



## LIFE ON THE VEG

Consumers are shunning supermarkets  
in favour of ethical and sustainable produce



In this issue we celebrate some of the awards that academics have won recently in terms of research grants and book prizes (p12), as well as those won by the College, mentioned in the Master's report (p8). *BBK* magazine had its own moment of glory, winning the silver HEIST award, in the best alumni publication category.

We have such supportive and engaged alumni that we are always pleased to celebrate their successes too; in this issue we feature Sarah Weir's appointment as Head of Arts and Cultural Strategy at the Olympic Delivery Authority (p14); and Simon Bird's comedy success (p15).

However, the magazine also aims to interest its readers in topics beyond the College. Alongside articles on research advances (p2), we include the personal insights of academics on two of the world's trouble spots, Afghanistan (p26) and Iran (p22). Closer to home, there's an alternative view on the MPs' expenses scandal (p20); and whether the supermarkets' stranglehold on food production limits consumer choice (p18) and how rural towns are being hit by the recession (p28).

Finally, did you know that *BBK* is available online? If you would prefer to receive the magazine this way, please email your name and home address to [alumni@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@bbk.ac.uk) and we will alert you when the spring issue comes out.

Sonya Barber, Acting Editor

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Cover image  
Organic produce  
*Jasper White/Getty Images*



THE QUEEN'S  
ANNIVERSARY PRIZES  
FOR HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION

2006

# London: the making of a world city

Lecturer Mike Berlin on the new course and lecture series exploring London's development from the seventeenth century to the present day

A small café in east London has an interesting item on the menu. It sells bagels (spelt beigels) filled with Jamaican ackee and saltfish. This marriage of an Eastern European Jewish bread roll with West Indian fish and vegetable tells us a lot about why London is a unique city where cultural hybrids such as this flourish. Few cities in the world have the sheer diversity of languages, religions and culture. What makes London so special?

A new course running this autumn at Birkbeck, hosted in partnership with the Museum of London, seeks to unravel the mystery. Over eleven meetings, including lectures, walks and site visits, we'll be exploring the remarkable story of how London went from a relatively small city of a quarter of a million in 1600 into one of the world's key financial and political centres, a multilingual, multicultural metropolis of over seven million people.

London's status as a world city is based on centuries of development dating back to the sixteenth century, when the city was barely larger than it had been in Roman times. Its economy was largely dominated by a limited range of exports of woollen cloth to much more economically powerful cities such as Antwerp. It was a walking city; nowhere was more than a few minutes' walk to open fields. The Great Fire of London, far from arresting the city's growth, led to even more property development.

Over the next four centuries London's fortunes were based on maritime trade. The Thames was filled with a forest of ships, leading directly to the building of the London docks. Down to the 1950s London's fortune was closely bound up with the quest for a seaborne empire, relying on the exploitation of people and



Above: *Moonrise, Mist and Merchandise on The Thames*, George Ayling/Private Collection/Bourne Gallery (Bridgeman Art Library)

resources on the far sides of the globe. London's wealth was built in the Caribbean slave plantations.

As London's share of global maritime trade grew, the empire provided the basis for the city's growth. Huge armies of white collar workers operated London's financial institutions. By 1800 London was the largest city in Western Europe; by 1900 it was the largest city in the world.

In the twentieth century Britain lost the empire and London's population declined. The docks fell silent. Despite the devastation of the 1940s and the painful recovery of the 1950s London emerged into the twenty-first century as a global centre and will continue to be a key centre of the global economic system.

One constant feature in London's

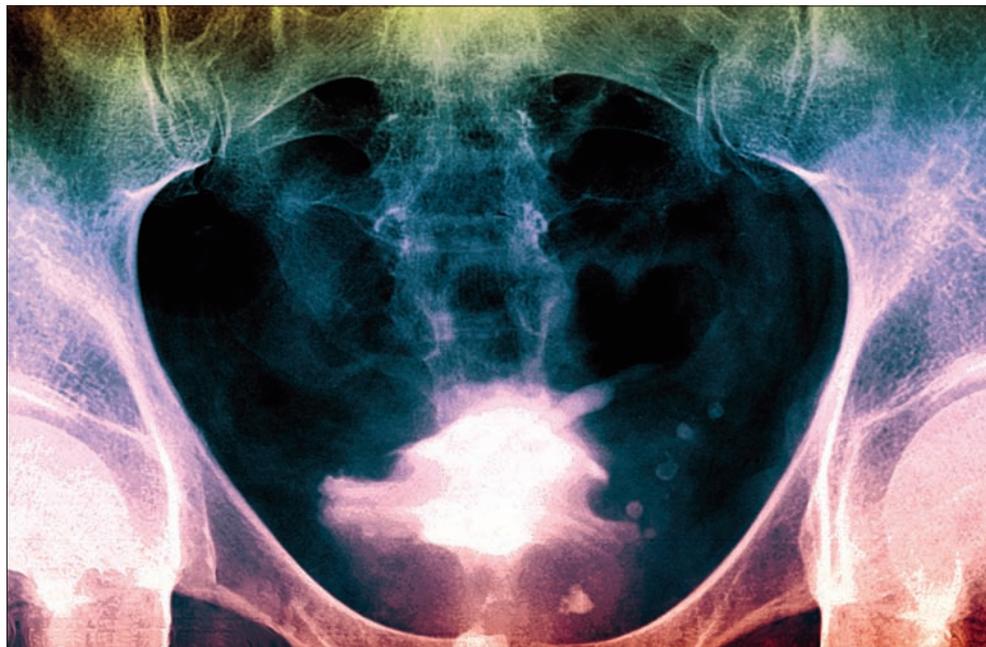
history is that it has been peopled by a regular injection of new blood. In the 1600s Londoners largely migrated from within the British Isles, though tens of thousands of Huguenot refugees came in the 1680s. Their numbers were supplemented in later centuries by others; Irish, Jewish, Asian, West Indian migrants, bringing new energy, new culture and new ways.

London's ethnic mix continues to be enriched by an ever more diverse global catchment area. The forthcoming lecture series will show that the ackee and saltfish bagel is a small reminder of one of the keys to London's uniqueness as a city.

For a list of dates and further details email [history@FLL.bbk.ac.uk](mailto:history@FLL.bbk.ac.uk)

# Tuberculosis drug funding award

Medical Research Council awards Birkbeck researcher a grant for urgent work into combating the disease



Tuberculosis (TB) is a contagious disease caused by the 'Superbug' *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* and remains the leading cause of death worldwide. Despite the presence of chemotherapy, extensive rise in antibiotic resistance is a great international cause for concern. In reported cases of extremely drug resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB), there is virtually nothing available that can combat the disease, hence the urgent need for new drug development.

The Medical Research Council (MRC) has awarded Dr Sanjib Bhakta, Department of Biological Sciences, with the highly esteemed New Investigator Research Grant for his work on cell wall structure, biosynthesis and regulation in *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. Dr Bhakta said: "*Mycobacterium tuberculosis* is unique in its cell wall architecture indicating that the enzymes regulating the synthesis of the pivotal substrates are excellent therapeutic targets for TB treatment."

Above: An X-ray showing tuberculosis of the bladder (Science Photo Library)

The MRC has also supported the TBD-UK, a UK based TB Drug Discovery Consortium, application for a collaboration grant where Dr Bhakta was a co-applicant. The Consortium aims to integrate their combined expertise to advance early-stage drug discovery efforts at the bench and translate them into new drugs in the clinic.

In addition, success with an Austrian Science Fund on evaluation of inhibitors as new anti-mycobacterial drug leads, where Dr Bhakta was also a co-applicant, has brought the two internationally leading institutions closer on tuberculosis research. Ongoing research in his laboratory focuses on the nature of the protective cell wall structure and biosynthesis in *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* in order to identify and validate potential therapeutic targets for developing novel anti-tuberculosis drug treatments.

For more information on the project, visit [www.ismb.lon.ac.uk/](http://www.ismb.lon.ac.uk/)

## Research into Aspergers

Highly intelligent adults with Asperger Syndrome, a form of autism, still have difficulties in day-to-day social interaction. This may be explained by 'mindblindness', the idea that they are unable to predict what other people will do by thinking about their mental states, that is, their knowledge and beliefs.

If this is true then why do people with Asperger Syndrome pass all the standard tests of mental state attribution? Is the theory wrong or are the tests insensitive? New research, led by Dr Atsushi Senju and Dr Victoria Southgate from Birkbeck's Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development, Dr Sarah White and Dr Uta Frith from the Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience at UCL and Aarhus University, and published recently in *Science* magazine, addresses these questions. It reports evidence from eye movements, that adults with Asperger Syndrome do not spontaneously anticipate another person's behaviour on the basis of that person's mental state. This is in stark contrast with typical adults, and even young toddlers.

So the mindblindness theory also holds for highly intelligent people with Asperger Syndrome. At the same time the research acknowledges their successful compensatory learning. This suffices for slow and deliberate thinking about other people's thoughts, but is not the same as the spontaneous and automatic ability to attribute inner thoughts, and it may be the lack of this spontaneous ability that is at the heart of the everyday social impairments still evident in highly intelligent adults with Asperger Syndrome.

