

# RESEARCH artefact

School of Arts & Sciences, UNDA Sydney, 2016 Issue: 2

## Research in print

### The problem of rape in South Africa

With rates of rape in South Africa among the highest in the world, the significance of context has surfaced repeatedly in South African scholarship on rape. Most commonly, rape is understood as a symptom of deep and pervasive gender inequality, historical, social and economic legacies of apartheid as well as post-apartheid state discourses that have normalized rape and enabled it to be tolerated. In addition, the role of masculinities has received significant attention, linked to social and economic histories and contemporary political narratives. This article considers how scholarly discussions on rape in South Africa are evolving. Applying a critical sociological lens of enquiry to the ways in which the problem of rape is constructed, it outlines the significance of state histories in understandings of rape in South Africa today.

Buiten, D., & Naidoo, K. (2016). Framing the problem of rape in South Africa: Gender, race, class and state histories. *Current Sociology*, 64 (4), 535-550. doi:10.1177/0011392116638844

### Jane Austen's Emma at 200

*Pride and Prejudice* (1813) is by far Jane Austen's most popular novel but, for literary critics, *Emma* (1816) is more often ranked as her greatest achievement. Or – in an era in which phrases such as “great books,” like “great men,” are apt to make the most hardened aesthete blush – her most intelligent. Yet, at the time of publication, *Emma's* longevity was far from guaranteed – reviews were few and far between, sales figures were less than promising, and the novel's young and artistically obscure author soon fell into a mysterious decline, dying of an unnamed illness eighteen months later. So how did this, Austen's fifth novel, make the epic 200-year journey from the dusty bin-ends of John Murray's publishing house to endow its author with the mantle of extraordinary and apparently inexhaustible celebrity?



Portrait of Jane Austen, drawn by her sister Cassandra (c. 1810).  
Wikimedia Commons

Nelson, Camilla (2016) Friday essay: Jane Austen's Emma at 200 . <https://theconversation.com/friday-essay-jane-austens-emma-at-200-51022>

### Feminisms: South Africa

In addition to national and transnational struggles for gender equality, South African feminisms have been strongly shaped by struggles for political and racial equality. From the turn of the twentieth century through to the decades following apartheid, South African feminist activism and scholarship has engaged deeply with questions of racial and class difference, and



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## Celebrating our HDRs

This semester it is all about the HDR students. The month of June saw the Sydney Research Office run the inaugural HDR conference and dinner, which was a runaway success. Students from across the campus presented their work on the stage or in a poster. We are very proud that one of our own, Seyi Lagoke, took out equal first place for the best poster presentation. You can read all about Seyi and his research in this issue – the first one to run a new section profiling our hardworking HDRs.

July saw the first Sydney writing bootcamp for HDRs, which once again was attended by students across the campus. It is also pleasing to see students not only attending the lunchtime Research Seminar series, but presenting in it. Sr Sophie Boffa, PhD candidate, and Fred Straughen, completing an MPhil, both feature in the Semester 2 series. Fred has also shared his experience at a recent Melbourne conference in *Artefact's* new section for staff and HDR conference reports.

It is fabulous to see our HDRs doing so well – and we look forward to seeing more from them! Enjoy the issue.

**Dr Christine de Matos is a Senior Lecturer in History and the Associate Dean, Academic Development and Research.**

**“With an increased curiosity in bromances, celebrities are now using their bonds and banter to promote their movies and gain online hits. A prime example of this is the bromance between X-Men actors, Michael Fassbender and James McAvoy.”**

nationalism. To the extent that women's activism, both feminist and non-feminist, has been profoundly embedded in the anti-apartheid movement, scholars have shifted from regarding as separate women's organising against national oppression and their organising against gender oppression, instead considering the complex ways in which these nationalist and feminist movements have been closely intertwined (Hassim 2006).

Buiten, D (2016) South African Feminisms. In Nancy Naples et al (Eds.) *The Wiley Blackwell encyclopedia of gender and sexuality studies*, Malden MA: Wiley.

