

## **Gender and Person in Oceania**

October 1-2, 2011  
Hedley Bull Lecture Theatre 2  
Hedley Bull Building  
The Australian National University

This workshop is a collaboration between the ARC Laureate project *Engendering Persons, Transforming Things* led by Professor Margaret Jolly and the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales-ANU *Pacific Dialogues* project led by Professor Serge Tchekézo. It brings together a range of early and mid-career researchers from across Australia working in Oceania with Professor Irène Théry from EHESS in France and researchers from New Caledonia.

Presentations will address the following themes

- Contending notions of gender as an attribute of the person or a mode of sociality
- The co-presence and dialectical tensions between models of the person as 'dividuals'/relational persons versus individuals
- How best to understand the situation of transgendered persons in Oceania
- The influence of Christianities and commodity economics on gender and personhood
- Changing patterns of intimacy, domesticity and marriage
- Women's role in conflicts, peace and Christianities in the region
- The significance of mobility and new technologies of modernity

Papers presented will traverse many countries: the Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. The program is listed over. The emphasis will be on dialogue and debate: short papers of c. 15 minutes are paired in panels and discussion time will be long.

This workshop is free and open to all but registration is required for catering purposes, by *Friday September 23*, by email to [nicholas.mortimer@anu.edu.au](mailto:nicholas.mortimer@anu.edu.au)

## Gender and Person in Oceania

October 1-2, 2011

Hedley Bull Theatre 2, Hedley Bull Building  
ANU Campus

### Saturday October 1

- 10.00 – 10.30            **Morning Tea**
- 10.30 – 10.45            **Welcome and Introduction** Margaret Jolly
- 10.45 – 11.30            **Opening Address**  
Chaired by Serge Tcherkézoff  
*'From the sociology of gender in Western countries towards an anthropology of gender in the Pacific ... and back again'*  
Irène Théry
- 11.30 – 12.30            **Transgendered Persons in Samoa and the Cook Islands**  
Chaired by Margaret Jolly  
*"My name is Vasi, I am a teine, but you say that I am a faafafine": Samoan persons and the Western discourse on gender and 'transgender' categories in Samoa.*  
Serge Tcherkézoff,  
*Gender on the Edge? Transgender, Gay and Other Pacific Islanders*  
Kalissa Alexeyeff
- 12.30 – 1.30            **Individuals and relations, marriage and the market**  
Chaired by Anna-Karina Hermkens  
*"I am still a young girl if I want": relational personhood and individual autonomy in the Trobriand Islands*  
Katherine Lepani  
*'No more love': Money, marriage, and the market*  
Debra McDougall
- 1.30 – 2.15            **Lunch**
- 2.15 – 3.15            **Gendered Christianities in Fiji and Samoa**  
Chaired by Katerina Teaiwa  
*Gender in Fijian Christian Theology*  
Matthew Tomlinson,  
*Changing covenants in Samoa? From brothers and sisters to husbands and wives?*  
Latu Latai
- 3.15 – 4.15            **Women, Christianity and peace**  
Chaired by Rachel Morgain  
*Gendering peace and violence in Bougainville and Solomon Islands*  
Anna-Karina Hermkens  
*'Our commonality is our humanness': women, faith and peacebuilding in Pacific Oceania*  
Nicole George

4.15 – 4.30                    **Afternoon Tea**

4.30 – 5.30                    **Gendered Mobilities in Vanuatu**

   Chaired by Katherine Lepani

*Finding the diamond: prosperity, secrecy and labour in the Vanuatu plantation economy*

Benedicta Rousseau

*Freedom to Roam: gender, power and new technologies of mobility in Vanuatu*

John P. Taylor

**Drinks at University House followed by dinner at Spicy Ginger Café**

**Sunday October 2**

9.30 – 10.30                    **Gender in French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Papua New Guinea**

   Chaired by Serge Tcherkézoff

*Women in Oceania, yesterday and today: violence and representations about blood and the sacred*

