

## SEMINAR ON CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH FICTION, 2010

### Programme.

#### 13<sup>th</sup> September. MONDAY.

10.00. – 10.40. Boris Proskurnin. Introductions, explanations, brief speeches.

10.40 – 11. 30 Discussion of a selection of our novels:

Catherine Brown on *Headlong*; Rod Mengham on *What a Carve Up!* Sandie Byrne on *White Teeth or Regeneration*; Karen on *Black Swan Green* and *The Taxi Driver's Daughter*

11.30 - 11.50 COFFEE

11.50 – 12.40 Catherine Brown on 'Chapters: Why writers have them, and how we can read them.'

12.-40 - 1.00 p.m. Introducing the Website (Sandie Byrne)

1 p.m. – 1. 30. The future of *Footpath* and Perspective Publications. (Karen Hewitt)

1.30 – 2.30 LUNCH

2.30 – 3.20 Teachers in groups to discuss the experience of teaching the novels with newcomers to the project; the British participants were move from group to group.

3.20 – 4.10 p.m. Our new novels; Karen will introduce Adam Thorpe's *Ulverton* and Ruth Rendell's *Portobello* (followed by a general discussion on detective fiction).

4.10 – 4.30 COFFEE

4.30- 5-20 Rod Mengham on "History into Fiction" – different ways in which novelists have dealt with history.

5-20 – 6.10 Introduction to a play-reading followed by the reading of the play.

#### 14<sup>th</sup> September. TUESDAY

10 – 10.40 Karen on "Teaching Literature: "What I feel" versus "What the novelist writes" '. (Based on reports from universities.)

10.40 – 11.30 Sandie Byrne on 'Exploring Narrative Voice'.

11..30 – 11.50 COFFEE

11.50 – 12.50 (or further) Seminar Exercise on Dialogue: papers for this text analysis were circulated on Monday.

12-50 – 1.30 Brief comments on other novels:

Catherine Brown on *Master Georgie*

Karen Hewitt on *The Sea House* or *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*

Rod Mengham on *Morality Play*

1.30 – 2.30 LUNCH

2.30 – 2.45 A problem: What happens when departments lose interest?

Two views – and other views.

2.45- 3.30 Teachers in groups to discuss whatever seems important; the British participants will move from group to group as requested.

3.30 – 4.20 Discussion of two poems to be led by Sandie Byrne. (Poems were circulated on Monday)

4.20 – 4.40 COFFEE

4.40 – 6.00 A Question and Answer Session. Participants were asked to submit written questions to the panel. To start the discussion we will consider two

questions which have arisen from the comments sent to Karen Hewitt about the novels:

(1) 'We are appalled at the unkindness which seems to go on in English schools – judging by *About a Boy*; *Magpie*; *Black Swan Green*; *The Taxi Driver's Daughter*. Is bullying so pervasive, and isn't anything being done about it?'

(2) 'We know the English love irony and we know that we sometimes miss English humour. But it seems that the English always retreat into irony or mockery whenever anything deep and profound comes up. Where is the English soul?'

Other questions were answered and, when suitable, thrown open for discussion.

### **15<sup>th</sup> September. WEDNESDAY**

There was a Day Conference on ELT issues at the English Language Department at PSU. Much of the conference was devoted to presentations about the teaching of Literature (specifically the ORF books) to students of non-philological faculties.

Brief Biographies of the British team.

**Sandie Byrne MA, DPhil**, is the author of numerous articles on nineteenth-century fiction and twentieth-century poetry, and a number of books including: *Tony Harrison: Loiner* (Clarendon Press, 1997); *H, v. & O: The Poetry of Tony Harrison* (Manchester University Press, 1998); *Readers' Guide to the Poetry of Ted Hughes* (Icon Books, 2000); a guide to essential criticism of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); the Norton Critical edition of *The Plays of George Bernard Shaw* (2002) and *The Unbearable Saki: The Work of H.H. Munro* (2007).

Sandie teaches at Oxford University Department for Continuing Education.

**Catherine Brown** studied English as an undergraduate at Cambridge, before migrating to interests in political science, art history, and Russia. She took an MSc in Russian and Post-Soviet Studies at LSE, an MA in Comparative Literature at UCL, and learned Russian and Spanish, before writing her PhD at Cambridge on *Anna Karenina* in comparison with *Daniel Deronda* and *Women in Love*, and the nature of comparative literature in general. She plans to write a book concerning the term 'soul' in British modernist literature.

Catherine has just been appointed to a post at New College, Oxford University.

**Rod Mengham** is Reader in Modern English Literature at the University of Cambridge, and Curator of Works of Art at Jesus College. He is the author of books on Charles Dickens, Emily Bronte, Thomas Hardy and Henry Green, as well as of *The Descent of Language* (1993). He has edited collections of essays on contemporary fiction, violence and avant-garde art, and the fiction of the 1940s. He is also co-editor and co-translator of *Altered State: the New Polish Poetry* (Arc Publications, 2003) and co-editor of *Vanishing Points: New Modernist Poems* (Salt, 2005). His own poems have been published under the titles *Unsung: New and Selected Poems* (Folio/Salt, 1996; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2001) and *Parleys and Skirmishes* [poems] with photographs by Marc Atkins (Ars Cameralis, 2007).