

Olive Senior

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Olive Senior was born and brought up in Jamaica. She attended Montego Bay High School and Carleton University School of Journalism, Ottawa, as a Commonwealth scholar. She also studied journalism as a Thomson Scholar at the Thomson Foundation, Cardiff, and book publication under UNESCO auspices at the Institute of Mass Communication, University of the Philippines. In Jamaica she first worked as a journalist with the Daily Gleaner, later with Jamaica Information Service. After some years as a free lancer in public relations, publishing and speech writing, she became editor of *Social and Economic Studies* of the University of the West Indies and, later, *Jamaica Journal*, published by Institute of Jamaica Publications of which she was also managing director. She has travelled extensively and from 1989 until 1993 when she settled in Toronto, she lived in several European countries. However she visits Jamaica frequently and the island and the wider Caribbean remain central to her work. She teaches writing internationally and has read her work and lectured at many international venues over the years.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Wikipedia; *www.The Poetry Archive.com*; *Dictionary of Literary Biography* 157 Third Series, USA; *Contemporary Poets*, St James's Press, USA; *Callaloo* (ed. Charles Rowell): Olive Senior, A Special Section, Vol. 11, No. 3, Summer 1988; *Encyclopedia of World Literature in the Twentieth century*, 3rd ed. vol 4; St James's Press 1999; *Facts on File Companion to World Poetry: 1900 to the Present*; *Contemporary Black Biography*, Gale Publishing 2006; "Olive Senior" in *A Reader's Companion to the Short Story in English*, edited by Erin Fallon et al. Under the Auspices of the Society for the Study of the Short Story. Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2001.

MAJOR INTERVIEWS

Hyacinth Simpson, 'The In-Between Worlds of Olive Senior', *Wasafiri*, 23:1, 2008

Martin Mordecai, Beat Profile: 'Olive Senior: Speaking Back to Home', *Caribbean Beat*, July/August 2006 <http://www.meppublishers.com/>

[online/caribbean-beat/archive](http://www.caribbean-beat.com/archive) 1992-2006 issue 80

- Amateritsero Ade interviews Olive Senior, *Sentinel Poetry* (Online) *The International Literary Journal*, January 2006, www.sentinelpoetry.org.uk
- Anthea Morrison, 'Making Cassava Bammy from Scratch': An Interview with Olive Senior, *Jamaica Journal* 29: 1-2, 2005
- Elaine Savoury, 'Interview with Olive Senior', *Wadabagei*, 8:3, Fall 2005
- Laura Tanna, 'One on One with Olive Senior', in three parts, *Jamaica Gleaner* Pt. 1, 17 October 2004; Pt. 2 31 October 2004; Pt 3, 7 November 2004. jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/2004
- Dolace McClean and Jacqueline Bishop, 'Of Hearts Revealed: An Interview with Olive Senior', *Calabash*, 2:2 summer/fall 2003, electronic version – <http://library.nyu.edu/calabash/vol2iss2/0202003> pdf
- Funso Aiyejina, 'Olive Senior, Interview', *Self-Portraits, Interview with Ten West Indian Writers and Two Critics*, Trinidad and Tobago: UWI School of Continuing Studies, 2003; originally published in *Trinidad and Tobago Review*, 17, 4-16 June 1995 as 'Olive Senior, Interview'
- Dominique Dubois and Jeanne DeVoize, 'An Interview with Olive Senior', *Journal of the Short Story in English*, 20th anniversary issue, 2003; originally published in issue no. 26, Spring 1996
- Joan Anim-Addo, 'Interview with Olive Senior', *Mango Season*, volume 7, December 1996
- Kwame Dawes, *'Talk Yuh Talk': Interviews with Anglophone Caribbean Poets*. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2001
- John Degen – Profile – Cover story *Books in Canada* February 1995
- Wolfgang Binder, 'An interview with Olive Senior', *Commonwealth*, 18:1, Autumn, 1995
- Marlies Glaser, 'Olive Senior: A Shared Culture', Caribbean Writers edition of *Matatu* edited by Marlies Glaser and Marion Pausch, Rodopi, 1994
- Charles H. Rowell, 'An Interview with Olive Senior', *Callaloo*, 11, summer, 1988
- Anna Rutherford, 'Olive Senior: Interview', *Kunapipi* 8, No. 2, 1986

FELLOWSHIPS, HONOURS AND AWARDS

Commonwealth Writers Prize, for *Summer Lightning*, 1987; F.G. Bressani Literary Prize for *Gardening in the Tropics*, 1995; *Over the Roofs of the World* shortlisted for the Governor-General's Literary Award for poetry 2005, runner up for the Casa de Las Americas Prize 2005; *Shell* shortlisted for the Pat Lowther Award 2006; Hawthornden Fellow, Scotland, 1994; Dana Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing and International Education, St. Lawrence University, Canton NY, 1994-5; Norman Washington Manley Foundation Award for Excellence (preservation of cultural heritage - Jamaica), 2003; Gold Medal of the Institute of Jamaica 2004; 2005 Humanities Scholar, University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados; Ontario Arts Council and Canada Council works-in-progress grants, 2006. Isabel Sissons Canadian Children's Story Award, 2011.