Professor Bernard Rigo

*The Magic Woman in Papua New Guinea tales and street paintings*

René Zimmer

10.30 – 11.00                    **Morning Tea**

11.00 – 12.00                    **Engendering Equality and Hierarchy, Individualism and Holism**

   Chaired by John Taylor

*Questioning 'egalitarian individualism': views on objects, relations and hierarchy from San Francisco to Fiji*

Rachel Morgain

*Engendering Persons and Things in Vanuatu: Relationality, 'Incipient Individualism' and Radical Alterity*

Margaret Jolly

12.00 – 12.30                    **Closing Session – Margaret Jolly and Serge Tcherkézoff**

12.30 – 1.30                    **Lunch**

## Abstracts in order of presentation

### *‘From the sociology of gender in Western countries towards an anthropology of gender in the Pacific ... and back again’*

Professor Irène Théry

École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS; French Institute of Advanced Studies in Social Sciences)

This paper will use a number of examples to show how my reading in anthropology, with a focus on the Pacific, has strengthened my views about the need to rethink the analytical tools used in gender studies that might be applied to sociological studies in Europe and North America. In particular, I shall consider the central shift from ‘gender as an attribute of the person’ towards ‘gender as a mode of social relations’. Among the many goals which this shift implies, the paper will focus specifically on two questions of general interest in the context of globalization:

- How a better understanding of what occurred for men and women in Western countries two hundred years ago, when democratic revolutions produced a new way of organizing hierarchical gendered relationships, can renew our interpretation of the contemporary movement towards gender equality throughout the world.
- How a ‘relational’ conception of gender, focused on the meaning and purpose of individual as well as collective action in a world governed by social institutions, allows us to avoid the usual confusion in gender theory between two different logical operations: dividing a class into subclasses and dividing a whole into parts.

Irène Théry is Professor of Sociology at the EHESS (French Institute of Advanced Studies in Social Sciences). Having completed the French *Agrégation* in the humanities (France’s highest selective examination for recruitment to the public education system) in 1975, then a PhD in sociology in 1983, Irène Théry became a researcher at the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique (jointly with the Ministry of Justice) in 1985. She has been Professor of Sociology at the EHESS since 1997. Théry’s field of research centres on modern transformations of the concepts of the person, the family, kinship and gender relations in Western societies, particularly in France. She has published a number of books and numerous papers on legal and social evolution in relation to marriage, divorce, blended families (*famille recomposées*), same-sex parenting (*homoparentalité*) and, most recently, the anonymity of donors in medically assisted reproduction. In her recent groundbreaking work *La distinction de sexe*, she engages in a dialogue with the results of anthropological research from Oceania and Africa to undertake a rethinking of the whole conceptual framework of gender studies.

For more details and a bibliography see: [http://www.pacific-dialogues.fr/operations\\_programmes\\_news\\_pacific\\_06.php](http://www.pacific-dialogues.fr/operations_programmes_news_pacific_06.php)

***“My name is Vasi, I am a teine, but you say that I am a faafafine”:  
Samoan persons and the Western discourse on gender and ‘transgender’ categories  
in Samoa***

**Professor Serge Tcherkézoff  
École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS; French Institute of  
Advanced Studies in Social Sciences)/  
Centre pour recherche et documentation sur l’Océanie/  
The Australian National University**

This paper is and is not about the Samoans ‘faafafine’: it is partly about them, but it will insist that, until very recently (with the creation of public ‘associations of Faafafine’), ‘they’ were a category invented and (mis)construed only from outside: Western literature, and also some mainstream Samoan discourse. This paper is not limited to a commentary about ‘transgender’ as it tries to build up a wider configuration of gender-and-transgender: it holds that the transgender brings to the fore the way in which normative gender and sex operate. This paper distances itself from the question “who *they* are?”, but rather investigate what non-‘faafafine’ say that ‘faafafine are...’.