# The origin of speech

Birkbeck academics chart the study of child development and language from Charles Darwin's 1887 article

This year marks the anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth (1809) and the publication of *On the Origin of Species* (1859). Commemorations have been held round the world celebrating the lasting contribution of Darwin's legacy. Marjorie Lorch, Professor of Neurolinguistics, has been exploring one of Darwin's least well-known works and his vast contribution to linguistics which has gone relatively unnoticed. As an old man Darwin published a short article in the newly founded British journal for psychology and philosophy *Mind*. Darwin based his *Biographical Sketch of an Infant* on a previously unpublished diary he

had kept of his own children's early development 40 years before.

Along with her colleague Dr Paula Hella (Birkbeck PhD and Honorary Research Fellow), Professor Lorch has uncovered how this article came to be published in 1877, and to chart its impact on the scholarly community. In a series of talks and publications, Lorch and Hella are tracing the way this minor work was responsible for initiating research into child development and language acquisition in this country. Prior to Darwin's *Biographical Sketch of an Infant* no significant investigations had been made into how children develop an understanding

Below:  
Charles Darwin, with his son William Erasmus Darwin, who was the subject of *Biographical Sketch of an Infant* (English Heritage Images)

and ability to use language.

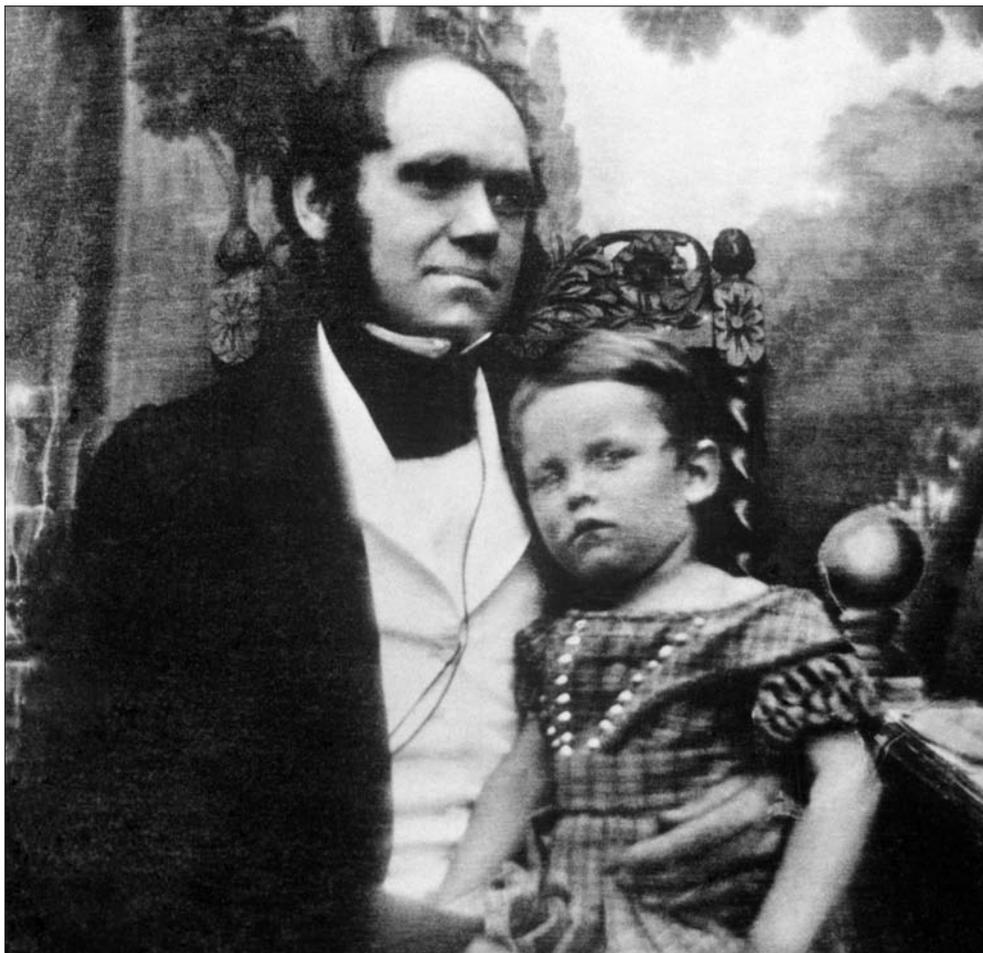
This research into Darwin's work on child language acquisition is part of Lorch's larger project on how language came to be understood as a function of the human brain. In the second half of the nineteenth century, clinicians and experimentalists began to map how different parts of the brain subserved different motor and sensory functions. The crucial question for this materialist programme was the status of language considered to be a fundamental part of the non-corporeal soul.

If this most human ability could be demonstrated to reside in a particular part of the brain, the relation of humans to the animal with respect to mental functions would need to be reconceptualised. Darwin's article was a significant step towards realising this goal. He believed that the study of the early unfolding of complex human behaviour in babies would lead to a natural science of thought and language.

Professor Lorch and Dr Hella participated in a Darwin symposium held at the International Society of the History of the Neurosciences meeting last June in Charleston, USA. Lorch currently holds the Presidency of this Society. There was a plenary lecture at the Henry Sweet Society for the History of Linguistic Ideas meeting held in Oxford in September and there will be a contribution to the Birkbeck Institute of Humanities two-day conference *From Childhood to Children* on 4–5 February 2010.



Two articles on this work will appear in the *Journal of the History of the Neurosciences and Language and History* in 2010.



# Archaeology students dig it up

Lottery grant gives schoolchildren access to Camden dig

Three Birkbeck MA Archaeology students taught archaeology to local schoolchildren for a week in July. The successful Camden project arose from an approach by the London Borough of Camden's Living Heritage Project Co-ordinator to Harvey Sheldon and Robin Densem from the College. The project was made possible through a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The site of the dig was at the Kentish Town Church of England Primary School, London, with 15 children who returned to school in the summer holidays to participate in the project, as part of the Camden out of school learning initiative. The Birkbeck team involved three MA Archaeology students who taught excavation skills to the children, aged from eight to 10 years old. The tutors were led by Samantha Boggia, MA Archaeology second year, assisted by David Jennings who is completing his dissertation, and Christine Hodge, a recent graduate.

The real-life nature of the project engendered much excitement and engagement from the children, who had all seen archaeologists on the television and were keen to emulate them. The tutors worked in the trench alongside the children, and ensured that the fieldwork was both tidy and thorough. There were also simultaneous archaeological activities outside the trench, including sieving earth from the spoil-heap and washing finds. The trench was only excavated to a shallow depth, and so the full sequence of deposits wasn't exposed; however the lower of the two layers that was dug contained a residual late prehistoric stuck flint blade or tool.

Map evidence showed that the area had been open fields in 1801. Houses had been built on the site of the dig between 1841 and 1870 and these were later demolished and



their plots were incorporated into the school grounds. Finds of nineteenth- and twentieth-century material were much studied by the young archaeologists.

The children enjoyed the dig and got a great deal out of the project, shown by the high retention rate throughout the week. A celebration was arranged for the last day, which was attended by the children's parents, as well as the Mayor of Camden, Councillor Omar Faruque Ansari.

Above: One of the children involved in the Camden project (Christina Panagi)

For more information on the new BA Archaeology course, visit [www.bbk.ac.uk/study/ug/archaeology/](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/study/ug/archaeology/)

## Babysibs project

The Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development, affectionately known as the Babylab, is using newly developed techniques for studying brain and behaviour in infants.

Scientists are investigating whether there are any differences in development between infants who have brothers or sisters with autism and those who do not. Siblings of children diagnosed with autism have an increased risk of developing the disorder compared to the general population.

Studying this group will, in the long term, hopefully help to identify the early signs of autism, possibly allowing for earlier and more effective interventions to improve the quality of life for children with autism and their families.

The Babylab has seen over 100 families for this project, from as far away as Scotland and Northern Ireland, and the first participants are just about to turn three years old.

Another of the Centre's projects is studying the sighted infants of blind parents. The main purpose of the study is to explore how these babies develop the brain mechanism for social communication. Moreover, it is hoped that this study will tell us about the development of the infant brain, which adapts to the social environment and develops the skills to process and respond to the physical and social world.

For more information on either of these projects, or if you would like your child to take part in a Babylab study call 020 7631 6258, email [babylab@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:babylab@bbk.ac.uk) or visit [www.cbcd.bbk.ac.uk/babylab/](http://www.cbcd.bbk.ac.uk/babylab/)





## SET IN STONE

Steven Connor, Birkbeck's Professor of Modern Literature and Theory, will be in conversation with Peter Randall-Page on 22 October at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, and here relates the beginning of his interest in the artist.

"I first became aware of Peter Randall-Page's abstract, geometric stone carvings at a time when I was considering what it means to think and the ways in which physical objects are implicated in thinking. Peter had heard some short radio talks in which I had meditated about the magic of certain everyday objects, and thought that my way of thinking might meet in an interesting way with his work.

"From the very start, I was struck by his gravely playful thinking through stone - that is, a thinking at once about and with it. Peter is fascinated by symmetrical patterns, but not as timeless archetypes. His work is situated somewhere between sculpting and drawing, seeming to take up the thread from where the moving finger of wind and rain has left off."

International Directory of Sculpture Parks and Gardens (supported by Birkbeck, *Art & Architecture Journal*, and LCACE), [www.bbk.ac.uk/sculptureparks](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/sculptureparks)

Right: *Parting Company* by Peter Randall-Page (Jonty Wilde)



# Collaboration offers project management courses

## Opportunities to get management accreditation

Birkbeck has collaborated with the ILX Group plc (ILX), the specialist best practice training company, to deliver a new postgraduate module Project Management for Informatics (PMI) that includes learning about PRINCE2® and the option for students to get PRINCE2 accreditation with ILX Group. The MSc in Information Systems and Management, in which the PMI module is compulsory, starts in October 2009.

