



# bbk

The Birkbeck magazine Issue 24, Autumn 2008

## LONG LEGS OF THE LAW

Should new legislation  
protect sex workers  
and clients?



Welcome to issue 24 of *BBK*. As ever, there is an enormous variety of world-class Birkbeck research to showcase, from yawning dogs (p1) to space exploration (p18).

The Chief Executive of the Arts Council, Alan Davey, tells *BBK* how his MA Classics from Birkbeck “opened up a whole new vista” (p13), and we hear from Dr Jean Moorcroft Wilson (p26) about how another graduate, war poet Isaac Rosenberg, had a unique perspective on the trenches. Meanwhile, the Master, Professor David Latchman details Birkbeck’s new strategy for the future (p8), while the latest news about Birkbeck Stratford is featured on page 11.

Birkbeck academics continue to engage with the public by commenting on important issues of the day: Professor Rob Singh says that an Obama administration may be at least as problematic as Bush (p24); Dr Dermot Hodson asks if Gordon Brown’s political demise is inevitable (p22); and Dr Belinda Brooks-Gordon says that public policy on prostitution must respect the civil liberties of both sex workers and clients (p20).

As always, we welcome your comments.

Catherine Stevens

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Cover image

Legs in fishnet stockings  
(Philip J Brittain/  
Getty Images)



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ANNIVERSARY PRIZES  
FOR HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION

2006

# Great exhalations

Research into yawn contagion shows the link between man and man's best friend

When a research project about yawning dogs by a Birkbeck undergraduate captured the attention of the worldwide media in August, the College benefited from extensive publicity. The research – which revealed that human yawns induce yawning in dogs – was reported in several national newspapers, and on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme, BBC1's *Breakfast News*, BBC World Service, BBC FiveLive and many regional radio stations, as well as in the US, New Zealand, Germany and Israel.

Most journalists and presenters treated the story lightheartedly, with the *Daily Mail* photographing several of their writers trying to induce yawns in their pets, as well as offering tips on how to stifle a yawn in important meetings. The *Los Angeles Times* invited readers to bring about a yawn in their canine friends, while the *Daily Telegraph* suggested that your dog may be able to read your mind.

Ramiro Joly-Mascheroni, whose BSc Psychology paper had attracted all the attention, found himself catapulted into the media glare overnight. "You can imagine my surprise when I woke up to breakfast news mentioning the research. I was amazed by the repercussions the study had in the media, practically all over the world," he says. "I suppose I did enjoy it, but at first, it all came as a bit of a shock. I spent the whole day giving radio interviews, including the BBC World Service, which might have been how my aunt found out. She lives in Buenos Aires."

Ramiro, who is starting an MSc at Birkbeck in Cognitive Neuropsychology and Cognitive Neuroscience this autumn, adds: "I found it nerve wracking to suddenly have to speak live about scientific work, especially because some radio stations picked up on

the serious side of the study too."

Ramiro's research paper was published in the Royal Society Journal *Biology Letters*. Up until now, contagious yawning has only been reported in humans and other primates such as chimpanzees, and is thought to relate to the capacity for empathy. Previous research by Birkbeck's Dr Atsushi Senju has found that people with autism, who often have impairment in the capacity for empathy, do not find yawning contagious. This new research may in the future help psychologists find out why the autistic brain behaves in this way.

"The research may suggest that what is impaired in autism may not be a human- or primate-specific capacity, but the capacity shared with other species," says Atsushi, who supervised Ramiro's study

with Dr Alex Shepherd at Birkbeck's Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development.

"As there are very few studies in this field, there are lots of potential next steps. We should examine the cognitive and neural basis for yawn contagion both in humans and non-humans, and explore the evolutionary origin of yawn contagion as well."

During the experiments, 29 dogs sat through two tests with researchers who were strangers to them. In the first, scientists simulated a loud, vocal yawn every time the dog made eye contact. In the control tests, scientists opened their mouths without making a

noise. "We found that when the experimenters mimicked yawning, 21 out of 29 dogs showed contagious yawning, and none of the dogs in the control group yawned, so this is a very strong and reliable effect," says Atsushi, who is supported by an ESRC/MRC Interdisciplinary Postdoctoral Fellowship.

Below: Yawning dalmations (Image Bank/Getty Images)



# Life in the fast lane

## Budding scientists step into researchers' shoes in Birkbeck's interns programme

The School of Crystallography has hosted seven budding scientists in its new Summer Internship Programme. Undergraduate students from universities across the UK, including UCL and Cambridge, and beyond, were given a taste of life as a researcher as they joined research teams in the School to begin to make scientific discoveries of their own. The students worked in areas as diverse as the mechanisms of dementia, high performance computational biology and the malaria parasite. "Their experience in a world-class research department will fire their passion for discovery and hopefully be the starting point for successful careers in science," said Dr Carolyn Moores, Research Fellow at the School.

One of the interns, Oliver Huish (20), is entering his third year of a Biochemistry degree at UCL this autumn. He wanted to experience life as a Birkbeck researcher because "it looked like a great opportunity to work at a world-

famous scientific institution", he says. Working under Dr Mark Williams, Oliver's project was to modify a computer programming tool, called BTL (pronounced beetle), previously written at Birkbeck, to enable it to harness fully the power of modern 'supercomputer' processors.

"My particular target was the Cell Processor, which is at the heart of every PlayStation 3. I doubt many people start the working day by turning on a games console! PlayStations are a very cheap source of a lot of computing power and their use is growing in serious scientific research." Oliver says he found the internship very useful because he would like to continue along the science route after he graduates.

Another intern, Nair Bonito (22), will finish her undergraduate degree in biochemistry this year from University of Coimbra, Portugal. For her internship she worked with Dr Carolyn Moores on

Below: Oliver Huish and Nair Bonito at Birkbeck, with portraits of famous crystallographers JD Bernal and Rosalind Franklin in the background (Christina Panagi)

the malaria parasite. "It was always my desire to come to London to develop my scientific knowledge, combined with the opportunity to improve my English. My brother has a good friend who had a great experience here and told me good things about Birkbeck."

She continues: "It was an amazing experience that made me feel that I'm getting more independent and competent in the lab. I learnt from more experienced colleagues, shared their thoughts, suggested my views and learnt how to solve more complex problems on my own. People at Birkbeck were really friendly and very patient when explaining new things. I would love to develop my career as a researcher and I'm thinking about applying for a PhD."

Adam Brewer (20), now in his third year at Cambridge, worked with the Listeria bacterium alongside Birkbeck's Dr Ajit Basak in a bid to understand better how it interacts with the immune system. "I wanted to take part in this internship programme because Birkbeck has a strong research reputation, especially in Crystallography, where it has some famous alumni. Working in a world-class establishment means you get to do high-quality research with people who are passionate and really know what they're talking about, so you end up with a solid grounding in the subject. When you are an undergraduate, you only experience laboratory work in teaching labs, so by doing a research internship you get experience of what doing a PhD might be like before you have to commit yourself. I would definitely recommend it to other undergrads who are considering research."



To find out more about research at the School of Crystallography, visit [www.cryst.bbk.ac.uk](http://www.cryst.bbk.ac.uk)



# Birkbeck leads autism network

Researchers at the forefront of a national project aimed at shedding light on a baffling condition



A nationwide project bringing together scientists from a host of different fields has been launched in a bid to shed light on one of medicine's most baffling conditions – autism. The British Autism Study of Infant Siblings (BASIS) is managed by a team at the Birkbeck Babylab, where researchers were awarded a grant worth £1.9 million by the Medical Research Council.

The team will work with a group of babies who may have a higher than average chance of developing autism because an older sibling has been diagnosed with the condition. Scientists believe understanding the differences between this group and those with no family history of autism could help identify early warning signs so that therapies can be more effectively implemented.

Birkbeck's Professor Mark Johnson, who directs the Babylab and the autism network, says: "This new project means we can harness the UK's strengths in cognitive neuroscience, neuropsychology and

infant psychology in a way that has never been achieved elsewhere."

Other institutions taking part include the Institutes of Child Health and Psychiatry, and the Universities of Cambridge, Oxford and Manchester.

Eye-tracking is used to measure where babies are looking and how quickly they move their eyes, and brain activity is recorded using the Babylab's custom-designed, baby-friendly 'sensor net'.

