Central Queensland University

Donna Lee Brien

'Welcome creative subversions': Experiment and innovation in recent biographical writing

Abstract
While biography is popularly understood as a literature that tells straightforward, factual life stories, it is – as a literary form – the site of considerable experimentation. This article maps current biographical experimental practice and enquiry against the background of innovation during the twentieth century. This includes a discussion of the form and craft of biographical innovation, including the practical, theoretical and methodological issues involved, much of which has been contributed by working biographers who also reflect on biographical form through the lens of innovation in their own practice.
Keywords: Creative writing, Biography, Life writing, Literary innovation and experimentation

> Imagination is as much the biographer's right and duty as the novelist's
> – Michael Olmert (2000: C8)

Introduction

More than thirty years ago, biographer and literary critic Leon Edel eloquently expressed the central puzzle of writing biography: "every life takes its own form and a biographer must find the ideal and unique literary form that will express it" (qtd in Novarr 1986: 165). This declaration came at a particularly fertile time of biographical enquiry, after decades of discussion of the form and craft of biographical writing, including the theoretical, methodological and ethical issues involved, much of which was contributed by working biographers who also reflected on biographical form through the lens of innovation in their own practice. Paradoxically, although biography continues to be the site of considerable experimentation, it is currently widely understood as a literature that tells straightforward, factual stories of lives as written by someone else (Pearsall 1998: 175).

Biographical innovation: a brief historical review

The twentieth century brought considerable innovation to biography. Edmund Gosse's landmark *Father and Son* (1907) moved from Victorian hagiography to focus on the private lives and fallibility of its subjects, and Lytton Strachey's revolutionary *Eminent Victorians* (1918) ushered in a number of key features of modern biography – "candour; irony and satire … the techniques of fiction and Freudian psychology; and beauty of language and design" (Cline & Angier 2010: 57). Experiments followed by biographers including Virginia Woolf in

such works as *Orlando* (1928) and *Flush* (1933), who in 1927 wrote that "the biographer's imagination is always being stimulated to use the novelist's art of arrangement, suggestion, dramatic effect to expound the private life" (Woolf 1927: 155) and imaginative American biographers such as Catherine Drinker Bowen, who wrote of the necessity of the biography not following "that straight line that leads to some neat historical or moralistic pole … and ends up in the sterile part of history" (ctd in Kort 2007: 29). In *Ventilations: Being Biographical Asides*, theorist Hesketh Pearson (1877-1964) stressed the role of invention in biography: "the finest biographer can only tell the truth as he sees it, and the probability is that it will not be the truth as other people see it" (Pearson 1930: 85).

Edel's five volume life of Henry James (1953-72), Richard Ellman's *James Joyce* (1959) and George Painter's *Marcel Proust* (2 volumes, 1959 and 1963) followed in the immediate post-war period, both detailed and beautifully written volumes which drew new insights from close research into the pyschology of their subjects. Following on from biographical work by Sigmund Freud (on Leonardo da Vinci, 1910), which sought to understand the biographical subject through the application of psychological theories and approaches, has led to works classified under the term 'psychobiography' although this classification came much later (Runyan 1982, Schultz 2005) and both the technique and its results are contested (Elms 1994). In 1973, Norman Mailer wrote *Marilyn* (1973), which although conceived as a collection of photographs with a brief introduction by the writer, instead evolved into a self-reflective examination of not only Monroe's life, but also the mythology surrounding her, this narrative supported by the now-familiar images. Mailer utilised his novelist's skills to make psychobiographical sense of his subject, his aim, he stated, to provide "a literary hypothesis of a *possible* Marilyn Monroe who might fit most of the facts available" (qtd in Novarr 1986: 161). Mailer's research was criticised (especially his perfunctory references to Monroe's movies) and reviewers attacked his egotism (on the basis that some of the most engaging material in this biography comes when the author's own experience approached most closely, and personally, that of his subject), but the harshest scorn was reserved for Mailer's re-creations of his subject's thoughts and motivations.

The 1970s were particularly fertile in terms of stylistic innovation. Martin Duberman's *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* (1972), a study of an educational-artistic community, eschewed the usual linear chronological progression and also inserted a fictionalised version of the author into the narrative, a literary strategy that presaged Edmund Morris' controversial fabrication in *Dutch: A Memoir of Ronald Reagan* (1999) by almost thirty years (see Brien 2002). In 1974, British historian Norman Hampson's ingenious *The Life and Opinions of Maximilien Robespierre* was structured as a dialogue between the historian narrator and three modern fictional figures – a government official, a Communist party member and a Church of England minister – who argue revealingly about the interpretation of the meagre facts available about Robespierre's life. Such an approach followed logically from such earlier innovation as Frank Walker's biography of famed Italian composer, *The Man Verdi* (1962), which the author himself called a "biographical experiment" (xi), and where Verdi was depicted through a series of personal relationships including his benefactor and father in-law, pupils, librettist and others. In *Lewis Carroll: Une Vie* (Gattégno 1974), Jean Gattégno constructed Carroll's life through a series of thirty-seven biographical essays arranged alphabetically by thematic title.

Following such innovative practice and post-structuralist declarations that all writing was construction and invention, in 1984 Ira Nadel asked "To what

extent is fact necessary in a biography?" (Nadel 1984: 5), asserting the biographer's right to distort the factual record in order to make important psychological or artistic points. This notion climaxed in Bourdieu's essay 'The Biographical Illusion' (1984), which posited that the very idea of writing a coherent story of a coherent life was nonsensical. Foucault had foreshadowed this position in his *I, Pierre Riviere* (1975), which attempted to expose the process by which biographies are shaped and filtered through their authors' subjectivities. David Novarr's 1986 *Lines of Life: Theories of Biography, 1880-1970* provided a major post-1945 critical survey of the genre, and a scholarly language in which to discuss these and later innovations.

The influence of such theoretically-informed approaches also led to articulated expectations that biographers accept the impossibility of objectivity, deny their omnipotence and make their political, social, cultural and other motivations discernible in their texts, a position that led to considerable experimentation with form and content. This has been especially apparent in articulations about readers being expected to take a more active and conscious role in meaning-making in the biographies they consume. Gattégno's stated aim was, for instance, that readers would, as they progressed through the text, "gradually … discover [Carroll] … and so re-create him" (1974: 5).

