

birk

The Birkbeck magazine Issue 21, Spring 2007

FRIENDS LIKE THESE

Our lives are more intertwined with
the fly than any other creature





Welcome to issue 21 of *BBK*. In 'Changing Tone', Birkbeck graduate John McDonnell MP talks about why he is standing for the Labour leadership and his lasting impressions of Birkbeck. We have another political intervention on page 23, from Boris Johnson MP, who gave the speech at Birkbeck's annual Foundation Dinner.

Philosopher AC Grayling tells us why he co-wrote a play for the Soho Theatre called *On Religion*, and about its message that the basis of belief is misconceived.

Also, in 'Our doubt is our passion', former priest and Birkbeck research fellow Mark Vernon comments on the terrain of the "committed, passionate agnostic".

In our cover story, 'On the Fly', Steve Connor describes the interweaving lives of flies and humans and what this tells us about ourselves; while in 'Mind the Gap', Andrew Jones explores whether gap-year volunteering perpetuates neo-imperialist stereotypes about 'poor' Africans.

Finally, congratulations to *BBK* editor Catherine Stevens on the birth of her daughter Scarlett Ella on 27 December last year. I'm taking the reins while Catherine's on maternity leave and can be contacted at: sarah.mccarthy@bbk.ac.uk

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Cover photograph:

Image courtesy of Brian Valentine (www.flickr.com/photos/lordv/)

Birkbeck is a world-class research and teaching institution, a vibrant centre of academic excellence and London's only specialist provider of part-time, evening higher education. Its academic reputation also attracts many traditional, full-time postgraduate and research degree students.

Top in London

Students rate Birkbeck top in London and third nationally

Birkbeck is the top university in London, with the third highest score nationally, for overall satisfaction in the second annual National Student Survey of final-year undergraduate students.

The Master of Birkbeck, Professor David Latchman, says: "Birkbeck staff work exceptionally hard to support our students, who are juggling busy lives with their part-time, evening study. For two years now we have been at the top of this survey so we know for sure that our students value what we do for them. We have recently launched our best ever financial support packages. This will allow even more students than ever to access the quality of education that our current students so clearly enjoy."

The survey of 157,000 respondents from 129 institutions makes student views about higher education available to the public, assisting prospective students to make informed decisions about what and where to study. It is run by the Higher Education Funding Council for England and endorsed by the National Union of Students.

Bill Rammell MP, the Minister for Further and Higher Education and Lifelong Learning, says: "I welcome another set of strong results from the National Student Survey. Choosing a higher education institution can be a daunting task, and it is vital that students can access the best possible information to inform their choices."

Birkbeck's bachelor degree graduates commonly cite flexibility and expertise in teaching as the aspects of life they were most pleased with at the College.

Susan Haslam (26), a lettings agency administrator who gained a BA Humanities in 2005, says:

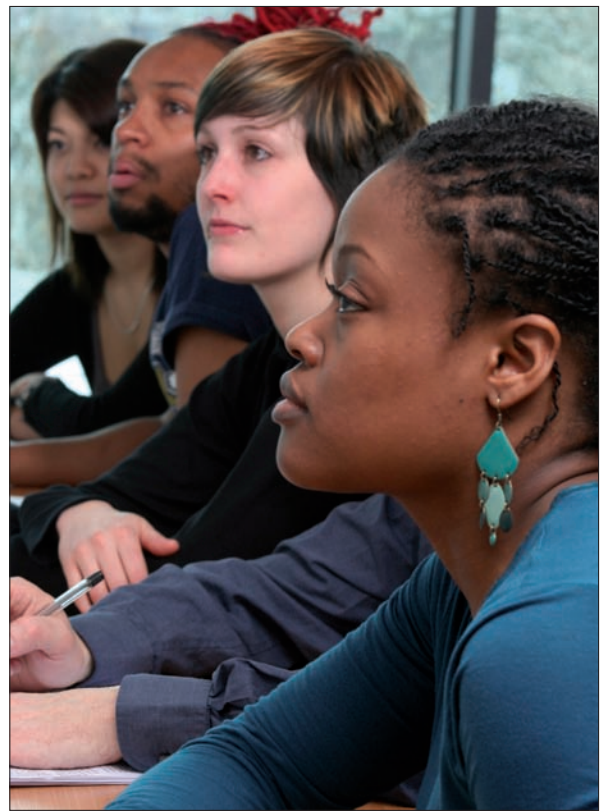
"Studying part-time at Birkbeck is affordable and you are not stuck with a large student loan, even before your first job. I have a good University of London degree which will give me the means to progress. My employers have recognised my enhanced market value and have rewarded me accordingly."

Similarly, Paul Clements (48), a Detective Sergeant in the police force, says studying law at Birkbeck meant he could "comfortably continue with work during the day and study in the evenings. Plus, Birkbeck has an excellent reputation. It's been some time since I studied, but the tutors gave me all the support I needed. I'm very proud – completing the LLB was an enormous achievement."

Like Paul, Eugene Okonkwo (40) feels a huge sense of accomplishment on graduating with a BSc Information Systems and Management. "Birkbeck was intellectually demanding, but the feeling of succeeding makes it worth it. I could combine a full-time job in the civil service and part-time study. Birkbeck has transformed my analytical skills and increased my confidence."

Building confidence was also a key factor in the success of Ekaterina Shakour, from Russia. She says: "I was worried that I wouldn't be able to cope as my English wasn't very good at that time. When I applied for the BSc Molecular Biology I discussed this with the staff, who were so supportive."

Ekaterina has a young daughter and found that studying at Birkbeck was the best way to juggle work, her family and her degree. "We did lots of work in the laboratory and I gained the knowledge I needed to apply



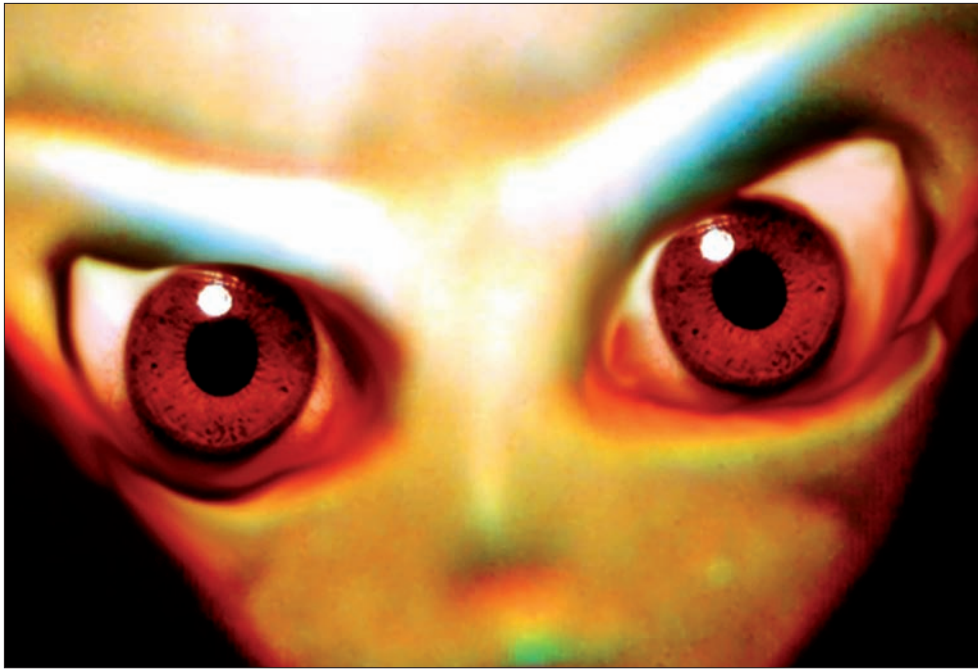
Above: Birkbeck students voted the College first in London for student satisfaction (JD Moore)

for a medical degree."

Joanna Selcott (52) also aims to use Birkbeck as a springboard to further study. She worked in the City before leaving employment to raise a family.

Now with a first-class BA History of Art, she says: "The quality of teaching was exceptional and the skills I learned gave me the confidence to apply for work." Joanna is now an information assistant at Tate Modern, and is surrounded by some of her favourite artists. "I do miss studying," she says. "I'm already downloading the Birkbeck postgraduate prospectus."

For more information about studying at Birkbeck, visit www.birkbeckmatters.com



STRANGER THAN FICTION

What stories do we tell ourselves about science? How do these fictions affect the use and position of science today? These questions and more were posed at the second free Birkbeck Lunchtime Lecture Series, 'Science and its Fictions', last autumn, featuring biophysics expert Julia Goodfellow, feminist theorist Rosi Braidotti, literary critic Roger Luckhurst and cultural historian Steve Connor. Look out for more free lectures at Birkbeck by visiting www.bbk.ac.uk/about/news

Left: Artwork of the face of an extraterrestrial being (Science Photo Library)

Line of defence

Birkbeck researchers create virtual immune system to help aid drug development for cancer and HIV

A virtual immune system called the ImmunoGrid is being created by Birkbeck researchers and European partners to model the human immune system. The computer simulation will help understand the host immune response to attacks by pathogenic bacteria and viruses. It will also enable researchers to assist the treatment of cancers of the immune system such as leukaemias and lymphomas.

Currently the simulator is being used to test different regimes for vaccine administration in the treatment of mammary tumours in mice, and colleagues in Bologna are testing these predictions on laboratory animals. It is also being used to plot the concentrations of viral proteins and populations of white blood cells during the course of HIV infection.

Our immune system is composed of a complex system of specialised cells and organs (such as lymph nodes, spleen, tonsils) which work together to find and kill invaders. It is responsible for distinguishing foreign proteins of invading pathogens from our own, and for protecting against alien substances and infections. It can reject transplanted organs but it is also susceptible to attack itself, from HIV in particular.

Professor David Moss, Senior Research Fellow at Birkbeck's School of Crystallography, and Dr Adrian Shepherd, Lecturer in Bioinformatics, lead Birkbeck's efforts in the ImmunoGrid collaboration, which involves seven other laboratories in France, Italy, Denmark and Australia.

"The complexity of the immune system, and the fact that the most successful pathogens each have

their own unique way of overcoming our defences, mean that we cannot develop a single simulator for the whole immune system. Instead we are developing separate simulators for different pathological conditions. Currently, the simulator works mainly at the cellular level but we are developing it to simulate whole organs," says Professor Moss.

"The ImmunoGrid will help us understand the immune response to pathogenic viruses and bacteria, and also how the immune system attacks our own cells in autoimmune diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis and celiac disease. It will also help us study leukaemia relapse."

