

Editor's Introduction

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One of the reasons that this second volume of *Lifewriting Annual* has taken longer to appear than the first is the interest the inaugural volume created, with a correspondingly higher rate of submissions and editorial work involved. New editorial arrangements in process should speed up the production of future volumes.

This volume is considerably heftier than the first. The three opening essays demonstrate again that closely attending to writers' manuscripts and letters is sometimes essential to understanding their work—and sometimes not. Based on a careful consideration of the many editions of Jane Austen's letters, Maggie Gover questions the usefulness of reading those letters to try to enhance the experience of reading Austen's novels. Sarah Russo takes on readers of Hannah Cullwick at the level of handwriting and transcription, arguing that misreadings have occurred because of poor representations of Cullwick's hand and letter-writing style. Sharon Bickle is interested in why a particular collection of letters has not had more influence in work on Katharine Harris Bradley and Edith Emma Cooper, who together wrote as "Michael Field." Using letters at the Bodleian Library not unknown to scholars but relatively ignored for reasons she plausibly puts forth, Bickle makes the case for a new understanding of the two writers. In light of recent research on the effects of trauma, Victoria Carchidi explains aspects of T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* that have gone unremarked or unappreciated. While noting its odd gaps and omissions, Robert Ward sees

the montage-like style of Joan Didion's memoir *Where I Was From* as revealingly appropriate to its subject. Bruce Kellner's loving analysis of the prose styles of Alice B. Toklas and Gertrude Stein reveals the sharp differences between them as well as the depth of interdependence between the two women who created them.

The six *Crossings* essays here combine lifewriting genres with others in new and interesting ways, fulfilling the goal of this section of the *Annual*. Griffith Thomas Couser mixes the modes of biography, autobiography, and cultural history to portray both himself and his father in richly particularized cultural surroundings. Anne Ryden's meditation on the death of her child, Ever, combines personal narrative with exposition and argument concerning medical facts, the place of the midwife in Australian medical culture, and the structure of authority in hospitals and medicine in general. Eugene Stelzig's autobiographical account of a mishap while traveling in Spain begins as a lighthearted personal narrative, but opens out into a double self-portrait—of the impulsive young man he was and the philosophically detached and kind man he has become. Christina Houen mixes autobiographical narrative with what might be called mythological fantasy in rethinking the presence of the figure of a crone in an autobiographical novel she has written. Howard Wolf's account of his years of book and manuscript collecting serves at least two purposes: not only does it provide a history of the collection it describes, but it may serve scholars of the figures whose writings Wolf has collected as an additional "finding aid" for material whose existence and whereabouts might otherwise not be known. Finally, the autobiographical essay Jeffrey Meyers has written on his writing of *Impressionist Quartet* offers a "behind-the-scenes" view of the experience of writing a collective biography of four painters.

The books reviewed in *Lifewriting Annual* are usually works of lifewriting rather than scholarship about them. The purpose of this restriction is to provide ample space for scholars of lifewriting to address particular instances of it. When appropriate, however, works of scholarship will be reviewed, for example, when a critical or theoretical work treats an underappreciated area of lifewriting, or when a scholarly work provides primary source material that will aid biographers.

I am grateful to many at Penn State Abington for their support. Chancellor Karen Sandler and former associate deans Hannah Kliger and Peter Pincemin Johnstone generously made resources available. Students in English 414: Biographical Writing—Erin Cook, Adam Elbahtimy, Monique Henry, Jake Hoeffel, Rebecca Long, Rob

Riegen, Meredith Simoes, Mary Beth Swayne, Shannon Sweeney, Alia Tahvildaran, and Stephen Trueman—cut their editorial teeth on submissions, and their work appears visibly and invisibly in this volume. A former student, John Newton, was a helpful guide to their efforts. I thank Alexis Azeff and Alia Tahvildaran for their careful copyediting. Over long hours at the computer, Alia became familiar with almost every aspect of editing the *Annual*; her keen eye for detail and up-to-date technical skills proved invaluable.

I am very grateful to Ann Christie, Martin Danahay, Karen Halnon, John Downton Hazlett, Ruth Hoberman, Shirley Neuman, Kenneth Silverman, Brenda Wineapple, and Hertha Wong for help of various kinds with this volume. Emily Hipchen and Nick McRae's work on book reviews came at a good time; I thank them for their efforts. At AMS Press, Gabe Hornstein, Ashlie Sponenberg, and David Ramm have been always helpful and patient. My guide to most things editorial is Eileen, whose knowledge and wise advice has saved me from error more times than I can count. Thank you again, Eileen.