The related trend of acknowledging biographers' limitations was exemplified in AJA Symons' *The Quest for Corvo* (1940), which AOJ Cockshut called "the autobiography of a biographer" (Cockshut 1989: 8). Brian Matthews' critically acclaimed *Louisa* (1987) highlighted the biographer's struggles and disappointments while attempting to narrate Louisa Lawson's story. This narrative device of author-as-character has continued to attract such biographers as Ian Hamilton (*In Search of J.D. Salinger* 1988) and Alan Close (*The Australian Love Letters of Raymond Chandler* 1995) but, as much of the criticism of Morris' *Dutch* suggested, such authorial self-acknowledgement can be seen by readers as self-important posturing and must be used with discretion. When readers judge this strategy as successful, it is usually when the biographers' interruptions of the biographical narrative attempt to render more apparent the nature of their research and how they are constructing their narratives, as in such works as Peter Ackroyd's *Dickens* (1990). Peter Stephen Jungk's *Franz Werfel: A Life in Prague, Vienna, and Hollywood* (1990) adds an italicised passage at the end of each chapter that identifies the gaps in his knowledge, areas he could not investigate, and his own estimates of his success in creating the subject and his past. Richard Holmes' *Coleridge: Early Visions* (1990) uses footnotes to take this acknowledgement of the biographer's role one step further, "not to document or expand on the text … [but] as a third point of view mediating between the subject and the biographer" (Rollyson 2007: 5). In *Out of Sheer Rage: In the Shadow of D.H. Lawrence* (Dyer 1997), Geoff Dyer carries this trope to perhaps its fullest extent, writing a memoir about his failed biographical attempt, producing a speculative biography of Lawrence in the process, a form which had been rehearsed in Ellen Wilson's recreation of artist Mary Cassatt's emotional life in her *American Painter in Paris* (1971).

Biographers have also tested the efficacy of not only inserting reproductions of texts, photographs, various documents, artworks and other materials into their biographies, but also using these as integral components of their narratives. Penelope Niven's *Carl Sandburg: Adventures of a Poet* (2003) is a brief biography intended for children that features illustrations by award-winning Marc Nadel to the point where Nadel functions "virtually as co-author" (Rollyson 2004: 60). Candace Fleming's *Ben Franklin's Almanac: Being a True Account of the Good Gentleman's Life* (2003), another biography for young readers, is organised into a set of thematic areas that are each presented as a

collage of snippets of Franklin's prose, etchings, sketches, cartoons and other primary documents, designed in homage to past almanacs. Recipes are often added in, or at the end of, chapters in food-related biographies (Brien 2011) and even prayers can form a component of biographical texts, as in David Robertson's *Awakening: The Life and Ministry of Robert Murray McCheyne* (2003), where each chapter concludes with questions reflecting on the life of this influential Scottish evangelical pastor and poet, and a suitable prayer.

The subject chosen for biographical study has also been a rich area of innovation. From Virginia Woolf's *Flush: A Biography* (1933), a biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning told though the life story of her pet cocker spaniel, the choice of *who* (or *what*) to write about has often been as experimental as *how* this life was written. This was particularly so for works classified as feminist biography, which emphasise the importance of both ordinary women's life experience and narrating important, but hitherto hidden, lives. An early example is Diane Johnson's National Book Award-nominated biography of Mary Ellen Meredith, wife of writer George Meredith and a poet in her own right, although she often published under her husband's name (Brown 2002), *The True History of the First Mrs. Meredith and Other Lesser Lives* (Johnson 1972). Significant numbers of this type of 'lesser lives' biography followed and continue to be published. Biographies of life partnerships and other relationships are a related topic, as – for instance – in Nigel Nicolson's *Portrait of a Marriage* (1973), which narrates his parents' marriage from their individual points of view, Phyllis Rose's *Parallel Lives: Five Victorian Marriages* (1983) and Katie Roiphe's *Uncommon Arrangements: Seven Portraits of Married Life in London Literary Circles 1910-1939* (2007), which examines the unusual unions of Vera Brittain and George Catlin, Katherine Mansfield and John Middleton Murray, HG and Jane Wells, Elizabeth von Arnim and John Francis Russell, Clive and Vanessa Bell, Ottoline and Philip Morrell, and Radclyffe Hall and Una Troubridge.

This is not a complete survey of past biographical innovation (and does not include technical innovations including in the digital realm) but is, rather, an attempt to indicate some of the range and extent of biographical experimentation up to the opening of this new century. All these authors and author-scholars, however, embody the recognition that biography is imprecise and limited by its very nature, the world, as Hayden White observed, not "present[ing] itself to perception in the form of well-made stories, with central subjects, proper beginnings, middles and ends" (White 1981: 23). Biographers recognise that they construct stories from the data they collect, forcing the disordered and vast complexity of an actual life into a neat literary form and, importantly, that the life thus presented only appears authentic and life-like to readers because they accept, and endorse, this literary convention.

Recent British biography

Despite this acknowledgement of creative construction, debates continue over the validity of experiment and innovation in biography. Inevitably, perhaps, these debates repeat main threads of argument. The first positions biographical fact as being allied to 'truth', while any invention/innovation is, therefore, inevitably related to fiction and, therefore, falsity. The second is to ally conventional forms and practices with ideas of 'solid' history, fact and truth (and 'good' biography), meaning that any experimentation or innovation is understood as leading to falsity, manipulation, underhandedness and a degradation of the form.

An interesting exception to this way of thinking has been the warm reception of the work of a number of British narratively focused biographers – writers who include Peter Ackroyd, Victoria Glendinning, Michael Holroyd, Hilary Spurling and Andrew Motion, and who use a range of literary techniques in their work, yet still produce what are (largely) accepted as non-fiction biographies by a varied readership. Ackroyd, for instance, whose acclaimed novels slide between fact and invention to present an unconventional view of history, has also produced a series of technically innovative and equally admired biographies. In his above-mentioned biography of Charles Dickens, Ackroyd's dramatised sequences were largely accepted by critics as providing additional, and valid, perspectives on Dickens' life and work – see, for example, reviews by Lee (1991), Lynn (1991), Mysak (1991), Ott (1991) and Klinkenborg (1993). Ackroyd has stated that he considers all his prose – whether biography, poetry, fiction or criticism – simply as 'writing' and the result of the same creative impulse, and does not see biography and fiction as "separate activities":

> For me, they are part of the same undertaking … simply aspects of the same process … I don't think they are different genres … Maybe they are for the reader, but for me they are not. (qtd in Onega 1996: 212-13)

Ackroyd's *London: The Biography* (2000) is the perfect amalgam of such genre-crossing ingenuity. As Andrew Holgate has written, this text is "history written by a novelist, passionate … and impressionistic" (qtd in Moss 2000b). Such impressionistic imagining does not, however, please all critics. Writing of Ackroyd's *The Life of Thomas More*, for instance, Michael Glover felt the book "leaves us with the feeling that this time Ackroyd might have done better to leave his subject to the historians" (Glover 1998: 47). Biographer Michael Holroyd, whose work has also been criticised in these terms, has posited a position for biography as *between* the genres of fiction and history, although acknowledging the discomfort that this can bring:

> Between history and the novel lies biography, their unwanted offspring, which has brought a great embarrassment to them both. In the historian's view a biography is a kind of frogspawn – it takes ten thousand biographies to make one small history. (Holroyd 2002: 8)

Wainewright the Poisoner (2000)