For information about studying at the School of Crystallography at undergraduate or postgraduate level, email info@bbk.ac.uk or visit www.cryst.bbk.ac.uk

The café as an urban space

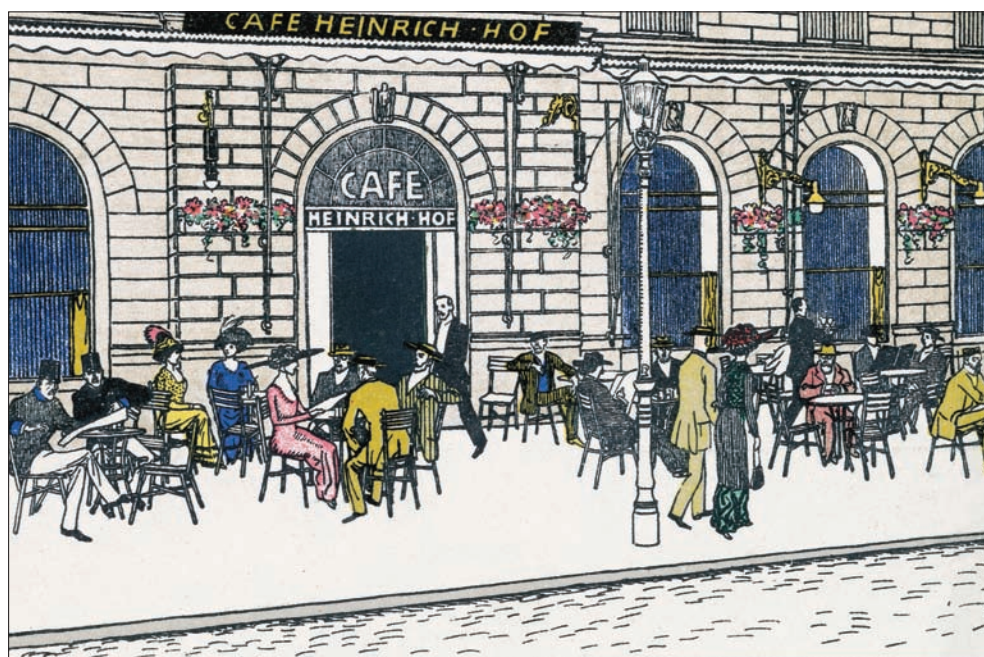
Birkbeck joins the Royal College of Art for a fresh look at the history of café culture

Café culture is very much part of contemporary urban living and an understanding of its special place as a cultural nexus in Vienna will add much to our understanding, not only of history, but also of ourselves. A new three-year research project run by Birkbeck and the Royal College of Art (RCA) will examine the cultural and artistic complexity of the café as an urban space, both in terms of turn-of-the-century Vienna and in the fabric of 21st century cities.

“For those of the current generation who thought the coffee house started life with Starbucks, this will come as quite an eye-opener,” says Professor Christopher Frayling, Rector, RCA.

The Viennese Café and fin-de-siècle culture project commenced in October 2006 and is funded by a £30,000 grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council. This multi-disciplinary study will investigate the social and artistic interactions that took place in and around the fin-de-siècle Viennese café, a key site of turn-of 20th century modernity. It functioned as both home and workplace, affording opportunities not only for leisure but also intellectual exchange. The researchers will explore the Viennese café as a threshold of space between public and private urban life, not only the architectural interior but also the boundaries between late 19th and early 20th century ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture.

The work focuses on Adolf Loos’s redesign of the Café Museum (1899), long interpreted as an icon of Viennese turn-of-the-century modernism, in order to formulate alternative metaphors of modernity



to those offered by the dominant discourses of art history, which have tended to focus on Paris. Since poet and critic Charles Baudelaire, the figure that has come to stand as modernity personified is the flâneur (man of the crowd) who strolls around the city ‘botanising on the asphalt’ (Walter Benjamin). The researchers propose an alternative idea, that of the coffee house habitué who sits and awaits the arrival of the world at his table.

“We have been working, independently, in the field of Viennese visual and cultural studies for many years,” say Dr Tag Gronberg and Dr Simon Shaw-Miller (Birkbeck’s School of History of Art, Film and Visual Media), who lead the study with Professor Jeremy Aynsley (RCA). “This project brings the opportunity to develop our work with other institutions. The work aims to challenge assumptions about turn-of-the-

century modernism and will undoubtedly enhance Birkbeck’s distinctive profile for interdisciplinary research.”

The project will result in an exhibition and international conference in 2009, a major publication and a series of literary and musical performances. It will benefit from close connections with the Royal Academy of Music and the Austrian Cultural Forum, London.

Johannes Wimmer, Director of the Austrian Cultural Forum, London, adds, “We are delighted to be associated with this work, which will not only highlight an intense and hugely creative period in Vienna’s cultural history, but will also aim at taking a fresh look at urban modernity and its metaphors.”

Above: Coffeehouse Heinrichhof, in Vienna. Colour lithography by Jung Moriz, around 1911 (Getty Images)

For more information about research at the School of History of Art, Film and Visual Media, visit www.bbk.ac.uk/hafvm/research

Screening London

The London Screen Study Collection at Birkbeck's new Centre for Film and Visual Media Research explores the capital's extraordinary moving image heritage, writes Professor Ian Christie



The London Screen Study Collection provides a good example of how academic research can reach a wider audience – through, in the fashionable jargon, ‘knowledge exchange’. It hopes to make available a wide range of material for viewing early this year, as part of Birkbeck’s new Centre for Film and Visual Media Research in Gordon Square.

The Collection emerged from Birkbeck’s London Project study of early cinema in the city (*BBK17*), and this research is already reaching Londoners through a touring exhibition, *Moving Pictures Come to London: The First Decades, 1894–1914*, which opened at Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre last April, before travelling to the Hampstead Museum, where it stays until 28 January 2007. It will then move to Barking and Dagenham, Lambeth and the City of Westminster (venues to be confirmed). Its documentation of the early film business is also available as a searchable database,

hosted by Birkbeck at <http://londonfilm.bbk.ac.uk>, and has been attracting a steady stream of enquiries and contributions.

Contribution is in fact the key to early cinema research, since this is a field where amateurs were active long before film academics realised the importance of seeing cinema ‘bottom up’ in all its local variety. Local historians, and even people with long memories and well-stocked attics, can make a contribution to filling in the many gaps in our knowledge of how film-going spread so rapidly in the early 20th century. But while the social history of cinema is at last on the agenda, what about actually seeing rare films?

Here the London Screen Study Collection aims to plug a surprising gap. The UK can now boast a network of regional screen archives that have grown up over the last decade and cover most of the country – except London. anomaly will not surprise anyone working in arts administration,

since London often suffers from the ambiguity of being both the national capital and a region. In addition to two of the world’s great archives, the National Film and Television Archive (recently rebranded BFI National Archive) and the Imperial War Museum’s film department, London has many film collections that include ‘local’ material. But there is no equivalent to the Paris Forum des Images, formerly known as the Videothèque de Paris, where you can actually see material made in or about the city with a minimum of pre-planning.

This is the plan for Birkbeck’s London Screen Study Collection, which has been supported by grants from Film London (£10,000) and the MLA London (£5,000) and will be housed in the exciting new Centre for Film and Visual Media Research designed by award-winning architectural practice Surface. Drawing on material from existing archives, held in duplicate copies, as well as the wide range of London film and video that is already published commercially, the Collection will allow both Londoners and visitors to explore London’s extraordinary moving image heritage. Courses on London screen history are also planned, together with screenings in the Centre’s state-of-the art cinema. Watch – or better still, visit – this space.

Ian Christie is Professor of Film and Media History at Birkbeck and was Slade Professor of Fine Art at Cambridge University 2005-06. For details about courses and research at the School of History of Art, Film and Visual Media, visit www.bbk.ac.uk/hafvm

Above: An early moving image from the 1906 oddly named film, ‘The ? Motorist’



BECOMING A POLITICAL ANIMAL

A new Certificate and Diploma in Politics will help students have a greater understanding of how decisions are arrived at. Christoph Meyer, the course director said, "recognising how politics works is the first step towards being able to influence it. This is particularly relevant to Londoners, even more so after the Tube and bus bombings in 2005."

For details call
020 7631 6626/6618 or visit
www.bbk.ac.uk/ce/politics

Left: Police dogs at Piccadilly Circus, as the station reopens following the bombings on July 7 2005 (Getty Images)

United we stand

New research centre wins £3.7 million to support international development goals

A new research centre aimed at tackling the complex problems of international development has won £3.7 million start-up funding from the government to develop partnerships with researchers, policymakers and practitioners in Africa, Asia, and other low and middle-income regions.

The Bloomsbury International Development Centre, to be launched this year, will form the nucleus of the largest academic grouping on international development in the UK, with a unique range and depth of expertise.

The Centre is a research collaboration of the Bloomsbury Colleges group, which consists of six institutions of the University of London: Birkbeck, the Institute of Education, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the School of Oriental and African Studies, The School of Pharmacy,

and Royal Veterinary College.

Initially, the researchers will undertake work to support the attainment of the UN's Millennium Development Goals, agreed by nearly 190 countries at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000. Extreme poverty and disease, infant mortality, universal primary education, sustainability and empowerment are some of the headline goals that will be the focus of the Centre's work.

The Centre will also look beyond these goals to longer-term development issues and capacity building to address the needs of partner higher education and research institutions, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and government departments. In addition, it will develop new teaching programmes, particularly focusing on postgraduate and continuing education.

Sir Andrew Haines, Director of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, says: "Substantial challenges remain to achieve the UN's Millennium Development Goals and address longer-term development issues. Action by governments and international agencies will only succeed if policies are underpinned by a robust research base, and by developing strong links with our partners in low-income countries. The range of expertise housed within this new Bloomsbury International Development Centre will be unmatched by any single UK institution and will constitute an invaluable source of independent expert advice."

For information about research and teaching at Birkbeck's School of Geography, visit www.bbk.ac.uk/geog



Memory and the camps

Major lecture series explores key themes of contemporary history

The world's oldest Holocaust memorial institution, the Wiener Library, has teamed up with Birkbeck to launch the Birkbeck-Wiener Library public lecture series, featuring leading scholars and public figures on key themes of contemporary history, such as migration, refugees, genocide and war.

The Wiener Library is the leading archive for the study of the Nazi era and of religious and racial hatred. It can trace its history back to 1933, when Alfred Wiener, a German Jew who worked in the Central Association

of German Citizens of Jewish Faith, fled Germany, and started to collect and disseminate information about events in Nazi Germany. Today, the Library is a major research institution, acquiring documentary collections, holding regular events and providing a focal point for researchers and students.

The theme of the spring-term Birkbeck-Wiener Library lectures is Memory and the Camps, with world-renowned philosopher and cultural theorist, Professor Tzvetan Todorov commencing proceedings on *The Memory of*

Concentration Camps (15 February). Professor Todorov is author of *Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in the Concentration Camps* and *Hope and Memory: Reflections on the 20th Century*, among many other works.

