



bbk

Birkbeck magazine Issue 25, Spring 2009

DON'T TALK!

Is Russia hushing
up its history?



In a time of economic uncertainty, it is not surprising that several of the articles in this issue are about change: how our relationship with Russia has changed since Putin came to power (page 18), the state of the unions and whether their loss of power has contributed to the economic freefall (page 24). Chief Executive of Crisis, Lesley Morphy, writes about her challenges in the current economy (page 13); and interest in climate change bodes well for a new environmental management course.

Other stories celebrate success: Birkbeck's collaboration with Sure Start nurseries won the 2008 *Times Higher Education* Widening Participation Initiative Award; and the Disability team has helped students win £30k from the Snowdon Awards Scheme.

At the time of going to press, we are waiting to hear whether *BBK*, shortlisted as best alumni magazine in the HEIST national awards for Higher Education, has won; 7 May is the day of reckoning. We will report on the outcome in our autumn issue. If *BBK* wins, the credit must be shared not only among our many contributors, inside and outside the College, academics and alumni, but also to our editor, Catherine Stevens, currently on maternity leave, and to *BBK*'s designer, James Brown.

Thanks to Sonya Barber, Catherine's stand-in as editor for this issue.

Jane Stephenson
Head of Communications

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THE QUEEN'S
ANNIVERSARY PRIZES
FOR HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION

2006

Cover image

Soviet propaganda poster shows a woman warning against gossip during wartime, 1941. (*Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images*)

A modern madness

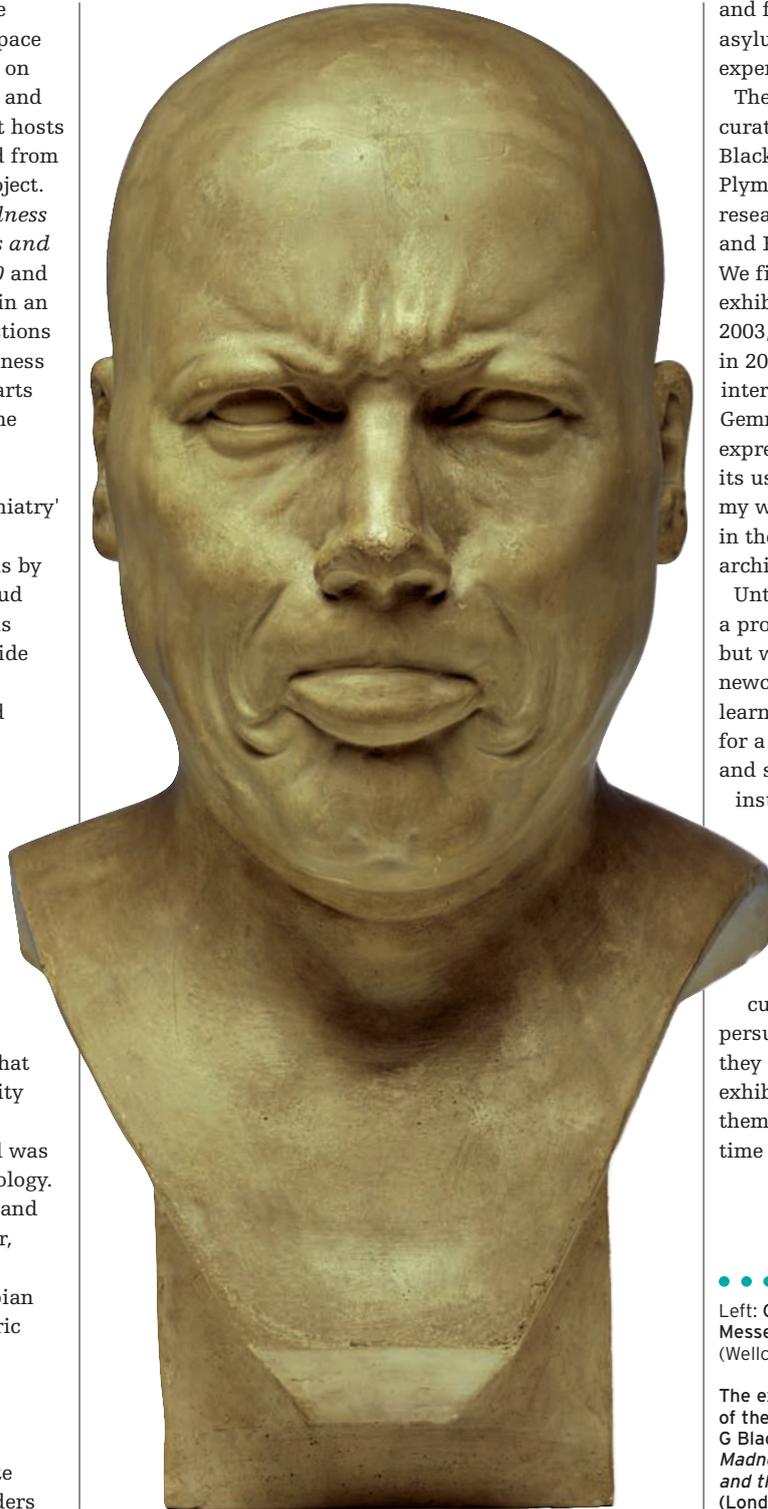
There is more to mental illness in Vienna around 1900 than Sigmund Freud, explains lecturer Dr Leslie Topp

The Wellcome Collection is the public venue and exhibition space opened by the Wellcome Trust on Euston Road, London in 2007, and between 1 April and 28 June it hosts an unusual exhibition, derived from a Birkbeck-based research project. The exhibition is entitled *Madness and Modernity: Mental Illness and the Visual Arts in Vienna 1900* and includes multifarious objects in an exploration of the interconnections between psychiatry, mental illness and modernism in the visual arts in Vienna between 1890 and the First World War.

Most people associate the combination of 'Vienna', 'psychiatry' and 'modernism' with the development of psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud. But while Freud is present in the exhibition, his innovations are shown alongside the asylums, therapies and diagnostic images that formed the lively mainstream of Viennese psychiatry.

We show that the artists, architects and designers who were breaking new ground in Vienna around 1900 had many and various points of connection with psychiatry and mental illness. Artists such as Egon Schiele and Oskar Kokoschka drew on a visual vocabulary that associated physical abnormality with mental decay, and the reception their works received was laced with psychiatric terminology.

At the same time, architects and designers such as Otto Wagner, Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser were drawn to the utopian impulses behind the psychiatric institution – the notion that a totally-designed physical environment could transform people's lives and heal a sick society. In designs for a private sanatorium for nervous disorders



and for Vienna's enormous state asylum, they were given scope to experiment with these ideals.

The exhibition, which I have curated along with Dr Gemma Blackshaw of the University of Plymouth, emerged from a four-year research project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. We first had the idea for an exhibition on this theme back in 2003, having met at a conference in 2001; I realised that there were interesting parallels between Gemma's work on Austrian expressionist self-portraiture and its use of psychiatric images, and my work on psychiatric institutions in the work of modern Viennese architects and designers.

Until 2007, the exhibition was a proposal with many supporters but without a home, and – both newcomers to curating – we learned a great deal in our search for a venue about the practices and shifting priorities of art institutions. The Wellcome Collection's inauguration proved timely. We were very attracted to its mission of bringing together history and medicine with art and culture, and we were able to persuade the curators there that they should take a chance on an exhibition that engaged with these themes by focusing on a specific time and place, Vienna around 1900.

Left: Character Head by Franz-Xaver Messerschmidt, Wien Museum, Vienna (Wellcome Collection)

The exhibition is accompanied by a book of thematic and object-based essays: G Blackshaw and L Topp, editors, *Madness and Modernity: Mental Illness and the Visual Arts in Vienna 1900* (London: Lund Humphries, 2009)

Birkbeck Stratford wins national award

College collaboration rolled out across other London boroughs

A collaboration between Birkbeck's Faculty of Lifelong Learning and two Sure Start nurseries has made part-time higher education available locally for parents from under-represented communities in Stratford and won the 2008 *Times Higher Education* Award for the Widening Participation Initiative of the Year. The Editor of *THE*, Ann Mroz, said "Birkbeck's commitment to helping these mothers achieve their qualifications is truly inspirational. The scheme has incredible potential."

"We are delighted that the project has been recognised," said Elaine Hawkins, Birkbeck's academic programme director of the scheme. "It has provided learning opportunities for 30 mothers of young children who would not otherwise have been able to access formal learning. Attendance at classes has been exceptional, despite students' demanding family responsibilities."

The students, whose commitment was marked by the award, have continued their studies this academic year at the Rebecca



Above: David Willets MP, Shadow Secretary, Innovation, Universities and Skills (left), with Birkbeck's award-winning team

Cheetham Children's Centre in Stratford and at St Stephen's Children's Centre in Upton Park. Many of the students are well on their way to achieving a full Certificate of Higher Education this July. In the past six months, Elaine has been working closely with the Birkbeck Outreach team to extend the initiative to other community

contexts in east London.

