

# ANTHROPOLITAN

NEWSLETTER ISSUE NO. 8 SUMMER 2013



# Greetings!

*The academic year 2012/13 has been busy for staff and students alike. We have had a very successful visit by the Internal Quality*

*Review, commending the Department for its openness and inclusivity, for our enthusiastic and articulate students, for the accessibility of the staff, the effective pastoral support provided to the students, and the commitment of staff to teaching. All the students the IQR team met were very positive about the Department and were appreciative of the high quality teaching delivered by staff.*

*This was the penultimate term ahead of the UK's all important REF (Research Excellence Framework) submission. Preparations reached a feverish state at certain times during the year. The Department's REF team is grateful for the patience and responsiveness of staff. We are going into the important submission period quietly confident that the Department has done everything it can to remain at the very top of the field.*

*In April our administrative team was joined by our new Undergraduate Administrator, Jolanta Skorecka. For the first time in three years we now have a full compliment of administrative staff and we are looking forward to creating a smooth and effective*

*experience for students and staff across all areas of academic life in the department.*

*The past academic year has seen a number of staff- and student-led innovations that will become fixtures in the calendar for the next few years. The first year BSc students were taken again to an away camp in February, accompanied by a number of staff. Undergraduate students at all levels were hugely active again in running the Anthropology Society. We had very successful debates this year between members of staff as well as new events such as a staff/student ball.*

*This term is always tinged with sadness as we say goodbye to our final year undergraduate students, several of whom were successful in winning coveted studentship funding at UCL, LSE and Cambridge. It is still too early to know whether we were able to match our examination success from last year, when almost 60% of students received first-class degrees, but the headhunting of our students by leading colleges in the UK confirms our standing as a Department leading the training in anthropology in the country.*

*Enjoy your summer!*

Professor Susanne Kuechler, Head of Department

# Sleeping in the darkness, like a seed beneath the earth

## Fond memories of this year's First Year field-trip

Johan Greve Petersen

1<sup>st</sup> Year BSc Anthropology

Going to university often carries the idea of being buried in books, being locked away in lecture theatres and moving calmly (sic!) from one deadline to the next. Equally, does going to Glastonbury connote ideas of music, mud and an ocean of happy festival-goers.



But this February reading-week roundly challenged both of these perceptions. This February, music still sounded from the bottom of the Somerset hills but this time it was the high pitch tone of swan-bone flutes, and the melancholy expressions of 30 anthropology students humming over and over; "I will sleep in the darkness, like a seed beneath the earth. I will sleep in the...."

The first-year field-trip to the Earth Spirit Centre was not merely an



opportunity to exhale after surviving half a year in urban London's strangling lack of nature, but a chance to engage in matters completely inaccessible in tutorials and seminars. The Body - as we were constantly reminded throughout the trip - is the most important tool for the anthropologist because bodily engagement allows the ethnographer to transcend the constraints of armchair research, facilitating deeper understanding and appreciation of other cultures and cosmi. If only the Victorian evolutionist E. B. Tylor had known "I will sleep....I will sleep..."

Bodily engagement meant days of exploring the powers of singing, dancing, hiking and storytelling, and above all, wait for it, sweating. Who of us could have imagined at the beginning of the year, 30 co-students squeezed tight in a sweat-lodge the size of a Ramsay Hall single bed room, staying put for hours, reciting ancient prayers, howling like wolves in the night. More like Summersweat than Somerset!

Our spiritual quest was facilitated by The "Green-Men" of Dundon, a band of cultural 'Others', alien to the urban environment of Bloomsbury. With them, we joined in an appreciation the land and its history, saluted the four corners of the world, drank from the spring of enlightenment, and attempted (with varying success) to sound like the fire and the wind. These rites allowed us to bond and spend precious time with each other and with members of staff in ways not possible back 'home' in Taviton Street.

Was this spending precious department money on just "hippie'ing" around for a couple of days? Quite possibly. But three years in this department is a long time to mingle with students without really knowing them, and we returned as not just co-students, but as friends with shared adventures and a very real sense of how to enter 'another culture'.

Top: 'Preparing for the long awaited sweat-lodge

Left: Warming up for the voice workshop

# $Fx(a):Fy(b) = Fx(b):Fa-l(y)$ . engineered wrappings for mythical sweets

Tobia Farnetti, PhD Anthropology  
Alice Elliot, PhD Anthropology 2012

Several decades ago, on the heels of a two-year study of North American Zuni and Pueblo myths, the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss came up with a formula which he thought described algebraically the logical structure of myth. In ‘The Structural Study of Myth’, a canonical essay that all students of anthropology eventually come to read, Lévi-Strauss wrote:

*“Finally, when we have succeeded in organizing a whole series of variants into a kind of permutation group, we are able to formulate the law of that group. It...seems that every myth (considered as the aggregate of all of its variants) corresponds to a formula of the following type:  $Fx(a):Fy(b) = Fx(b):Fa-l(y)$ . Here, with two terms,  $a$  and  $b$ , being given as well as two functions,  $x$  and  $y$ , of these terms, it is assumed that a relation of equivalence exists between two situations defined respectively by an inversion of terms and relations, under two conditions: (1) that one terms be replaced by its opposite (in the above formula  $a$  and  $a-l$ ); (2) that an inversion be made between the function value and the term value of the two elements (above,  $y$  and  $a$ ).”*

To evaluate whether or not this attempt to mathematically model myth was a cipher of Lévi-Strauss’s genius or merely a case of misplaced scientism, CROC (the Cosmology, Religion, Ontology and Culture Reading and Research Group) met for a full day of reading, discussion and critique on Saturday, January 12th 2013 in the Department of Anthropology. In the brief text that follows, Tobia Farnetti and Alice Elliot present their reflections on the discussion.

If there is something reassuring about myth and folktales, it is that one always knows where one stands with them. As Vladimir Propp (1968) and then Walter Ong (1982) observed long ago, the characters of myths and oral narratives tend to fulfil stereotypical roles and have characteristics that confirm them. So, the hero is brave, but perhaps poor, and throughout the story he will undergo difficult tasks to save the princess (who, of course, is beautiful but helpless and generally has lusciously long hair) and thus climb the social ladder to its highest point. The hero’s symmetric opposite, the villain, struggles for the same goal – the love of the princess,

the rule of the kingdom, or just a pot of gold – while the hero’s helper is good-hearted but weak, and the sage is old and blind. One is tempted to say that there are only so many characters in folktales and myths repeated in endless permutations, Jungian archetypes hidden behind every one of the characters. In Claude Lévi-Strauss’ numerous works on myth, and particularly his

monumental tetralogy *Mythologiques* which excavates the structural logics of indigenous myths from the Americas,



Greedy Goatsucker

the heroes are not brave knights and beautiful princesses but somewhat more colourful characters such as defecating sloths, greedy goatsuckers, jealous potters and men without anuses. What is more, the characters of Lévi-Strauss's structuralist analyses do not represent fixed Jungian archetypes but constantly change and shift into something other than themselves, so that severed heads can turn into planets and women into birds. With Lévi-Strauss's guidance, one will notice that some of these transformations are downright inversions. They frequently depict a world in reverse or a cosmos turned upside down in which everything becomes its opposite as, for example, when he writes in *The Jealous Potter* (1988:80), "earthenware [...] is used in 'anti-cooking' and... boiling water instead of fire sets the world ablaze". Behind all of these transformations, lies the same structure, and this structure can be expressed in what Lévi-Strauss famously branded "the canonical formula of myth" (see above), designed to show that ultimately there is no single "better" version of a myth, one that is more complete or authentic but that, rather, the myth is all its variations and the relationship between them. The message of this *mythologique* is that the whole corpus of Amerindian myths is ultimately one huge mono-myth with countless variations, and that the formula is the bones behind the sprawling flesh of its mythical imagination or mythopoeisis.

