



Teaching Life as Story

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The way that people tell their life story, and are supported to do so, can be empowering and open up new opportunities. Following a long career working in community based not-for-profit organisations, my research and teaching has always been underpinned by the belief that one way to understand day-to-day lives is through stories. Listening to and reading about the lives of other people, as well as narrating our own lives, is part of everyday life. Reading, writing about, watching and listening to narrative discourse in different forms, and writing about people's lives in creative and re-creative writing — and I include metanarratives in the latter—are just a few of the ways that help us grapple with the lives of ourselves and others. Whether we then go on to understand people any better is a different story and is influenced by our own place in the world and the way that the story is framed by ourselves or others within historical, cultural, social and political contexts, as recent theory has taught us. Also, my own research on the changing nature of archives and concerns about authenticity in public discourse and the fluidity of genre, as well as my background in literary criticism, have undoubtedly influenced the design and content of my teaching.

As biographer Claire Tomalin comments, “What you look for when you are thinking about a biography are the stories in somebody's life” (2004, 92). Similarly, John Paul Eakin's writing about autobiography argues that “narrative is not merely something we tell, listen to, read, or invent, it is an essential part of our sense of who we are” (2008, ix). He suggests that “what we are could be said to be a story of some kind” (ix) given that “We tell stories about ourselves every day” (1). Elsewhere, I have added that we tell stories about ourselves and others every day, in our personal and professional lives.¹ These life stories may be about people we know or are connected to our lives in some way, as well as about people who are

famous and infamous. They may also be about people whose stories have previously been hidden or ignored. In nonfiction narratives, life stories are based on the facts of our lives, but how we tell them and to whom can influence the way that they are heard or understood. As Julie Rak notes for autobiography and memoir, “the process of writing a life is, indeed, selective and involves creativity as they decide what story to tell and how to tell it” (2017, 102). This is also true for biography and, as Rak also comments, genre matters when teaching life-writing (101).

My courses focus on both first and third person narratives and include some discussion on metanarratives and novels about life-writing. A study of the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction, particularly creative nonfiction, and challenging assumptions about genre lies at the heart of a study of life-writing. In addition, these courses cover aspects of how to write well and the importance of reading, including our expectations of the implied reader.² As Laurie McNeill and Kate Douglas argue, “what we read, how we read it, how we talk about what we read—underpin pedagogies of life narrative” (2017, 8). I encourage students to think about David Morley’s argument that reading is an essential part of writing:

Writing is only a more exacting form of reading ... To become, and to remain, an original creative writer you must first become, and be, as original a reader. (2007, 25)

And as with writing, so with reading, the experience of rewriting and rereading is essential. In my teaching I also encourage students to consider the extent to which life and life-writing, as a reflection of individual and group lives, whatever form it takes, is mediated, relational, fragmented, often collaborative and influenced by cultural perspectives, questions of diversity, geographical locations, our understanding of history and the nature of translation, literal and metaphorical, across languages, cultures and nations.

The course I describe here is an introduction to life-writing.³ It is taught to students of the Oxford University Department for Continuing Education. The overview for the course in 2018 reads:

Stories about our lives can be told in many ways. The life of the same person, or group of people, can be explored from different perspectives. This course will focus on the lives of literary figures, covering biography, autobiography and memoir. From fiction to nonfiction, we will discuss a range of approaches to writing about famous people and those who are invisible or forgotten.

The course will also offer an opportunity to discuss a life story that you are keen to write, if you have one. Reflecting on the nature of life-writing can inform both our reading and writing about people’s lives within wider cultural, social and historical contexts.

In the first week, I outline the structure for each two hour seminar that will include a short lecture followed by a discussion based on the theme for that week. A regular slot is available for students to make a presentation about their own life-writing project, if they wish. Each week we then cover aspects of genre, style and form, questions of theory, close reading of some examples of canonical and noncanonical narratives, the role of the reader, as well as some general principles about writing well.⁴ I also squeeze in sections on working in both personal and institutional archives, types of evidence and how to gather material from a range of sources on the basis that the quality of research and how it is conducted have a critical influence on how a story is told. Students submit two assignments, including one formative piece halfway through the course.