Professor Serge Tcherkézoff is a professor of anthropology (Directeur d’études) at EHESS ([http://www.pacific-dialogues.fr/op\\_presentation\\_EHESS\\_eng.php](http://www.pacific-dialogues.fr/op_presentation_EHESS_eng.php)), a founding member and, until 2008, the convenor of CREDO - the main French Centre for Pacific Studies (<http://www.pacific-credo.fr/>), part-time professor of Pacific Studies at University of Canterbury, New Zealand (since 2000), recently ARC Linkage Fellow at the Australian National University with the Gender Relations Centre (convenor : Prof Margaret Jolly) and now (since end of 2010) Visiting Professor at ANU, College of Asia and Pacific, in charge of the EHESS-Canberra Branch at ANU (<http://www.pacific-dialogues.fr/home.php>). His works bring together the results of his field studies in Samoa during the 1980s and 1990s with an ethno-historical critique of European narratives about Polynesia. He is organising programmes on these ‘early encounters’ (<http://www.pacific-encounters.fr/home.php>). He has also published extensively on the methodology of holistic anthropology. For his publications see: <http://www.pacific-credo.fr/index.php?page=publications-11&hl=en>

***Gender on the Edge? Transgender, Gay and Other Pacific Islanders*  
Dr Kalissa Alexeyeff  
Research Fellow, Anthropology  
The University of Melbourne**

It is a little-disputed fact that studying transgender identities and related non-normative forms of gender and sexuality can shed light on a host of issues that are central to the social sciences. This paper examines how transgendered people bring to the fore the way in which normative gender and sex operate as pivotal categories that drive, perpetuate, and rationalize, social organization and notions of personhood. Transgender individuals also expose a host of dynamics that at first glance have little to do with gender or sex, such as processes of power and domination; the complex

relationship among agency, subjectivity, and structure; and the mutual constitution of the global and the local.

Dr Kalissa Alexeyeff is currently a Research Fellow in the School of Philosophy, Anthropology and Social Inquiry at the University of Melbourne, seconded from her position as Lecturer in the Gender Studies Program. She has a doctorate from the Australian National University entitled '*Dancing from the Heart: Gender, Movement and Sociality in the Cook Islands*'. A revised version appeared as a book of the same title from the University of Hawai'i Press in 2007. Her research interests include gender, sexuality, expressive culture, globalization, and development.

***"I am still a young girl if I want":  
relational personhood and individual autonomy in the Trobriand Islands***  
**Dr Katherine Lepani**  
**Senior Research Associate**  
**ARC Laureate project *Engendering Persons, Transforming Things***  
**The Australian National University**

In the Trobriand Islands of Papua New Guinea, sexuality is valued as a positive expression of relational personhood, registering the efficacy of consensual and pleasurable practice in producing and maintaining social relations. The power of sexuality to demonstrate capacity and potential holds particular salience for unmarried young people. This presentation draws on my ethnographic research on gender, sexuality, and HIV in the Trobriands to consider forms of relational personhood and individualism by focusing on the gendered agency of youth sexuality. The autonomous mind, *nanola*, is central to understanding the embodiment of social relations and how individual assertions and acts are ultimately expressions of situated relationality.

Dr Katherine Lepani is a long-term resident of Papua New Guinea, where she has been involved in HIV policy and program work since the mid-1990s. After completing a Master of Public Health (Tropical Health) degree at The University of Queensland (2001), she commenced her doctorate program in Anthropology with the Gender Relations Centre at ANU and was awarded her PhD in 2008. From 2009-2011, she was a lecturer in the ANU College of Medicine, Biology and Environment, involved in the development of the Master of Culture, Health and Medicine program offered jointly by CMBE and the College of Arts and Social Sciences. She is currently a Senior Research Associate in the College of Asia and the Pacific, engaged in Professor Margaret Jolly's ARC Laureate Project *Engendering Persons, Transforming Things: Christianities, Commodities and Individualism in Oceania*. She has a forthcoming book with Vanderbilt University Press on her ethnographic research in PNG, titled *Islands of Love, Islands of Risk: Culture and HIV in the Trobriands*.