Andrew Motion's *Wainewright the Poisoner* (2000) makes an interesting case study in this context. The United Kingdom's Poet Laureate from 1999 to 2009, Motion is also known as a novelist, but has been most awarded for his biographies. After studying English at University College, Oxford, where WH Auden was one of his teachers (Crace 2005), Motion taught English at the University of Hull (1976-1980) at which time he had his first volume of poetry published and met poet (and university librarian) Philip Larkin. Motion's first biography was a group biography, *The Lamberts: George, Constant and Kit* (1986), of three generations of a creative, but troubled, family. This biography was extremely well received, winning the Somerset Maugham Award, presented by the Society of Authors to the best writer or writers under the age of thirty-five (Society of Authors 2013). His second biography, *Philip Larkin: A Writer's Life* (1993), published almost a decade after he was appointed one of the poet's literary executors following his death in 1985, won the Whitbread Prize for Biography, fulfilling the criteria of not only being well written but

also "enjoyable" reading (Costa Book Awards 2013). Motion's *Keats: A Biography* (1997) was more unevenly received by critics and readers. This was not, however, due to any of Motion's biographical strategies, but instead mainly to the way Motion imaged his subject as far more actively engaged with his life and times than previous, more traditionally Romantic portraits – nursing his tubercular mother and brother, undertaking training to be a surgeon and participating in radical politics. Motion's close reading of Keats' letters was also both admired and criticised.

After these three significant biographies, Motion cast his life of Thomas Griffiths Wainewright (1797-1847) as an openly fictionalised and, therefore, considerably experimental biography. Wainewright is a fascinating subject – a painter and author who moved in famous circles (friend of Blake, Byron, Keats, Hazlitt and Fuseli among others) and made significant financial gains each time his close relatives died in suspicious circumstances. Wainewright never admitted to murder, but circumstantial evidence (obvious motivation, possession of books on poison, and his special interest in the recently developed strychnine, which could not then be reliably detected at autopsy) led to his arrest, conviction (for forgery) and transportation for life to Van Diemen's Land in 1837. Wainewright died there a decade later after working on a chain gang, as a hospital orderly and, finally, as a portrait painter.

In *Wainewright the Poisoner*, Motion utilises the available historical evidence together with his considerable knowledge of the Romantic period to concoct a 'Confession' – a chronological, first-person narrative, which purports to have been written by Wainewright himself shortly before his death. Motion follows each of the twenty-one chapters of Wainewright's confession with a series of detailed, in-text numbered, third-person historical notes, a structural framework which is as elucidating as it is elegant. In the first person component, Motion has Wainewright present himself as blameless victim who not only insists on the truth of his narrative, but also the limitations of the autobiographical enterprise:

> I shall begin this confession by insisting on what a less sceptical age would accept without question. It is the truth. Not the whole truth (for such a thing is impossible), and not the only truth (ditto), but not a lie. (3)

The cool-voiced biographer's notes which follow each instalment of the confession provides evidence which sometimes supports, but at others questions, 'Wainewright's' version of events.

Although in his illuminating introductory essay – which is, in itself, a significant contribution to the literature on biographical innovation – Motion asserts his substantial commentary (the notes range in length from single sentences to short essays and comprise a third of the biographical text) is not intended to "correct" the confession (xviii), it does sometimes refute Wainewright's narrative, bringing known facts to light and noting omissions and ambiguities. The notes also contain discussion of how the available evidence – the newspaper reports and legal records as well as Wainewright's own letters, private papers, literary publications, lengthy ticket-of-leave application, paintings and even a fictionalised account of his life that he published in 1825 [1] – is, in itself, often contradictory. This documentary record was also incomplete as most of his paintings, drawings and letters were destroyed or lost. Although a number of factual and fictionalised biographical studies have been produced – including biographical (Wilde 1889, Muriel 1942, Hodgman 1967) and fictional characterisations in works by Dickens, Bulwer-Lytton and Hal Porter – Motion posits that many of these studies are

untrustworthy and, moreover, discusses how speculation about Wainewright's crimes has now become accepted fact due to these recreations (279-93).

Rollyson has noted that when there have been repeated biographies of the same subject some biographers "begin to experiment with their form, knowing that the basic facts are now in the public domain" (2007: 6), and many critics appreciated Motion's innovation. In the *Washington Times*, Lucy Moore wrote that she understood that Motion "clearly felt that neither straight biography nor pure fiction would do Wainewright's complexities justice, and so he combined the two genres", calling the result "stunning" (Moore 2000). *The Sunday Times* reviewer, John Carey, found that *Wainewright* was "brilliantly innovative, gripping, intricately researched" and thus "does justice to its subject at last" (qtd in Moss 2000a) while Michael Spinella recognised that Motion had crafted "a fascinating tale as complex and compelling as if Wainewright himself had written it" (Spinella 2000).

A number of critics noted that the innovation did not decrease the texts' value as biography, noting that it was a "genuine tour de force, and on a non-fictional level, a telling portrait of a strange, intriguing and repellant man" (Fallon 2000). Alex Dick went further to suggest that Motion was trying to "reinvent biography" (Dick 2000), and Bill Kent called the work "a marvellous literary hybrid … a subversive meditation on how, for a biographer, facts and speculation are really opposite sides of the same coin (Kent 2000). While Richard Freadman found Motion's notes problematic and dislocating,

> Good biographies admit ambiguity; but this one produces a kind of irresolution, a disjunction between the 'poisoner's' putative point of view and the biographer's implicit claim to final authority, that I found ultimately unproductive... (Freadman 2000: 7)

others felt that the tension between the confession and the notes created a space where readers could form their own impressions of Wainewright and even that the very ambiguity of the text was its strong point.

The openly invented nature of Wainewright's confession prompted some resistance to classifying Motion's work as biography. Jonathan Bate wrote in the *Independent* that *Wainewright* was "a broken-backed compromise" (qtd in Moss 2000a), Ben Winters called it "odd pseudo-biography" (Winters 2000), while Charles Saumarez Smith posited in the *Observer* that *Wainewright* fell "between the different literary requirements of fiction and of history" (qtd in Moss 2000a). Overall, however, this criticism was mild compared with the virulence Morris' fictionalised biography of Ronald Reagan had attracted when it was published the year before. Although some of this variance in reception was, no doubt, due to the difference in subject matter – a long dead, unknown English Romantic artist and convicted criminal as compared to a (then) living ex-President of the United States – I believe it was also, in large part, due to the clarity with which Motion revealed his technique. He always clearly delineated inarguable fact from what was based on more disputable evidence and what was his own speculative invention, describing in his foreword:

> The great majority of scenes and encounters in the Confession, all the friendships, and all the main events, actually happened. Often … I have used contemporary accounts, weaving them together with Wainewright's own words to make a consecutive narrative… At other times, when no word from Wainewright survives … I have used other people's accounts of such

> experiences, and let myself add things that are typical and appropriate. (xviii)

The notes further clarified exactly what fitted into which category.