McNeill and Douglas have argued that teaching life narratives, “can embody issues and concepts—such as power, agency, “race,” and class ... [it] can therefore become a genuine opportunity to represent diversity and talk about difference” (6). I teach both autobiographical and biographical narratives influenced by my working life in projects supporting homeless people, disabled people and people who have experience of mental health problems, domestic violence and substance misuse. Learning about the lives of people outside the canon, as well as the lives of better known figures, portrayed and transformed in both autobiographical and biographical texts, offers students an opportunity to look at both their own lives and those of others around them, including the lives of people whose experience may be very different from their own. The life of Stuart is just one example of such a life. *Stuart: A Life Backwards* (2005) by Alexander Masters is a story about Stuart’s life that begins close to its end, as Masters gets to know Stuart later in his life and talks to him about his past. His story is representative of the experience of homeless men in Britain and the impact of abuse. As Masters suggests:

Biographies of unknown people ... have enormous potential as campaign tools. Interesting lives that might have been our own—not just on the streets but in prisons, refugee camps, old people’s homes, behind the closed curtains of the house at the end of the road—are forced onto the attention of readers who know nothing about them except clichés and taxes. (2010, 130)

Some people’s lives have wider significance and their life stories challenge dominant discourses. Rachel Holmes argues that Saartjie Baartman, who experienced appalling discriminatory treatment in nineteenth-century England and France, is “South Africa’s most famous and revered national icon of the colonial era” (2007, xiv). In 2002 her remains were returned

to a funeral in South Africa attended by thousands of people. Rachel Holmes suggests that Saartjie's tragic experience as a black woman translates her into:

a living ancestor. Nations, like individuals, need myths and icons to salve and heal the psychological and physical injury inflicted by oppressive systems ... Saartjie's homecoming was a tangible act to right a historical wrong. (177)

We may not be able to hear Saartjie Baartman's voice directly, but the story of her life is important in postcolonial discourse and the history of South Africa.⁵

As part of studying canonical and noncanonical texts, each week on the course considers how different narratives are constructed to convey meaning. For example, we discuss the use of naming, how scenes and anecdotes are used to construct a life story, metanarratives about the experience of life-writing and a few novels that explore aspects of life-writing. Students are made aware of the pitfalls of assuming that how names are applied in public discourse is straightforward. Alan Bennett muses in his diary, *Keeping On Keeping On* (2016), on 15th October 2012, about the ways that a range of people address him:

In the coffee shop across the road where I get my daily decaf latte it's 'Sir', though one of the (several) discussion groups outside refers to me as 'that man', as in 'Hello, that man,' which has an undertone of the parade ground to it. In the greengrocer's I am 'Mr B.' and to the elegant old lady who used to own it and who has lived round here longer than I have, I am 'My dear'. (291)

In *Mrs Woolf & Her Servants* (2008), Alison Light discusses how she found it difficult to track down Virginia Woolf's servants: "Frequently in my research I was hampered by the convention of omitting servants' surnames" (xvi). This resonates with Hermione Lee's perspective that

A still lingering difference between biographies of men and of women is revealed by the matter of naming.... biographies of women have for so long been more protective and intimate than those of great men, a biography of a famous English woman novelist might still refer throughout to Jane or Charlotte. (2009, 129)

A week on my course focusing on life-writing and nature provides a context for a discussion about how scenes and anecdotes are narrated. In *His for Hawk* (2014), for example, Helen MacDonald writes about her grief

following the death of her father. Students study a scene when she is out with her hawk. It is full of both silence and screeching, as MacDonald violently “broke through brush, blindly ... smashing through the branches of a fallen tree, blind and brute” (176). The alliteration pushes the narrative forward here. The hawk has chalk mud on her toes: “It covered my glove as she ate, made small white marks like the letter of half-forgotten words that as she ate were smeared and erased and written all over again” (176). The hawk almost seems to become part of MacDonald’s writing and rewriting of her experience. Following this descriptive passage, she describes how she felt following this experience:

It had been a long while since I’d hunted with a hawk ... I was astounded by the radical change in subjectivity it had instilled: how the world dissolved to nothing, yet was so real and tangible it almost hurt. How every passing second slowed and stretched, catching us out of time ... We’d been out for less than an hour. It had felt like years. (176)

MacDonald’s relationship with nature and birds becomes part of her relationship with grief and a way to escape it. She loses herself in her relationship with the hawk:

Its part of being a watcher, forgetting who you are and putting yourself in the thing you are watching. (86)

Other writers, such as nature writer Tim Dee, describe their experience of being with animals, rather than people, birds again in his case. In *The Running Sky: A Birdwatching Life* (2009), he writes about how as a child, when his parents argued before their divorce, he “watched birds. They always seemed to know where to go and never bumped into one another; only people clashed and collided. At the time I didn’t—couldn’t have—put it like this” (2009, 110). Asking students whether they think this relationship with animals and nature would be appropriate for other life-writing provokes a wide-ranging discussion.

