2004 – Civil Partnerships Act passed

2005 – Gay and lesbian adults gain right to adopt

Think before you speak

Benjamin Butterworth discusses the danger of misusing the word "gay"

"That's gay!" This is the call heard in school playgrounds up and down the country. And up and down many other Western nations. Kids from New York to Newport will squeal with childhood innocence how "gay" an error is; how, because another kid got something wrong or didn't know the answer to a question, they are now thoroughly "gay". It is a word used with such propensity that it can hardly fathom definition by the end of a school day. Failing that test was gay. Your rubber is gay. That's a gay pencil case. And your mum is definitely gay.

But these are not a newly enlightened generation of children eager to contemplate sexual and gender labeling in a post-liberal age. And I don't think they are contemplating an emerging redefinition of the family to

acknowledge that one's mother could, in fact, be a homosexual. No. They are regular kids illustrating, in their own murky and trifled ways, much wider held attitudes within our society. Attitudes which do not propose to be nearly as tolerant or open-minded as we might want to think.

The problem of children using the term 'gay' as an insult is a big problem, but not a new problem. It has been well established in the past decade or so, and though laws and regulations around sexual orientation have changed a great deal in that time, small indicators like children's language can give away considerable social undercurrents. Undercurrents which because, by their very nature, they do not surface in any fist-in-mouth, obtuse way, we can easily dismiss not to be problems at all.

The term in question was, of course, once an expression of merri-

ment. I recall being on work placement in a Cheshire primary school during my GCSEs, and informing a child there that they were not to scream "gay!" across the playground. The child replied with a gleeful twinkle that their use of the term "gay" was not offensive, for it in fact means "happy". The proud child may have thought they'd got one over on me, but what this really gave away was that the child knew, truthfully, what the term meant. And yet they made no effort to dispel using it. They felt it fully acceptable and ordinary playground language. And classroom language, for that matter.

The problem was that no adult had told them to stop using it. As a society we accept words like this being hurled around; either because we don't want to cause a fuss, or because we don't think it really matters. But the truth is that for many young people who are LGBT, the use of terms like "gay" in

such a incessant and casual way can come to cause serious insecurities. At a time in life when fitting in is a daily struggle, coming to terms with the fact you may be different - in such a fundamental, personal way - can be a real struggle. The last thing young people need is their difference being flaunted as a label for every misdemeanor.

What tolerating this abuse of language entrenches is a subtle acceptance that being different - being gay - is wrong. It becomes manifested in our casual language choices, and those who have never much had to think about sexual orientations use words like "gay" or "faggot," amongst a long list of profanities, without thought for what offence they can cause.

As adults, we need to take responsibility for the attitudes we espouse. It is crucial teachers, schools and those in positions of responsibility (not least parents themselves) do not let these

issues through the net. Schools need strong anti-bullying policies - which make explicit reference to dealing with sexual and gender orientation discrimination on all levels, in all circumstances. We are born homosexual, we learn homophobia.

In this, the UK's seventh annual LGBT History Month of February, we should recognize the great leaps forward which have been made along the path to equality. But with the same recognition, we must not mislead ourselves to think that the end goal has been achieved. Shaping our schools to be more tolerant and open minded is key to producing a generation without prejudice. So that, one day, the struggle for LGBT equality really will be a topic of history. ☹

Hare Krishna: food for all

Emanuela Russo interviews Rakshana Das



Flickr: Mayapur

While I was lining up to get some free food, I wondered: what makes this man stand outside in the cold to give free food to students like me?

On Wednesday 8th February, I interviewed Radik (or Rakshana Das, which is his Hare Krishna name), the man who serves free food on campus each week. His responses have been paraphrased.

When did you start coming here to serve the food?

I started in 2004 at SOAS. After three years I found more volunteers so they went to SOAS and I looked for a university close by and that's how I came here. I have been at the LSE since 2007.

Does the university know that you are providing this service? Have you come to a special agreement?

Interesting you would ask that because when I started at SOAS, some people were against my service. I had some problem with local restaurants. For two years security tried to move me out of the campus. Then some people from the Students' Union defended me in a newspaper article, and I managed to stay and continue the service.

How long does it take you to do all this (prepare food, set up stall, get here)? What's your typical day like?

We start cooking the food at 7am. Then I get here at about 12pm. I stay until around 1.30pm (depending on when the food finishes). And then, of course, I have to come back and someone will take care of the pots. I love serving everyday and I like the company. Sometimes students even come to help us. We prepare around 900 portions that go to 2 university and 3 homeless shelters.

The food's journey is even longer. It is produced in Africa and companies ship it here. However, if the food's best-before date is in less than a week, the UK supermarkets do not accept it because they wouldn't be able to sell it on time. Therefore, we take this still good food and we give it to both homeless and students. Otherwise this healthy, wonderful food would be thrown away.

I love coming here. It shows that even though I am vegetarian, I can be strong and carry all this food by cycling here.

If you spend all this time doing this service for us, how do you support yourself? Do you work at night...or is this service paid?

No, I am volunteering. I don't get paid for this. I don't need to have a job. I do different projects to support

myself. I used to live at Hare Krishna temple. They showed me how to live simply. Now I don't need much for my expenses. My life is not all about "money, money, money!". I love to come and do something that is helpful for the people. I don't like to work for somebody who tells me what to do. In charity, we are working like friends.

Can you talk about more about Hare Krishna?

To be honest, I am not a religious person but I follow Hare Krishna's style of life and I like it. I've always wanted to know more than what scientists can tell me. We have sessions at Hare Krishna and we then discuss and pass this knowledge from generation to generation.

Do you want to spark a certain kind of thought or a certain kind of action? If so, what kind of actions would you like to promote by doing this? (ex. your religion, being vegetarian or do you want to prove that money is not everything?)

My goal is to be happy. I do it because it makes me happy. The people at Hare Krishna don't force me. They say God is merciful, so even if I don't do it, they tell me He wouldn't send me to hell. But I do encourage people to become vegetarian. We have to stop killing animals, Karma is coming back for us with diseases and war.

People who are vegetarian have very good health, less risk of heart disease and the like. By eating a killed animal, I believe this violence will be within you - it's bad energy.

What if people eat lunch here but then have dinner at home and they eat meat? Do you feel like your work doesn't have much of an impact?

True, that could happen, but at least I know that the students that get food here are not paying for the killing of the animals. We are still saving animals. I do around 300 plates a day so I know I've stopped students from consuming 300 portions of meat products.

Do you sometime feel unmotivated to come (ex. It is very cold outside or you feel exploited by students, like they are taking advantage of this) or do you always feel encouraged to come?

Well, after the holidays it's always hard to come back! But then I get the hang of it again and I feel alright. I might feel unmotivated sometimes when I cycle with all this heavy food behind me, but when I arrive and I see the smile on students' faces, I understand it's worth it. People here are so nice. I think if even one person here says "thank you, please come again next time" and 299 despise me and reject me, I'd still come. Some homeless people have had hard lives, and they sometimes treat you badly. But here it's so easy.

What if the chickens and cows are in a free-range farm, and they just die (not because they are killed)? Would you eat their meat then?

No. I think meat is testing us. But to have dead animals inside you; to me it's wrong. After being vegetarian for 20 years, eating an animal would be the same as eating a human being. There are many healthy alternatives to meat, I'd rather be vegetarian. For the enjoyment of the taste of meat there is violence and suffering. As Paul McCartney says "If slaughterhouses had glass walls, everyone would be a vegetarian."

I saw a Youtube video where they prank people in a supermarket. They have a stall that gives free samples of sausage. On the table of the stall, there is a box that makes fresh sausages from the pork. The server at one point says "one second, let me just make some more samples". He comes back with a small living pig and tries to put it in the machine in front of all the people. The pig screams and cries and guess what? The people start beating the guy. People have a nice heart. So when they see this kind of animal cruelty, they try to stop it.

When I became a vegetarian (which was before knowing what Hare Krishna was), I was struggling. One day potatoes, another day carrot etc. but I didn't know enough recipes to make things in different ways. Now I know that with milk, we can cook 1108 different dishes.

Para, the coordinator, says that they want to open a food bank for students. If you would like to get involved, please e-mail: foodforalluk@gmail.com.

Measured musings | The Asian obsession with fairness

It's funny how people in different parts of the world have such different ideas as to what qualifies as an attractive skin colour. New York has been hit by a number of skincare products that offer a brightening effect; names like "Le Blanc" and "Snow and White Cloud" conjure up images of some unobtainable pearly whiteness, an almost angelic glow to the skin. These products are supposed to give skin a "youthful glow," but the makers are keen to emphasise the products are simply intended to brighten a complexion - they have nothing to do with colour and are aimed at all ethnicities. However, these are just repackaged products from Asia, where beauty aspirations are most certainly about the colour of your skin. Across the continent in Japan, India and China the fairer the better, "whitening up" is very much in vogue.