When these babies reach two and three, the researchers will conduct tests to see whether or not they show symptoms of autism. "With those children who do show signs of autism, we will re-examine our data from their first two years in order to understand the factors that differentiate them from babies who did not go on to develop autism. This will improve our knowledge of the earliest symptoms, and we hope it will help in the design of interventions that may alleviate the condition in at least some children."

Above: A baby takes part in one of the activities designed to measure brain activity, wearing the sensor net (Michael Crabtree Portraits)

## Parenting scheme assessed

The findings of Birkbeck's government-commissioned research to evaluate the performance of the Family Nurse Partnership show that the programme is helping to improve the life chances of vulnerable babies, young children and their families.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families, along with the Department of Health, started piloting the Family Nurse Partnership in 10 areas in England in 2007. Family nurses provide intensive home visiting for vulnerable first-time young parents, working with them from early pregnancy until the child is two. The nurses aim to build close relationships with parents so that they adopt healthier lifestyles, provide good care for their babies and plan their future life goals.

"My research, conducted over two years, found that the scheme is widely welcomed by hard-to-reach families and reaches clients who are likely to benefit most," says Professor Jacqueline Barnes, from Birkbeck's Institute for the Study of Children, Families and Social Issues.

"The parents had very high regard for their family nurses and engagement with fathers was good. There are early signs that clients now have aspirations for the future and cope better with pregnancy, labour and parenthood."

Children's Minister Beverly Hughes adds: "The research shows that this alternative way of working by family nurses is making a real difference to the lives of young parents." A further 20 sites will soon deliver the Family Nurse Partnership scheme.

# Arts and soul

Arts Week captures the imagination, writes Professor Tom Healy

Birkbeck has an enviable reputation for the quality and liveliness of its Arts and Humanities research. In History, Literature, Politics, Law, Philosophy, History of Art, Languages, Film, Sociology and Linguistics, Birkbeck academics engage with the important intellectual, social and cultural issues of our time, particularly promoting a climate of interdisciplinary inquiry. Birkbeck's Arts Week, which this year took place between 27 May and 2 June, was designed as a showcase of the varied concerns, public and scholarly, that engage Birkbeck academics. It offered 21 events: lectures, readings, panel discussions, even an eight-hour

marathon reading of the epic 'Beowulf' in its original Old English – an occasion that drew a favourable review in *The Times*.

The idea behind Arts Week was a simple one. Virtually every week of the year, a large number of arts activities take place in the College; but many are only publicised among groups of specialists. Arts Week invited everyone to these events – current, former and prospective students, members of the public and Birkbeck staff – to sample the variety of our engagement with the Arts.

Co-ordinated by myself from English and Humanities and Claire Adams from the Faculty of Arts, but occurring because of the enthusiasm of Birkbeck staff for

their work, Arts Week enabled all those interested to discover more about such diverse topics as medieval Islam and science, the politics of memory, 'making' theatre in London today, or whether morality is absolute or relative. Screenings of films of historic London took place, the artist Malcolm Le Grice presented and spoke about some of his video art, and there was a reading about the disciples of the American poet Walt Whitman.

Special to Arts Week, a substantial number of staff from various disciplines came together to hold roundtable discussions about 'Drivers of Global Political Change', 'Empire in a Post-Colonial World', and about how Russia is and has been perceived by the British. There was also an opportunity for people thinking about undertaking study in the Arts at Birkbeck to ask the staff questions and find out what is available.

Arts Week was an experiment and it was interesting to see what captured people's interests and imaginations. A lecture on 'Constantine and the Law of Christ' had a big uptake, and a presentation of research by staff in linguistics had the organisers roaming about searching for more seats to accommodate the turn out. The week was a sound start to what will become an annual event. Planning has already started for next year's Arts Week (May 11–17) and while we may not be able to repeat our 'Beowulf' marathon, we do promise an impressive, eclectic and wide-ranging group of activities.

Below: Illustration of Grendel from *Brave Beowulf*, edited by Thos Cartwright (© The British Library/Heritage-Images)



For more information contact Claire Adams, [office@fac-arts.bbk.ac.uk](mailto:office@fac-arts.bbk.ac.uk). For details about studying at Birkbeck, visit [www.bbk.ac.uk/prospective](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/prospective)

# On the box

Dr Mike Allen on the explosion of serious writing about television

Television has traditionally been regarded as the poor cousin of cinema, both in general cultural terms and in the academic arena. But the growth and complexity of television as an institutional, social and cultural phenomenon, especially in the satellite and digital era, has made that pejorative attitude increasingly outmoded. In the 21st century, television has become, arguably, more socially and culturally significant than cinema. The explosion in serious writing on and about television over the last decade is an indication of this shift. This increasing academic interest in the medium has been one of the impetuses in Birkbeck developing its new MA Television Studies, launching in October 2009.

The part-time and full-time master's degree will provide a mirror programme to the existing MA History of Film and Visual Media, which offers only small 'pockets' of television among its taught modules. The two MAs are designed to allow students to take advantage of modular interactivity, enabling them to choose to study components of both programmes.

Birkbeck has chosen to develop this postgraduate course because very few currently exist in British academia. In fact, there are only two dedicated MAs in television in UK higher education, at Aberystwyth and Bristol, with all other postgraduate taught programmes at British universities teaching a combination of film and television. Birkbeck, therefore, hopes to be able to offer the new MA to a substantial potential catchment area, throughout London and the south east.

The MA Television Studies will offer a range of taught modules – a broad, survey-style core course and



Above image: iStockphoto

several optional modules on subject areas including Television and its Related Media, European Television, Experimental British Television, and Contemporary American Television. Students will also conduct a research project into an aspect of contemporary television practice and a dissertation on a subject chosen by them.

As an alternative to the research project – a unique feature of the MA, as in the existing MA History of Film and Visual Media – there will be a two-month work placement, which will offer students the opportunity to experience working within a television-related media company. Many students in the film MA have gone on to find careers in media partly as a result of experience gained during their placement. The combination of academic rigour of the taught modules and dissertation, together with the

practical skills offered by the placement, will make the MA Television Studies a uniquely attractive programme.

We hope that the new MA, framed within the international reputation of British television, will fill an important gap in the spread of taught postgraduate courses on offer to potential students in the London area, as well as being of interest to others from further afield and abroad. The MA Television Studies will put Birkbeck at the forefront of an exciting and expanding area of media academia, confirming its international reputation as a leading research institution.

Dr Mike Allen is the admissions tutor for the MA Television Studies. His book, *Live from the Moon: Filming and Televising the Space Race*, will be published early next year by IB Tauris. To find out more about studying at Birkbeck, visit [www.bbk.ac.uk/prospective](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/prospective)

# On the record

A new dictionary of nineteenth century journalism reveals an intriguing history of the press

## Bursary take-up examined

A new study has been launched to explore the strategies used by English universities to promote institutional bursaries to students, parents and academic advisors. The Office of Fair Access (OFFA) commissioned Birkbeck's Professor Claire Callender and David Wilkinson (National Institute for Economic and Social Research) to look at the actions taken by higher education institutions (HEIs) to improve bursary take-up. It will review the marketing techniques used to promote bursaries, and ask whether bursaries influence students' decisions about where and what to study at university.

"Despite the government's and HEIs' endeavours to ensure that students are aware of the support on offer, reports suggest that students are especially unaware of bursary provision," says Professor Callender. "At least 12,000 students on full state support failed to collect their bursaries in the first year of the new system."

Sir Martin Harris, Director of Fair Access, says: "Bursaries help make higher education affordable for students from lower income backgrounds. It is, therefore, vital that institutions promote them effectively so that students know what they're entitled to and take up their bursaries. This important piece of work should help achieve this."

The study will be completed in the spring. The results will help produce good practice guidance for university staff responsible for the publicity and delivery of bursaries.

Meanwhile, Birkbeck came fourth in a national table of universities with the biggest rise, at 458, in government-funded student places.



Above: A group of journalists during the trial of French army officer Alfred Dreyfus in 1894 (Gerschel/Getty Images)

The international launch of the *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism* takes place on 8 December at the British Library.

"With over 1700 entries, *DNCJ* features journalists, periodicals, newspapers, publishers, printers, illustrators and relevant topics," says co-editor, Laurel Brake.