Julian Barnes’s *Flaubert’s Parrot* (1984) is a novel and a complex meta-narrative about life-writing, particularly biography. It is the text that students have found most difficult on the course. In part, it muses on the extent to which objects, such as stuffed parrots—I was still pursuing the bird theme on the same week of the course — and statues of the nineteenth-century French author Gustav Flaubert, places, such as those where Flaubert lived, and museums about his life and writing, as well as the role of a fictional biographer portrayed in the novel, all influence the way we understand Flaubert’s life story. The novel asks whether Flaubert

merely parrots the words of others: “Loulou’s [Flaubert’s parrot] inability to do more than repeat at second hand the phrases he hears is an indirect confession of the novelist’s own failure. The parrot/writer feebly accepts language as something received, imitative and inert.” (1985, 11). At times, the novel seems to be more about the life of the fictional biographer, or about his attempt to avoid what else is happening in his life. The novel asks us, amongst other things, to consider whose story is really being told in a biography.

In Search of J.D. Salinger (1988) is a metanarrative about Ian Hamilton’s attempts to secure the agreement of Salinger to answer questions about his life and writing, and to publish an experimental biography. This is a story about the experience of the biographer, rather than his subject. However, Hamilton makes a distinction between himself and the character of his biographer, “my sleuthing other self” (1989, 7). He grapples with the moral issues that dealing with a reluctant subject involves, while his “biographizing alter ego” (9) was “merely eager to get on with the job” (9). He writes about “we” throughout his book, tussling with his “companion” who is more unscrupulous. Hamilton also writes about Salinger’s different selves and he is interested in the performative nature of his letters depending on who he was writing to and why. Hamilton hopes that his “invented biographer figure” (189), his own self-fashioning, would help to lure Salinger “into the open” (189) so that at the end of his biography “there might even be some sort of amusing confrontation, a final scene in which *he* would try to outsmart *us*” (189). He submitted his manuscript in 1985 and Salinger took objection to his use of quotations from unpublished letters. Legal action followed and Hamilton was unable to publish. *In Search* is a story about his quest to do so and the type of biography it might have been. Rather than the ghostly conversation that Hamilton had hoped for between the fictional character of Salinger and his biographer alter ego, he regrets that it is as “litigants or foes, in the law school textbooks, on the shelves of the Supreme Court, and in the minds of everyone who reads this, the “legal” version of my book” (212) that their relationship will be remembered. Hamilton’s story is an example of a metanarrative about life-writing that raises ethical issues about the use of autobiographical material.

Students on my course consider ethical issues both as readers and writers. As Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson suggest, the “ethical issues of writing life narrative are many; that is, real consequences upon the writer’s or other people’s lives may ensue from publishing a narrative and from reading it” (2010, 241). They are writing about autobiography, but this is also true of biography. Students may come to a course with ambitions to write their own memoir, autobiography or biography.

Each student, if they wish, is offered an opportunity during the course to explore some ideas with the group as a whole. We need to create 'safe' boundaries so that students can share their work. A discussion about ground rules is useful. Planning a student led session in discussion with each student beforehand also helps to ensure that it is a positive experience and that students only offer material that they feel is appropriate.⁶ In the case of a few students, we may agree to discuss some autobiographical material on a one to one basis and not as part of the group.

A comparative study of life-writing in a range of forms runs throughout my teaching. There are many ways that comparative research and teaching on life-writing can be undertaken. On my courses, for example, I include material on the lives of Samuel Johnson and his servant, Francis Barber; nineteenth-century nurses Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole; Charles Dickens and his relationship with Nelly Ternan, an actress with whom he had a relationship; and Virginia Woolf and her servant Nelly Boxall. In each of these examples there is both a famous and a not so famous figure. Other ways to teach comparative lives would be to consider autobiography and biographies written by the same writers, life stories about the same subjects but across different genres, life stories about people who share similar experiences of trauma, family history, or lived through the same historical events. They may have the same profession, have lived in the same house or geographical area, or have used the same object in their daily life. My course covers aspects of visual and material culture and how this informs our understanding of lives in the context of history and dominant discourses.