Still, the question remains as to what we are to make of the formula. Is it mainly a fetishisation of the natural sciences and mathematics, an imperialistic claim of Western intellectualism over the "mind of the primitives"? In the first chapter of *The Savage Mind* (1966), Lévi-Strauss famously argues that scientific and



A young Lévi-Strauss in Amazonia, c.1953

mythical thought are two autonomous and equal ways of thinking (i.e. myth is not a precursor of science). In which case, the mathematical formula could be taken as an attempt by the 'engineer', who for Lévi-Strauss personifies the logic of science, to break the rules and imprison the intuitive creativity of myth in the iron cage of algebraic logic.

Or, is the canonical formula, on the contrary, an ironic and powerful hint given to us by the master of structuralism, of the unflinching structure of mythical creativity: of its ability to stand as a specific type of imaginative logic that works on and with paradox, without needing any external referent or trigger to reproduce itself rigorously ad infinitum? Then, the wrapping may be engineer-like, but the sweet it envelops, and the message it delivers, is especially mythical in taste.

Should we treat the formula as a feat of applied mathematics and place through its machinery, the myths we encounter in our tortuous ethnographic trajectories? Probably not. In the end, it may be preferable to abandon the awkward task of mathematizing myth,

and to concentrate on what the formula has to say not only about myth, but also about structuralist logic generally. In fact, with its emphasis on inversion, structural opposites and permutation groups, the canonical formula is possibly best seen as the ingenious crystallisation of Lévi-Strauss's thought: a refined, clean, concise testimony to the rigour and imagination of structuralism itself.

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# Schrödinger's Ape: evolving human-animal liminality in modern Britain

Kathleen Bryson

PhD in Biological Anthropology



“Chumanpanzee” – A Human-Animal “Liminal Zone”?  
(c) Kathleen Bryson 2002

As a student of evolutionary anthropology, I am interested in the grey area between modern human beings and extinct ancestors, as well as between human beings and other great apes. I particularly focus on academic and social paradigms in which one being is categorised as human (read non-animal) and the other, an animal (a chimpanzee, for example). We often pigeonhole our surroundings into such dualistic categories i.e. white/black, nature/culture, we/they, human/animal. Often one side of a dichotomy has more power in such ‘reciprocal alterity’ (e.g. heterosexuals generally have more rights and are accorded more “humanity” globally than homosexuals).

In relation to the Human/Animal alterity, this distinction between *Homo sapiens* and chimpanzees is intriguing, as many of the boundary enforcements (such as cumulative culture, complex tool use, Theory of Mind) are subject to interpretation – interpretation, in this case, by the more “empowered” half of the dichotomy.

When we assign such clear binary categories, we implicitly believe that there are essential, unchangeable qualities that the categorised object possesses: we essentialise. Essentialism, dichotomisation and stereotyping help us make ready sense of our world. Such “shorthand” thinking may even be hard-wired in evolutionary terms. Does binarism reflect the “real” world? Or were evolutionary forces at work that favoured dichotomous brains - because those who simplify were somehow better equipped to survive and

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reproduce? Alternatively, are dualistic categories reflective of our upbringing under certain socio-ecological conditions and power asymmetries and thus social constructs? The world itself

may not be the way we perceive it, and it is possible that essentialist thinking influences scientific results, which are often based on binary, either/or categorical thinking.

Indeed, in terms of the Human/Animal divide and in-group/out-group distinctions in general, studies suggest that we as humans discriminate against those we understand to be less than fully human, be they animals or homosexuals or females or the disabled. This is an indication of infra-humanisation: one’s in-group is more human than an out-group (Leyens et al. 2000). This suggestion in terms of discrimination has particular significance in the field of prejudice studies, and is linked to my own doctoral research.

For example, my PhD research concentrates on four classic binary alterities (Human/Animal, Male/Female, Heterosexual/Homosexual, body/machine) that are often cited in biological anthropological studies. As a pilot project, I explored the rigidity or fluidity of the Human/Animal alterity by

gathering data on boundary perceptions of whether humans were considered to be animals, apes or primates. I did this via the coding of human/animal boundary categorisations from articles over a 16-year period of newspaper reporting in the UK (1995–2010). My goal was to investigate whether societal concepts of “real” categories potentially reflect political events or scientific discoveries – in other words, reflect cultural influence.

My initial pilot study showed intriguingly that inclusionality (humans are animals; humans are apes; humans are primates) started out at a very high rate during 1995, but then dropped steeply towards the year 2000, followed by a slight recovery. In 1995 we were fairly comfortable grouping ourselves with fellow animals, and them with us. Then, by the year 2000, something shook that tolerance on a cataclysmic level.

Why these tremors, and why then? Categorical boundaries are likely to be sensitive to surrounding societal narratives (Abercrombie 1996). What resulted in this period of geopolitical upheavals included a post-Cold War shift of Western politics to the right in about 2000; the 9/11 event and ensuing military and economic conflicts; *fin de millennium* anticipatory hype; and the

astronomical growth of the internet. All of these could be seen as a type of “millennial animal-angst” where the category of what was “human” had to be protected, and thus the boundaries were drawn more tightly.

Indeed, in regards to in-group boundary enforcement, several recent sociological studies have indicated a high correlation between essentialism by the more socially enfranchised party and societal instability that “emerged only when the dominant group was threatened by the prospect of social change” (Morton et al. 2009).

In turbulent and conservative times our tendency to protect the category of humanity is strengthened (Aosved & Long 2006; Capozza 2009), and societal shakiness could account for the minimisation of the “human” in-group at the expense of other great apes as we approached the year 2000. This process of human/animal *infrahumanisation* that allows for in-group/out-group sorting might be based on natural-kind categorisations, possibly reflecting a cognitive adaptation (Atran 1998). However, this essentialism also seems sensitive to cultural change – thus suggesting that our concepts of reality itself and, therefore, scientific discourse, are historically flexible.