In January, a new course began with a group of 15 students at the Community Learning and Skills Service [CLASS] in Walthamstow, and in March a similar group began their studies at a newly opened training centre linked to the Ann Taylor Children's Centre in Hackney. Workshops are currently taking place at nursery education centres in East Ham and Dagenham with a view to classes starting in these locations in September. "In every context, it has been crucial to use preliminary workshops to begin a process of planning a curriculum that matches participants' goals, interests and previous educational experiences," said Elaine. "It is so important to listen to potential learners when shaping the detail of the curriculum. At the same time, our workshops ensure that prospective students appreciate that they can work towards goals that they may have previously thought were unattainable."

For more information email Elaine Hawkins, e.hawkins@bbk.ac.uk

WORLD-RANKING PHILOSOPHY

Birkbeck's Department of Philosophy has been rated sixth in the UK, according to a new survey. *The Philosophical Gourmet Report* (also known as *The Leiter Report*) is the most respected ranking of philosophy departments in the world. It is based on a survey of nearly 300 leading philosophers, and Birkbeck ranked strongly in a number of specialist areas: second in the world in feminist philosophy, in the top 10 globally in both philosophy of action and the history of analytic philosophy, and in the top 20 globally for philosophy of language.

This report follows the results of the recent Research Assessment Exercise, which analysed the research of all Faculty members; 100% of the research was judged to be of a quality that is internationally recognised.





MUM'S THE WORD

MaMSIE (Mapping Maternal Subjectivities, Identities and Ethics) is an international research network established by Dr Lisa Baraitser at Birkbeck.

This unique network is leading a re-consideration of the maternal in contemporary culture. It aims to explore the position that the mother occupies at the intersection between scientific possibilities, psychosocial practices and cultural representations. The network is interdisciplinary and includes researchers in the social sciences and humanities, creative writers, artists and psychoanalysts. MaMSIE has recently launched a new online journal, *Studies in the Maternal*, at www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk

On 30 and 31 May, MaMSIE will co-host an international conference at Birkbeck on motherhood, psychoanalysis and feminism, with talks by an impressive line-up of philosophers, film theorists and psychoanalysts, including Bracha Ettinger (EGS, Saas Fee), Adriana Cavarero (Verona), Renata Salecl (LSE), and Laura Mulvey (Birkbeck). For more information, please contact mamsie@bbk.ac.uk and see booklist on page 29.

Left: Dancing mother and daughter (iStockphoto)

Law and HIV research project

Highlighting the difficulties of accessing healthcare

The African HIV Policy Network (AHPN), an umbrella organisation representing the interest of Africans living with HIV and AIDS in the UK, is working with Jonathan Thorpe (second Year LLB student) and Dr Matthew Weait (senior law lecturer) on an innovative project highlighting the difficulties faced by its constituents in accessing healthcare.

Conventional socio-legal research typically uses qualitative data collection techniques (interviews, surveys etc) and is sometimes criticised for being anecdotal or unrepresentative, especially where the data set is limited. This project is attempting, despite the use of a relatively small sample, to collect evidence in such a way that its validity and reliability are significantly enhanced.

Based on a methodology developed by PIVOT, a Vancouver-based legal organisation where Dr Weait worked on a Government of Canada funded

research project, volunteers with AHPN have been taking evidence from people who have been experiencing particular problems accessing healthcare because of their status as refugees and asylum seekers. Rather than simply being recorded, the evidence is being collected and converted into an output that would – if necessary – be accepted as valid and truthful by a court of law: the affidavit.

Affidavits have been used by PIVOT to highlight a range of social problems – housing, police misconduct and the plight of exploited sex workers. Although they have not been used in litigation, the clear factual evidence of the deponents (those who swear the affidavits) has formed the basis for reports that have been highly influential in social policy. This is the intention of the present project.

Over the past six months, volunteers have been trained to

conduct interviews and convert these into affidavit form. So far, nine people have given their evidence, which will form the basis of a policy paper published this spring.

Dr Weait comments: “What is particularly exciting about this project, apart from the ways in which it has given a Birkbeck undergraduate and AHPN volunteers a unique opportunity to develop policy-orientated research skills, is that it provides a practical, valuable demonstration of the radical potential for traditional legal forms. Public interest and strategic lawyering is critical to ensuring that the voices of those who would otherwise be silenced are heard, and this project has the potential to make a real difference.”

To find out more about law courses at Birkbeck, visit www.bbk.ac.uk/law

Double success with pioneering research

Crystallography researchers make significant advances

Fighting antibiotic resistance

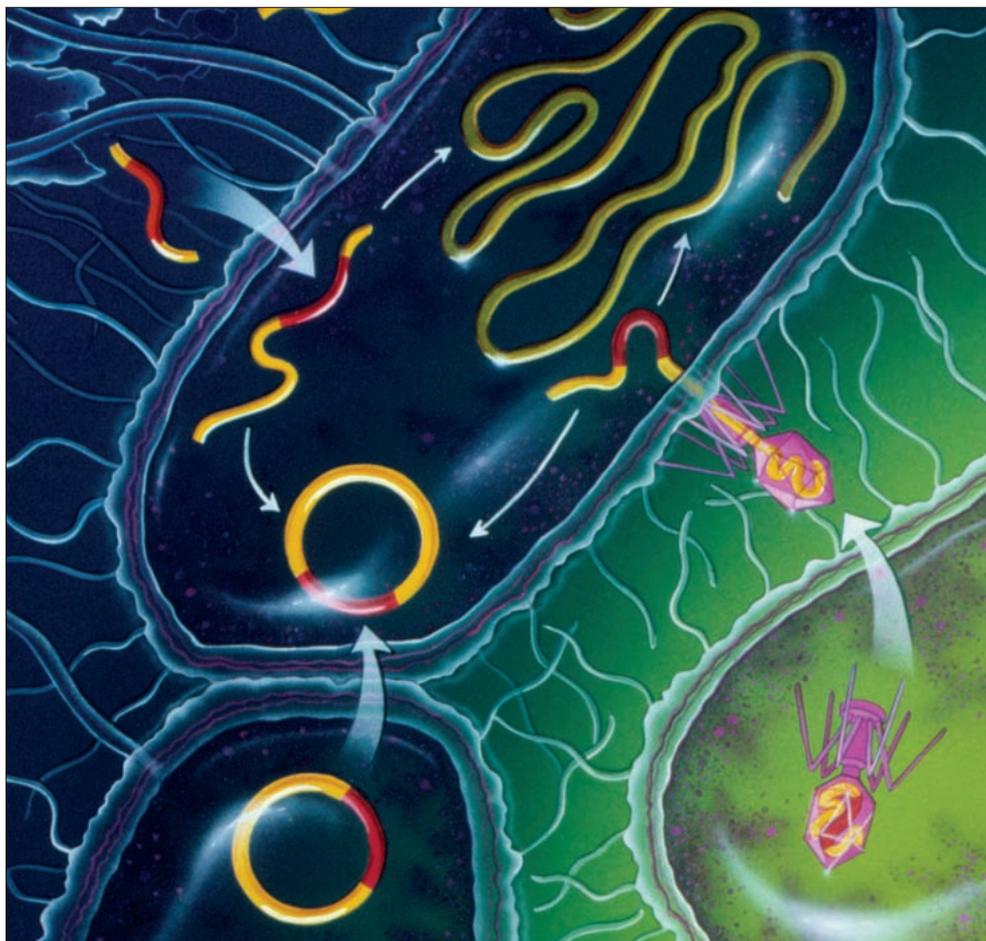
Professor Gabriel Waksman and his colleagues from the Institute of Structural and Molecular Biology (ISMB) at Birkbeck and UCL have identified the structure of a key component of the bacteria behind diseases such as whooping cough, peptic stomach ulcers and Legionnaires' disease.

The research, published in the journal *Science*, funded by the Wellcome Trust and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), also sheds light on how antibiotic resistance genes spread from one bacterium to another. The findings may help scientists develop novel treatments for these diseases and new ways to curtail the spread of antibiotic resistance. Antibiotic resistance spreads when genetic material is exchanged between two bacteria, one of which has mutated to be resistant to the drugs. This exchange is facilitated by a multi-component device known as a type IV secretion system.

"Type IV secretion systems are directly involved in the spread of antibiotic resistance," says Professor Gabriel Waksman, Director of the ISMB and lead author of the study. "This is why they have become obvious targets in the vast effort required to fight infectious diseases caused by bacteria. If we can inhibit the secretion systems, we could potentially prevent the spread of antibiotic resistance genes and this would have a considerable impact on public health."

First images of new-born proteins

Professor Helen Saibil and her team have obtained the first images of a new-born protein in the 'womb' of an enclosure that helps it find the proper structure. These findings, supported by the



Above: Artwork of bacterial cells becoming resistant to antibiotics (Science Photo Library)

Wellcome Trust, have been published in the journal *Nature*.

As the newborn wriggles around in its molecular barrel, researchers have so far been unable to get a clear picture of it. Birkbeck's Department of Crystallography, in collaboration with the group of Saskia van der Vies at the Free University, Amsterdam, have now succeeded in imaging a 'newborn protein in the womb' by using a particularly large protein baby. The researchers studied the case of a virus that infects bacteria and uses the bacterial barrel to help fold its own shell protein. This protein is too large for the barrel, causing the virus to bring its own lid along so

its protein can be securely locked up in the folding chamber.

