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NINETEENTH –CENTURY LITERARY AND CULTURAL CRITICISM

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Volume 1

Life Writing

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LIFE WRITING: INTRODUCTION

'How did we, as a nation, fall into the biographical habit?' asked Edmund Gosse in 1901. It was scarcely two months since the death of Queen Victoria, and as the Edwardian age began, Gosse (himself a future life writer, with *Father and Son*, 1907) was deploring the 'monstrous army of biographies' invading public life. 'What led us to cultivate it with such astounding indifference to form, purpose, and proportion?'[1] His eagerness to distance himself from a genre the literary elite of his age seemed equally to despise and to consume by the cartload typifies the contradictory attitude of critics and readers to the various forms of life writing that distinguish the 'long' nineteenth century. While there was no shortage of readers for each new account of a life, whether through obituary, autobiography, biography, memoir, 'recollections,' or prosopography (collective biography), few, in the eyes of sceptical reviewers, avoided the pitfalls of vanity or scandal on the one hand, or dullness on the other. Yet the constant reading and reviewing of these works were what kept the great periodicals of the age in business, despite the air of weariness adopted by many of those who earned their living by finding morsels to admire and long tracts of self-indulgent reminiscence to denigrate.

The aim of this volume is to assemble a number of different narratives and trajectories about nineteenth-century life writing in its multifarious forms. The simplest of these is the chronological. How exactly did life writing develop between the age of the Romantics and the end of the Edwardian period? While there have been many critical histories of the genre, especially from the 1980s onwards, these have inevitably focused on peaks rather than troughs, or even the necessary middle ground, with half a dozen monumental volumes rising quickly to the surface.[2] Few of these

were of purely literary figures, and most of them were male: Thomas Moore's 2 volume *Life* of Byron (1830-1), J.G. Lockhart's *Life of Sir Walter Scott* (1837-9),Wordsworth's *Prelude* (14 books, 1850), John Henry Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua* (1864), John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography* (1873), J.A Froude's 4 volumes of Carlyle's *Life* (1882 and 1884), and John Ruskin (*Praeterita*, 1885 and his *Life* by E.T. Cook, 1912). Autobiography and biography in these early days received more critical attention than the other life writing forms of diaries and letters, as they were considered more 'shaped' and designed, more of an art form, besides being associated with some of the greatest men of the age. Diaries, by definition, were more inchoate, as were the hefty volumes of correspondence amassed by editors who relied on them to fill up the voluminous biographies so despised by critics like Gosse. Even today, biography occupies an awkward middle-brow position in the life writing hierarchy, considered an easier read than narrative history, with a greater propensity to gossip and entertain. As for women, although they had been writing diaries and letters for centuries, and some famous autobiographies (for example Margaret Cavendish's *True Relation of My Birth, Breeding and Life*, 1656), it was a long time before they found their way into the life writing canon, and then it was often through the efforts of twentieth-century female critics, such as Mary Mason, Estelle Jelinek, and Linda Peterson, publishing women-only studies of female autobiography.[3] The critical field has expanded significantly in the twenty-first century, salvaging increasing numbers of previously forgotten life writers, but one aim of the present volume is to retell, by offering a differently-accented chronology, the story of how the various categories of life writing surfaced in nineteenth-century periodicals.

Themes and Types

This chronology emerges in a way that may seem haphazard, as editors and reviewers made their own choices as to what should be reviewed. Working-class writing is an obvious omission, with limited (and then rather patronizing) notice of Samuel Bamford and Ebenezer Elliott in the 1840s. It was not that working-class (largely male) autobiography did not exist, but that few of the major reviews wanted to notice it. As early as 1827 John Gibson Lockhart was complaining that 'Our weakest mob-orators think it is a hard case if they cannot spout to posterity.'[4] Swamped by a plethora of memoirs by clergymen, admirals, artists, and actors, reviewers like Lockhart adopted an impatient, elitist outlook on the field. By the second half of the century didactic biographies of successful men from humble backgrounds were rapidly proliferating in the wake of Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help* (1859). The two 'landmark' works, which attracted extensive, mostly approving, comment, were biographies, carefully managed by middle-class authors: Smiles's own *Life of a Scotch Naturalist: Thomas Edward* (1876) and William Jolly's biography of John Duncan, the Scots botanist (1883). Charles Robinson, reviewing the *Scotch Naturalist* for *The Academy*, exemplified this more positive approach in applauding its 'noble lessons for us all.'[5] As for women, although we have long known that female life writers considered worth noticing were likely to be thinly scattered through the first fifty years of the nineteenth century, periodical history clearly reinforces the impression that the field was heavily male-dominated, both in terms of works reviewed and the identities of the reviewers. Such female-authored publications as attracted attention tended to be the sprawling journals and correspondence of women with a social profile or a position in court, such as Hester Thrale-Piozzi, or Cornelia Knight, 'Lady Companion to the Princess Charlotte of Wales,' the review of whose autobiography begins: 'This book shows little genius or insight, yet we are not