Funded by the British Academy, the Royal Flemish Academy, and the Birkbeck Schools of Continuing Education and English and Humanities, *DNCJ* is a result of international collaboration in the research community, with 13 associate editors from the continent, the US and the UK, and contributors from across the world.

*DNCJ* is published by the British Library and Academia Press, Ghent, and electronically by ProQuest. Visit [www.dncj.ugent.be](http://www.dncj.ugent.be) for details.

Meanwhile, a new, free and publicly accessible digital edition of six 19th century newspapers and periodicals is now available from the British Library, the

University of London and Olive Software. The *Nineteenth-Century Serials Edition* (NCSE), directed by Professor Brake, is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. "NCSE includes a range of titles that span the century," she says. "Selected for their variety and innovation, they represent the prodigious transformation and growth of the press in that century that parallels our own move from paper to digital content."

The collection includes a satirical contemporary of *Punch*, an early women's magazine published and set by women, a publishing trade magazine, a Chartist newspaper, a mid-century political weekly and a long-lived philosophical monthly.

Professor Brake adds: "From history to theology, literature to politics, interviews to obituaries, the material here is framed by, but not confined to, media history."

For details visit [www.ncse.ac.uk](http://www.ncse.ac.uk)

## CAUGHT BY THE BUZZ

When Catherine Arbuthnott reached the final of *University Challenge* in 1998 representing Birkbeck, she clearly ignited a passion for answering questions under intense pressure. Ten years later, she is still taking part in quiz shows, with her Birkbeck pals Ken Brown and Richard Wheatley, who both faced Jeremy Paxman a year later.

The threesome have now formed team 'Birkbeck Alumni' for the new TV quiz *Only Connect*, on BBC4 every Monday until December. Contestants compete to find connections between seemingly disparate elements. Team captain and teacher Catherine (MA Medieval Studies, MPhil Medieval Studies) says: "We work well together because we respect each other's ideas." Ken, who read Bioinformatics and works in computer support at Birkbeck, says: "Our previous TV experience was useful. We do think we are fast on the buzzer but we faced other fast teams too." Ken and Richard also appear on BBC2's *Eggheads* this autumn.

Right: From left to right, Catherine Arbuthnott, Ken Brown and Richard Wheatley (Christina Panagi)



## Law firm offers bursaries to Birkbeck students

Denton Wilde Sapte uses new matched funding scheme to boost funding

Denton Wilde Sapte LLP, a leading city law firm, has launched a postgraduate bursary scheme for students at Birkbeck's Stratford campus, using £50,000 of dormant client funds, following clearance from the Solicitors Regulation Authority.

The firm used the government's new matched funding scheme (see page 16) to boost the bursary funding by a third to offer a total grant of £75,000. Birkbeck Stratford staff plan to run the bursaries over three years, providing £1,000 grants to around 10 students a year. The scheme has been extended to enable students at Birkbeck's Bloomsbury campus to apply for financial assistance too.

"We recognise the myriad links that a business has to its local community, and have chosen to focus particularly our pro bono and volunteer work in London on disadvantaged communities in east

London," says Denton Wilde Sapte Chief Executive, Howard Morris.

"We are very interested in Birkbeck Stratford, as it offers part-time and evening courses, which makes it much more accessible to mature students and postgraduates. We have established these taught postgraduate bursaries to support part-time students with a particular enthusiasm for the regeneration of their local community, whose work will contribute towards creating lasting beneficial socio-economic and/or environmental development and change."

"The generosity and support shown by Denton Wilde Sapte is invaluable to the Stratford project," says Adrian Punaks, Birkbeck's Head of Development and Alumni. "It is appreciated greatly by the College, and of course, by those students who receive awards, as it can be the deciding factor for people struggling to afford

their studies."

Denton Wilde Sapte has made a separate donation of £5,000 to create a hardship fund, which has been part-allocated to two students. The firm has also set up a bursary through the Denton Wilde Sapte Charitable Trust in 2007 that provides one Birkbeck student with £1,500 a year for a four-year course.

The firm's other community projects in east London include the PopLaw free weekly legal advice clinic in Poplar; working with City Gateway, a charity for young people in Tower Hamlets; and providing volunteers at the Whitechapel Mission, London's oldest centre for the homeless.

For details about these postgraduate bursaries, visit [www.bbk.ac.uk/reg/finance/pgt\\_finance](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/reg/finance/pgt_finance)

For general information about how to finance your studies, visit [www.bbk.ac.uk/studentfinance](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/studentfinance)

# Support for part-time students will only improve when it becomes an election issue



Master's report  
David S Latchman

In the last issue of *BBK* I described the Government's decision to withdraw funding for students studying for equivalent or lesser qualifications (ELQ) to those which they hold already, and how Birkbeck was opposing this decision as well as preparing to deal with its impact on us.

Our arguments were supported by the House of Commons Select Committee Inquiry (SCI) into this decision. The committee members were unhappy with several aspects including the lack of consultation prior to the decision being announced.

The Government announced some concessions in response to the SCI, an increase in the compensatory funding for institutions with part-time students and an annual review of the subjects exempted from the ELQ decision. Nonetheless, the College, in common with other institutions, didn't receive funding for new ELQ students beginning their studies in 2008, and the impact of this decision on us will grow year by year so that we will ultimately lose 38% of our teaching funding, according to the Higher Education Funding Council for England's (HEFCE) figures.

In response to this, we are continuing to pursue the dual approach which was outlined in the last *BBK*. Firstly, in terms of Government, we continue to point out the disproportionate impact of the ELQ decision on the part-time sector, which has 10 times as many students affected as in the full-time sector. The focus of our campaign has shifted however, to pointing out how the ELQ decision comes on top of the relatively poor support available to part-time students and the institutions which teach them. We are now lobbying both Government and the Opposition to improve this support. I would urge all our supporters and alumni to join us in this campaign since support for part-time students will only improve when this becomes an election issue, alongside improved support for 18 year olds studying full time.

In parallel, we have continued to pursue the second approach of working with HEFCE to ensure that we develop a strategy for the future that allows Birkbeck to continue to play a key role consistent with our mission of part-time study informed by research excellence. This is of particular importance since we can't simply recruit new students to compensate for those who will no longer

be funded. Rather, we need to obtain fundable student numbers from HEFCE to replace those we have lost in order to ensure that additional students who are recruited attract HEFCE funding.

The College therefore proposed that HEFCE should fund a strategic review of our future and, following the award of £200,000 to do this, we selected Grant Thornton Limited to carry out the review. Most importantly, the Grant Thornton review identified a key role for Birkbeck in the future entirely consistent with our mission that would enable us to bid for the additional funded student numbers to HEFCE. This involves building on our traditional strengths of research excellence combined with part-time study but offering greater flexibility to students to study individual modules (perhaps supported by their employers) in a more flexible manner, so that degrees can be completed in less or more than the traditional four-year, part-time undergraduate degree, according to the students' requirements. This is obviously highly encouraging and forms the basis for Birkbeck to develop a new strategic plan, which is completely in keeping with Government and HEFCE priorities of employer engagement and widening participation. This recognises the key role of the part-time sector in delivering the Government/Leitch target that 40% of the workforce should have a university-level qualification by 2020.

However, it will be necessary for us to make changes at Birkbeck in order to ensure that we can deliver this exciting new agenda. Three key changes emerge from the Grant Thornton report and the discussions College management have had with the consultants. Firstly, we need to develop further the student experience so that every student, from the moment they first make an enquiry to the moment that they graduate, is supported in the most effective way possible. This has led to the proposal of a one-stop student shop in which students would be able to obtain answers to all their queries and receive support on matters such as finance and language skills.

Secondly, we need to reorganise the existing 16 schools of the College into a smaller number of 'super schools', with delegated financial responsibility. This will allow each super school to make resource decisions against a strategic plan, approved annually by the College management. This new structure will allow the third key change, namely the integration of the Faculty of Lifelong Learning with the rest of the College, so that each super

**“ Birkbeck's future role involves building on our traditional strengths of research excellence combined with part-time study but offering greater flexibility ”**

**“By working together with all our staff, students, alumni and other supporters, we can develop a new, improved Birkbeck”**



school will include the appropriate subject areas from the lifelong learning faculty. This will enable the super schools to offer a single pathway in any particular subject, ranging from Certificate and Diploma level, right up to Doctoral level, with students beginning at a level appropriate to their prior qualifications and leaving at the level suited to their requirements, with the opportunity to return for further study in a seamless manner.