***'No more love':  
Money, marriage, and the market***  
**Assistant Professor Debra McDougall**  
**Anthropology and Sociology**  
**The University of Western Australia**

This paper takes as its starting point a lament that I have heard over and over from women during my years of research in the Western Solomon Islands. It goes something like this: “our lives are now devoid of love, for we are always marketing.” We might see this comment as statement as evidence of either the rise of possessive individualism or the perdurance of traditional relationality. Is it a clear-sighted observation of the social effects of the expansion of market relations? Or a performative affirmation of the continuing importance of relational personhood? I will suggest that neither alternative is quite right. Drawing on theories of Melanesian relationality and emergent individualism as well as older work on the sociology of exchange, I suggest that alienation has always been a possibility of Ranonggan kin relations. Focusing on two apparently unrelated rituals—both, somewhat unusually, organized by women—I unpack the logics of intimacy and alienation internal to Ranonggan sociality but exacerbated, in some ways, by the expansion of the market. The first ritual ‘straightened out’ social relations tangled by an incest violation; the second ritual ‘quieted the adze’ of an old man who gave his nieces and nephews a large dugout canoe. In both the actors strive to show they are acting not out of self-regard, but out of love for one another.

Having joined UWA in 2006 as an ARC Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Debra is now an Assistant Professor in Anthropology and Sociology. She received a BA (with Honours) in History from Penn State University and an MA and PhD in Anthropology from The University of Chicago. Prior to moving to Perth, she taught at the University of Notre Dame (Indiana, USA). Since 1996, Debra has carried out intensive long-term fieldwork in the Solomon Islands. Her PhD research was focused on Ranongga Island, in the Western Province of the Solomon Islands, and while her postdoctoral research has involved some research on other islands and in the towns of Gizo and Honiara, her ‘home’ in the Solomons remains Ranongga. While her research has been focussed geographically, it has ranged thematically over a many arenas of social and political life in this island society.

***Gender in Fijian Christian Theology***  
**Dr Matthew Tomlinson**  
**Department of Anthropology**  
**Monash University**

In Fijian discourse, the *vanua* (land and people) is often characterized as the foundation of the traditional order and all it entails: attendance upon chiefs, knowledge of one’s kin connections and proper social roles, respectful kava drinking, and so forth. Indigenous theologians in Fiji cannot escape the *vanua*, especially as it is generally paired in a half-complementary, half-oppositional way to Christianity. But the question of how the *vanua* is gendered is especially vexing for theology, as it

highlights the significant gap between universal values and patriarchal norms. In this paper, I discuss two innovative thinkers on this subject. First, I examine the Methodist theologian Ilaitia Tuwere's writings on the 'feminine face' of the *vanua*, analyzing his attempt—which many Methodists would consider radical—to give a feminine focus to the foundational Fijian social order. Second, I describe an interview I conducted in 2009 with a female Methodist minister who must remain anonymous because of the sensitive nature of the discussion. She had experienced continual and wrenching conflict with the church's male-dominated hierarchy, but had proudly dissented. Whereas Tuwere tries to transform understandings of the *vanua* by appropriating a feminist Christian theology, the minister at PTC implied that her experiences demonstrated how Christianity and the *vanua* are irreconcilable, partly due to the *vanua*'s gendered aspects.

Dr Matt Tomlinson earned his PhD from the University of Pennsylvania and has lectured in anthropology at Monash University since 2005. He is the author of *In God's Image: The Metaculture of Fijian Christianity*, and co-editor of *The Limits of Meaning: Case Studies in the Anthropology of Christianity* (with Matthew Engelke) and the forthcoming *Christian Politics in Oceania* (with Debra McDougall).