## Life and Culture

*Sociologic: Analysing Everyday Life and Culture* is a contemporary introduction to sociology for the modern student. Notre Dame's own John Rees is one of the eminent authors who helps readers learn about sociological concepts through examination of a variety of theories and theorists, all the while relating and applying this knowledge to their own experiences of everyday life. Students will relish exploring the world of society and culture through personal narrative, humour, and examples.

Rees, J A. (2015) The Nation and the State. In J.Arvanitakis, (Ed.) *Sociologic: Analysing Everyday Life and Culture* (pp.179-196). Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

## Selling the bromance

Celebrity culture is celebrated in the media daily. The Web 2.0 paradigm shift has resulted in a convergent media environment that has affected both celebrity culture and the practice of journalism. When breaking through media clutter is paramount to both increased visibility and readership, capturing public imagination has become the key to success. A mutually reliant relationship develops between celebrities wishing to promote themselves and their work, and entertainment journalists seeking to fulfill their mandate and grow followers. As a result, the media is sensationalizing details, and the celebrities are being used as a commodity to sell stories and films. With an increased curiosity in bromances, celebrities are now using their bonds and banter to promote their movies and gain online hits. A prime example of this is the bromance between X-Men actors, Michael Fassbender and James McAvoy. This chapter identifies how their bromance is shaped by media, analyzing the role journalists play in promoting and branding. Through textual and semiotic analysis of three articles, the intricate performative and representational relationship between reporter and celebrity is explored. As a result, it is made evident that journalists can transform the context of an interview through their own observations, using

cont. p4



*Could you tell us briefly about your PhD thesis?*

I did my PhD in Sociology at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. Drawing on feminist scholarship, the thesis examined representations of gender in print news media, and the ways in which journalists from these newspapers understood their role in the production of gendered news texts. I found that gender discourses in the newspapers were varied and often contradictory. However, a “liberal-inclusionary” approach to gender equality - focusing on promoting women’s inclusion in the public sphere - was quite prominent. On the other hand, representations of the private sphere of relationships, sexuality and the home saw a greater level of gender stereotyping, including dominant and violent masculinities and sexually objectified femininities, and a backlash against feminism. I also found that journalists, particularly from the more tabloidised newspapers, employed a discourse of objectivity that distanced them from their role in reproducing these gendered messages.

*How would you explain the broader significance of your research to an educated layperson?*

My research showed that the meaning of gender and gender equality is still an area of great contestation, with gender equality advancing in some areas and lagging in others. It is not a linear process, but a dynamic one, and news media is one of the spaces in which these contestations over meaning play out. It also highlighted that, while journalists often assume they are approaching the news with “objec-

# Denise Buiten

## Interview with a researcher



“tivity”, the production of print news media is highly gendered. This highlights some of the problems of a discourse of journalistic objectivity, a discourses that is increasingly being challenged.

*What is your current research focus?*

Currently, much of my research focuses on gender based violence, from the ways in which it is represented and understood, to the ways in which it is taught in universities. I am also interested in transformative pedagogies, including the role of tertiary education in social justice.

*What is the cutting edge in your field and how does your work extend/relate to it?*

There is a lot of debate today about the evolving role and nature of feminism. This includes questions over the role of

intersectionality – the ways in which other social categories such as class, race and disability intersect with gender –and questions over the nature of third wave feminism more broadly. Much of my research touches on the ways in which feminism and feminist scholarship is evolving, for example the ways in which feminism and issues of intersectionality are reflected in the media, and how feminist ideas have shaped discourse surrounding gender-based violence today.

