

Okay, I guess I should really call this Day 2 Part I as it is about 2:45 am right now. Damn jet-lag... or is it the late night curry??

I am a little insulated from broadcast media right now, which is unusual for me. Granted I am an Internet animal, but I am also a regular old news junkie and I haven't been getting good reception on the beeb, there's no tele here, so all I have to go on is the printed word, either online or on paper.

I have just seen that the networks and AP are calling MD and VA for Obama, which is heartening. I knew I should have picked up an Obama08 button before coming over here. It may have served as a conversation starter...

I will need some of those. As I settle into this flat I am feeling a very distinct immigrant vibe. It may be because I recently read "A Face In The Crowd" in [last month's Vanity Fair](#) (pg 124) about an Algerian immigrant and the housing he got, the insular life he lived, etc. The little flat I am in (see photos) feels like an immigrant's flat. The only significant decor is a large Ganesha statuette on the coffee table and some vaguely Indian feeling wall hangings. Now I am making some assumptions here, but still.





So I figured since the big papers I want to read, the Independent, Guardian and Telegraph are morning papers I would wait for the Wednesday issues before buying any. On the street there are people hawking the free rags, so I grabbed a copy of [thelondonpaper](#) and read it over curry last night. Its very cheeky, and features a lot of interaction with its readership, accepting and publishing text messages, email, etc. Here is a snapshot of what is on the minds of the locals:

Of course there is the fascination with the tragedy of Amy Winehouse and Pete Doherty (of Babyshambles) and their respective bouts with drink/drugs. This takes on an almost schizophrenic quality, however, as shown in these excerpts:

Amy Winehouse's mother has spoken of her pride at her daughter's Grammy success and her hopes that the troubled star is on "the road to recovery".

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This is paired in the same issue with a reader's comment:

Tempting Amy

Does no one else think that the Hawley Arms fire could have been started by friends or family of regular Amy Winehouse, eager not to see her slip up when she gets out of rehab? If that place is gone, she'll have one less venue to go and misbehave in. And that's got to be a good thing. It's only what I'd have done if Amy was a member of my family.

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As for Pete, the review of his recent performance at Brixton/Academy bears the slug "Pete's spark has gone" and goes on to lament "A band doesn't have to be trashed to rock — but if a singer's reputation has been founded on unpredictability, it's hard to be glad he's acting more stable when he performs as if the fire's gone out." (Couldn't find that online).

Other big news discussions center around more sober topics, like comments by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the head of the Anglican faith, on Sharia law:

He has been embroiled in controversy since Thursday for claiming the adoption of elements of Islamic legal codes in the UK "seems unavoidable". At least two Synod members have called for Dr Williams to go and he has faced criticism from leading bishops, secular groups and government figures.

<SNIP>

Tory former Chancellor Ken Clarke said of the Archbishop: "He's just one of the most unworldly men I have ever met, together with being one of the most intelligent and plainly one of the most saintly and he has got himself into an absolutely classic British row and has angered a lot of people because they have all been persuaded that he has been talking about bringing back the stoning of women for various moral offences, and so on, which plainly he is just about the last person on earth to contemplate."

Dr Williams defended himself on his website on Friday, saying he had made no proposals for sharia, and "certainly did not call for its introduction as some kind of parallel jurisdiction to the civil law".

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Prompting many responses such as this one:

We Left Sharia Behind

Regarding the Archbishop of Canterbury's comments about the introduction of aspects of Islamic Sharia law in the UK: Dr Rowan Williams should understand that many Muslims and non-Muslims left lands where Sharia was practiced to be here. No one wants to go "backwards". If people want to live under the Sharia, there are plenty of countries that will suit their needs. Those of us who have abandoned the Sharia-ruled lands have no desire for it to take root here.

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There are other serious topics such as the dreadful fire at Camden Locks last weekend. But one that caught my attention is a plan to be announced by PM Gordon Brown to invest over £200m (about \$400 million) to make London's South Bank an "Arts Capital" with, get this, an investment in arts education!

Enough for now. Ta!