As the bulky virus protein can't move around as much as other proteins do, its position inside the barrel was well defined enough for Saibil's team to take its picture. Comparing their images to the existing pictures of the empty barrel, the researchers could gain valuable insights into how a protein is bound and released during the assisted folding process.

To find out more about crystallography courses at Birkbeck, visit www.cryst.bbk.ac.uk

The climate of change

New Master's programmes explore changing landscapes and plans for coping in the future



Climate change is now an accepted part of life and organisations everywhere are looking for people to help them manage the challenge posed by ever rising CO₂ levels and associated changes in climate and landscape. A new MSc programme in Climate Change Management will, from October 2009, provide an opportunity for professionals to attain a comprehensive advanced-level grounding in this field, while continuing to work full-time. This is crucial if policymakers and business strategists are to make joined-up decisions that work across sectors. A complementary MSc in Climate Change Science will be launched in October 2010.

The Climate Change Management programme will be headed by Dr Becky Briant, an expert in past climate and landscape change over geological timescales. She is currently researching how river response to past climate change informs our projections of future

landscape changes, which will link directly to Master's-level teaching. As well as drawing on College environmental expertise, the programme will have input from external experts.

The first year of the programme in Climate Change Management will provide training in four core modules: Climate Change; Environment and Policy; Climate Change and Sustainable Business Practice, and Research Methods. Students will then be able to pursue their own interests in the second year with access to a range of modules relating both to climate change and to wider environmental issues. These span practical skills and philosophical approaches, so that students can choose something vocational or take the opportunity to reflect more broadly.



For further information on the MSc Climate Change Management, go to www.bbk.ac.uk/geog

Above: Dry, cracked earth under a blazing sun (iStockphoto)

Green group responsibility

Rosanne Ainslie is a third-year BSc Environmental Management student and on top of her studies and juggling three jobs, she is part of the Energy Management Systems Group (EMSG), overseeing Birkbeck's progress towards phases 2 and 3 of environmental accreditation.

"I wanted to get some more hands-on experience and the best place to start was at Birkbeck. The EMSG has a group of volunteers who meet every six weeks and work towards achieving environmental goals in relation to Birkbeck's environmental policy. The College has an excellent programme tackling matters of waste, recycling, energy saving and reducing overall carbon emissions."

Rosanne (below) has represented Birkbeck at conferences on sustainability and waste. "My main project at the moment is putting together a training programme for environmental awareness. The programme is aimed at everyone at Birkbeck, ranging from students and academics, to professional support staff."



For more information on the EMSG, go to www.bbk.ac.uk/sustain

News in brief

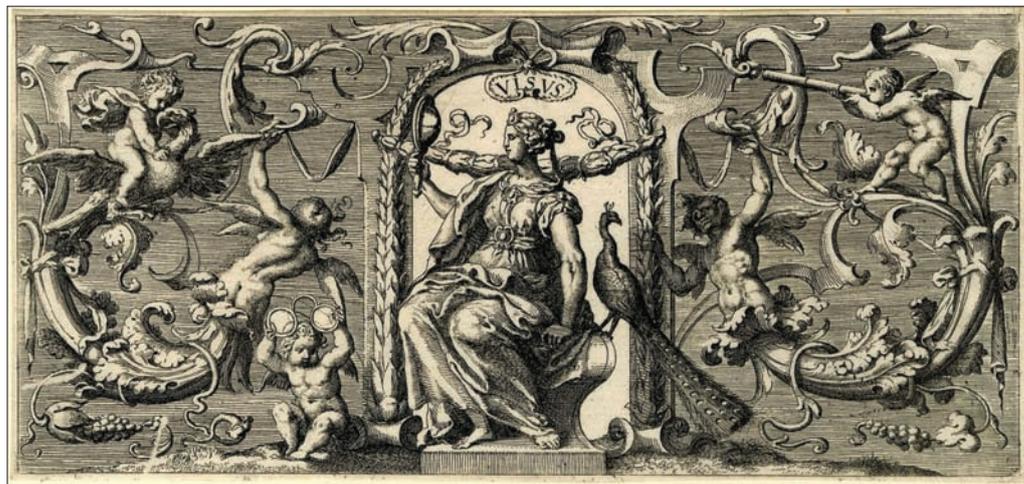
Disability Office wins grants, a new German business course and online image bank

Snowdon Awards

Established in 1981, the Snowdon Awards Scheme provides grants to physically disabled and sensory impaired students in further and higher education or employment training. Since 2002, Birkbeck's Disability Office has helped students apply for funding and the charity has supported 16 students from the College, awarding a total of £30,000. This money has assisted students with a wide range of additional services to help with their studies, including giving deaf students sign language interpreting support, and laptops to students with mobility problems so that they can study from home.

One of the recent applicants was Lidia Felix, who is currently studying for a Postgraduate Diploma in Management at Birkbeck. Lidia suffers from a rare sickle cell disease and lung disorder, Sarcoidosis, and had been too ill to work for ten years. After coming off heavy medication, she wanted to catch up with what she had missed by taking some undergraduate modules at Birkbeck. 'Although my body was frail, my mind was very clear and I wanted to get myself back into the loop,' says Lidia. 'I had taken a Master's in Gender and Development studies 20 years ago and wanted to study for another postgraduate course at Birkbeck but couldn't afford it.'

Mark Pimm, Disability Services Manager, helped Lidia apply for a Snowdon grant, which she received in September 2008. 'The award has made a profound difference



to my life," explains Lidia. "Without their financial support I would never have been able to study again."

Talking business

Dr Peter Damrau and Dr Alexander Weber, from the German department, have developed a new type of bespoke, in-house German course for businesses. The initiative combines several elements which meet the complex staff development needs of British companies that want to trade with Germany. Damrau and Weber found that human resources departments not only want to improve their employees' linguistic skills, but also look for training in the specific business etiquette necessary to succeed in the relevant industry abroad. Additionally, there is often a more general need in the company for team-building and 'neurolinguistic programming' (NLP). The new course, designed in co-operation with the psychology department, offers sessions which are focused on

NLP. This learning method is also reflected in the language component and ensures that the course enhances team-building. The integration of several key staff development objectives makes this kind of training both time and cost effective. The course could attract the kind of funding which the government has recently launched to address the economic downturn.

Image bank

An Arts and Humanities Research Council funded project (2006–2009), British Printed Images to 1700, makes available in a searchable, online facility a comprehensive collection of printed images (which includes *Illustration from Francis Clein's Quinque Sensum descriptio*, above) from early modern Britain. The project partners are Birkbeck, the Centre for Computing in the Humanities (King's College London), the British Museum, and the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A). The project draws principally on the holdings of pre-1700 British

prints in the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum, the largest single collection of such material. In the database, all variants of each print are grouped together, with a preferred example prioritised and different states itemised in a production history. Material has also been introduced from other collections, such as the National Art Library at the V&A, making it possible to include a larger selection of engraved title-pages and book illustrations from the period.

Each image will be reproduced online to a high quality; details can be magnified. Searches may be made by date, place or person (including both those depicted in a print and those responsible for producing it). There will also be an extensive subject index comparable to the Tate Online's *Insight*. The interface will be launched on 11 July at the British Museum; for details see www.bpi1700.org.uk

Professor Michael Hunter is the director of the project, and will edit conference papers on the subject, which are due out in 2010.

Our successes in research and recruitment provide the ideal springboard for Birkbeck



Master's report
David S Latchman

One of the perennial themes of the university sector is the idea that different universities should have distinctive missions with a particular emphasis on research, on teaching or on interaction with the local community. The fact is however, that if an individual university were to disappear, its students and staff could be redistributed to other universities without any particular damage to the sector as a whole.

This is not true in the case of Birkbeck. We have a unique mission, namely to deliver a flexible university education in an environment of research excellence. Clearly, a key aspect of this is the maintenance of our reputation for research excellence and, in particular, to have this confirmed in external assessments. We were therefore delighted with the results of the recent Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), in which the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) conducted an assessment of all research in universities, with each university being invited to submit their research-active staff for assessment. Universities often submit only a relatively low proportion of their staff and omit others who do not conduct research of appropriate standard in order to maximise their position in unofficial league tables.

At Birkbeck, we were able to submit over 90% of our eligible staff as research-active, compared to, for example, the Open University which submitted around 40% of its eligible staff. Moreover, our results were excellent. We appear in the upper quartile of UK universities in all the published league tables; over 75% of our staff were returned in groupings which were assessed as having 50% or more of their research rated in the highest categories, 4* (world leading) and 3* (internationally excellent). Indeed, according to one or more methods of calculation, five of our submissions (Earth Sciences, History, History of Art, Psychology and Spanish) were in the top five of UK submissions in their area.

It is particularly gratifying that these successes occur

“ Birkbeck has a unique mission, namely to deliver a flexible university education in an environment of excellent research ”

across the College rather than being concentrated in one particular area. We maintained our strengths in the arts as illustrated in the last RAE (2001), but also performed very well in the sciences and showed a considerable improvement in business-facing disciplines such as Computer Sciences and Management.

