



ALEXANDER McCALL-SMITH



Place and year of birth: Bulawayo, Zimbabwe (24 August 1948)

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS OF HIS WORK:

- In Alexander McCall-Smith's series of novels "*The Sunday Philosophy Club*", the main character a middle-aged philosopher and amateur detective Isabel Dalhousie, evokes deep philosophical questions and an intensely human dimension that questions fundamental notions about ethical behaviour and life in general.
- McCall-Smith's decision to give up all professional commitments at the age of 57 to devote himself to writing fiction, highlights the fact that, as many cultural gerontologists have commented, the advanced age of life could be the time for greater personal and intellectual development, the ability to make more meaningful life choices, and the opportunity to achieve a better understanding of

oneself and others.

- Through the character of the previously mentioned professional (and vocational) philosopher and amateur detective Isabel Dalhousie, the author reflects on the need to question the inherent morality of our daily actions, expressions and thoughts, and how these can impact our lives and those of others.
- Elizabeth does not get involved in mysterious cases out of simple curiosity, but out of an irresistible urge to do what she thinks is right. The reason for this is her own theory of moral proximity, which she describes as "the basis of those obligations that arise when we are close enough to others to be able to witness or feel their needs, or when we are in some other way linked to their suffering. (*A Distant View of Everything* 2017: 160-161).

THE AUTHOR'S QUOTES TAKEN FROM PRIMARY SOURCES OR INTERVIEWS:

- "And that was where philosophy really did count: it set out the major choices behind all those practical day-to-day questions of charity and understanding and simple decency" (*The Lost Art of Gratitude* 2009: 84).
- "That was the best way of doing good, she thought; do it when the person for whom you are doing the deed is under heavy sedation and will never remember. So might one leave presents for others – while they were asleep or otherwise unaware of what you were doing." (*The Lost Art of Gratitude* 2009: 242)
- "People who are naturally good have to work at it. The goodness may be there, but they have to cultivate it, work to bring it out ... in order to become better people, we must practise." (*The Lost Art of Gratitude* 2009: 107-109).



- “I think goodness does exist. I think most of us find in our lives that we encounter people for the most part who are reasonably prosocial, whose lives aren't completely dysfunctional ... you don't have to portray the world as being a veil of tears and as being a bleak place in its entirety. That's not to say that one doesn't recognise that, but I suppose I'm just the sort of writer who works at that end of the spectrum and I think that's defensible enough.” (Alexander McCall-Smith - Interview for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2016)

PUBLICATIONS / COMMUNICATIONS

1- Volumes 2016-2019

Emma Domínguez-Rué and Linda Nierling, eds. (2016): *Ageing and Technology: Perspectives from the Social Sciences*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, ISBN 978-3-8376-2957-6

Núria Casado-Gual, Emma Domínguez-Rué and Brian Worsfold, eds. (2016): *Literary Creativity and the Older Woman Writer: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Bern: Peter Lang, ISBN 978-3-0343-2199-0

Núria Casado-Gual, Emma Domínguez-Rué and Maricel Oró-Piqueras, eds. (2019): *Re-discovering Age(ing): Narratives of Mentorship*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag. ISBN 978-3-8376-4396-1

2- Publications 2016-2019

Emma Domínguez-Rué (2018): The art of doing good. Aging, creativity and wisdom in the Isabel Dalhousie Novels. *Journal of Aging Studies* –Vol. 44 (pp.22-27), ISSN 0890-4065

Núria Casado-Gual, Emma Domínguez-Rué and Maricel Oró-Piqueras. (2019). Of Wisdom, Growth, and Gratitude: Revisiting the Mentor Figure within the Framework of Ageing Studies. In Núria Casado-Gual, Emma Domínguez-Rué and Maricel Oró-Piqueras, eds. *Re-discovering Age(ing): Narratives of Mentorship*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, pp. 9-20.

Emma Domínguez-Rué. (2019).Your Child of Sorts. In Núria Casado-Gual, Emma Domínguez-Rué and Maricel Oró-Piqueras, eds. *Re-discovering Age(ing): Narratives of Mentorship*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, p. 171.

Emma Domínguez-Rué. (2019). The Mirror Stage of Old Age. In Sarah Falcus, Raquel Medina and Aagje Swinnen (Eds.) *Encyclopedia of Gerontology and Population Aging*. Springer.

3- Conference papers 2016-2019

Emma Domínguez-Rué, Núria Casado Gual et al. (2016): The Creativity of the Older Woman Writer: Ten Case Studies. The SforAGE International Conference 'Envisioning a New World: Social Innovation for Active and Healthy Ageing', Barcelona (Spain) 2016.

Emma Domínguez-Rué (2016): Senior Techs: Ageing and Technology from the Perspective of the Social Sciences. The SforAGE International Conference 'Envisioning a New World: Social Innovation for Active and Healthy Ageing', Barcelona (Spain) 2016.

Emma Domínguez-Rué (2016): Reinventing Womanhood: Carolyn Heilbrun / Amanda Cross and Post-Menopausal Empowerment. The SforAGE International Conference 'Envisioning a New World: Social Innovation for Active and Healthy Ageing', Barcelona (Spain) 2016.



Emma Domínguez-Rué (2017): The Art of Doing Good. Ageing, Creativity and Wisdom in the Isabel Dalhousie Novels by Alexander McCall-Smith. 1st INDEST International Conference, Lleida (Spain) 2017.

Emma Domínguez-Rué (2017): So Miss Marple Got Engaged: Age Identity and Gender Normativity in *The Sunday Philosophy Club Series* by Alexander McCall-Smith. International Conference on Gender Studies – Identity, Alterity and Gender Normativity, Cambridge (UK) 2017.

Emma Domínguez-Rué (2018): Wise Choices in Late Life: Wisdom and Reinvention of the Self in the Isabel Dalhousie Novels by Alexander McCall-Smith. 'Mirror, Mirror: Perceptions, Deceptions and Reflections in Time' International Conference, London (UK) 2018.

Emma Domínguez-Rué (2018): Age Identity and Gender Normativity in Detective Fiction: the Amateur Sleuth. Hannover-Herrenhausen Symposium 'Perspectives of Cultural Ageing', Hannover, Germany 2018.

Emma Domínguez-Rué (2019): Ageing and Gender (Non)Conformity: the Amateur Sleuth and Alexander McCall-Smith's Isabel Dalhousie. International Conference on Gender Studies –Gender Non-Conformity, Oxford (UK) 2019.

By: Emma Domínguez-Rué edominguez@dal.udl.cat [<mailto:edominguez@dal.udl.cat>]