The Asian obsession with fairness spans back many centuries. Some historians suggest it even pre-dates contact with Europeans, whilst it may have been encouraged by colonialism in the region. There seems to be this fixation with capturing this elusive concept of fair beauty. If we look at

countries like India for example, discrimination on the basis of skin colour is rife. This idea that fairness equates to beauty and that darker skin is unattractive is embedded in Indian society. The beauty, film and media industry all reflect this idea, you will be hard pressed to find an Indian film actress with a darker complexion.

The beauty industry has been quick to tap in to this obsession providing consumers with hundreds of different types of creams, lotions and bleaches all designed to make their skin appear lighter. The "Skin Whitening" industry is serious business; in 2010 it was worth an estimated \$432 million. It seems crazy that in a country where most people are born with darker skin they want to be the exact opposite.

"Fair and Lovely" and "Fair and Handsome" are some of the most popular products. Their names sound comical, but they are deemed a necessity by many Indians. The commercials that advertise these products reach a further level of ridiculousness. The storylines are all pretty similar. They start with a pathetic girl, who is of course, dark skinned. Her life is disastrous until she applies this fairness

cream which, along with her complexion, transforms her fortunes. Suddenly that dream career/man/modelling contract is hers and she lives happily ever after (that is until she realises the side effects of these products). There is even a popular soap in India about two sisters, one is attractive and fair, the other is darker and so obviously society finds her hideous. You can't make this stuff up.

The ironic thing is that there is very little conclusive evidence that proves these fairness creams actually work. People may just be buying in to a pointless craze. This mentality has even spread to the online domain. A few years ago Vaseline encouraged men to appear whiter in their Facebook profile pictures as part of an advertising campaign for a new fairness product. It's not really clear when this absurd trend will end and people will realise that fairness creams don't have magic powers. When will they accept that they are naturally brown and changing that fact would involve re-writing DNA?

Gurdeep Chhina
Features Editor



Flickr: SophiaKristina

Social

THE TRIALS of TWEETING

Flickr: edlh

Laura Aumeer on joining the Twitter phenomenon

If I used the words “hashtags”, “trends”, and “tweets”, I doubt you would be surprised. It seems everyone has Twitter from the royal family to Obama to the humble LSE SU shop. Recently, I found myself reinventing an old disused Twitter account. I had discarded it like an unwanted Christmas present last summer when I came across the stumbling block of what actually to tweet, but now I had better intentions, and with essays to do more time on my hands apparently.

I shouldn't have to explain what Twitter is. However, for anyone who has been living under the proverbial rock - in other words with no Internet connection - it allows users to post “tweets” of up to 140 characters. These can be links, your passionate opinions or inane updates about your day, such as what you had for breakfast or how late your train is. It is possible to tag other users and phrases, and see what is most popular. It probably isn't surprising to hear that Justin Bieber and One Direction members are rather more commonly talked about than David Cameron and the Pope, though they both have Twitter too. However, despite the preponderance of the inane on Twitter,

its effects run deep. It played a role in the revolutions that made up the Arab Spring, broke super injunctions and is used in nearly every political campaign. Whether it is celebrity gossip or major breaking news, you are more likely to hear about it on Twitter first. Twitterless, I felt like I was missing out on something, separated from a certain part of society.

Turning a long, forgotten account into something that actually represented me took some time. I changed my name, picture and biography. I blocked all the random people that had for some reason decided to follow this lifeless account. There were around 15 of them and the fact they were willing to follow MeVersion 1.0, made me think I didn't want them following the new me. In a Madonna-esque fashion, I had reinvented myself. The time spent on this was not mere vanity. In fact it is hardly different from spending a bit of time deciding what to wear before you leave the house. Especially before you leave the house knowing you will meet and interact with numerous strangers, family members, good friends, colleagues, your boss and even possibly some ex-lovers. Now, if anyone finds an outfit that suits that

day - a mix of professional and personal, serious and fun - please let me know. You may then have the answer about how to deal with this mix on social networking sites too.

“become an Internet celebrity known for being intelligent, witty and insightful”

The new account involved some thought. Summing your whole self in 160 characters needless to say is not easy. It may sound odd, but there also was the issue of what to use as a name. A full name is perhaps too easy to find. There is the very real twenty-first century fear of future employers screening social networking accounts, and do we really want

everything we have made comments about to be so easily brought up? However, use something too obscure and even people you know in “real-life” may think you are just another randomer who has started following them, a lonely middle-aged woman or a young, bored teenager.

With this done, who to follow? It is apparently a rule of Twitter that who you follow says a lot about yourself to other users - a sort of code for the well-established “tweeters”. More importantly though, who did I want to read updates from frequently? Updates on how members of the Big Brother house were coping with their diet weren't high up on the list; pretty, young things, loved up were not needed to make me feel any worse about my days stuck in the library; dry tweets by ghost-writers for the busy yet famous weren't that interesting either. On the other hand, witty comments, news and interesting insight were all welcomed.

All of this and the issue of actually “tweeting” has not yet come up. This was the reason for the time spent reinventing the profile after all. It sounds easy: just update the world in brief soundbites, retweet what others have said and learn how to use hash-

tags - which aren't anything to do with illegal substances, as I had to explain to my technophobic family. Do this successfully and watch the followers increase, become an Internet celebrity known for being, intelligent witty and insightful.

What to tweet? An interest in current affairs doesn't fit so neatly alongside a penchant for messy nights out. Do I really want someone who might appreciate that I've retweeted something on womens' rights to hear how I felt on the morning after the night before? Online resources are essential to stay in touch with friends now. However, no matter where you work - from charities, to media organisations, to large businesses - twitter is probably going to be a public relations tool. This mix of public and private, so to speak, is here to stay.

So one week on and how far have I come? Well, my followers are slowly increasing. Although a recent bubble of excitement burst when I found my latest three new followers were apparently promoting some Walmart voucher/scam. And no I haven't quite yet started a revolution or brought down a super-injunction. Well it has only been a week. Just give it time.

Making memories

Cleo Pearson asks if a camera really captures the moment

Think of those idyllic default Windows backgrounds, don't the skies look brighter than, than... well that's just it, there's nothing that quite compares to them, because they aren't real. Don't get me wrong, I am an avid photo editor, but sometimes what we see is not what we get, it is what the increase saturation button can offer instead. Photos can be selective, revealing just one side of something. Picture a photo of a beautiful, lush rainforest, pity you can't see the graveyard of burnt out stumps lying behind the lens. Sure, a photo can hold 1000 words, but can it deliver the sounds, the smells, the temperature or textures around you. When my camera broke whilst I was away in Ghana, be it by karma or bad luck, it forced me to learn that photos can't capture everything.

Even before I'd ever been to Africa, I had been captivated by the photos of African people and places that I'd seen on the TV, websites and books. The brightly contrasting colours of patterned fabrics, wild vegetation and dry red earth and I could imagine the heat of being there. But, as I was stood at a dark airport exit I realised that those photos I had been looking at all my life, couldn't help me imagine one pixel of this reality. With beads of sweat indistinguishable from those of anxiety dripping from every pore, I waited as taxi drivers swarmed closer around my luggage trolley. I was simultaneously petrified and exhilarated. It wasn't love at first sight; it was love at first arrival.

"Snap me, Snap me!" It's not something my friends at home often ask, but it soon became a regular

demand when the children spotted the camera sticking out from my pocket. The problem with taking photos of the children at school was that they were

weeks.

Finger on the button, blue 'on' light glows and whir...buzz...silence. the lens was stuck. After establishing

For the first few days it was hard. I wrapped up "Camera" in a blanket, tended her with cold flannels and brought her fresh pawpaw but to no

having to worry that it would fall out of my pocket and get crushed in the stampede of dusty feet. I began feeling safer on trips to market with less fear of being mugged. I could climb trees, explore the bush and try carrying as many children as humanly possible - with few resources there were limited options for recreational activities - without having to stop the fun and say "Woah, wait! Be careful of my camera!" The smiles and pictures that I hold in my memory were not posed, they were real. When she posed for photos, little five year old Angie with her shaved head and bare feet would put her hand on her hip with attitude. She was worlds away from the sexualised kid's bikinis from Primark or preteens aspiring to be Pussycat Dolls. Yet, somehow in some ocean current, this wave of "sexy" posing had hit a young Ghanaian girl from a small village. But the memories I keep with me of her are more natural: the only Angie I know who looks good with her hand on her hip is Ms Jolie, not my Angie after all.

Fortunately my Dad visited me in my last week in Ghana and I was able to photograph those final few days. Despite my reflections, on my next trip, will I take a camera? Of course, but how I use it will be to a very different effect. Since my arrival at university, I don't have a collection of drunken fresher's week fancy dress calamities captured on camera. Call it bad luck, call it karma, call it a sign, but the first night I decided to use my camera at university it was stolen. I think I'll stick to creating my memories for now, not trying to document them before I've had a chance to live them.

