

Writing and Reconciliation Symposium
The Inn at Virginia Tech
November 5-7, 2012

Sponsors: Office of the Provost; College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences; Incentive Grant from the Inn at Virginia Tech; Office of Outreach and International Affairs; MFA Program/Department of English; Women's and Gender Studies/Department of Sociology; Center for 21st Century Studies; Institute on Society, Culture, and Environment; Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention; the Graduate School; CLAHS Dean's Advisory Committee on International Initiatives

“Writing and Reconciliation” is an innovative symposium conceived of by the Center for 21st Century Studies, the Creative Writing Program in the Department of English, and the Women's and Gender Studies Program in Sociology, all in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. This symposium brings together Sri Lankan writers and scholars with others from Virginia Tech and beyond to discuss how individuals and communities come to understand the displacement, trauma, and identity conflicts that arise when history erupts in and around persons' lives. Together with keynote readings, the symposium will include workshops and panels with invited scholars from the US and abroad and VT faculty, students, and the local community.

Keynote Speakers:

Romesh Guneseckara, author of *Reef and Monkfish Moon*, shortlisted for the Booker Prize

Ru Freeman, author of *The Disobedient Girl*, nominated for DSC Prize for South Asian Literature

Jean Arasanayagam, poet and fiction writer of more than 30 books, including the recent autobiography, *A Nice Burgher Girl*. The theme in her work is hybrid identity and ethnic and religious turmoil in Sri Lanka.

Thiyagarajah (Arasa) Arasanayagam, political activist and playwright

Invited Participants:

Minoli Salgado, University of Sussex, short story writer. Salgado's research has a literary focus on postmodernist texts, a theoretical orientation towards post-structuralist debates on migration and a regional connection to South Asia. Books: *Writing Sri Lanka: Literature, Resistance and the Politics of Place* (Routledge, 2007).

Mangalika De Silva, NYU, Fellow; Anthropology, border politics, Muslims, violence, and Sri Lankan state formations. Mangalika de Silva's research is positioned at the

intersection of postcolonial democracy, violence, criminalized minorities and post-structuralist political philosophy, visiting scholar at the South Asia Institute, Columbia University.

Prema de Silva, University of Colombo; Books: '(Re)production of Nationalism and Communal Politics in the Age of Globalization: Popular Buddhism in Sri Lanka' In Health, Deana Mathur, Chandana (eds.) *Communalism and Globalization in South Asia and Its Diaspora*. London: Routledge, 2010. *Beyond the Sacred Journey: Pilgrimage Practices at the Temple of Sri Pada*. Colombo: Social Scientists Association (Forth Coming book - 2012).

Siri Hettige, Director of the Social Policy and Analysis Research Center and Professor of Sociology, University of Colombo

Seni Seneviratne, born and raised in Leeds, Yorkshire is of English and Sri Lankan heritage. Her work as a poet and creative artist is widely acclaimed. Her debut collection, *Wild Cinnamon and Winter Skin*, (Peepal Tree Press, 2007), was described by Professor Ramey, (California State University) as "a virtual master class between covers which represents two decades of commitment to poetic craft." One of the poems from this collection was highly commended in the Forward Poetry Prize, 2007.

Malinda Seneviratne, activist, writer, poet, journalist, *The Nation*

Sudesh Mantillake, dancer/performer, Department of Performing Arts and Media Studies, University of Peradeniya

Athula Samarakoon, documentary filmmaker, Department Head of Performing Arts and Media Studies, University of Peradeniya

Chinthaka Bandura, award-winning Kandyan drummer, Department Head of Performing Arts, University of Colombo, Sri Palee Campus

Ranjan Hettiarachchi, Department Head of Media Studies, University of Colombo, Sri Palee Campus

Ananda Abeysekara, Associate Professor in the Department of Religion and Culture at Virginia Tech. He is also a member of the editorial board of the journal *Culture and Religion* (Routledge). Publications include: *The Politics of Postsecular Religion: Mourning Secular Futures* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).