

Research Seminars

Spring 2013

Anthropology and World Literature

On a recent upsurge, the anthropology of literature goes a long way back and includes the role of literature and literary texts in anthropology. Since the 1970s, when Victor Turner identified African ritual and Western literature as “mutually elucidating”, a growing number of anthropologists have related to literature in their research. Fieldworkers often read fiction set in their fields, by local writers, in order to deepen their knowledge about people and places they research. Fiction also appears in teaching, on reading lists which suggests that the relationship between ethnography and fiction remains in productive tension. Increasingly, literary and reading communities are the objects of inquiry by anthro-

pologists. The notion of world literature, which used to mean masterpieces from Western Europe, has now been expanded to refer to the circulation of literary works in a global or cosmopolitan context. From an anthropological point of view, this raises issues of migration, diaspora and postcoloniality, but also more generally of literacy, media, and social life.

This seminar series features presentations that aim to discuss various literary engagements in anthropology. It welcomes presentations by doctoral candidates and researchers/staff on aspects they find especially interesting on or around world literature and its various genres such as fiction, crime novels, memoirs, travel writing, reportage.

Does the pairing of anthropology and literature for instance contribute to anthropology's relationship to a wider audience? The seminar series Anthropology and World Literature is a part of the initiative on World Literature by the English Department and the Department of Social Anthropology at Stockholm University.

For further information, please contact Helena Wulff or Mattias Viktorin.

January

January 21, 13.00-15.00 B600

Professor Helena Wulff, Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University

»Telling the truth through fiction: Anthropology and the literary imagination«

Drawing on my study of the social world of contemporary Irish writers and their work, the idea of this seminar is twofold, firstly to explore the making of a writer's career, and secondly to consider literary imagination in relation to anthropology. I am primarily interested in literary imagination as an object of study – how and what Irish writers imagine, but I am also intrigued by how literary imagination can enrich the anthropological enterprise both when it comes to knowledge construction and writing practice. I will make the case for fiction as a genre which can convey pieces of information about a society that are of the same ethnographic quality as ethnography that a trained anthropologist would identify. But in order to be incorporated into an anthropological understanding, fiction needs to be contextualized in a wider theoretical context. A literary anthropological study benefits from a combined social and a textual analysis. Not only can an anthropologist learn about a society through its literature, but the ideal is to be able to bring new data from literature back to social conversation in order to increase its value, and vice versa: to find out how certain key concerns in a society are managed through literature.

January 28, 13.00-15.00 B600

Associate Professor Paula Uimonen, Spider, DSV, Stockholm University

»The making of *Digital Drama*«

When I set out to write *Digital Drama*, my aim was to explore more innovative forms of ethnographic representation. This was also how I pitched my work to the publisher, promising Routledge that the book and its accompanying web site would attract a wide readership, within and beyond academia. Paul Stoller endorsed the book in terms of "creatively engaging ethnography" and a "cutting-edge contribution to contemporary ethnography." His words on the back cover carry a great deal of meaning to me, since his critical review of the manuscript helped me find a writing style that came closer to the artistic tone I aspired to. Paul Stoller's constructive comments also sharpened my analytical focus on the 'power of the between,' which Ulf Hannerz and Victor Turner had inspired me to explore. When I developed the book's accompanying web site, I was honoured by Ulf Hannerz' words on the book cover "*Digital Drama* makes us think about how new tools can change the ethnographic craft." Following the Tanzanian custom of recognizing the value of fellow authors and scholars in terms of people who help you write, in this seminar I will share some

reflections on the process of writing *Digital Drama*, while paying tribute to the anthropological elders who helped me along.

February

February 4, 13.00-15.00 B600

Professor Emeritus Ulf Hannerz, Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University

»Small countries: Comparative perspectives«

This seminar talk is a report on an on-going collaborative activity now approaching completion, particularly with professor Andre Gingrich, Vienna, as main partner. Most recently it involved a small conference with some 15 participants in Landskrona in June, 2012. The notion of "small countries" can be understood in absolute as well as relative terms: it can refer to countries with small populations and/or limited territories, and it can refer to countries which perceive themselves, or are perceived, as small in relation to other, larger countries – often specific other countries such as dominant neighbours. Frequently countries are small in both senses. While small scale must always be seen in relation to many other social, political, economic and cultural characteristics, it can influence phenomena such as network form, trust, accessibility and national self-images, such as sentiments of vulnerability and needs for self-enhancement. Contrasted to about a half-dozen large countries, some 25-30 European countries tend to be understood as "small", including the Nordic countries (we are not concerned here so much with mini-countries such as Monaco or Andorra). By similar standards (primarily population size), small countries are found in all major world regions except North America and East Asia. While anthropology has rather seldom focused on countries as units of study, there is a considerable potential here for the comparative use of anthropological ideas.