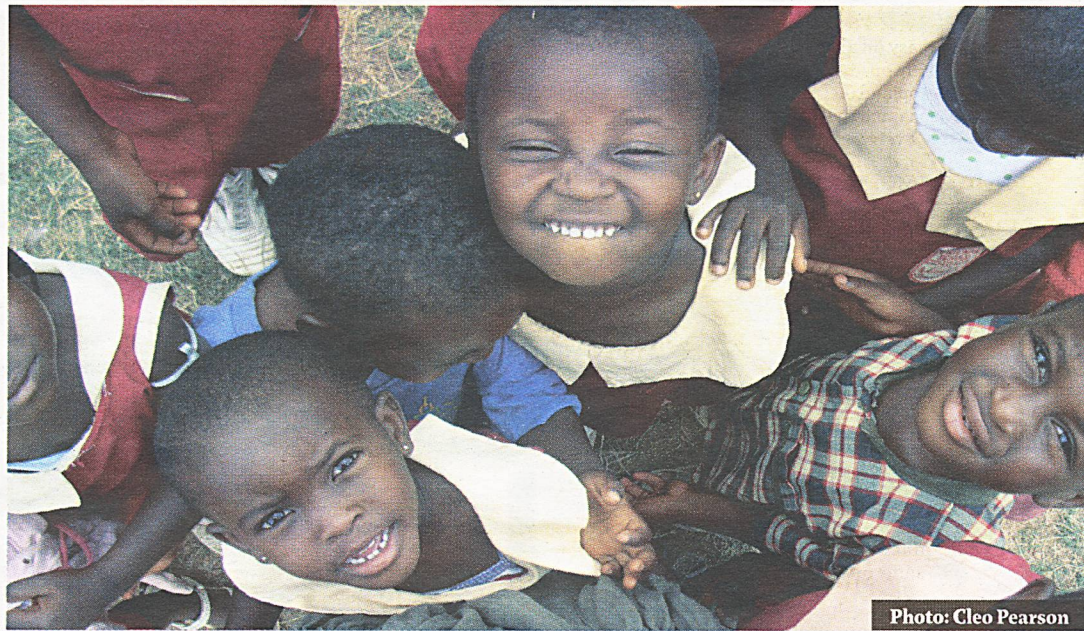


Photo: Cleo Pearson

so eager to be 'in' a photo, it was if they were trying to climb inside the very camera itself. A tip I'd pass on if you ever find yourself being mobbed by the subject of your photos is to tell them to run away and get a photo of them running towards you, it worked very effectively given the circumstances. Anyhow, I soon found myself filling up my memory card within my first

that no number of attempts to 'turn it off and on again' were going to make things better, I realised that it was over. My camera was not dead, but comatose. Kumasi, the nearest city, had a large number of camera repair shops, but I was not risking the validity of my Samsung guarantee for street market tampering. I had to face up to three months without a camera.

avail. I found myself out on walks looking at picturesque views with a view-finder square printed on my iris, imagining what a brilliant photo it would make.

Then with time I realised that not having to worry about my camera and making sure I had things documented gave me a new found freedom. I could play football with the boys, without

LSEx Valentine's Day

A day chock-full of cards, flowers, dates and rather old cliches

A holiday with its roots in Ancient Roman history and lore, Valentine's Day is now entrenched as a celebration of love, relationships and the greeting-card and restaurant industries. For one day, those in long-term and serious relationships are allowed to flaunt their happiness, through mandatory dates, cards and public displays of affection. Whilst those on the other side wait expectantly for the cards and flowers from possible future lovers or are made to feel inferior for their single-status. Valentine's Day celebrates the coupled-up and derides the single.

A 2011 survey by StudentBeans.com looked into the number of sexual partners students claimed to have had. Students at the University of Glamorgan came out top with 10.9, whilst LSE was ranked 25th with 5.9, above Kings at least, who had 5.7. Now, this doesn't tell us the relationship status of those surveyed; was it a case of numerous romantic dates and cards or one night stands? However, it does suggest that maybe students do not always want the coupled-up, loved-up status Valentine's Day seems to infer we do.

Long-term relationships are seen as the norm in today's society. In human society traditionally the young are looked after by both of their parents for a comparatively long time - they aren't just kicked out of the nest and told to get on with it. If both mother and father are to play a role in this, it helps if that the sexual relationship continues monogamously. In addition a serious relationship can bring extra security and stability for both involved. However, life never runs quite like this, and the equation of one plus one

equals happiness is not always right.

It could be argued that everyone is just looking for that perfect partner, perhaps even a soul mate. That casual sex, one-night stands and "friends with benefits" relationships are just blips, as we struggle to find this serious relationship. These numerous sexual partners can be seen as simply mistakes we make on the path to true love. Are other forms of relationship really inferior to the one we're meant to celebrate on Valentine's Day?

Developments in the twentieth century chart the rise of the unconventional love story. From the 1960s the birth control pill has helped separate sex from pregnancy and, as a result, separated sex somewhat from long-term relationships and marriage. Women, and in particular young women, no longer faced the choice of being sexless or shacked up with a house full of unruly children. Sex was more accessible and the pressure of finding a life partner was reduced. From statistics showing high rates of chlamydia amongst young people to magazines such as Cosmopolitan delivering advice on how to deal with the awkwardness of a one night stand, it is clear that society has a more liberated stance on relationships than Valentine's Day would suggest. Unfortunately, you won't find a "You were a great one night stand" card next to the "To the love of my life" cards on the shelf at Clintons.

If the disappointment of receiving no Valentine's Day card is worrying you, take a look on the other side of the coin. Those loved-up couples have to worry about meeting the expectations of the day. Cards, flowers, meals out and presents, are needed to make the

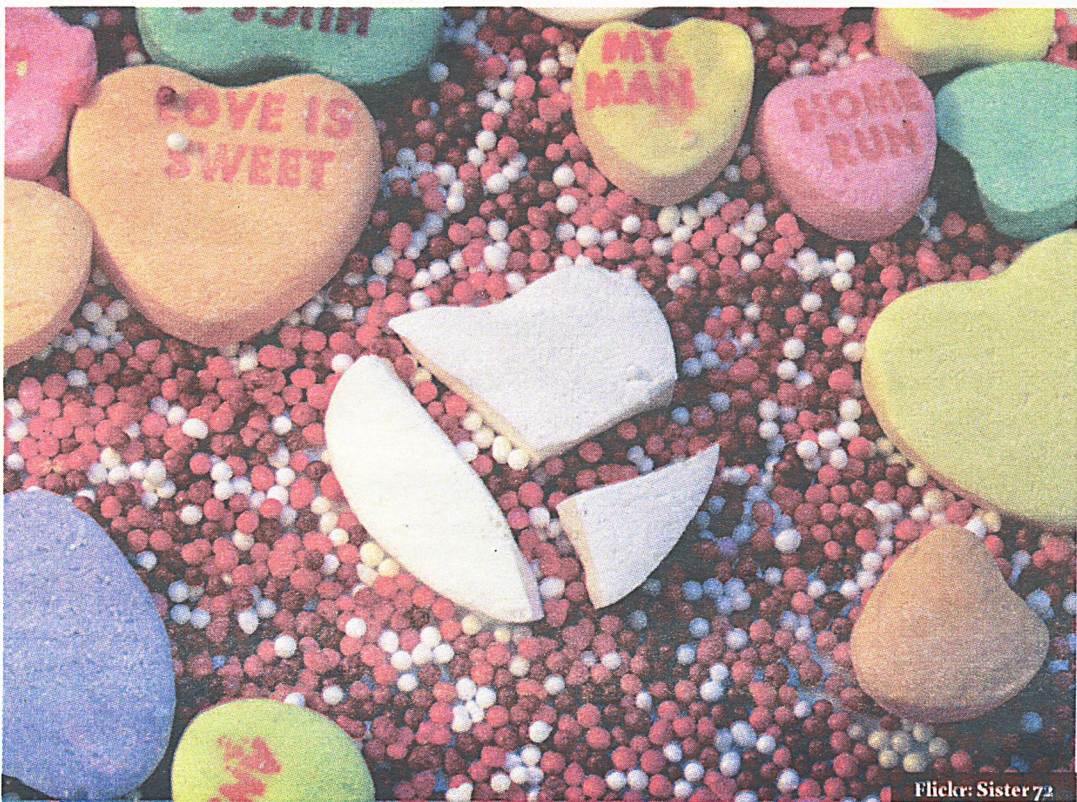
day, and night, perfect just because it is the 14th February. The red and pink hearts and smiling Cupid don't reflect the reality of relationships, love and sex, but a romantic ideal we have been forced to accept. There are attempts to confront this, from vagina-shaped cupcakes rebelling against the dainty pink hearts on those found in most

bakeries to the single-nights at bars and clubs.

In conclusion, don't be upset if you don't receive a card on Valentine's Day. Yes, a bit of romance is fun, but there is plenty else to do that is not based on candle-lit dinners and cards. Take your own stand against the commercialism and celebrate love and sex for what it is

today. Forget the heart-shaped sweets and buy something more vulgar.

Throw out the normal card and make your own, being honest with what you write. Celebrate all the relationships you have, whether its your long-term partner, your family, your close friends, and even your friend-with-benefits.