Although these results are outstanding, they are only part of the story since they also inform the research funding (QR) which we receive from HEFCE. After the announcement of the results in December, we awaited the funding announcement in March with some trepidation. The latest RAE rated each submission in terms of the proportion of work falling into different categories of excellence, as opposed to the single summary grade given in previous RAEs. This resulted in the identification of so-called 'pockets of excellence' in new universities; the need to fund these suggested a move in funding away from the old universities. To counteract this, HEFCE announced that it will ring-fence the funding for science subjects at the expense of arts and social sciences. Clearly, these changes were not likely to benefit Birkbeck as an old university which did very well in the 2001 RAE and which submitted only a small proportion of staff in the science area, albeit with excellent results.

I was, therefore, delighted at the beginning of March when our grant letter from HEFCE showed that we have maintained and indeed marginally increased our QR funding. This builds on our success in the 2001 RAE and is a tribute to our excellent results and the fact that we were able to submit a larger number of staff than in 2001. It confirms our claim to being the only university with a flexible teaching model which has a research-intensive environment.

The grant letter from HEFCE also contained good news regarding our teaching funding. As I previously described in this column, the government's decision to withdraw funding for students studying for equivalent or lesser qualifications (ELQ) was a serious blow to the College. It resulted in our teaching funding being safety netted to maintain it in cash terms at the 2007–2008 level with such safety netting being due to end after 2010–2011.

A major target of the strategic review of the College is to secure the conversion of the safety net funding into additional student numbers, since the funding for these would become part of our core grant and would continue beyond 2010–2011, as well as being uplifted annually for inflation.

The grant letter from HEFCE included conversion of over £2 million of our safety net into core grant representing almost 700 additional full-time equivalent student numbers for 2009–2010. In the next few months, HEFCE will consider our bid for further additional



student numbers for 2010–2011 representing another £2 million of safety net funding being converted into additional student numbers. Our bid to HEFCE also includes a significant amount for costs of our restructuring and to facilitate future student recruitment.

Fortunately student recruitment continues to be buoyant. Preliminary figures for 2008–2009 suggest that we were approximately 450 FTEs over our HEFCE target for non-ELQ students. These represent students who will not be funded due to our not having funded student numbers to accommodate them even though they are otherwise eligible for funding. Obviously, the additional student numbers which have become available will allow these students to be funded in 2009–2010. Moreover, we believe that the current economic situation will enhance recruitment to Birkbeck, as students look to either protect their jobs or to obtain different skills to gain new jobs. In this regard it is highly ironic that the government's ELQ decision prevents exactly this sort of reskilling by individuals who already have a qualification in one area but want to retrain in another.

Similarly, our success in Stratford serves as a platform for further expansion in student numbers. Stratford itself now has over 1000 students enrolled and will continue to contribute more and more to our overall student numbers. Equally importantly however, we have observed a 65% increase over the last two years in applications from east London boroughs to Birkbeck in Bloomsbury. This is obviously dependent on the intensive outreach

campaign with community groups which we have conducted in these areas over the last two years. It serves, therefore, as a model for similar campaigns in other areas of London with low participation in higher education and good transport links to Bloomsbury. In particular, the new Minister responsible for Higher Education, David Lammy, has put us in touch with the North East London College which is in his Tottenham constituency. We are now working in partnership with them to extend the opportunity for students in this area to study at Birkbeck, either by participating in courses offered on the North East London College site or in Birkbeck itself.

Our successes in research and recruitment provide the ideal springboard for Birkbeck to continue its unique mission in the future with the new structures recommended by the Strategic Review. As I write, we have recently conducted the interviews for Executive Deans to lead the five new Schools which will begin operation this autumn. I am confident, therefore, that Birkbeck will continue as a unique institution devoted to flexible learning in an environment of research excellence, despite the vagaries of government policy.

“ We have observed a 65% increase over the last two years in applications from east London boroughs to Birkbeck in Bloomsbury ”

The arts in Britain today

Arts Week events question the role of arts, politics and culture



What's the use of the arts in Britain today? That is the question posed by this year's Arts Week Panel, as part of Birkbeck Arts Week. A debate about the value of the arts is long overdue, and a panel featuring Turner Prize-winner Grayson Perry, Chief Executive of the Arts Council Alan Davies and Kerry Michael of Theatre Royal Stratford among others will set out to tackle the thorny issue of art's value. What is the artist's role in a climate of war, global warming and economic meltdown? What are the ethical duties of artists towards the culture they live in? How should public subsidy best inform and support the development of artistic practice? What can art offer Britain today? This debate is one of many discussions tackling the role of arts, politics and culture in this year's Arts Week. After an

impressive programme last year, we hope that this year's events will be just as successful. With lectures, readings, panel discussions, even a creative writing marathon, Arts Week is a showcase of the varied concerns, public and scholarly, that engage Birkbeck academics.

This year's line-up reflects the vibrant culture of the arts at Birkbeck. Among the many events taking place are: Michael Rosen, Birkbeck visiting professor and children's laureate on writing children's poetry; a Dickensathon (a marathon reading of Dickens, in memory of Professor Sally Ledger – see page 16 for her obituary); and a discussion on the legacies of Thatcherism. For those considering studying the Arts at Birkbeck – for a BA, MA, MPhil or PhD – there will be taster sessions in English, Theatre and Humanities, and information on our full range of

Above:
(Steve Cotton/
artofthestate.co.uk)

courses available at each event. We were really pleased to see so many of our alumni at the events last year and hope that Arts Week will continue to be an opportunity for our past and present students to sample the ongoing and rich range of ideas and debates that are so central to Birkbeck's culture.

Arts week highlights

Monday 11 May

6pm World Cinema: Critical Views
7.30pm Arts Week Panel
What's The Use of The Arts In Britain Today?

Tuesday 12 May

5pm Michael Rosen
Writing Children's Poetry: But Who Am I Talking To?
6pm Humanities, Theatre and English Taster Courses

Wednesday 13 May

1pm Lunchtime Lecture:
The Human/Animal
3pm Dickensathon
6pm Legacies of Thatcherism
6pm Humanities, Theatre and English Taster Courses
7.40pm Roundtable: *Law and the Creative Arts*

Thursday 14 May

6pm Richard J Evans: *Nazi Loot: The Spoilation of Cultural Objects 1933-45 and the Problem of Restitution*
6pm Film: Patrick Keiller, *The Dilapidated Dwelling*
7pm Paul Hirst Memorial Lecture
7.30pm Panel on the European Elections of June 2009

Friday 15 May

1.30pm Cultural Impact Symposia

Saturday 16 May

4pm *The Meaning of Life:* Philosophy lecture by Dr Michael Garnett

For full details, visit:
www.bbk.ac.uk/artsweek

Sergeant's major fraud investigation

Birkbeck academic to appear in BBC investigation into the William Henry Ireland's Shakespearean fakes

Michael Dobson, Professor of Shakespeare Studies, will be appearing on *The One Show* on BBC1 in June in conversation with John Sergeant, the celebrated political journalist and erstwhile ballroom dancer.

Dobson's last television appearance, in 2008, found him eating tripe, smoked fish and prunes with *The Times* restaurant critic, Giles Coren, during *The Supersizers Go ... Elizabethan*, a BBC2 documentary about food of that era.

Sergeant is presenting a series of items about notorious fakes and impostures, and consulted Professor Dobson about the tragicomic teenaged forger William Henry Ireland. In 1795, Ireland presented his credulous father Samuel with a succession of spurious Elizabethan documents;

among them were purported love letters from Shakespeare to Anne Hathaway, personal notes from Elizabeth I asking Shakespeare to come and entertain her, and a manuscript of *King Lear*. At the climax of the ensuing public sensation after Samuel rashly published these texts in facsimile, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, manager of Drury Lane Theatre, agreed to stage what Ireland claimed was a hitherto missing Shakespeare play, *Vortigern*. He hoped that a fascinated public, keen to judge its authenticity for themselves, would ensure the play a long and profitable run.

Unfortunately, a matter of days before the play had its premiere, on 2 April 1796, the lawyer and literary scholar Edmond Malone published a 450-page book demolishing Ireland's forgeries.

John Philip Kemble, Drury Lane's star Shakespearean actor, felt he could not possibly be seen to have been taken in by Ireland's would-be Shakespearean melodrama. By the time he reached Act V as the title role he was audibly sending up the play; his eyebrow-raising performance of the line "And when this solemn mockery is over ..." provoked ten minutes of uproarious laughter and shouting.

After a turbulent curtain call, an attempt to advertise a second performance of the play was greeted with such outraged booing that *Vortigern* was not seen in performance again until the 200th anniversary of the debacle was marked by a revival at the Bridewell theatre off Fleet Street. It was, Professor Dobson insists, thoroughly entertaining, especially for audience members who had always wanted to see bits of *Macbeth*, *Cymbeline*, *King John* and *Richard III* all jumbled together.

Professor Dobson is currently chair of Birkbeck's expanding BA programme in Theatre Studies, and as well as setting up a new MA programme in Shakespeare and Contemporary Performance, is writing a new study of John Philip Kemble's Shakespearean career. Despite the enthusiastic insights into choreography provided by Mr Sergeant between takes, Professor Dobson has no current plans to be distracted from his study by the cha-cha-cha.

The theatre-orientated issue of Birkbeck's online nineteenth-century studies journal *19* (www.19.bbk.ac.uk) will be available soon.