These proposals were debated and approved at the College committees in the summer term. In discussions at the Academic Board, we agreed to add the fourth key principle of maintaining the College’s research excellence, which was implicit in the Grant Thornton report and the College management’s discussion of it.

These four key principles were approved by Birkbeck’s Governors at their meeting on 4 July. They will form the basis for the College’s new strategy and for a major bid to the HEFCE strategic development fund (SDF) for the additional student numbers and the resources required to implement our new strategic plan.

I have tasked a number of Birkbeck colleagues with taking these proposals forward, more details of which can be found on our strategic review website. Each of these individuals has convened a small group to assist them with their specific task and is consulting widely across the College. These groups will report to a steering group, which I chair.

I believe the changes will enable us to offer a seamless service to our students both in terms of academic study in their chosen discipline and the support services which are so important for recruitment and retention. Each super school will be able to offer a range of courses at all levels in its academic areas and will make a key contribution to the work of the College in the critical areas of research, teaching, widening participation, engagement with employers and our developments in Stratford. The integration of the lifelong learning faculty will place the issues of lifelong learning and widening participation at the heart of Birkbeck, while maintaining the research excellence which distinguishes us from many other institutions with significant numbers of part-time students.

This is not the first time in its history that Birkbeck has faced difficulties. Each time, the College has responded magnificently and has emerged strengthened and better prepared for the future. I believe that by working together with all our staff, students, alumni and other supporters, we can achieve this once again and develop a new, improved Birkbeck which is loyal to its mission of high quality part-time study in an environment of research excellence, but which offers greater flexibility and an improved service to all our students.





## MAGIC OF THE VIENNESE CAFÉ COMES TO LONDON

As part of a three-year research project with Birkbeck, the Royal College of Art (RCA) is hosting an exhibition this autumn called Vienna Café 1900, exploring the culture and design of the Viennese coffeehouse around the turn of the last century.

Today's London coffeehouse business is booming as more and more people seek a place to rest, work, eat or socialise in the busy city. Looking at how cafés were part of Viennese life raises interesting questions about how we live and socialise in the modern city.

"But for the Viennese coffeehouse, modern life would not be the same for any of us," says Birkbeck's Dr Simon Shaw-Miller. "For those who thought the coffeehouse started with Starbucks, this will come as quite an eye-opener," adds Professor Christopher Frayling, Rector, RCA. From 13-24 October. Visit [www.rca.ac.uk/viennacafe](http://www.rca.ac.uk/viennacafe)

Left: View from the Café Heinrichhof of the Imperial Opera, Wiener Werkstätte Postcard No. 412, c.1910 (©MAK, Gustav Kalhammer)

## Access for all

The latest news from Birkbeck, Stratford

The first Birkbeck Stratford Enrolment Evening on 24 July at the Old Town Hall attracted around 130 visitors. Staff offered taster sessions and advised about all aspects of life as a part-time learner, including financial support.

The outreach team organised a summer schedule of 25 events, spanning shopping centres, libraries and community venues, to keep the Birkbeck Stratford profile high in the run up to the autumn Open Evenings. Activities included an information stand at the Canary Wharf shopping centre.

The team then held a student induction day on 20 September at the University of East London. Current Birkbeck students were on hand to advise new students about how to juggle study with work.

The outreach team continues to form relationships with local practitioners, and held a conference with the Open University and the Linking London Lifelong Learning

Network to educate people whose job it is to advise others about part-time higher education.

Also, the Faculty of Lifelong Learning is collaborating with two Sure Start children's nurseries to make higher education available for local parents. The project is shortlisted for the *Times Higher Education* Widening Participation Initiative of the Year, with the winner announced on 23 October.

Thirty women commenced their studies last year in St Stephen's Children's Centre, Upton Park, and in the Rebecca Cheetham Child Care Centre, Stratford. This project is particularly distinctive because it provides face-to-face learning in the nurseries for parents whilst their children are cared for in the same building. "Attendance at classes has been exceptional," says Birkbeck's Elaine Hawkins. "Two babies have been born lately but the mothers returned to study after only two weeks' break."

Three quarters are set to complete 60 credits towards their Level 4 Certificate, and are keen to continue on UEL or Birkbeck degrees in Stratford. One says: "The course helped me to re-start my education. I'm so happy Birkbeck provided a course like this."

An 'Acting Together' event in July brought together community and youth workers from Birkbeck and the Theatre Royal Stratford East to explore how theatre can provide creative opportunities for those who are often excluded.

Lastly, a £50,000 donation from The Eranda Foundation will help extend Birkbeck's Babylab research into east London. Researchers hope to understand better the effects of nutrition, multilingual households and the importance of sleep in the development of babies. "This kick-starts the major fundraising campaign for the Stratford building project," says Adrian Punaks, Head of Development and Alumni.



## BIRKBECK'S LEGAL CONTORTIONIST

Second-year Law student and contortionist Iona Luvsandorj took her incredible act into the semi-final of ITV's variety show *Britain's Got Talent* earlier in the year. Iona, who manages to squeeze performances around her studies, has been training for 18 years and attended a circus school.

"I can't be a contortionist for ever and I need to think about what I'll do next," she said. "I love Law and would like to practice contract law in the future." She is pictured being filmed at Birkbeck by ITV.

## Figes book shortlisted for Samuel Johnson Prize

Powerful book illuminates hidden histories

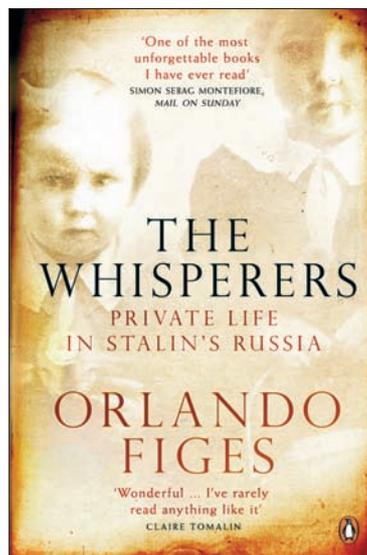
Orlando Figes' book *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* was shortlisted for the prestigious Samuel Johnson Prize this summer. Sponsored by BBC Four, the prize, now in its 10th year, celebrates diverse and thought-provoking writing in non-fiction. The award covers current affairs, history, politics, science, sport, travel, biography, autobiography and the arts, and the competition is open to authors of any nationality whose work is published in the UK in English.

Although Professor Figes didn't win, the honour of being shortlisted for the prize often has a big impact on the selected authors. Kate Summerscale won for her account of a notorious Victorian murder mystery, *The Suspicions of Mr Whicher*.

Professor Figes has written five histories of modern Russia. This moving and powerful book illuminates as never before the

hidden histories of the ordinary people who lived under Stalin's tyranny. It reveals a society where everyone spoke in whispers: whether to protect themselves, their families or friends – or to betray them.

Drawing on hundreds of private



family archives concealed in secret drawers and under mattresses in homes across Russia, and on countless interviews with survivors, Professor Figes recreates the maze in which people found themselves: a world of terrible moral choices and compromises, where an unwitting wrong turn could either destroy a family or, perversely, later save it.

Living a double life became the norm, yet, amid all this, love, creativity and family resilience somehow managed to defy the state's values.

This history, one of the most important and involving for many years, lets Stalin's silent victims tell their stories for the first time. Eric Hobsbawm, Birkbeck President's, says: "Few historians have the courage to attack great subjects, fewer have the grasp to succeed... this book will do more to help us understand the Russian revolution than any other book I know."

# A new vista

Alan Davey tells *BBK* how his MA Classics helps him in his role as Chief Executive of the Arts Council



As the man in charge of leading the organisation responsible for championing, developing and investing in the arts, Alan Davey has a lot on his plate. It's no wonder he's having trouble finishing his Birkbeck PhD.

The Arts Council is the national development agency for the arts, distributing public money from the government and the National Lottery. As the bedrock of support for the arts in England, it will invest £1.6 billion from 2008-11.

Alan is well known for his passionate interest in, and advocacy of, the arts, as well as for his unrivalled knowledge of public policy in this area. He was previously director for culture at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2003-06), and at the then Department of National Heritage he was responsible for designing the National Lottery.