His lecture is followed by Professor Ulrich Herbert (Freiburg University), an expert on the history of the Third Reich, who will speak about the formation, development and conceptualisation of the Nazi concentration camps (13 March); Birkbeck's Professor Orlando Figes will discuss the camps in the Soviet Union, in his lecture on *The Gulag in Memory* (25 April); and Volkhard Knigge will speak about history and memory in the Buchenwald memorial (12 June).

Last autumn's theme was War Crimes and Trials, with Dr Donald Bloxham, Reader in History at Edinburgh University and former Research Director of the Holocaust Education Trust on *Nuremberg and After*. Also speaking was Linda Melvern – a leading journalist and Honorary Professor in the Department of International Politics at the University of Wales – on the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda.

Birkbeck's Dr Nikolaus Wachsmann, the co-convenor of the lecture series, said: "We are delighted to work with the Wiener Library on this lecture series, which is part of a growing co-operation between our institutions, with further links and joint research projects on the horizon."

The lectures are organised by Birkbeck's School of History, Classics and Archaeology and the Wiener Library and are supported by the Birkbeck Development Fund.

The spring-term Birkbeck-Wiener Library lectures take place at Birkbeck, venue and times to be announced. Admission is free but registration is required, by calling 0207 636 7247 or emailing info@wienerlibrary.co.uk. For details, visit www.bbk.ac.uk/hca/news/wienerlecture

Above: French refugees escaping the Nazi onslaught in 1941 (Getty Images)

Birkbeck takes centre stage

Unique MFA Theatre Directing gives students a head start in a cut-throat business, writes Eulina Clairmont

After successfully completing its three-year pilot, Birkbeck's highly praised Master of Fine Arts in Theatre Directing is set to continue after endorsements from the theatre industry's leading bodies: the Arts Council England, the Theatre Managers' Association and Equity.

Prompted by the theatre industry, the MFA Theatre Directing responds to a gap in training. In 1989, the Gulbenkian foundation recommended improvements to directors' training in their report *A Better Direction*. The report highlighted the crucial need for an integrated programme of theoretical study and professional practice.

The course has been developed through close co-operation between Birkbeck and the National Council for Drama Training, which is the body charged by the theatre industry with overseeing and safeguarding training provision and standards for theatre professionals.

Programme Director and theatre director Rob Swain, commends Birkbeck for having the vision and enthusiasm to take on this unpredictable venture into the world of theatre. "The innovative approach to the assessment of an artist's work and Birkbeck's willingness to collaborate with the theatre industry provided the right mix of attitude and expertise to develop this unique training," he says.

In the first term, students enjoy a three-month secondment to a leading drama school such as the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art or Guildhall. Throughout the first year, students work with leading directors, actors, writers and

designers: for example, pioneering film-maker, Mike Leigh and stage and screen star, Juliet Stevenson, recently led talks and practical sessions.

"The MFA Theatre Directing is the only course of its kind in this country," Rob continues. "No other combines postgraduate level study with extended secondments, and we attract contributors who are on the cutting edge of theatre."

He adds: "As well as good relationships with the leading drama schools, we have regular workshops at the National Theatre Studio and visits from members of the Royal Shakespeare Company's voice department. Currently we have directors on placement at nine theatres including the Royal Court, the Gate at Notting Hill and the Theatre Royal, Stratford East."

Every student is assessed on his/her own production and over three years Birkbeck has, in essence, co-produced 26 plays. There have been several reviews in the national press and many in *The Stage* newspaper. One of the plays, *The Ash Boy*, has been published by Methuen.

"The MFA provides students with a range of highly developed professional skills and the ability to work as autonomous, self-aware artists," says Rob. "It is also about who knows who, and all the directors leave with fat address books."

"The secondments can lead to great things and studying at Birkbeck has been a really positive experience," says Zoe Waterman, who graduates this year. "I was at the Arts Education School where I learnt about actors' training. They asked me to come back to direct first-year students in Chekhov's



Uncle Vanya. I also assisted director, Lucy Pitman-Wallace, on the revival of *The Burial at Thebes*. I've just received the John Fernald Award to assist Lucy again on tour in the UK, China and America in 2007–2008, and she has asked me to work with her on a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*."

Rob concludes: "The MFA has begun to find its place in the theatre industry. The term 'Birkbeck director' already has a currency, and as more directors graduate and take up leading positions in the theatre, the more significant its impact will become."

Above: *After Miss Julie*, directed by MFA Theatre Directing student Zoe Waterman

For details about the MFA Theatre Directing, contact the School of English and Humanities on 020 7079 0689 or visit www.bbk.ac.uk/eh

Kicking off a sporting era

The Birkbeck Sport Business Centre addresses a growing number of challenges, writes Simon Chadwick



The next decade promises to be an unprecedented one for sport in London. This year, the new Wembley Stadium is set to open and the city hosts the first stage of the Tour de France. The 2012 Olympic Games will take place in the capital and the government is encouraging the English Football Association to bid to stage the 2018 football World Cup.

Yet sport is not just important for the capital. It is performing an increasingly significant role in the UK economy. Estimates indicate that sport and its related activity account for almost 3% of gross domestic product. The Premier League alone generates around £2 billion of business each year.

Managing sport professionally has never been more important. With this in mind, the Birkbeck Sport Business Centre (BSBC) in the School of Management and Organizational Psychology addresses the growing number of challenges that sport managers face. Dr Linda Trenberth, one of three co-directors, states: "We want

to provide high-quality services to sport businesses to help them effectively, innovatively and profitably manage their activities."

Sean Hamil, another co-director, believes the Centre is well equipped to do this: "We can undertake practical, applied and academic research in commercial sport and produce reports that help businesses develop a detailed understanding of the marketplace."

The Centre has already worked with FC Barcelona, the German Bundesliga, UEFA, the New Zealand Rugby Union, the four Grand Slam tennis tournaments and Sport England.

These are clearly challenging, yet exciting, times for sport, and the BSBC is ideally placed to shape the future and take advantage of the opportunities that sport presents.

Simon Chadwick is a co-director of the Birkbeck Sport Business Centre. For further details, visit www.sportbusinesscentre.com. He is also Programme Director of the MSc Sport Management and the Business of Football. For more information, visit www.bbk.ac.uk/manop

Above: An artist's impression of the new Wembley Stadium, which will host the Olympic football finals in 2012 (Courtesy London 2012)

The write stuff

As the moon rose over Malet Street, London's literati gathered on 28 September to celebrate the launch of *The Mechanics' Institute Review*, Issue 3, writes Amy Popovich.

This literary journal is produced by students, like myself, on the Publishing module of Birkbeck's MA Creative Writing programme.

The launch had a very successful turn out, attended by graduating and incoming students, as well as agents and members of the publishing world, and at least two students from my course have gleaned interest from agents AP Watt.

In addition to all the hands-on experience gained from producing a book, from concept through to concrete reading material, one of the most important things I've taken away from the course is a heightened optimism toward succeeding in the publishing world.

Led by creative writing tutor Julia Bell, *MIR* has quickly become a respected source of good writing. Julia says: "My ambition for *MIR* is that it becomes a fixed point on the literary calendar where readers who are interested in new voices and emerging talent will find plenty to stimulate them. Each year the bar gets raised a little higher in terms of quality and professionalism. This year's issue has really set a high benchmark for *MIR4*."

Visit www.bbk.ac.uk/mir for more details

PRIZE DRAW: *BBK* has 10 copies of *MIR3* to give away. To enter, send a postcard to *BBK21* prize draw, Birkbeck, External Relations, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HX. Closing date: 1 March 2007

Master's report: Forward thinking

A new research centre, success in surveys and expansion projects continue to drive Birkbeck forward, writes Professor David Latchman

It is very gratifying when Birkbeck achieves success in audits and opinion surveys. It is particularly satisfying however, when the plaudits are received from our own students. I was therefore delighted that, as described on page one, Birkbeck was once again highly acclaimed by its students in the second National Student Survey of student opinion in all universities.

This year saw the completion of the Torrington Square landscaping project to provide a most attractive open space in which students and staff can relax, but also keep in contact via wireless access. The space beautifully complements the modern development of our main building, which was completed a couple of years ago.

I was recently asked why, when we had only just opened the gardens, we had already begun to tear away at the side of the main building. In fact, this represents the essential final phase of the project to develop a learning support centre in the new reception area. This work, which is supported by Birkbeck Fellow Mrs Phyllis Somers and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), will provide a resource centre where prospective students can obtain information about Birkbeck courses, financial and other support, as well as a quick-stop coffee bar.

Meanwhile, our association with our partners in the Bloomsbury Colleges group (formerly known as the Bloomsbury Consortium) has recently moved onto a new level. As well as promoting administrative collaboration among the partnering six colleges, we also wish to develop joint research activity. Having surveyed the activity in



each institution, it was clear that all members were active in International Development, (in Birkbeck's case, in the School of Geography and the Faculty of Continuing Education). A bid was therefore submitted to HEFCE for a joint Bloomsbury International Development Centre and this has recently been awarded a grant of £3.7 million (page five). The researchers will undertake work to support the UN's Millennium Development Goals to tackle extreme poverty, disease and infant mortality, as well as the attainment of universal primary education. It is likely that the Centre will shortly have office space in property purchased from the University of London, close to our campus.

Regular readers of *BBK* will know that this is the third successful bid to the HEFCE Strategic Development Fund we have been involved in during the last year.

The others involve our leadership of the Linking London: Lifelong Learning Network, and our bid for Birkbeck, Stratford (Page 11). Together, these three bids have yielded over £12 million in support, which must be unprecedented for an institution of our size.

We are involved in discussions with Newham Council about constructing a building in Stratford. Many of the proposed features will mirror those of the modern part of our main building, including the proposal to place a learning support centre and coffee bar at the front.

I look forward to updating you further on this important development in future issues. I also invite you to visit our Bloomsbury campus to see for yourself how Birkbeck is changing.

**Professor David Latchman,
Master of Birkbeck**

Above: Sudanese refugees queue for their daily ration of onions, beans, flour and oil in the Farshana refugee camp (Getty Images)

Built to last

New facilities herald a better Birkbeck

Staff and students continue to benefit from Birkbeck's comprehensive building and refurbishment projects.

The major building work that took place on the ground floor area facing Torrington Square, consisting of a new foyer and library entrance, was the final part of the redevelopment design undertaken by Nick Evans Architects. The earlier part of the work to develop integrated library facilities, new lecture theatres, teaching rooms and offices was completed in 2005.

The new foyer, which houses the library front desk, a one-stop-shop information centre for course enquiries, the new coffee shop, *The Café on the Square* are due to be completed this term.