Below: John Sergeant and Michael Dobson break from filming at the Novello Theatre on Aldwych



For more information on English Literature courses at Birkbeck, visit www.bbk.ac.uk/eh

In a time of crisis

Leslie Morphy talks about how an MSc at Birkbeck prepared her for tough challenges

Leslie Morphy, the current Chief Executive of the homeless charity Crisis, has spent a lifetime helping people. Although she didn't start out with a clear plan after her BSc in Economics at the London School of Economics, Leslie quickly found her calling in the non-profit sector. "It never occurred to me to go into the corporate world. I just wanted jobs that I found engaging and rewarding," she says. "I found that I was particularly interested in how people did and didn't fare in the education system and about adult literacy and educational programmes. I thought that there was a large educational deficit and disadvantage. I had been lucky enough to have a good education and I wanted to do what I could to help others."

After doing educational research for the National Union of Students, Leslie became the Director of Broadcasting Support Services, which specialised in providing television and radio audiences with information and educational services. As if this wasn't enough hard work, it was at this time that she felt the desire to immerse herself in academic rigour again, and in 1977 she signed up for a MSc in Politics and Social Theory at Birkbeck.

"I didn't want to give up working full-time and Birkbeck gave me the opportunity to do both," explains Leslie. "My MSc at Birkbeck was jolly hard work. Anyone who embarks on a postgraduate degree part-time while working full-time must be prepared for how exhausting but also rewarding it will be. I had a particularly demanding job, so studying on top of that was very intense but I enjoyed it. I got a lot out of the course and, even though the subject didn't specifically relate to my career, my Master's taught me many



important skills, enhancing my analytical and discursive abilities. When I finished my time at Birkbeck I felt that I was prepared to concentrate fully on my career."

After completing her MSc at the College, Leslie's career moved from strength to strength as she delved further into helping educate others. After leaving Broadcasting Support Services in 1983 and freelancing as a consultant in educational broadcasting, she took on the position of Head of Research and Development at the Basic Skills

Above: Leslie with a representative of the Chartered Institute of Housing and a member of the charity at a Crisis Skylight Centre (Garry Lemon)

Agency, a non-departmental government body specialising in adult literacy and numeracy. Seven years later Leslie moved to the Prince's Trust as Director of Programmes and Policy, where for nearly 10 years she helped deliver programmes to 40,000 young people a year.

In 2006 she took over as Chief Executive of Crisis and has never looked back. "I want to give people the opportunities to move out of poverty. By re-engaging people with education, skills training and support, you are not merely managing their homelessness but transforming their lives so that they are in a position to support themselves," Leslie comments.

On top of the vast numbers of people who already need help, Leslie predicts that the coming years are going to be increasingly difficult due to rising unemployment and redundancy. "We need to be prepared to provide more help to more people," Leslie explains. Despite this added pressure, she remains positive. "I am an optimistic person by nature. It is sometimes difficult but I am surrounded by extremely committed staff and volunteers who keep me going."

In the current economic climate, Leslie feels that education is more important than ever and that Birkbeck gives people a unique opportunity to study at any time in their lives. "The College offers a flexible way to get affordable qualifications, as you can fund yourself throughout. This has never been more valuable and worthwhile."

To support Crisis, see www.crisis.org.uk
To find out more about studying Social and Political Theory at Birkbeck, visit www.bbk.ac.uk/polsoc

North America Alumni Group

Birkbeck's diverse and vibrant alumni community is spread throughout the world and act as excellent international ambassadors for the College. There are currently over 1700 alumni living abroad, and each year the community grows.

To strengthen ties with its international alumni, the Development and Alumni team has set up the Birkbeck Alumni North America group, which is open to all former Birkbeck students now residing in the US and Canada; it promotes academic, professional and social networking among its members. The group held its first meeting in December 2008 and established an online forum where members can discuss and share their experiences of Birkbeck: <http://groups.google.com/group/bbknorthamerica>

To make it easier for US alumni to support Birkbeck, we have recently formed a partnership with the British Schools and Universities Foundation (BSUF) which enables Birkbeck to receive donations from the US via the Foundation. A gift via the BSUF supports Birkbeck and its most needy students, plus US donors benefit from the same tax deductions on their charitable donations as they would if they gave to a US-based university or charity.

Not only will US donors get their IRS tax deduction, but their generosity will be matched by an additional 50% through the government's matched funding scheme.

For more information about Birkbeck's International Alumni groups, please contact Carly Stewart c.stewart@bbk.ac.uk

To make a donation to Birkbeck via BSUF, please contact Evana Topolovec e.topolovec@bbk.ac.uk



Acropolis now

Heather Reyes on how a visit to Athens inspired her to fulfil a publishing dream

Birkbeck students know the exhilaration of having the chance to fulfil a dream. For me it was studying for an English PhD, which led to the fulfilment of another dream: starting a publishing company. I'd been a published writer since my first degree, but after teaching for a few years, I'd lost touch with recent literature. To update, I applied to Birkbeck and it 'changed my life'.

No time for my own writing while studying and working, but later, armed with new knowledge and discipline, I produced a flood of writing. Some was published – including a novel, *Zade* (2004). My editor at Saqi Books said I was a pretty good editor myself, so realising I had 'transferable skills', I took a formal editing course and started a new career as a freelancer.

My partner had worked in a London publishing house, ran literature festivals and was also a writer. Friends said we should

start our own publishing house, and, though we loved the idea, we kept putting it off. Then we went to Athens, which I'd always wanted to see; despite the traffic, pot-holes and wild dogs, it didn't disappoint, although even with guide books, we couldn't get under the city's skin.

Back home, we looked for an anthology of Athens: seeing cities through the sensibilities of writers can help. There were rather dreary collections for a few cities, but they didn't convey the fun of exploring them. My partner said 'Since nobody's doing it, what about publishing the books ourselves?' I scarcely paused for breath, 'Yes.'

So Oxygen Books was born and the first book in our *city-lit* series, *PARIS*, was launched on 31 March, with more guides to follow later this year; they are available from all good bookshops and direct from www.oxygenbooks.co.uk

To find out more about English courses at Birkbeck, visit www.bbk.ac.uk/eh

Above: Heather Reyes at the Acropolis where Oxygen Books was born (Private collection)

Think of the children

Clare Mulley brings to life the children's rights pioneer, Eglantyne Jebb

Clare Mulley is a Birkbeck Social and Cultural History MA graduate, and award-winning author of *The Woman Who Saved the Children: A Biography of Eglantyne Jebb, Founder of Save the Children*.

"In the 1990s when I was a struggling Save the Children fundraiser, I took heart from one of Eglantyne Jebb's great quotes: 'the world is not ungenerous, but unimaginative and very busy'. In a room around the fund's archives, I found a crumpled leaflet featuring a photo of a starving Austrian baby with the word 'suppressed' scribbled in Eglantyne's writing – I knew then that hers was a going to be a great story.

"During my MA, I focused all my essays on Eglantyne: I was hooked and decided to take a module on biography. The converted house in Golden Square where I studied was doors from Save the Children's first office and I often wondered if I was walking in Eglantyne's footsteps. The following year

my proposal for the biography won the *Daily Mail* Biographers' Club prize, and I started writing in earnest.

"With three children, I was aware of the irony of taking time off from my childcare responsibilities to research a woman who dedicated herself to promoting child welfare but who actually had no particular affection for them. 'I suppose it is a judgment on me for not caring about children that I'm made to talk all day long about the universal love of humanity towards them,' Eglantyne wrote. She was a complex woman, driven more by humanitarian impulse than sentimental concern for children and her dramatic life story is all the more fascinating for this."



BBK readers can get a 20% discount on *The Woman Who Saved the Children*. Visit www.oneworld-publications.com with the code OWFLY09 at the checkout. All author royalties are being donated to Save the Children

Below: Clare Mulley on Mount Salève where Eglantyne Jebb drafted her statement of children's rights

Writers speak out

Pop across from Malet Street to the RADA foyer bar on the first or second Monday of the month and you'll find what, to the uninitiated, is a contradiction in terms: a lively literary event. writLOUD sees budding Birkbeck writers reading alongside the best of the UK's published authors.

Set up as a forum for Birkbeck writers to test out their work and socialise with writing colleagues, the early writLOUD events were held in the cosy surroundings of the Oxfam Bookshop in Bloomsbury. Soon, however, a larger venue was required and writLOUD moved to RADA.

With its stage and café-bar atmosphere, the foyer bar is the ideal setting, and is filled each month by those looking to mingle with fellow writers, gain inspiration from fresh, live performances, or simply have a great night's literary entertainment.

Comedian Rich Hall has read at writLOUD, *The Times* literary editor, Erica Wagner has sung, and wunderkind Richard Milward has turned himself into a tower block for the night! writLOUD has also celebrated the success of Birkbeck creative writers who've made it into print, including Sally Hinchcliffe and Rebekah Lattin-Rawstrone.

As it reaches its second anniversary, writLOUD aims to build on its success, while remaining a key social focus for the Birkbeck writers' community.



To find out about writLOUD at Birkbeck, visit www.bbk.ac.uk/writloud



Obituaries

Professor Sally Ledger, Sir Bernard Crick and Lady Judy Hurd



Sally Ledger (1961–2009)
Former Head of Birkbeck's
School of English and Humanities

The School of English and Humanities is in mourning at the sudden death of Professor Sally Ledger on 21 January, 2009. Sally was a vibrant presence at Birkbeck from 1995 until she left last summer to take up the prestigious Hildred Carlisle Chair at Royal Holloway. Many friends, colleagues and students gathered at 30 Russell Square on 20 February to remember her, and to celebrate her great gift of life. The large space was packed to overflowing, and we heard many heartfelt tributes to a remarkable woman who touched so many people's lives.