In 1998, while he was working as

a civil servant at the Department of Health, Alan embarked on the MA Classics at Birkbeck. "It looked like such a great course that reflected the multi-disciplinary nature of classics," he says. "I would recommend it. I loved Birkbeck so much that I somehow carved out time for my studies. My partner said it was lovely to see me content with a pile of books."

Alan remembers most fondly the Tuesday night core course in the first year. "There was the realisation that we could never be certain about what we know and didn't know, and the real nature of proper scholarship. Then there was beginning to understand Virgil's epic Latin poem, 'Aeneid'. It was marvellous. It has opened up a whole new vista in terms of knowledge. I take nothing for granted, and look for ambiguity of expression and messages much more than I did."

Above: Alan Davey at the daring Arts Council-commissioned 'Turning the Place Over' public art display by Richard Wilson in Liverpool. The sculptor cut out a section of a derelict building and rotated it on a giant pivot

Alan learnt Latin and Greek as part of his studies. "It was hard in terms of time," he says. "Latin was like getting to know an old friend better, and Greek was like being introduced to a new way of thinking. Once you get it, it's the most natural, wonderful way of expressing things that you may not have thought anyone wanted to express."

Although Alan has written four chapters of his Birkbeck PhD exploring Roman masculinity, this aspect of his life is "on ice", he says. "It's my unfulfilled ambition. When I've settled into this job I will recommence seriously."

His Birkbeck studies to date have assisted him in his new role at the Arts Council by helping him think about art and culture in relation to society in a different way, he says. "I've learnt to never take things at face value. I love the job. It's really good to be running an organisation that should be at the heart of civic life in this country. And it frequently is but it can be more."

The crux of his job is finding the balance between focusing funding on quality and brilliance, and at the same time promoting accessibility and connecting with diverse audiences. "We fund great art – the brilliant, wonderful, unexpected stuff that artists do – and we make it available to as many people as possible," he says. "Great art will reflect the diversity of the UK. Access and excellence go together."

It's no surprise that Alan uses his spare time to immerse himself in the arts. "London is a fantastic place for the arts. I can't get enough. And I'm currently reading a book on Roman manliness that I'm disagreeing with, which is always fun. So I'm still at the PhD ..."

To find out about studying History at Birkbeck, visit [www.bbk.ac.uk/prospective](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/prospective)



# Where there's a will there's a way

Jakki Mellor-Ellis on leaving a legacy to the College

Former student Jakki Mellor-Ellis was delighted to graduate with a BSc in Psychology from Birkbeck in 2004, and wanted to continue her studies at postgraduate level, with the hope of becoming a counsellor. However, due to a change in personal circumstances, Jakki's financial situation changed, leaving her unable to fund her studies. Reluctant to let this set-back stop her, Jakki looked for funding, exploring different charities and organisations that would fund her. What she found, however, was extremely disappointing. As others may have learned, the availability of postgraduate funding is limited, making it even harder for students on lower-incomes to progress to a higher level of study.

Determined that others wouldn't have to miss out, and could benefit from a postgraduate Birkbeck education, Jakki decided to leave a gift in her will to Birkbeck, to benefit postgraduate students wishing to study in the School of Psychology. "My studies at Birkbeck gave me great confidence," she explains, as she made use of her new-found skills to take up posts such as Governor of University College London Hospital (UCLH) and to sit on a number of its community outreach boards.

The support Jakki received from her tutors, and the "fantastic" work of the Disability Office confirmed her decision, along with her concern that more students may have difficulty paying for their education in the future.

Jakki found the process of arranging her will and remembering a gift to Birkbeck quite easy, choosing to leave a residuary legacy – a percentage share of the value of her estate – to the College. By remembering Birkbeck in this way, and by letting us know of her intentions, we have been able to



Below: Jakki Mellor-Ellis (Geoff Wilson)

work closely with Jakki to make sure that her wishes are carried out.

Jakki's enthusiasm for the College shines through, and she continues to volunteer for us at Open Evenings on the alumni stand, promoting the benefits that a Birkbeck qualification can bring to everyone.

Believing that university fundraising is becoming even more important to ensure equal access to education, Jakki says: "I would strongly encourage others to follow my lead. I believe legacies are a fantastic potential source of funding for all would-be Birkbeck students.

If you would like more details about how to remember Birkbeck in your will, or would like to inform us that you have already done so, contact Rhian Curtis on 020 7079 0763 or [r.curtis@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:r.curtis@bbk.ac.uk). A brochure is also available online at [www.bbk.ac.uk/alumni/support](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/alumni/support)

## Princess Royal opens LIDC

HRH The Princess Royal inaugurated the premises of the London International Development Centre (LIDC) in the summer as Chancellor of the University of London. The LIDC brings together social and natural scientists and educators across the six Bloomsbury Colleges, namely Birkbeck, the Institute of Education, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the Royal Veterinary College, the School of Oriental and African Studies and the School of Pharmacy. The aim is to address complex problems in international development.

The Princess Royal expressed delight at the re-opening of the Georgian building at 36 Gordon Square, as well as her interest in LIDC's work. After being welcomed by Sir Andy Haines (Director of the London School of Hygiene) and Professor Jeff Waage (LIDC's Director), she met LIDC staff, including Birkbeck's Dr Andrew Jones (pictured).

For more details, visit <http://lidc.bloomsbury.ac.uk>





## IN MEMORY OF BENEDETTA

Birkbeck's second annual cake sale this summer raised £1,509 for the the Benedetta Ciaccia Memorial Fund. Together with sponsorship funds raised by 12 staff taking part in the British 10k London Run, a total of £3,200 was raised for the Fund, which assists students who encounter hardship while studying.

The Fund also sponsors the award for Best Final Year Student on the Foundation Degree in IT, received this year by Arthur Jach. "I would like to thank the College for giving me the chance to prove myself," says Arthur. "I am pleased to know that all my time and effort put into studying has been noticed and appreciated. Knowing that the prize is funded by the Benedetta Ciacca Memorial Fund makes this moment even more special."

For details about how to donate to Birkbeck, visit [www.bbk.ac.uk/alumni/support](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/alumni/support)

## Two gifts for the price of one

It's never been a better time to give, writes Adrian Punaks

The government launched a £200 million matched funding scheme for voluntary giving to higher education institutions earlier this year, following a consultation led by the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills. The announcement caused great excitement in the sector, and justifiably so. It presents Birkbeck with an unprecedented opportunity to maximise its funding by increasing the number of alumni and friends who give to the College and offering them a real incentive to do so.

The scheme began on 1 August and runs for three years until July 2011. It is the first of its kind in the UK and unlocks a 'vault' of government funding for the College. For every £1 Birkbeck raises, the government will match it by giving a further 50p – increasing the value of each and every charitable gift by 50%. A £50 gift becomes £75; £1,000 becomes

£1,500; £10,000 becomes £15,000, and so on – it's as simple as that.

And it doesn't replace the Gift Aid scheme, which enables the College to reclaim the basic rate of tax on donations from UK tax payers where a £1 gift is worth £1.28, but exists alongside it – potentially making each donation to Birkbeck worth well over 70% more than its original value.

Of course, this provides a wealth of opportunities for Birkbeck; not only to increase significantly the income the College already receives through donations from alumni, friends, companies and charitable trusts, but also to offer an incentive to give and make a real impact to everyone who wants to support the College.

Donors who know that their donation will lever government funds that have been specifically earmarked for higher education, and that are equal to 50% of their original gift, are presented with a real opportunity to make

a difference.

The matched funds come at a particularly exciting point in the College's history when Birkbeck is extending its provision of high quality, part-time evening higher education beyond its historic roots in Bloomsbury, to Stratford in east London. With donations eligible for matched funds until 31 July 2011, the scheme will make a significant impact on the vision for Birkbeck Stratford; the College plans to open a purpose-built facility in east London by 2011, shared with other organisations in the region.

Birkbeck's proportion of the £200 million will support the Stratford project by providing a huge boost to an initiative that will make a difference to generations of students to come.

It's already proving a success; in the first month a further £60,000 in government matched funds has been earned by virtue of donations through the scheme.

