

## Biography

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Spring 2013, SOM #150.719, Wednesdays 3:30-5:30, Welch Seminar Rm.

**Requirements:** 1) Weekly readings and class participation, 2) Oral report on your written project, 3) Written assignment: Choose ONE: a) An original research paper that takes a biographical approach to a life or part of a life, b) A biographically oriented dissertation proposal meeting the Program requirements (thesis itself is optional), c) A historiographical essay on at least two (if available, three) biographies of a single figure, or d) An essay on an issue concerning Biography as a genre.

**January 30** Introductory session and choosing our biographies

**February 6** Overview of history and issues in Biography

Hermione Lee, *Biography: A very short introduction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009)

Samuel Johnson, "On Biography," *The Rambler*, 13 October 1750,  
[http://books.google.com/books?id=-HHvOxszNAsC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+rambler+on+biography&hl=en&sa=X&ei=V9\\_IUJ78O82F0QGNx4G4Bg&ved=0CEAQ6AEwAg](http://books.google.com/books?id=-HHvOxszNAsC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+rambler+on+biography&hl=en&sa=X&ei=V9_IUJ78O82F0QGNx4G4Bg&ved=0CEAQ6AEwAg)

Samuel Johnson, [untitled], *The Idler* 84, Saturday, 24 November 1759,  
<http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Texts/idler84.html>

Virginia Woolf, "The New Biography," [1927], in *Selected Essays* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), pp. 95-100. [ereserves]

Virginia Woolf, "The Art of Biography" [1939], in *Selected Essays*, pp. 116-123.  
[ereserves]

Leon Edel, "Biography: A Manifesto," *Biography* I, 1 (1978), pp. 1-3. [online journal]

Stanley Fish, "Just Published: Minutiae Without Meaning," *New York Times*, September 7, 1999, <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/09/07/opinion/just-published-minutiae-without-meaning.html>

**February 13** Theory and craft of modernist biography

Leon Edel, *Writing Lives: Principia Biographica* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987).

## February 20 Issues and Reflections

Iris Origo, "Biography: True and False," [1959] in her *A Need to Testify* (New York: Helen Marks Books, 2001), pp. 11-49. [ereserves]

Oscar Handlin, "History in a World of Knowledge," in his *Truth in History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1979), pp. 252-290 (SKIM sections before and after 266-275—read these carefully). [ereserves]

Victoria Glendinning, "Lies and Silences," in Eric Homberger and John Charmley, eds., *The Troubled Face of Biography* (London: MacMillan, 1988), pp. 49-74. [ereserves]

Ann Thwaite, "Writing Lives," in Homberger and Charmley, *The Troubled Face of Biography*, pp. 17-40. [ereserves]

James Walter, "'The Solace of Doubt?': Biographical Methodology after the Short Twentieth Century," in Peter France and William St. Clair, eds., *Mapping Lives: The Uses of Biography* (New York: Oxford UP, 2002) pp. 321-335 [ereserves]

Shirley Leckie, "Biography Matters: Why Historians Need Well-Crafted Biographies More than Ever," in Lloyd E. Ambrosius, ed., *Writing Biography: Historians & Their Craft* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), pp. 1-26. [ereserves]

## February 27 More Issues and Reflections

Harold Orlans, "The Many Lives of T. E. Lawrence: A Symposium," *Biography* 16, 3 (Summer 1993), pp. 224-248.

Udi Greenberg, "Remembering Walter Benjamin: Benjamin and his Biographers," *Biography* 30, 2 (Spring 2007), pp. 194-212.

Ray Lecoursiere, "Biographers' Bereavement and Other Factors in Inadvertent Deathbed Distortions: The Biography Deaths of Proust and Freud," *Biography* 32, 3 (Summer 2009), pp. 493-510.

David Schwalm, "Locating Belief in Biography," *Biography* 3, 1 (Winter 1980), pp. 14-27.

Carlo Ginzburg and Carlo Poni, "The Name and the Game: Unequal Exchange and the Historiographic Marketplace," in Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero, eds., *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1991), pp. 1-10. [ereserves]

Carlo Ginzburg and Marco Ferrari, "The Dovecote Has Opened Its Eyes," in Muir and Ruggiero, eds., *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe*, pp. 11-19. [ereserves]

James Walter, "The Utility of Short Lives," *Biography* 29, 1 (Spring 2006), pp. 329-337.

**March 6** The Romantic biographer and his subject

Richard Holmes, *Footsteps: Adventures of a Romantic Biographer* (New York: Vintage, 1996).