*How has your research influenced your teaching?*

A feminist ethics and understanding of transformation has greatly influenced the way I teach. I encourage students to engage with scholarship and questions of social justice in a way that is self-reflexive, and aim to model this self-reflexivity in the way I teach and interact with students. The role of emotion in intellectual and scholarly engagement, including the discomfort that deep engagement with new ideas can bring, are things that are openly discussed in my classrooms. Feminism is also concerned with the link between theory and practice, and the units I teach are often structured in a way that requires students to consider the links between theory and ethical practices in everyday life. My research on gender based violence has also entered the classroom in various ways, with students in our social justice program encouraged to question some of the everyday attitudes and practices that perpetuate gender-based violence.

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**We welcome your feedback and contributions which can be sent to [philip.dennett@nd.edu.au](mailto:philip.dennett@nd.edu.au)**



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# Blogscape

## The Religion Gap – John Rees

*The Religion Gap* explores the impact of religious actors and interests upon the dynamics of world politics, addressing an often missing dimension into the study of international relations. Curated by Dr. John A. Rees of The University of Notre Dame Australia, the blog explores topical issues in global affairs and IR scholarship through the lens of religious

### cont. from p2

specific terms – in this case romanticized words – to sensationalize an article. This, in turn, can impact on how audiences view a celebrity's identity and can help promote their image and film.

Lam, C., & Raphael, J. (2016) Selling the Bromance: Sensationalism of the McAvoy/Fassbender relationship. In Raphael, J., Deb, B., Shrivastava, N (Eds.) *Building Bridges in Celebrity Studies* (pp. 32-45). Toronto: WaterHill Publishing. ISBN-13: 987-0-993938-4-8

## A framework to foster creativity in teams

It has been suggested that using the Socratic Method (a directed questioning technique to encourage critical thinking) to create a learning environment within an organization is a way to foster creativity in an uncertain environment. This article describes the development of a grounded theory to empirically test and refine a model to manage a Socratic dialogue within organizational teams. The resulting 4E's Socratic Model produced concrete creative outcomes in real-world application in a range of organisations.

Dennett, P. (2016). The 4E's Socratic Model - a framework to foster creativity in teams. In Reisman, Fredricka (Ed.) *Creativity in Arts, Science and Technology* (pp.46 – 57). Berlin: KIE Conference Book Series. ISBN: 978-1-85924-276-6

agency. Written from an IR perspective, *The Religion Gap* is designed to help scholars, students and all interested readers to think critically about religion in a way that is clear, interesting and via a wide range of subjects.

International Relations often looks to the ancient world for insights into modern politics. For instance, early IR undergraduate studies regularly include readings of the 'Melian Dialogue' and other accounts from the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BCE). This post explores a potential linkage between religion-led insurgencies in the distant past and in our present day.

One tangible expression of antiquity shaping modernity is the Western Wall in Jerusalem where millions of Jews draw religio-nationalist inspiration from the ancient ruins of the Second Temple razed by the Romans in 70CE. Due to centuries of Christian mythmaking, this date was said to mark the end of ancient Jewish resistance against Empire. Yet the Jewish War was only the first of three significant revolts against the power of Rome in this period. Indeed, the importance of the third resistance, led by Simeon Bar Cosiba in the second century CE, could help us interpret another religious revolt occurring today, namely, the ISIS rebellion.

One key difference between the Jewish War of 70CE and the uprising that began in 132CE is the role played by Bar Cosiba as a messiah figure. This latter revolt centred on a divinely appointed leader renamed in some ancient sources as Bar Cochba ("son of the star"). The messianic intensity of the uprising might also explain the severe repression that the Romans wrought upon Judea in the aftermath of the conflict in 135CE, far worse than sixty-five years earlier including the construction of a pagan city and a temple to the Roman god Jupiter where Jerusalem once proudly stood.



Image by Thierry Ehrmann

Instructive for us is the negative legacy of the Bar Cochba rebellion within Judaism itself. After the Bar Cochba defeat, all notions of political messianism – the hope that God would vanquish the foes of his chosen people and inaugurate a new political society under the authority of an anointed leader – were now considered at enmity with the true faith. This condemnation is revealed in yet another name change for Simeon Bar Cosiba that appears in the ancient record: once regarded as "son of the star", rabbinic literature now tellingly casts him out as Bar Coziba ("son of lies") which for the historian Stephen Wilson "expresses disillusionment with all messianic rebels" (1995).