To make a donation through the scheme, or for more details, contact the Development and Alumni Office on 020 7079 0694 or email [a.punaks@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:a.punaks@bbk.ac.uk)

# Obituaries

## Tony Chandler, Walter Spear and Wally Bussey

### Tony Chandler

*Former Master of Birkbeck (1928–2008)*

Professor Tony Chandler died on 17 July 2008. Born in Leicestershire on 7 November 1928, he attended Hinckley Grammar School and Alderman Newton Boys' School. In 1946 he enrolled at King's, London, and left with a first class BSc in Geography with Mathematics. He took a Teacher's Diploma, and spent his national service (1950–52) teaching meteorology and commonwealth studies to servicemen at RAF Cranwell.

His specialisms were meteorology and air pollution, and he pioneered highly innovative research into London's climate and 'heat island', giving rise to his major book, *The Climate of London* (1965). He served on many committees of enquiry into pollution and provided evidence for architects and planners with respect to the design and arrangement of buildings.

In 1952 he was appointed assistant lecturer at Birkbeck, and started a MSc degree, which included a thesis on the historical geography of Leicestershire. At the end of his third year at Birkbeck he was promoted to lecturer and began his pioneering work on the urban climate of greater London. In 1956 he moved to UCL, becoming professor in 1969, and departed to a chair at the University of Manchester in 1973.

Professor Chandler became Master of Birkbeck in October 1977, as successor to the political economist Ronald Tress. This return to his alma mater was irresistible but he resigned on medical grounds in January 1979, which his Birkbeck colleague, Professor Eila Campbell, described as "devastating news". At the age of 49, he entered what would prove to be three decades of retirement.

### Walter Spear

*Electronics pioneer (1921–2008)*

Professor Walter Spear died on 21 February 2008. His pioneering work on amorphous semiconductors helped lay the groundwork for much of today's mobile phone industry.

Born in Germany, he came to Britain just before the war, and, as a student at Birkbeck, his passion for experimentation emerged. With Werner Ehrenberg, he designed and built a microfocuss X-ray generator, which led to the discovery of the double-helix structure of DNA.

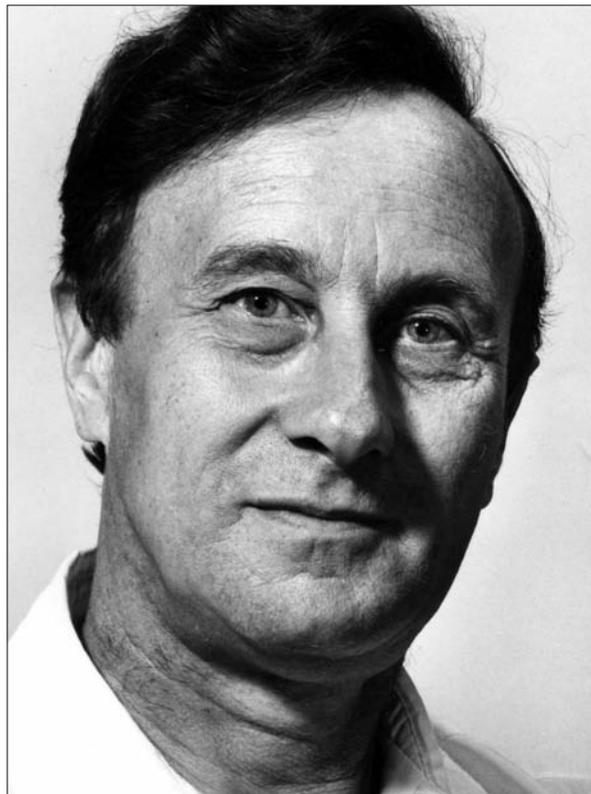
He later took a job at the University of Leicester, where he met Peter LeComber. The two joined the University of Dundee in 1969, Spear as Harris Professor of Physics, and started a revolution in amorphous semiconductor research by making inexpensive silicon-based thin film electronic devices possible. They made the first amorphous silicon p-n junction – the building block of electronic devices – and showed that it could convert light into electricity. This led to the development of a device that is found in virtually every mobile phone screen today. His legacy, held with LeComber, is the ubiquitous liquid crystal display of the mobile information age.

### Walter 'Wally' Bussey

*Jazz musician (1931–2008)*

Born in London in 1931, jazz musician and teacher Walter Bussey thrilled audiences with his performances on the saxophone, clarinet and flute. Having left school at 16, he went to New York after his National Service to study with Lennie Tristano, the celebrated blind jazz pianist, before returning to London to continue his musical career.

Visiting Spain in 1958, he developed a passion for all things



Above: Walter Spear (University of Dundee Archive Services)

Spanish. In 1969 he gained a BA Spanish from Birkbeck and later moved to Gravesend, Kent, teaching at a grammar school in Northfleet for 15 years. In 1975 he was awarded a PhD on Spanish theatre from Queen Mary, London.

Walter and his wife Jenny later moved to Spain to take early retirement and he enthusiastically continued playing music, teaching, travelling, and mastering Valenciano. Jenny and Walter's family wish to thank their friends who donated generously to a collection of £470 to Birkbeck's Alumni Fund, which Walter donated to during his life, to help students in financial difficulty.

Jenny says: "Wally's three years at Birkbeck as a mature student changed his life completely and he wanted to help others achieve the same sort of benefit."

# Fly me to the Moon

Researcher Katie Joy wants to be the second Birkbeck alumna into space, and tells Simon Watts how the Pope may help her get there

For most of us, childhood dreams and aspirations stop soon after a visit to the school careers advisor where we leave set on a path towards a 'rewarding' career. But for Katie Joy, there was no such dissuasion. A trip to the cinema in 1995 left her with a dream she is still pursuing today, and she is conducting world-leading research in the Birkbeck/UCL School of Earth Sciences to make it a reality.

"I came out of *Apollo 13* thinking it was amazing and I read every book I could get my hands on, including Birkbeck graduate Helen Sharman's autobiography."

Katie achieved a first in Geology at Royal Holloway, followed by a PhD in Planetary Science from UCL. Since 2007 Katie has been a Postdoctoral Research Assistant at Birkbeck/UCL, where she's studying lunar meteorites to reveal more about the Moon's surface, magmatic past and chemical composition. "We have a relatively poor understanding of the geology of the Moon," says Katie. "It's like going to Kenya, collecting rocks and then trying to work out the entire geological history of Africa, based on that one country."

Katie hands over a small sample of Moon rock, which turns out to be as holy as it is rare, belonging as it does to the Pope. "People don't realise but the Vatican has a massive meteorite collection, made up of donations when people die. I was doing some research with a Jesuit priest who works at the Vatican observatory, and he gave this to me to blast with lasers for further study." Those studies have determined that the meteorite contains dark basalt, similar to that found in Hawaii, but is also flecked with white rock – older crust from the far side of the Moon. "We've compared the

minerals in this sample to those we've obtained from the Apollo mission and found that they are different. Lunar meteorites like this sample allow us to compare and hypothesise about those areas of the Moon we haven't yet been to."

She is involved in two projects that are extending what we know about lunar science. MoonLITE is a proposal for a UK-led mission to the Moon to place four darts in the surface to take measurements. Led by Birkbeck's Dr Ian Crawford, Katie's role will be to help analyse the data obtained for comparison with existing Moon rocks.

Katie is also co-investigator for the new Chandrayaan-1 X-ray Spectrometer (C1XS), an instrument about the size of a toaster that is flying aboard an Indian mission to the Moon, which will map the X-rays given off from the Moon's surface. "C1XS will map new elements like magnesium, aluminium and silica. These are really important because they help to form most of the rocks on the

Moon. If we know more about these elements, it tells us how the Moon evolved geologically."

Earlier this year, Katie applied for one of four spots on the European Space Agency's (ESA) new astronaut training programme, along with 8,500 others. Although unsuccessful, it's not dimmed her enthusiasm for space adventure. "Having a Brit in the astronaut programme would really help raise the profile of the ESA. Getting UK school kids to realise that they can get involved in space research is important. At school I didn't realise you could do planetary science. A British astronaut would really boost peoples' interest."

And what of the longer term? "I'd like to believe that in my lifetime people will land on Mars, and it could be by 2045." It wouldn't be a huge surprise to find her somehow involved in that first flight.