PRINCE2 is a process-based approach for project management, providing an easily tailored and scalable project management methodology for all types of projects. The method is the de-facto standard in the UK and is practiced worldwide.

In addition to the postgraduate module, Birkbeck is also offering a short course Project Management with PRINCE2, which includes an evening workshop hosted by

Birkbeck and 40 hours e-learning by ILX.

Dr David Wilson, programme director of the MSc comments: "PRINCE2 is a well-known and widely respected project management qualification in high demand. A large percentage of job adverts appearing in recent editions of *Computer Weekly* included PRINCE2 as a requirement for mid-career computing roles. The qualification also has a wide appeal for those working in general management and finance roles. We chose to collaborate with ILX as the company is well respected and the biggest international provider of PRINCE accreditation.

"This course extends our management and information systems provision to particular, specialised continuing professional development. By collaborating with organisations like the ILX Group, Birkbeck can offer alumni and

other mature students support with specialised CPD and professional activities, as well as our traditional academic educational development."

All holders of the PRINCE2 foundation and practitioner qualifications can apply for credits on the Project Management for Informatics module as part of the MSc in Information Systems and Management. "This innovative collaboration is a positive example of how universities and personnel development organisations can collaborate to respond better to employer demand," concludes Dr Wilson.

For further details on the MSc, visit [www.dcs.bbk.ac.uk/courses/mism](http://www.dcs.bbk.ac.uk/courses/mism). You can enrol on the short course starting on Friday 23 October at [www.dcs.bbk.ac.uk/courses/prince2](http://www.dcs.bbk.ac.uk/courses/prince2)

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# The importance of our model of part-time evening study is being universally recognised



Master's report  
David S Latchman

"Treatment of part-time and mature students needs to be improved. The failure of the current system to treat them on the same basis as full-time students ... is in effect a form of discrimination that is not only wrong but also hinders the achievement of the government's objective of 40% of adults in England gaining a university qualification by 2020. The forthcoming review of fees needs to examine all aspects of support for part-time and mature students."

The above quotation comes from the summary of the recent wide-ranging report on Students and Universities produced by the House of Commons Select Committee for Innovation, Universities and Skills. It illustrates the growing support for our campaign to provide part-time students and the institutions which teach them with appropriate support.

The progress in government thinking in this area was illustrated when Lord Mandelson chose Birkbeck as the venue for his first major policy speech since taking over responsibility for universities as Secretary of State for the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. In front of an invited audience of Vice-Chancellors and journalists, he praised Birkbeck for "its commitment to research and teaching excellence and its innovative approach to evening study". He also urged the need to encourage alternatives to full-time study including "part-time modular degrees". Subsequently, in a letter to *The Times*, he stated that "the model of university education as something solely for those in late adolescence is badly outdated".

This government appreciation of the importance of part-time study by mature students was paralleled in the recent report by the Policy Exchange think-tank, which has considerable influence on Conservative policy. This report, co-authored by Birkbeck's Professor of Higher Education, Claire Callender, presented a model to address the inadequate support for part-time students and more importantly identified sources from which the additional funding for this could come.

There are considerable grounds for optimism therefore that whichever party is in power after the next election, it will deal with the inequalities facing part-time students and the institutions which teach them. However, given the

economic situation, we need to continue our campaign to keep this issue high up on the agenda. We were recently awarded the *Times Higher Education* Award for the Marketing and Communications Team of the Year 2009. This was in recognition of our outstanding campaign on behalf of part-time students and particularly those affected by the Government/HEFCE decision to withdraw funding for students studying for an equivalent or lesser qualification (ELO) to those which they already hold. Our communications team are now working closely with the Open University to ensure that the forthcoming Fees Commission gives full consideration to the needs of part-time students as it considers the fees and support available to university students.

Although we have cause for optimism about improvements in part-time support in the future, we also have to ensure the ongoing stability of Birkbeck in the face of the vagaries in Government/HEFCE policy, such as the ELO funding withdrawal. At the time of my last report in *BBK*, we were applying to HEFCE for additional student numbers to replace those which we lost due to the ELO decision. I am delighted to report that HEFCE awarded us a total of 1246 additional student numbers for 2009–2010 and 2010–2011. The £4 million per annum of funding associated with these additional student numbers will remove the need for the safety net funding put in place by HEFCE after the ELO decision. Moreover, unlike safety net funding, such funding continues indefinitely rather than being limited to a three-year safety net period and is also uplifted annually for inflation.

Of course, we have to recruit these additional non-ELO students. To assist us in doing this, we applied to HEFCE for £5 million of additional funding on top of the student number funding, to allow us to implement our strategic plan for the future. I am pleased to report that, at its meeting in July, the Strategic Development Fund Panel awarded us these funds in full.

This funding will provide support for our future strategy which is already well on the way to implementation. In particular, we have reorganised the College into five large Schools each of which incorporates appropriate parts of the Faculty of Lifelong Learning and has delegated financial responsibility. Executive Deans have now been appointed to lead these

**“ There are considerable grounds for optimism, that whichever party is in power after the next election, it will deal with the inequalities facing part-time students. ”**



five Schools. I am delighted to welcome to the College Professor Philip Powell (who leads the School of Business, Economics and Informatics) and Professor Miriam Zukas (who leads the School of Social Sciences, History and Philosophy). They will work alongside our three internal appointees who were all chosen against stiff external competition. They are Professor Hilary Fraser (School of Arts), Professor Nick Keep (School of Science) and Professor Patricia Tuitt (School of Law). I look forward to working with all of them to take the College forward in a new phase of its development.

In parallel with this organisational change, we have also introduced a student support project, and visitors to Birkbeck will now see the redesigned main entrance, which contains the My Birkbeck Helpdesk. Here, students will be able to get responses to the vast majority of their queries from frontline staff and online services: for queries which they are unable to answer, these frontline staff will immediately book an appointment with specialist advisers. We hope that this new centre will enhance even further the levels of student satisfaction with the service which Birkbeck provides. We already score very well in the National Student Survey, where once

Above:  
Lord Peter  
Mandelson,  
speaking during  
his visit to the  
College in July  
(Geoff Wilson)

again in the 2009 Survey we received the top score for multi-faculty institutions in London and the fourth highest score nationally. But, of course, we aspire to do even better and the new centre will assist us in doing this.

These are exciting times for Birkbeck. The importance of our model of part-time evening study is being universally recognised and we are being supported by HEFCE to restructure and prepare ourselves for an even more successful future. Our teaching at Stratford continues to flourish; we recently signed an agreement with the College of North East London launching our joint project in Tottenham in the presence of the Minister for Higher Education, David Lammy MP, and we also have a progression agreement with Tower Hamlets College (see page 10). As Lord Mandelson said, Birkbeck is 'London's evening university'.

**“ In the 2009 National Student Survey once again we received top score for multi-faculty institutions in London and fourth highest nationally. ”**

# Dangoor donation

Generous donation helps to provide scholarships for lower income students



At the recent visit by the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, Lord Mandelson, the Master, Professor David Latchman, said he was delighted to announce that Dr Naim Dangoor OBE and his Exilarch's Foundation had pledged a half-a-million pound gift to Birkbeck, for the provision of scholarships to support lower income, part-time students.

Over a four-year period, the £500,000 will release a further £250,000 in government matched funding and will give up to 150 students access to a further £450,000 in government course and fee grants.

It represents a total funding package of £1.2m to students who may not otherwise have been able to attend university this year. The non-repayable scholarships will be available to undergraduate and postgraduate students to cover

course fees and associated study costs, such as books and childcare.

"Dr Naim Dangoor's incredibly generous donation will help students who may not have been able to enrol on full-time courses elsewhere, but can now consider Birkbeck's unique part-time mode of learning as an attractive alternative," said Professor Latchman.

"We are delighted that we are able to make this donation to Birkbeck, which offers Londoners such unique opportunities in higher education through part-time study," commented Dr David Dangoor, son of Dr Naim Dangoor.

The bursaries will also offer support for those students who fall into the 'poverty trap', whereby they earn above the threshold entitlement for government funding, but below the amount to afford their studies comfortably.

Above: Dr David Dangoor, talking to a student at Scholars' Evening (Geoff Wilson)

## Partnership links in north London

Birkbeck and the former College of North East London (CONEL) signed a memorandum of understanding in June this year.

The agreement is the foundation of a new, fruitful partnership which will lead to collaborative ventures to attract CONEL students to Birkbeck and joint academic work. Present at the signing were David Lammy MP for Tottenham, Principal of CONEL, Paul Head, and the Master of Birkbeck, Professor David Latchman. CONEL is now known as the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London.

A progression agreement was also signed by Birkbeck and Tower Hamlets College in July, which aims to encourage further education students to progress onto business courses at Birkbeck. The progression agreement links the Access to HE Diploma (Business and Accounting) at Tower Hamlets College to the Foundation Degree in Management, the Foundation Degree in Management and Accounting, the BA in Management and the BA in Accounting and Management at Birkbeck. It is hoped that this will raise the aspirations of vocational students, who often feel that university is not for them.

Agreements such as this are part of the ongoing work of Birkbeck and the Linking London Lifelong Learning Network to encourage students with non-traditional qualifications, such as Access, BTEC and Diplomas into higher education.

