

BEN HOARE, who died yesterday aged 22, was a student, enthusiastic musician and amateur writer with uncertainties about his long-term career plans.

Hoare's life was plagued by dualities. In the official version of his life, his greatest achievements were academic; but in spite of a love of literature, it was not long after being admitted as an undergraduate at St Anne's College, Oxford, that he realised that his real passions lay elsewhere. He loved generic and derivative cinema, particularly romantic comedies set in American High Schools, and thought that if there was a Prom at the end, then it was all the better. It was possibly the escapism of musicals that led him to cite *The Wizard of Oz* as his favourite film, but he also enjoyed those works that challenged the genre, even if that meant facing up to the realities of life and death which had often depressed him.

Even as a competent tuba-player, first in the award-winning ensembles of his home town, Bromley, Kent, and later in a number of orchestras at the University of Oxford, he was not entirely content. His main musical love was what he described as "loud, distorted, melodic rock & roll", whose immediacy distinguished it from the other styles that he was familiar with. Since his early teens, he had a vague ambition to perform rock music,

Sentimental student with anxieties about life-writing



BEN HOARE

but was unable to find a rock band that was in need of a tuba player, however enthusiastic.

When not performing, Hoare dabbled in writing, although never particularly successfully. He often stated that, whatever he were to do later in life, he hoped that it would involve writing, but what survives of his work reveals a lack of dedication in this regard. Few of his pieces were shown to anybody, and even fewer published. Before showing his writing to others, Hoare usually went through his work and removed any traces of overt autobiography, apparently entertaining some doubts about how his life experiences had been manifested in writing. Several briskly-abandoned diaries survive as a testimony to the fact that he evidently wanted to record and muse upon his life, but was disenchanted by the results. One formative experience in his late teens was the realisation that to love oneself does not necessarily amount to arrogance. He lacked social confidence, and often compensated for this in an inappropriate way, either by talking too much and appearing arrogant, or by not talking at all. He hated being ignored, and was most comfortable with people who encouraged him to open up and confide in them.

Ben Hoare was born on September 26, 1981, the son of a primary school teacher and a police inspector. He found it

mildly amusing that his parents belonged to what were arguably the two most-criticised professions in the nation, although later on this amusement turned to an anxiety that he had no real example to follow. Much of his life was marked out for him – educated first in Bromley, Kent, then at Oxford University, it was some time before Hoare genuinely began to think for himself. Having been conditioned to believe that what he had achieved so far was the only option available to him, he entertained this delusion for much of his life.

Fortunately, several challenges which faced him whilst at University forced him to face up to the fact that much of his life had been spent doing what seemed obvious rather than doing what would be best for him. The first was a conflict between academic commitments, which had previously always taken priority, and social attachments. The wrench of leaving home and starting University had strained his relationship with long-term girlfriend, Gemma, and it eventually became apparent that there was a balance that needed to be redressed. Hoare seemed content with his changed priorities, and in his second and abruptly terminated third year at University, he never allowed academic concerns to impact on his social life.

Ben Hoare is survived by his tuba, which was never named but much-loved.