Below: Katie Joy  
(Teri Pengilley)

For more details, visit the Centre for Planetary Sciences at [www.cps.ucl.ac.uk](http://www.cps.ucl.ac.uk)



# Events and books

Current publications, and dates for your diary

## Diary dates

Friday 3 October, 4-9pm

### Film screening

Dr Giancarlo de Cataldo, Rome Appeals Court Judge, presents the adaptation of his novel, *Romanzo Criminale*  
Birkbeck Cinema, 43 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PD

■ *Free entry, booking required.*  
Email [l.dajani@law.bbk.ac.uk](mailto:l.dajani@law.bbk.ac.uk)

Wednesday 15 October, 5-6pm

### Inaugural lecture:

#### 'Is democratic global governance possible?'

Speaker: Prof Daniele Archibugi  
Clare Management Centre,  
Torrington Square, London WC1

■ *Free entry, booking required.*  
Email [events@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:events@bbk.ac.uk)

Friday 17-Saturday 18 October,  
10am-6pm

### Conference: the Viennese Café as an Urban Site of Cultural Exchange

Speakers: Dr Steven Beller, Washington DC, Professor Edward Timms, University of Sussex and others  
Victoria and Albert Museum and Royal College of Art

■ *Payment: [www.rca.ac.uk/viennacafe](http://www.rca.ac.uk/viennacafe) or email [a.waplinton@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:a.waplinton@bbk.ac.uk)*

Wednesday 5 November  
**Undergraduate**

### Presentation Ceremonies

Science, Social Sciences and FLL: 11am; Arts: 3pm  
Logan Hall, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL

■ *Email [events@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:events@bbk.ac.uk)*

Wednesday 5, 5pm and  
Thursday 6 November (time tbc)

### Conference: 'Second Strings: Linguistics and other fields'

In honour of Prof Michel Blanc on receiving his Fellowship.

Speakers: Profs Michel Blanc, Itesh Sachdev, Adam Jaworski and Paul Meara

Birkbeck, room tbc

■ *Free entry: booking required.*  
Email [p.gardner-chloros@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:p.gardner-chloros@bbk.ac.uk)

Wednesday 12 November,  
10am-5pm

### Association of University Administrators Conference

Topics include widening participation and enhancing student service delivery  
Birkbeck, Malet Street

■ *Payment and booking required. Email [e.mckaig@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:e.mckaig@bbk.ac.uk)*

Wednesday 26 November,  
4-7.30pm

### Birkbeck Postgraduate Open Evening

Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way, London WC1H 0DG

■ *To book, visit [www.bbk.ac.uk/openeve](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/openeve)*

## New books

### The Degradation of the International Legal Order?

### The Rehabilitation of Law and the Possibility of Politics

Bill Bowring  
*Routledge Cavendish 2008*

### Law as Resistance: Modernism, Imperialism, Legalism

Peter Fitzpatrick  
*Ashgate 2008*

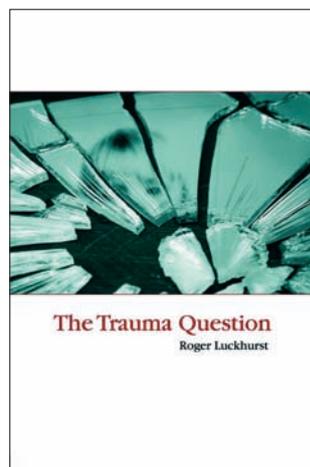
### Being Against the World: Rebellion and Constitution

Oscar Guardiola-Rivera  
*Birkbeck Law Press 2008*

### Eukaryotic Transcription

#### Factors (5th ed)

David S Latchman  
*Elsevier Academic Press 2008*



### The Trauma Question

Roger Luckhurst  
*Routledge 2008*

### After Bush: the Case for Continuity in American Foreign Policy

Timothy J Lynch and Robert S Singh  
*Cambridge University Press 2008*

### Contested Identities: Catholic Women Religious in Nineteenth-Century England and Wales

Carmen M Mangion  
*Manchester University Press 2008*

### Isaac Rosenberg: the Making of a Great War Poet

Jean Moorcroft Wilson  
*Weidenfeld and Nicolson 2008*

### Global Business, Local Law: The Indian legal system as a communal resource in foreign investment relations

Amanda Perry-Kessaris  
*Ashgate 2008*

### Qualitative Psychology: a Practical Guide to Research Methods (2nd ed)

Jonathan A Smith (ed)  
*Sage 2008*

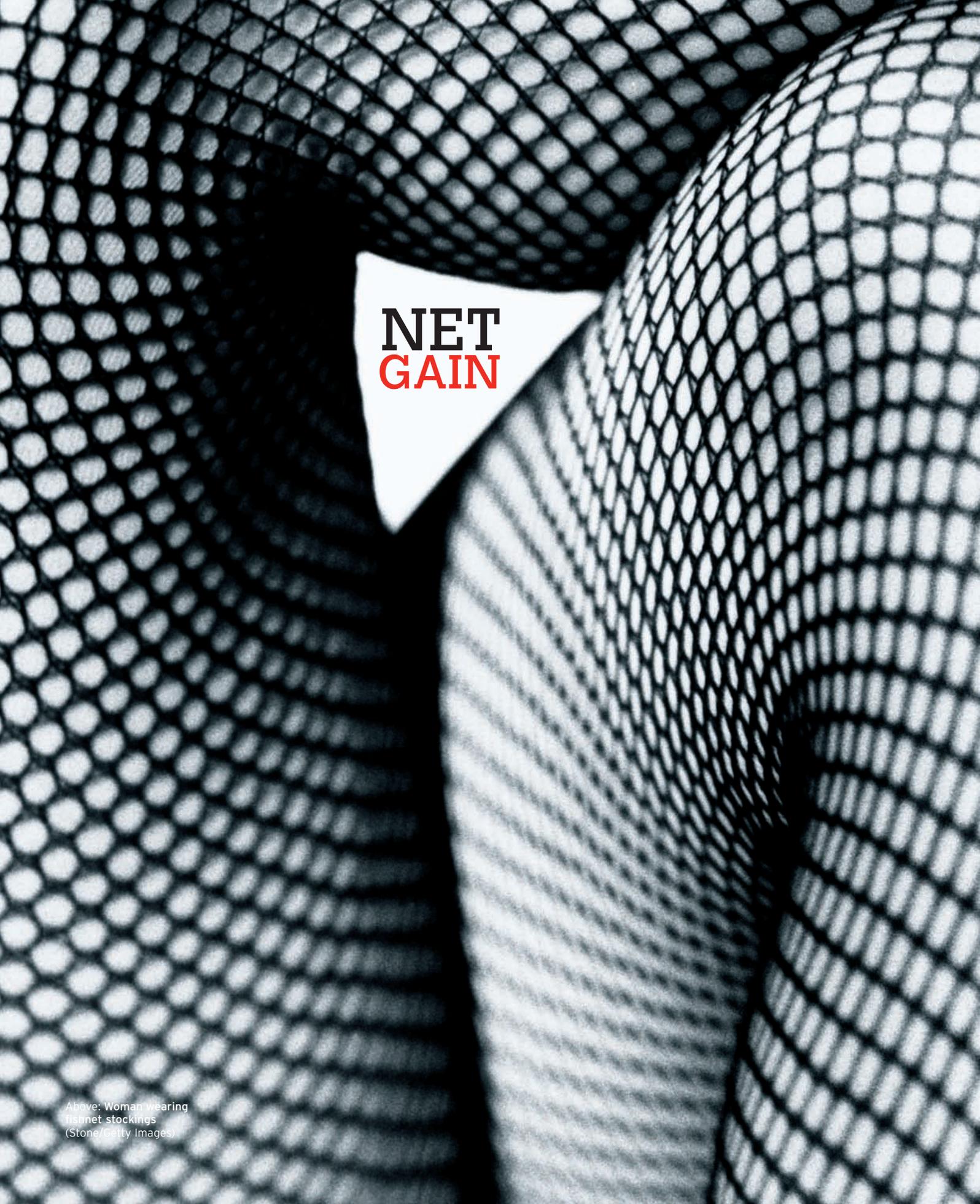
### Counselling and Psychotherapy with Older People: A Psychodynamic Approach

Paul Terry  
*Palgrave Macmillan 2008*



## Lonely planet?

Not any more! The Alumni Office has now established international alumni groups to connect people with their fellow Birkbeck graduates wherever they are in the world. So far, groups have been set up in Asia, Europe, Africa, North America and Latin America. Whether you're in London or elsewhere, there are more ways than ever to keep in touch. To join an existing alumni group or to set up a new one, contact the Alumni Office on 020 7631 6563 or [c.stewart@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:c.stewart@bbk.ac.uk)



**NET**  
**GAIN**

Above: Woman wearing  
fishnet stockings  
(Stone/Getty Images)



# EXIT STAGE LEFT?

Having been likened to a hero in a Shakespearian tragedy, is Gordon Brown's political demise inevitable or can he escape the sticky end that usually awaits such characters? asks

Dr Dermot Hodson

Jonathan Powell, former chief of staff to Tony Blair, famously dismissed Gordon Brown's chances of becoming Prime Minister, likening the then Chancellor to a hero in a Shakespearian tragedy who strives for, but ultimately fails to win, the crown. Although Powell's prediction was eventually proved wrong, the dramatic reversal of fortune experienced by Brown in his first year at Number 10 is enough to have made the Bard blush.