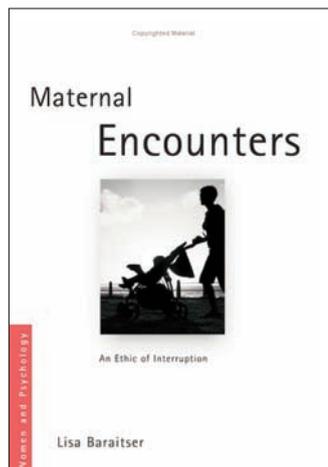


# Glittering prizes

A selection of awards for the College, including prizes for academic works, grants and recognition for this magazine

## Joint winners

Dr Lisa Baraitser from the Department of Psychosocial Studies became the joint winner of the 2009 Feminist and Women's Studies



Association book prize in June with her *Maternal Encounters: An Ethic of Interruption*.

The judges commented: "This book is highly innovative and is beautifully and movingly written. Baraitser creatively weaves together personal and theoretical registers, proposing bold new ways to think about maternal subjectivity and a new ethics of relationality.

"She has defined a subject of study that significantly moves on existing debates. This book will be an important text in feminist psychoanalysis but also have widespread impact across the disciplines. It should be essential reading for all scholars interested in motherhood and the maternal."

Professor Robert Singh, Department of Politics and Sociology, recently became joint winner of the Best Book in American Politics award in this year's Neustadt Prize for the

book he wrote with Timothy J. Lynch: *After Bush: The Case for Continuity in American Foreign Policy*. The Neustadt Prize is an annual award by the American Politics Group of the Political Science Association of the UK, for the best book published in the past year on US politics by a UK academic. The presentation will be made during this year's American Politics Group Annual Colloquium, at the US Embassy on 13 November 2009.

## Literary prizes

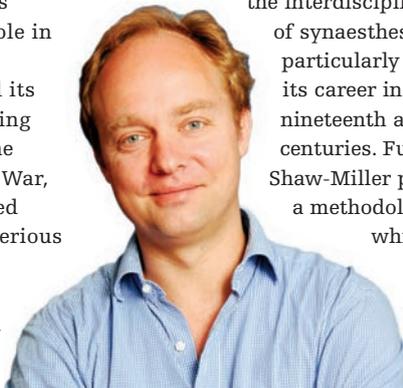
Professor Frank Trentmann, Department of History, Classics and Archaeology, has recently been awarded the prestigious Whitfield Prize by the Royal Historical Society for his book *Free Trade Nation*.

In awarding the prize the judges said that Trentmann's human history of free trade was a 'brilliant achievement'. The citation stated: "He identifies free trade as 'uniquely central to (British) democratic culture and national identity' between the 1870s and the 1930s. He rightly finds it odd, therefore, that both its dominant role in Edwardian Britain, and its erosion during and after the First World War, have received almost no serious attention – let alone explanation – from historians

or social scientists.

All western societies generated protectionist pressures after 1900, but what needs explanation is why they were so successfully resisted in Britain by 'a popular free trade army'. Professor Trentmann explains with admirable clarity and conviction both that resistance and its later erosion; but his massive study does much more than that. He looks back to the origins of the free trade movement in and before the 1840s, and forward to the present, to globalisation and to the rising demands today for fair trade rather than free trade."

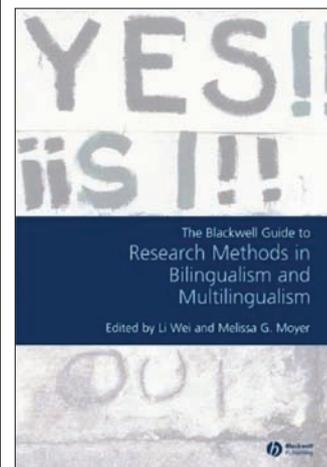
In September, Dr Simon Shaw-Miller, Assistant Dean, History of Art and Screen Media, was awarded the Prix Ars Electronica Media. Art. Research Award for his forthcoming book *Eye hEar: Art, Music, Film & the Culture of Synaesthesia* at the Award Gala in Linz, Austria. Prix Ars Electronica showcases excellence in international digital media at the interface of art, technology and society. The judges said: "This detailed and comprehensive treatment of the visual aspects of music revives the interdisciplinary concept of synaesthesia, particularly focusing on its career in the early nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Furthermore, Shaw-Miller proposes a methodology with which differences among



Left: Professor Frank Trentmann

transdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary practices can be understood."

The British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL) awarded this year's BAAL Book



Prize to *The Blackwell Guide to Research Methods in Bilingualism and Multilingualism*, edited by Birkbeck's Li Wei, Professor of Applied Linguistics, and Melissa Moyer, Professor of English at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain, who was a Birkbeck Institute of Humanities Fellow between March and June this year.

The citation read: "The Blackwell Guide was written as a response to the need for a 'know-how' book that enables students and researchers alike to design and carry out research projects by guiding them through issues such as the criteria for classifying bilingual speech data, what variables to consider in designing an experiment or case study and what are workable or unworkable topics for a research project".

## Recent awards, fellowships and grants

**Professor Helen Saibil**, Department of Crystallography, has recently been awarded a £1m Wellcome Trust five-year programme grant for research into protein quality control. This work addresses the molecular and cellular basis of protein quality control by examining the action of molecular chaperones in protein folding and in reversal of aggregation, and the cellular consequences of protein misfolding.

**Dr Victoria Southgate**, Department of Psychology, has also been awarded nearly £500,000 for a Research Career Development Fellowship by the Wellcome Trust. Dr Southgate commented: “My research question concerns those aspects of brain development that enable infants to learn from others’ actions.

“Specifically, what are the neural mechanisms that enable infants to identify others’ actions as goal-directed, and to coordinate their actions with others? In addressing these questions, I will test hypotheses generated by a model of action interpretation which implicates infants’ developing motor skills in action anticipation, but dissociates them from goal attribution.

“Having identified these mechanisms,

I will ask how the uniquely social environment of infant learning might impact on these mechanisms.”

More awards have come from the Leverhulme Trust. Three early career fellowships have been awarded in the former School of History, Classics and Archaeology; to **Dr Christian Goeschel** for his work on *Organised crime in Germany, 1918–1948*, and **Dr Surekha Davies** for research on *European Knowledge of Distance Peoples, 1550–1700*.

In the School of Science, **Dr Mayada Elsabbagh** has also been awarded an early career fellowship for her research on *Bridging the gap between laboratory measures and Biomarkers*.

Earlier this year, a research fellowship was awarded to **Dr Nic Wachsmann** in the Department of History, Classics and Archaeology and he has also just been awarded a British Academy Research Development Award for £85k.

## College wins more awards

The College won a *Times Higher Education* award at the

magazine’s first Leadership and Management event, named for its outstanding Communications and Marketing. The team was recognised for its response to the ELQ funding decision, launching a

high profile lobbying campaign while achieving record recruitment rates. Ann Mroz, editor of *Times Higher Education*, said: “Birkbeck was left facing a 40% cut to its teaching funds following



last year’s decision by the Government to stop financing second degrees. The role its team has played in campaigning against the decision, thrusting it into the political spotlight, has been superb.”

*BBK* magazine took the silver award in a national competition to find the best alumni publication. The Heist Awards for higher education are the premier awards for communications and marketing in the sector. Birkbeck pipped Oxford University to the post for the award.

## Stratford prize

Birkbeck Stratford has been awarded the prize for Individual Organisational Impact in this year’s London Education Partnership Awards (LEPA). The College was also

runner up in the category of Excellent Professional Practice in Curriculum.

“This is a great recognition of the achievements of the entire Birkbeck Stratford team,” said Professor Philip Dewe, Vice-Master of Birkbeck. “It demonstrates the strength of the partnerships we’ve built with local organisations in east London.”

In awarding the prize, judge Dr Christine Jude from the Institute of Education, said: “We really did feel, as one of your students said, that if George Birkbeck was alive today this is what he would be doing. We were hugely impressed by the range and depth of the partnership work and how Birkbeck had really gone the extra mile in developing the relationships at all levels to bring people in. You also brought in potential competitors and made the partnership work for east London.”

The Birkbeck Stratford team has been building partnerships throughout east London with education providers, community and voluntary organisations and local businesses. These include the University of East London, East Thames Housing Association, Sure Start Centres, Children Centres, Newham Sixth Form College, Nextstep IAG provision and Tower Hamlets FE College.

The London Education Partnership Awards were set up to celebrate the many education partnerships in the capital that help Londoners move into higher education, enabling them to fulfil learning and career goals.



Right: Professor Li Wei



the Pairing Scheme at Arts and Business, encouraging arts sponsorship, becoming Deputy CEO in 1996. Next came the Royal Academy as Head of Sponsorship, becoming Fundraising Director in 1999. Prior to her current role, Sarah was Executive Director of the Arts Council England, London. "I left the Arts Council where I had a big budget and large team and began working with no budget and only two staff. Starting again is nerve-wracking but also very important; it grounds you and is a great learning process," Sarah comments.

"Now is an exciting time. The modern Olympics were based on the three pillars of culture, education and sport. My role is to ensure that the Arts, in the broadest sense, are represented in the Olympic Park during and after the 2012 Games. I want London's creativity to come alive, involving as many people as possible," explains Sarah. "The ODA is working to improve the area's infrastructure with new buildings, houses and jobs. Over 30,000 people will have worked on the Park by the time it is completed, and of the current workforce, one in ten was previously unemployed and a fifth is living locally. By working, I hope that people will gain the confidence to think about upskilling. Institutions like Birkbeck Stratford are integral to this, offering new educational opportunities."