A study of life-writing by and about the eighteenth-century canonical figure Samuel Johnson provides wide ranging material that covers historical perspectives on life-writing, the relationship between subject and biographer, the collaborative nature of life-writing and the perspective that life-writing is a translation, a version of life stories. I teach aspects of the history of life-writing across different historical periods, but tend not to do so chronologically, preferring to focus on particular themes instead each week.

Samuel Johnson wrote a biography about the contemporary poet Richard Savage, *The Life of Richard Savage* (1728), who he knew personally. We discuss sections of this biography on the course, looking at some of the anecdotes that Johnson has written about Savage's life and the tone and style he uses to tell them. Johnson also wrote about biography: "The business of the biographer is often to pass slightly over those performances and incidents, which produce vulgar greatness, to lead the thoughts into domestick privacies, and display the minute

details of daily life, where exterior appendages are cast aside” (1888, 82). He also thought that

there has rarely passed a life of which judicious and faithful narrative would not be useful.... We are all prompted by the same motives, all deceived by the same fallacies, all animated by hope, obstructed by danger, entangled by desire, and seduced by pleasure... more knowledge may be gained of a man's real character, by a short conversation with one of his servants, than from a formal and studied narrative. (83)

These aspects of biography give rise to more discussion. Johnson had a canonical biography written about him by James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791), who also knew him. A discussion with students about both Johnson's and Boswell's influence on the future of life-writing provides rich material for a wide ranging debate. We consider the extent to which biographies can be considered collaborative given that both men knew their subjects and are describing conversations they had with them. Also, how is the approach of a biographer influenced if, as in many cases, the biographer does not know his or her subject?

Francis Barber was an important figure in Johnson's life, as Michael Bundock's biography, *The Fortunes of Francis Barber* (2015), makes clear:

On a summer's day in 1752, two ... figures are making their way through the hubbub and grime of London's Fleet Street. The street is mobbed with people of all kinds ... but these two stand out.... [Johnson] stands almost six foot in height. But although he is powerfully built, his appearance is disconcerting.... Like Johnson, Francis Barber stands out in the London crowd, though not for his size or his mannerisms, but for another reason: he is black. (2)

We know little of Barber's life and most of what we do know is in the context of the life of Johnson. It is almost impossible to hear his voice directly, apart from a brief mention in Boswell's biography. He was an influential figure in Johnson's life, but nevertheless we only hear about his life in 2015, not 1791.

Romantic biographer Richard Holmes has written a twentieth-century metanarrative about Johnson's biography of Richard Savage, *Dr Johnson & Mr Savage* (1993). He describes this book as

the biography of a biography. It concerns the kinds of human truth, poised between fact and fiction, which a biographer can obtain as he tells the story of another's life, and thereby makes it both his own (like a friendship) and the public's (like a betrayal). It asks what we can know, and what we can believe, and finally what we can love. (5)

This book offers a different version of Savage's life, paying homage to the work of Johnson whilst at the same time offering something different, what might be called a countersignature, based on new evidence. Holmes has also written metanarratives about his experience as a biographer and his perspective on life-writing.⁷

A couple of weeks studying life-writing about Jane Austen and Virginia Woolf on my course includes: letters and diaries; the nature of visual representation in portraits and photographs; the embodiment of women, including descriptions about a woman's appearance and the impact of public iconography, such as statues and sculpture; the importance of place in the representation of someone's life; and the extent to which a life can be understood through the objects that are directly connected with their lives or are representative of the historical period in which they lived.⁸ We also discuss the lives of these women from a feminist perspective and the extent to which both Jane Austen and Virginia Woolf have become products of the film and media industry, recreating characters that may have little to do with these women's actual lives; as Claire Harman suggests, "Austen is a brand, a product, a myth" (2009, 244).