Across Torrington Square on the eastside facing the School of Oriental and African Studies, Birkbeck continues to extend its estate in Bloomsbury. Next to its Clore Management Centre (which houses the School of Management and Organizational Psychology), Birkbeck officially opens its new Wolfson Institute for Brain Function and Development and the Henry Wellcome Building on 31 January. This is the first new building constructed for Birkbeck since 1997, when the Clore was opened. The planning officers at Camden were keen that the design of the Henry Wellcome Building replicate many of the features of the Clore, which it abuts, and also that the large plane tree in the rear courtyard be protected. Staff from the Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development (aka the Babylab) at the School of Psychology moved into the new building at the start of this academic year. Their former

offices at 32 Torrington Square and the Senate House north block will be occupied by new staff within the expanding School of Psychology.

In the main building, the old Senior Common Room has become *The Fifth Floor Eatery*, with new contemporary furniture and lighting, and separate informal seating areas.

Also, a partnership between Birkbeck, its Students' Union and the University of London Students' Union has resulted in the refurbishment of the Birkbeck bar on the fourth floor, now called the *George Birkbeck Bar*, with a new bar and seating areas, a pool table and large-screen television, plus equipment for

Below: The Wolfson Institute for Brain Function and Development in the Henry Wellcome Building (Birkbeck Photo Unit)

entertainment evenings.

The Director of Estates and Facilities, Philip Cowling, says: "These exciting projects at Birkbeck, the improved learning and recreational facilities, signal to the Bloomsbury and wider educational communities the College's commitment to its students and staff."

Torrington Square, the space flanked by Birkbeck, SOAS and Senate House, was redesigned by architects, Robert Myers Associates and officially opened by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of London, Sir Graeme Davies, in May last year. It has since been 'highly commended' in the design category of the Landscape Institute awards.



Renowned intellect remembered

Inaugural Paul Hirst Memorial Lecture sees presentation of prizes to deserving students



The inaugural Paul Hirst Memorial Lecture was given by Will Hutton, Chief Executive of the Work Foundation and *Observer* columnist, on 6 November, writes **Jason Edwards**, School of Politics and Sociology.

The talk, based on Will's forthcoming book, *The Writing on the Wall: China and the West in the 21st Century*, was attended by 200 guests, many of whom were former students of Professor Hirst. It provided a provocative challenge to the view that China's status as a future economic and political superpower will be secured solely through its embrace of free-market capitalism. China's recent economic growth has been overseen by the Communist Party and founded largely on cheap labour and the mass production of derivative consumer goods. This model of capitalism has not served to foster the kind of stable companies and social institutions necessary to support sustained economic growth. Without the establishment of social pluralism

and strong representative institutions, China's future is more uncertain than the champions of free-market economics would have us believe.

As Will remarked, this argument was developed by Hirst himself in the 1980s and 1990s. Will's lecture was thus a fitting tribute to Paul's work, and provided a memorable start to what will hopefully become an annual fixture.

Paul Hirst was Professor of Social Theory at Birkbeck for over 30 years before his death in 2003. The Paul Hirst Memorial Lecture will serve both to honour his memory and support publicly relevant social and political analysis.

The lecture also served as an appropriate forum for the presentation of the first Paul Hirst Memorial Prizes for outstanding students from the School of Politics and Sociology. The first winners were Rebecca Atkinson and Gareth Harris.

If you would like to contribute to the Paul Hirst Memorial Fund, email: j.edwards@bbk.ac.uk

Birkbeck, Stratford update

The new Birkbeck/University of East London Partnership at Stratford was launched on 21 November 2006 when a memorandum of understanding between the two institutions was signed by the Vice-Chancellor of UEL, Professor Mike Thorne, and the Master of Birkbeck, Professor David Latchman.

The partnership aims to improve participation in higher education in east London by attracting new students who would not otherwise participate through the provision of new opportunities and progression pathways. The signing took place at a lunch hosted by UEL where senior management and academics from Birkbeck and UEL got to know their counterparts. UEL Vice-Chancellor Professor Mike Thorne said "We recognise Birkbeck's history and reputation and we believe we can bring our youthful energy and enthusiasm to this project."

The Master of Birkbeck, Professor David Latchman, replied: "To continue our widening participation agenda we must come to where students need our services most and UEL is the perfect partner for this initiative." Birkbeck was awarded nearly £5m in April 2006 by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to take its flexible, evening teaching provision to east London. Birkbeck courses will be offered at the UEL Stratford campus from September 2007 as part of the Birkbeck strand of this new partnership.

Above: The Master, Professor David Latchman and the winners of the Paul Hirst Memorial Prizes, Rebecca Atkinson and Gareth Harris (Jason Edwards)

An equal partnership

Educate, inform, challenge and entertain was the aim of Disability Equality Week

Leading celebrities in the disability field joined the campaign to support Disability Equality Week, organised in early October last year, with workshops, films, a careers open house, tours and live entertainment designed to promote equality for disabled people and the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

The event was launched by Radio 4's *In Touch* presenter, Peter White, and included a performance by Lawrence Clark, one of the country's very few physically disabled comedians.

The DDA states that from 1 September 2005, all public bodies will have a duty to promote equal opportunities for disabled people.

Birkbeck, in conjunction with the School of Oriental and African Studies and the Institute of Education, under the auspices of the Bloomsbury Colleges group, organised its contribution to Disability Equality Week to

broaden knowledge and understanding of disability issues among staff and students.

Birkbeck's Disability Officer, Mark Pimm, recognises that Birkbeck has done a lot to serve its disabled students, but says it must continue to work hard to comply with the new Act.

"Last year we had 600 disabled students and actively worked with 400. We have a disability contact person in every school and department and an active student disability committee."

"Birkbeck's disability equality scheme and its action plan, a further requirement of the DDA, was published in December. The Disability Equality Week was just one of a range of activities that will work towards eliminating discrimination."

To find out more about the work Birkbeck is doing in this area visit: www.bbk.ac.uk/disability

Below: Learning to sign during a Disability Equality Week workshop (Birkbeck Photo Unit)

Obituary Ronald Tress

Birkbeck was saddened to hear of the death on 28 September 2006 of political economist Ronald Tress, a former Master of the College.

After graduating from University College at Southampton and Hawarden, he took a teaching appointment at the University College of the South-West in Exeter.

In 1941, he became an economic adviser to the British War Cabinet and was the first to perform the vital work of bringing together the comparative data of the war economy potential of Germany and Britain. In 1947 he left the civil service to return to academic life. Following stints at the London School of Economics and the University of Bristol, he became Master of Birkbeck in 1968. During this time, Birkbeck obtained buildings on Gresse Street in 1971 to accommodate Geography, Geology and the new Social Sciences departments, and three new departments were established: Economics, Applied Linguistics, and Politics and Sociology. He stepped down in 1977, becoming a Birkbeck Fellow, and took on the Directorship of the Leverhulme Trust, a post he held until 1984.

The Master of Birkbeck, Professor David Latchman, says: "Ronald Tress was an outstanding individual who played a key role in the development of the Birkbeck we know today. I visited him a couple of years ago. Although frail, he remained an outstanding intellect and I greatly enjoyed discussing Birkbeck with him. He even gave me good advice on how to deal with the Academic Board!"



Future perfect

Adetoun Baruwa says Birkbeck has improved her self-esteem

"I feel that I've proved to the world and most importantly to myself that I'm capable of undergoing higher education at a world-class institution, and the beauty of it is that I was able to do so while comfortably supporting myself financially," says Adetoun Baruwa, 37 (BSc Psychology, 2005).

"I chose Birkbeck because the School of Psychology is highly rated for research. I was also attracted by Birkbeck's convenient location in central London, and gaining a University of London degree was important too."

Adetoun, who works full-time as a secretary, says her favourite subject was Research Methods, a module that allows students to differentiate between statistical techniques and understand the theoretical rationale behind them.

"Even though it was the most challenging module, knowing that I can carry out a scientific research project to a very good standard is rewarding in itself."

"I also liked the fact that my classmates were mature students from various backgrounds. This, coupled with our common goal, enabled me to relate to them, and it also contributed to my feelings of security and assurance."

"Studying for a degree at Birkbeck has definitely improved my self-esteem," she adds, "and being able to study part-time as well as hold down a full-time job meant that I didn't have to struggle financially. I have a mortgage and financial security is very important to me. Being in debt after graduation is an unpleasant and unnecessary burden. I paid my fees by monthly direct debit, which suited me. Had I not known about Birkbeck, I

probably would have had to forget about studying for a degree."

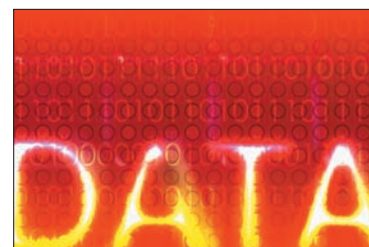
For her final-year project Adetoun researched emotional intelligence and how it relates to decision making. "I've found as a result of my research that emotional intelligence – or the capacity to understand and regulate emotions – is as important as general IQ in achieving a well-balanced life. There is definitely a need for children to be educated in such skills at school."

Adetoun is now making plans to build on her BSc Psychology degree and enter into a profession working with children in a counselling capacity.

To find out more about studying psychology at Birkbeck, call 0845 601 0174, email info@psychology.bbk.ac.uk or visit the School of Psychology at www.bbk.ac.uk/psyc
For more information about psychology research at Birkbeck, visit www.bbk.ac.uk/psyc/research



Below: Psychology graduate Adetoun Baruwa (Birkbeck Photo Unit)



Changes to data protection

There has been a change to the wording of Birkbeck's data protection notice. Birkbeck continues to keep alumni data securely in-house and does not sell or exchange details with third parties for sales or marketing purposes. The only change to our use of data is that, along with all other higher education institutions in the UK, we supply a small sample of data to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) for the national survey of graduate destinations.

Each year, from 2006, a sample of those who graduated three years previously is selected to take part in a longitudinal study of graduate destinations. This is carried out by a surveying organisation contracted by HESA. Birkbeck will ensure that all new graduates are offered the opportunity to opt out of this survey. If you have graduated within the last two years and wish to opt out of this survey only, please email alumni@bbk.ac.uk giving your full name and subject of study, with the subject line 'exclude from HESA'.

To find out more about the HESA survey, visit www.hesa.ac.uk/dhe_longitudinal

Leading lights

The brightest minds are attracted by Birkbeck's world-class research reputation

"I chose Birkbeck for my MSc Occupational Psychology because the College's reputation in my field is first-class," says Anne Fanning, 48, a self-employed occupational psychologist specialising in the design and delivery of recruitment processes, management development and coaching programmes.