Flickr: Sister 72

It's not the destination that counts

Stephanie Strickland on student-style coach travel

It's not the destination, it's the journey. Well, that's not strictly true, now is it? Let's contextualise. Situate our knowledge. Employ an alternative perspective to this literary romanticism. Let's talk Coach Travel.

I caught the Mega-bus home from Manchester last week.

Admittedly, traversing the length and breadth of the country for only a few pounds has its benefits; being able to afford one more can of tomatoes as opposed to halving one for a two day stretch is certainly one. Unfortunately, I'm not exaggerating; the "lack-of-student-loan-at-masters-level-diet" would sell Atkins under the table.

However, before embarking on a multi-hour coach adventure in the UK you should appreciate that there are a certain number of conditions you have to be prepared to deal with. Firstly, the vague smell of bananas. For six hours I couldn't quite determine the source of this slightly putrefied, fruity odour. I've since concluded that it was a clash of aromas; the poor attempt to perfume the disinfectant and the smell it was trying to conceal - both of which intermittently billowed from the toilet door - combined with the snacks of fellow passengers. Fragrant.

Secondly, your long-haul travel companion, the one who took the window side of the two berth seat. Here, personal space becomes a myth and a stranger's drool on your shoulder becomes less of a cliché and more of a reality. If you're lucky their iPod will die shortly after Stoke-on-Trent, and you'll be saved from enduring the muffled base beat of their play-list for the duration. If you're not, I guess it's not too bad, they are playing "stairway to heaven" after all and that's a classic.. Even on repeat...for three hours.

Thirdly, it is important to note that, fundamentally, the extensive, horizon-less combination of the M6 and M1 particularly, is not likely to make for an exciting journey anyway. When you wistfully stare out of the window and, for 190 miles, all you see is the concrete intersection, romantic sentiments about the thrill of the journey seemingly stumble and face-plant the British motorway system.

But, as so many of us know, universalisms can be notoriously unhelpful. The much repeated quote

above must have some weight in order to weather the test of time. By way of illustration let me shift the country, the continent and the side of the road.

For six weeks during the summer two friends and I travelled through Vietnam. Being uneasy on a moped and disinclined to rely on an airline where passengers applaud on landing, coach travel remained the best option. Interestingly, traversing the length and breadth of that country, in significantly less comfort, constituted more of an adventure than my Manchester to London trip ever could have. I have a feeling even if the latter had involved a police chase and some nitrous-oxide, the Vietnamese context would still win out.

The term "sleeper-bus" evokes a story of deception and shattered expectations; "fully-air-conditioned" a blatant and unapologetic lie; "only seven hours to the highlands" a cunning trap to lure you to the family road-side cafe so you can waft valuable Dong on tepid Ph. All in all a veritable mine-field of unexpected hurdles for uneventful travel, and thus, the source of some of the best memories.

Perhaps the most unforgettable was the eleven hour, midnight bus journey from mountainous Sapa to Hanoi. After heaving, dragging and kicking our backpacks up the hill towards the station we stocked up on supplies for the trip ahead. Generally these included incredible pastries and cakes, a relic from French colonialism, and about as much bottled water as we could carry. Even the occasional banana...

Descending from mountains through blankets of cloud is always going to be an interesting experience. I might add that this is not isolated to just a Vietnamese locale. As a child I remember plenty of car journeys through the Alps, covering my eyes as we drove through the mist; the realisation that the road hair-pinned and the horizon plummeted arriving only just in time. What was somewhat unique to the Sapa context however, was the distinctly intermittent infrastructure. Its all well and good realising the road makes a sharp turn, but what happens when the road gives up and disappears entirely? A lot of nausea became the apparent answer, especially at the speeds our

driver seemed content with. I'm not religious, but I crossed myself.

We'd booked a sleeper bud for this stint but lying down only seemed to make the situation more unnerving. With everyone lying on their backs on sweaty leather flatbeds, covered in garish fleecy blankets, it looked as though we had all been in some horrific accident and had been strapped onto rows of spinal boards. I couldn't help worry that this was pre-emptive.

At around 1am passengers started asking the driver to stop. The journey thus far had transformed the eclectic mix of travellers into a unified group of crossed-legged children, desperate for the toilet and sporting a distinctly green hue. At 2.30am the driver conceded and we pulled onto the side of the road outside a wooden house, its front yard smattered with low plastic tables and chairs, each equipped with chopsticks, small bottles of soy sauce and about a million mosquitoes. The majority of the Vietnamese passengers ordered steaming bowls of what looked like noodles and stewed trotter, presumably to cure their spun stomachs. The majority of the "western" travellers abstained and went to bend double over the nearest bush.

Now this is where it all got interesting. Ten minutes later, whilst my friends and I were being gently smoked by the clouds from smouldering, unfiltered tobacco, there came some very loud and angry shouting. Everyone looked up. Two men were standing between us, the mopeds and the coaches, gesticulating furiously at each other and near on foaming at the mouth. Everyone looked down. Next,

a scream from the woman serving Ph. Everyone looked up. The angrier of the two men had reached behind him and drawn what can only be described as a Samurai knife from the back of his trousers. Firstly this seemed like a highly impractical hiding place, especially given his two-wheeled choice of transport. Secondly... everyone ran. Small plastic chairs went flying. Now, where may you ask was our first port of sanctuary? Of course, the giant tin can - our old friend the coach. We piled back on, the "put your shoes in plastic bags" rule abandoned and trampled by thirty pairs of flip flops. The driver locked the door and without so much as a glance to make sure everyone was present, fired up the engine. Our faces remained unapologetically pressed up against the window, watching our Samurai friend roar and wield, his adversary walking slowly backwards towards the group of men left at the tables, their half smoked cigarettes forgotten in their hands.

From our safe observation point we watched several men hurry forward, attempting to reason with anger. He swung twice, thankfully only connecting with one of the wooden posts holding up the corrugated roof. His hit seemed to have purged him. Either that or the subsequent struggle to remove his knife from the framework of the house made him a bit sheepish. He was convinced to re-sheath the sword and get on his way. As our coach pulled out and away from the roadside cafe, we watched from the back window as the man swung himself onto his moped, done

with a surprising amount of agility given the twelve inch blade hoisted in his trousers. His little machine sounded like a very angry bee in a jam-jar, and with one final yell at his initial catalyst, he hunkered down behind its handlebars and buzzed off.

That journey from Sapa to Hanoi could have been a lot smoother and a lot less eventful, but it's a story, a memory, a page in my diary and an occasion to reminisce over months down the line. Sadly I fear that if British budget coach companies had a history of incidents similar, you would see far fewer of trundling along the slow lanes of the motorways. So, some advice that I plan to follow myself: The next time you grab a coach that bores you to tears, have an imagination. Its monotony should be your canvas. Take some headphones, a scarf to wrap around your nose and shut your eyes. Picture you and your thirty or so travel companions careering down a mountain road made of shale. Imagine it's your escape craft from a dicey situation. Think of hurtling past rice terraces and acres of bamboo forest semi-shrouded in cloud.

Alternatively just appreciate the climate control and the fact you don't have to peel your skin off the seats after six hours of sweating at forty degrees. From here you can't do any work, you can't save the world or fix the GFC, bring about world peace or re-freeze the ice caps. There really is nothing left to do but sit back, relax and enjoy the ride.



Photo: Stephanie Strickland

Travel Diary: Two days in Paris

Xin Ting Wang on her experiences in that other Eurostar destination

Nowadays the word Paris hardly provokes genuine interests anymore, mostly what you get is a half-hearted "oh that's cool". The city is only across the channel and most people have been anyway. But for me this trip is still somewhat special, since it holds three "firsts". The first time I travelled alone, the first time I lived in a youth hostel and also my first trip to a francophone country after my new acquaintance with the language. It was all very exciting until the weather dampened it all. It was simply too cold to wander around, be it in the grand Champs-Élysées or in the narrow cobbled back streets.

Anyway I hopped on the Eurostar. 6:49pm, 48 minutes after the train set off for its destination, I decided to jot something down about this trip. Not because something terribly interesting had happened, but the opposite. The total black out of WIFI services and signals was completely unexpected. I was very bored. Luckily, with the

combination of writing, sleeping and staring into empty spaces, time didn't pass too slowly.

After the Eurostar, the next form of public transport waiting in line for me was the metro. The Paris metro was far from a warm retreat from the falling snowflakes outside. And it took me a meticulous study of the metro map, two changes of lines and heading to the complete wrong direction to finally arrive at my "home" for the next three days. However, I soon felt deceived by the hostel's website and perhaps my own idealised perception. The photos on the website looked so cute, pretty and cosy. But in reality, it was just bare, undecorated and unwelcoming. I suddenly really missed traveling with my parents and, most of all, the hotels.

In the early morning of the next day, I turned the corner on the right and visited the Sacre Coeur. The church, which stood at the summit of the butte Montmartre, against clear blue sky, looked so serene and sublime. Filled with the power of religion, the

atmosphere inside the church was overwhelming, and for the first time I felt that I had to kneel down and pray. It was the ideal place for a withdrawal from the buzz of the city. Coming out of the church, I had the view of a Paris just waking up for a brand new day in front of me and the Sacre Coeur behind; at that moment, I thought I wouldn't change having what was behind me, for the entire world in front.

