

## Letters

### You put my head in books, Cosmo

I WAS amused to read my ex-husband Cosmo Landesman's remark (21 May) that I hadn't read a single book for the Jewish Quarterly Wingate Literary Prize I was on the judging panel for because "I have never read a book".

If he hadn't been such a dullard in our 10-year marriage, maybe I would not have been so keen to finish the complete works of Patrick Hamilton, Oscar Wilde or Graham Greene during many a numbing night. Unmoving though it is to have my literacy dissed by a man who writes English as though it is his third language, I would expect him to have had more respect for the great Jewish writers I loved reading.

**Julie Burchill, Brighton.**

### London is full of grand designs

WITH regard to the Chelsea Barracks site, it is ridiculous to pretend we must choose between Lord Rogers's glass boxes and Prince Charles's Georgian pastiche. In the Sixties and Seventies, Neave Brown and others in Camden's architects' department were building beautiful high-density council estates that still flourish, such as the Dunboyne Road Estate. And there can be no better model for elegant, high-density private housing than the Barbican flats. If architects today can't be creative, let them copy the models that work.

**Joyce Glasser, NW3.**

### TRANSPORT PROTEST

[standard.co.uk/transport](http://standard.co.uk/transport)

IF I don't go to work, I don't get paid. Will Bob Crow personally reimburse everyone whose earnings will suffer from the RMT's 48-hour strike next month? Like many people, I have had to take a pay cut this year. What makes Tube workers so special they have to make everyone else's life hell when faced with a pay freeze?

**Alan.**

### ONLINE POLL

#### Should the Government bail out Vauxhall?

Vote at [standard.co.uk](http://standard.co.uk)

#### Our last result

Will 'cyber courts' in shopping centres improve trust in the justice system?

**YES** 17%  
**NO** 83%

### ES txts

■ I'm devastated at the Greenwich Market redevelopment plans. I go there at least once a month and love its relaxed, old-worldly feel. Tourists visit this part of London for its sense of history – leave it that way, we have enough shopping centres.

**Fiona.**

■ Justice has been done with Man U's defeat in the Champions League final. They were outplayed by Bayern Munich until extra time in 1999 and were outplayed for most of last year's final against Chelsea. What joy to see the TV commentary sycophants change their tune towards Ronaldo as the match went on.

**Kerry Trubee.**

■ Why must we compartmentalise people such as Simon Woods as "straight" or "gay" at different times of their life? Some of us are bi.

**Aphra Behn.**

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International appeal: modern Chinese art at the Saatchi Gallery on King's Road

### Time to break Saatchi's spell

BY praising Charles Saatchi for his "energy and generosity" in keeping Britain abreast of contemporary art from around the world, Brian Sewell is using his old bête noire to kick the Tate. But it is a blunt tool. Modern Chinese and Middle Eastern art is filled with boring mimicry of Western artists supported by opportunist dealers who, post-credit crunch, want to create products to sell to billionaires from those parts of the world.

I got more from the Tate's shows of French artist Pierre Huyghe, Brazilian Helio Oiticica or even Roni Horn than anything out of Saatchi's culling of the international art market. Sewell made more sense when he was exposing the impoverishment of the Young British Artists than in his enthusiasm for this new batch of imports. To get a less product-orientated perspective on art we must break the Saatchi spell, not canonise its ringmaster.

**Jack Wakefield, NW1.**

WITH regard to Tracey Emin's contrast of male and female artistic talent, I think there is creativity in men and women alike as long as they remain unsatisfied with their own work and believe they can do better next time. Remain your own greatest critic and you will retain your talent.

**Elliot Kane.**

## An end to MP apparatchiks

AS A Conservative, I am mystified at how Julie Kirkbride clung on to her position for as long as she did. By the same token, why did David Cameron not dismiss, say, Chipping Barnet MP Theresa Villiers from his front bench when revelations were made about her allowances? Kirkbride's claim for an extension to benefit a family member and Villiers's claim for stamp duty on a second home despite already owning a property in the capital are both examples of appalling personal judgment.

Too many MPs are shocked by the power shift under the Freedom of Information Act from the rulers to the ruled, as they apparently live in a bubble without contact with ordinary voters. For too long the candidate mix has been consistently wrong across the parties: apparatchiks are imposed and "outsiders" need not apply.

Special arrangements for a constituency home would not be necessary if MPs by default came from the place they represent.

For non-London MPs, there is

sufficient space on the South Bank to create high-quality, portered parliamentary apartments.

Allowances must be scrapped, and MPs' salaries increased, realistically, to £100,000. MPs should hold no outside directorships or consultancies: they are there to work for us. Cameron has responded well so far to the expenses scandal but must try harder to set the standard for 21st-century government.

**Chris McLaughlin, SW19.**

■ MANY MPs have acted improperly, breaking the Commons Green Book's injunction that expense claims "should be above reproach". That does not legitimise the way some prominent people are insulting elected representatives with no proper finding of guilt against them.