When Sally died, it was extraordinary to experience the shockwaves as news of her death

rippled out across the world, each time zone bringing a deluge of emails expressive of the great global grief at her loss, from the east coast to the west coast of the US, and then Australasia, as far away as Dunedin on the South Island of New Zealand, where within a week Sally was to have delivered a keynote paper at the Australasian Victorian Studies Association Conference.

At the heart of that radiating presence, at the centre of Sally's life, affirming and sustaining her as she blossomed professionally, was her family, Jim Porteous her husband and Richard, her son. And at the centre of her professional life for many years were Sally's friends, students and colleagues at Birkbeck, especially in this School, and the Centre for Nineteenth-Century Studies. How privileged we

all are to have had the opportunity to work closely, and party, with a woman so widely loved and so deeply mourned across the world.

Part of that privilege was, of course, to have worked with a very brilliant academic, who played a key role in redefining the field of nineteenth-century studies. In 1997, two years after joining Birkbeck, Sally published *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle*, a truly groundbreaking study of late Victorian women writers and radicals that reclaimed a body of work and a cultural moment that had hitherto suffered a critical neglect now unimaginable. Her readings of fiction at the Fin are wonderfully alert to its ideological contradictions, and to how the politics of gender, race and class are worked out in literary form. Her reputation in the field was consolidated with the publication of three edited volumes on the political and cultural history of the Fin de Siècle, and a book on Henrik Ibsen; she was made Professor at Birkbeck in 2005.

From writing on the under-studied and decidedly non-canonical writers of the Fin, Sally shifted her attention to that most canonical of high Victorian writers, Charles Dickens. At the local level, she took over the organisation of Dickens Day, which has long been associated with Birkbeck, and transformed it into a cutting-edge annual conference. And on the international stage she became centrally involved in the Dickens Project convened by the University of California at Santa Cruz. Despite the demands of being a dynamic and popular Head of School from 2002–2005, she published *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination* in 2007, an acclaimed book which has changed the way we read Dickens by

Above: Sally Ledger
(Dr Tom Healy)

contextualising his work within the vibrant dissenting political culture of the 1830s and 1840s. Her academic interests in the popular and the radical convey the essence of Sally's politics and passions, as did her new work, on sentimentality, speak of the importance of the emotional and affective life for this warm, loving woman.

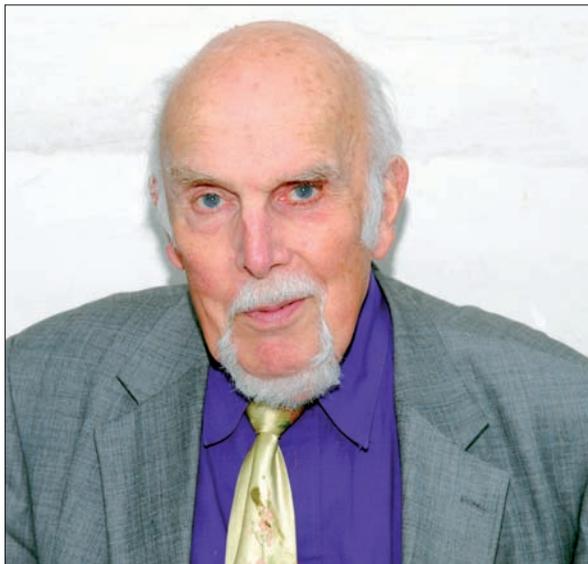
Her work was enviably well integrated into the rest of her life. Her great erudition notwithstanding, she was immersed in popular culture, from shopping to music to football, and was partial to the latest slang. And her colleagues and students became, seamlessly, her friends. She brought to her professional and intellectual life a real humanity, so that her warmth, her generosity, her integrity and sense of justice, her fearless honesty, her irrepressible sense of humour, fed into her scholarship and her academic leadership in incalculably significant ways.

Sally, we miss you. But how lucky we are to have had you in our lives, and as often as I have wept over you these past few weeks, I have smiled at the happy memories you have left us, and the inspiration to be better people.

**Professor Hilary Fraser,
School of English**

Sir Bernard Crick (1929–2008) Founder of the School of Politics and Sociology

Sir Bernard Crick was the founding professor of the Birkbeck's Department (later School) of Politics and Sociology in 1971. He was a man of many parts: academic political theorist and energetic activist in a variety of political institutions and events. He obtained his first degree at



Above:
Sir Bernard Crick
(Birkbeck Photo Unit)

UCL, then his doctorate at LSE and Harvard. He was appointed a lecturer at LSE in 1957, then to the Chair of Politics at Sheffield University in 1965. At Birkbeck, Crick built up a successful department: initially entirely postgraduate, the teaching seminars were lively forums of political and intellectual ferment.

Crick's three early books, *The American Science of Politics*, 1958, *In Defence of Politics*, 1962, and *The Reform of Parliament*, 1964, established his reputation. His best known work was *George Orwell: A Life*, published in 1980. Crick established the annual Birkbeck Orwell Lecture and the Orwell Prize for political writing. He himself believed in the maxim that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance, and advocated participatory citizenship; he edited *The Political Quarterly*, a forum for political theory and debate; he was active as researcher and interlocutor in the Northern Ireland conflict in the 1980s. He was concerned at what seemed like the decline of the Labour Party in the 1980s,

and championed Neil Kinnock as leadership candidate.

Crick retired from Birkbeck in 1984, moving to Edinburgh where he was appointed Honorary Fellow of the University. His enthusiasm for active citizenship led him to the educational plans for citizenship studies in school curricula, appointed to this task in 1997 by his former Sheffield student David Blunkett, then the Secretary of State for Education. He also devised education programmes for immigrants in UK citizenship and tests for candidates seeking British naturalisation. He was knighted in 2002.

Sami Zubaida, Emeritus Professor of Politics and Sociology

Lady Judy Hurd (1950–2008) Independent Governor of Birkbeck

Lady Judy Hurd, wife of the former Conservative Foreign Secretary Lord Douglas Hurd, and an Independent Governor of Birkbeck since October 2005, died on 22 November 2008. She was a former Birkbeck student who obtained a BA History in 1998 and also a former member of staff at the College, having worked as a secretary in the Department of History of Art in the 1960s. Lady Hurd maintained an interest in the College through contact with the Development and Alumni team, and as a member of the Buildings Committee. Lord Marshall, who worked closely with her, said "Judy made a good contribution to Governors' meetings. She was always mindful of issues of importance to students and her presence will be sorely missed."

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A response to Tony Chandler's obituary, written by David Unwin, can be found at www.bbk.ac.uk/about_us/publications/bbk

RUSSIAN RELATIONS



The Memorial Society is a Russian human rights and historical information centre that has pioneered research into the history of repression in the Soviet Union for 20 years. Two Birkbeck academics have long-standing relationships with it: Law Professor **Bill Bowring** as a partner in the European Human Rights Advocacy Centre (EHRAC) litigation project and History Professor **Orlando Figes** researching source material for his recent book. Here they describe their work in Russia.



Bill
Bowring

When I lecture in Russia, as I frequently do, I always remind my audience that Britain and Russia have a long history together. They were, until recently, the centres of large empires, the former maritime, the latter continental. Furthermore, England and Russia have had a close relationship since the sixteenth century, when Ivan IV (the Terrible) proposed marriage to Elizabeth I, and an English embassy was established in Moscow. We were on the same side in the Napoleonic Wars, and the First and Second World Wars. No-one, either in England or in Russia, can remember what

the Crimean War was about. We clearly have a lot in common.

As recently as 2000 the former Prime Minister Tony Blair helped the then acting President Putin out of a tight spot, when the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe recommended Russia's suspension because of atrocities committed from late 1999 in the Second Chechen War. Blair promptly invited Putin on a private visit to London, including tea with the Queen. This was the clearest signal that nothing would happen to Russia, and Putin publicly thanked Blair.

Why are relations now so difficult? One issue concerns human rights. I have been visiting Russia and the former USSR regularly since 1983. My research focuses on problems of human rights protection, especially since Russia joined the Council of Europe in 1996; and issues of federalism, regionalism and minority

rights, subjects I teach to undergraduates and postgraduates. I am an activist and practitioner as well as an academic, and six years ago I founded the EHRAC which has now assisted Russians in more than 150 cases against Russia at the European Court of Human Rights. I assist with drafting, and have appeared at the Court in the first Chechen cases, and the first environmental case against Russia.

I have now been deported from Russia twice, in 2005 and 2007, but won the right to return, most recently as expert with the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's (OSCE) High Commissioner on National Minorities, studying the situation of the Ukrainian minority in Russia. I am representing Marina Litvinenko, the widow of Aleksandr Litvinenko, murdered with radioactive Pollonium in London in 2006, in her case against Russia at Strasbourg.