Motion accepted that the voice he gave Wainewright was "a confection", but also argued that it was "the one I would have tried to characterize by far more conventional means, had I decided to write a more familiar sort of biography" (xviii). Indeed, one of the strengths of Motion's work is the act of ventriloquy by which he creates a persuasively believable, as well as historically and culturally accurate, voice for his subject. Cast in credible Romantic period speech, this voice makes manifest Wainewright's erudition, energy and charm, as well as his vanity and callousness in a manner that many of the previous studies had not been able to do. It is largely through this (fictionalised) voice that Motion is able to represent Wainewright as a complex human being, laudably achieving his aim of "bringing him back to life as a plausible and dynamic force" (xviii). Ventriloquising, or providing a believable voice for a historical character comes from the term 'literary ventriloquism' coined by David Lodge in 1987 for how novelists create (and readers 'hear') the various voices in literary works (Lodge 1987: 100). While biographies including, as Freadman has noted, Gertrude Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933) have effectively employed varieties of biographical ventriloquism, it is more usually employed by fiction writers. Interestingly, when skilled fiction writers employ this technique – as Peter Carey did in his *The True History of the Kelly Gang* (2000) – their resulting works are often perceived as much as biography-histories as imaginative pieces. Carey uses as its central conceit the (invented) document of which Kelly biographers dream, an autobiographical account supposedly written by the bushranger, the fictionalised voice so credible that historians debated its authenticity. This was despite Carey making no claims for the historical accuracy of his work.

A number of reviewers found *Wainewright* so innovative that it questioned "the very nature of biography itself" (Kuritzky 2000). Motion supported such assertions with comments that he felt it was "high time that there was a proper well-ventilated conversation about what on earth biography thinks it's doing" (qtd in Wagner 2000) and his statement in *Wainewright*'s foreword that he wanted to address "matters that biography normally only implies" (xix). These are declarations that some thought dismissive of other significant innovations in biographical writing, although they do not detract from Motion's work as a powerful endorsement of the possibilities inherent in fictionalising fact-based biography. Motion has written that

> I want my writing to be as clear as water. No ornate language; very few obvious tricks. I want readers to be able to see all the way down through its surfaces into the swamp. I want them to feel they're in a world they thought they knew, but which turns out to be stranger, more charged, more disturbed than they realised. In truth, creating this world is a more theatrical operation than the writing admits (qtd in British Council 2011).

For all these reasons, I believe Motion's biographical portrait and discussion of biography in *Wainewright the Poisoner* was a landmark moment of high and successful experimentation in recent biographical writing. Other examples have followed and, while there is not space here to survey this entire territory, a number of representative categories and some examples will be discussed below.

Recent experimental biographies

The surprise bestseller *Cod: The Biography of a Fish that Changed the World* (Kurlansky 1997) spawned a series of genre-stretching studies of non-human (and particularly food) subjects (see Brien 2010a), while biographies of place were also prominent at the end of the twentieth century. These included John Birmingham's *Leviathan*: *The Unauthorised Biography of Sydney* (1999), Eric Rolls' *Australia: A Biography* (2000) and Ackroyd's *London: The Biography* (2000). Some of these projects, Rolls' and Ackroyd's for instance, are monumental in scope and could be classified as histories in the Annales School style such as Le Roy Ladurie's epic *Montaillou* (1980). Others, such as Carola Hicks' acclaimed biographies of art objects, agree with Kopytoff's assertion – following Appadurai's proposal that objects possess their own 'biographies' which need to be researched and expressed (Appadurai 1986) – that such inquiry can reveal not only information about the objects under consideration and the times in which they were used, but also much about such texts' readers, who examine their "cultural … aesthetic, historical, and even political" responses to these narratives while reading them (Kopytoff 1986: 67). Hicks' *The Bayeux Tapestry: The Life Story of a Masterpiece* (2006) traces the tapestry's manufacture and how it has been used and interpreted, *The King's Glass: A Story of Tudor Power and Secret Art* (2007) explains why the design of the windows of Cambridge's King's College Chapel altered during the decades of their manufacture due to political events, while the posthumously published *Girl in a Green Gown: The History and Mystery of the Arnolfini Portrait* (2011) relates the story surrounding the creation of, and subsequent history behind, Jan van Eyck's masterpiece. Researching and writing such biographies of 'things', an activity producing what are known as 'object biographies', has provided a rich vein of such work, which include subjects as diverse as MG Lord's study of the Barbie doll (1994) alongside archeological and museum objects (Gosden & Marshall 1999), jewels (Saunders 1999) and restaurants (Brien 2010b).

Recent literary-related biographical studies which move well beyond the literature and lives of its authors to include analyses of popular culture include such volumes as Claire Harman's *Jane's Fame: How Jane Austen Conquered the World* (2009) which uses a more conventional biographical study as the basis for an exploration of the ongoing revival of Austen's works including in film and television adaptations and novelisations, how Austen has been portrayed in these and other productions, and how her name has been used to sell a wide range of products. David Ellis' *Death and the Author: How D.H. Lawrence Died, and Was Remembered* – which he describes as an "experiment in biography" (Ellis 2008: xii) – is a moving account of Lawrence's dying days and the fate of both his work and reputation after his death. Ellis, author of the well regarded third and final volume of the Cambridge series, *D.H. Lawrence: Dying Game 1922-30* (1998), also includes a narrative account of his own research alongside a series of reflections on death and dying more generally. These range from musings on changing attitudes to death and what it means to a patient to be terminally ill, as well as other matters as diverse as the role of religion in modern life and the consequences of dying without a will. The medical aspects of the tuberculosis Lawrence and other consumptive writers suffered at that time, including the sometimes horrifying descriptions of 1920s treatments, ensured this biography appealed to a broad readership and it was, indeed, reviewed in medical as well as literary publications. In his positive assessment in the *British Medical Journal*, Theodore Dalrymple noted the work caused him to positively revise his opinion of Lawrence (Dalrymple 2008). Although Ellis' narrative always keeps Lawrence as the main subject focus, it also, as Peter Balbert describes, "seamlessly radiates outward to connect with … literature, theology, psychology, philosophy and medicine (Balbert 2009:

376). This combination creates, that reviewer noted, "nothing less than a masterpiece of biography, intellectual history, and medical inquiry … a study that is simultaneously wide-ranging and sharply focused" (2009: 375). Reviewers generally agreed, finding the subject matter a strength of the work, and one that increased its significance (see, for example, Glendinning 2008, Poole 2008).

