

Dear Reader,

The articles, reviews and letters in this, our third, issue represent an array of current research from UCL's humanities and sciences which, I have no doubt, would sit just as well in one of the more established intellectual journals one comes across in newsagents and online. Once again, as I catch a breath in the midst of the editor's tasks, I realise how lucky I am to have been granted access to so much learning. I feel somewhat wiser, certainly happier, for having read all that has gone into this issue. When one is normally an explorer only within one's own discipline, it is immensely enriching to take a moment to find out what is going on outside one's immediate circle of thought, and reminds one (if one needs reminding) of the wealth of work that is conducted at UCL. The comments I have received from a number of quarters make it very clear that there is great enthusiasm among students and staff, not only for conducting their own Herculean labours, but also for sharing their results with colleagues from other UCL departments and faculties. I invite you to take your share, and read on. A hundred thank yous are herewith sent to the many academic staff-members who have taken the time to review the articles in this issue and provided us with their considered and helpful comments. Where would we be without you?

Twenty-two students, both under- and postgraduate, entered our **essay competition**, and it was astonishing to see the breadth of topics. Many decided to approach gigantic subjects: religion, the Middle East, human rights, secular ethics, nature ... it seems that no vision is too daunting for the UCL student to tackle. Our winner, Stephen Fleming, and runners-up, Douglas James and Thomas Wolf, were chosen by the Editorial Board after much discussion; the Graduate School was very kind indeed in donating the prizes (£100 for the winner, £50 each for the runners-up), and we are extremely grateful to Prof. David Bogle and Anne Macdonald for their continued support of our little venture. As for those whose entries did not quite make it, the Editorial Board was glad to have received and read them, and we hope that at least some of them will make it into a future issue as full-blown articles.

Oddly, nobody wrote an essay about **the future of *Opticon1826***, so I'll have to fill in the gaps. We hope that the number of submissions will continue to be as high as it has been since our first issue in 2006, or even higher. We hope that we will continue to see as great a variety of submissions as we have done – in fact, this variety seems to us to have increased over the three issues, and it is infinitely satisfying for the Editorial Board and the Founders to see that it really

is possible to publish work from all UCL's faculties in one forum. Finally, we also hope that one day (however far away that day may be) our little academic journal will receive the kind of attention outside our walls that other, older, academic journals have been enjoying: though we may not exactly be lying in the gutter, we are always looking at the stars.

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If you have made it this far, chances are that you will have noticed that we have a **new web site**. Having freshly promoted us to a position closer to the top of the UCL domain, Nick Dawe and Neil Martin from UCL Web Services gave up a sizeable chunk of their time to design a new template for us, with more handsome colours and menus, so that we can now stand out as a little more of a journal web site. We hope that you will find it easier to get around, and that the layout and contents are a tad less heavy on the eye.

Gesche Ipsen  
*Editor-in-Chief*