

SEMINAR SERIES 2007

TUESDAY 19 JUNE

PROFESSOR BARBARA CAINE

Historical Studies, Monash University, HRC Visiting Fellow

*Biography and History*

At a time when the popularity of biography amongst both scholarly and general reader is immense, when academics in many different disciplines are talking about 'the biographical turn', and when one is able to purchase or read not only biographies of persons, but of countries, cities, fashions, cuisines, commodities and theories it is interesting to reflect on the changing relationship between history and biography. This paper will explore some of the different ways in which the similarities, differences and connections between biography and history have been understood and written about in the period from the late 18th century to the present. It will examine some of the changes within biography across this period, and at some of the debates that have occurred around the question of what it is appropriate for a biography to encompass. It will look at the ways that the establishment of history as a discipline tended to exclude biography and at the discussion of biography in a number of canonical texts on history. Finally it will analyze some of the new ways of thinking about biography and individual lives that have been evident in historical writing since the 1970s.

Biographical information

Barbara Caine is Professor of History and Head of the School of Historical Studies at Monash University. She is the author of several collective biographies including *Destined to be Wives: The Sisters of Beatrice Webb* (Oxford University Press, 1986), *Victorian Feminists*, (Oxford University Press, 1992) and most recently *Bombay to Bloomsbury: a biography the Stracheys, c 1850-1950* (Oxford University Press, 2005). She is currently writing a book on *Biography and History* for Palgrave Macmillan.

She has recently become interested in South African History, and particularly in the question of women's involvement in the struggle against apartheid. Her most recent publication in this area is 'Prisons as Spaces of friendship in Apartheid South Africa', *History Australia*, vol. 3, no 2, December 2006.

ALL WELCOME

Venue: Theatrette, Old Canberra House, Lennox Crossing, ANU  
Inquiries: Email: [administration.rsh@anu.edu.au](mailto:administration.rsh@anu.edu.au). Phone: 612 52700