Let's now sketch on a broad canvas and consider parallels between the Bar Cochba rebellion and the rise of the Islamic State insurgency. Firstly, both movements grew from the ferment of decades of war driven, at least for their adherents, on the restoration of divine authority and sacred tradition under threat from pagan empires. Second, both movements lack widespread support in the diaspora communities they claim to represent. In the same way that Jews throughout the Roman Empire distanced themselves from the radical actions of Bar Cochba in Judea, some of the leading critics of ISIS operations are Muslim leaders and citizens living in pluralistic societies around the world.

cont. p5



Third, and most significantly, both the Bar Cochba and ISIS rebellions are distinct from their predecessors in building a quasi-state (evidenced by minted coinage in each case) that was led by a central divinely-chosen figure: Simeon Bar Cosiba as messiah, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as caliph. Whilst messiahs and caliphs arise from different faiths, the wide-ranging traditions associated with each title mean that the kind of messiah that Bar Cochba was can, quite reasonably, be approximated to the kind of caliph that Baghdadi has declared himself to be. Each are leaders of a project fusing spirituality and territory in the creation of a divinely-guided political society.

Of course, with the aid of history we know what happened to Simeon Bar Cosiba and his movement, whereas the ISIS rebellion is still underway. Can we look to the past in this instance as a way of thinking about the future? In a limited way, we can. That Bar Cochba (“son of the star”) became Bar Coziba (“son of lies”) is telling because it serves as a theological judgment against those who might entertain notions of militant political messianism in the future. Indeed, such was the power of this religious condemnation, combined with the failure and destruction of the Jewish uprisings against Rome between 66-135CE, Jewish piety became revolutionised toward individual and community devotion to the Law and away from visions of political state-building (until the founding of modern Israel in 1948).

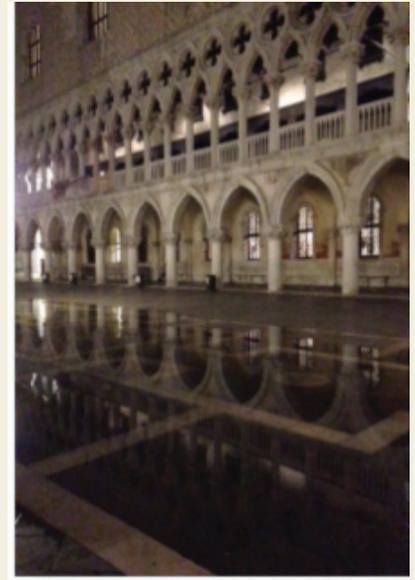
What will the legacy of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and his Islamic State be? Such a question may take decades to answer, but it is also one worth considering now, for several reasons. Firstly, the territorial project of ISIS – its brand distinctive against al-Qaeda and other Islamist insurgencies – is failing. The city of Fallujah has practically fallen and once Mosul and Raqqa follow, in what forebodes as a protracted humanitarian catastrophe, the centralised base of the caliph will no

longer exist. (Escape, or succession will become unsustainable as the borders of ISIS territory are broken.)

Second, the collapse of the territorial project will likely provoke a theological crisis for ISIS followers and sympathisers. Though ISIS has an apocalyptic insurance policy that promises divine vindication in the face of defeat, the tangibility of the caliphate will be lost. Noted scholar Vali Nasr has written that “Sunni theologians and political theorists have always measured the worth of authority in terms of power” (2006). Applying this logic to ISIS as a Sunni extremist movement, the loss of central command may lead to a reconsideration of Baghdadi’s fundamental claim to rule. When such a reconsideration occurs, the legacy of ISIS may be theologially recast among followers and sympathisers. To this end, Bin Laden’s legacy (and an al-Qaeda style network) may prove more durable among global jihadists than the ISIS caliph.