***Changing covenants in Samoa?  
From brothers and sisters to husbands and wives?***

**Reverend Latu Latai**

**PhD scholar**

**ARC Laureate project *Engendering Persons, Transforming Things*  
Australian National University**

In this paper I will explore how in the process of Christian conversion in Samoa by the London Missionary Society, the indigenous sacred covenant between brother and sister was transposed onto the relation between the pastor, his wife and the congregation. This will entail a consideration of how far Victorian models of gender and domesticity were promoted by foreign missionaries and how far Samoan people accepted, resisted and transformed these models. It is situated in relation to previous accounts of foreign missionary influences in diverse Oceanic contexts, for example, Gailey in Tonga and Linnekin in Hawai'i, and the limits of what might be called the 'domestication' thesis. In Samoa women had assumed powerful roles as *tamasa* 'the sacred child', and as indigenous priests mediating with the gods. What effect did Christian conversion have on this sacred power of women?

Reverend Latu Latai is a doctoral student in Pacific Studies in the School of Culture History and Language, College of Asia and Pacific, ANU. He is part of the team working with Professor Margaret Jolly on the Laureate project *Engendering Persons, Transforming Things: Christianity, Commodities and Individualism in Oceania*. Latu has a Masters of Theology (2005) from the Pacific Theological College in Suva. His doctoral thesis is looking at Samoan missionary women as wives in Papua New Guinea from the early days of London Missionary Society work to the time of PNG's independence in 1975.

***Gendering peace and violence in Bougainville and Solomon Islands***  
**Dr Anna-Karina Hermkens**  
**Postdoctoral Fellow**  
**ARC Laureate project *Engendering Persons, Transforming Things***  
**University of Nimboud/ Australian National University**

In this presentation I address the ideological underpinnings of the Bougainville and Solomon Islands conflicts in terms of gender. In both areas, women are renowned for having initiated peace-building efforts between (male) warring parties. However, women were also supporting and instigating violence through means of, for instance, gossip. Through this comparative case study, the tendency to construct essentialist images of women as peace-makers and men as warriors comes to the fore, revealing the power relations and gender politics that are at the centre of nationalist projects and conflicts such as those in Bougainville and Solomon Islands.

Dr Anna-Karina Hermkens is a cultural anthropologist working as an ARC postdoctoral fellow with the School of Culture, History and Language, the College of Asia and the Pacific. She has been doing research in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and Solomon Islands, focusing on material culture, gender issues, and, since 2005, the interplay between religion, conflict and peace-building. She co-edited a volume on Marian pilgrimages *Moved by Mary* (Ashgate 2009) and has published several book-chapters and articles on the Bougainville conflict in terms of gender, religion and customary beliefs (in amongst others, *Intersections; Culture and Religion, Anthropology Today*).

***'Our commonality is our humanness':***  
***women, faith and peacebuilding in Pacific Oceania***  
**Dr Nicole George**  
**Department of Political Science and International Studies**  
**University of Queensland**

Pessimistic assessments of Pacific Island affairs over the past 20 years have described a region suffering from threats to stability. Such assessments over-emphasise the historical and contemporary prevalence of conflict, and concentrate on home-grown sources of instability while ignoring the negative impact of international influences. They also ignore the capacities of Pacific Island populations to resist conflict and promote peace. In this paper I challenge the idea that conflict and instability have become endemic to the region by demonstrating the important role that Pacific women play in peacebuilding and the centrality of religious faith in this type of advocacy. Religious adherence has often been drawn upon to fuel communal distrust and violence in Pacific societies. Yet references to faith have also played an important part in helping communities resist and recover from conflict. Drawing on first hand testimony, primary documents and other secondary sources, my paper will demonstrate how women also use faith to promote their peacebuilding ambitions. In particular, I will show how they equate their membership of faith communities with broader humanitarian ideals which then allow them to challenge uncritical acceptance of violence arising out of tribal, clan or religious difference. Women's secondary

status within the region's religious institutions is an important consideration however, and also reminds us that membership of faith communities has not always been empowering for women. I therefore conclude this paper with some discussion of the difficulties women activists face when they promote peace by drawing on religious discourses that have also been harnessed by parochial power-holders in some Pacific contexts as part of efforts to restrict women's political visibility.