February 11, 13.00-15.00 B600

Doctoral Candidate Susann Ullberg, Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University

»Writing floods: Literature and memory in Santa Fe; Argentina«

Flooding is a historical problem in the Argentinean city of Santa Fe since the days of its foundation by Spanish conquerors. This paper forms part of my dissertation which aims at understanding the relation between memory and disaster preparedness in this city. Among the many forms of remembering past floods are myths, historiography and several local works of art such as novels, motion pictures and music. Some of these are eminently localised while other transcend regional and national frontiers. I conceptualise these forms as narrative memory and argue that together they configure a mythico-history which shape urban meanings of disastrous flooding. In this seminar I will focus on the literary works that narrate stories about flooded people and places in Santa Fe.

February 18, 13.00-15.00 B600

Anette Nyqvist, PhD, Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University

»Travel writing... and anthropology«

Anette Nyqvist has invited Per J Andersson to co-host this seminar. In an attempt to unpack the broad and diverse genre of travel writing they will provide a brief history of it, go through

some of its subgenres and offer their own personal experiences of producing texts within the genre. There are some obvious overlaps between travel writing and anthropological writing. The aim of the seminar is to explore and discuss some of the joint experiences of travel writers and anthropologists. Seminar participants are invited to share their experiences, thoughts and reflections in a conversation on the similarities and differences between the work of travel writers and anthropologists in the past, present and future.

Per J Andersson is co-founder and editor of the Swedish travel magazine *Vagabond* and has 25 years' experience of travel writing. Per is the author/co-author of nine travel- and/or guide books and his main "field" and area of expertise is India. Anette Nyqvist has worked as a travel writer.

February 25, 13.00-15.00 B600

Professor Gudrun Dahl, Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University

»Moral arguments in environmental work«

This project, which is still in the initiating stage, looks at how moral arguments, relating to different human concerns, animals, "nature", particular natural phenomena or the ecosystem as a whole, are mobilized in negotiations or conflicts over environmental work.

Moral arguments are often emotionally loaded by their connection to identity-making at the individual or collective level. These are arguments that proscribe or prescribe, praise or condemn lines of action, but also contribute to present what kind of people we are and who we do want to be seen as. Such questions are at issue whether "we" are individuals reflecting on ourselves, voluntary organizations seeking members or financial support, companies seeking permission to carry out operations necessary to their work or to brand themselves to customers, or authorities seeking legitimation.

Human-oriented moralities point to how particular human objects of care are socially constructed (e.g. "aboriginal people", "local population", "the humanity"). They activate notions of agency, intentionality, causality and responsibility. Environmental arguments relate to conceptions of the environment's inherent, aesthetic or instrumental values, and to models of interconnectedness, imbalance and transformation. They may also refer to competing popular or scientific models of causality and change.

The approach to morality and normativity in this project will itself be that of the external and (methodologically) relativist observer. It will try both to identify the moral conflicts that environmental work implies, and to contribute to anthropological theories of the social nature of moral concerns, a growing field of studies within the discipline.

March

March 4, 13.00-15.00 B600

Associate Professor Shahram Khosravi, Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University

»The Revolution and the Iranian family«

Revolutions weaken the family. There are several historical examples, from the French and Russian revolutions to the Chinese Revolution. The Iranian Revolution in 1979 changed the family structures in Iran. Power relations within the family shifted enormously as a result of the rapid social changes. More than 3 decades after the revolution the Iranian family

is struggling with enormous crises. The family has drastically been weakened by the political turbulence after the Revolution, during the eight years long war with Iraq (1980-1988), mass emigration, long-term economic hardship, controversial family policies, and discriminatory cultural politics targeting women. The crisis is materialized in the escalating rate of divorce, falling rate of marriage, generation gap, 'runaway girls', 'sexual anomie', increasing number of street children, and domestic violence. As part of a larger study of social changes in the contemporary Iran, this presentation explores the impact of the 1979 Revolution on the family.