Winner of the Whitbread Award for Biography in the year it was published, Alexander Masters' *Stuart: A Life Backwards* (2005) follows on from feminist and other such 'lesser lives' biography as well as the memoir 'boom' in the current trend of profiling 'ordinary' lives. Written in commemoration of his friend, an activist who had once been both homeless and a violent criminal, Masters attested that a traditional chronological structure, beginning in childhood, resulted in a text without dramatic interest that also did not mimetically reflect its subject: "It bored me to tears ... Stuart [Shorter] was the opposite of orderly: a chaotic, outrageous, alcoholic sociopath" (ctd in Gilles 2009: 89). Masters credits Shorter with the solution to structure the book "like a murder mystery", starting near the end of the 'story' when the biographer met his subject, then charting backwards to Shorter's childhood in order to explain "what murdered the boy I [Shorter] was" (ctd. in Gilles 2009: 89). This deceptively simple narrative strategy was much praised, however it is relatively rare in both fiction and non-fiction. The complexity of such "retrograde" narrative (Genette 1983: 37) has been described:

> the procedure of telling-in-reverse offers a range of unexpected and unconventional perspectives… Stressing how and why rather than what, retrograde narrative engages readers by supplying results before causes, sustaining curiosity when the later stages of events are known, but exploiting the characters' relative ignorance of what lies ahead of them, and forcing readers to confront their own processes of response and memory, to make sense of material already presented. (Ireland 2010: 29)

Masters' text has also been noted for its inclusion of reproductions of drawings, photographs, newspaper articles and extracts from Shorter's diary (Nørgaard 2009), the final of which are very revealing not only in terms of their content, but also of Shorter's state of mind as revealed in his penmanship and other features (Nørgaard 2009: 148), however, it is the choice of subject – one of Britain's underclass, a homeless man with many of the problems of that way of life (alcoholism, drug-addiction, crime, violence and suicide) – that was most lauded in reviews. Gary Morse, for instance, noted as the book's "greatest triumph" that it presents "an intimate, poignant, if often disturbing view of one homeless man in England … in all of his complexities and contradictions, his strengths and weaknesses" (Morse 2007). The book was so revealing that although not written specifically for psychologists or professionals of any discipline – or perhaps because it was not – it has been identified as offering insights to a wide range of care workers:

> researchers and practitioners in the area of homelessness, for community mental health providers, and for therapists who work with challenging-to-serve clients … particularly illuminating for psychologists who serve clients with co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders, personality disorders, and history of childhood sexual abuse. (Morse 2007)

Other recent innovative biographies seek to present known figures in new ways, as in Frances Wilson's *The Ballad of Dorothy Wordsworth* (2008), which focuses on the information in the subject's journals when she lived with her brother at Dove Cottage in Grasmere from 1799 to 1802, and Sally Cline's *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise* (2003), which argues that Zelda was an accomplished artist in her own right (she was a writer, dancer and painter) and her mental illness was largely a result of thwarted ambition and exploitation. Cline not only details the occasions her famous husband used her work without attribution (publishing a number of her stories under his name and including passages from her letters in his works) but also Zelda's distress regarding this appropriation. Recent genre hybrids are another type of biographical experimentation, and include Kate Summerscale's *Suspicions of Mr Whicher: Or the Murder at Road Hill House* (2008), which blends group biography with family history, and narrates this in the style of the country-house murder mystery.

Concluding remarks: biographical conjecture and biographical memoir

Despite Nikolaou's judgement that a softening of "definitional boundaries between fiction and life-writing [is creating] welcome creative subversions" (Nikolau 2006: 20), biographies which openly veer into conjecture – particularly in terms of discussing private lives, thoughts, emotions and motivations – often attract criticism. This may, however, be in the process of changing. The term 'speculative' was used openly by Steven Scobie, author of a landmark critical study of Bob Dylan's work (1991), in the title of his book-length biographical poem, *And Forget My Name: A Speculative Biography of Bob Dylan* in 1999. Focusing on the musician's early years, this self-described "imaginative and semi-fictional" work proclaims that while "details of places, names, and specific events are true … it is the poet's interpretation that transforms the work from biography into art" (Scobie 1999: back cover). In this volume, Scobie speculates on his subject's emotions and motives to try to discover what he describes as the "deeper truth" under the surface of the facts (1999: back cover), and this attempt was favourably reviewed. Julia Blackburn's *Old Man Goya* (2002), an openly speculative biography of artist Goya's final years, mixes memoir and meditations on travel with highly personal responses to his art, and has also been very positively received by both literary critics and readers. Highly speculative work like Paula Gunn Allen's *Pocohontas: Medicine Woman, Spy, Entrepreneur Diplomat* (2003) continues this trend, both acknowledging the lack of evidence around the subject and her motivations, but nevertheless asserting a well-rounded life for Pocohontas in active opposition to the "Disney diet of true love, romance and talking cartoon animals" (Cooper 2005: 151). Allen, moreover, innovatively uses Native American oral history and other information as source material. Duncan Hamilton goes so far as to title his extremely entertaining and surprisingly poignant speculative biography of a Victorian jewel thief, *The Unreliable Life of Harry the Valet* (2011).

Other authors also signal that there is still more room for biography to expand and develop. One of these areas is the biographical memoir – where the biographical narrative focuses on an element or discrete time frame of the life in question. Paula Byrne, writing about her biography of Evelyn Waugh, *Mad World: Evelyn Waugh and the Secrets of Brideshead* (2010), which is structured by linking events in the author's life to his famed novel *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), classifies these as "partial life biographies" and states she is convinced they "are the way of the future" (Byrne 2010: 376). For Byrne it is not, however, an either/or proposition: "there will always be a place for the 'cradle

to grave' biography. I think that the two can happily co-exist" (376). This kind of partial version of the group biography saw another, further elaboration in Michael Holroyd's wonderful biography of a series of women, *A Book of Secrets: Illegitimate Daughters, Absent Fathers* (2010) which DJ Taylor, writing in *The Literary Review*, described as "nothing less, in fact, than an attempt to mark out, and then gamely transgress, at least half-a-dozen boundaries that a previous generation of biographers would have hesitated to cross" (Taylor 2010: 20). In this work, Holroyd also provides a very lyrical exposition on his role as a biographer, what Jane Shilling characterised as "an ode to the biographer's craft" (Shilling 2010). Others appreciated this text which ranges over a number of linked lives over two centuries and their connection to an ornate Italian villa, reviewers calling it "a book of singular fascination" (Taylor 2010), "poignant" (Shilling 2010), "glowing" (Bakewell 2010) and "magical" (Appignanesi 2010).

Carole Angier has recently asserted that "In biography's house there are many mansions. As long as there are books, there will be room for us all" (Angier 2010: 60). All writers and readers of innovative biography should hope so.