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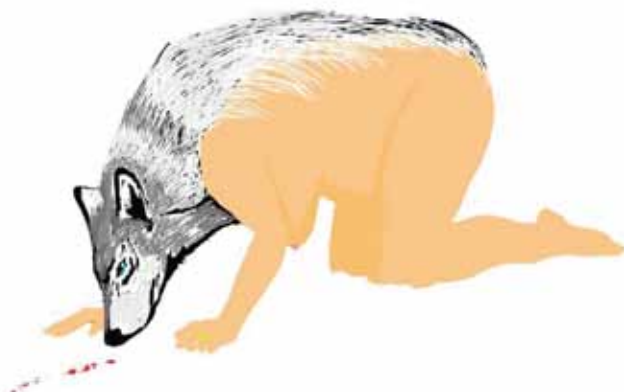
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Wolf-Woman – A “Natural-Kind” Hybrid  
from Winterland / (c) Jessica Cheeseman & Kathleen Bryson 2012



“Animals”  
(c) Kathleen Bryson 2009





# Living the Angry River: Bangladesh's crumbling chars

Rebecca Seglow Hudson

3rd Year BSc Anthropology

I stepped down from the boat and was tugged through the throng of eyes and chattering mouths. The young woman gripped my arm; my brutish English feet failed to grip the sticky earth. Flip flops bending and sliding, I was rushed to the island's edge. She pointed at the silent, swollen river. She talked, ardent with urgency. Her sari whirled colour into each gesticulation.

*"The land is breaking!"* She pointed to the slice of mud on which we stood. *"Do you see? Is it like this in foreign places? Just yesterday there was a piece of land here!"* She laughed *"In just two days, two hundred metres of our char has gone! We have nowhere to go, we are just waiting here. We are so afraid"*

I was in charland, the constellation of fleeting, delicate islands scattered

through Bangladesh's expansive rivers. Bangladesh is a delta, its land continually carved and re-carved by a network of 200 coursing rivers. *Chars* are the delicate islands that emerge and disintegrate within these rivers. An estimated 5 million people live on the *chars*, they are some of Bangladesh's most marginalised inhabitants. Annual flooding, occasional drought and recurrent erosion rob already indigent households of crops, livestock, homes and communities. Most of my informants had been forced to move *char* over 30 times. Yet all insisted they weren't nomadic: *"We try to look for stability"* Muhammed told me, *"I invest my future in this land, and I will continue to do so. Maybe tomorrow it will crumble and I will be left with nothing. But I will keep investing; no one can predict what will be stable"*. Each year, these climatic shifts

increase in intensity and frequency. *Char* dwellers, with barely a carbon toe-print between them, are what theorists mean when they talk about the 'losers' of global warming. I spent two months doing fieldwork in the northern *chars* of Bangladesh for my Final Year project, trying to comprehend how *char* dwellers negotiate the natural disasters that compose much of their everyday lives.

I travelled to the *chars* with a local NGO and many *char* dwellers thought I could assist them in some way: was I a doctor? A vet? Could I help set up the high school they so badly needed? At these moments, anthropology felt sorely impractical. More uncomfortable were encounters that revealed the mechanics of inequality. I arrived at one *char* in the middle of an argument between a *char*



dweller and an NGO representative. The men stood at the centre of the *char*, staring into the oval fish pond the NGO had installed for villagers to produce an income during the monsoon. The fish pond was empty, a gaping lacuna at the village's centre. "We have nothing to eat! There is no work!" the *char* dweller yelled "Now the landowner has told us we aren't allowed to cultivate fish here. He wants to do it himself! He will get all the profit! So what income do we have for the next three months? You told us the pond was for us". Seeing me, the NGO worker turned his back on the man and rolled his eyes. "He hasn't a clue what he's talking about" He explained, lighting a cigarette with a smile. "The landowner is a very good man; we have a good relationship with him, never mind about this *chaur*!" He ushered me to the nearest boat and we left, leaving the villagers to lament the politics of the pond and devise new ways to survive the floods.

Anthropology allows us to unpick the social threads that people make and are made by. In the dynamic chaos of my short fieldwork encounter, I saw these threads spring to life. Happenstances, observations, stories, jokes, mistakes

(I fell through a banana-tree raft right into the river at one point) and long discussions over tea and baked sweets gave me a glimpse at the texture of *char* life. Villagers banded together in times of trouble, swim-herding all the *char*'s cattle through the river when

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**"My time in Bangladesh was one of the most disorienting, intense, enriching and thoroughly enjoyable times of my short life."**

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warned of flood, staying awake all night to ward off armed robbers who threatened to steal livestock. Yet what struck me most was how the texture of this ostensibly remote place was entangled in social threads on a global scale, the 'place-making projects'<sup>2</sup> of elsewhere. Development workers from Dhaka, with money from Britain, install the promise of fish ponds. Vestiges of Britain's colonial land policy allow landowning elites to revoke rights to the pond. Doctors from Luxembourg visit annually to oversee child vaccination

programmes. Carbon outputs from around the globe determine the level of erosion the *chars* will face in years to come. All the while, *char* dwellers patch together stability on the great silent whiteness of the river.

My time in Bangladesh was one of the most disorienting, intense, enriching and thoroughly enjoyable times of my short life. People I met both in and out of the *chars* were unendingly generous and patient with me, and I thank them for teaching me how anthropology emerges from the spirited shambles of daily life.

<sup>1</sup> A derogatory term for a *char* dweller, associating them with rudeness, violence and poverty

<sup>2</sup> Gille, Z. and Riain, S. 'Global Ethnography' in Annual Review of Sociology, 2002. 28:271-95

Below left: Two boys stand on a boat by the side of a flooded *char*. Below right: An NGO worker tells the local *char* dwellers that they must be united and work hard to cope with the latest flood.



# Some views of the Mongolian 'Wolf Economy'

Rebecca Empson, Lecturer in Social Anthropology



Food Market, Ulaanbaatar

After reading that Mongolia now has the fastest growing economy in the world, I was keen to visit the country and see how things had changed. While most of the world is suffering the effects of the global financial crisis, Mongolia, we are told is apparently experiencing economic growth unlike anywhere else. Large-scale foreign- and state-owned mining operations, involving gold, copper and coal are generating great hope for the future. Mongolia's ex-Vice

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**“While most of the world is suffering the effects of the global financial crisis, Mongolia, we are told is apparently experiencing economic growth unlike anywhere else.”**

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Minister of Finance has captured this sense of hope in his term ‘The Wolf Economy’ to describe how Mongolia could potentially ‘leap-frog a Western development model, drawing lessons from the Middle East, and be inspired by stories of Asian Tigers to build [their] own model’!

In Mongolia, the wolf is revered but

also hunted, hinting at the way in which the economy could emerge with strength or alternatively, be subject to destruction. This fear of destruction has fuelled widespread concerns that Mongolia's resources are being exploited by outsiders. The comparison with the Middle East is also evidence of fears such as potential ‘overheating’ of the economy, where the exploitation of natural resources leads to a sharp rise in the value of local currency. Moreover, fears of the social and political pitfalls associated with the development of a rentier state, deriving most of its income from the foreign exploitation of its resources, also abound. Aware of the economic and political disenfranchisement being played out in the Middle East and West Africa, Mongolians are rightly seeking a different kind of solution. But what kind of effect is this economic growth having on people's everyday lives?