**March 13** Biography in History of Science and Medicine

Thomas Hankins, "In Defence of Biography: The Use of Biography in History of Science," *History of Science* 17, 1 (March 1979), pp. 1-16.

Robert M. Young, "Biography: The basic discipline for human science?" *Free Associations*, 11 (1985), pp. 108-130, <http://human-nature.com/rmyoung/papers/paper49h.html>

Robert Westfall, "Newton and his biographer," in Samuel Baron and Carl Pletsch, eds., *Introspection in Biography* (London: Routledge, 1985), pp. 175-189. [ereserves]

Roy Porter, "Taking histories, medical lives: Thomas Beddoes and biography," in Michael Shortland and Richard Yeo, eds., *Telling lives in science: essays on scientific biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), pp. 215-241. [ereserves]

Michael Shortland and Richard Yeo, "Introduction," in Shortland and Yeo, eds., *Telling lives in science: Essays on scientific biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), pp. 1-44 [ereserves]

Thomas Soderqvist, "Existential projects and existential choice in science: science biography as an edifying genre," Shortland and Yeo, eds., *Telling lives*, 45-84. [ereserves]

**March 20 SPRING BREAK**

One biography chosen by our class (see attached Short List) in the following categories:

**March 27** A life, times, and work biography.

**April 3** A thematic/focused biography

**April 10** A dual/multiple biography

**April 17** A biography of the unfamous

**April 24** A biographical doctoral thesis

**May 1** Final discussion

## **LIFE, TIMES, AND WORK**

Janet Brown, *Charles Darwin: Voyaging* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995). (The first of a two-volume biog, taking Darwin through *Origin*.)

Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (New York: Penguin, 1991)

Charles Nicholl, *Leonardo Da Vinci: Flights of the Mind* (New York: Viking, 2004).

Richard Westfall, *Never at Rest: A Biography of Isaac Newton* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980)

## **FOCUSED/THEMATIC**

Nathaniel Comfort, *The Tangled Field: Barbara McClintock's Search for the Patterns of Genetic Control* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 2003).

Theodore Porter, *Karl Pearson: The Scientific Life in a Statistical Age* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2004).

Robert Richards, *The Tragic Sense of Life: Ernst Haeckel and the Struggle over Evolutionary Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Frank Sulloway, *Freud: Biologist of the Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1983)

## **DUAL/MULTIPLE**

Arthur Miller, *Einstein, Picasso: Space, Time, and the Beauty That Causes Havoc* (New York: Basic Books, 2001)

William Newman and Lawrence Principe, *Alchemy Tried in the Fire: Starkey, Boyle, and the Fate of Helmontian Chemistry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

Laura Otis, *Müller's Lab: The Story of Jakob Henle, Theodor Schwann, Emil du Bois-Reymond, Hermann von Helmholtz, Rudolf Virchow, Robert Remak, Ernst Haeckel, and their Brilliant, Tormented Advisor* (New York: Oxford U, 2007).

S. S. Schweber, *In the Shadow of the Bomb: Oppenheimer, Bethe, and the Moral Responsibility of the Scientist* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007)

Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians: Cardinal Manning, Florence Nightingale, Dr. Arnold, General Gordon* [1918], reprint, (Forgotten Books, 2012).

## UNFAMOUS

Natalie Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1984 )

Natalie Davis, *Women at the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1997).

Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1992).

Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The Beggar and the Professor: A Sixteenth-Century Family Saga* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

Charles Van Onselen, *The Seed is Mine: The Life of Kas Maine, A South African Sharecropper, 1894-1985* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996).

Laurel Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (New York: Vintage, 1991).

## DOCTORAL

Lloyd Ackert, *From the thermodynamics of life to ecological microbiology: Sergei Vinogradskii and the cycle of life, 1850-1950* (Johns Hopkins, 2004).

Jill Cooper, *Of Microbes and Men: A scientific biography of Rene Jules Dubos* (Rutgers, 1998).

Susan Lamb, *Pathologist of the mind: Adolf Meyer, psychobiology and the Phipps Psychiatric Clinic at the Johns Hopkins Hospital, 1908-1917* (Johns Hopkins, 2010).

Philip Pauly, *Jacques Loeb and the control of life: an experimental biologist in Germany and America, 1857-1924* (Johns Hopkins, 1980).

Kimberly Pelis, *Pasteur's imperial missionary: Charles Nicolle (1866-1936) and the Pasteur Institute of Tunis* (Johns Hopkins, 1995)