Notes

[1] Wainewright's fictionalised account of his life, titled *Some Passages In The Life Etc Of Egomet Bonmot, Esq, Edited By Mr Mwaughmaim, And Now First Published By Me*, was published in *The London Magazine* in 1825, under his nom-de-plume, 'Egomet Bonmot'. return to text

Works cited

Ackroyd, P 1990 *Dickens*, Sinclair-Stevenson, London return to text

Ackroyd, P 2000 *London: the biography*, Chatto & Windus, London return to text

Allen, P Gunn 2003 *Pocohontas: medicine woman, spy, entrepreneur, diplomat*, HarperSanFrancisco, San Francisco return to text

Andrew Motion Official Website 2010 'Biography and books': http://www.uktouring.org.uk/andrewmotion/books.htm (accessed 1 May 2013)

Angier, C 2010 'Tradition: biography', in S Cline & C Angier (eds) *The Arvon book of life writing: writing biography, autobiography and memoir*, Methuen Drama, London: 47-61 return to text

Appadurai, A 1986, repub 2003 *The social life of things: commodities in cultural perspectives*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge return to text

Appignanesi, L 2010 'An Italian villa unites aristocratic characters from different ages in this magical book: *A book of secrets: illegitimate daughters, absent fathers* by Michael Holroyd [review]', *The Observer* (31 October): http://www.guardian.co.uk/profile/lisaappignanesi (accessed 1 May 2013) return to text

Bakewell, S 2010 'A dream-like villa in Italy unites the women into whom Michael Holroyd breathes warmth and life in this glowing work: *A book of secrets* by Michael Holroyd [review]' *Sunday Times* (31 October): http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/culture/books/non_fiction/article431481.ece (accessed 1 May 2013) return to text

Balbert, P 2009 'DH Lawrence & death', *English literature in transition, 1880-1920* 52, 3: 375-80 return to text

Birmingham, J 1999 *Leviathan*: *the unauthorised biography of Sydney*, Random House, Milsons Point return to text

Blackburn, J 2002 *Old man Goya*, Jonathon Cape, London return to text

Bourdieu, P 1984 'L'Illusion biographique', Paris, pub 1987 'The biographical illusion', *Working papers and proceedings of the center for psychosocial studies* 14: 1-7 return to text

Brien, DL 2002 'Being honest about lying: defining the limits of auto/biographical lying', *TEXT: journal of the Australian association of writing programs* 6, 1: http://www.textjournal.com.au/april02/brien.htm (accessed 1 May 2013) return to text

Brien, DL 2010a '"Porky times": a brief gastrobiography of New York's The spotted pig', *M/C journal* 13, 5 (October): at http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/290 (accessed 1 May 2013) return to text

Brien, DL 2010b 'Rewriting a national cultural food icon: a gastrobiography of Vegemite', *ReWriting the menu*, *TEXT: journal of writing and writing courses*, Special issue 9 (October): http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue9/Brien.pdf (accessed 1 May 2013) return to text

Brien, DL 2011 'Pathways into an "elaborate ecosystem": ways of categorising the food memoir', *TEXT: journal of writing and writing courses* 15, 2 (October): http://www.textjournal.com.au/oct11/brien.htm (accessed 1 May 2013) return to text

British Council 2011 'Literature: Andrew Motion': http://literature.britishcouncil.org/andrew-motion (accessed 1 May 2013) return to text

Brown, S 2002 'Diane Johnson 1934-', in L Champion & R Austin (eds) *Contemporary American women fiction writers: an A-To-Z guide*, Greenwood Press, Westport, CT: 154-58 return to text

Byrne, P 2010 *Mad world: Evelyn Waugh and the secrets of Brideshead*, HarperPress/Harper Collins, London return to text

Carey, P 2000 *True history of the Kelly gang*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia return to text

Clifford, JL ed 1962 *Biography as an art*, Oxford University Press, London

Cline, S 2003 *Zelda Fitzgerald: her voice in paradise*, Arcade, New York return to text

Cline, S & C Angier 2010 *The Arvon book of life writing: writing biography, autobiography and memoir*, Methuen Drama, London return to text

Close, A 1995 *The Australian love letters of Raymond Chandler*, McPhee Gribble Penguin, Ringwood return to text

Cockshut, AOJ 1989 'AJA Symons' *The quest for Corvo*' in J Meyers (ed) *The biographer's art: new essays*, New Amsterdam, New York return to text

Cooper, N 2005 '*Pocahontas: medicine woman, spy, entrepreneur, diplomat*. Paula Gunn Allen', *Atlantis: critical studies in gender, culture & social justice* 29: 2: 151-52 return to text

Costa Book Awards 2013 'Past winners': http://www.costabookawards.com/archive.aspx (accessed 1 May 2013) return to text

Crace, J 2005 'Andrew Motion: Mr Speaker', *The Guardian* (13 December): http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2005/dec/13/highereducationprofile.highereducation (accessed 1 May 2013) return to text

Dalrymple, T 2008 'The death of the author', *British medical journal* 337, 25 (November, a2717): http://www.bmj.com/content/337/bmj.a2717 (accessed 1 May 2013) return to text

Dick, A 2000 'Andrew Motion, *Wainewright the poisoner*' [review], *Romanticism on the net*, 20 (November): http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/005952ar (accessed 1 May 2013) return to text

Duberman, M 1972 *Black mountain: an exploration in community*, EP Dutton, New York (reprint ed 1993) return to text

Dyer, G 1997 *Out of sheer rage: in the shadow of D.H. Lawrence*, Little, Brown, London return to text

Edel, L 1953 *Henry James: The Untried Years 1843-1870*, Hart-Davis, London; 1962 *Henry James: The Conquest of London 1870-1881*, Lippincott, Philadelphia; 1962 *Henry James: The Middle Years 1882-1895*, Lippincott, Philadelphia; 1969 *Henry James: The Treacherous Years 1895-1901*, Lippincott, Philadelphia; 1972 *Henry James: The Master 1901-1916*, Lippincott, Philadelphia return to text

Ellis, D 1998 *DH Lawrence: dying game 1922-30*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge return to text

Ellis, D 2008 *Death and the author: how DH Lawrence died, and was remembered*, Oxford University Press, Oxford return to text

Ellman, R 1959 *James Joyce*, Oxford University Press, Oxford (rev ed. 1982) return to text

Elms, AC 1994 *Uncovering lives: the uneasy alliance between biography and psychology*, Oxford University Press, Oxford return to text

Fallon, F 2000 'The poisoner's handbook', *Irish times* (19 February): http://www.irishtimes.com (accessed 1 May 2013) return to text

Fleming, C 2003 *Ben Franklin's almanac: being a true account of the good gentleman's life*, Atheneum/Anne Schwartz Books, New York return to text

Foucault, M (ed) 1975, pub 1982 *I, Pierre Riviere, having slaughtered my mother, my sister, and my brother: a case of parricide in the 19th century*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln NE return to text

Freud, S 1910 *Leonardo da Vinci and a memory of his childhood*, in James Strachey (ed & trans) 1957 *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* 11, Hogarth Press, London return to text

Freadman, R 2000 'Prose and cons of a bizarre life' [review: *Wainewright the Poisoner*], *The Age* (27 May): Saturday Extra 7 return to text