Arriving at Chinggis Khaan International Airport last summer and driving along the potholed road to Mongolia's capital, large posters lined the roadside depicting smiling men wearing hardhats and shaking hands in front of heavy machinery with slogans proclaiming:

‘A Partnership You can Trust’ or ‘A Mine for Mongolians’. In the city, the Soviet-planned boulevards and housing complexes had been interrupted by new buildings that cut through these old visions with shining facades that glistened alongside traffic that was in almost permanent gridlock. This certainly was a different city to the one I had encountered just a few years before. Money from the new mineral wealth, it appeared, had penetrated and proliferated every corner and could be spent in the range of new shops and restaurants that filled the streets. It could also be invested in the exclusive gated residential villas, such as ‘Dream Land’ or ‘Buddha Vista’, located in the ever-expanding outskirts of the city which also house (albeit in another direction) the growing felt-tent settlements of those who migrate to the city from the rest of Mongolia in search of work.

Leaving Ulaanbaatar, I was keen to see what impact the emerging economy had on the countryside. Travelling across Mongolia's beautiful and vast countryside, the seasonal rain transformed most of our route into a muddy swamp, giving the sense that, in

terms of infrastructure at least, things were very much the same as before. Arriving at a small district centre, of no more than 2,000 people, on the Mongolian-Russian border, however, it was obvious that things had changed. Mobile phone coverage now extended to the countryside. People could call each other before embarking on a visit. Electricity was available, if you had the money, and televisions were showing the London Olympics, while freezers hummed away in corners, interrupted only by power cuts when meat defrosted for the millionth time, and floors became sodden with the pinkish colour of blood. Motorbikes were everywhere, zipping past corners and over rivers in all directions so that one could almost always guarantee a lift from one side of the district to the other.

These, along with new electric cookers and sometimes washing machines, appeared to be the material manifestations of the 'Wolf Economy'. The district centre now had two banks with bank workers in crisp uniforms sitting behind desks. They were issuing a range of a different loans and repayment schemes so that people could purchase different commodities or start businesses of various kinds. Making this money available to people was one way in which the government was trying to diversify the economy. So that while economic growth may be inevitable from the mining industry, it should not be confined to this activity



alone. We stayed in the far countryside with my friend Dondog and his family. They are pastoral herders whose two youngest daughters now go to university in Irkutsk, in Siberia. Picking wild strawberries in the forest, milking their cows, preparing products for the winter, and chopping wood for the stove, things did not seem so different from before. Shamanic initiation ceremonies were being held, parties and gatherings took place, and slowly, as the autumn began to show in the yellowing grass, the hay-collecting season began.

Returning to Ulaanbaatar, I scurried around visiting friends across the city before our return to the U.K. Cold and wet from the rain, on my last day, I took a chance and walked in through the glass doors of Mongolia's largest new sky-scraper. Shooting up its transparent lift, I glanced out of the window at the sprawling city down below. On the 25<sup>th</sup> floor I stepped out into a kind of nest on top of the world. This was the infamous Blue Sky Lounge. Here foreign men in well-cut suits could be seen sitting in low-slung chairs behind cold beers or martinis talking to Mongolians through interpreters while crunching

down on another dry, salted cashew. Walking round the 360 degree vista up here in the clouds, the world felt quite divorced from that going on down below, where people were avoiding being splashed by the afternoon traffic speeding past. This building, the bar, its people, as well as the sheer distance and exclusivity it afforded on the city and the country as a whole, was another kind of materialisation of Mongolia's so-called mineral boom, albeit one granted only to certain kinds of people. Here, then, are some snapshots of Mongolia's emerging economy from some very different perspectives. Outside of the GDP figures and indexes that circulate in the international press media, it remains to be seen how far this economic growth will actually go in creating the kinds of places, communities and activities that have been predicted in its wake.

[www.ganhuyagchh.blogspot.com/2010/10/wolf-economy.html](http://www.ganhuyagchh.blogspot.com/2010/10/wolf-economy.html)



Top: Summer party for elders  
Left: Local naadam celebration  
Right: Delivering milk for sale

All photos © Rebecca Empson



# An Interview with Susanne Kuechler

Professor in Anthropology and Material Culture in the Department of Anthropology, her research focuses on creativity, innovation, and futurity in political economies of knowledge.

## WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY DOING RESEARCH-WISE? WHAT PROJECTS ARE YOUR STUDENTS INVOLVED WITH AT THE MOMENT?

I have been Head of Department for a period of five years, and the comparative perspective I had already come to appreciate, coupled with a theoretical introspection into the 'material mind', has been a life-saver. Comparison imposed itself productively on my work when, after 15 years of conducting research in Island Melanesia, several factors conspired to suggest a relocation of my field-site to The Cook Islands in Eastern Polynesia, where I have worked for the past 12 years. Gradually, too, the radius of my activities has shifted to more domestic fields, though not permanently, I hope.

My first long-term field-site was in the island of New Ireland, northeast of mainland Papua New Guinea. This island is known for its elaborate funerary ceremonies that culminate in the carving, weaving, and moulding of sculptural works for exchange between land-holding groups. Known under the generic name Malanggan, ritual work and its product culminate in an

elaborate destruction of everything that was associated with a deceased person, including the figures that are made as an image of the social body to complete the last phase of the funerary process, the secondary burial. Made for exchange, to mark and underwrite future relations of sharing land and its products, Malanggan sculptures and masks comprise one of the largest ethnographic collections housed in museums all over the world. This is because their sale by islanders came to be seen as a way to secure the financial resources required to stage ever more elaborate and costly ceremonies. My research established the first case study of what came to be known as 'image-exchange' and established its pivotal importance to political economies of knowledge that extend across expanding regions in Island Melanesia, as I was able to show that proprietary rights to image-based resources (and their mnemonic capacity) are central to the governance of land-holding polities.

When turning some 13 years ago to the history of the take-up of cloth and clothing as 'new' material in the Pacific, I initially had intended to continue working in New Ireland,

focusing on the displacement of bark-cloth production. However, the early departure of a postdoctoral fellow assigned to study the fabrication of large elaborate patchwork quilts in the Cook Islands, Eastern Polynesia, forced me fortuitously to take on the ethnographic research to be conducted in this area. There are no museum collections to work from because all quilts are gifted to be eventually returned to the maker's household and wrapped around her own or her husband's or child's body in the grave house that is positioned in every garden. So, it took me a number of long return visits to gain the confidence of informants who were willing to open the trunks in which quilts are stored temporarily between exchanges and their eventual deposition in the grave. Learning the art of stitching *tivaivai* also led me to discover a topological way of thinking about transnationally extended relations of affinity (in-lawship), sustaining household economies affected by migration to New Zealand and elsewhere. Inspired by my growing curiosity in the many connections and disconnections between the ethnography of Island Papua New Guinea and Eastern

Polynesia, and against the background of my involvement in the writing of the *Art of Oceania* book recently published by Thames & Hudson, I set out to write a comparative study of image economy and body politic in Oceania which I hope to finish this year.