surprised that it has been described as one of the most interesting works of the season.'[6] Male autobiography, by contrast, was so prolific that it was sometimes reviewed by the batch: for example when John Gibson Lockhart in 1827 set out to discuss ten examples, but gave up after only five.[7] There was early recognition of the dominant male life writers in the field, and anything by or about the 'heavyweights' of the period, especially Walter Scott, Lord Byron, or John Stuart Mill could be sure of attracting full-scale coverage. The first female autobiographers to emerge from obscurity were often the most controversial, either because of their outspokenness or unconventional lives, such as Lady Morgan (1862) and Harriet Martineau (1877), while Elizabeth Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857) stood out uniquely as the life of one famous female novelist narrated by another. This volume, in its choice of contents, aims to reinstate the contribution of women as life writing producers, editors, and, to a lesser extent, reviewers, without overbalancing what was clearly a predisposition over much of the nineteenth century to privilege male authors and reviewers.

Reviewers and Authors

The reviewers themselves are not always identifiable from the information available in the *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals.* Indeed, for much of this period reviewing was anonymous, with signatures beginning to appear only in the final quarter of the century. We can, however, gather that contributors were a mixture of regular, professional reviewers associated with one or more periodicals, and general writers who might be publishing in their own right, even as they were critiquing their colleagues. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, for example, numbered among its regular contributors John Gibson Lockhart, Walter Scott's son-in-law, and Margaret Oliphant, who was not only a regular reviewer of life writing but also a biographer

who left a posthumous autobiography. Editors themselves sometimes contributed articles, as did Henry Reeve (1813-95), editor of the *Edinburgh Review* when he wrote a major analysis of John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography* in his own periodical (1874), or publishers, such as George Smith, who produced a theoretical overview 'On Biography and Biographies' (1892) for *Temple Bar*.

Another trend in reviewing at this time was the essay-article on the life writing genre itself, examples of which are included in this volume. As reviewers, as well as life-writers themselves, were troubled by the recurrent charges levelled against this form of writing, it surfaces repeatedly as something to be attacked and apologised for. The most familiar and obvious of these charges were vanity and egotism, along with the insensitive assumption, on the part of the life writer, that the public would be interested in anything they had to say about themselves. These charges were especially problematic with literary subjects as writers' lives were often both lacking in narrative drama and overly self-preoccupied. 'Vanity and jealousy,' as Sir Archibald Alison argued in an 1849 overview of the field '– vanity of themselves, jealousy of others – are the great failings which have hitherto tarnished the character and disfigured the biography of literary men,' though he did concede that French authors were guiltier of this than English.[8] Inevitably, many forms of life writing were edited for publication, especially posthumous autobiographies, and those who had helped these works into the world were often as aggressively scrutinised as the original authors. George Smith, for example, was concerned about the biographer's zeal for harmonizing all the facts of a subject's life, minimizing contradiction, and knowing what details to select for discussion. 'How much is he to suppress?' Smith wondered, especially where personal correspondence was concerned. 'Is he to be idealistic or realistic in his treatment of the subject?' In theorizing biography before

going on to examine three specific examples – Trevelyan's *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay* (1876), Froude's *Life of Carlyle* (1882-4), and Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791) – Smith concludes that Boswell's was the best, because he both admired his subject and was truthful about him: 'This, then, is the essence of biography, and the only thing needful.' [9]