March 11, 13.00-15.00 B600

Associate Professor Bo Ekelund, Department of English, Stockholm University

Title to be announced

March 18, 13.00-15.00 B600

Professor Patrick Laviolette, Tallinn University

»Hitched - Stochastically ruptured road travel«

Alienation, dependence, fear, mobility, protest, sociability and time – these are some hitch-hiking themes. Since everyday forms of car travel structure many of our spatial perceptions and experiences, I question how breaks of convention, such as those which exist when hitching, impact upon roadscape encounters and the sensing of place. Searching for journeys begins with the search for oneself. It continues through many artificially constructed forms of solidarity. As a travel method, hitching ruptures normative car trips, whereby destinations are no longer extensions of the present. Hitchers act on a compelling need to move in an intensely free yet highly constrained manner. Seeking heights of physical and mental experience, they travel as if travel itself was a fleeting opportunity. Roads, vehicles and bequested transport are integral here. By exploring hitch-hiking in Britain, the paper considers a number of poetic and political threads linked to the alternative modalities of experience involved in thumbing a ride. It does so impressionistically and largely through auto-ethnographic descriptions.

March 25, 13.00-15.00 B600

Adnan Mahmutovic, PhD, Department of English, Stockholm University

»How to fare well and stay fair: Bosnian-Swedish Fiction«

What is Bosnian-Swedish writing in English? Adnan Mahmutovic is a Bosnian refugee who writes about migrant experiences in Sweden in his third language. The presentation will focus on the series of short stories which deal with many small and everyday aspects of migrant life as well as the big traumas they bring with them. More specifically, the focus will lie on one story, »Gusul«, told through different media: short story, film, and an accompanying essay about the filming experience. Gusul (Ritual Washing) captures the final moment of intimacy between two Bosnian Muslim women in Sweden. It is about the mundane, intimate and unspectacular lives of refugees.

April

April 8, 13.00-15.00 B600

Doctoral Candidates Andrew Mitchell and Daniel Escobar Lopez, Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University

Andrew Mitchell PhD Project Presentation

»The 'Swedish Wolf': Landscape, Identity and Conflict« (working title)

As the debate that surrounds the hunting of wolves in Sweden becomes increasingly polemic questions of how such perceptions are engendered and maintained come to the fore. Hence, this project shall consider how the incorporation of 'scientific', 'environmental' and 'ecological' discourses are utilised in order to legitimise actions and perceptions amongst both conservationists and hunters. The project shall also consider how dogs have come to play a crucial role in the wolf hunting controversy, and is one reason why peoples' response to the presence of wolves is both 'heated' and 'emotional', as in some instances hunting dogs have been killed by wolves. Ironically, however, according to the traditional definition of the species concept, dogs and wolves are essentially the same species. With such thoughts in mind, what is a wolf (and in particular what is the 'Swedish wolf'), where do the boundaries between wolves and dogs lie, and how are they constructed and maintained? Domestication is often cited as the 'process' that separates dogs from wolves, however, what does this phenomenon mean in practice with regard to dog-wolf, as well as human-dog and human-wolf interactions?

Daniel Escobar López

»Negotiations of gender in an Andean community in the context of tourism«

My research project on gender, identity and development issues explores how economic change and tourism in a rural Andean village affect power hierarchies, social positions and gender relations. The study focuses upon the women association of handicrafts *Cinco Nevados* situated in the rural Quechua speaking community of Ccorimarca within the municipality of Chinchero in the southern Peruvian region of Cusco. Through the case of the association, I aim to investigate, firstly, how the new economic activity of selling handicrafts has impacted upon the distribution of power between women and men among the families involved in the association as well as the images of femininity and masculinity in Ccorimarca as a whole. Secondly, I will examine how the social positions of these women have been affected and how they negotiate their new positions in the community. Finally, I will explore how these women negotiate with the pressure from the tourism sector of being "authentically indigenous", while at the same time the construction of a nearby international airport fosters "modern" citizens. The research problem will be analyzed at two levels: the relation between the structure and the everyday interactions concerning gender and power by applying a doing gender approach.

