

In his class, student playwrights brought in scenes to be read by actors. “Sometimes Derek would let the scene go for a page, and sometimes he’d stop it after the first line,” she says. “He’d ask all sorts of questions about the first line, the first moment, what happened before the lights went on.”

“I remember a classmate of mine who literally could not get through the first line, because they spent 20 minutes of class time discussing what happened before that speech,” she says. “I watched my classmates just squirm and squirm, all of them wondering where this was going, and then there was the ‘aha moment,’ where we all got his point, which is that the play starts before anyone speaks. Derek didn’t explain—he *did*. And waited for us to catch up. And that could be terrifying if it was you. But he was right.”

Lopez recalls that in 2009 Walcott was visiting Boston and came to see a production of her play *From Orchids to Octopi* at the Central Square Theater in Cambridge. “He was lovely and gracious,” she says, “and then he said to me about the play, ‘That was a lot of words.’ That was so Derek, because it was absolutely spot-on, a very good critique that I would learn from, and it had his devilish humor.”

His approach to poetry class was similar. “Derek didn’t use class time for workshopping student poems,” says poet Kirun Kapur (GRS’00), who recently published the collection *Visiting Indira Gandhi’s Palmist* (Elixir Press, 2015).

“If you wanted to talk about something you’d

written, you had to go and see him in his office, which felt a bit like visiting the lion in his den. You had to screw up your courage. He knew this and relished it, I think. The writing of poetry was a brutally serious undertaking to him—something requiring plenty of courage. I was lucky enough to have many extraordinary conversations with him in his office. We were both from islands, and he never got tired of talking about the sea.”

Born in 1930 on the island of Saint Lucia in the West Indies, Walcott published his first poems as a teenager. He taught school at various places around the Caribbean after graduating from the University College of the West Indies in Jamaica.

The first of his collections to catch the attention of critics was *In a Green Night*, published in 1962. Among his friends and supporters over the years were Robert Lowell (Hon.’77), Joseph Brodsky, and Seamus Heaney, the latter two also Nobel laureates. Walcott was also a talented painter, and his watercolors of Caribbean scenes sometimes appeared on his book covers.

His first play was produced in 1950, and he founded the Trinidad Theatre Workshop (then called the Little Carib Theatre Workshop) in 1959. The troupe performed two of his plays at the Boston University Theatre in 1995, the Elliot Norton Award-winning *The Joker of Seville* and the Obie winner *Dream on Monkey Mountain*. Walcott hit Broadway in 1998, with *The Capeman*, a collaboration with Paul Simon.

## Game-Changing Foreign Correspondent and COM Dean

*Bernard Redmont reported on world events, moved the college forward* | BY TATIANA M. R. JOHNSON

As a broadcast journalist in Paris in 1968, Bernard S. Redmont was the first to report that North Vietnamese officials were willing to begin peace negotiations.

A foreign correspondent for 40 years, Redmont also covered Leon Trotsky’s assassination in Mexico, Juan Peron’s dictatorship in Argentina, and the Six-Day War in the Middle East, according to the *Washington Post*.

A former professor of journalism and dean emeritus of the College of Communication, Redmont died on January 23, 2017. He was 98.

He arrived at COM in early 1982, and was dean from 1983 to 1986. He led the college through curriculum reforms and a name change—from the School of Public Communication (SPC) to the College of Communication—a result of his 1983 long-range study of the school. He also helped pilot the continuing London Internship Programme in 1986.

In response to a 1985 call for proposals from the US government, Redmont proposed a project to train Afghan refugees as professional journalists in the wake of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. The training ultimately was held in Peshawar, Pakistan, near the Afghan border, in a joint



**Bernard Redmont, pictured here in Moscow, was a foreign correspondent for 40 years.**

project between the United States Information Agency (USIA) and BU. Redmont had favored an alternate proposal—to train the journalists at COM, in an academic and independent framework—and his disagreements over the project with John Silber (Hon.’95), then the University president, led to his resignation.