Because of the weather, the rest of my trip was very museum-heavy, which actually suited my appetite rather well. In the Louvre, it was six hours of sensual fiesta. Not just the paintings and sculptures on display, the Louvre itself is an architectural master piece.

Espace Dali was the highlight of the trip. The Spanish genius' somewhat enigmatic drawings and sculptures were so expressive I often found my feet rooted to the ground and eyes magnetised. Dali is not just a talented artist, but certainly also a great philosopher and scientist.

I waited in line for the Musee

d'Orsay. I had come to see the paintings by Van Gogh, but left disappointed, again. No matter how much Van Gogh's personal story moved me, I just couldn't see his feverish passion and frenzy in his paintings.

Besides the art, one phenomenon in the museums really baffled me - many people spent their time taking pictures with them posing next to the paintings without giving more than one glimpse to the actual work itself.

Not being in possession of a camera really was a liberation for me. Obviously there were moments when thoughts like "this would look great in a photo" appeared. Soon though my first reaction was not painstakingly trying to find a photogenic angle for the camera but to see, hear and feel those handsome things with my eyes, ears and heart. We are at a place for ourselves, not for the people who will later glance at the photos on facebook.

Sadly, one of my main intentions of going on this trip, to speak some French, had failed miserably. Everyone

simply spoke perfect English. Every time when I gathered enough courage to ask a simply question in French, the response was always in English.

I don't know if I enjoyed the new experience of traveling alone as much as I hoped. Maybe it was the weather, maybe it was the youth hostel, maybe it was just me. Taking the wrong metro line, failing to find the right places and queuing for 40 minutes just to get into a museum, became so much more frustrating when there isn't a companion to laugh them off.

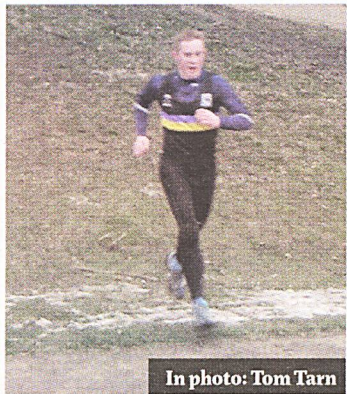
After two very long days, although mourning the lack of time to linger longer in the museums, I was more than happy to go home. On the train to St. Pancras when the girl next to me took out her chunky Accounting study pack, which had three red capital letters printed on the top right corner, I was just glad to know that I was not the only person studying for the next two and half hours.

Snow fight

LSE clash with Kings in snowy conditions

Nathan Converse

Each year, the LSE Cross Country team enjoys a home advantage when we host the University of London Cross Country championships. This year, however, our home venue was unavailable due to it having been turned into a car park for the Olympic stadium. Bringing to bear formidable organisational skills and an unparalleled local knowledge of North London, team treasurer, Arthur Wadsworth, ensured that the race went ahead at an alternate, in many ways superior, course on the grounds of the historic Alexandra



In photo: Tom Tarn

Palace. We had hoped that shifting the race from December to February 8 would let us avoid the punishing snowy conditions that plagued last year's fixture.

Wishful thinking!

On a course that featured packed ice, deep snow, and ample mud, Martin Holm once again led the men's team, finishing eighth overall and claiming the University of London individual championship title. Captain, Nate Converse, and Chris Martin went one-two on the UCL two-man, ensuring victory over the squad from Bloomsbury, but were bested by Kings'

top two. Rounding out the team were Rasmus Weschke, making his first appearance in LSE yellow, purple, and black. In the end, despite maintaining an ample lead in the overall season's standings, the LSE team finished second to rivals, Kings. The LSE second team brought honour to the north side of the Aldwych, however, with Andrew Ehrich, Zimo Qi, and Seb Koh defeating the Kings' seconds.

Fresh from representing the university of London at BUCS cross country championships the previous Saturday, Rebecca Tisdale led the LSE Women. Next across the line was fresher Rebecca Windemer, taking a less than relaxing break from her alternate career with the LSE Rugby squad. Jess Lanney rounded out the team, defying a hamstring injury to break out a fierce final kick and come within a few metres of Kings' Jo Smart. The team tied for third place on points, but were tragically kept off the podium.

With only one race left to go in the cross country season, the Running Club's focus is shifting to the track. The athletics squad this week moved training to the track at Ladywell, which is conveniently located—particularly for the Bankside mafia forming the core of the team. At the end of the month, the team will for the first time in recent memory compete at BUCS indoor championships not under the UOL umbrella, but rather proudly flying the LSE colours.



Images courtesy of Nathan Converse

LSE Rowathon

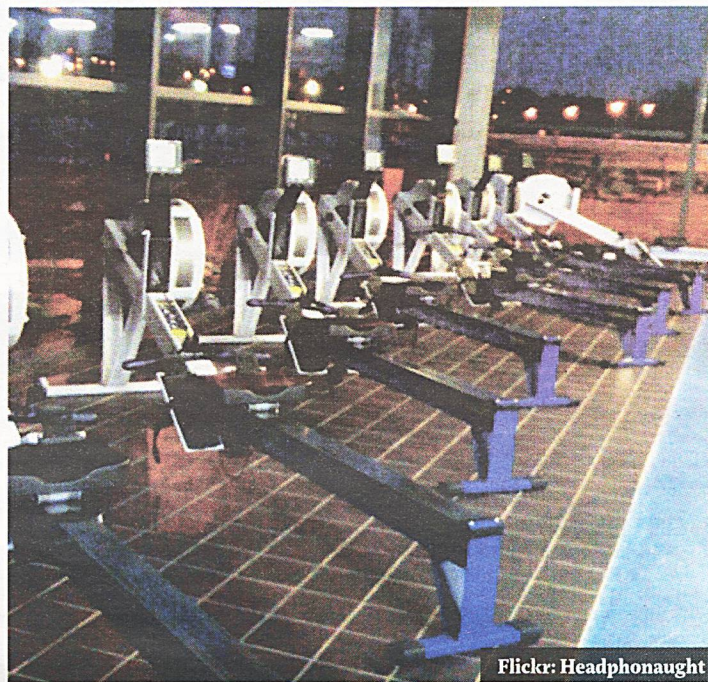
Rowing club burns calories for RAG week

Tom Meaden

On Tuesday morning the LSE rowing club are going to Amsterdam. Difference is we are doing it in Houghton Street on erg machines. From 9 till 7 on Tuesday the boys and girls of LSE rowing club will be putting themselves through 9 hours of torture to raise money for the RAG team. At a total distance of around 360 Km it isn't going to be easy and any support and

5 times. To put this in AU language it's going to be like a night in Zoo Bar hot, sweaty and will probably end up covered in vomit.

The LSE rowing club isn't the best known club in the AU, our members have rarely rowed before and are usually recruited based on willingness to get up early and spend extensive periods of times doing an activity which is painful, soul crushing and physically exhausting, much like going to KCL. However we wouldn't have it any other way and we look forward to sharing it



Flickr: Headphonaught

donations anyone can offer will be a great motivation for us and help for a great cause.

If we complete our target, we will burn 36,000 calories, complete 45,000 strokes on the rowing machines and row Calais To Dover and back again

with the wider LSE community.

On Tuesday we are going to Amsterdam, powered by nothing more than Wright's bar and rowing club pride. Please come support us and RAG week as a whole.

Footballers as Scapegoats

Jamie Morgan Evans

Floros Nicola, a highly respected Welfare Officer and Coach Educator for the FA, died suddenly last month. He inspired many aspirant coaches to appreciate the complexity of football in the national culture. On one coaching course in 2008, I remember him saying how absurd it is that professional footballers receive so much public scrutiny for their wealth when there are such a tiny number of pro-footballers in this country; especially when there are approximately a quarter of a million millionaires in Britain.

Since the financial crisis, this estimate has increased. It is certainly not the wealthy who pay the price for recklessness (despite token moments of late which saw Mr Fred Goodwin lose his knighthood and Stephen Hester give back his bonus). It is, however, the case that the sentiment Floros expressed still remains. Professional footballers are continuously subject to disproportionate forms of cultural generalisation and elitist finger pointing. They certainly get a hard press.

As the recent protests in Cairo reveal, football can easily become embroiled in social and political ideals. But, returning to the point of how much money footballers should earn, let us take a moment to remember just how expert professional footballers are. That is not to say that professional

footballers earn too little. No, this is more about who society deems worthy of money and status.

A generation of elite players have become extremely rich throughout the Premier League era, which has seen the infrastructure of traditional football bullied by global media giants. Footballers exploit the system that has been rewarded to them (often on the advice of pushy agents). Their fortunes, which are not self-regulated, are better challenged in relation to the impoverishment of the grassroots game or the lack of funding in Women's Football, issues which organisations like the Guerreiras Project work to discuss.