"At Birkbeck I realised that the thirst for education hits people at different stages in their lives," Sarah concludes. "I donate money to the College because I struggled myself while studying, having taken a big pay cut, and I want to give others the opportunity to learn. Out of everything I have done, my BA at Birkbeck is one of my proudest achievements."

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

## Art for the Park

Head of Arts and Cultural Strategy for the Olympic Delivery Authority Sarah Weir considers her proudest achievement

Leaving school aged 16 hasn't hindered Sarah Weir, currently working as the Head of Arts and Cultural Strategy for the Olympic Delivery Authority. Desperate to start work, Sarah joined Lloyds Insurance Market as an office junior making tea; 15 years later she was running the company. "It was an unusual career path as one of only 50 women working with 5000 men, but I managed to become one of the first and youngest female Managing Directors," says Sarah. Despite having such a high powered job, Sarah still felt there was something missing. "Having worked my way up from the bottom, when I got to the top I wasn't sure where to go. I went to see an educational psychologist who recommended that I study at university," she explains.

"This truly was a life-changing moment for me. Having always been

interested in the arts, I decided to study for a History of Art BA at Birkbeck. The part-time course was perfect because I needed to carry on working," she says. "Despite being the MD of a company, I could barely type. I gave up my weekends and evenings for four years but it was extremely rewarding; I felt such a sense of achievement on graduation day."

After her first year at Birkbeck, Sarah's working life changed dramatically. "I decided to leave the company and started working at Purdy Hicks Gallery, taking a huge pay cut." She continues: "I had always felt a bit of a fraud without a degree, so my BA gave me more confidence. I had previously worked in very male dominated workplaces; suddenly at Birkbeck I had some fantastic female role models."

Sarah's career in the Arts rapidly took off; she worked as Head of

Above: Sarah Weir  
(Private collection)

# Comedy career

Award-winning comedian Simon Bird soars to success

Despite being best known for playing Will in *The Inbetweeners*, a hit British sitcom on E4, Simon Bird never dreamt of becoming an actor. "English was the only subject I was any good at and everyone just assumes that you will become a journalist or a teacher, but I had always wanted to write for television."

However, while studying for his English BA at Queen's College, Cambridge, he became a member of the Cambridge Footlights, the infamous comedy troupe that has spawned the likes of Clive Anderson, Sasha Baron Cohen, John Cleese, Stephen Fry and David Mitchell, and got a taste for performing. "I had always enjoyed taking part in school plays but had never thought about a future in acting. I guess in the back of my mind I had dreamt of starring on TV but never really taken it too seriously."

"After finishing my BA, despite having an agent, my career hadn't yet taken off and it still felt like a hobby, so I decided to study for an MA in Cultural and Critical Studies at Birkbeck. Although it was a full-time course, the evening classes suited me perfectly as I could spend my days writing and my evenings studying. I was surprised to see that I was one of the youngest in my class but it was nice to learn with such a mixed group of people. I wasn't the most organised student, but I enjoyed hunkering down, locking myself in my room and going slightly mad while trying to get an essay done."

Simon enjoyed his studies so much that he decided to take on a PhD, however it was during this time that his career took off and after the first series of *The Inbetweeners* he won the 2008 British Comedy Award for Best Male Newcomer. "It was a total shock because this was my



Above: Simon Bird

first TV role. We never actually thought about what reactions we would get to the show as we were too busy learning our lines and we were scared out of minds that we were going to make fools of ourselves."

A third series of *The Inbetweeners* has recently been announced and Simon is currently working on a pilot for a new BBC3 comedy show. "I put my PhD on hold after my first year as I am currently concentrating on my comedy career. Perhaps I will be like Brian May and finish my doctorate in 40 years time! London needs somewhere like Birkbeck. Studying shouldn't be exclusively for young people and it is great to know that you can pick up studying at any point in your life."

## La prononciation française pour de vrai

Penny Sewell taught French language and linguistics in Birkbeck from 1973 to 2007, and continued to teach on a part-time basis until this year. During that post-retirement time she was able to complete a long-planned project which was to film her course on French pronunciation, something that several students had suggested. The filming was done in the School of Arts, drawing on the expertise of Mansour Shabbak, the School's technical support officer. The course is delivered in French and is aimed at post-intermediate level students. Penny sends greetings to her past students and hopes life is treating them well.

BBK readers can get a 33% discount on the DVDs. Visit [www.soundsfrench.co.uk](http://www.soundsfrench.co.uk) and email [penny@soundsfrench.co.uk](mailto:penny@soundsfrench.co.uk). The purchase price includes a donation to the Birkbeck Alumni Fund.

## Students' Union clubs and societies

Birkbeck alumni are now welcome to join and participate in all the clubs and societies run by the Students' Union, such as the cricket and football club, the Early Modern Society, the Film Society and the Law Society. To find out more about clubs and societies in which you might be interested, please contact the Students' Union on 020 7631 6335 or visit [www.bbk.ac.uk/su/](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/su/)

# Alumni news in brief

Former students' generous donations help ease current students' financial hardship



## Ringling for support

Former students (*above*) pledged £105,000 over three years during this year's annual Birkbeck telephone campaign, making it the most successful so far. Almost 5000 students were contacted during the campaign to raise funds to help students who experience financial hardship during the course of their studies, as well as to support projects that directly enhance the Birkbeck student experience.

But it wasn't all about fundraising. Alumni enjoyed reminiscing about their time at Birkbeck, remembering colleagues and lecturers, as well as discussing subject programmes and exams with current students. Many of those called were also keen to hear about the new developments

taking place within the College. The response was fantastic and our alumni have once again shown they play an important part in the life of the College – as advocates, ambassadors, volunteers and donors.

## Scholars' evening

The Master, Professor David Latchman, hosted the second annual Scholars' Evening on 8 July. The evening was to thank donors for their generous contributions to Birkbeck. Bursaries and scholarships at Birkbeck enable students to fulfil their potential, helping students who may not have been able to afford to study at university.

"The evening was an opportunity for bursary recipients to meet donors and

discuss the impact that the donations have made on their lives," said Adrian Punaks, Head of Development and Alumni. "Many of the students who came along had just completed their final year and were able to talk about their plans for the future."

Professor Latchman and Tricia King, Pro-Vice Master for Student Experience and Director of External Relations, spoke about the great generosity of the donors and the opportunities that the donations open up to Birkbeck's students. Current LLB Law student and bursary recipient, Lola Aladeshelu, responded, saying how receiving a Birkbeck bursary has had such a positive impact on her life and how she hopes her studies will improve her career prospects.

## Reduced fees for alumni library membership

As of 28 September, Birkbeck Library will reduce alumni membership fees from £75 to £70 a year for borrowing access and from £40 to £35 a year for reference access. In addition, library memberships will no longer expire at the beginning of the new academic year in September, but will be valid for a whole calendar year from the day you join.

Library membership gives you access to all books and journals on the open shelves, allows you to search for materials on the library catalogue and to use quiet study areas.

Over the years library membership funds have supported a number of library projects. Most recently, they have contributed towards the digitisation of Mrs Birkbeck's Album. This includes a collection of poems, songs and other texts, as well as drawings and watercolours by famous women and men between 1825 and 1847, and a poem by Mary Shelley.

The funds are also helping in establishing the Crick Archive that contains papers belonging to the late Professor Sir Bernard Crick, which have been donated to the College by his family. This is a highly significant acquisition and links closely to the research undertaken in the College on politics and citizenship. Both collections will be available to students and researchers in the Birkbeck Library.

# Alumni authors

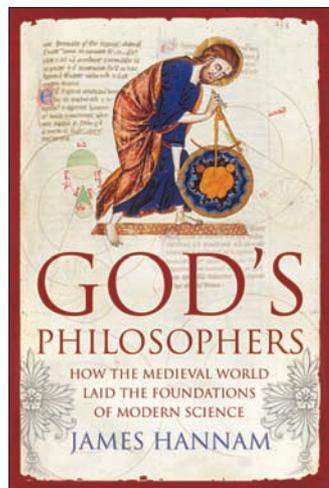
Many alumni lead interesting lives and have fascinating careers. Here we feature four former students who have become authors

## James Hannam

*God's Philosophers: How the Medieval World Laid the Foundations of Modern Science* (Icon Books Ltd 2009)

James took a Physics degree at Oxford before training as an accountant. He enjoyed a successful career in the City, mainly financing film production, but harboured ambitions to write about the history of science.

"In 2001, I started a part-time MA at Birkbeck in Historical Research and the experience only served to whet my appetite further for the subject. I studied for a PhD at Cambridge in the History and Philosophy of Science in 2003, obtaining funding so that I could study full time. My thesis on the decline of medieval learning during the sixteenth century was completed in 2008. In the meantime, I also worked on my first book for the general reader which is an investigation over six centuries to uncover the unknown story of medieval scientific discovery."