Anne says her master's degree has helped her career and she is able to use it practically in her work. "My colleagues now have greater respect for me. I am called upon for advice and I can command higher fees. Recently one of my more challenging clients asked for my opinion on the latest leadership research. This was a whole module at Birkbeck and I was able to have an informed discussion feeling very confident and he was visibly

impressed. Having the Birkbeck MSc on my CV has secured assignments too."

The next step for Anne is to gain Chartership of the BPS, which her MSc allows her to do. "To achieve a merit was fantastic. I have learned to challenge and critique from an informed viewpoint, which has boosted my confidence and reputation. I would most certainly recommend Birkbeck to others."

Similarly, Sanjit Roy was drawn to Birkbeck because of its reputation in his area of interest. "I specifically chose Birkbeck's MSc Finance because of the high research rating of the School of Economics, Mathematics and Statistics and the experience of the academic staff," says Sanjit, 31.

"I wanted a world-class degree and an opportunity to learn from lecturers who are pioneers."

Below (from left to right): Anne Fanning, Sanjit Roy and Poppy Muir (Birkbeck Photo Unit).

He adds: "I was surrounded by students who were working within finance, so I had a real connection to actual banking and finance issues. You have to be very driven to do it and I admired how focused everyone was."

Sanjit now works as a product manager for a major investment bank in London, managing large corporate deals. He aims to continue to build his career in corporate and investment banking and progress into a position where he can directly influence strategy and policy.

Poppy Muir, 32, says her time at Birkbeck studying for her MA Arts Policy and Management was "hugely empowering". Poppy, who works as a projects co-ordination officer at a major London art gallery, says: "My master's degree is a well-recognised qualification and was instrumental in helping me to secure my current job. The degree broadened my horizons by encouraging a wider, more industry focused knowledge and enabled me to get much closer to achieving my goals."

She continues: "Balancing work and study was challenging at times, but I felt a great sense of achievement on completing each module. My studies helped me to re-focus on my writing skills after 10 years out of an educational environment and gain greater confidence in my abilities. I was happy with the balance between cultural theory and practical theory, and courses such as art law and artistic production were extremely relevant to my work."

For more information about Master's degrees at Birkbeck, visit www.birkbeckmatters.com





CHANGING TONE

As Tony Blair prepares to leave Downing Street, Labour leadership contender and Birkbeck graduate John McDonnell tells Catherine Stevens how he plans to beat Gordon Brown to Number 10

The saviour of the Labour party or a socialist dinosaur? A breath of fresh air or the death throes of old Labour? John McDonnell has been called many things in his time, especially as Ken Livingstone's deputy and chair of finance at the GLC in the early 1980s.

But it wasn't until he declared himself as a Labour leadership candidate against Gordon Brown that he received a real barrage of criticism from certain quarters.

"It is completely predictable," he

says. "The best antidote to the sort of prejudice and bias against me is to get the debate going and talk about the issues, which hasn't happened in the Labour party for about 10 years."

John McDonnell, MP for Harlington and Hayes since 1997 and chairman of the leftwing Campaign Group of around 35 MPs, earned his reputation as the leading backbench rebel by voting against the government 63 times in 2005, including opposing the extension of the maximum period for police detention of a terrorist suspect without charge, as well as the second reading of the higher education bill – which included plans for variable student tuition fees.

"My candidacy is about the future. It's 21st century socialism," he says. "This isn't old Labour or

new Labour, this is the Labour party. It's a straight choice between me, and Brown and Blair. Brown is seen as one of the architects of New Labour so he is no different from Blair."

On all the big issues, John stresses how he stands in opposition to the government line. "I want immediate withdrawal from Iraq. We need to go straight to the United Nations and appeal to the rest of the world to help us out of the mess we've created ... I'm opposed to privatising public services ... I'm in favour of increasing pensions and restoring the link with earnings ... I'm opposed to Trident ... I would abolish tuition fees and restore grants, and to pay for it, we should look at corporate taxes which have remained static since 1999 at 3.2% of GDP."

But wouldn't this approach lose the business vote that helped bring Labour to power? "I don't think it was business that won it for us," he continues. "In 1997 we mobilised the traditional coalition that always brings Labour to power. It's a whole range of public sector workers. It's those who are interested in peace and the environment, people who want a decent school at the end of their street and their local Accident and Emergency kept open, and it's people who want decent politics. They threw out the Tories because of corruption and sleaze. What we've done in nine years is systematically alienate each section of the Labour-voting coalition, so I want to bring it back together again. Simple enough isn't it?" he laughs.

The initial hurdle is getting his name on the ballot paper in the first place. John needs 44 Labour MPs to nominate him, which he accepts is "a hell of a hill to climb, but we're working on it. The Electoral Reform Society's poll at the Trade Union Congress gave us 58% of the

delegates. That's unbelievable as an indication, so if we can get on the ballot paper, we'll give them a shock. I say to people: put me on the ballot paper and you'll have a choice. Don't and we'll sleepwalk into losing the next election."

Described as a "man of principles" who would "politely turn down a slot on a political show to attend his 10-year-old son's school sports day" (*Guardian*, 14/7/06), what qualities does John think he possesses that elude his competitor Gordon Brown?

"It's not about the personalities – that's the whole point of this. We are eschewing the traditional campaign styles. In the old days, a group of MPs would meet, decide who they were going to run and there would be no policy programme whatsoever. It would be about the individual and the power play rather than any forms of political principles or policies."

"We have completely reversed the process. We've gone out as a rank and file collective, taking decisions on what the policies will be, and then deciding who will run. Of course people have to trust the individual but we have refused to get involved in that personality discussion."

"We're not getting much national coverage anyway," he says. "The small New Labour leadership elite in the House of Commons, and the media that hang about the bars here, will not give us any coverage whatsoever. In fact, they try to squeeze us out. I always work on a friendly basis but with the New Labour clique there's an arrogance and derision of what we are doing. This is because they are cut off from the Labour party membership."

"Time after time I've been in TV interviews and they pull me because no minister will go on the same platform as me. So we are making our own weather: we tour round the country and we get lots of local coverage. We are using



“What we’ve done in nine years is systematically alienate each section of the Labour-voting coalition, so I want to bring it back together again. Simple enough isn’t it?”

Previous page: A cardboard cut-out of Tony Blair is removed at the end of the Labour party conference in 2006 (Getty Images)
Above: John McDonnell outside the Houses of Parliament (JD Moore)
Far right: John McDonnell announces his candidacy for Labour party leader (Empics)

every possible mechanism. Never in my life did I think I'd ever have a blog."

The website launched by his campaign, www.john4leader.org.uk, boasts the slogan 'another world is possible'. Launched last July, it received nearly half a million hits in its first four months, and John says he has been "overwhelmed by thousands of emails of support – it's unbelievable".

"People want a radical break from New Labour and there is a warning out there. At the last General Election we lost 100 seats off our majority. We then got crushed in the local elections in many areas. At best, we are predicting a hung parliament."

If McDonnell beats Gordon Brown and becomes Prime Minister, he will face a general election challenge from David Cameron. So what chance does he think his Labour party would stand against the Conservatives?

"We'd win because Cameron is Blair Mark Two but a bit cuddlier, and Cameron has to face up to the fact that Blair Mark Two won't work because it will be deeply unpopular. On the doorstep, Blair is Labour's major disadvantage."

McDonnell is also keen to point out the negative impact the Blair/Brown feud has had on the reputation of his party. "Voters don't like naked ambition or people in politics carving each other up without there being a political point to it. If it's just 'oh it's my turn to become leader' they resent it. Brown's attempted coup last autumn was like an episode of *The Sopranos*. It was disgusting because there was not a single political issue debated. I thought it was appalling, it did us damage because it makes us look like a divided party."

However, he is optimistic about the future of his party and has faith that he can rebuild the trust of the voters. "We'll get over it. I

want to get back to the situation where we restore democracy. We have degenerated as a party where democracy doesn't exist and Cabinet meets for 20 minutes on a Thursday morning to get their orders. The parliamentary Labour party has had just one vote in nine years and that was about the disciplinary procedures against Labour MPs who speak out against the whip. And within the party itself, conference decisions are completely ignored.

"We need to go back to a construction of government that is of a broad church, have the debate and then unite around the policies. I want less whip votes so that MPs can vote on principle. Without whip votes, we wouldn't be in Iraq and we wouldn't have introduced tuition fees."

"If we can have a democratic debate and leadership election, then whoever wins, the party will hopefully unite and beat the Tories. The election should be undertaken on the basis of friendship, comradeship, civility, debate around the policies and then a vote. This approach doesn't show division, that's democracy."

ON BIRKBECK

When McDonnell enrolled at Birkbeck on the MSc Politics and Sociology, he was a researcher for the Trade Union Congress and a councillor at the GLC. He studied under Bernard Crick, Sami Zubaida and the late Paul Hirst, graduating in 1981.

"I wanted to keep the brain going and the only way to do it was to discipline myself with a course where you are driven to do that essay by having to get it done. So I decided on Birkbeck. It was such an exhilarating period and the balance of it was absolutely fantastic. You had Bernard Crick wandering up and down the lecture room like a Roman in a toga. He was such an exciting lecturer."

He continues: "Part-time study has always been a Cinderella service, but more so now than before, and that worries me. Birkbeck's done a good job of reaching out – I'm a grand believer in that – but there isn't much acknowledgement of this in government. More people will be looking to come back to study at a later stage in life because they will be deterred by tuition fees and graduate debt from doing a full-time degree. Birkbeck offers a route through."

"The most important thing about Birkbeck for me was that it kept me up to speed with theoretical developments. People call it a master's degree because you are mastering a subject and I completely agree with that. It has set me up for life by making sure I could relate everything back to that initial grounding. It was a good time, but it was hard. I kept falling asleep on the train on the way back to Hayes and ending up in Slough!"



Solid foundation

The first recipient of the Benedetta Ciaccia Memorial Fund award has already been promoted

Christian Bosio is the first recipient of the Benedetta Ciaccia Memorial Fund award for the outstanding graduate of the year in the Foundation Degree in IT.

This award is given in memory of Benedetta Ciaccia, who tragically died in the Aldgate Tube explosion on 7 July 2005. Benedetta obtained a Foundation Degree in IT with Merit from Birkbeck, but sadly did not learn of her achievement before she died. The fund was established by Birkbeck and her former employer, Pearson, the international publishing group.

"I'd like to thank Birkbeck and Pearson for the prize," says Christian. "I was surprised to receive this award, though the feeling of elation was soon sobered out when I discovered how

Benedetta lost her life on 7/7. She now reminds me that we have so many opportunities, while hers were so tragically cut off. I try to remember this when I am tempted to put off an action I should take."

