

In the mid-winter of '63 I began my revisions for Finals. I burnt the midnight oil from January to the appointed day in June. On that morning Mrs Barnes woke me at six. As I shaved I asked myself if I had fully understood Trusts and the Rule against Perpetuities. Over coffee I endeavoured to recall cases and dates in Contract and in Tort. My decision to attend the Bump Supper had been a mistake. It cost me two days of revision and upset the timetable I had so carefully prepared.

Rig for Finals was subfusc – dark suit, white bow-tie, gown and mortarboard. With thirty minutes to go I left Bath Place and headed down New College Lane to the Examination Schools in The High. On arrival I was surprised to be greeted by the head waiter of the Oxford Union Society, Mr Duck. Quite what his role was in these proceedings I never did find out.

Law Finals consisted of eight papers of three hours each, spread over the better part of a week. As soon as they were over, with the results as yet unknown, a celebratory lunch was held. Our tutor, Tony Guest, sat next to me. In the middle of the meal he suddenly declared he had a confession to make. He had voted against my admission to the College because of what Gresham's had said about my prospects. It seems that the authorities at my old school had advised Univ that I would probably become President of the Oxford Union but I would probably not get a degree.

I had been elected Treasurer of the Oxford Union at the end of my second year but had resigned the post in protest against the Society's continuing refusal to admit women to full membership. Had I stood for the Presidency my opponent would have been Girish Karnad, a Rhodes Scholar from India who went on to find fame and fortune in Bollywood as an actor, playwright and film maker.

In the matter of a degree I was called back for a viva and questioned on Trusts and the Rule against Perpetuities. In those days the Examiners could award a First, a Second, a Third and a Fourth. Only one of our number managed a First. This was John Swift, a scholar who switched from Greats to Law. As for myself, Tony Guest need not have worried. I got a Second.

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