### WHAT NEW DIRECTIONS HAS YOUR RESEARCH TAKEN IN EUROPE?

My work took a new direction when it came to be informed by another research project that started in 2005. Here, I headed a research group which is part of a European Network project on Sustainability in a Diverse World. Questions of why materials are taken up and others rejected, what provokes material translation, and what it does to the way people think about their relation to one another and to the objects they love, had emerged already from the ethnographic foci of the Cook Island *tivaivai*. The European project on diversity and sustainability inspired me to direct my inquiry to the complex world of the UK's and European materials industry and to questions of

the difference made by the 'design' of materials to our perception of 'cultures of materials'. The theme of the social lives of materials is the subject of the second manuscript that I am currently in the process of writing.

### CAN YOU TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR PHD STUDENTS?

I have been fortunate to be able to supervise a tremendous group of PhD students throughout my time here at UCL. Those that are in the process of research and writing up now are working on the gold nexus, on networks in the UK materials industry, on hierarchy and sociality in the Max Planck, on artistic interventions in Canada and New Zealand using woollen trade blankets, on material religion in Orthodox Christianity and in the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) in India, and on disaster, ecology, and material culture in northeast Queensland. My students have been hugely active in various Research and Reading Groups, from chaos to organisations and sustainability, and they have collectively

organised now the second panel to be hosted on the international conference circuit, the American Anthropological Association meetings. Every single one of my past students has become a professional anthropologist, taking up posts in publishing, museums, NGOs, and university departments, and I am very proud of all of them.

### WHAT NEXT?

I am half way through my 5 year role as HoD. I love to be mother-hen and look after the many needs of the department, whose manifold nature never ceases to surprise me, but I cannot claim that it has not affected me. I rely heavily on students and colleagues to tell me what I need to read to keep up, and busy myself writing, trying to complete two major publications, rather than doing more research, every minute I can find between admin and teaching. When the going gets really tough, I dream of returning to the Pacific. I love to plot the research proposal that will enable me to triangulate my research by extending my comparative frame to Micronesia. Presently I have landed

Below: Tivaivai from the Cook Islands



## STAFF PROFILE

on the decision to do research in the Marshall Islands where ironically I almost ended up some thirty years ago, when, en route to fieldwork in New Guinea, I decided to disobey my supervisor, heading to New Ireland instead. Before I can reconnect with the big wide world, however, I will have to finish writing my manuscripts – a motivating thought.

### HOW DID YOU BECOME AN ANTHROPOLOGIST? TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOUR CAREER SO FAR.

I grew up as a child in Germany, moving every three years, which, given the federalist nature of Germany, involved a considerable culture shock with every move. For as long as I can remember my all too vivid imagination has been occupied by books that opened up a world of intricate and fascinating relations, and after feeding on adventure books about American Indians, New Zealand sheep farmers and African tribes, I soon turned to books in my father's huge collection of French and German literature and philosophy. Today, after both my father and mother's deaths, I have come to own what has remained of the collection and I share it with my eldest daughter, who has taken after my father's bibliophilic inclination. Among these books was a copy of Malinowski's *Father in Primitive Psychology* (Vol 5 of Magic, Science and Religion) which I remember to have devoured when I was around 14 years old, as my mother recalled how I vividly explained to her the role of the father and the mother's brother in Trobriand Islands, while walking the dog. I had no idea that a subject such as anthropology existed and could be studied right up until the completion of the German Bache laureate.

Then, in that very month of May when school finally was behind me, a notice appeared in the local newspaper that the local ethnographic museum, the Uebersee Museum Bremen, was looking for volunteers to help move the objects in the exhibition into the store in time for the renovation of the museum. My mother, keen to have me out of the house and away from books, enlisted me, and I remember turning up rather grumpily one bright May morning on the steps of the museum. Amazingly, I had finally found what I was looking for. By pure chance I was assigned to the Pacific curator who had himself conducted fieldwork in New Ireland (PNG), and I busied myself moving very large Malanggan carvings into the store, cataloguing them, and reading about them in the library of the museum (I returned for three consecutive summers, finally helping to reinstall the new exhibitions). Raptured, I tormented the curators to tell me what they had studied and where best to go, and they suggested the Department of Ethnology at the Free University in Berlin, where again by pure chance British social anthropology was read in English. As I had been taught purely in the classical languages of Latin and Greek, I had to learn English before being able to read, and decided that I needed to spend a year in England to really understand the books that I found in the small ethnography section of the FU library. I enrolled as an exchange student in the Department of Anthropology at the LSE and took part in the 3rd year. On the back of the exam marks, I was invited back for MPhil/PhD work there. I indeed did return a year later after completing my masters in Ethnology in Berlin. When arriving at the LSE for MPhil/PhD work, Alfred Gell, who became my supervisor, had also just returned from a period spent



Above: Malanggan Figure

in Australia. The rest is history.

### ARE YOU ONLY AN ANTHROPOLOGIST?

Yes, I would say that I am an anthropologist with a radar for the ethnographic and that this extends to all aspects of my life. I am afraid that I have been so very busy, juggling teaching, research, and raising a family that I have become a truly boring person, clinging to straws that are held out to me in the attempt to catch up with what is going on around me, often in vain. My imagination is lived out almost completely in my ethnographic and theoretical ruminations, and I look forward to the time when I can return to the books I once so loved and reach out to discover the new heights in the publishing world. I have been able to maintain a few passions, such as swimming and opera, tending to my orange tree (now bearing fruit after 13 years) and, as most of you will have realised, eating pretzels.

# Go your own way: new directions from walking in the field

David Jeevendrampillai

PhD Anthropology (Material Culture)

Early spring 2012 I started my fieldwork. As part of UCL's Adaptable Suburbs Project, and funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), the project aimed to develop a deeper understanding of suburbs as 'small settlements' in spatial relation to other areas of the city. It was hoped that by understanding the changing patterns of road networks and the patterns of business activity along them, the project could inform policy on how to best plan for (sub)urban environments, especially those which are vulnerable to changes in economic planning and implementation. The role of the anthropologist (me) on this project was to chart how people understood the role and importance of change where they live in relation to street networks and associated business activity.

I was tasked to roll out and encourage the use of an 'auto-ethnographic' web tool called a community map, through which people could upload their stories of what it was like to live in the suburbs. I wondered about what sort of people would spend time doing this, who would want to show me, us 'their' place, and what was in it for them. I started to think about local enthusiasts and set off to find some.

In mid-February I walked into the back of a traditional local pub in Surbiton, a leafy affluent suburb of London, knowing that a group of people who called themselves 'Seething villagers' were preparing for a community parade. I found them crafting giant lamps, fish and giants heads. When I asked why they were doing it they responded 'it's for fun' and handed me a glue brush. That was day one and, by the end of it, I had made a giant wicker lamp!