Whilst the ISIS effect will not disappear overnight, the power to doubt the divine sanction of a failing movement is significant, not only for present adherents but also as a battlefield in countering recruitment strategies. As with the changing legacy of Simeon Bar Cosiba two millennia ago, the line between ultimate inspiration and ultimate deception may be a very fine one for the legacy of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. In the words of an anti-ISIS statement issued by Saudi Arabia’s most senior cleric: “Those sinners attribute their inhuman actions to Islam when they claimed an Islamic State, and Allah knows that the hypocrites are liars”.

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Aqua alta, Piazza San Marco, Venice, June 2016

## Reflection

*Karen McCluskey*

My semester one 2016 was any academic’s dream. I was granted six months leave from teaching, supervisory and administration duties, to concentrate on research! This meant I could write ‘that’ book on images of local Venetian sanctity in the Middle Ages – the one I’ve wanted to write since finishing my PhD at the University of Sydney 10 years ago. What a way to mark an anniversary. When I started out last January to ‘turn the PhD into a book’, it seemed a relatively easy task: update the bibliography, make a few changes, and Bob’s your uncle. What was I thinking? Indeed, the past 10 years of academic development, intellectual stimulation, teaching history, rethinking and rewriting ideas for conferences and articles really impacted on my historical perspective. This is a good thing...don’t get me wrong.

I went to Venice, twice (yes twice!) to check notations, do more re-search on ‘new’ sources, re-analyse



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works of art I'd seen before, investigate new ones, find some of those missing relics I was unable to locate previously and liaise with colleagues working in the same field. With the space (both physically and mentally) it was amazing how all of this was actually possible. Something that struck me during this time was how I could look at the same problem (how Venetians visualised sainthood) and the same (major) sources (relics, paintings, caskets) and see them with rather different eyes. So 'turning the PhD into a book' now became a very different and much more complex matter. I'll share with you the most exciting development which involves a significant change in my perspective.

Venetians, like any community of believers, venerated all sorts of saints for different reasons. Universal saints (George, Nicholas and Mark for instance) who helped govern the city and give it its identity; apotropaic – protective – saints (Michael the Archangel, George, Nicholas again); thaumaturgical – or healing – saints (Mark again, his companion Hermagoras, Paul the Martyr, Lorenzo Giustiniani); holy helpers who assisted pilgrims, merchants and other travellers and whose relics rested in Venice (Christopher, the Christ bearer; Lucy, light and guidance) etc. Many of these devotions were ancient even at the end of the Middle Ages and were part and parcel of Venetian life.

The veneration of local, near contemporary holy men and women however was new and is the subject of my research. These are late-mediaeval men and women who lived in cities and towns and who developed holy reputations amongst their contemporaries. Upon their deaths, 'unofficial' veneration emerged; that is, cults which had the sanction of the local bishop but had not been officially recognised by the pope. Their status as 'new' saints was often questioned and many, including humanist and poet Franco Sacchetti, bemoaned their existence. After all, the pope had not determined their sanctity and, in many cases, the new cults were eclipsing the 'old' ones. Sacchetti worried about the consequences. He was not alone.

In Venice, a number of 'new' cults were suppressed. In a couple of instances, the suppression worked, but in two specific cases devotion continued well into the twentieth century. These cults focused on two lay Venetians Pietro Acotanto (d. 1187) and Contissa Tagliapietra (d. 1308) who emerged from the ranks of the *cittadini* (the regular citizens). No mediaeval images of either figure exist and no mediaeval sepulchres have ever been found. Two medieval sermons in Pietro's honour survive and apparently his relics (although I'm still working on finding them!). Contissa's relics do exist and I finally got to see them in April! What is interesting is that both figures' specialities, if you will, revolve around water: Pietro safeguarded Venetians against *aqua alta*, significant floods that periodically (and with increasing tenacity today) inundated the lagunal city. Contissa had a reputation for protecting children from falling in water. It makes sense that in a city surrounded by water and prone to flooding, such holy helpers would be sought after. But the authorities saw their cults as superstitious and aimed to subdue them. In the persistence of their cults, I've newly discovered a tenacious group of people – the *cittadini*. These are the regular citizens who ignored patriarchal decrees and continued to visit the sepulchres and whose real concerns and anxieties can be borne out in the longevity of these cults. Despite attempts at suppressing them numerous times, the cults endured because there was a human need. Although their voices are lost to history, we can hear the *cittadini* loud and clear here, but we – I – must be prepared to think 'outside the box'. Looking for real human experience in the documents of history is difficult but now, with my new perspective, I find it impossible not to.