Christian works full-time as a senior IT engineer for the London Business School. He says it was hard work juggling work and study, but adds: "I realised that study could immediately benefit work and vice versa. For example, the programming skills I learnt at Birkbeck were easily transferable to work, so I could accomplish more rewarding tasks. Also, my work experience provided interesting examples when writing my essays."

He chose the Foundation Degree in IT because he wanted a well-rounded approach to the subject.

"It not only addresses technical issues, but also provides a critical awareness of the context in which they play," he says.

Christian has since graduated with the foundation degree and has enrolled on the BSc Information Systems and Computing, also at Birkbeck. "I'm enjoying the BSc because I can continue where I left off and pursue my areas of interest."

And thanks to his studies, Christian was rewarded with a promotion at work. "I used to work in a call centre in banking, and now I feel my change of career rests on a more solid foundation."

To contribute to the Benedetta Ciaccia Memorial Fund, call the Alumni and Development Office on 020 7079 0718 or email alumni@bbk.ac.uk

Waking the dead Professor

Birkbeck graduate Rachel Summerson (pen-name Elizabeth Hawsley) and Jenny Haddon have published *Getting the Point*, aimed at helping adults to punctuate properly. Between them, the authors have witnessed many perils of punctuation. Take our heading, Rachel's own example: a missing comma turns an everyday campus tale into a ghost story.

Rachel, who has an MA Victorian Studies said, "it was Lucy, one of my bright A level students, who brought it home to me when she said: 'You mean there are rules for commas? I thought you just sprinkled them about like black pepper on pizza.'"

New governor for graduates

The graduate community of Birkbeck has voted for Susie Hodge (MA in History of Art by Research, 2002) to represent them as the new alumni governor, serving until 2010.

"I'm delighted to be part of this unique and innovative College," says Susie (right). "My MA was such a fulfilling experience that I'd love to give time to help others benefit from similarly satisfying experiences, as well as support Birkbeck to expand further its higher education provision." In order to spend more time with her two children, Susie left a high-profile advertising career to become an author, illustrator and teacher.



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We may publish the names of donors to the Alumni Fund. Please tick if you wish to remain anonymous.

Help for those who need it most

New financial packages empower Birkbeck students

The Student Opportunity Fund has been established with the support of Birkbeck's former students and friends. The fund provides full four-year bursaries to talented students who are not eligible for statutory funding, but who could not afford to study at Birkbeck without support.

To celebrate the launch of the fund, and to congratulate the first 10 bursary recipients, the Master of Birkbeck, Professor David Latchman, hosted a reception on 15 November. Cyril Dennis MBE, one of the founders and principal supporters of the fund, congratulated all recipients on their commitment and determination. He also expressed his delight at being in the position to help others in their quest for improvement and knowledge.

Speaking on behalf of the fund recipients, Gorm Shackelford, a BSc Biodiversity and Conservation student, thanked the donors for their generosity.

"We are delighted to have given the first 10 bursaries to such a varied and talented group of students," says Anna Murphy, Head of Development and Alumni. "It was wonderful for donors to be able to meet them and see first-hand the difference their donations have made."

Meanwhile, a package of statutory funding for part-time students is also new this academic year. These government grants provide financial support to Birkbeck students who would otherwise struggle to pay their fees.

Fees grants of up to £1,125 and course grants of up to £250 (to cover costs other than fees) are available for part-time

undergraduate students who fulfil certain criteria. These grants are already proving to be extremely popular with Birkbeck students, with the number of applications this academic year already topping the total figure from the last year. Students who are not eligible but who need help with childcare or field trip costs, for example, may apply to the Government Access to Learning Fund.

When Anthony Botros, a BA Accounting and Management student, encountered financial difficulties, he sought help from Birkbeck. "The process was extremely simple and quick. I received a fee grant, which covers a large proportion of the fees, and a course grant to cover the cost of textbooks. On top of that, I was given a student travel card with a 30% discount. The financial support from Birkbeck has taken the burden out of the cost of studying."

He adds: "I decided to join Birkbeck because it provides part-time evening study that lets you keep up with full-time work, earn an income and gain work experience. Birkbeck has a good reputation and gives people a chance to take part in higher education who otherwise might not be able to do so."

Similarly, Kirsty Bailey, a final-year BA History student, says the financial help she received was invaluable to her, with Birkbeck's Student Financial Support Office helping her cover her course costs. "It was very easy and everybody I spoke to was helpful," she says. "Without this help I would not have been able to stay at university."

Kirsty, who works in a book

Below: Kirsty Bailey, one of the students who has benefitted from financial support (Birkbeck Photo Unit)

store, adds: "I have a young family and there is no way I could have done a full-time course, so Birkbeck was the best option – not least because it also gives people the opportunity to graduate from university debt-free. I'm now thinking about going on to do an MA at Birkbeck. I have no intention of going anywhere else!"



To find out how you can help support Birkbeck students, visit www.bbk.ac.uk/alumni/support. For details about new government and Birkbeck money available for part-time study, visit www.bbk.ac.uk/reg/finance/ug_finance



Theatre of difference

AC Grayling on why he is using the theatre to explore “the increasingly bitter difference between those of religious and non-religious outlooks”

When Jacob Burckhardt, great student of the Renaissance, taught at the University of Basle, he and his fellow professors were encouraged to be educators not only of their own pupils but of the city around them.

Today this sentiment would be better and more modestly put: the university has a role to play in contributing to society’s conversation with itself from its stores of learning and the insights based upon it. In practice this means members of the university sharing their interests and eagerness with the world outside, by at least sometimes communicating in ways both accessible and amenable to it. And that emphatically does not mean dumbing down: there are methods of eloquence and presentation other than the scholarly dissertation which can inform, engage and challenge.

Above: AC Grayling (right) with Elliot Levey, who plays Alex in *On Religion* (Courtesy Soho Theatre)

One such way is by means of theatre, though admittedly there have not been many academics as such who have taken this route – though scholars have done so: one could start with Ben Jonson and John Milton and seek others. Some of the debates and conflicts that vex society cry out to be explored dramatically. One such issue is the increasing, and increasingly bitter, difference between those of a religious and non-religious outlook.

Over a year ago I was approached by Mick Gordon, director of *On Theatre*, to write a play with him about religion. Mick is an award-winning ex-associate director of the National Theatre, who started his own company as a vehicle for exploring matters of philosophical importance in society through the medium of drama. Last year he had an outstanding success with *On Ego*, written with Paul Brooks, at the

Soho Theatre, where our play, *On Religion*, opened for preview on 30 November for a six-week run.

Mick had read my book *What Is Good?* which discusses the debate between religious and secular attitudes to ethics from classical antiquity to the present. It prompted him to bring the central aspects of this debate to the stage. We arrived at the story of a family in which a scientist, well-known for her criticism of religion, falls out with her grown-up son who has espoused Christianity and chosen to become a priest. The split between them is made irresolvable by his death, and it is left to his fiancée, mother of his child, and his father to find a way to continue life.

As this quick sketch suggests, the play is not an harangue on one side of the argument only, but an observation of the divide and its effects, and a consideration of what is necessary for living with the conflict while it remains.

Mick Gordon and his colleague Chris Haydon interviewed a number of luminaries on both sides of the debate, including Archbishop Rowan Williams, Richard Dawkins and Don Cupitt. We wove ideas and insights from what they had to say into the text of the play. The result is a drama simultaneously of the heart and the mind, which illustrates how matters intellectually are also, and too often tragically, matters of real human life.

I usually spend long solitary hours and months at my desk, writing; this joint endeavour was an exhilarating process for me, involving not just another writer but gifted actors and a wonderfully talented stage team. Mick and I are planing more plays on great themes.

AC Grayling is Professor of Applied Philosophy at Birkbeck. Visit www.bbk.ac.uk/phlil for details about courses and research at the School of Philosophy

Boris has views for Birkbeck

Shadow Minister for Higher Education, Boris Johnson MP, gives keynote speech at College Foundation Dinner



A wild mop of white-blond hair, a suit creased from cycling around London, a blustering entrance: it could only be Boris Johnson. At the end of last year, Boris came to Birkbeck to give the annual Foundation dinner speech.

Since 1995, Boris Johnson has been Conservative MP for Henley on Thames, he is also Shadow Minister for Higher Education, although perhaps he is still most widely known for his appearances on the BBC satirical programme *Have I Got News for You*. Such is the impact of his performance, the tabloid press dubbed him the 'star' of the show, after only three appearances. More sensibly, he was editor of the *Spectator* and is a column writer for the *Daily Telegraph* for which he won the British Press Awards *Columnist of the Year* in December 2005.

Birkbeck was delighted to welcome such a colourful, perhaps even cult figure, as Boris to give the speech at its Foundation Day dinner. The annual event is held in honour of college founder, George Birkbeck. The event is held as near as possible to 2 December, which was the date, in 1823, that George Birkbeck launched London's first-ever Mechanics' Institution, which evolved into what it is today – Birkbeck, University of London.

Boris chose to speak on ways of tackling the current challenges in education. In front of the assembled guests, who came from the worlds of education, business and charity, Boris Johnson spoke enthusiastically about Birkbeck. He praised Birkbeck's contribution to teaching and research and was particularly impressed by Birkbeck's last Research

Assessment Exercise result which he described as 'one of the best in the country'.

Boris went on to explore the challenge of producing scientists and ways of halting the decline of science subjects in schools and universities. He also expressed his view that while educators and parents should be encouraging to children, they should always be honest, "when you have an eight year old's homework in front of you and the spelling is so bad that it might as well be Albanian, they have drawn a picture of you that looks like an epileptic hippopotamus on a bad day, you have a choice, do you tell him or her the truth about their exact level of attainment or do you say something encouraging?"

Though few of the guests wanted to dwell on the image of an epileptic hippopotamus on a bad day, Boris's speech encouraged a good discussion amongst the audience which included Professor Eric Hobsbawm, President of the College, Professor David Eastwood, Chief Executive of HEFCE, and Professor Mike Thorne, Vice-Chancellor of the University of East London.

Previous speakers at the dinner have included the Rt Hon Charles Clarke MP (then Secretary of State for Education) in 2004 and Mr Michael Grade (then Chief Executive of Channel Four in 1994). Every speaker brings with them something unique, but few can be quite as unique as Boris.

For more information about the history of Birkbeck, please visit www.bbk.ac.uk/bbk/history If you would like to know more about Boris Johnson visit his website www.boris-johnson.com

Above: Boris Johnson MP, at Birkbeck on the day of the Foundation Dinner (Geoff Wilson)

ON THE FLY

Despite, or perhaps because, flies are such close-knit intimates of ours, the interweaving of the lives of flies and humans has never been systematically studied, until now, writes **Steve Connor**

In 1909, a film entitled *The Balancing Blue-Bottle* was advertised in Charles Urban's kinematographical catalogue. The film had arisen, we learn, from the 'discovery by accident of amazing juggling powers in a common Blue-Bottle Fly'. We are promised, after exhibitions of the fly's powers of ropewalking and dumb-bell lifting, the following domestic scene: 'A very miniature Chippendale chair – made from a pen-holder – is occupied by the upright fly, whose wings, protruding from the rails, absurdly resemble the tails of a morning coat'.

