Cathy Cantwell Tuesday 30th April,
Wolfson College Seminar Room 3, 5. pm - 7pm, followed by dinner at Wolfson

Title: The Phurpa Consecrations Practice (byin riabs phur pa'i sgrub pa) texts from the Eightfold Buddha Word, Embodying the Sugatas (bka' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa), revealed by Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124-1192), and their connections with the Transmitted Textual Traditions

Abstract: This paper seeks to introduce the core group of texts or text sections for the Action Phurpa (’phrin las phur pa) part of Nyang ral Nyi ma ’od zer's revealed corpus of the Eightfold Buddha Word, Embodying the Sugatas (bka’ brgyad bde gshegs ‘dus pa). In doing so, it poses the question of what exactly revelation means in this case, and how these texts relate to the transmitted corpus of texts (bka’ ma). Nyang ral is at the fount of both the rNying ma tantric tradition of revelation and of the transmitted literature, responsible for codifying and passing on a huge corpus of materials, yet in both cases it is clear that he was contributing to already well-established traditions, even if we have little remaining of the previous textual productions. It is not perhaps quite so clear how in this early period the distinction was made between the categories of revealed and transmitted texts. In terms of the content of the texts and the means of transmission, there does not seem to be a particularly sharp differentiation in this case study. One possible clue may come from the conceptualisation of the revealed texts as having passed through the hands of the King, Khri srong lde'u btsan, the eighth century Tibetan emperor who became central to the rNying ma pa's self-identity as spiritual representatives of the glorious days of the Tibetan Empire.