

**THE OPEN UNIVERSITY'S BOOK HISTORY AND POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES
RESEARCH GROUPS IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE INSTITUTE OF ENGLISH
STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON**

Inter-University Research Seminars, 2010-2011

BIOGRAPHY, ITS SUBJECTS AND SOURCES

From Montaigne to Mandela

Wednesday October 6, 2010

Room G35 Senate House

SARAH BAKEWELL

Biographizing Montaigne

Sarah Bakewell was a curator of early printed books at the Wellcome Library before becoming a full-time biographer and writer. Her subjects have ranged from Caroline Rudd, eighteenth-century Irish-born seductress and forger (*The Smart*, 2001), to Jorgen Jorgenson, nineteenth-century marine adventurer, one-time ruler of Iceland and founder of Tasmania (*The English Dane*, 2005). Earlier this year she published *How to Live: A Life of Montaigne in one question and twenty attempts at an answer*, a life study of an essayist - itself in essay form - that transports biography into experimental terrain. Sarah also teaches Creative Writing at the City University.

Wednesday October 20, 2010

Room G32 Senate House

MAUREEN DUFFY

Biographizing Aphra Behn

Maureen Duffy is among the most distinguished and versatile of living British writers. Her novels include *That's How It Was* (1962), *The Single Eye* (1964), *The Paradox Players* (1967), *Wounds* (1969), *Capital* (1975), *Londoners* (1983), *Illuminations* (1991), *Occam's Razor* (1998), and *Alchemy* (2004). Her *Collected Poems, 1949-84* were issued in 1985. *The Passionate Shepherdess*, a life of Aphra Behn, appeared in 1977, and her biography of Henry Purcell in 1994. In 1985 Maureen was elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, on whose council she served for many years.

Wednesday November 3, 2010

Room G35, Senate House

PHILIPPA BERNARD

Biographizing Kathleen Raine

An early graduate of the Open University, Philippa Bernard worked for the French section of the BBC before she and husband established a flourishing antiquarian bookshop in Chelsea, where the poet Kathleen Raine was among their customers. Philippa was General Editor of *Antiquarian Books: A Companion for Booksellers, Librarians and Collectors*, and she regularly lectures for the National Trust. Her biography of Raine, *No End to Snowdrops*, appeared in 2009.

Wednesday November 17, 2010

Room ST273, Stewart House

MAGGIE FERGUSON

Biographizing George Mackay Brown

Maggie Fergusson read History at Oxford and began working for the Royal Society of Literature, of which she is currently Secretary, in 1991. Her prize-winning life of the Orcadian poet George Mackay Brown appeared in 2006 and draws on conversations in Orkney with the poet, his family and friends, together with unpublished correspondence held in the Edinburgh University archives. Maggie is currently working on a commissioned life of the children's author Michael Morpurgo. She was elected FRSL in 2008.

**Thursday February 24, 2011
House**

Room ST273, Stewart

WILLIAM RADICE

Biographizing Tagore

William Radice read English at Magdalene College, Oxford, taking a diploma in Bengali at SOAS followed by an Oxford D.Phil on Michael Madhusudan Dutt. His first volume of poetry *Eight Sections* appeared in 1974, and subsequent volumes include *Strivings* (1980), *Before and After* (1995), *Gifts* (2002) and *Green, Red, Gold: A Novel in 1001 Sonnets* (2002). His narration to rhymed couplets to Mozart's *Zaide* was commissioned by the Trinity College of Music in 2007 and his translation of Puccini's *Turandot* was performed by the English National Opera in 2009. In 2003 William's collected columns for Calcutta's *Statesman* were published under the title *A Hundred Letters from England*. A Senior Lecturer in Bengali at SOAS, he is among the most accomplished English translators of Tagore.

Tuesday March 8, 2011

Room ST274, Stewart House

RUVANI RANASINHA and SUSHEILA NASTA

Biographizing Tambimuttu

Meary James Thurairah Tambimuttu (1915-1983) was born in colonial Ceylon, nephew of the philosopher and art historian Ananda Coomaraswamy. Arriving in London in 1938 he became Editor of the influential magazine *Poetry (London)* the following year, publishing a whole generation of poets. Currently his life and work are a focus of the research project “Making Britain: South Asian Writers in Twentieth-Century Britain, 1870-1950”, housed at the Open University, at King’s College, London and in Oxford. A Senior Lecturer in English at King’s and an editor of *Interventions*, Ruvani Ranasinha was born in Sri Lanka and took her doctorate at Christchurch, Oxford with Robert Young. Her book *South Asian Writers in Twentieth-Century Britain: Culture in Translation* was published by OUP in 2007. Susheila Nasta is Professor of Modern Literature at the OU and Director of “Making Britain”.

Tuesday March 22, 2011

Room ST273, Stewart House

STEPHANIE NEWELL

Biographizing John Moray Stuart-Young

Known to the Igbo as “Odeziaku”, the Uranian poet, novelist, traveller and trader John Moray Stuart-Young (1881-1939) was born in the Manchester slums and fled Britain after serving a prison sentence for forgery. Settling in Onitsha in eastern Nigeria, he became a much loved local figure, at whose funeral 10,000 people lined the streets. Professor of English at Sussex University, Stephanie Newell is the author of *Ghanaian Popular Fiction* (2000), *Literary Culture in Colonial Ghana* (2002) and *West African Literatures* (2006). Her biographical study *The Forger’s Tale: The Search for Odeziaku* appeared in 2006.

Tuesday April 5, 2011

Room ST273, Stewart House

ELLEKE BOEHMER

Biographizing Mandela

Elleke Boehmer is Professor of World Literature in English at Oxford and a Fellow of Wolfson College. Raised in Durban, tri-lingual in English, Dutch and Afrikaans, she has held chairs at Nottingham Trent and Royal Holloway, London. She has published four novels: *Screens Against the Sky* (1990), *An Immaculate Figure* (1993), *Bloodlines* (2000) and *Nile Baby* (2008). Her book *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (1995) is a set critical text in literature departments worldwide. Elleke is co-investigator on the “Making Britain” project.

Her *Nelson Mandela: A Very Short Introduction* was issued by OUP in 2008.