Over coming months I told people of my interest in their relationship to Surbiton and invariably I was told to 'talk to so and so' and more often than not, told to visit places, buildings or streets. People regularly offered to walk me around and show me their place. Walking was important not only in the sense that people perceive, interact and understand the world in this way but also it is important in showing and sharing with others the values and associations with place.

Through the fieldwork I became interested in the notion of showing place through walking. In all I developed four walks with the residents of Surbiton, but the form they took and the interest they took in them surprised me. The first walk involved no leader but rather an exercise in collective decision making about the next place to walk to along the route, resulting in a messy and contested walk. Walk Number Two merged fact & fiction using local history creatively blending fact with



storytelling and the invention of myth. The third walk recreated an old English ritual called 'beating the bounds' in which the boundaries of place were marked out through an annual walk and site specific ritualistic 'taking of pains'. (We swapped this last bit for more fun things than pain-taking!) The last walk merged the personal archive of home and memory with arrival histories to the area.

At the end of the fieldwork, I was struck by how the map remained empty and how local enthusiasm had rejected funded training from Blue Badge walking guides, but had rather done things on its own terms, using creativity and fun to develop sociality and spread it through the resulting 'landscape of value'. It is this spreading, sharing and scaling up of values, associations and meanings that I'm currently fascinated by, and my thesis seems to be talking less about spatial properties but more about forms of knowing and how they move, spread and share, and so change the material expressions of self and landscape.

It's funny how you set off to walk one way, but end up somewhere else. But then fieldwork in anthropology is all about being guided someplace new. Right?

Top: Debating the boundaries of place.  
Far left: The Giant of Seething parades through Surbiton.



# Doctoral research feature – Art and Anthropology

## an interview with Eitan Buchalter...

**Eitan studied Fine Art at Oxford, graduated with an MSc in Medical Anthropology here in UCL, and is now researching his doctorate in the Department.**

publications or funding proposals) but my research shows they can be better understood as dynamic processes. In the former case, ideas become institutionally ‘frozen’, permitting only incremental shifts in thinking.

*What is your research about?*

In my work, I explore ideas as an analytical category and examine what ‘ideas’ mean to scientists. By their nature, ideas are dynamic and are best thought of as ‘networks’ that are acted upon by scientists’ beliefs, experiments, discussions and the institutional settings within which science takes place.

*Why did you move from a degree in Fine Art to an MSc and then PhD in anthropology?*

I can see how it may seem like a change of direction but, in my head, it all makes perfect sense! As an artist, I am interested in human behaviour and so, in an attempt to delve more deeply into this, further study in anthropology seemed like a perfect fit.

**“As an artist, I am interested in creative human behaviour and so, in an attempt to delve more deeply into this, further study in anthropology seemed like a perfect fit.”**

*Are you an artist first, and anthropologist second?*

If you force me to choose, then I think so, but I never really think about it like this! I am sure I am not alone in saying that I just try and do as much of the things that interest me as possible. It just so happens that this interest crosses the boundary between art and anthropology. Can I be an artist first and an anthropologist first, as well?

*Who are your main inspirations for your artwork?*

Marcel Duchamp and Tino Sehgal

The central argument is that there is a disconnect between the dynamic way that scientists themselves think about ideas and the stifling institutional environment in which academic science is conducted. At the heart of this tension are institutions that value ideas as static objects (for example, as delivered and communicated in peer-reviewed



Conveyor, performance at Tate Modern, 2009

*Which of your works are you most happy with?*

Well, Conveyor was a very exciting project. This was a performance where I stood at the top of one of the escalators at Tate Modern (see photo) and made eye contact with everyone who happened to be on it. The escalator gradually became a stage filled with people working out that they were performing.

*How do people react to your art work?*

Everyone reacts differently and, for me, observing these different reactions is exactly what I am interested in.

*What’s your next project?*

I am working on a book in collaboration with the photographer Manuel Vason.

*What do you plan to do after your PhD?*

Teach!



# Tasty things!

## ... and an interview with Arsim Canolli

**Arsim Canolli was born in Prishtina, Kosova. He came to the UK in 1997 where he studied art at London College of Music and Media and then anthropology at UCL In 2010, he left to do his fieldwork in Kosova. He is currently writing up his PhD thesis entitled “Behind open doors: the social significance of food in Kosova”. He loves his ale and fish and chips.**

*Why did you move from a degree in art to an MA and PhD in anthropology?*

“All art aspires to the condition of music” said Walter Pater. This saying was uttered to me by the pathway leader at the London College of Music and Media (in Ealing) when I went for an interview in 2001. I came to enjoy studying art and aesthetics, but felt that I wanted to explore the cultural surroundings that enable particular art

forms to grow and flourish. I was then exposed to the anthropology of art and landscape, and that was the main thing that encouraged me to enrol to do an MA in Material and Visual Culture at UCL.

*Why did you choose to study food for your PhD project?*

Well, as I grew into anthropology, I came to think that food and art are “tasty things” that people cannot live without. And their significance lies in

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**“I felt that exploring how food works with people would give me some ideas of how to proceed with anthropology.”**

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the traditional as well as innovatory relations between them. As the philosopher Berkeley said, the taste of an apple is neither in the apple – for an apple cannot taste itself – nor in the mouth, but in the eater. It is in the contact between them. I felt that exploring how food works with people would give me some ideas of how to proceed with anthropology.

*How do people react to your work?*

Well, people in Kosova sometimes get surprised about my food project. ‘Why

food’, they ask, ‘in the country that only politics matters?’ Sometimes I have an answer, but most of the time I listen to their answers.

*What’s your next project?*

I’m inspired by ethnographic film. Robert Gardner films are my favourites, especially “Dead Birds”. He is one of the most passionate hunter-gatherer of visual images in the discipline of ethnographic film. And so, after my PhD, I want to complete a documentary film I’ve already commenced called “The Highland Museum”. It is about an old couple who have turned their house into an ethnographic museum in Lekaj, Montenegro. The film-making process started in 2011 and is still going on.

*What do you plan to do after your PhD?*

I want to go back to teach at the University of Prishtina in Kosova and help my colleagues in the Department of Anthropology there. It is a young department and we believe it has great potential. Last semester I taught a course in Legal Anthropology which was a whole new area for me. It helped me better understand legal anthropology and teaching. During this time I also translated Malinowski’s “Crime and Custom in Savage Society”.

Both interviews conducted by Paul Carter-Bowman



Left: 100m long breadloaf served in Prishtina during Albanian's Independence Day - 28 November 2012

# Life insurance, risk and hope in London

Sofia Ugarte Pfin

MSc in Social and Cultural Anthropology



*'Life isn't predictable and for this reason it's wise to plan ahead and look at all the options that could help secure your future.'*

(The Guardian 2012)

How does life insurance work upon modern life's uncertainty? And how can this be of interest to Anthropology? Despite being a quotidian practice both in urban and rural areas, insurance has been almost completely ignored by anthropology. The first challenge faced during my Masters research, has been to relate life insurance to anthropology in a theoretical and ethnographic way. To this end, I am applying frameworks from the anthropology of risk and the anthropology of hope to the voices of the insured, the uninsured and the life insurance companies.