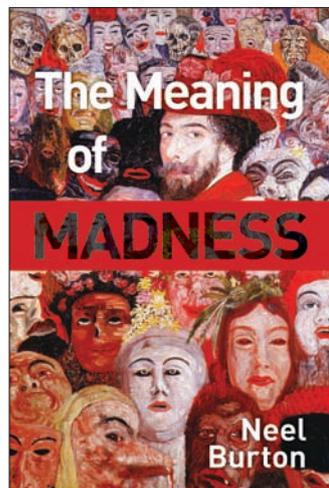


## Neel Burton

*The Meaning of Madness* (Acheron Press 2008)

From 2006 to 2008, Neel studied for a part-time Master's in Philosophy at Birkbeck; he is currently academic tutor in Psychiatry at Green Templeton College, Oxford. "I wrote *The Meaning of Madness* for various reasons, most importantly my frustration at the stigma that people with mental disorders are made to suffer. It proposes to open up the debate on mental disorders, including common mental disorders such as anxiety and depression. For example, what is schizophrenia? Why does it affect human beings and not animals? What are the boundaries between mental disorder and 'normality'? Is there a relationship between mental disorder and genius?"

"I also wanted to show how mental disorders are inextricably tied to what makes us human, and how, in some cases, they can be both a good thing and a bad thing."

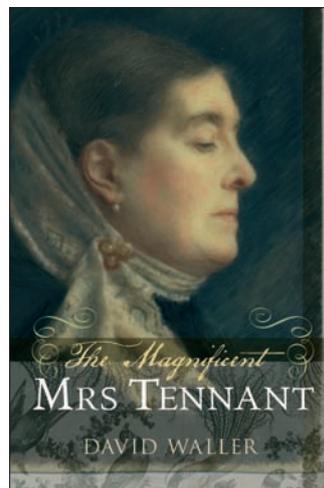


## David Waller

*The Magnificent Mrs Tennant* (Yale University Press 2009)

David first became fascinated with the nineteenth century when he took a part-time MA in Victorian Studies in 2002–2004. "I was working in the City and wanted to take on something that had absolutely nothing to do with my day job," he says. "It was a richly rewarding course. After I'd finished I ended up writing a history book about the period." *The Magnificent Mrs Tennant* is a biography of Gertrude Tennant, a Victorian *grande dame* who had a literary and political salon in the heart of London, and a fling with French author, Gustave Flaubert.

"I found a treasure trove of letters in a friend's attic," David recalls. "In a trunk were letters from Oscar Wilde, Henry James, Flaubert, Victor Hugo, Robert Browning and George Eliot, and many other luminaries of the nineteenth century. I knew I had to write a book about the lady to whom they were corresponding."



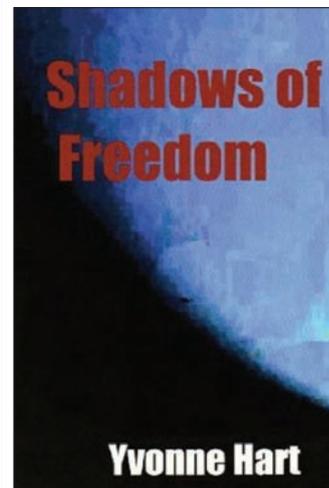
## Yvonne Hart

*Shadows of Freedom* (Youwriteit.com 2009)

Having travelled extensively and worked as a travel writer when she was younger, Yvonne was inspired to create her own adventures.

"Now I'm retired, I can no longer afford travel to exotic places; I can only travel in my imagination. After gaining my MA at Birkbeck in Commonwealth Studies in 1990, I found that for the first time in years I was free to do some light reading, so I began to take an interest in thrillers."

The idea slowly matured in my mind that I ought to write one myself. I submitted my manuscript to an initiative by the Arts Council and YouWriteIt.com and was chosen for publication. *Shadows of Freedom* is a tale of revolution, with other dramatic ingredients thrown in – an earthquake, prison escapes and a touch of romance, and I am receiving very favourable reviews."







# PAPER TRIAL

In the wake of the Westminster expenses scandal, **Rob Briner** asks whether it's fairer to blame the institution rather than individuals





Iran's post-revolution generation has become frustrated with Islamic impositions, and are preoccupied with livelihood, lifestyle and enjoyment, says Sami Zubaida

# IRAN UNVEILED

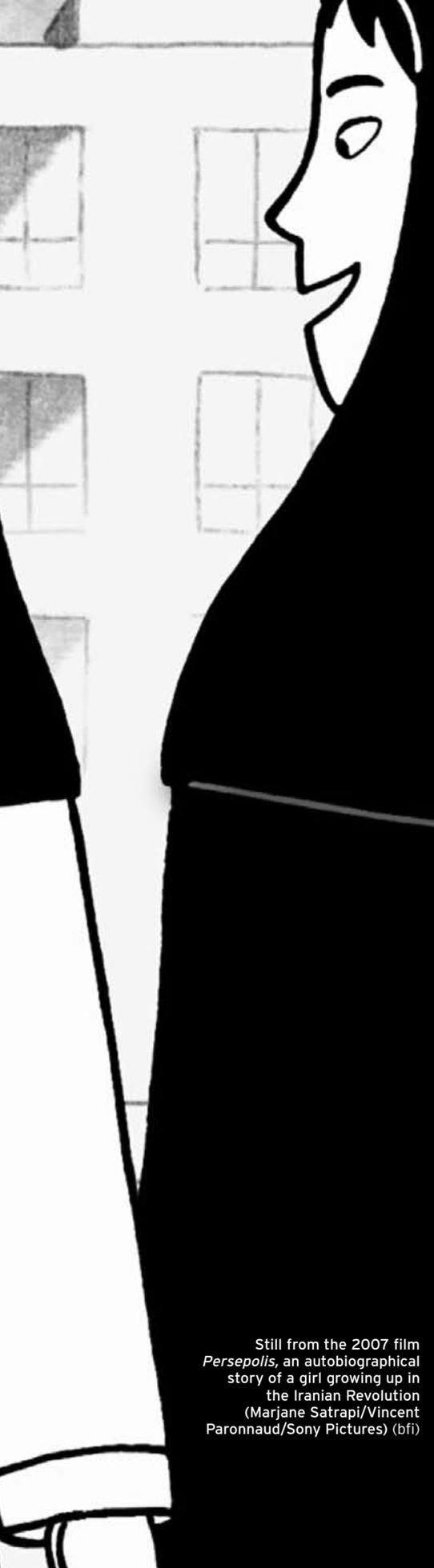
The Iranian Revolution of 1979 ushered in the Islamic Republic, but there were many and diverse forces that made the Revolution. Some were secular and leftist, and some were Islamic humanists, but ultimately the state that emerged was dominated by conservative clerics who then proceeded to establish a repressive regime with strong theocratic elements.

However, the Constitution of the Republic bore the traces of those early struggles and combines two potentially contradictory principles; one is democratic and specifies an elected parliament, an elected President and the rule of law enshrining various liberties. But this democratic element is overridden by the ruling principle of Velayet-i Faqih, the Rule of the Jurist, the supreme authority on Islamic law and theology. This was first embodied in Ayatollah Khomeini until his death in 1989, when he was replaced by the present incumbent, Khamenei. The constitution gives the Jurist/Leader, as well as clerical bodies under him, wide powers over the armed forces, the judiciary and finance. In effect the ruler can overrule elected bodies.

The activism and heightened political consciousness stimulated by a popular revolution survived despite the subsequent repression. A notable example is that of women, both religious and secular, who played leading roles in the struggles of the Revolution and its aftermath. This continued under the Islamic Republic, with resistance to imposed veiling, a battle which they lost. Women, however,



PUNK  
IS NOT  
DEAD



Still from the 2007 film *Persepolis*, an autobiographical story of a girl growing up in the Iranian Revolution (Marjane Satrapi/Vincent Paronnaud/Sony Pictures) (bfi)

continued to be active in resisting the projects of conservative clerics to reverse laws that gave them rights within the family and society. While some of the backward elements of religious law were enacted, many others were reversed or ameliorated. Some Muslim women, including prominent members of clerical families, were active in these campaigns. Others, like Shirin Ebadi, the Nobel Laureate and established lawyer and former judge, lent great weight to these campaigns. Reformist politicians, lawyers, writers, artists and journalists continued to agitate for democratic rights and cultural freedoms. These figures assumed leading positions after the election of the reformist President Khatami in 1997, till the end of his second term in 2005. During that 'Tehran spring', much intellectual and cultural innovation flourished, despite the repeated repressions by the clerical authorities and the judiciary. A good example is the now renowned Iranian cinema, with internationally reputed cineastes and prize-winning films.

Iran after the Revolution, while suffering repressive regimes, never became a unitary dictatorship in the manner of its Arab neighbours. The duality of government between elected politicians and theocratic power, while giving overwhelming advantage to the latter, nevertheless afforded a measure of pluralism and spaces for dissident and creative movement. Add to that informal factions within the clerical and ruling circles jockeying for power and control over the resources. This plurality of power centres, most of it not 'democratic', nevertheless offered spaces for activism and dissent. These are enhanced by the new media: the internet and blogging, as well as radio and TV channels from America and Europe, notably the recently installed BBC Persian service. These channels are more successful at evading the bans and repressions of the Iranian print media, and are playing a central and well publicised role in the present turmoil.

It is this pluralism and spaces for dissent which are at issue in the present

impasse. Khatami's reformist project was largely blocked by the clerical establishment and its allies, notably the powerful Revolutionary Guards corps, who have wide political and economic interests added to their security functions.