Dr Nicole George holds a lectureship in peace and conflict studies at the University of Queensland. Her current research examines the poorly understood history of Pacific women's peacebuilding activity. By documenting the political capacity of women peacebuilders this study aims to challenge mainstream accounts of contemporary Pacific Islands history which evoke a region sliding into conflict. This project reflects a broad interest in gender and development issues in the Pacific and is theoretically informed by feminist work on questions of political agency and participation. Nicole's published work on these themes has appeared in *The Contemporary Pacific*, *The Australian Feminist Law Journal*, and *Development in Practice*. Her book manuscript entitled *Situating Women: Gender Politics and Circumstance in Fiji* is forthcoming from ANU E-Press.

***Finding the diamond:  
prosperity, secrecy and labour in the Vanuatu plantation economy***

**Dr Benedicta Rousseau  
McArthur Research Fellow, Anthropology  
University of Melbourne**

This paper considers a set of stories from Vanuatu that tell of mysterious – and usually thwarted – routes to prosperity in the context of the post-World War Two plantation economy. Finding the 'diamond', in whichever of the various forms it takes, offers its holder an escape from the drudgery and necessity of wage labour. While many of the stories give a clear sense of the racially-based inequalities of colonialism, they also present a broader questioning of the role that labour might have to play in ni-Vanuatu men's lives in the future. The nexus of secrecy, knowledge and wealth in these stories parallels pre-existing indigenous routes to male power in Vanuatu, but occurs here in the context of changing forms of social and spatial organisation. I present material about changes in men's employment during this period, arguing that a shift occurred in the amount of control they had over their engagement with the capitalist economy, precipitating concerns over their possible future value as producers and/or consumers, which continue into the present day.

Dr Benedicta Rousseau was trained in social anthropology at the University of Auckland and completed her PhD at the University of Cambridge in 2004. Over the past ten years she has taught a range of topics within anthropology at universities in England and New Zealand. She has pursued ethnographic research in Vanuatu since 2000, and has recent and forthcoming publications on the role of *kastom* in state courts, alternative models of development, and election campaigning. She is currently a McArthur Research Fellow in Anthropology at the University of Melbourne.

***Freedom to Roam:***  
***gender, power and new technologies of mobility in Vanuatu***  
**Dr John P. Taylor**  
**Anthropology Program**  
**La Trobe University**

This paper explores issues of gender and power, including sacred power, in relation to the recent and rapid uptake of mobile phone technology in Vanuatu. While the reception of this technology is overwhelmingly positive, this paper examines some local concerns regarding perceived negative impacts. Such concerns relate to an emphasised link between mobility of communication and knowledge and ideas about the physical mobility of gendered persons, to a perceived widening and flattening of territoriality, and to the potential for phones to generate dangerous ‘excesses’ across social space. Along with more mundane concerns, people in Vanuatu complain of phones being used by men to ‘pull’ women across the archipelago; of people using mobile phones as a conduit for sorcery, including siphoning credit from one phone to another; of great crowds of people turning up at *kastom* ceremonies, and especially at deaths, as a result of word spreading too quickly and widely; and especially of dangerous gossip being spread uncontrollably. This paper asks how mobile phone use, knowledge and popular culture articulate the gendered dynamics of modernity and power in Vanuatu, especially with regards to mobility.

Dr. John Taylor’s research interests are focused within the Pacific region, including in his home of New Zealand and in Vanuatu where he has been conducting field research since 1999. His work is influenced by a range of critical theory, and is guided by the capacity of participant-observation and ethnography to directly engage the situations and struggles of everyday life and reveal deep understandings of ourselves in relation to others. Dr. John Taylor is currently exploring themes relating to the historical and contemporary transformation of masculinities in northern Vanuatu, particularly in terms of colonial and neo-colonial relations of power, including the sacred powers of Christianity and sorcery. He is also researching and writing on tourism and cultural heritage, for instance in writing about some spectacular northern Vanuatu rituals and cultural events, the participation of ni-Vanuatu within Vanuatu’s burgeoning tourism industry, and the activities of tourists and the dynamic nature of tourism photography. His publications include *The other side: ways of being and place in Vanuatu* (University of Hawai’i Press, 2008), the edited volume *Changing Pacific Masculinities (The Australian Journal of Anthropology, 2008)* and recent papers in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* and *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*.