Gattégno, J 1974 *Lewis Carroll: une vie*, Paris: Le Seuil; pub as 1976 *Lewis Carroll: fragments of a looking-glass*, Crowell, New York; 1977 *Lewis Carroll: fragments of a looking-glass, from Alice to Zeno*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney return to text

Genette, G 1983 *Narrative discourse: an essay in method*, trans JE Lewin, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY (1st pub 1972, in English 1980) return to text

Gilles, M 2009 'Memoir and biography', in Philip Oltermann (ed) *How to write*, Guardian Books, London: 89-104 return to text

Glendinning, V 2008 'Live and let die', *The Spectator* magazine (1 November): http://www.spectator.co.uk/books/2558196/live-and-let-die (accessed 1 May 2013) return to text

Glover, M 1998 'Facts as fiction' [review: *The Life of Thomas More*], *New Statesman* (6 March): 47 return to text

Gosden, C & Y Marshall 1999 'The cultural biography of objects', *World Archaeology* 31, 2: 169-78 return to text

Gosse, E 1907 *Father and son*, C Scribner's Sons, New York & W Heinemann, London return to text

Hamilton, D 2011 *The Unreliable life of Harry the valet*: *the great Victorian jewel thief*, Century, London return to text

Hamilton, I 1988 *In search of J.D. Salinger*, Random House, New York return to text

Harman, C 2009 *Jane's fame: how Jane Austen conquered the world*, Canongate, Edinburgh return to text

Hodgman, VW 1967 'Wainewright, Thomas Griffiths (1794-1847)', in *Australian dictionary of biography* 2, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne: 558-59 return to text

Holmes, R 1990 *Coleridge: early visions*, Viking Press, New York return to text

Holroyd, M 2002 *Works on paper: the craft of biography and autobiography*, Little Brown, London return to text

Holroyd, M 2010 *A book of secrets, illegitimate daughters, absent fathers*, Chatto & Windus, London return to text

Ireland, K 2010 'Peeling the onion: outcomes to origins in retrograde narrative', *Journal of literary semantics* 39, 1: 29-41 return to text

Johnson, D 1972 *The true history of the first Mrs. Meredith and other lesser lives*, Knopf, New York return to text

Jungk, PS 1990 *Franz Werfel: a life in Prague, Vienna, and Hollywood*, Grove Weidenfeld, New York return to text

Kent, B 2000 'A romantic villain's slim biography is enhanced by fiction' [review: *Wainewright the Poisoner*], *Philadelphia inquirer* (20 August): http://inq.philly.com/content/inquirer/2000/08/20/books/WAINE20.htm?template=aprint.htm (accessed 1 May 2013) return to text

Klinkenborg, V 1993 '*Dickens* by Peter Ackroyd, *The invisible woman: the story of Nelly Ternan and Charles Dickens* by Claire Tomalin' [review], *Smithsonian* 23, 10: 131-32 return to text

Kopytoff, I 1986, repub. 2003 'The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process', in Arjun Appadurai (ed) 2003 *The social life of things: commodities in cultural perspectives*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 64-94 return to text

Kort, C l2007 *A to Z of American women writers*, Facts on File, New York return to text

Kuritzky, J 2000 '*Wainewright* a successful biographical experiment' [review], *CNN.com* (21 July): http://www7.cnn.com/2000/books/reviews/07/21/review.wainewright (accessed 01 May 2013) return to text

Kurlansky, M 1997 *Cod: the biography of a fish that changed the world*, Walker, New York return to text

Le Roy Ladurie, E 1980 *Montaillou: cathars and catholics in a French village, 1294-1324*, trans B Bray, Penguin, Harmondsworth (1st pub 1975 *Montaillou, village occitan de 1294 à 1324*, Paris: Editions Gallimard) return to text

Lee, H 1991 'The man who didn't sleep' [review: *Dickens* by P Ackroyd, *The invisible woman: the story of Nelly Ternan and Charles Dickens* by Claire Tomalin], *New republic* 204, 23: 35-8 return to text

Lodge, D 1987 'After Bakhtin', in N Fabb, D Attridge, A Durant & C MacCabe (eds) *The linguistics of writing*, Methuen, New York: 89-102 return to text

Lord, MG 1994 *Forever Barbie: the unauthorized biography of a real doll*, William Morrow & Company, New York return to text

Lynn, KS 1991 '*Dickens* by Peter Ackroyd' [review], *American spectator* 24, 5: 45-6 return to text

Mailer, N 1973 *Marilyn*, Grosset and Dunlap, New York return to text

Masters, A 2005 *Stuart: a life backwards*, Fourth Estate, London return to text

Matthews, B 1987 *Louisa*, McPhee Gribble, Melbourne return to text

Moore, L 2000 'The murderous dandy', *The Washington Times* (18 June): http://www.washingtontimes.com (accessed 01 May 2013) return to text

Morris, E 1999 *Dutch: A memoir of Ronald Reagan*, Random House, New York return to text

Morse, G 2007 'Seeing the homeless: the biography of a street person' [rev: *Stuart: a life backwards* by A Masters], *PsycCRITIQUES* 52, 33: http://www.apa.org/pubs/databases/psyccritiques/index.aspx (accessed 1 May 2013) return to text

Moss, S 2000a 'Critical mass: *Wainewright the poisoner* by Andrew Motion. Stephen Moss on the critical reaction to Andrew Motion's biography of painter-poet-poisoner Wainewright', *The Guardian unlimited* (1 March): http://books.guardian.co.uk/critics/reviews/0,5917,142160,00.html (accessed 1 May 2013) return to text

Moss, S 2000b 'City of words: Stephen Moss on Peter Ackroyd's ambitious history of the capital, *London: the biography*', *The Guardian unlimited* (17 October): http://books.guardian.co.uk/critics/reviews/0,5917,383787,00.html (accessed 1 May 2013) return to text

Motion, A 1986 *The Lamberts: George, Constant and Kit*, Chatto & Windus, London return to text

Motion, A 1993 *Philip Larkin: a writer's life*, Faber & Faber, London return to text

Motion, A 1997 *Keats: a biography*, Faber & Faber, London return to text

Motion, A 2000 *Wainewright the poisoner*, Faber & Faber, London; also pub 2000 *Wainewright the poisoner: the confession of Thomas Griffiths Wainewright*, Knopf, New York return to text

Muriel, JStC 1942 *Suburban gentleman: the life of Thomas Griffiths Wainewright, poet, painter, and poisoner*, Rich & Cowan, London return to text

Mysak, J 1991 'A Dickensian life' [review: *Dickens* by Peter Ackroyd], *National Review* 43, 5 (1 April): 45-6 return to text

Nadel, I 1984 *Biography: fact, fiction and form*, Macmillian, London & Basingstoke return to text

Nicolson, N 1973 *Portrait of a marriage*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London return to text

Nikolaou, P 2006 'Notes on translating the self', in M Perteghella & E Loffredo (eds) *Translation and creativity: perspectives on creative writing and translation studies*, Continuum, London & New York: 19-32 return to text