Life writing theory peaked intellectually, however, with Edith Simcox's review 'Autobiographies' (1870) in the *North British Review*. Like many of the other theorists, she attempts to manage the unstoppable sprawl of her chosen field by grouping and classifying its characteristic types. For her, they correspond roughly with Auguste Comte's three historic periods (the theological, metaphysical, and scientific) which for her translate into the epic and heroic (action stories); the liberal and dramatic, containing 'artists of a sort, but no heroes'; and a third, 'more complicated' type, which may 'chronicle thought.' [10] Without ducking the charge of egotism, she tries to steer her way between the autobiographer's claim to attention and the factors that cause this to wane and become less justified, such as when his life grows emptier and less worth narrating. Humour, too, is an awkward ingredient in life writing, and best avoided: 'The autobiographer lives in a glass house,' she states, while the diary 'is a mouse-trap, like Hamlet's play, to catch consciences.'[11] Whatever the type, though, she concludes, the most valuable is where the author takes us behind the scenes of his career, to 'the revelation of something – which we could not have known as certain and actual without his assistance.' [12]

Simcox was one of many reviewers who, while assessing the volumes of contemporary life writing as they tumbled off the press, could not resist comparing them with their predecessors, and creating an historical overview of the field. For all their tendency to sneer at soft targets, reviewers acknowledged that life writing, in all

its varieties, was an increasingly important part of the literary landscape, and one that reached back for centuries. Their articles show that they were interested in how it came to be so prominent, and they repeatedly rehearse the highs and lows of its broader European chronology, lingering over the dominant influences of Cellini, Goethe, Rousseau, Boswell's Johnson, Hume, and Gibbon. The question was always to what extent modern-day practitioners measured up to these illustrious predecessors, which in turn prompted reviewers to try to identify what makes a memorable and durable autobiography or biography. It would be reasonable to suggest that this debate continues throughout the long nineteenth century and is never entirely resolved. Very few examples of life writing (if any) are universally welcomed and applauded.

Prefaces

Another place where the theorizing of life writing was frequently rehearsed was in editorial and authorial prefaces: hence the decision to include several examples in this volume. Apologies and explanations abound in these short pieces, though perhaps the most entertaining is Harriet Grote's Preface to her biography of her husband, the historian George Grote (1794-1871). The simple *raison d'être* for this work is explained through a reconstructed dialogue between husband and wife, where he asks her what she is busy about, and she responds by saying she is arranging materials for a sketch of his life which she has been invited to write by his friends:

> "*My* life!" exclaimed Mr. Grote; "why, there is absolutely nothing to tell!"
>
> "Not in the way of adventures, I grant; but there *is* something, nevertheless—your Life is the history of a mind."
>
> "*That* is it!" he rejoined, with animation. "But can you tell it?"

Mrs Grote replies that unless *she* gives some account of his early life, 'no other hand can furnish the least information concerning it': an argument that her husband graciously accepts.[13]

While the usual approach to prefaces is to apologize for shortcomings, or to justify some unusual practice (such as Harriet Martineau's insistence that her friends burn their correspondence, or Margaret Oliphant's 'Postscript,' explaining that Anna Jameson's editor and niece, Gerardine Macpherson, died before her biography went to press), the most extreme example of nested apologies, opening up like Russian dolls, occurs in A. C. Benson's fictitious autobiography *The House of Quiet* (1904). Here the reader travels backwards in time to an 'Introductory,' dated 'Christmas Eve, 1898,' where the author claims to have been looking through old papers preparatory to narrating 'the story of a simple life.' This is followed by a 'Prefatory Note to the Original Edition,' and an Introduction (signed 'A.C.B.') to the 1906 edition. A further signed Preface, dated April 12 1907, was added a year later, alluding to a hostile attack on the previous publication, and clarifying the purpose of the book as 'a message to the weak rather than as a challenge to the strong.' Walled in by this veritable fortress of explanations and apologies, Benson finally proceeds with a narrative further backdated still, to 'Dec. 7, 1897.'[14]

Given that this is a fictitious autobiography, and not his own real-life story, this level of nervous deferral, however extreme, testifies to the continuing problematic response to life writing at the end of the century. Many Victorians both longed to tell their story and in equal measure shrank from doing so, while readers (at least those who were also reviewers) felt obliged to withhold easy approval as they eagerly consumed the confessions of their contemporaries. This inevitably produced a knock-on effect with Prefaces, especially those written by the autobiographer in person.