cont. from p8



Ghent, 2016

more often.

One great thing about travelling to conferences is that you meet new amazing people. I journeyed with other attendees on a sobering trip to the WWI sites of Ypres and Passchendaele, and unsuccessfully tried to imagine how these gentle bucolic landscapes were the same places in images that show the mud, misery and massacre of that conflict. A final dinner with new friends at a seafood restaurant (admittedly a challenge for a vegetarian) was delightful. I looked around the table: an Australian, a Japanese, a few Americans, pondering that once our nations were enemies, now we are all just historians sharing a meal and ideas. The charismatic waiter informed us his grandmother opened the restaurant in the 1920s, and it had been in the family ever since. The historians could not help but quietly speculate about whether Nazis had frequented it in the period when Ghent was under German occupation.

I didn't just go to a history conference: history was simply everywhere.

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# Conference reports

## **“Modernism and Work” AMSN3, University of New South Wales, 29-31 March and Williamstown Literary Festival, 18-19 June**

*Deborah Pike*

Last semester I presented a paper in the Arts & Sciences and Philosophy & Theology research seminar series, entitled “Completing the World: Human Effort and Cosmogony: Rilke and Teilhard de Chardin”. I then presented this in revised form at a conference held at the University of New South Wales in March. The conference was on “Modernism and Work”, run by the Australian Modernist Studies Network. At the conference I was made part of the Executive Committee of the Network.

My paper was a study of two key figures of the early 20th century whose thought and writing has shaped modernist understandings of the cosmos. Both Rilke and Teilhard were poets in the broad sense, dealing with the theme of humanity’s place in the universe. I was fortunate enough to visit the Teilhard archives at the Musee d’Homme in Paris, which inspired initial study. It is clear that while Teilhard brought science and palaeontology to bear on human evolution and cosmology, Rilke focused on human art and artistry and the contribution artists make to ‘completing the world’ via poetic and creative endeavour. Rilke was heavily influenced by the French sculptor Auguste Rodin, whose philosophy of workmanship he adopted wholeheartedly.

I also took part in the panel ‘On Happiness’ as part of the Williamstown Literary Festival in June. Along with colleagues Camilla Nelson and Georgina Ledvinka, I co-edited *On Happiness: New Ideas for the Twenty-First Century*, published by UWA Press last year. Associate Professor of His-

tory at Monash, Tony Moore, author and oncologist, Ranjana Srivastava, and prize-winning writer, Alice Pung, also formed part of the panel. Each was a contributor to the volume. It was a sell-out session at the Williamstown Festival and a crowd favourite event. One of the organisers, Lis Grove, wrote the following:

“It was indeed a coup to secure four of the distinguished authors of this collection of 15 essays on one of humanity’s central preoccupations for millennia. What is happiness and should we pursue it? What does it mean, if anything, in a world so often given over to conformity, materialism and self-preoccupation, all in the name of ‘happiness’? From vastly different backgrounds, the participants – a medical oncologist, a literary academic, a writer and a cultural historian – offered the packed audience a range of ideas to help unpack this almost impossibly complex topic. They were a stimulating bunch, and so too was the audience. Questions and comments came thick and fast, responded to with thoughtfulness and honesty by the speakers – no slick answers from this lot! Discussion could have gone on for at least another hour and widespread satisfaction was expressed at the end of a rich and thought-provoking session.”