JURIES AND LITERARY ORGANISATIONS

I have served on juries for Canada Council, Ontario Arts Council, Toronto Arts Council, Saskatchewan Arts Awards, Commonwealth Writers Prize at regional and international levels, Guyana Prize, among others,

TEACHING AND WORKSHOPS

Faculty, the Humber School for Writers, Humber College, Toronto, from 1998 to the present. I have also taught writing (poetry and/or fiction) at the University of Toronto; St Lawrence University, Canton, NY; University of Miami, Florida; Barnard College, Columbia University, New York; University of the West Indies in Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad. I've conducted writing workshops in many venues, including residential workshops for the Arvon Foundation in England and TyNewydd Centre, Wales, and workshops for the Poetry School, London, UK; Bermuda Ministry of Culture and Bermuda College; Bahamas Writers Summer Institute, among others.

International Readings and Lectures (selected list)

National Library of Canada; Toronto: Harbourfront Literary Festival (various); Vancouver International Festival of Writers, Feminist Book Fair, The Netherlands; Crossing Borders Festival, Den Haag; Poetry International, Rotterdam; Literatures of the Commonwealth Festival, Manchester; London: South Bank Centre: Royal Festival Hall, (various); Commonwealth Institute, London, University of Glasgow, University of Reading, Brooklyn Public Library, University of Hawaii, Colgate University, NY; University of Iowa, IO; University of Maryland, PEN Authors in the Classroom, NY, St Olaf College, Minn., Kent State University, The Americas Society, New York, NY, University of Northern Iowa, Hamilton College, NY; Art Institute of Chicago; Wellesley College, Mass; University of Pittsburg, Penn; University of Paris (the Sorbonne).

I have also lectured and/or read my work in Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Colombia, Curacao, Guyana, Trinidad, Bermuda, the Bahamas, among other places.

RESIDENCIES

Writer in Residence: University of Adelaide, Australia, 2009; University of the West Indies, Trinidad, 2002; University of Alberta, 1998-1999; University of the West Indies, Jamaica, 1993, 1998; Banff International Writing Studio, 1997; Arts Council of Great Britain International Writer-in-Residence, England, 1991.

USE OF WORK IN EDUCATION

Gardening in the Tropics has been a poetry textbook for the CAPE syllabus for Caribbean schools, beginning in September 2005 and *Summer Lightning* has been a literature textbook on the CXC (Caribbean Examinations Council) syllabus. *Gardening in the Tropics* has also been on the syllabus for the International Baccalaureate. My work is taught at universities internationally and appears in many anthologies for primary and secondary schools and multicultural education.

PUBLICATIONS

Forthcoming 2012

Birthday Suit, a picture book for children, Annick Press

Books

Dancing Lessons, (novel), Cormorant Books, 2011

Arrival of the Snake-woman (fiction), Toronto: TSAR Books, 2009; first published UK: Longman, 1989

Shell (poetry), Toronto: Insomniac Press 2007

Over the Roofs of the World (poetry), Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2005

Gardening in the Tropics (poetry), Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2005; first published Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995; Newcastle, England: Bloodaxe Books, 1995

Encyclopedia of Jamaican Heritage, Kingston, Jamaica: Twin Guinep
2003

Discerner of Hearts (fiction) Toronto: McClelland and Stewart 1995; new edition 2002

Quartet (stories by Maya Angelou, Alice Walker, Lorna Goodison and Olive Senior) UK: Longman/Pearson; new edition 2002

Working Miracles: Women's Lives in the English-Speaking Caribbean UK: James Currey/USA: Indiana University Press, 1991

Summer Lightning (fiction) UK: Longman/Pearson 1986

Talking of Trees (poetry) Kingston, Jamaica: Calabash, 1986

A-Z of Jamaican Heritage, Kingston, Jamaica: Heinemann and the Gleaner Company Ltd. 1984

Anthologies and Journals

My work has been included in numerous anthologies worldwide.
Selected list of anthologies that have included my work:

So Much Thing to Say: 100 Calabash Poets (2010); Tell Tales vol. 4: The

Global Village (2009); Norton Introduction to Literature, 9th edition (2006); Norton Introduction to Poetry, 8th edition (2004); Stories from Blue Latitudes: Caribbean women writers at home and abroad (2006); Revival: an anthology of Black Canadian Writing (2006); The Oxford Book of Caribbean Verse (2006); New World of Literature: writings from America's many cultures, (2005); Poems on the Underground: 1,000 years of poetry in English. 9th edition (2001) and Best Poems on the Underground (2009); Turn of the story: Canadian short fiction on the eve of the millennium (1999); The New Exeter Book of Riddles (1999); Oxford Book of Caribbean Short Stories (1999); Go Tell it on the Mountain and related readings (1998); Eyeing the north star: directions in African-Canadian literature (1997); The Penguin Book of Caribbean Short Stories (1996); The long pale corridor: contemporary poems of bereavement (1996); Modern literatures of the non western world: Where the Waters are Born (1995); Concert of voices: an anthology of world writing in English (1995); Ancestral House: the Black Short Story in the Americas and Europe (1995); Rites of Passage: stories about growing up by black writers from around the world (1994); The Heinemann Book of Caribbean Poetry (1992); The Faber Book of Contemporary Caribbean Short Stories (1990); Hinterland: Caribbean Poetry from the West Indies and Britain (1989)

Selected List of Journals

Maple Tree Literary Supplement (MTLS online), Arc, The Literary Review of Canada, Sentinel Poetry (Online) The International Literary Journal, Journal of Postcolonial Writing, Review 68: Literature and Arts of the Americas, Kunapipi, Mangrove, Wasafiri, Moving Worlds, Journal of Caribbean Literatures, Poetry Wales, Wildflower: North America's Magazine of Wild Flora, Calabash, Poetry London Newsletter, Conjunctions, Arts Review, Savacou, Skywritings, Artrage, Spare Rib, Third World Quarterly.

Translations

Recent translations include:

ZigZag, translated into French by Christine Raguet, Geneva: Zoe, 2010; *Eclairs de chaleur*, translated into French by Christine Raguet, Geneva: Zoe, 2011, *Depuis la Terrasse et autres nouvelles* (translated into French by Marie-Annick Montout), special edition, l'Atelier d'écriture, Mauritius, 2011; *Zomerweerlicht* (Trans: Marie Luyten), Netherlands: Ambo/Novib, 1991; *Das Erscheinen der Schlangenfrau* (trans: Wolfgang Binder) Germany: Dipa/Verlag, 1996 and Unionsverlag 2003; a Book Club Selection, The Berne Declaration, Switzerland, 1996.

Recent translations in journals include: Antologia Pan-Americana, 48 contos contemporâneos do nosso continente, Brazil:Organização Stéphane Chao, 2010; Poetas del Caribe ingles: Antología (2 vol) (translated by Keith Ellis), Colección Poesía del mundo serie, Venezuela: 2009.

Other work has been translated and published in Russian, Italian, German, Dutch and other languages

OTHER MEDIA

The Poetry Archive (UK). <http://www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/singlePoet.do?poetId=14910>.

Half-hour feature, 'Gardening with Olive', Caribbean Tales, Leda-Serene Films, Toronto, first broadcast on Bravo TV as part of the Literature Alive series, 2006

Story 'You Think I Mad, Miss?' produced and performed as 'Mad Miss' by Theatre Archipelago, May 27-June 12, 2005, Artword Theatre, Toronto

Internet Poet-in-residence on the 'Common . . . Places' web site launched by the Commonwealth Institute, London, England, 1999

Poem 'Ode to Pablo Neruda' commissioned by BBC Radio 3, England, first broadcast in series 'Poet's Fan Mail', 16 October 1997

Radio play 'Window' commissioned by CBC Radio (Canada) and first broadcast on Morningside Program in three parts 21-23 March 1996

Short story 'The Pain Tree' commissioned by CBC Radio (Canada) for broadcast in Short Story Festival, 'Between the Covers', November 1997

Stories and poems have also been broadcast on JBC, Radio Mona (Jamaica) BBC Radio 4 (UK), BBC Book at Bedtime; CBC Radio 'Morningside' program (Canada), BBC Schools Service, Inner London Education Authority (UK), North York Board of Education (Canada), among others.

REVIEWS

Reviews of my work have been published in literary journals, periodicals and newspapers in the Caribbean, Canada, the USA, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and elsewhere (selected list or copies of articles available on request).

CRITICAL SURVEYS

See **CRITICAL RESPONSE** for scholarly articles on my work