It is one thing to consider in a respectful and polite manner whether a sitting MP should be deselected for the next election, quite another to haul the MP before a "star chamber" where the penalty is termination of

their career. Now Nick Clegg, a privy councillor, has absurdly called for Westminster's gates to be barred until "every nook and cranny of our political system [is] reformed".

If the Commons possessed a Speaker who knew his job, he would already have taken firm measures to investigate recalcitrant MPs and subject them to the discipline of the House. Self-appointed busybodies who take on this function (including the Prime Minister) risk action for breach of privilege when Parliament resumes after the next election.

**Francis Bennion, former parliamentary counsel.**

■ WHILE attention is focused on the disgrace of further MPs, what about the peerage that Michael Martin, who has done more to degrade the office of Speaker than any predecessor, is due to receive? Perhaps we could have a referendum on that. Otherwise it will take years to re-establish any degree of respect for the House of Commons.

**John Vallintine, SW1.**

## STARS SHELLEY VON STRUNCKEL

### Aries March 20 - April 18

Others may complain about plans being changed. The real problem is that dealing with the details involved requires a certain amount of effort, when they were rather hoping that they could relax and let everybody else do the work.

For your weekly/monthly forecast, call 0906 6513 520

### Taurus April 19 - May 19

There is no diplomatic moment to raise and discuss the difficult matters that have recently come to light. However, others are as uncomfortable about them as you are, and so will be relieved to get things out in the open. That being the case, they'll make every effort to ensure those discussions are kept civilised.

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### Gemini May 20 - June 20

Don't be afraid to let go of plans that simply aren't working. True, in saying farewell to them you create a very large gap in your diary, and in your life. However, the more you explore the potential of the events coming your way, the more convinced you'll be that these could be even better.

For your weekly/monthly forecast, call 0906 6513 522

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### Cancer June 21 - July 21

This is one of those peculiar times when obstacles could be doing you a favour. Not only are they preventing you from taking plans further, they're also raising questions you wouldn't have thought about. Focus on these now and you'll clear them up before they turn into real problems.

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### Leo July 22 - August 21

Only now are you beginning to realise how you'll benefit from this week's dramatic developments. The more you've learned, the more you've realised just how worthwhile these could be, for you and others. Enough to justify making the major changes that they'd demand.

For your weekly/monthly forecast, call 0906 6513 524

### Virgo August 22 - Sept 21

Everybody is aware of the confusion triggered by your ruler Mercury's retrograde cycle. However, you suffer doubly from it, because it also tends to intensify the self-doubts you're usually able to ignore. Unsettling as tackling these is, face them head on now and you could recognise many are nothing more than that, mere doubts.

For your weekly/monthly forecast, call 0906 6513 525

### IF IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY ON...

**Saturday** While you're generous, recently others have taken advantage of that. Think whether you need to draw the line with certain individuals, making it clear that you're expecting something back from them, and soon.

**Sunday** Your ruler Mercury ends its retrograde cycle on your birthday. Obviously life becomes less chaotic. But also, you'll finally be able to resolve certain perplexing issues, some of which you thought you'd just have to live with.

**Monday** Numerous concerns have seemed overwhelming. Now you muster the courage to confront them, or the individuals involved, openly. Equally, profound insights enable you to put to rest complex, and haunting, personal dilemmas.

Calls cost 60p per minute from a BT landline. Other networks and mobiles may vary. The astro-line horoscopes are updated every Friday

### Libra Sept 22 - Oct 22

Over the coming week both the hot-headed Mars and your ruler Venus move from your opposite sign of Aries to the more practical Taurus, ending a cycle that's required massive diplomacy. While you've wanted to support others, their ideas have been as hasty as they've been irrational. You'll be relieved their common sense is finally returning.

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### Scorpio Oct 23 - Nov 21

It is one of those peculiar times when minor misunderstandings can either turn into seismic clashes or lead to constructive, if strained, discussions. The choice is yours. Challenging as remaining calm is, do so and you'll work miracles.

For your weekly/monthly forecast, call 0906 6513 527

### Sagittarius Nov 22 - Dec 20

There's no arguing that you've achieved a great deal during the past month or so while Mars has accented family and domestic matters. Still, you'll be relieved to know that as it moves into a new sign, tomorrow, so too will your focus shift to situations involving who and what you love most in life.

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### Capricorn Dec 21 - Jan 18

Usually, facts are facts. But not at the moment. Frustrating as that is, it gives you an excuse to address certain lingering issues from the past. Your previous efforts to resolve these have been remarkably unsuccessful. Now that everybody's feeling unsure, where there were once so difficult could be far more co-operative.

For your weekly/monthly forecast, call 0906 6513 529

### Aquarius Jan 19 - Feb 17

Fully understanding new ideas and offers may take ages. That's as it should be, since they were triggered by Jupiter's recent encounter with Neptune, in your sign, the first of three this year. By the last, in late December, your perspective on these will have developed considerably.

For your weekly/monthly forecast, call 0906 6513 530

### Pisces February 18 - March 19

Don't be shy about expressing either your desires or priorities, even if there's a serious clash. Only once you know where there are differences can you work things out. Begin now, and not only will you resolve those differences, you'll also develop a more in-depth understanding of others.

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