Orlando
Figes

I have been going to Russia for my research since 1983. I worked in the old Soviet archives years before they opened up and saw from the start the changes made by glasnost and perestroika. It's hard to imagine now, but until 1987 foreign historians weren't allowed to use the catalogues, and had to order files from references we found in the footnotes of Soviet books. We were forced to work in a separate reading room and couldn't even use the canteen in case we came into contact with Soviet historians. But the system had a flaw: there was only one

toilet for Soviet and foreign researchers. In those days I was a smoker. The Soviet archivists enjoyed my Western cigarettes and gladly helped me find the numbers of the files I needed for my work. It was a bit like spying, I suppose.

The opening up of the Soviet archives was a great liberation for historians. We could work on almost any theme without fear of censorship or bans by the authorities (for several years in the 1980s I was refused a visa to the Soviet Union). It was exciting to collaborate with Russian archivists and historians on previously forbidden topics like the history of the Stalin terror and the Gulag.

In the past few years the mood has changed. Putin has been calling for a more positive version of Soviet history to be taught in Russian schools and universities. In the mass media,

increasingly controlled by the Kremlin, Stalin is presented as a national hero, the man who made the Soviet Union great and won the war against Hitler, and nothing much is said about the terror any more. The changes have made life more difficult for foreign historians. We have been accused of blackening Soviet history by focusing attention on the terror.

Last December the police raided the St Petersburg offices of the Memorial Society and took away their whole archive. All the materials I had collected with Memorial in St Petersburg – about a third of the sources I used in my recent book, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* – were confiscated by the police. Since the raid my Russian publishers have cancelled a contract to publish my book in Russia.



BOOMING ART

With American billionaires and Russian oligarchs keeping prices soaring, Anna M Dempster examines the relationship between art and money

The London economy rests on the twin pillars of art and money and is supported, at times, by a third pillar, law. This is at the heart of the often-cited government claim that the (loosely defined) 'Creative Industries' are second only to the (even more loosely defined) business and financial services in terms of economic impact, growth and job creation. These industries are at the heart of the global capital and of the knowledge-based economy seen as a source of the UK's competitive advantage. The rarely asked, and to date unanswered, question is: What is the connection between art and money? The simple answer: it is fundamental. The current financial crisis accentuates this connection.

On Monday 15 September 2008, Lehman Brothers, one of the world's oldest and largest investment banks, filed for bankruptcy. Alan Greenspan described it as a 'once in a century event'. Images of young, shell-shocked employees, in New York and then London, walking home with their belongings packed up in cardboard boxes, sent shockwaves around the world. The failure of a firm founded in 1850, with 25,000 staff worldwide, represented not just the greed of a few but the shattering of dreams for the many. Travelling on the tube from the City of London to Birkbeck, I remember the Underground was unnaturally quiet.

As the financial markets reeled, on the other side of London the contemporary art market rallied. On the same day, Sotheby's, one of the world's largest and most powerful auction houses, founded in 1744, staged a veritable coup during a two-day auction entitled 'Beautiful Inside My Head Forever'. The sale made \$199 million, beating the record for the highest ever auction dedicated to a single artist and

“ The sale made \$199 million, beating the record for the highest ever auction dedicated to a single artist and making Damien Hirst the richest living artist in British history ”

making Damien Hirst the richest living artist in British history. The sale highlighted the relationship between global art and global money. Even though the auction was reportedly 'thinly traded' with only a handful of bidders, the publicity machine surrounding Hirst's 'brand' ensured that enough bidders were attracted from among the American billionaires, Middle Eastern sheikhs, Russian oligarchs and art-market insiders, to set prices soaring. The speculative momentum and irrational exuberance of the art world seemed to parallel that of finance.

The relationship between the symbolic and subjective world of art and the seemingly objective one of money is a fascinating one. The renowned art critic Robert Hughes bemoans their entanglement, which he argues has led to the 'fetishisation' of art, its loss of purpose and meaning. But the dominance of the art world by the rich and powerful has historical parallels. After making their money as Florence's greatest bankers, the Medici family became avid patrons of the arts in the fifteenth century. They invested in, and raised the social standing of, contemporary artists. They had themselves painted alongside biblical saints, in an attempt to secure a place in heaven as well as history. The flourishing art market in the Netherlands during the seventeenth century provides another intriguing example. Socio-economic development such as the emergence of a new middle-class fuelled demand and stimulated a mass-market for art. Economic historians broadly agree that market forces helped to both shape and drive Dutch painting, encouraging product and process innovation of both content and form. In the Hague Historical Museum a small

plaque explains how extremely high prices for land (property), encouraged people to diversify their investments into other assets, including art. The astronomical rise in the British housing market of the past decade provides an interesting parallel.

Whether or not widespread patronage and exuberant investment in the arts produces 'good' art is an altogether different question. Luckily, great art is produced as much (if not more) in times of crisis as in those of prosperity. The current trend for both financial and creative industries seems to be 'back to basics'. To survive the financial crisis, Warren Buffett said "we need banks to get back to banking". Art dealers and auction houses are reporting a 'strong shift to Old Masters' away from trendy contemporary art. Maybe the world of art, like that of money, is turning its back on the hype and the hard-sell, swapping their exotic options for something simpler and hopefully less toxic.

For many creative and finance professionals, the current economic crisis might provide a welcome opportunity to go 'back to school'. With Birkbeck offering courses in Economics and Finance as well as the Strategy and Management of Creative Industries, together we might begin to understand the fascinating relationship between art and money.

Anna M Dempster is a lecturer in the Department of Management and currently a visiting professor at Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University. She has published in international journals and is writing a book on strategy and entrepreneurship in the creative industries, to be published by Oxford University Press

'All You Need Is Love' by Damien Hirst on display at Sotheby's in London. The work sold at auction for over \$2.4m (PA Photos)

STATE OF THE UNIONS

Margaret Thatcher's industrial relations legacy was a shift in power away from trades unions that has contributed to the current financial crisis, says Professor John Kelly

The 25th anniversary of the 1984–1985 miners' strike has generated a flood of media commentary, much of it critical of the strikers' tactics and of the mineworkers' president Arthur Scargill. His chief protagonist, Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, had a visceral hatred of the militant trade unionism that he represented and her memoirs contain a self-serving and melodramatic chapter on the strike, which she refers to as an 'insurrection' launched by the 'Fascist Left'. Her victory over the miners was a victory for the 'free economy'. With hindsight we can now see that the assault on trade union power and on the capacity of working people to increase their earnings is one of the policies that would ultimately lead to the current financial crisis.

Thatcher's confrontation with the miners was not an isolated act of revenge against an unusually militant union and its Marxist president. It was in fact an integral component of a coherent and radical programme to destroy the 'post-war settlement' of government support for full employment based on nationalised industry, high public and welfare spending and strong trade unions, and replace it with the neo-liberal vision of a 'free market'.

Successive Conservative governments from 1979 to 1997 enacted seven separate laws that systematically undermined trade union power. The ability of unions to strike was dramatically reduced while the capacity of the employer to fire workers, close factories and relocate overseas was increased. For example, in the February 2009 dispute at Lindsey Oil Refinery over the use of subcontracted foreign labour, the company actions were lawful, but the

strikes were not. This shift in the balance of power seriously weakened trade unions and, in conjunction with high unemployment, led to a dramatic and sustained fall in trade union membership and influence. In 1979 over 13 million workers (55% of the workforce) belonged to trade unions; when the Conservatives left office in 1997 the number had slumped to a little over seven million (30% of the workforce) and was still at that level in 2008.

When the Conservatives came to power, the trade union movement was dominated by manual workers in manufacturing, coalmining and transport. Today the most highly unionised groups are public sector professionals. In 1979, approximately 75% of employees had their annual wage increases determined by negotiations between unions and employers but by 1997 that figure had also fallen, to just 35% (and it stands at that level today). Strike activity fell even more dramatically.

Neo-liberals were delighted with this transformation of British industrial relations and convinced these changes were responsible for the rapid economic growth in Britain recorded between 1986 and 1990 and again from 1993. Equally striking was the redistribution of national income: during the years of strong trade unions (from the late 1940s to the late 1970s) there was a steady rise in the share of national income going to wages and salaries at the expense of profits, dividends and interest. From the early 1980s this trend was thrown into reverse and profits, dividends and top salaries increased each year at four to five times the growth rate of average earnings.

Although the increase in income inequality was especially striking in the

UK, it was also seen in other countries.