By the presidential elections of 2005 the reformists were split and demoralised, with widespread disillusion and anger among the electorate. The apathy and divisions that ensued, added to alleged electoral manipulation, allowed the election of Mahmud Ahmadinejad to the Presidency. He has the support of the Leader, Khamenei, and the powers he commands: the constitutional duality between Leader and President is neutralised. However, there are various factions in the clerical establishment who are not happy with this consolidation, notably former president Rafsanjani, a powerful figure.

Ahmadinejad's widely disputed success in this year's elections threatens to further this consolidation of power by a unitary centre,

combining Leader, President, the military and security services, and the judiciary, with direct control over the all important oil revenues. This would, in effect, eliminate the democratic and pluralist elements of

the Islamic Republic, and it is this which is being so vociferously resisted.

A majority of the Iranian population are under 30, a generation that has grown up after the Revolution and the traumatic war with Iraq (1980–88). They have the normal preoccupations with livelihood, lifestyle and enjoyment, including sexuality. As such there is, by all accounts, a widespread discontent and frustration with the petty Islamic impositions on all these aspects, and, crucially, with the economic problems of unemployment and inflation.

The prospect of heightened repression, corruption and economic mismanagement by the consolidated power of Khamenei and Ahmadinejad is a powerful stimulus for continued dissent and agitation.



Sami Zubaida is Emeritus Professor of Politics and Sociology, School of Social Sciences, History and Philosophy

# Capital verse

Earlier this year the BBC asked Birkbeck to take part in its Poetry Season with articles on poets with London connections. Below are the two abridged articles

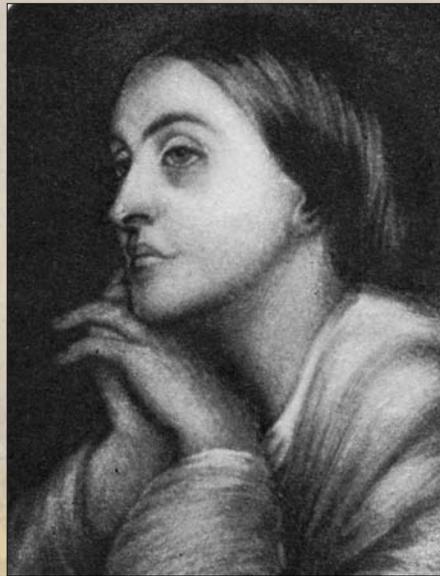
## Christina Rossetti

Though mythologised by some of her contemporaries as the pious recluse of 30 Torrington Square Bloomsbury, where Rossetti lived from 1873 until her death in 1894, the truth is that she loved London. The late-Victorian writer William Sharp remembers a conversation between the poet and a friend about the poetic advantages of living in the countryside. Rossetti made her position very clear. "I am," she said, "not only as confirmed a Londoner as was Charles Lamb, but really doubt if it would be good for me, now, to sojourn often or long in the country." "But", the lady insisted, "let me ask, do not you yourself find your best inspiration in the country?" Rossetti replied emphatically: "Oh dear, no! My knowledge of what is called nature is that of the town sparrow which makes an excursion occasionally from its home in Regent's Park or Kensington Gardens."

Born and raised in Charlotte Street, Rossetti belonged intellectually to London. She was part of both the Pre-Raphaelite circle and the London's Ritualist scene of Anglo-Catholicism, one of whose centres was Rossetti's own church in Albany Street (Regent's Park). Though Rossetti didn't use London as the subject of her poetry, her observations of life here influenced

her view of the world and her poetry.

A rare autobiographical reference to one of her early experiences of the metropolis shows how London's cultural milieu affected her work. "A great many years ago," wrote Christina Rossetti in *Time Flies: A*



*Reading Diary* (1885), "I visited a large waxwork exhibition brilliant with costumes, complexions, and historical effigies." This was Madame Tussaud's, then situated in the Baker Street Bazaar in Portman Square, which was walking

distance from her home in Charlotte Street.

In the late 1840s, Madame Tussaud's biggest waxwork attraction was the "Royal Family At Home!" The visit left a strong impression on the young poet. "Entering that gorgeous assembly I literally felt shy!", she explained in *Time Flies*, "it was the distinguished waxen crowd which put me out of countenance." Rossetti's response to this experience appears in one of her most important poems of this early period, *The Dead City* (1847), a poem that foreshadows the way in which she will tackle social criticism in her poems.

*The Dead City* is an example of Rossetti's use of allegory in her poetry to highlight the phantasmagoria of urban materialism. The poem, like much of Rossetti's poetry, suggests not only the need for a spiritual awakening but also the necessity of living outside the materialism of everyday life.

To read the unabridged article, visit:  
<http://tiny.cc/gM2ny>

.....  
Dr Ana Parejo Vadillo is a Lecturer in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture. Her new book, co-edited with Marion Thain, *Michael Field, The Poet: Published and Manuscript Materials*, is out now

“London became the central scenario of TS Eliot’s imaginary geography, known to him through his reading of Henry James.”

## TS Eliot

London is inextricably intertwined with TS Eliot’s poetic imagination. It gave him the landscape, soundscape and generally the sensual ambience of most of his best poetry. The ‘yellow fog’ of *The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock*, written before he left America, is the fog blowing from the factories across the Mississippi toward the town of St Louis where he was born. It becomes ‘the brown fog’ of *The Waste Land*, transposed to London.

London became the central scenario of his imaginary geography. He had begun to live there in 1914 but in a sense it was already known to him through his reading of Henry James (Eliot’s poem, *Portrait of a Lady*, written in America, begins with ‘Among the smoke and fog of a December afternoon’). But it is doubtful whether his unique combination of moral conviction and scepticism of all values could have flourished in America. London offered him a multi-layered society, and language, where cockney voices (the first title of *The Waste Land*) and music hall could be heard alongside those of polite Edwardian society, audible especially in his plays, and could echo with Dante, Shakespeare, Spenser, in fact with the whole of European literature. America was marked

by the strong levelling force of the demotic, and indeed it was precisely this that his American contemporary, the poet William Carlos Williams, accused Eliot of running away from.

When he first came to London, Eliot lived in Gordon Square in Bloomsbury, Greek



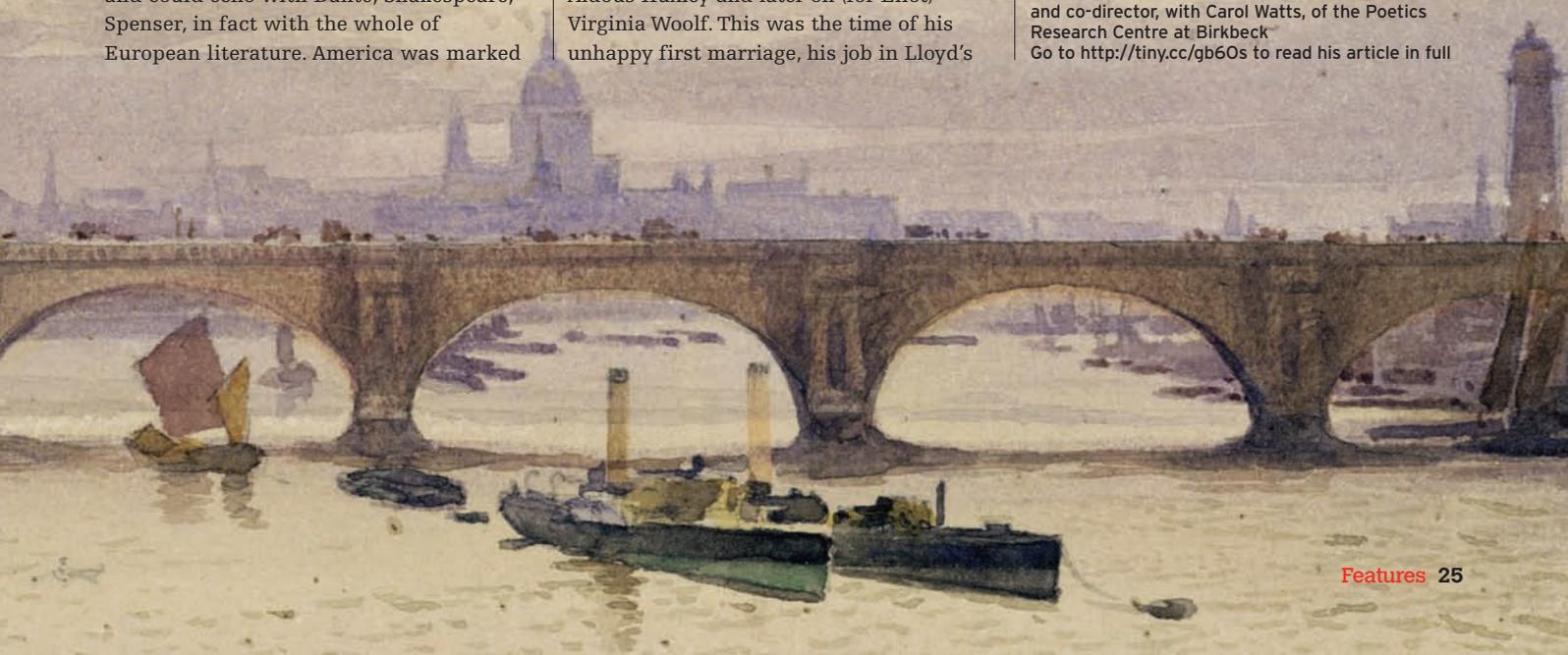
Street, Soho, and later in Baker Street. This was the cosmopolitan London of Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, Bertrand Russell, Aldous Huxley and later on (for Eliot) Virginia Woolf. This was the time of his unhappy first marriage, his job in Lloyd’s

Bank, and, in *The Waste Land*, his vision of commuters crossing London Bridge as the condemned souls of Dante’s hell, the place without hope. He gave lectures on English literature at Southall for the University of London Extension Board and also taught at the County Secondary School in Sydenham.