Due to life's uncertainty, some people decide to contract a life insurance policy in order to feel secure that their families' will always be provided. The insurance is a contract whereby an insurance company promises to pay selected beneficiaries money when the insured person dies. The insurance has a cost determined by the life insurance company and the expected mortality rates. This translates into an insurance policy that can be paid by the insured person once a month, once a year, or once in a lifetime. The decision to take life insurance is related primarily to the risk of dying.

Working with the concept of 'hope' gives rise to new perspectives when studying life insurance and risk as it shows how uncertainty, knowledge, agency and temporality play together in a different level of analysis. Vincent Crapanzano views hope as a category of experience that presupposes a metaphysic and is embedded in peoples' cultural and historical reality. His theme is hope as a subject of analysis. Hope mediates and realistically opens up the future in front of us, pushing its borders towards a mysterious and transcending nature (2004: 100-104). Hope, unlike unconscious desire, orients knowledge-wise towards the future, having its source in a non-human agency that could be God, fate, chance, fortune.

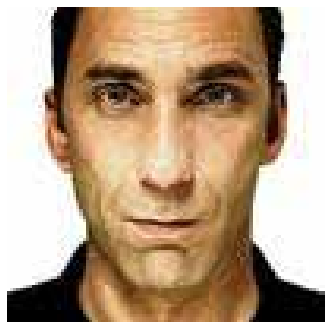
By contrast, Hirokazu Miyazaki's work on hope is related to his ethnographic work he has conducted with Suvavou people in Fiji and Japanese traders in Tokyo. He approaches hope not as an emotional state or a positive feeling but rather as a method (Miyazaki 2004:5). He uses hope to understand how different forms of knowledge make sense to people in uncertain circumstances: Fijians who want to recover their ancestral land and Japanese traders who

deal with loss and failure in the financial market. Hope for them is a method of knowledge, specifically, a 'method of radical temporal reorientation of knowledge' (ibid.).

However, how does hope relate to the work life insurance in securing the future of uncertain livelihoods? The hypothesis I want to develop during my fieldwork is that life insurance works as a source of hope in Miyazaki's sense: as an aid to knowing outcomes in the context of radically uncertain futures. How life insurance works as a 'technology of hope' is what I aim to explore among both insured and uninsured Londoners.

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# Travel, imagination and experience

## Will Self and Jonathan Lamb visit the Department

Professor Chris Pinney introduced the event to a packed house of staff and students, describing Will Self first of all as “novelist, cultural critic and psycho-geographer enthusiast for armchair anthropology, author of an imaginary ethnography of sorts (*The Book of Dave*), and Professor of Contemporary Theory at Brunel.” And then, Jonathan Lamb “Professor of Literature at Vanderbilt University, a specialist in Eighteenth-century literature who has written extensively about travel and who, like Will, has done some really punishing travelling not least through his participation in the BBC programme *The Ship*, a re-enactment of Cook’s first voyage.”

The pair were invited to address a range of themes that, they were told, might include travel literature and anthropology as cultural critique, the relationship between imagination and experience and, crucially why anthropology may have lost the ability to confidently narrate alterity or ‘otherness’ to a broad public.

Will Self stressed that the 1970s and 80s were a boom-time for Anthropology in popular culture. The striking convergence of anthropology and popular culture was reflected in the works of Desmond Morris and Carlos Castaneda (the latter’s accounts of the Mexican Yaqui shaman, Don Juan sold over 28 millions copies), as well

as Will’s own first book – about an anthropologist from South London who discovers a ‘boring’ tribe in Amazonia. Today, though, will went on, this trend is reduced to parodies of its former glory in TV shows like *Jungle Jane* or Bruce Parry’s *Tribes*. This has occurred mainly because the breadth and density of communications networks have ended the pristine isolation of Anthropology’s traditional subject-matter. Instead, anthropology is being popularly replaced by activities like his own psycho-geography where walks anywhere without computer and mobile phone (ouch!), for example, between Piccadilly Circus and Heathrow Airport, escape the net and enter ‘the wild’ in a way analogous to Anthropology in its hey-day.

Jonathan Lamb then went on to place Anthropology within a venerable history of influential writings based upon epic Western contacts with remote otherness. This meant not just expressing the strangeness of other cultures specifically (as Rousseau did) but, more widely, trying to capture the sublime otherness of any elusive phenomena that have only ever been translated and conveyed subjectively. In a sense, you really did need to “have been there to know”, ‘there’ being where the expressible meets with the inexpressible to nonetheless be expressed! Anthropology classically sited itself at this anomalous interface,

drawing much authority from the fact of ethnographically ‘being there’ and of framing the cross-cultural encounter in narratives that drew in a wide audience. Today, though, (Jonathan Lamb thought) the anthropological attempt to express the inexpressible in ethnographic language seems distinctly limited.

Unsurprisingly, the anthropological audience was enthralled and miffed at the same time. From it, came the strident response that, true enough, the discipline is no longer popular in the same genres. But that, in different ways and with varied publics and on different geographical scales, it continues to develop as a strongly influential vehicle for the exploration of social and cultural otherness. The audience agreed. The speakers looked doubtful. The meeting ended. Drinks ensued. Thanks Chris!

Concocted by Chris Pinney & Allen Abramson (staff), and Kiran Morjaria & Alistair Cooper (MSc in Social and Cultural Anthropology)



# To Hypothesise or not to Hypothesise? That is the Question!



Ruth Mace and Sara Randall  
'fight' it out for The Anthropology  
Society



One of the highlights of this year's Anthro Soc events was the much anticipated meeting between two of the department's longest standing members, Professor Ruth Mace and Professor Sara Randall. Expected to be something of a showdown (hence we advertised it with a boxing-style poster), the evening was surprisingly convivial! One particularly lively point of debate was whether in "doing science" one must approach one's data with a hypothesis

already established, and therefore whether demography should in fact, be considered, a science. Professor Mace suggested that Professor Randall's demographic methodology ultimately amounted to data collection, providing the raw materials through which scientists like Professor Mace test their hypotheses. In return, Professor Randall argued that entering the field with a hypothesis in mind may pre-emptively exclude anomalies or unexpected

material that fall outside the scope of the pre-fabricated hypothesis. The audience of staff and student argued the point enthusiastically. A fascinating evening that provided insight into both the disciplines of demography and human evolutionary ecology and the motivations and opinions of their (convivial) exponents!

Liz Fox

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## Foreign Bodies: understanding the Other

*Foreign Bodies* is an exhibition that is in UCL's North Cloisters and across UCL Museums from 18th March - 14th July 2013.

The exhibition is curated by research students and its aim is to re-interpret UCL's museum collections through the theme of 'foreign bodies'.



embodiment of sin due to its wild yet human-like behavior. Through seven very different research projects, audiences are invited to explore the idea of what is alien to us – biologically, psychologically, socially and politically – and how this concept has shifted across history, culture and even species.