Even John Addington Symonds, whose life was far from colourless, opens his (1889) by confessing: 'It would be difficult to say exactly why I have begun to write the memoirs of my very uneventful life.' Heartened by the examples of others, he explains that this is because he has been occupied for the last three years with translating and publishing the autobiographies of Benvenuto Cellini and Carlo Gozzi, but he nonetheless vies with Gozzi (who called his own memoirs 'useless') in disparaging his own as 'this piece of sterile self-delineation.'[15] Where a relative acts as editor, the apologies are motivated by the disjunction between what the relative knows from a personal relationship and the likely impression of the public based on reading their published biography. In her Preface to the first edition of her mother Sara's *Memoir and Letters* (1873) Edith Coleridge insists that the letters included with the unfinished autobiography 'were not acts of authorship, but of friendship; we feel, in reading them, that she is not entertaining or instructing a crowd of listeners, but holding quiet converse with some congenial mind.' [16] When the book went into a fourth edition just a year later, she added a further Preface, explaining why she had revised and compressed the contents of the original edition. As a hybrid life writing form (memoir and letters), the book leaves her scope to reconsider her selection of letters in response to charges both of 'an excess of the intellectual and abstract element in the correspondence, overlaying its personal interest,' and of 'too many references to trifling matters, social or domestic…'[17] For Edith, it was a struggle to achieve the right balance for everyone, and, blaming herself for poor judgement, in her closing lines, thanks her uncle, Derwent Coleridge, for his support: perhaps as an oblique form of public endorsement for her efforts.

Women's Life Writing

Female life writers, even towards the end of the nineteenth century, continued to face additional pressures in an already pressurised field, as did the female subjects of biography. Within this collection women seem to fall into two main categories: those who were assumed to have claims on the public's sympathy, such as Charlotte Brontë, as biographical subject, and Margaret Oliphant as autobiographer, and controversial figures, such as Lady Morgan and Harriet Martineau, who faced a more suspicious readership. Even by the 1860s and 70s, it was still considered inappropriate for women to express strong opinions or boast about their achievements to an anonymous audience. In her 'Prefatory Address,' Lady Morgan says she is writing to explain herself in response to being 'abused, calumniated, misrepresented, flattered, eulogized, persecuted,' and appeals to the decency of 'you, dear, kind, fair-judging public, who are always for giving a fair field and no favour.'[18] Martineau, whose *Autobiography* (1877) was freely abusive of others, had regarded it for years as her duty to narrate her life.[19]

For sad female lives, battered by tragedy, as with Charlotte Brontë and Margaret Oliphant, there was mostly understanding — at least so far as their personal life was concerned —and for those who were seen as entirely virtuous, such as Annie Keary and Mary Somerville, praise was ungrudging. Of growing importance in the second half of the century were women's autobiographies reviewed by women who would themselves enter the field of life writing, or who were already regular reviewers for leading periodicals. When Frances Power Cobbe reviewed Somerville's *Personal Recollections* (1873) twenty years before she published her own *Life* (1894), she was already asking what constitutes a good biography, in relation to Somerville's 'long, spotless, and unobtrusive life.' By this point, nineteenth-century life writing had travelled a long way from the swashbuckling episodes of Moore's *Byron*, with which,

in any case, it was inappropriate to compare a life of quiet virtue, such as Somerville's, albeit in the 'unfeminine' disciplines of science, mathematics and astronomy. Indeed, Cobbe makes a point of saying that the charm of such lives as Somerville's is that 'they give us glimpses into human nature, not bird's eye views of senates and battlefields.'[20] Meanwhile, at opposite ends of the spectrum of privilege were Queen Victoria's *Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands* (1868), the reviews of which emit dutiful appreciation, rather than fulsome praise, and Annie Keary (1825-1879), Yorkshire-born novelist and children's writer, who battled ill health for much of her quiet life, as recorded by her younger sister. Options for self-presentation by women, or their representation by others, in the field of life writing, though broadening, still seem more restricted than those for men, and more fraught with inhibition about the pitfalls of overmuch intimacy with readers.