Since Gordon Brown took office in June 2007, the UK economy has experienced slowing domestic demand, rising consumer prices, falling housing prices and its first serious bank run since 1866. The economy stagnated in the second quarter of 2008, ending a run of 64 quarters of consecutive growth, while the monthly rate of consumer price inflation has doubled over the last year. Such turbulence has tarnished Brown's once-bright reputation for economic competence. According to a recent FT/Harris Poll, more than three-quarters of voters believe that the government is at least partially to blame for the current economic downturn.

Shakespeare's tragic heroes are generally the author of their own demise rather than the victim of circumstance. For his part, Gordon Brown can legitimately claim that events outside of his control have weighed on his premiership. Chief among these are the continuing effects of a global financial crisis, the seeds of which were sown in the US sub-prime mortgage market in late 2006. In retrospect, the timing of Tony Blair's departure was also unfortunate for Brown, coming as it did at an advanced phase of the business cycle and the tail

end of a decade-long housing boom.

Macmillanesque "events", however, are not entirely to blame for Brown's continuing troubles. From a political-economy perspective, three factors that were integral to his success as Chancellor have hindered his effectiveness as Prime Minister.

Firstly, Brown is, in keeping with dramatic conventions, paying a high price for his earlier hubris. As Chancellor, Brown staked his political reputation on his stewardship of the economy, using his annual budget speeches to claim implicit authorship of Britain's stellar growth performance. On occasion prudence made way for pride, as in the 2004 budget speech when Brown issued a mock apology after Treasury officials discovered that the economy was experiencing its longest period of sustained growth not for a century, as had previously been reported, but for two hundred years.

Secondly, by retaining de facto control over economic decision-making, the Prime Minister has made life difficult for his Chancellor, Alistair Darling. Part of the secret of Brown's success at the Treasury lay in his ability to say no to the short-term expenditure and taxation demands of his colleagues (including, on occasion, the Prime Minister). For all of his political experience, Darling does not enjoy the same degree of autonomy within the Brown government. This was demonstrated in April of this year when the Chancellor was forced into a policy u-turn after backbenchers successfully lobbied for compensation for losers from the abolition of the 10p tax rate.

Thirdly, Brown's technocratic style of

Right: Gordon Brown departs the stage after addressing the Institute of Directors in April 2008. The Prime Minister admitted making mistakes in abolishing the 10p tax rate (Daniel Berehulak/Getty Images)



A high-angle, wide shot of a massive crowd of people, likely at a political rally. In the lower center, Barack Obama is seen from behind, wearing a light blue shirt and dark trousers, with his right arm raised and pointing towards the crowd. The crowd is dense and diverse, with many people wearing hats and sunglasses, suggesting a sunny outdoor setting. The overall atmosphere is one of a large-scale public gathering.

# FEVER PITCH

The pressure on Barack Obama to deliver what George W Bush could not is likely to be foolishly and unsustainably high, writes Professor Rob Singh

Barack Obama speaks to an estimated 75,000 strong crowd in Oregon (Justin Sullivan/Getty Images)



**“ This is the poet who wrote some of the most devastating and, at the same time, humane words about front line experience ever penned ”**





# From the parapet's ledge

As a private on the Western Front, Isaac Rosenberg's experiences of the brutal realities of war mark him apart from other war poets, argues Dr Jean Moorcroft Wilson

Isaac Rosenberg was both a poet and a painter talented enough to win a place at the Slade, which he attended with his East End contemporaries, David Bomberg and Mark Gertler, among others. But it was his training at Birkbeck that first encouraged his ambitions. The Birkbeck fees were low enough even for someone of Rosenberg's impoverished background, while standards were high. He enrolled in autumn 1907 and spent the next three years in the 'pure realm of art', which he had longed to enter since childhood. He learnt not only to paint in oils and sketch from the nude, but he also studied portraiture and two of his most successful pictures – his Tate self-portrait (1910/11) and his *Head of a Monk* (1908) – are almost certainly from this period. He won at least three Birkbeck prizes. He also expanded his self-education in English poetry at Birkbeck, thanks to one of his art teachers, Alice Wright.

It was in poetry that he would establish his reputation as one of the greatest of the First World War poets. Fellow poet Siegfried Sassoon praised Isaac Rosenberg's "genius", TS Eliot called him the "most remarkable" of the Great War poets, and FR Leavis, equating him with

Wilfred Owen, found him "even more interesting technically". Yet even now, 90 years after his death on 1 April 1918, Isaac Rosenberg has not been fully recognised as such: it is over 30 years since there has been a full-length biography of him. He has certainly not been absorbed into the national consciousness in the way that Rupert Brooke, together with Sassoon and Owen, has. How many people can quote, or even identify one line of Rosenberg's verse? Yet this is the poet who wrote some of the most devastating and, at the same time, humane words about front line experience ever penned:

*A man's brains splattered on  
A stretcher-bearer's face;  
His shook shoulders slipped their load,  
But when they bent to look again  
The drowning soul was sunk too deep  
For human tenderness.*

It is not that Rosenberg has lacked his admirers. But there has often been a condescending, slightly grudging note to the praise.

Rosenberg died on the Western Front aged

*continued over*

only 27, his tragic early death resembling that of many other well-known poets of the conflict. But he differed from the majority of First World War poets in almost every other respect – race, class, education, upbringing, experience and technique. The son of poor immigrant Russian Jews, he served as a private in the army and his perspective on the trenches is quite different from the other mainly officer-poets, allowing the voice of the ‘poor bloody Tommy’ to be eloquently heard.

His Jewishness alone gives him a unique position among them. Sassoon, it is true, was half-Jewish, but on his father’s side and he was brought up as a Christian. And though many of Rosenberg’s friends from the East End wrote verse during the First World War, they will not be remembered among its greatest poets. While Sassoon, like the majority of his fellow war poets, drew largely on the Christian and Classical mythology he had absorbed through his traditional public school education, Rosenberg’s different cultural heritage distinguishes his work in a number of ways, lending to it, as Sassoon himself claimed, “a racial quality – biblical and prophetic. Scriptural and sculptural...” The fact that Rosenberg had been exposed to an English education and would eventually read widely among the English poets only adds to his interest, his work displaying, as Sassoon again argued, “a fruitful fusion between English and Hebrew culture”. For his part Rosenberg claimed that Jewishness gave him and his fellow-Jewish artists “that which nothing else could have given”.

His working-class origins also mark him out among the mainly middle-class public schoolboys who make up the war poets. Like one of his earliest, and most enduring models and fellow-engraver, Blake, he was largely self-made, a fact which helps account in both for their fierce originality as well as occasional clumsiness.

Rosenberg’s reasons for enlisting – unlike the visions of valour, patriotism and sacrifice which motivated poets such as Brooke and, initially, Sassoon – were



Previous page: British troops go over the top in the trenches on the Western Front, France, 1916 (Popperfoto/Getty)  
Right: Self portrait, oils, 1914



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**General correspondence**

External Relations,  
Birkbeck, University of London,  
Malet Street,  
London WC1E 7HX

**Editorial**

Catherine Stevens

**T:** 020 7079 0881

**E:** c.stevens@bbk.ac.uk

**Design**

James Brown

**E:** james.brown@bbk.ac.uk

**Birkbeck Society**

Carly-Dee Stewart

**T:** 020 7631 6563

**E:** alumni@bbk.ac.uk



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