My own work as a biological anthropologist involves studying baboon behavior in Gashaka Gumti National Park in Nigeria. And, as one of UCL's Researchers in Museums as well, I have is presented relevant images alongside objects that illustrate similar

attempts to understand primates across thousands of years. For example, the Egyptian God of writing, Thoth, is depicted as a baboon scribe in an ancient explanation of the dexterity of primate hands, while a 15th century Christian artwork depicts a monkey as the

We are also expanding the topics covered in the exhibition online, at <http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/researchers-in-museums/> and on Twitter @ResearchEngager.

Suzanne Harvey

## Cerne Abbas Trip



Cerne Abbas Giant

The research and reading group, 'Primate Sexualities: Beyond the Binary', is co-facilitated by Professor Volker Sommer and Kathleen Bryson. We explore dichotomous concepts such as "us" and "them", and "gay" and "straight", and various ideas linked to the biology and cultures of sexuality: how differences might be shown to be hard-wired (or socially constructed) by studying primates, and how we as naked primates define each other against perceived normative behaviours.

After discussing a variety of papers exploring how sexuality is expressed and accepted - from fetishism to bisexual males, and from asexuality to robot-human sex - we visited the Cerne Abbas Giant in Dorset in early April. The landmark is relevant to the exploration of attitudes towards public sexuality in medieval Britain and provided an excellent opportunity for a comparative assessment of modern British societies and social landscapes.

After visiting the "Rude Man" himself - weather did not permit us to have a reading group *al fresco*, as was our original intention - we hiked down to the local abbey and stockade (see photo), then took refuge in pubs and teahouses and held our discussions over lunch. It was a fascinating end to a stimulating year.

Kathleen Bryson

## Economic and Political Transformations in Inner Asia

At the end of the Spring term, a self-presentation among Mongolia's one-day workshop was held in the urban elite.

Anthropology Department, dedicated to exploring themes of economic and political transformation in Inner Asia.

This region has experienced profound economic and political changes since the end of State Socialism in the 1990s, and our workshop provided an opportunity for scholars and students working on this region to come together, and present their work on these themes in a series of panel presentations. It was especially interesting to hear presentations from students from different Universities (UCL, Cambridge, SOAS, LSE), at different stages of research.

Drawing together case-studies from Mongolia, China, Siberia, a Tibetan community living in Nepal, and the Kalmyk Republic in southwest Russia, the workshop was divided into three panels.

The first panel focused on Mongolia and it addressed ritual economies - with a focus on shamanic economies, and money used to decorate shamanic coats - as well as processes of learning among Mongolian children and

The second panel examined processes of political transformation, and included presentations on the political-economic situation in the Kalmyk Republic and nomadism among the Humli-Khyampa of Nepal. It went on to look at techniques of the self in China with presentations exploring the use of new media among the Hui, and self-cultivation through tea drinking in Beijing.

The third panel engaged with routes and borders, and addressed China's economic presence on Russia's border, as well as reindeer herding in northern Mongolia, and rumours circulated on the internet in Russia and China.

The 'Economic and Political Transformations in Inner Asia' workshop delivered a highly enjoyable day, and provided a crucial opportunity to engage with people working in this region, and to hear them present their work.

Joseph Bristley



## Padma Shri Award



Christopher Pinney, Professor of Anthropology and Visual Culture at UCL has been awarded a Padma Shri by the Government of India for contributions to Literature and Education.

108 Padmas were awarded this year, six to non-Indian nationals of whom three were persons of non-Indian heritage. A medal and scroll was presented by the President of India Pranab Mukherjee in the Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi on 20 April in the presence of the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Professor Pinney has worked on popular visual culture in central India since 1982 and has taught and lectured widely in India. His publications cover photography and printed political and devotional images. His first book was *Camera Indica*. His latest, due later this year, is *Lessons from Hell* on popular printed Hindu images of punishment in hell.

## Poster Competition Won by Kathleen Bryson

UCL ran its 2012/13 Graduate School Research Poster Competition on 25th and 26th February. The event is

intended to enable graduate students to advertise their innovative research. Overall, 247 posters were displayed in the North & South Cloisters.

First prize in the faculty grouping “Arts & Humanities, Laws, Social & Historical Sciences” was secured by Kathleen Bryson, PhD student in the Department of Anthropology supervised by Professor Volker Sommer. Her poster entitled “Evolving the Binary: Are We Already Living on the Planet of the Apes?” featured a case study that explored fixity and ambiguity in social and scientific categories. The judges lauded Kathleen’s work for its simple explanations of complex concepts. See Kathleen’s article on page 6.

Kathleen’s winning post can be viewed at: [www.grad.ucl.ac.uk/comp/2012-2013/poster/slash-wil.html](http://www.grad.ucl.ac.uk/comp/2012-2013/poster/slash-wil.html)

## Max Planck Award

Beatriz Aragon, a first year PhD student in the department, has been awarded a 2-year doctoral researcher position with stipend at the Max Planck Institute for the study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity. The award will help fund her PhD research about Roma minority and their interactions with healthcare services in Madrid.

The Max Planck Institute is located



in Gottingen (Germany) and carries out interdisciplinary social science research on diversity in historical and contemporary societies, particularly concerning ethnic and religious forms and dynamics. The institute is leading a European pilot project about medical diversity which Bea’s work will contribute to directly.

## Faith and Flame

Victoria Baltag has won a prestigious award in Popular Prize category at the LSE Research Festival for a short film she made: *Faith and flame*.

*Faith and Flame* is an anthropological documentary about the life of Roma people in modern Romanian society. The film focuses upon Roma history,



culture and identity and Roma Holocaust, as well as on contemporary issues including the predicament of Roma children in schools.

LSE’s Research Festival is a celebration of the creativity that lies at the heart of all research. This year, the posters, films, photographs and apps entered by research students and staff from LSE, Cambridge, SOAS and UCL formed a brilliant showcase of work that engaged fellow researchers and general public alike,

## Recently Awarded PhDs

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Alison MacDonald - Breast Cancer Survivorship in Urban India: Self and Care in Voluntary Groups

Tom McDonald - Structures of hosting in a south-western Chinese town

Alice Elliot - Reckoning with the outside: emigration and the imagination of life in Central Morocco

Heidi Colleran - The evolutionary anthropology of fertility decline in rural Poland

Sandra Tranquilli - African great apes: assessing threats and conservation efforts

Emiliano Zolla Marquez - Territorial practices: an anthropology of geographic orders and imaginations in the Sierra Mixe

Beata Switek - Reluctant intimacies. Japanese eldercare in Indonesian hands

Sumiko Sarashima - Intangible cultural heritage in Japan: Bingata, a traditional dyed textile from Okinawa

Catalina Tesar - "Women married off to chalices": gender, kinship and wealth among Romanian Cortorari Gypsies

Alesya Krit - Lifestyle migration: Architecture and kinship in the case of the British in Spain

## New Appointments

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Jolanta Skorecka joined the department administrative team in April as a new Undergraduate Administrator. She previously worked in Development Planning Unit, The Bartlett.

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ANTHROPOLITAN is published by UCL Anthropology.

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