Caryl Rivers, a COM professor of journalism, recalls Redmont as “a man who cared deeply for journalism, both in his career and in his time in academia.”

Redmont served in the US Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, coordinating broadcasts to Latin America. A World War II veteran and recipient

# For Love of the Past and Present

*University Professor Herbert Mason celebrated voices of the ancient and modern worlds* | BY JESSICA ULLIAN

of a Purple Heart, he was a combat correspondent for the marines. After the war, he was the Latin America bureau chief for what would become *U.S. News & World Report*, and later was transferred to Paris, according to the *New York Times*.

In the early 1950s, Redmont was subpoenaed by the House Un-American Activities Committee to testify in one of the trials of William Remington, a Commerce Department official accused of being a Communist. After his refusal to name Remington a Communist cost him his job at *U.S. News*, he remained on the McCarthy-era blacklist for a full decade, and no American news outlet would hire him.

Claude Erbsen, a retired Associated Press vice president and director of world services, describes Redmont as “a man of absolute and unflinching integrity, which cost him dearly in the McCarthy era.”

Redmont worked for Agence France-Press, the Canadian Broadcasting Company, and as Paris bureau chief for Westinghouse Broadcasting Company (Group W). It was there that he broke the story that the North Vietnamese were willing to hold peace talks with the United States. He later received an Overseas Press Club Award for Best Radio Reporting from Abroad. He also worked at CBS News in Moscow and Paris before joining the BU faculty.

He was born Bernard Sidney Rothenberg. He earned an undergraduate degree from the City College of New York and a master’s degree from Columbia University’s school of journalism.

Those who knew Herbert Mason by reputation saw his retelling of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* in verse narrative, a finalist for a National Book Award in 1972, as evidence of his interest in ancient religion. His students and friends knew there was more to his appreciation of the ancient Mesopotamian narrative: its enduring celebration of friendship.

Mason, the William Goodwin Aurelio Professor of History and Religious Thought, a University Professor emeritus of history and religion, and a College of Arts & Sciences professor of history and religion, died on January 1, 2017, at age 84. Over decades at Boston University, he taught courses on subjects ranging from Sufism to Irish history, infusing his scholarly expertise with anecdotes and wisdom he’d gleaned from long relationships with collaborators and mentors. Such connections shaped his life and career and formed his abiding belief that the voices of the past were instrumental in understanding it.

“He believed history needed to be taught with the stories of the people who lived at that time,” says his wife, Jeanine Young-Mason (SON’74, SED’82). “It is the person’s voice that’s the real history.”

Mason’s early life was largely shaped at age seven by his father’s sudden death—a loss that forever linked him with the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, a narrative that



**Over decades at BU, Herbert Mason taught courses on subjects ranging from Sufism to Irish history, infusing his scholarly expertise with anecdotes and wisdom he’d gleaned from long relationships with collaborators and mentors.**

centers on a quest to conquer death in the name of love. After reading in English and French literatures, history, and philosophy as an undergraduate at Harvard, he moved to France, where an acquaintance introduced him to the great scholar of Islam Louis Massignon. Mason recounted their first meeting in his 1988 book about their relationship, *Memoir of a Friend*:

“He was standing upon my entering his study, but he

then sat down at his desk, on which there was a small typewriter and sheets of paper scattered about along with a book open on which he had been making notes with a pen still held in his left hand. ‘Yvonne tells me you are interested in Gilgamesh,’ he said in English.

‘Yes,’ I said shyly.

‘He went on a long journey in search of the secret of immortality to bring his friend Enkidu back to life.’

I said nothing but stared at him and waited for him to say more.

‘Eternal love is to be wrung from our inmost heart. I learned that fifty-one years ago when I lost a friend to death.’

I sat still staring at his parched lined face and sad eyes as he pointed slowly with his now empty left hand toward the window or to some place beyond.”