***Women in Oceania, yesterday and today:  
violence and representations about blood and the sacred***  
**Professor Bernard Rigo**  
**Social Sciences Centre (CNEP)**  
**University of New Caledonia**

The violence which concerns women is important as much in French Polynesia as in New Caledonia, and, actually, in most Oceanic societies. Nothing authorizes us to explain this as the perpetuation of a brutal tradition or the mere mechanical effect of acculturation. It is important to situate the status of Oceanic women in the course of a history marked by evangelization.

***Femmes d'hier et d'aujourd'hui en Océanie: sang, violence et sacré***

Les violences qui touchent les femmes sont importantes aussi bien en Polynésie française qu'en Nouvelle-Calédonie ainsi que dans bien d'autres sociétés océaniques. Rien n'autorise à y voir la reconduction d'une tradition brutale ou l'effet mécanique d'une acculturation. Il importe de replacer le statut des femmes océaniques au cours d'une histoire marquée par l'évangélisation.

Professor Bernard Rigo is Professor of Oceanic languages and cultures at the university of New Caledonia and Director of the Centre of New Studies of the Pacific (CNEP). He works across the disciplines of philosophy, anthropology, oceanic literature and culture and the epistemology of the social sciences. His most recent books include: *Altérité polynésienne ou les métamorphoses de l'espace-temps* (2004, Paris, CNRS Éditions). *Conscience occidentale et fables océaniques* (2004, Paris, L'Harmattan). *L'espace-temps polynésien* (2005, Papeete LARSH, ISEPP-Au vent des îles).

***The Magic Woman in Papua New Guinea tales and street paintings***  
**René Zimmer**  
**PhD Scholar**  
**University of New Caledonia**

Papua New Guinea tales present a vision of woman as a gifted, versatile being endowed with creative power and thought, much above her status in real life. The renditions offered by the street painters in Port Moresby corroborate the fact that women, by shedding light on their immediate environment, play an active part in the overall emancipation of the nation. Both in tales and in contemporary pictorial representations, women are associated with magic. Even though stories and paintings might be anchored in a traditional context, their interpretation at the allegorical and/or symbolic level shows that the leading role played by the magic woman is key to promoting modern, humanistic values in a rapidly changing world.

René Zimmer is a PhD scholar at the University of New Caledonia.

***Questioning ‘egalitarian individualism’:  
views on objects, relations and hierarchy from San Francisco to Fiji***  
**Dr Rachel Morgain**  
**Postdoctoral Fellow**  
**ARC Laureate project *Engendering Persons, Transforming Things***  
**The Australian National University**

In Dumont’s influential work *Homo Hierarchicus*, an opposition between relational and individual social forms is painted as an opposition of hierarchy (within the ‘holistic’ Indian context) versus equality (rooted in Western individualism and linked to Christianity). Such an egalitarian, democratic conception of individualised sociality appears interestingly mirrored in discourses within new evangelical churches in Fiji. As Brison (2007) points out with respect to the ‘individualistic’ Harvest Ministry church, Pentecostal pastors in Fiji draw on egalitarian ideas, “using imagery drawn from the World Wide Web to evoke the view of a decentralized world network of Pentecostal Christians differentiated only by one’s level of commitment to Christian principles and one’s anointing by the Lord” (p.24). Yet this Dumontian link between individualism and egalitarianism must be seen as ideological, not always (or even generally) obtaining in practice. Following Toren’s work on sociality and hierarchy among Sawaieke villagers, I argue for a critical approach to such ideologies of sociality – one which foregrounds how both hierarchy and equality are produced and negotiated within a given (relational or individualised) social setting. Problematising Dumont’s link between individualism and egalitarianism, I draw on my work among contemporary Pagans in California, for whom relational social patterns mediated through gift exchange are conceptually linked with anti-hierarchy, while individualism is conceptually connected with domination. Here, relations of inequality arising out of the (individualised) commodity economy can be seen to bubble over into resentments at hierarchies emerging within ritual contexts that are otherwise idealised as relational and egalitarian. Developing a more complex picture of the interplay between forms of sociality and the poles of egalitarianism/hierarchy can allow us to examine critically the egalitarian and democratic claims such as those made within Pentecostal settings in Fiji, and further illuminate the complexities inherent in patterns of ‘individuality’ and ‘relationality’.