In a recent article written for the Guardian, Ros Coward placed footballers (and lottery winners) in the middle of the argument surrounding consumerism and the excessive nature of bankers' bonuses. She argued that consumerist society is very much a "depressing spectacle" and the hyped-up evidence of social mobility, which lottery winners and footballers are seen to represent, is scandalous self-justification on the part of sponsors and corporations.

There is, however, a risk of paying too much attention to the symbolic nature of footballers' spending habits when they themselves are thrown into the public gaze to distract from the systematic causes of socio-economic injustice and endorse consumption

in the same process. On one hand, people look to players as role models. On the other hand, the public attempts to delegitimise the earnings and cultural status of footballers. Either way, footballers are placed in the crossfire of a struggle for what the sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, referred to as symbolic domination.

Bourdieu wrote about the ways in which taste is used as a weapon in social conflicts, whereby groups at the top of the social hierarchy use their "capital" (economic and cultural) to legitimise their privilege and gain symbolic domination over other social groups.

It would seem that there is a real desire to delegitimise the fortunes of particular working-class icons like Wayne Rooney because it is intolerable for some people that such footballers have access to unimaginable wealth and cultural freedoms merely through the dexterity of physical skills perceived to be insignificant. It would, however, be a sad world if everyone had to prove their contribution to society. The narrative suggests that physical labour is for less well educated people at the bottom of society. In a society which so aggressively marginalises manual skilled labour and the cultural identity of working class men in particular, I think many deem it unsuitable for footballers to take home such fortunes.

Public sentiment still throws up an

imagination for footballers collecting their weekly wages in brown paper envelopes on a Friday evening. When they do cash in their wages, they don't even spend it on anything nice or useful. Imagine that! Indeed, the idea that they should spend their earnings on tasteful objects or charity (which many players already do) implies a hypocritical stance that mocks the choices of particular social groups.

It is this kind of attitude that places great national responsibility on English players "to do a job" in international competition only to persecute them at the point of tournament exit for 'being spoilt, unpatriotic and having far too much money.' Is this not a description of corporations who idly threaten to abandon ship if a Robin Hood tax was to be introduced?

The contest over the wealth of the footballer is less about the amount of money and more about the pockets that the money is going into. Before his acquittal, Harry Redknapp, labelled the "wheeler dealer" of English football, was exposed to wild public scrutiny for tax evasion, despite the disproportionate economic comparison this holds to the £95 billion in tax dodged each year by corporations. However, the narrative surrounding footballers' incomes characterises, if not simply the problematic question of the "right" to economic freedom in society, but the further issue of who society thinks it is free to question about its fortunes.

Sport In Brief

Capello resigns

Fabio Capello resigned as England manager after 'crunch' talks with FA chairman, David Bernstein, last Wednesday. The decision came after a disagreement between Capello and the FA over the removal of John Terry as England captain.

The future's bright, the future's Redknapp

Harry Redknapp was found not guilty of tax evasion by a High Court jury last week. In response to the verdict, bookmakers have made Redknapp odds-on favourite to become the new England manager.

Six Nations round-up

In this week's Six Nations ties, England came back from behind to overcome Italy at the Stadio Olimpico, 19-15, whilst the France - Ireland match was controversially cancelled only 10 minutes before start time. Meanwhile, Scotland were undone by two sin-bins, losing to Wales, 27-13.

Giants steal the show at Super Bowl

A late winner saw the New York Giants repeat the feat of overcoming the New England Patriots at the last hurdle. The Giants had previously done the same in 2008 and this year's tightly-contested Super Bowl saw them triumph 23-21.

Khan announces Peterson re-match

Amir Khan was finally able to confirm a re-match with the man who defeated him in controversial circumstances last December, Lamont Peterson. The fight will take place at the Mandalay Bay Hotel on May 19, with Khan vying for revenge.

Switzerland crash out as Federer loses

The Swiss tennis team succumbed to a surprise defeat to the USA in the Davis Cup. The US team took an unassailable 3-0 lead after doubles victory and a shock singles defeat for Roger Federer, his first Davis Cup singles loss in nine years.

Wrong Message Sent By Removing Terry As Captain

Amit Singh

The FA recently announced their decision to strip John Terry of the England captaincy for the second time in his career. The decision has prompted much controversy and led to the resignation of Fabio Capello. The removal of Terry as captain revolves around an ongoing race row with Anton Ferdinand, where Terry was alleged to have called him a 'black c**t' during Chelsea's away game at QPR in October.

First and foremost, let me make it clear that racism should not be tolerated in any way shape or form on a football pitch or in any sphere of modern life; if Terry is found guilty in July, he should be punished in the harshest way possible. However, the crux of this lies around the fact that Terry has not been found guilty of anything yet - he is merely facing an accusation, a very serious one, but an accusation nonetheless. Many tweeters will tell you conclusively that they know what he said, but in reality, we will not know for certain until after July the 9th.

The FA have been put in a difficult position, but by allowing Terry to captain England against Sweden last November, they effectively look like they are bowing to public opinion by removing him now, rather than making an informed decision. They were, in essence, hoping that the court case would convene prior to the European Championships and thus make their decision for them; essentially, they wanted to cop out. Clearly, it is a lose-lose situation for the FA. If they kept him on as captain it would appear that they are supporting someone who may have used racially offensive language, who could feasibly lift the trophy for England; if they sacked him (which

they have) it is condemning a man to guilt without affording him a fair trial.

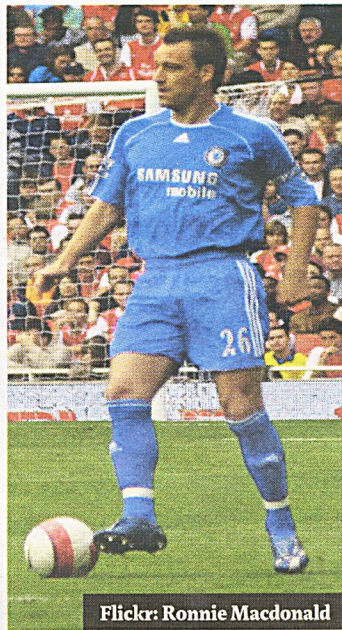
There is actually no precedent for what has happened. Of course, with Terry being captain and the allegation being so serious, it is a unique case. Yet, previously, we have seen players on trial while still representing their country. Steven Gerrard was on trial for affray while still playing for England, he was acquitted and still represents England to this day.

It's impossible for me to speculate on the incident itself other than to again reiterate the severity of the accusations for which we must not take lightly. If Terry said it, as stated, he should be punished as harshly as possible. However, if he did not, then he has been dragged through a witch hunt, stripped of his captaincy, for something he has not done. Would the FA then say, 'sorry John' and reinstate him as captain if that is the case? The fact of the matter is, racism, rape, or murder, you should be innocent until proven guilty, not condemned to your fate by the media and the FA before a court case has even gone to trial.

The Daily Mail writer, Des Kelly, speculated how as the 'terrible racist', Terry, was right to be stripped. Does using racially charged language make a person racist? I'd argue not necessarily. Much of racist language is to do with context and, as someone who has been racially abused myself, I am well aware of this, as some who have not been racially abused may not be. It is feasible that Terry did say what he is accused of saying while not actually being racist himself. This is, of course, not to excuse him if it does come out that he did in fact use such language. One should note that he is the captain of one of the most diverse teams in the UK as well as a close friend of players like Drogba and Ashley Cole (who is

giving evidence at his trial).

David Kidd of the People tweeted at me that 'you either have it in you to say something racist or you don't' - what a stupid comment. How ludicrous to suggest that by merely uttering a word, you are automatically evil and racist - that is not true. This is not to excuse Terry; as stated, I believe that what he said, if he said it, is disgraceful and has no place on the football field or anywhere else for that matter, but



Flickr: Ronnie Macdonald

his guilt does not condemn him to the status of the BNP or EDL - and nor should it.

Terry as a man has done some deplorable things over his career - some truly awful things that I'd never condone. He has cheated on his wife,

allegedly, on multiple occasions including a stint with his former teammate's ex-girlfriend in 2010.

If we want a moral bastion as captain, then England fans will be looking for a while. Gerrard was almost charged with affray, Rio Ferdinand missed a drugs test in 2003 and had a 13 year affair despite being married. Meanwhile, Wayne Rooney recently let his head get the better of him for England on the field, as he did in 2006, as well as having many questions asked about him over his private life. It's worth noting that all of these players have worn the captain's armband at some stage during their England careers.

Racism, you can argue, is different to this; but, again, without prior prejudice, it is worth remembering that this is an allegation of racism, not a confirmation of it.

Terry has been a good captain, regardless of what you think about him as a man; he is a quality player and undoubtedly England's best, fit defender. During the World Cup campaign, he played with a plethora of different partners due to the unreliability of Rio Ferdinand and still performed at a high level. In the Euro's, again he has led from the back.