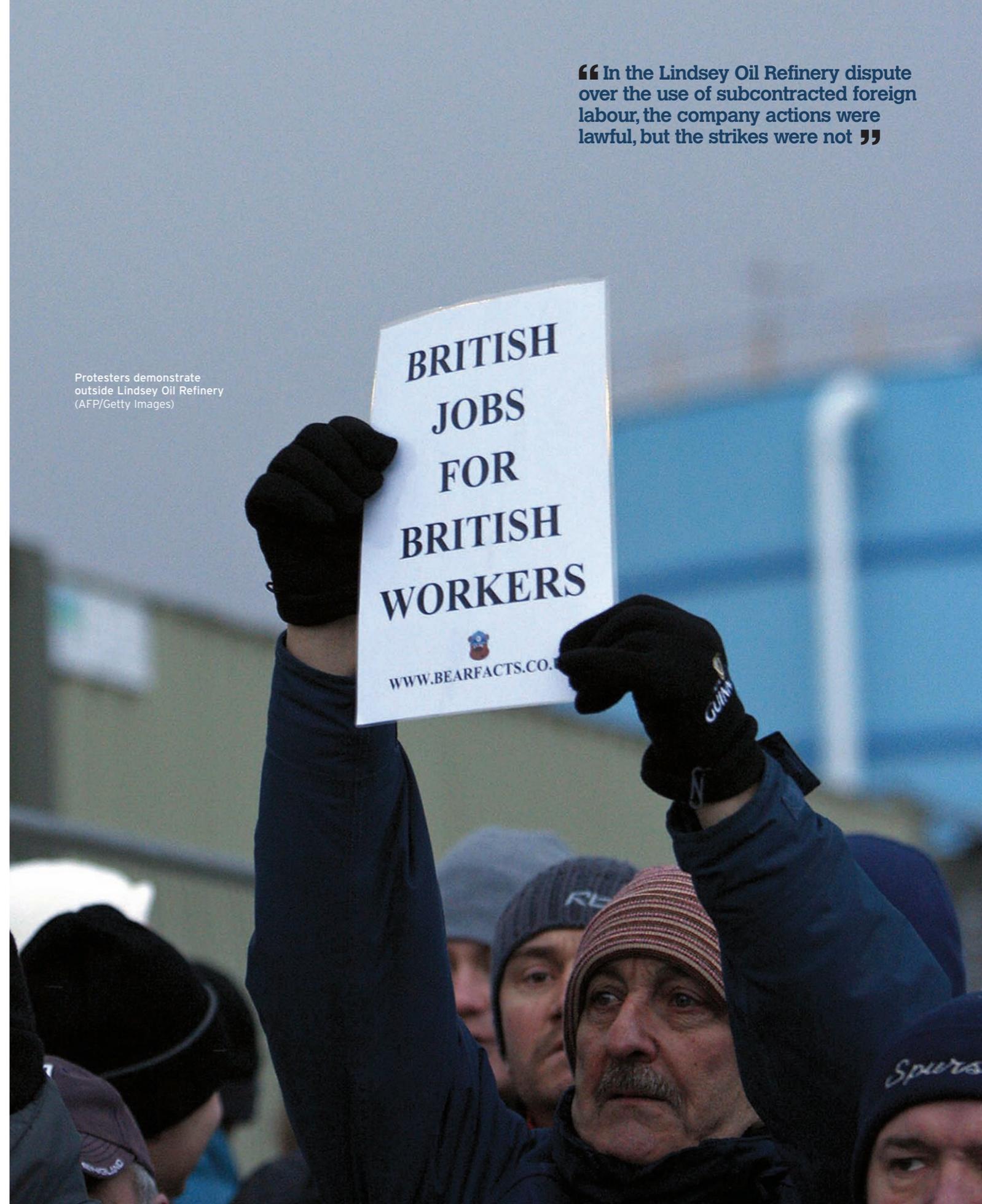
Unemployment however remained stubbornly high: the lowest level recorded in Britain between 1979 and 2008 of just 5% is approximately twice the 2.5% average for the period from the late 1940s until the late 1970s. Yet for Conservatives and their neo-liberal advisers, historically high levels of unemployment were acceptable because they weakened trade unions, reduced the level of strike activity and restrained workers' pay demands.

Even in the 1990s however there were commentators, such as the late Andrew Glyn, who warned that this 'new industrial relations' model of weak trade unions, modest wage growth and a profits and dividends bonanza was potentially damaging and dysfunctional. In essence, the productive capacity of firms, both in the UK and elsewhere, was in danger of outstripping the capacity of workers to consume the goods being produced. One of the preferred solutions of both Conservative and Labour governments was to encourage a credit boom in both consumer goods and in housing so that consumption levels could be kept artificially high while wages could be held down and not erode business profits. Both in the USA and the UK, the folly of excessive reliance on credit has now become apparent.

Perhaps the British government should repeal some of the anti-union laws first passed by the Conservatives but retained by Prime Minister Blair?

John Kelly is Professor of Industrial Relations in Birkbeck's School of Management

“In the Lindsey Oil Refinery dispute over the use of subcontracted foreign labour, the company actions were lawful, but the strikes were not”



Protesters demonstrate outside Lindsey Oil Refinery (AFP/Getty Images)

Events and books

Dates for your diary and current publications

Diary dates

Wednesday 29 April, 1-2pm
Lunchtime Lecture:
Defining Humanity/Animality: A Modern History
Professor Joanna Bourke,
School of History, Classics
and Archaeology
Room B33, Malet Street
■ Free entry, first come,
first seated. Email
lunchlectures@bbk.ac.uk

Tuesday 12 May, 5-6pm
Inaugural Lecture:
Writing Children's Poetry: But who am I talking to?
Visiting Professor Michael
Rosen, Children's Laureate
BO1, Clore Management Centre
Torrington Square
■ Free entry, booking required
Email events@bbk.ac.uk

Wednesday 13 May, 1-2pm
Lunchtime Lecture:
What Does Darwinism Tell Us About Human Nature?
Professor John Dupré,
University of Exeter
Room B33, Malet Street
■ Free entry, first come,
first seated. Email
lunchlectures@bbk.ac.uk

Wednesday 13 May, 5-6pm
Inaugural Lecture:
Death, exile or imprisonment: The Politics of Disgrace in Early Modern France
Professor Julian Swann,
School of History, Classics
and Archaeology
BO1, Clore Management Centre
Torrington Square
■ Free entry, booking required
Email events@bbk.ac.uk

Thursday 14 May, 7pm
Paul Hirst Memorial Lecture
Helena Kennedy, QC

BO1, Clore Management Centre
Torrington Square
■ Free entry, booking required
Email j.edwards@bbk.ac.uk

Wednesday 20 May, 5-6pm
J D Bernal Lecture:
The University in Society
Professor Julia Goodfellow, CBE
BO1, Clore Management Centre
Torrington Square
■ Free entry, booking required
Email events@bbk.ac.uk

Thursday 21 May, 5-6pm
William Matthews Memorial lecture: The Late-Medieval Literature of Conversion
Professor Steven Kruger,
City University of New York
BO1, Clore Management Centre
Torrington Square
■ Free entry, booking required
Email events@bbk.ac.uk

Wednesday 3 June, 1-2pm
Lunchtime Lecture:
Animals and the Sporting Life
Professor Steven Connor,
School of English
and Humanities
Room B33, Malet Street
■ Free entry, first come,
first seated. Email
lunchlectures@bbk.ac.uk

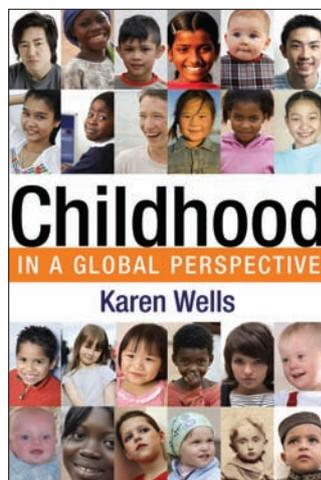
Wednesday 3 June, 5-6pm
Inaugural lecture:
Mummy! The True Story of a British Museum Curse
Professor Roger Luckhurst,
English and Humanities
BO1, Clore Management Centre
Torrington Square
■ Free entry, booking required
Email events@bbk.ac.uk

Saturday 6 June, 3-5pm
Discussion:
Talking Books - Novel History
Speakers: Sarah Dunant, Hilary
Mantel, John Sutherland,

Joanna Bourke
Room B36, Malet Street
■ Free entry, booking
recommended. Email
j.eisner@bbk.ac.uk

For a full calendar of events,
visit: www.bbk.ac.uk/events

Recent books

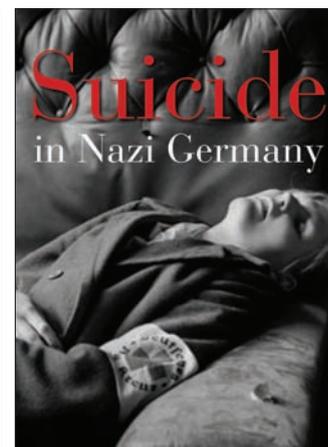


Childhood in a Global Perspective
Dr Karen Wells
Polity Press 2009

Code-switching
Dr. Penelope Gardner-Chloros
Cambridge University
Press 2009

Technological Change and Mature Industrial Regions. Firms, Knowledge and Policy
Mahtab A Farshchi, Odile EM
Janne and Philip McCann
Edward Elgar Publishing 2009

The Object Reader (In Sight: Visual Culture Series)
Dr Fiona Candlin and
Raiford Guins
Routledge 2008



Suicide in Nazi Germany
Christian Goeschel
Oxford University Press 2009

The Muslim Brotherhood: Hasan Al-hudaybi and Ideology
Barbara Zollner
Routledge 2008

Maternal Encounters: The Ethics of Interruption
Lisa Baraitser
Routledge 2008

The Blackwell Guide to Research Methods in Bilingualism and Multilingualism
Li Wei and Melissa Moyer
WileyBlackwell 2008

Erratum

We apologise for the omission of Sharon Joseph-Buckley, MA English from the graduates list in the November 2008 Presentation Ceremony Brochure and the incorrect details printed of Mr Milan Maluk, BSc Economic and Social Policy.

bbk²⁵

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