More than the rat, the cat, the dog or the horse, the fly is our familiar. Flies accompany human beings wherever they go and have probably done so since the first development and spread of animal husbandry among early humans. Flies are, as one of their rare celebrants has written, 'the constant, immemorial witnesses to the human comedy'.

Flies were indeed literally thought to be the 'familiar' of witches. About one tenth of all the species known to science are flies. Not only this, many creatures that are not flies at all have nevertheless been given the name: dragonflies, butterflies and fireflies; even the flea has a name that factitiously suggests an association with the fly. The spellings 'flee', 'flea' and 'flie' were largely interchangeable in the volatile orthography of pre-18th-century English. The word fly is used to signify any kind of small flying creature of indeterminate form. Flies are so familiar,

continued page 26





that we allow them to multiply, in kind as well as number, under our noses.

And yet, despite, or perhaps because, flies are such close-knit intimates of ours, the interweaving of the lives of flies and humans has never been systematically studied. My book *Fly* makes a start at this job. It is a contribution to the new but growing field of 'cultural entomology', itself a subset of the growing interest among historians of science and culture in the complex relations between human beings and animals.

Flies are defined biologically as insects of the order diptera (Greek, two-winged). Diptera are distinguished from other flying insects, such as dragonflies and butterflies, by having only one pair of wings. Where other flying insects have a second pair of wings, many diptera have a pair of club-like balancing organs, known as halteres, named after the counterweights which Greek long-jumpers used to assist their flight through the air. The order of diptera encompasses 29 families, among them crane flies, mosquitoes, midges, horse flies, robber flies, flower flies or hover flies, and vinegar flies or fruit flies.

The most well-known and widely-dispersed families of diptera, however, are the muscidae, encompassing *Musca domestica*, the housefly, the stable-fly and the tsetse fly, calliphoridae, or blow flies, the family that includes bluebottles, and sarcophagidae, or flesh flies. It is this class of diptera that is usually meant when we refer to 'flies'. The reason for this is their conspicuous feeding and breeding habits. The housefly lays its eggs in piles of dung, or other decaying organic matter. The maggots which hatch from these eggs feed on the rotting matter until they pupate. The adult fly, though a promiscuous feeder, also has a taste for this kind of decaying matter. Blowflies and fleshflies prefer to lay their eggs on dead bodies, including the bodies of humans. A sudden appearance of bluebottles in a house will usually indicate that there is a dead animal, such as a mouse, or bird, somewhere at hand.

Though some flies will travel up to 15 miles under their own steam, and can be lifted up by winds and thus be transported even further, for the most part



“ For centuries, flies have shared human habitations because of the rich source of nourishment provided by the various kinds of excrement, solid and liquid, human and animal, that is always so abundantly in evidence in them.”

they occupy quite restricted ranges – about a quarter of mile being the average flight range. How then, for example, can a stay-at-home like the housefly have become so widely diffused across the globe? It is almost certainly because of being carried by humans, in their curiosity and restless urge to conquer new territories, and being sustained by the animal upon whom humans have relied for so long for their conveyance, the horse.

For centuries, flies have shared human habitations because of the rich source of nourishment provided by the various kinds of excrement, solid and liquid, human and animal, that is always so abundantly in evidence in them. Once human beings ceased to be nomadic, and settled in agricultural and then urban communities, they ceased to leave their droppings on the road. When human beings came to rest, it was their excrements that had to be mobilised instead, via gutters, drains, sewers and other forms of cloacae. So, as human beings began to farm, rather than graze the earth, flies developed an animal husbandry of their own, cultivating human beings for the decaying matter of which they proved to be such prodigiously efficient producers. As one 19th-century encyclopaedia put it: ‘The house fly is such a constant companion of man, that its presence in a coral or other island is sufficient evidence that human inhabitants are not or have not been far distant’. So, in a sense, while it is the fly which spreads and carries disease to humans, it is also humans who spread and carry flies. Flies and humans are reciprocal hitchhikers. And, although flies can bring into our houses and on to our plates organisms that we would prefer to hold at a safe and hygienic distance, the restriction of their range means that what they bring back to us is mostly our own. Flies bring us disconcertingly to ourselves.

Long before the discovery of the implication of flies in the transmission of pathogens to man (mosquitoes and malaria, the tsetse fly and sleeping sickness), the fondness of flies for uncleanness and decay led to associations with devilry and the demonic. The name of Beelzebub, traditionally Satan’s lieutenant, is usually explained as meaning ‘Lord of

the Flies’. And yet the loathing for and terror of the fly were a product largely of the early 20th century. Before that time, flies had been merely an annoyance. The growth of understanding during the 19th century of the bacteriological nature and transmission of many diseases made the fly humanity’s great entomological antagonist. In the public health campaigns of the earlier 20th century, flies became an enemy to be exterminated.

The fly has often prompted reflections on the nature of form and change. Well into the 18th century, flies, like fleas and other insects, were believed to be bred from spontaneous generation. They seemed to be the teeming life of matter rather than form: the product of chance and the perverse embodiment of mutability itself.

There is also a counter-tradition, inaugurated by St Augustine, who scoffed at those who declared flies to be the servants of the devil, declaring that the body of a fly was ‘more glorious than the lightning’. More recently, Augustine’s respect for the fly has been revived in genetic research, which came to depend on the humble fruit fly, *Drosophila melanogaster*. The fruit-fly was adopted as the favoured species for genetic experimentation because of its prodigious powers of reproduction and the ease with which it could be gathered: simply leave half a banana in a milkbottle and within hours you would have dozens of willing laboratory subjects. Whatever understanding we have gathered of the processes of genetic transmission and the development of biological form, we owe to this creature. No wonder that some geneticists have come to think of human beings themselves as ‘wingless flies with wigs’.

Steve Connor is a critic, broadcaster, cultural historian, and Professor of Modern Literature and Theory in the School of English and Humanities at Birkbeck. He is the author of many books, including *The English Novel in History* (1995), *James Joyce* (1996), *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (2000) and *The Book of Skin* (Reaktion, 2004)

For more information about courses at the School of English and Humanities, call 0845 601 0174, email info@bbk.ac.uk or visit www.bbk.ac.uk/eh

Andrew Jones on whether overseas gap year volunteering perpetuates neo-imperial stereotypes about 'poor' Africans or increases knowledge of the plight of low-income countries

Mind the gap

A photograph of two people, a woman on the left and a man on the right, walking away from the camera across a field of tall grass. They are both wearing large backpacks. The scene is backlit by a bright sun, creating a silhouette effect and a warm, golden glow. The sky is clear and bright.

As journalists launched into their annual 'gap year' debate ahead of the summer A-level results, my phone started ringing. Ever since I carried out a review of gap year provision in the UK for the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in 2004, this has been a feature of my summer.

The debate around gap year activities has become particularly contentious since the international development charity, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), launched a report arguing that many overseas gap year programmes – especially those in low-income countries in Africa – do more harm than good.

The report argues that many young

people undertaking one of these so-called 'volunteer tourism' placements in a developing country are actually draining local resources rather than helping the cause of development. Worse still, this 'charity tourism' was said to perpetuate neo-imperial stereotypes and attitudes about 'poor' Africans in need of assistance from the West. Overseas gap years were being labelled, if not a complete waste of time, then certainly of dubious value, in both development and educational terms.

VSO was of course arguing for more gap-year providers to develop the kind of well-organised, locally embedded and longer-term placements that their own

youth service programme is based upon. I have much sympathy for their argument. The overseas gap year industry, particularly in low-income countries, is not regulated, populated by numerous small organisations and often lacks adequate resources on the ground, as well as quality assurance mechanisms. There are plenty of examples of badly run programmes, disorganised placements and ill-conceived projects.

Yet the media negativity that surrounded VSO's criticisms did not tell the whole story. Since writing the DfES review, I have spent a further two years focusing on overseas gap year placement schemes, following young people on their gap years in south-east Asia and East Africa through the whole experience – from the point they signed up and were inducted in the UK to the end of their placements and the return home. I hope soon to follow up the study with a one-year-after phase of further research asking them to look back at the value of their experience. My findings paint a rather different picture to the blanket negativity generated by media coverage of the VSO report. The reality of overseas gap year activities is more complicated and the research suggests a strong set of positive benefits that counter the (sometimes justifiable) criticisms being levelled.

First, in the four low-income countries I studied, it became quite clear that individuals were gaining an enormous amount on a personal level in terms of life skills, maturity, organisational and communication skills and, in a wider sense, knowledge of the world. The evidence that volunteering placements benefit the volunteer was convincing. What is more, the economic and social contribution of these volunteers was widely identified by people in the host communities. Clearly, the value of gap year volunteers depends on the nature of the project and how it is set up, but the placement schemes I studied did produce clear (if modest) positive benefits for host communities.

Secondly, while this may seem to be a separate issue from the VSO criticism, the research suggests that personal development and the objectives of

fostering cross-cultural understanding in a global society resonate with each other. Far from exaggerating or perpetuating neo-imperial stereotypes about African countries, people and cultures, the gap year placement experiences I studied increase understanding of the plight of low-income countries. Many of the young people I interviewed were able, by the end of their placements, to articulate a sophisticated view of the problems faced by the host communities and had a growing interest in, and understanding of, cultural difference.

Third, there is the long-term (but relatively intangible) gain of motivating young people to consider volunteering later in life. My research aligned with a strong body of existing evidence that those who went on these kinds of placements were much more likely to volunteer again. The value, therefore, of these gap year schemes may be better viewed as a 'taster' experience that shapes people's lifelong activities rather than as a one-off. Those who undertake a gap year experience of limited value at 18 are likely to be the same people who you find coming to VSO a decade or more later.

The story of overseas gap years is a mixed one but they have much that is worth defending. The negative arguments need to be countered by a wider appreciation of the full impact of these activities. VSO certainly offers a model of good practice, and there is an urgent need for the providing sector to be pushed in that direction. Yet there is little evidence that the other schemes do more harm than good. My research suggests many may be highly ineffective in development terms but in the worst case they are likely to have the same economic benefits as tourism. Rather, the challenge for the gap year sector, and those who might regulate it, is to raise the quality of placements. They need to evolve into the kind of locally embedded partnership arrangements that the Department for International Development (DfID) now seeks to foster in its development projects. If that were achieved across the sector, then overseas gap years could become a real instead of an aspirational contributor to development in the global South.