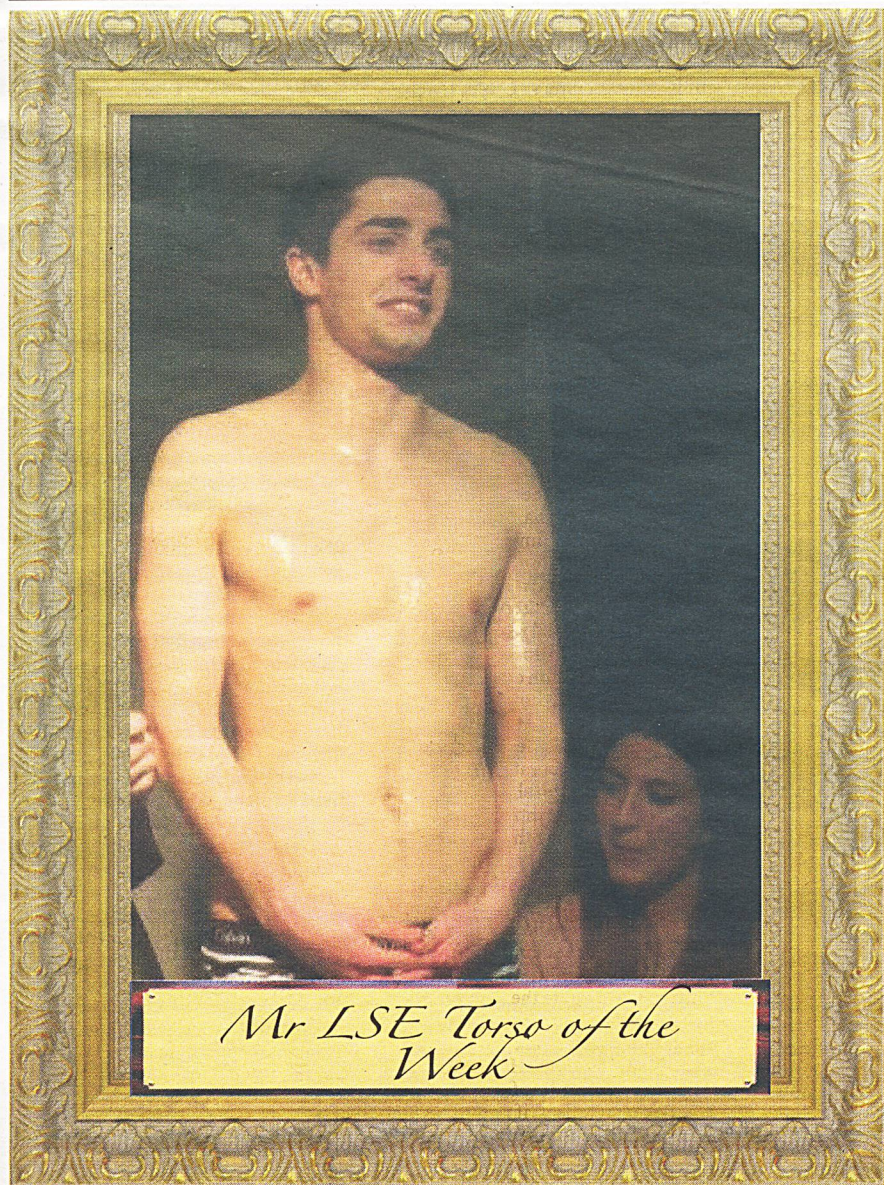
Capello reportedly asked if any players had a problem with Terry as captain, to which they all replied no. Capello also reportedly asked new young players which of the senior professionals took time out to welcome them and stayed in touch after international duty, they mainly all said Terry. Recently, there have been reports about antipathy towards him from some of the squad's black players; though, Ashley Cole and Daniel Sturridge are team mates of his and there appears to be little animosity from Chelsea's black players towards Terry,

as far as we are aware. Regardless of whether he was stripped or not, his place in the squad will still be divisive among some players.

Terry cannot win in this situation even if he is proven innocent; his reputation has been ruined by the allegations and he has been condemned to guilt by the FA. If he turns out to be innocent, it will be incredibly interesting to see how Terry handles the situation; some reports are alleging that he will sue the FA if an innocent verdict is given in July. What is for certain, whether we like Terry as a man or as England captain, is that everyone should be innocent until proven guilty and suggesting otherwise seriously undermines that pivotal feature of our society.

The FA were in a lose-lose situation just as Terry arguably is, but they have certainly made matters worse for themselves. Terry, if selected for England in the future, will now have to sit in a dressing room with black players, having been condemned a racist before his case has even been heard, which will almost definitely damage team harmony further. This is exacerbated by the fact that Capello was a staunchly against the idea to strip Terry of the captaincy and promptly resigned as a result of the decision.

Again, to reiterate, I do not know if Terry is innocent, but if he is guilty, I still stand by the principle that he should not be punished until a case has been heard, rather than being answerable to a witch campaign via twitter and the mainstream, reactionary media. Yes, it will be a disgrace if the England captain leads his side out to Euro 2012 only to be convicted of racism a few weeks later, but if we believe in innocent until proven guilty, this is a possibility we surely have to accept and so do the FA.



Mr LSE Torso of the Week



As the anticipation built up in the Tuns, this year's Mr LSE competition was markedly different to previous years. Whilst before the run up to the stage performances would have seen power press-ups to the death, this year's selection of boys had only a spattering of real men amongst them, and it really did show when it came to the shirtless round.

A round of shit chat introductions saw the initial weaklings, many of whom were FC, shamed off the stage, and as the contestants were whittled down, the record numbers in the audience began to heckle the piss poor chat up lines and cheer on unexpected talents. The night was not without controversy though, as Dodds had an early exit following his memorable line "if I flip this coin, what are the chances of me getting head?" It appeared a man in a skirt had far more luck, as Eton #2 impressed all with his ability to blow a pipe and win a heart or two. Sadly, this was not enough as one FC with a degree in mixology eventually won at the grand finale, much to the dismay of many spectators.

Being crowned Mr LSE appears to have its perks as our man found his lips being Shep-parded towards those of a flame headed hockey damsel. The pair was seen locking lips outside, in plain sight of those spilling from the Tuns, with our lady clearly showing her appreciation for the man dubbed as LSE's finest. Other success was also found amongst runner-up Geoff. Easily the best body on stage in those final rounds (shame his talent didn't quite match up), the man ducked out early with social netballer Ms L DeBeer, and the pair was not seen again.

One particular R-Cad was seen semi-humping a lady in the middle of Zoo bar, desperately trying to undo her Bra (ssing-ton). It seems our lucky man had more than just sexual intentions on his mind though, as he was seen flashing her debit card the following afternoon in the Tuns...I guess the poor soul may have turned to selling his body to tide him over or the rest of

uni. Tragic.

Captain Mateer was spotted thrashing about once again, but this time, the lady was defending (what's left of) her honour and dignity, rather than attempting to desecrate others'. She was literally beating away some pathetic soul in a striped shirt who was relentless in his attempts to pull the lass. Within seven seconds of the final KO of the guy, though, she physically fell onto the lips of one waiting bystander, not that it did anything to dissuade the aforementioned creep.

It seems that KR was more than happy with her BJ (credit: SCG). The fine gentleman of the LSERFC escorted the lady to her door but is reported to have wondered home alone, failing to get between the posts for yet another week. No idea how you'll get AU Pres with craic like that. Across the dance floor, though, it seems fellow starlet Raquel Oddity was being Shermated by one of FC's favourite wannabe BNOs. The rugrat-Sherman hybrid, commonly known as Ginger Jack, illuminated Zoo Bar and drew heads as he attempted to woo the sensuous young lass. Sadly, his ball didn't quite reach the back of the net, despite offering to cook her breakfast. Shame...

As per, Zoo Bar was far from love and games. FC appeared to clash with netball this week, and we can officially dispel any rumours that Higs got involved in a brawl with a member of the opposition. The story goes that he "shoved" her mistakenly, with her sidekick being the valiant lady who punched the FC lad. Lets keep rivalries and spats to competitive sports please, no one likes to see a bloodbath in Zoo.

Brace yourself for the de-babooning of many an AU gentleman next Wednesday, as RAG week will see the AU Wax return with full force. After the successful turn out at Mr LSE, there's no doubt that we'll have another corker of a week, so I expect to see you all there at 7:30pm in the Tuns. Peace.

Sport

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- FA send wrong message by removing Terry
- LSE clash with Kings in snowy conditions
- Rag Week rowathon

LET'S TALK TACTICS



Nilio: LSE's own samba soccer star



Timothy Poole

Nilio, full name Anil Bagga, is well into his third year at LSE. At first glance, he is one and the same as every other LSE undergraduate; however, beneath the surface, there's much, much more. Unbeknownst to most of us here at the School, Nilio is a fully-fledged entrepreneur, running several Samba Soccer Schools around Warwickshire, West-midlands. On a cold, typically British Monday morning, I caught up with the third year sociology student with a difference to find out more about his work.



Nilio on LSE...

You received the Hobhouse Memorial Award for best overall academic performance in Sociology for your first year. What has been your experience of LSE in your time here?