Niven, P 2003 *Carl Sandburg: adventures of a poet*, Harcourt Children's Books, New York return to text

Nørgaard, N 2009 'The semiotics of typography in literary texts: a multimodal approach', *Orbis litterarum* 64, 2: 141-60 return to text

Novarr, D 1986 *The lines of life: theories of biography, 1880-1970*, Perdue University Press, West Layfayette, IN return to text

Olmert, M 2000 'The poison and the pen of TG Wainewright' [review: *Wainewright the Poisoner*], *The Washington Post* (13 September): C8 return to text

Onega, S 1996 'Interview with Peter Ackroyd', *Twentieth century literature: a scholarly and critical journal* 42, 2: 208-21 return to text

Ott, B 1991 'Literary biography' [review: *Dickens* by Peter Ackroyd], *American libraries* 22, 9: 920 return to text

Painter, G 1959 *Marcel Proust: a biography*, vol 1, Chatto & Windus, London; 1965 *Marcel Proust: a biography*, vol 2, Chatto & Windus, London return to text

Pearson, H 1930 *Ventilations: being biographical asides*, Lippincott, Philadelphia return to text

Pearsall, J (ed) 1998 *The new Oxford dictionary of English*, Clarendon Press, Oxford return to text

Poole, S 2008 ‘Death and the author’, *The Guardian* (22 November): http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/nov/22/death-author-dave-ellis-lawrence (accessed 1 May 2013) return to text

Robertson, D 2003 *Awakening: the life and ministry of Robert Murray McCheyne*, Paternoster Press, Milton Keynes return to text

Roiphe, K 2007 *Uncommon arrangements: seven portraits of married life in London literary circles 1910-1939*, Dial Press, New York return to text

Rollyson, C 2007 *Biography: an annotated bibliography*, Author’s Guild/iUniverse, Lincoln NE return to text

Rollyson, C 2004 *Reading biography*,Nebraska: iUniverse, Lincoln NE return to text

Rolls, E 2000 *Australia: a biography*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia Qld return to text

Rose, P 1983 *Parallel lives: five Victorian marriages*, Knopf, New York return to text

Runyan, W 1982 *Life histories and psychobiography*, Oxford University Press, New York return to text

Saunders, NJ 1999 ‘Biographies of brilliance: pearls, transformations of matter and being, c.AD 1492’ *World archaeology* 31, 2: 243-57 return to text

Scammell, W 2000 ‘*Wainewright the poisoner* by Andrew Motion’, *The Spectator* 284: 41

Schultz, WT 2005 *Handbook of psychobiography*, Oxford UP, New York return to text

Scobie, S 1999 *And forget my name: a speculative biography of Bob Dylan*, Ekstasis, Victoria, BC return to text

Scobie, S 1991 *Alias Bob Dylan*, Red Deer College Press, Calgary AB return to text

Shilling, J 2010 ‘Michael Holroyd’s *A book of secrets* is a poignant account of three near-forgotten lives and it is also an ode to the biographer’s craft: review’, *The Telegraph* (14 October): http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/8123897/A-Book-of-Secrets-Illegitimate-Daughters-Absent-Fathers-by-Michael-Holroyd-review.html (accessed 1 May 2013) return to text

Society of Authors 2013 ‘Somerset Maughan Award’: http://www.societyofauthors.org/somerset-maugham (accessed 1 May 2013) return to text

Spinella, M 2000 ‘Wainewright the poisoner: the memoir of Thomas Griffiths Wainewright – Regency author, painter, swindler, and probable murderer’ [review], 1 June *Booklist online*: http://www.booklistonline.com (accessed 1 May 2013) return to text

Stein, G 1933 *The autobiography of Alice B Toklas*, Harcourt, Brace & Company, New York return to text

Summerscale, K 2008 *Suspicions of Mr Whicher: or the murder at Road Hill House*, Bloomsbury, London return to text

Strachey, L 1918 *Eminent Victorians*, Chatto & Windus, London return to text

Symons, AJA 1940 *The quest for Corvo: an experimental biography*, 3rd ed, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth (1st pub 1935) return to text

Taylor, DJ 2010 ‘A book of secrets: illegitimate daughters, absent fathers by Michael Holroyd [review]’, *The Literary Review* (1 November): 20-1 return to text

Wagner, E 2000‘A double life’ [review: *Wainewright the Poisoner*], *The Australian* (18 March): R10 return to text

Walker, F 1962 *The man Verdi*, Knopf, New York return to text

Waugh, E 1945 *Brideshead revisited, the sacred & profane memories of captain Charles Ryder*, Chapman & Hall, London return to text

White, H 1981 ‘The value of narrativity in the representation of reality’, in WJT Mitchell (ed) *On narrative*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London return to text

Wilde, Oscar 1889 ‘Pen, pencil and poison’, *Fortnightly review* (January); collected in 1891 *Intentions*, Heinemann & Balestier, London; repub in 1913 *Intentions*, Methuen, London: 55-91 return to text

Wilson, E 1971 *American painter in Paris: a life of Mary Cassatt*, Farrar, Straus, New York return to text

Wilson, F 2008 *The ballad of Dorothy Wordsworth*, Faber & Faber, London return to text

Winters, B 2000 ‘“Poison” pen’ [review: *Wainewright the poisoner*], *New city Chicago* (17 August): http://www.newcitychicago.com/chicago/words-2000-08-17-583.html (accessed 1 May 2013) return to text

Woolf, V 1927 ‘The new biography’, collected in 1960 *Granite and rainbow: essays*, Hogarth, London: 149-55 return to text

Woolf, V 1928 *Orlando: a biography*, L & V Woolf, London return to text

Woolf, V 1933 *Flush: a biography*, L & V Woolf, London return to text

Donna Lee Brien (BEd, Deakin; GCHE, UNE; MA (Prelim), USydney; MA, UTS; PhD, QUT) is Professor of Creative Industries and Associate Dean, Research & Postgraduate, in the School of Creative and Performing Arts at Central Queensland University, Australia, where she also chairs the Creative and Performing Arts Special Interest Research Group for the Learning and Teaching Education Research Centre. A Past President of the national peak body, the Australasian Association of Writing Programs, Donna is currently the Commisioning Editor of Special Issues, for TEXT: The Journal of Writing and Writing Courses*, a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of* The Australasian Journal of Popular Culture *and a Foundation Editorial Board member of* Locale: The Australasian-Pacific Journal of Regional Food Studies*. Donna’s biography* John Power 1881-1943 *remains the standard work on this expatriate artist and benefactor, and current research includes a group biography of Australian food writers and an Office of Learning and Teaching project on a MOOC on creativity for Masters coursework students.*

TEXT
Vol 18 No 1 April 2014
http://www.textjournal.com.au
General Editor: Nigel Krauth. Editors: Kevin Brophy & Enza Gandolfo
text@textjournal.com.au