Controversial Lives

The biggest scandals were indeed reserved for men, and took many forms as the century passed from the more straightforwardly immoral escapades of the Romantics, for which their readers might be already prepared, to the more psychologically complex experiences of famous men, such as John Stuart Mill and Thomas Carlyle. The posthumous publication of Mill's *Autobiography* (1873) prompted lengthy overviews in the heavyweight journals, and much analysis of his unconventional inner life. Henry Reeve's review, for his own periodical, the *Edinburgh*, records the public's increasing interest in a man who had appeared to live a dry, secluded, uneventful existence, but who had produced 'one of the most curious and instructive volumes which exist in all literature,' comparable only with the *Confessions* of St Augustine and Rousseau.[21] Having once known Mill personally, Reeve, who met him in France in 1821, is deeply moved by the narrative of his breakdown and

transformation into a far nobler character than could have been expected, but more reticent when he comes to Mill's infatuation with, and eventual marriage to, Harriet Taylor. 'It is not our duty to pass sentence upon this significant connexion of Mill with a lady, who was,' Reeve carefully acknowledges, 'when he first knew her, married to another man.'[22] Believing Mill's high sense of honour would have prevented him from behaving inappropriately towards her before her husband's death and her remarriage to Mill, he nevertheless finds it difficult to believe that she was as extraordinary and exceptional as Mill claims, and regrets that its main consequence was to withdraw him from society. Reeve's review was of course just one of many of Mill's *Autobiography*, which attracted the more prestigious reviewers, among them John Morley for the *Fortnightly.* The *Autobiography* was recognised as an unusual and strenuous work, both for author and readers, in the tradition of an intellectual history, without what Morley called 'literary grandeur' or 'artistic variety.' He was instead deeply impressed by Mill's 'quality of self-effacement,' and the 'modest and simple tones of the writer's own voice.' [23] A combination of Mill's own seriousness and that of his reviewers seems to have restrained them from indulging in too much speculation about the details of his relationship with his wife.

With the revelations of James Anthony Froude's *Life* of Carlyle (1882-4), on the other hand, the marital relations of this complicated and apparently unhappy couple could hardly be avoided as a subject for discussion. Herbert Cowell, described by Trev Broughton as 'one of Froude's few even-handed reviewers,'[24] compared Carlyle's autobiographical remains with Mill's, in terms of the way they 'disarm hostility and challenge strict judicial fairness, by the very completeness of their confessions and self-surrender.' Impossible as it was to discuss Carlyle's private life without considering the complex character of his wife Jane, Cowell also likened this

controversy to Mill's with Harriet, adding that the revelations in Carlyle's *Reminiscences* (1881) of Jane 'elevated his married life to the dignity of a literary problem.' [25] Regretting the unattractive picture that emerges of the couple, Cowell nevertheless suggests Carlyle's remorse over her death was greatly exaggerated, and Jane was 'no victim. She knew exactly what she undertook.'[26] A barrister by profession, Cowell weighs his evidence carefully as he deliberates how much of this private story should have been exhibited to the general reader, regretting that the attention focused on their turbulent marriage has distracted Froude from sustaining his claims that Carlyle's work made him a writer of epoch-making significance. Indeed, through many of the reviews included in this volume there is an ongoing conflict between the private and the public in the subjects' lives, over the question of how much should be conveyed from the biography itself into the review. One senses a knowledge in the reviewers that the more extraordinary the lives (and many of them were extremely unconventional) the more their readers would want to know personal details, rather than a more detached analysis of their achievements.

Writers and Artists

In a different way, writers' and artists' lives were also challenging, both for biographers and reviewers, in that they entailed long stretches of solitary creativity which were not particularly interesting to write about, still less to read. A review of John Everett Millais' life and works, in the *Fortnightly Review* (1896) drawls with ill-concealed weariness, that the telling of his life is 'but the naming of these pictures.'[27] Much the same might have been said about Anthony Trollope, notorious as he was for his rigid programme of daily productivity, and there was some disappointment with his *Autobiography* (1883) for not saying more about his inner life. Inevitably, the tale of his early hardships as an impoverished Harrow schoolboy, which reviewers