So far, a worldly, wonderful whirlwind of a semester.

## **“Critical Autoethnography”, State Library of Victoria, 21-22 July 2016**

*Fred Straughen (MPhil)*

I attended the 2nd annual international autoethnography conference hosted by Monash University, at the State Library of Victoria in July. The conference theme for this year was Animacies, Affects and Objects of Critical Autoethnography. The conference aimed to explore how the inanimate, the animal and the “stuff” of

everyday living constructs our lives and cultures. The two day conference featured a keynote address from Professor Peta Tait of La Trobe University (Sensory Affects: Species Surprise, Astonishment, Disturbance) and a performance (Slant) by Southern Illinois University doctoral student A.B. The two days also comprised individual contributions and collaborative workshops designed to get participants actively engaged not only in discussion and informal conversation but in doing things such as making a video. Amongst the sessions in general was a strong commonality of performance, be it theatre, music, video or poetry.

Participants could engage in one of three session streams; animacies, affects or objects. One of the standout sessions for me was Dancing with Data: An autoethnographic reflection on diverse writing practices, presented by Associate Professor Toni Bruce of the University of Auckland. The essence of this presentation was an argument that academics have both the right and responsibility to present research in multiple ways, in order to reach diverse audiences while at the same time expand what is regarded as research. Her presentation touched on the significance or otherwise of rugby within the New Zealand national psyche. Her analysis resonated with me as I struggle to understand what is meant by the term ‘unAustralian’ which sporadically infects/infests various Australian media and political stages.

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**“Fan Studies Network Conference”, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK, 25-26 June 2016; “Celebrity Studies Journal Conference, University of Amsterdam”, 28-30 June 2016; and “Bridging Gaps: What are the media, publicists, and celebrities selling?”, Centre for Media & Celebrity Studies, Barcelona, 3-5 July 2016**

*Celia Lam*

I attended three conferences in June and July. The “Fan Studies Network Conference” was organised by a group of UK-based academics from various disciplines including literature, media and cultural studies. The conference offered an interdisciplinary space for scholars to explore the issues, ethics and methodologies of Fandom research, with a keynote presented by Professor Henry Jenkins from USC. Earlier in the year, I embarked on a collaborative research project with a colleague from Curtin University, in which we explored the Pop Culture convention experience of Australian fans. Early findings from field work conducted at the Gold Coast Supanova convention were presented at this conference.

The *Celebrity Studies Journal* editorial board organises a similarly themed conference every two years. This year many leading voices in the area of celebrity studies, including Jo Littler, Alice Warwick and David Giles, presented stimulating keynote presentations, while the conference offered scholars a means to exchange ideas and hear the latest developments in the field. For the past two years I have been writing about celebrity bromances with a colleague from Curtin University. This conference offered a platform to present our latest research. We each presented a single paper and a

co-authored paper.

For the past two years I have been involved with the Centre for Media and Celebrity Studies (CMCS), an international organisation and research network that aims to facilitate scholarship and media commentary on celebrity culture. This year, my colleague from Curtin and I organised and co-chaired a conference titled “Bridging Gaps: What are the media, publicists, and celebrities selling?”, held in Barcelona 3-5 July. The conference theme called for academics to consider the role, influence, power and authenticity of celebrity activism. Part of the ethos of CMCS conferences is to foster meaningful discussion on issues surrounding celebrity culture. To achieve this, the conference is deliberately intimate with a small selection of delegates who attend single session panels. We received more than 60 submissions from around the globe and had a difficult task reducing the selection to our desired number of 30 papers. Our keynote speaker was Professor P David Marshall from Deakin University, who gave a thought provoking presentation on the commodification of the self that set the standard for discussion and paper presentations to come. Over the course of the two days our delegates engaged in lengthy discussion on issues surrounding celebrity culture and activism, drawing from disciplines that ranged from political and Middle East studies, to media and journalism, and sociology and disability studies. We also organised three special-interest panels. I chaired a Media Workshop offering insight for scholars to become critics and experts in media and to build a media presence. David was a member of the panel along with Dr Kirsty Fairclough-Isaacs from the University of Salford, UK. My co-chair lead a debate about Beyoncé’s role as a feminist female celebrity, and I chaired a roundtable focused on Celebrity Activism. The conference concluded to great

success and positive feedback from the delegates.