Academically, it's been fantastic - I've really enjoyed my course. The modules have been particularly engaging, especially certain sociological modules which have allowed me to apply my knowledge of the terms, and debates to the projects we deliver with the soccer schools. I joined the football 2nd team in the first and second years which I really enjoyed; the social life has been great as well. Overall my experience of LSE has progressively got better. It's interesting because at a university like LSE, you meet people who have knowledge about what you do which you don't necessarily have, so you constantly find yourself learning about yourself, your work and others. I've managed to create several good friendship groups and it's always good for people to bounce ideas off each other.

As a third year sociology student, in a few words, could you tell us what the sociology of sport is exactly?

I haven't studied the sociology of sport as a module but I do like reading on the subject outside of my studies; it's a sub-discipline of sociology which focuses on sports as social phenomena. It's concerned with various socio-cultural structures, patterns or groups involved with sport. It's a shame that the sociology department here doesn't have a sociology of sport module, you know - its central to peoples lives and appears to be increasingly so. It would be great to see one in the future.

Your dissertation is based on the lack of British Indians in managerial and playing positions in UK top-flight football; could you tell us a bit about what your research has shown you?

Yes, my dissertation is focussed on the representation of British Indians in playing and coaching and you can't focus on the two separately, there's a clear relation between playing and coaching. British Indians haven't had a player in the Premier League so that makes it a lot harder for there to be any British Indian coaches. Clearly, there are a lot of British Indians playing and coaching at grassroots level, but hardly any are playing and none are coaching at professional level. A cultural barrier exists - it would be interesting to explore the issue from all angles, from British Asians themselves - how they perceive it to exist - to seniors in the FA. Even carrying out an historical comparative analysis would be useful to show how far, if at all, British Indians have come to break that cultural barrier.

Nilio on the social enterprise...

Samba Soccer Schools was started before you came to LSE; what was it like setting your own social enterprise up during your gap year?

Challenging. Really challenging, but also exciting. You have to have a lot of self-discipline. I had a lot of drawbacks initially but, in doing these things, you're required to overcome obstacles, which thankfully I did - it's great to see the rewards that follow hard work. I think we've done extremely well to get where we are; Samba Soccer Schools is completely different today to when we started. The vision has become very clear.

How did the enterprise develop initially?

[Laughs] As an expensive idea. Well, we started off needing investment and we got this from various charities such as the Round Table. I didn't have the money at that age to fund the idea - without the initial financial support, we probably wouldn't exist. We did our market research and the feedback we got from schools we'd sent questionnaires to was very positive; we knew people wanted our idea. Initially, we set up a school in Kenilworth and this was a huge success. We found that young people really liked the style of football we taught and the Brazilian samba music we combine with the coaching. The money generated from this project was put back into delivering more projects in local communities with the aim of developing the esteem and spirit of those communities. Now, we're running courses in Warwick, Coventry, Sydenham, Brunswick and Southam and we have upcoming projects lined up in a small town in Brazil called Goiânia, working in partnership with an organisation called the Gap. We'll be going to Brazil the summer after next; we're looking to leave a legacy - the big aim is Brazil

2014 and, hopefully, by then we'll become an international brand.

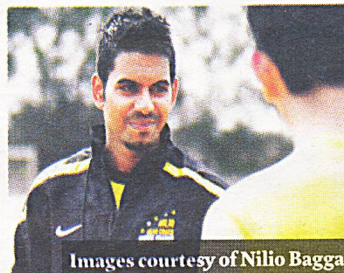
Nilio on the schools...

Your work has seen you short-listed for two Asian Football Awards; what are the main aims of your soccer schools?

The soccer school has a two-fold purpose; one is to encourage young people to play with the flair and freedom that epitomises the Brazilian game. Secondly, the schools look to use football as a tool for social development. We use football as the medium to develop discipline, confidence and knowledge in young people. We want the world to become a better place because Samba Soccer Schools was here. We aim to reveal the talent of young players from local communities with the belief that they can get in. We also provide employment opportunities for young people in coaching and project work. We want to develop more coaches teach football the Brazilian way with the launch of your Youth Employment Plan.

So what is it that makes your schools unique compared to other academies?

It's the style of football and attitude we have as coaches that makes Samba Soccer Schools unique. Its a collaboration you know. Our philosophy is simple. We want young people to play football with passion and joy. This style and attitude to football produces excellent results on and off the pitch. The programmes we run are designed in ways that incorporate Brazil's carnival culture promoting flair, skill, rhythm and positivity. The schools have got a lot to do with having fun, but it's also about recognising talent. We hope to provide a future for those that play for us, not only in playing, but also in coaching. Our schools also demonstrate innovation. We coach young



Images courtesy of Nilio Bagga

people Brazilian football to the sound of samba music. Its good because the rhythm gives rise to a synchronous, stylistic way of playing football both independently and within a team.

Are there any particularly promising talents that you're working with at the moment?

Yes, two lads got through to the England trials; they didn't quite make it in the team but it was a great experience for them - they learnt a lot. I also have three very committed and skilful younger players. Im sure we'll see

them in the leagues in the future.

How much do you enjoy working with the players?

I enjoy it as much as the players love to play football! Coaching is a lot of fun for me, especially when you see young people adapt to the Brazilian style and the rewards that follow. They begin to realise their own potential. I've been coaching since I was about 15 and I set up Samba Soccer Schools at about 18. At times it does get challenging, but perseverance is key. I was also coaching for a different company originally called 'We Play', which helped me learn the tricks of the trade and I'm fully applying all my knowledge at the moment.

Nilio on the what Brazil can teach us...

What are the key difference between Brazilian and English football?

I guess the difference can be captured in Neymar's motto; "Ousadia e Alegria" which means boldness and joy - this is the style of playing Brazilian football. English football is more about discipline and defense, whereas Brazilian football is more of an art - it's all about attacking with pace and flair. I think we can learn a lot from the Brazilians and we can use their methodology to build the next wave of talented and skilful players. It's the attention they pay to the technique of play that is phenomenal. They treat the ball as if it was a partner in a dance, this gives the comfort and rhythm of play. It's like what Robinho says, 'Man, you can't just play football, you've got to have the sway'. You always want to watch Brazil as they just have a completely entertaining brand of football. The English league is very different, we don't see much creativity. Its too tactically defensive which is a shame because there are some fantastic players in the leagues. I used to play Sunday League football and the midfielders would be very aggressive and use their upper body more than their lower body. Brazilian football focuses much more on the lower body.

Is this something you concentrate on through your work with Samba Soccer Schools?

Definitely; we use a smaller, heavier ball to develop technical skill and ability. Kids in Brazil first train with a smaller size, which makes them more adapted to a creative, flair-based game. We try to encourage young players to play this way from an early age too. The coaches encourage the players to use their skill as much as they can, but, admittedly, this can't come at the cost of letting their teammates down. Its fun to watch and this style produces more goals - at the end of the day who doesn't want to see more goals!

South America is known for producing the very best players: Messi, Ronaldinho, Pele, Maradonna - and many more. Can a country like England have real hopes to foster similar technically proficient talent?

Of course. Watch playground

football. You'll see a Messi, Ronaldinho, Pele and Maradonna. If you ever watch young players play football on the playground during their breaks, its much like Brazilian football. They play with a lot of flair. When I was younger, me and my friends would be so passionate, we didn't want the bell to ring. We'd plan tactics during our lesson for the next break. Like all kids at a young age, our passion and joy of football was never ending. Why then do kids grow out of this style of football? I think it has a lot to do with the method and attitude coaches have here. Play can be very strict at times. This is what fazes out that creative playground spark. Brazilian football is a way of life and perhaps we need to adopt this culture on the pitch. No doubt, our England players are fantastic; we know they are. But together, they are not gelling - unlike a team such as Brazil or Spain. That might have something to do with them not being integrated enough.

Nilio on sport...

Do you see sport as a way forward for under-privileged children?

Yes, definitely. When I set up the enterprise originally, my vision of it was broken down into three things: firstly, to finding a targeted community that needs help; second, to develop high quality Brazilian football programmes to help them, and thirdly, to stay in contact with those communities and build a relationship with them in which we provide value to them. Sports allow under-privileged children to realise their own talent and their own aspirations, which pushes them on in life. It's definitely one of the ways forward.

Finally, if you had one bit of advice to someone from a disadvantaged background who wants to become a footballer, what would it be?

For anyone on the downside of advantage, whose chances of becoming a footballer may seem to be at odds with reality, the price of success is hard work, dedication to the dream, and the determination that whether you make it or not, you have applied the best of yourself to make it. If you have a dream, there's nothing in the world that can stop you, except you, yourself. Stay focused!

Ever thought about becoming the England manager?

[Laughs]... I wouldn't write it off. Nilio first harboured hopes of becoming a professional footballer, but his passion soon turned towards coaching. He will be speaking at TED x LSE on the 17th March whilst, if you want to know more about the Samba Soccer Schools, you can contact Nilio on admin@sambasoccer.net. or visit the upcoming website at www.soccersambaschools.com at the end of the month.