From the mid 1920s he became an editor at Faber and Faber, in Russell Square, and by then was tending to move in more conservative social circles. During the Second World War, by which time he had been received into the Anglican Church, he was living in a vicarage in Kensington, and serving at nights as an air raid warden. *The Four Quartets*, originally to have been called *The Kensington Quartets*, were mostly written during the war, and meditate on a time when Eliot feared the destruction of European civilisation.

Though in the final part of his life, the time of his second and happy marriage, he reconnected with his American childhood, London, the ‘unreal city’, was to Eliot what Alexandria was to Kavafis and Lisbon to Pessoa. This was in spite of, or perhaps because of the fact that he always saw himself as a resident alien.

William Rowe is Anniversary Professor of Poetics and co-director, with Carol Watts, of the Poetics Research Centre at Birkbeck  
Go to <http://tiny.cc/gb60s> to read his article in full



# OUT OF AFGHANISTAN

The British government should set a deadline to withdraw troops from Afghanistan says Professor of Law, **Patrick McAuslan**



Image: British soldiers conduct operation Southern Beast in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan (Getty Images)





# RURAL RECESSION

A new research centre uncovers the true impact of the economic downturn on rural towns, says John Shepherd

Research undertaken by the Rural Evidence Research Centre (RERC) at Birkbeck, shows that small country towns with large numbers of middle class managerial and other administrative workers have been hit hardest by the recession. Country towns in all parts of the country have been affected but rises in Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimant counts are most prominent in the

South East, the South West, East Midlands and the East of England regions.

The RERC has developed a classification of over 1600 rural towns with populations of 1500 to 40,000 based upon their demographic, social and economic character which can be used to track changes in the number of JSA claimants over the last 12 months.

Research shows that the recession really began to hit country towns in October of last year, with the number of JSA claimants rising from an estimated 89,500 in May 2008 to 202,000 in May 2009. The JSA claimant count rose fastest among rural towns with young families and a high proportion of administrative (to a large extent public service) jobs located generally across Middle England from Wiltshire to Cambridgeshire (e.g. Daventry, St Neots, Abingdon).

The second highest rate of increase in the JSA claimant count was among towns with a mix of age groups and high proportion of professional workers, found in all parts of the country but mainly around the bigger provincial cities and towns (e.g. Droitwich, Verwood, Sandbach). Rural towns with the lowest rate of increase in the JSA claimant count were coastal or more deeply rural towns with high proportions of older people and leisure/tourism jobs (e.g. Shanklin,

Cromer, St Ives) and towns with high proportions of routine/unskilled jobs and other forms of disadvantage found mainly, though not exclusively, in and around former coal mining areas (e.g. Pontefract, Bishop Auckland, Glossop and Maryport).

Rural towns have a total population of 11 million (one-fifth of the population of England), are among the fastest growing areas in the country and are a focus of a number of key government policies. This sort of information has never been available before in such detail and it is helping to dispel a number of rural myths about the role of small towns in different parts of the country.

John Shepherd is Professor of Geography and Director of the RERC. He has recently been appointed to the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) for the Rural Development Programme for England 2007-2013 (RDPE).

The RERC is based in the Department of Geography, Environment and Development Studies and supported by Birkbeck's Business Relations, and commercial partner, Globe Regeneration. It was established with £1.5m of funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in 2003 and since 2008 the RERC has been a self-funding Research Centre: [www.rerc.ac.uk](http://www.rerc.ac.uk)

Above: The entrance to a former Woolworths store in Ashby de la Zouch (Reuters)

# Events and books

Dates for your diary and current publications

## Diary dates

Wednesday 7 October 7.30-9pm

**Lecture: *Coming-of-age  
Diaspora: hybrid identity  
formation in European cinema***  
Dr Daniela Berghahn, Royal  
Holloway, University of London  
Room 538 Birkbeck

- Free entry; booking recommended. Email [ac.richards@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:ac.richards@bbk.ac.uk)

Thursday/Friday 15-16 October,  
9am-5pm

**Conference: *Psycho-political  
Resistance in Israel-Palestine***  
Mohamed Altawil, Stephen  
Frosh, Seamus Heaney et al.  
Room B34 Birkbeck

- Payment & booking required. Email [j.eisner@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:j.eisner@bbk.ac.uk)

Friday 23 October, 6.30-8.30pm  
***What's in a Name? Taxonomy  
and Biodiversity: Saving our  
Experts from Extinction***

Professor Lynne Boddy,  
President of the British  
Mycological Society  
Room B04, 43 Gordon Square,  
London WC1H 0PD,

- Free entry; booking recommended. Email [environmentevents@FLL.bbk.ac.uk](mailto:environmentevents@FLL.bbk.ac.uk)

Tuesday 27 October, 1-3pm  
***Unconscious Phantasies of  
'Cure' and the Therapeutic  
Aims of Psychoanalysis***

Ignes Sodre  
Room 540 Birkbeck  
■ Free entry; booking required.  
Email [j.eisner@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:j.eisner@bbk.ac.uk)

Wednesday 4 November  
***Undergraduate Presentation  
Ceremonies***

Institute of Education, 20  
Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL  
■ Email [events@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:events@bbk.ac.uk)

Wednesday 11 November, 1-2pm

**Lunchtime lecture:  
*Storytelling and the Child***  
Michael Rosen  
Room B35 Birkbeck

- Free entry; first come, first seated. Email [lunchlectures@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:lunchlectures@bbk.ac.uk)

Tuesday 17 November, 5-6pm

**George Orwell lecture:  
*More Like a Castle than a  
Realm: Thomas Cromwell's  
Radical England***  
Hilary Mantel

B01 Clore Management Centre,  
Torrington Square  
■ Free entry; booking required.  
Email [events@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:events@bbk.ac.uk)

Thursday 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)

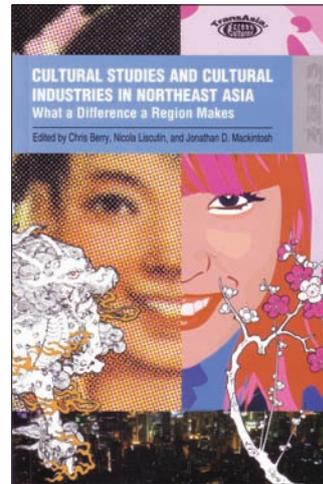
For a full calendar of events,  
visit [www.bbk.ac.uk/events](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/events)

## Recent books

***English Literary Sexology:  
Translations of Inversion,  
1860-1930***  
Dr Heike Bauer  
Palgrave Macmillan 2009

***The Scientific Way of Warfare:  
Order and Chaos on the  
Battlefields of Modernity***  
Dr Antoine Bousquet  
Columbia University Press 2009

***Masculinity and Male  
Homosexuality in Britain,  
1861-1913***  
Dr Sean Brady  
Palgrave Macmillan 2009



***Cultural Studies and Cultural  
Industries in Northeast Asia:  
What a Difference a  
Region Makes***

Dr Chris Berry, Dr Nicola  
Liscutin and Dr Jonathan  
D. Mackintosh  
Hong Kong University Press 2009

***Foucault's Law***  
Peter Fitzpatrick and Ben Golder  
Routledge 2009

***Victorian Reformation: The  
Fight Over Idolatry in the  
Church of England, 1840-1860***  
Dominic Janes  
Oxford University Press 2009

***Visual and Other Pleasures:  
Collected Writings (Language,  
discourse, society)***  
Laura Mulvey  
Palgrave Macmillan 2009  
(Republished)

***Fantasy and Political  
Violence: The meaning of  
Anti-Communism in Chile***  
Dr Margarita Palacios  
VS Verlag für  
Sozialwissenschaften 2009

***Three Lyric Poets: Harwood,  
Torrance, Macsweeney***

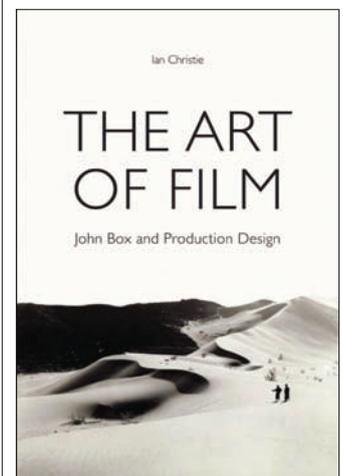
William Rowe  
Northcote House Publishers  
Ltd 2009

***The Great Naval Game:  
Britain and Germany in the  
Age of Empire***  
Dr Jan Rieger  
Cambridge University Press 2009

***Japanese Society at War:  
Death, Memory and the  
Russo-Japanese War***  
Dr Naoko Shimazu  
Cambridge University Press 2009

***Military Economics: The  
Interaction of Power and Money***  
Ron Smith  
Palgrave Macmillan 2009

***The Art of Film: John Box  
and Production Design***  
Ian Christie  
Wallflower Press 2009



## Erratum

Apologies to Daniel  
Commodore, who was listed  
in the March Presentation  
Ceremony Brochure as having  
graduated in LLB Law. This  
should have read LLM Law.



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