**25th annual World History Association (WHA) conference, Ghent University, Belgium, 2-5 July 2016**

*Christine de Matos*

While I have traipsed the academic conference circuit for a couple of decades now, I had never attended a WHA conference before. But Belgium beckoned, and off I went to present a paper based on a joint research project, with UNDA colleague Dr Karen McCluskey, titled “Ajax and Anzacs: Greek Classicism in Australian WWI commemorative monuments”.

And what a grand place in which to hold a history conference. The past permeates the senses, from the sounds of French and Dutch to the gorgeous gothic architecture and canals edged with flowers. Arriving in the old centre of the Flanders city of Gent/Gand/Ghent was simply a marvel, a stunning reminder of the historical economic greatness of this former medieval city-state.

The conference was held in Het Pand, an old Dominican monastery that is now part of Ghent University. The WHA conference is unique as it not only includes academics but also secondary school teachers of history. After the presentation of my paper, a US school teacher came up to me thoroughly effused. I used lots of images in the presentation – photographs of monuments and artefacts – and she was inspired to find ways of using visual images in the classroom to teach history to her students. It made me wonder about over-used terms like ‘impact’ and ‘engagement’ – was not this a useful form of impact, even if it cannot be ‘measured’? Current talk is all about engagement with ‘industry’ – engagement with other educators, especially in the primary and secondary school sector, perhaps should also be something we do

cont. p6



# Seyi Lagoke

## Interview with an HDR student



*Could you tell us briefly about your thesis?*

My thesis is in the field of health informatics, an emerging field which embraces planning, acquisition, adoption and application of information technology in health care.

Specifically, my own research focuses on the improvement of the medication management process. The research intends to model how information flows across the process and identify points of disruption in the flow. These points of disruption would then be improved upon using mathematical algorithms and an improved model would be developed. The research also seeks to evaluate the impact of current technologies used in the medication management process on the information flow.

For the purpose of this research, there are two research questions:

What are the safest and most effective information flow pathways within the medication management process that would significantly reduce medication

errors in Australian acute care facilities?

To what extent have health information technologies enhanced or weakened the information flow in the medication management process in Australian acute care facilities?

The methodology for the research is an action based research with the use of quantitative and qualitative data sourced from health care participants in the medication management process.

*How would you explain the broader significance of your research to an educated layperson?*

The research has an objective of improving the flow of information in the medication management process. This improvement would bring about better accuracy from the point of prescription to the point of administration thus reducing the incidence of medication errors.

*What is your current focus?*

As indicated earlier, the research is

seeking improvements in medication management but primarily looking into Australian acute care facilities. Literature has suggested that 33% of medication errors occurs among patients on admission. This underscores the importance of this type of research especially at a time like this when there have been reports about incidences in the hospitals as reported by the media.

*What is the cutting edge in your field and how does your work extend/relate to it?*

There have been a number of innovative developments/technologies in health-care and specifically in the medication management process. These range from e-prescribers, computer on wheels, automatic dispensing cabinets and bar code scanners to mention a few. The second part of this research would be evaluating how effective these technologies have been to the medication process.

*What do you hope to do when you finish your degree?*

I have enjoyed research since starting this program, so I hope to continue with research, teaching and training people in this field or other allied fields.



**Attendees at the inaugural HDR Conference run by the Sydney Research Office. Photo courtesy of Seren Dalkirin, A&S PhD candidate, (centre front).**