compared with Dickens's tough time at Warren's Blacking warehouse, made livelier reading than the years of novel-production. Richard F. Littledale, writing in *The Academy* (1883), however, felt that the *Autobiography* was 'something more than a mere disclosure of private affairs for the justification of public curiosity: it is a memorial of a trusty friend, given by himself to that large circle of well-wishers who are genuinely interested in all that concerned him.'[28] On the whole, Trollope was successful in balancing commentary on his achievements with avoidance of overt boasting. When his great contemporary and rival, Charles Dickens, died suddenly in 1870, Trollope quickly produced an article that combined obituary with an evaluation of his work, noting also how the newspapers had already 'told the public all that can be told at once; - and that which will require later and careful telling, will we hope be told with care.'[29] Trollope's summary gives us a useful sketch of the hasty process by which a 'life' began to take shape quickly through the press the moment it ended, while a more measured (and more critical) response forms at a more gradual pace over the next few years, but it also references the hybrid nature of life writing, then and now, in its combination of obituary, character analysis, critique of achievements, exploration of personal life, and incorporation of letters, journals, quotations from works, diaries and testimonies. The review, in this respect, becomes an embryo biography in itself.

By far the most exciting literary stories were those of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Life* of *Charlotte Brontë*, and the Brownings' correspondence, which prompted dramatic statements from journalists. 'This is one of the saddest lives we have ever read,' is the opening sentence of the *Eclectic Review* on Brontë (1857), concluding, with similar melodrama, 'Few and evil were the days of Charlotte Brontë.'[30] The *Athenaeum* critic, Henry Fothergill Chorley (1808-72) also began with a striking line: 'The story

of a woman's life unfolded in this book is calculated to make the old feel young and the young old.' By this he meant that the reader was taken back to attitudes and living conditions that seemed to belong to the distant past; for him additionally, as for many reviewers of this biography, it was the unusual phenomenon of one female novelist's life being written by another that made the book especially intriguing, and for Chorley, Gaskell's 'labour of love,' as he saw it, 'has produced one of the best biographies of a woman by a woman which we can recall to mind.' [31] As it happens, Brontë had met Chorley at her publisher's home in London in 1849 and was 'tantalized' by his peculiar voice and features, finding him less sympathetic than he subsequently found Gaskell's account of her life.[32] As for the Brownings, Stephen Gwynn (1864-1950), reviewing their courtship correspondence of 1845-6 for the *Edinburgh*, prefaced his response with ethical concerns about exposing the intimacies of love-letters between two famous poets: 'love letters, as a general rule,' he argues, 'have no business with print,' and he was embarrassed by his consciousness of prurient eavesdropping. That said, his review performs a *volte-face* in declaring that 'They were the hero and heroine of the most wonderful love story, if you consider it rightly, that the world knows of.'[33]

Volume Contents

Given the wealth of material available on the great figures of the age that attracted many reviews, some by names as distinguished as themselves, one challenge of assembling this volume was to choose which would be the most worth making available. The aim has been to cover the full nineteenth century, beginning with the Romantics and ending with biography sceptics such as Gosse (who ironically is best known for his dual biography, *Father and Son*, 1907), and to achieve a balance between canonical figures such as Walter Scott and John Stuart Mill, and those who

are less well known, including Annie Keary and Anna Jameson. That the latter group tend to be women makes its own comment on the genre of life writing in this period, as indicated at the start of this introduction, but while there might have been a case for also ordering the contents chronologically, to further emphasise this history, the extracts are arranged in thematic groups, or according to some other feature they share, such as their profession, or their association with controversy. Where a work was widely reviewed and is easily available, as with Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, the decision was made to select a less familiar example (Chorley in *The Athenaeum*) rather than a widely anthologized review such as W.C. Roscoe's much lengthier response in *The National Review.*

The length of nineteenth-century reviews is indeed another obvious issue with a volume of this kind, especially given the major journals' custom of excerpting extensive passages from their focal texts. As we have indicated in our general introduction to the series, as volume editors we have all had to select and cut judiciously, not just in order to make our volumes more readable, but also to tell a story. The story here is of a gradual transition from the male-dominated, large scale, 'heroic' biography of essentially worldly, professional men, to a model of those whose claims to notice were more diverse and less obvious. It was the responsibility of the press not just to maintain critical standards, but also to theorize the genre of life writing, as some of the most ambitious articles in this volume attempt to do. When the *Contemporary Review* in 1870 published 'A Suggestion for a New Kind of Biography,' it was registering both disquiet with the current forms, and a sense that there was much still to be achieved. Dismissing 'biography with a purpose,' the reviewer, Robert Goodbrand, argues the case for capturing 'the broken and baffling and disappointing angles which occur in every real life.'[34] While perhaps this had