“ The overseas gap year industry is not regulated, populated by numerous small organisations and often lacks adequate resources. ”

Dr Andrew Jones is the Head of the School of Geography. His latest work is *Dictionary of Globalization* (Cambridge: Polity Press 2006), which provides a critical overview of the contemporary globalization debate, bringing together all the disparate elements of a vast and ever-growing literature.

For information about geography programmes at Birkbeck, including the BA/BSc Geography and Environment and the MPhil/PhD Geography, call 020 7631 6473, email secretary@geography.bbk.ac.uk or visit www.bbk.ac.uk/geog

To be human is to be ignorant of many things but it is also to know that you are, says former priest and Birkbeck honorary research fellow **Mark Vernon**

OUR DOUBT IS OUR PASSION

In 1869, Thomas Henry Huxley coined a new term. With the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* 10 years earlier, this brilliant Victorian anatomist and zoologist became one of evolution's staunchest defenders. He approved of his sobriquet, 'Darwin's bulldog'. It earned him one of the most famous put-downs in the confrontations following the publication of the groundbreaking book. In 1860, Bishop Samuel Wilberforce, son of the anti-slavery campaigner, had enquired of Huxley whether he was "related to an ape on his grandfather's or grandmother's side?"

Huxley's reply was equally withering. He said he would rather have an ape for a grandfather than a man who substituted ridicule for science. However, while he hoped that science would scotch the mysteries and authority that he thought Christianity perpetuated to the detriment of human progress, he also admitted that science itself was not the final answer. For the term he coined in 1869 was the word 'agnosticism'.

His neologism was meant as a rebuke to all 'gnostics' who dogmatically present their beliefs as truth. He wrote: "In matters of the intellect, do not pretend that conclusions are certain which are not demonstrated or demonstrable." This is important because it expresses an intellectual humility. With respect to science, it acknowledges that when it comes to the big questions in life, what science has established "amounts at present to very little" – Huxley's words – compared to the wisdom of, say, history

and literature. With respect to religion, it acknowledges the ethical idealism of the life of faith: Huxley was theologian enough to realise that the question of God was one on which he had to remain a committed agnostic.

This is something that the dogmatic champions of science and religion forget in their skirmishing today. It is why they seem – frankly – so unsophisticated; they merely reflect each other in fundamentalist fervour. But there is a wisdom in the crowds: if you believe the surveys, more people are agnostic about religion than are either unquestioning believers or militant atheists. Of course, many are 'shrug-of-the-shoulders' agnostics. Theirs is a Catherine Tate attitude to God: 'Whatever!' But again if the research is right, many do care. It is these people who are packing the cathedrals, drawn by the architecture and the music because it throws them beyond the language of certainties. They are those who perhaps want to get their kids into the local church school: they recognise that the religious setting provides 'added value'. They are just not sure how to be agnostic, and could not quite say why they suspect it matters.

Matter, though, it does. We live in a world that is not very good at handling risk – from hoodies on the street corner to terrorists in the suburbs, from food scares to environmental collapse. Fear is the name we give to that uncertainty. Conversely, there is a lust for certainty, seen in various fundamentalisms,

scientific as well as religious. After all, we have all hoped that the Enlightenment was true: modernity would bring an end to fear, by the power of rational science. Now that it hasn't, we are spiritually bereft, less capable of embracing the uncertainty that is part of the human condition. But we are 'between beasts and angels' in Augustine's phrase.

It is as if we are paying the price for an under-investment in traditions of uncertainty. There are two main strands. First is the one that reaches back to Socrates: for him reason is the key to wisdom not because it can comprehend all, but because it exposes the limits of our understanding. Second is the theological tradition that begins and ends with the one thing that is certain in religion: God is unknown. This is called apophaticism; it is the theology of the mystics for whom the religious quest was the search for spiritual experience or doctrinal certitude but was to enter the cloud of unknowing.

What has this to do with the contemporary situation? When asking the 'big questions', such agnosticism points out that meaning is not found directly, it does not come off-the-shelf. In this, it is rather like happiness; "Success in circuit lies," as Emily Dickinson put it. What agnosticism points out is that understanding comes with experience: you have to live – to live life in all its fullness, as it says in the gospel of St John. To turn to books, religious or rationalist, and expect meaning to leap

“ It is as if we are paying the price for an under-investment in traditions of uncertainty. ”

at you off the page is to turn to the abstract for that which has to be embodied. And agnosticism cultivates a fascination with questions, as opposed to an obsession with answers, because that is what it is to be most fully human. Keats summed it up well in his negative capability: “When man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.”

To be human is to be ignorant of many things but it is also to know that you are – to be ignorant but not pig ignorant. To develop that sense is to deepen one’s humanity. “Our doubt is our passion,” as Henry James put it. It is time to recognise that when the truth of things is not demonstrated or demonstrable, what is needed is not the knock-out blow, but the humanly richer, intellectually humbler and politically necessary terrain of the committed, passionate agnostic.

Dr Mark Vernon is an Honorary Research Fellow at Birkbeck and a writer, journalist and broadcaster – notably on BBC Radio 4’s *In Our Time*. He began his professional life as a priest in the Church of England. His academic interests led him from physics to philosophy via theology. He has a PhD from Warwick in philosophy, degrees in theology from Oxford and Durham, and a physics degree from Durham. He is the author of *Science, Religion and the Meaning of Life*; *The Philosophy of Friendship*; and *Business: the Key Concepts*

READER OFFER: Dr Vernon’s book is on sale at www.marvernon.com, with a 20% discount (£14.99). Use code WLIFE2006a when you reach the checkout.

To find out more about studying philosophy at Birkbeck, visit www.bbk.ac.uk/phil



Letterbox

Here is a small selection of what you had to say about the new-look *BBK* magazine

I'd like to congratulate you on the new *BBK* design. I think the page layout is very successful. It's both attractive and easy to read. I'm glad you've continued your tradition of strong, original images; and I like the fonts and paper stock you have chosen. Overall, it's by far the best alumni magazine I receive (I get three others) for both content and layout. *BBK* leaves me feeling proud to be associated with the College.

Amy Chamier
MSc Organizational Behaviour, 1999

I enjoyed the smaller-look magazine. I particularly like the fact that you give a good amount of space to articles of general interest, not just college news, which makes it a really good read.

Sylvia Moody
BSc Psychology, 1981; PhD, 1984

I have just finished reading *BBK* and I thought I'd let you know that I not only found the content a good read and the design very pleasing on the eye – I also much prefer the new smaller format which I found to be more user-friendly.

Colin Wood
Diploma in Computing Science, 1987

Many of you also complimented BBK using the readers' questionnaire:

"I like receiving it and so does my non-Birkbeck husband!"
"It's great to maintain connections with my very recent academic past."
 "It enables a feeling of camaraderie among fellow Birkbeck students."
"I really enjoy keeping in touch



this way. As an international student, it brings me back to London and Birkbeck."

"Thanks to the magazine I feel more connected to Birkbeck than to my other colleges and I like feeling part of an academic family I really admire."

"I enjoy the academic tone."

"A first-rate and most interesting production."

"Very readable and user-friendly."

"A good product. Professional and well-presented."

"Thanks to all concerned for taking such care over it. Please keep up the good work."

"I learn about different subjects through it."

"It's really well-produced, balanced and interesting read – well done."

"Maintains very high standards."

"I enjoy the magazine a lot. I like its neat lines and clarity."

Above: The relaunched version of *BBK* magazine

"Love the size and the colour pictures, it looks altogether more readable and attractive."

"I meet people who have missed out on post-school education and give it to them where appropriate."

"It reflects well on the College."

"It confirms and continues my good opinion of Birkbeck and conveys aspects of the College's unique value in each issue."

"The new look BBK is fantastic. I love the size and the addition of colour."

"What a refreshing change."

"I would like to add my appreciation for the well-produced and informative alumni magazine."

"Congratulations on a superb new edition."

Details of where to send your comments on this issue of *BBK* can be found on the opposite page.

Spring 2007

Birkbeck's events and books

Diary dates

New year - new course?

Why not sign up for a certificate, diploma or short course? Courses start throughout the year.

For more information visit www.bbk.ac.uk/study/ce

8 February

**Birkbeck Open Evening
4pm-7.30pm**

Venue: Royal National Hotel,
Bedford Way, London WC1

To register, visit

www.bbk.ac.uk/openeve,
call 0845 601 0174 or email
info@bbk.ac.uk

Wednesday 14 February

**George Orwell Memorial
Lecture by Neal Ascherson**

Homo Britannicus,
Scotophobia and All That
5pm. Date and venue TBC

For details, email
events@bbk.ac.uk or call
020 7631 6571

Saturday 17 March

**One day programme - Stress
Without Distress in Health**
Course is free but booking

is essential.

To reserve a place, email
psychology@fce.bbk.ac.uk or
call 020 7631 6669

Tuesday 1 May

**Birkbeck Open Evening
4pm-7.30pm**

Royal National Hotel,
Bedford Way, London WC1

To register, visit

www.bbk.ac.uk/openeve,
call 0845 601 0174 or email
info@bbk.ac.uk

Saturday 2 June

**One day programme -
The Enigma of Pain
and its Management**

Course is free but booking
is essential.

To reserve a place, email
psychology@fce.bbk.ac.uk
or call 020 7631 6669

Thursday 28 June

**Birkbeck Open Evening
4pm-7.30pm**

Royal National Hotel,
Bedford Way, London WC1

To register, visit

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Recent books

**Images of Power:
Iconography, Culture and the
State in Latin America**

Jens Andermann and William
Rowe (editors)
Berghahn Books, 2006

**The Handbook of Trust
Research**

Reinhard Bachman and
Akbar Zaheer (editors)
Edward Elgar, 2006

**Marketing and Football: An
International Perspective**

Simon Chadwick (editor)
*Elsevier's sport marketing
series, 2006*

Empire

Alejandro Colas
Polity Press, 2006

**The Form of Things: Essays
on Life, Ideas and Liberty**

AC Grayling
Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2006

**The Renaissance Hospital:
Healing the Body and Souls**

John Henderson
Yale University Press, 2006

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Birkbeck-Wiener Library public lecture series: Memory and the Camps

Venue: Birkbeck

Times: TBC

Admission is free but
registration is required:
call 020 7636 7247 or email
info@wienerlibrary.co.uk.

For details visit

[www.bbk.ac.uk/hca/news/
wienerlecture](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/hca/news/wienerlecture)

15 February

Tzvetan Todorov

The Memory of Concentration
Camps

13 March

Ulrich Herbert

The Nazi Concentration Camps:
formation, development and
conceptualisation

25 April

Orlando Figes

The Gulag in Memory

12 June

Volkhard Knigge

Complexity as Opportunity:
History and Memory in the
Buchenwald memorial
after 1990



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