April 15, 13.00-15.00 B600

Haris Agic, PhD, Department of Medical and Health Sciences, Division of Health and Society, Linköping University
»Hope rites: An ethnographic study of mechanical help-heart implantation treatment«

New medical technologies like mechanical help-hearts save lives, but they also bring new uncertainties, risks, and challenges. Based on nine months of ethnographic field work in a Swedish academic hospital I examine the ways of managing uncertainties of end-stage heart failure and of high-tech treatment, and also how these practices tie into the shared understandings of life-threatening chronic illness, the body,

and medical technology's role. In my dissertation I draw on anthropological discussions of healing rituals as an analytical tool to make sense of social and cultural dimensions of mechanical help-heart implantation treatment. Viewed as a ritual, this treatment creates and maintains hope as a virtue through which possibilities of new medical technology are justified as culturally approved ways of handling the uncertainties of severe heart failure and mechanical help-heart treatment. Ultimately, even when treatment is regarded as successful, the patients may be saved but are never really 'cured' and remain, thus, permanently tied to the world of medicine. This new mode of existence is characterized by paradoxical permanent transit between uncertainty and hope.

April 22, 13.00-15.00 B600

Professor Ghassan Hage, University of Melbourne
Title to be announced

April 29, 13.00-15.00 B600

Per Ståhlberg, PhD, Media and Communication Studies, School of Culture and Communication, Södertörn University
Title to be announced

May

May 6, 13.00-15.00 B600

John Knight, School of History and Anthropology, Queen's University Belfast

»The blurring of the monkey: Analysing changing forms of macaque observation in post-war Japan«

This presentation explores the relationship between the mobility and the observability of animals, using the monkey in post-war Japan as a case study. Human observation of Japanese monkeys in twentieth century Japan took a number of different forms. Japanese zoos established 'monkey mountain' exhibits in which captive groups of monkeys could be easily viewed by zoo-goers. Early post-war primatologists attempted, with limited success, to observe wild monkeys in the forest. The 1950s saw the establishment of monkey parks, which allowed members of the public to view monkeys recreationally. The monkey park succeeded as a tourist attraction because, based on regular provisioning at a set feeding station, it effectively immobilized the monkeys in the park grounds on a daily basis. However, towards the end of the century, the monkey park was criticized for being unnatural, and a new trend emerged known as 'monkeywatching', which involved viewing unprovisioned monkeys in the forest – recalling the post-war primatologists' attempt to view forest monkeys. I shall analyse these different forms of monkey observation by drawing a parallel with hunting.

May 13, 13.00-15.00 B600

Örjan Bartholdsson, PhD, Department of Urban and Rural Development, SLU
Title to be announced

May 20, 13.00-15.00 B600

Jenny Sjöholm, post-doctoral researcher and lecturer, Uppsala University
»Learning laboratories: The modern artstudio and experimental and self-directed knowledge«

In the context of the cultural economy as well as the individual

lization of the economy, this paper highlights individualized and dynamic artistic production processes and reveals how micro spaces of work and creativity are arranged to facilitate experimentation, making and knowing. This paper particularly explores the modern art studio as a central space for individual creative and knowledgeable actions by focusing on the methodological and productive function of London-based art studios. Drawing on London-based visual artists' narratives and on material traces of their work processes, such as sketchbooks, collected objects and prototypes, the paper presents the art studio as a microcosm of an artist's self-directed work in progress, creativity, knowledge, thought and expression. It is argued that the studio offers insights into a making and knowledge that is investigative and experimental; into the practices and skills visual artists need in order to transform initial plans, ideas into material work. The studio is presented as a space where old works, works in progress and the fruits of the artist's research activities mingle in controlled chaos. The studio is a space of discovery, where collected and selected objects and research materials and experiences resonate with each other and provoke reflection and thinking. Furthermore, in contrast, the studio is also presented as a space of material engagement and enchantment, a workshop, where a large part of the methodological practice is based on the recurrence of manual labour. Experimentation and creativity in the studio is seen to rely on a productive and ambiguous tension based on the knowledge practices of contemplation and elaboration, critical thinking and bodily engagement, instruction and improvisation: the studio is a personal archive and a laboratory.

Jenny Sjöholm, is a post-doctoral researcher and lecturer at Uppsala University. Her research has generally been focused on geographies of art, artistic practice and the art world. More specifically she has engaged in projects focused on cultural labour, small-scale cultural entrepreneurship, artistic practice, skills and knowledge, as well as the re-privatization of the art world, art market intermediaries, and contemporary private art collectors.

May 27, 13.00-15.00 B600

**Inge Daniels, Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology,
University of Oxford
Title to be announced**

June

June 3, 13.00-15.00 B600

**Mattias Viktorin, PhD, Department of Social Anthropology,
Stockholm University
Title to be announced**