Dr Rachel Morgain is currently an ARC postdoctoral fellow in the School of Culture, History and Language, College of Asia and the Pacific. She submitted her PhD entitled “Beyond ‘Individualism’: personhood and transformation in the Reclaiming Pagan community of San Francisco” in 2010, in which she explored questions of sociality among a group of contemporary Pagans identified by their environmentalist, feminist and activist political outlook. Dr Rachel Morgain’s current project is exploring the rise of new forms of evangelical and charismatic Christianity in Fiji, and how these articulate with changes in sociality. She will focus her ethnographic research in Suva, looking at how the appeal of growing evangelical and charismatic forms of Christianity is intersecting with changing social and economic relationships. She is interested in the complexity of modes of personhood among these new Christians, exploring questions such as: how Christians in these settings come to experience their relationship with God; how sociality is expressed within and beyond the church environment; how new social relationships within these churches intersect with long-standing commitments of land and kinship; and how these developments articulate with changing economic conditions.

*Engendering Persons and Things in Vanuatu:  
Relationality, 'Incipient Individualism' and Radical Alterity*

**Professor Margaret Jolly**

**ARC Laureate Professor**

**ARC Laureate project *Engendering Persons, Transforming Things*  
The Australian National University**

Approaches to the person in Oceanic ethnography have often been haunted by projects of radical alterity, which in stressing the profound differences between 'us' and 'them' have tended to diminish the importance of cross-cultural connections and historical relations. Arguably theoretical approaches deriving both from Louis Dumont and Marilyn Strathern have had this effect, if in different ways. In *Wayward Women*, Holly Wardlow rather suggests the co-presence of dual modes of personhood, relational and individual, in contemporary PNG but ponders which contexts, which forces of modernity, are eliciting more individualistic and autonomous modes of agency and how expressions of an 'incipient individualism' might be gendered (Wardlow 2006: 20). Taking inspiration from Wardlow, this paper will ponder similar questions in the context of ethnographies of North Vanuatu which explore transformations of gender and rank accompanying pervasive Christian conversion and the widespread effects of commodity economics. It will highlight how changes in gendered personhood are integrally connected with changing relations to non-human beings and 'things' which are equally gendered.

Professor Margaret Jolly is an Australian Research Council Laureate Fellow and Professor in Anthropology, Gender and Cultural Studies and Pacific Studies in the School of Culture, History and Language in the College of Asia and the Pacific. She is an historical anthropologist who has written extensively on gender in the Pacific, on exploratory voyages and travel writing, missions and contemporary Christianity, maternity and sexuality, cinema and art. Her books include *Women of the Place*, Kastom, *Colonialism and Gender in Vanuatu*, Harwood Academic Publishers, Chur, 1994; *Sites of Desire, Economies of Pleasure: Sexualities in Asia and the Pacific*, (ed. with Lenore Manderson), University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1997; *Maternities and Modernities: Colonial and Postcolonial Experiences in Asia and the Pacific*, (ed. with Kalpana Ram) Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998; *Borders of Being: Citizenship, Fertility and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, (ed. with Kalpana Ram) University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2001; *Oceanic Encounters: Exchange, Desire, Violence* (ed. with Serge Tcherkézoff and Darrell Tryon. Canberra, ANU E-Press, 2009).