been present from the beginning, with the notoriously unstable lives of the Romantics, Goodbrand's suggestion brings us closer to the present day model, and also to the more sympathetic emotional history of the nineteenth-century novel of George Eliot and Thomas Hardy. Contested to the end of the period, in terms of its worth and purpose, life writing retained its power to arouse powerful emotions in all who engaged with it, whatever their status, and the critical writing it produced is some of the most contentious in the history of nineteenth-century periodicals.

Notes:

[1] Edmund Gosse, 'The Custom of Biography,' *The Anglo-Saxon Review* 8 (March 1901), pp. 195-6.

[2] Early landmark critical studies, largely of autobiography, include George P. Landow, *Approaches to Victorian Autobiography* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1979), *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* , ed. James Olney (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), and Avrom Fleishman, *Figures of Autobiography: The Language of Self-Writing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

[3] See Mary G. Mason, 'The Other Voice: Autobiographies of Women Writers,' in James Olney (ed. 1980), pp.207-235), Estelle C. Jelinek, *The Tradition of Women's Autobiography: From Antiquity to the Present* (Boston: Twayne, 1986), and Linda H. Peterson, *Traditions of Victorian Women's Autobiography: The Poetics and Politics of Life Writing* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1999).

[4] [John Gibson Lockhart], 'The Life and Times of Frederick Reynolds,' *The Quarterly Review* 35 (January 1827), p. 149

[5] Charles Robinson, *'Life of a Scotch Naturalist: Thomas Edward, Associate of the Linnean Society*,' *The Academy* (10 February 1877), p. 108.

[6] 'The Autobiography of Miss Cornelia Knight, Lady Companion to the Princess Charlotte of Wales,' *The British Quarterly Review* 35 (January 1862), pp. 40-61.

[7] Lockhart, 'Frederick Reynolds, (1827), pp. 148-165.

[8] [Sir Archibald Alison], 'Autobiography – Chateaubriand's Memoirs,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 66 (September 1849), pp. 297-8.

[9] [George Smith], ''On Biography and Biographies,' *Temple Bar* 94 (April 1892), p. 579; p. 582.

[10] [Edith Simox], 'Autobiographies,' *The North British Review* 51 (January 1870), p. 385.

[11] *Ibid*., p. 395; p. 397.

[12] *Ibid*., p. 386.

[13] 'Preface,' *The Personal Life of George Grote. By Mrs. Grote* (London: John Murray, 1873), pp. iii-iv

[14] *House of Quiet An Autobiography by Arthur Christopher Benson* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1907), p. vi; p. 4.

[15] *The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds: A Critical Edition*, ed. Amber K. Regis (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp.59-60.

[16] Edith Coleridge, 'Preface to the First Edition,' *Memoir and Letters of Sara Coleridge Edited by Her Daughter*, 2 vols (2nd edition. London: Henry S. King & Co, 1873), p. vi.

[17] Edith Coleridge, 'Preface to the Fourth Edition,' *Memoirs and Letters of Sara Coleridge,* Fourth Edition Abridged (London: Henry S. King (1875), p. x.

[18] Lady Sydney Morgan, 'Prefatory Address,' *Lady Morgan's Memoirs: Autobiography, Diaries, and Correspondence*, ed. W. Hepworth Dixon, 3 vols (London: Wm H. Allen & Co, 1862), Vol I, pp. 1-2.

[19] In the Introduction to her *Autobiography* Martineau says that the duty of writing it had been 'a weight' on her mind 'for thirteen or fourteen years' (*Autobiography*, ed. Linda H. Peterson, Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2007, p. 34).

[20] [Frances Power Cobbe], '*Personal Recollections of Mrs. Somerville*,' *The Quarterly Review* 136 (January 1874), p. 76.

[21] [Henry Reeve], '*Autobiography*. By John Stuart Mill,' *The Edinburgh Review* 139 (January 1874), p. 92.
[22] Reeve, *ibid.*, p. 119.
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