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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

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Welcome to the third issue of the second volume of the new series of *Amicus Curiae*. We appreciate the support that contributors, readers and others have given the journal, assisting the progress that the relaunched journal has made.

Much of this issue consists of a collection of essays, kindly organized and edited by Professors Fiona Cownie and Emma Jones, which explore questions about English legal education and its development in the light of Professor William Twining's seminal study delivered as the Forty-sixth Hamlyn Lectures and published as *Blackstone's Tower: The English Law School* (1994; see also Twining 1997). An earlier and more general appreciation of Professor Twining and his work offered the observation that he 'has been (still is in my view) the most influential figure in British legal education over the last half century' (Arthurs 2011: 3). A subsequent characterization described him as 'an intellectual who is a pre-eminent Renaissance man among legal scholars: a bricoleur ... [who has made an] ... outstanding contribution to legal education as a pedagogue, an innovative educational practitioner

and an activist reformer' (Baxi & Ors 2015: vii-viii). I first met William at a workshop, kindly organized by his UCL colleague Professor William Butler, held in late 1988 at Peking University Law School, where he introduced his audience to *Alice in Wonderland's* Cheshire Cat. Understanding the Cat, he explained, will help us all appreciate better the fugitive nature of evidence law. The Cat keeps

disappearing and fading away, so that sometimes one could see the whole body, sometimes only a head, sometimes only a vague outline and sometimes nothing at all, so that Alice was never sure whether or not he was there or, indeed, whether he existed at all. In practice, our rules of evidence appear to be rather like that (2006: 211-212).

This insight was well-understood and appreciated by a local audience in Beijing that was more accustomed to carefully regimented lectures delivered in the spirit of constructing a perfect socialist legal system with Chinese characteristics. Our workshop was part of an 'academic tour' of China involving visits to a range of local legal institutions, and Professor Twining was quick to grasp the

importance of the point that ‘people’s mediation committees’ did (as they still do) a lot more work than the ‘people’s courts’. Back in the UK, he gave much kind support and encouragement to Professor Simon Roberts and I in the development of the University of London Intercollegiate LLM programme of (very likely), the first degree course in the UK dedicated to ‘alternative dispute resolution’. This innovation has been ‘blamed’ from time to time for facilitating the introduction of Lord Woolf’s access to civil justice reforms of the late 1990s (see also Twining 1993). Subsequently, in a volume celebrating the SOAS Law School’s Fiftieth birthday and its continuing engagement with comparative legal studies, Professor Twining contributed an insightful essay that argued for a more global and inclusive vision for comparative law—one which would free itself of the dominance of the ‘country and western’ tradition (Twining 2000). Over the past two decades, his inspirational scholarship has continued to flourish, drawing not only on his early intellectual engagement with the work of Hart, Collingwood, Llewelyn and Mentschikoff but also the voices of Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Amartya Sen, Abdullahi An-Na’im,

Upendra Baxi, Francis Deng and Yash Ghai. His unwavering commitment to legal education and its reform, and to his role as a mentor, institution-builder and supporter of younger scholars (Lacey 2019), continues to motivate us ‘more than somewhat’.

The Special Issue is supplemented by an important Note contributed by Professor Patrick Birkinshaw on the findings of the Panel launched in July 2020 to consider options for changes to the process of judicial review through an Independent Review of Administrative Law. The Report of the Panel (CP 407) was published in March 2021. The Review’s findings have been responded to by the Ministry of Justice in *Judicial Review Reform: The Government Response to the Independent Review of Administrative Law* (CP 408), and Professor Birkinshaw, *inter alia*, points to a number of issues in the response of the Government as well as the Review.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, Professor Carl Stychin, Director of IALS, contributes a short Note on the University of London’s new Refugee Law Centre. This body provides legal advice for refugee clients on a *pro bono* basis, is based on a model of Clinical Legal Education, and is located in

<sup>1</sup> Professor Birkinshaw is the author of a number of important studies including (2020) *European Public Law: The Achievement and the Brexit Challenge* Alphen aan den Rijn: Wolters Kluwer; (2010) *Freedom of Information: The Law, the Practice and the Ideal* 4th edn Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Law in Context); and with Mike Varney (2019) *Government and Information Rights: The Law Relating to Access, Disclosure and their Regulation* 5th edn London: Bloomsbury Professional.

Charles Clore House. The Clinic is supported by the Central University and by ten of the University's Member Institutions, operates in partnership with Macfarlanes and Clifford Chance, two leading international law firms based in London, and provides opportunities for lawyers to undertake *pro bono* work. The new initiative seeks also to bring together the shared interests of refugee law scholars and practitioners, and to encourage

collaboration between academics and non-academics in the field.

The Visual Law contribution in this issue is offered by Lin Yang, a young scholar who is currently working on online dispute resolution and its regulation, primarily with reference to developments in the People's Republic of China. His note introduces us to China's three innovative online courts and explains their growing role in the PRC's justice system.

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