Virginia Woolf wrote a diary that gives us an insight into her personal life and her life as a writer.⁹ We hear her gossiping with friends in her letters and sometimes hear a voice that is surprising and challenges what we thought we knew about her. Students also discuss other more recent examples of letters and diaries. Questions about gaps in both autobiographical and biographical evidence and how to deal with it and the extent to which the reader can accept the authenticity of these autobiographical texts are key themes for any life-writing course. Students worry that the autobiographical material they plan to use for their own projects, such as a mother's memoir, or letters by a distant aunt or uncle, are reliable; perhaps their relatives are unreliable narrators. Another student worries that the autobiographical story that she wants to tell will be upsetting for her family and friends. She is not sure if she can write about everything that happened to her in a specific period of her life, which they have not heard about before.

Like Johnson, Woolf wrote much cited essays about the nature of biography, "The New Biography" and "The Art of Biography". These essays open up a discussion with students about the role of fiction and nonfiction in life-writing. For example, her suggestion that the biographer "can give us the creative fact; the fertile fact; the fact that suggests and engenders" (1967a, 228). Woolf also wrote fiction that challenges the conventions of more traditional realist biography. *Orlando: A Biography* (1928) is a fictional portrayal of her friend and lover Vita Sackville West. She also wrote *Flush: A Biography* (1933), a novel about the life of a cocker spaniel

loved by the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning before her marriage. The book is light hearted and witty. This is the moment when Elizabeth Barrett and the poet Robert Browning, Flush's rival for Barrett's affections, meet for the first time after many letters have been exchanged between them:

Now his hand was on the door. The handle spun. There he stood.

"Mr. Browning", said Wilson.

Flush, watching Miss Barrett, saw the colour rush into her face; saw her eyes brighten and her lips open.

"Mr. Browning!" she exclaimed.

Twisting his yellow gloves in his hand, blinking his eyes, well groomed, masterly, abrupt, Mr Browning strode across the room. He seized Miss Barrett's hand, and sank into the chair by the sofa at her side. Instantly they began to talk. (52)

Barrett is clearly flushed in the presence of both Flush and Browning. The use of humour, parody and irony in both fiction and nonfiction are other themes covered in the course.

Another session on the life and writing of Virginia Woolf discusses a novel by Michael Cunningham, *The Hours* (1998), on which a Hollywood film of the same name has been based. The life of a writer, Virginia Woolf, Clarissa — a publisher who has the same name as one of Woolf's character in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) — and one of Woolf's twentieth-century readers who is reading *Mrs Dalloway*, are the three main female characters in Cunningham's novel. Students consider the extent to which the film tells a different or a similar story to the novel? How much does Cunningham's novel or the film have to do with the novel *Mrs Dalloway* or the life of a writer called Virginia Woolf? How influential is the reader in our understanding of both Woolf's writing and her life?

Reviews of life-writing narratives give one reader's perspective about specific texts and they highlight new developments in the field. I try to study one or two recent examples during the course. Woolf wrote a biography of her friend, painter and critic Roger Fry (1866–1934), *Roger Fry: A Biography* (1940). In a *New York Times Book Review*, Edward Alden Jewell praises the biography's "logical pattern", although he notes that "in its carefully written pages a man's spirit does not rise sharply clear above the sea of strangeness and enigma that surrounds it" (1940, 102). In her biography of Fry, Woolf struggles to find the creative facts that can suggest and engender, bring to life, her subject's story. As Woolf herself found, it can be very difficult to identify the biographer "whose art is subtle and bold enough to present that queer amalgamation of dream and reality, that perpetual marriage of granite and rainbow" (1967b, 235), the marriage of fact and personality.

McNeill and Douglas give a helpful overview of some of the issues that auto/biography studies can address and that I hope to cover in my courses: “such as questions of authenticity, authority, and representation, these texts challenge students’ perceptions and beliefs, asking them to consider how knowledge, history, truth, and so forth are socially constructed, shaped by the ideologies and limitations of the cultural and historical context in which they are produced” (2017, 70). James Shapiro, Charles Nicholls, and Jonathan Bate have each considered the life of William Shakespeare in the context of his times from their own contemporary cultural perspectives. In *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* (2005), Shapiro wants to explore both “what Shakespeare achieved” (xv), including the writing of *Hamlet*, and what “Elizabethans experienced” (xv) in this particular year. His book is concerned with “the familiar desire to understand how Shakespeare became Shakespeare” (xviii). Shapiro sets this squarely amidst “a sense of how deeply Shakespeare’s work emerged from an engagement with his times” (xxii). In *The Lodger: Shakespeare on Silver Street* (2008), Nicholl is interested in “recreating the physical and cultural circumstances of a period of Shakespeare’s life. The plays he was writing at the time are part of those circumstances” (34). Nicholl’s focus is Shakespeare’s home on Silver Street during a specific period of his life. In *The Genius of Shakespeare* (1997), Bate argues that the genius of Shakespeare “is the process of Shakespeare, that which is performed by the performance ... the working through does not *lead to a conclusion*, it *performs the point*” (336). This encourages students to consider the performative nature of their own and other people’s lives.

Autobiography and memoirs may set the lives of individuals and their peers within the context of historical events of huge significance. *East West Street* (2016) by Philippe Sands is about the experience of his Jewish family living in Nazi Germany and the connections between the places where they lived and key figures both in the Nazi regime and the Nuremberg trials that brought them to justice. Graphic memoirs and autobiographies also bring individual experiences of historical events to life and offer students a different way to think and write about their own experience. *Maus* (1991) by Art Spiegelman, which focuses on his father’s experience of Auschwitz, and *Persepolis* (2008) by Marjane Satrapi that is about her experience of living in Iran as a child and young adult, are two significant examples discussed on life-writing courses.

On one of my courses, students submitted assignments in a range of forms, including: an autobiographical graphic memoir; a story about someone’s love of a particular object; autobiographical poetry; a biographical anecdote; and the opening scene of a family memoir. This article outlines some aspects of an introductory course that covers a lot

of ground about genre, students' own writing and questions of style and form. Students have welcomed material on theoretical perspectives and embrace discussions about the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction. Do I try to cover too much? Possibly. However, students do seem to relish the breadth and pace of the material. Of course, this kind of course raises more questions than it answers, as most life stories do.

As someone with a background in literary studies, as my examples illustrate, I am immersed in the study of narrative on and off the written page. I hope that by the end of the course students recognise that the words we use, how we put them together, and how different forms of narrative are connected, are all integral to the way that we show and tell the facts of our lives and those of other people.

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NOTES

- 1 See *In Collaboration with British Literary Biography: Haunting Conversations* (2017).
- 2 Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's chapter on strategies for reading life narratives in *Reading Autobiography* (2010) and Hermione Lee's *Biography: A Short Introduction* (2009) are useful texts for students. I also refer students to *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction* (2016) by William Zinsser and *The Arvon Book of Life-writing: Writing Biography, Autobiography and Memoir* (2010) edited by Sally Cline and Carole Angier, among others.
- 3 Craig Howes discusses his introductory course in "Biography, Oral History, Autobiography: A Graduate Course" in *Teaching Life-writing Texts* (2008), 115–121.
- 4 I would agree with John Mepham and Sarah Sceats that what is at stake is "not to press the claims of any one theoretical approach but to open as many doors as possible so that students can deepen their understanding of whichever theories seem most rewarding or appropriate. Within this framework three themes recur: truth telling, ethical problems, and fictionality" (2008, 92).
- 5 Also, see "Life-writing in the New South Africa" by Judith Lütge Coullie in *Teaching Life-writing Texts* (2008) and *Selves in Question: interviews on Southern African auto/biography* (2006), edited by Judith Lütge Coullie, Stephan Meyer, Thengani H. Ngwenya and Thomas Olver.
- 6 Craig Howes discusses ethical issues in relation to supporting students with autobiographical writing in his essay, "I Won't Remember-For You": What life-writing criticism and theory could bring to the autobiographical writing classroom' *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 32:1 (2017), 111–115.

- 7 See *Footsteps: Adventures of a Romantic Biographer* (1985), *Sidetracks: Explorations of a Romantic Biographer* (2000) and *This Long Pursuit: Reflections of a Romantic Biographer* (2016).
- 8 See *The Real Jane Austen: A Life in Small Things* (2013) by Paula Byrne.
- 9 See Suzanne Bunkers's discussion of teaching diaries as a text that "can be both personal and communal" (2008, 46). In the same collection of essays about teaching life-writing, John Mephram and Sarah Sceats comment that "the diary is open to patterns of meaning making and to attempts (perhaps unconscious) to manipulate the reader" (2008, 94).