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Introduction

Doug Munro and John G. Reid

This volume of essays was inspired by the increasing though still-limited body of scholarship connecting the writing of history directly with the lives of those who write it, and the contributions were initially presented as papers at an intensive workshop held at The Australian National University in July 2015. While the writing of historians' lives by themselves or others is not new in itself – Edward Gibbon's *Memoirs of My Life and Writings*, for example, appeared posthumously in 1796 – considerable discussion flowed during the 1980s and 1990s from the publication of Pierre Nora's *Essais d'ego-histoire*.¹ The extent of subsequent developments is demonstrated in the seminal work in the English language – Jeremy Popkin's *History, Historians, & Autobiography* – where the significant increase in historians' autobiographies and associated discussion of the genre becomes evident.²

The early years of the twenty-first century have seen additional perspectives developed. The editors of a 2014 special issue of the *Journal of Historical Biography*, entitled 'Telling Academic Lives', offered a paradox: 'we contend that, because the historians analysed here are at times flawed, selfish or narrow-minded individuals, they are ideally suited

1 Pierre Nora, ed., *Essais d'ego-histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987); see also Jeremy D. Popkin, *History, Historians, & Autobiography* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 74–5.

2 Popkin, *History, Historians, & Autobiography*. A monograph-length study on biographies of historians has yet to appear, but see Doug Munro, 'Biographies of Historians – or, The Cliographer's Craft', *Australian Historical Studies*, 43:1 (2012), 11–27, doi.org/10.1080/1031461X.2011.640694.

to make a case for the humane: flawless and lifeless they are not, but human they are'.³ History, therefore, was an essentially humane pursuit, incompletely understood except through exploration of the characteristics of the historian either through autobiography or by authors who are themselves historians. For Jaume Aurell in 2016, specifically examining historians' autobiographies, such works may be read moreover as 'cultural artifacts that convey their authors' theoretical perspectives on their lives and profession', and as 'privileged sources of intellectual history and, more specifically, of historiographical inquiry'.⁴

Thus, Nora's invitation to historians to make their own formation part of their historical study, and so to blur the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity, has continued to resonate during an era in which historians have long put aside pretensions of being objective. But the degree to which subjectivity is integral to historical practice remains an area of active debate. While this discussion has particular significance in the area of historians' autobiographies, it also bears on the wider significance of biography as an underpinning to historiographical understanding. Accordingly, the contribution made by this book is to examine the ways in which biography and autobiography can enhance historiographical understanding in four principal areas, and to conduct a reconnaissance in each.

The opening section is devoted specifically to historians' autobiographies, considered especially in a context of gender-based analysis. As the Australian historian Ken Inglis once observed, '[a] lot of history is concealed autobiography',⁵ a point that Sheila Fitzpatrick addresses in the opening contribution to the collection. Taking her own experience as historian and autobiographer as a point of departure, Fitzpatrick argues that the nature of history as an artistic pursuit ensures that there is a 'personal subtext' to historical writing that complicates not only the task of the autobiographer but also that of the biographer writing about the life of a person to whom they are personally close. This touches on questions of 'truth' and accuracy. Fitzpatrick takes up Philippe Lejeune's injunction that writers of autobiography have a pact with their readership to get it

3 Geoffrey Gray, Doug Munro and Christine Winter, 'Editors' Introduction: Telling Academic Lives', *Journal of Historical Biography*, 16 (Autumn 2014), 2.

4 Jaume Aurell, *Theoretical Perspectives on Historians' Autobiographies: From Documentation to Intervention* (New York/London: Routledge, 2016), 1–2.

5 K.S. Inglis, *This is the ABC: The Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1932–1983* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983), 1.

right, insofar as they are able.⁶ As she notes in her first autobiography, there is the question of honesty: ‘But honesty is another can of worms: what do we mean by it?’⁷

There are those who insist that autobiography is a form of creative writing, a selective account that deploys techniques of the novelist – what to highlight, what to downplay, what to omit altogether, and which themes to develop. When writing autobiography, an author – historian or not – may indeed leave things out for many reasons, though without necessarily leading to serious distortions of the overall picture. Conversely, there are also cases when an autobiographer will draw attention to the certainty of alternative interpretations of the same event.⁸ Yet historians, when engaging in strict historical analysis, must also be selective, in the interests of maintaining relevance to a given question or for the sake of concise and focused exposition. Historians, moreover, adopt literary devices of many kinds, even in the chaste context of monographs or scholarly articles. It is true that the range of reasons for selectivity may extend further for an autobiographer than for a historian writing as such. There may be omissions in deference to the sensibilities of immediate family or in the face of even stronger constraints – as in the case, as noted by Sheila Fitzpatrick in this volume, of A.J.P. Taylor’s *A Personal History*, which omitted any mention of his second wife in the light of her threat of legal action if she were brought into the picture.⁹ In short, autobiography is not – and it cannot be – the whole, entire, unvarnished truth, but neither is it a fictional genre. And, as a context within which to understand an author’s analytical work, it can be intensely revealing.

Accordingly, Doug Munro and Geoffrey Gray, in a comparative study of three accounts by historians of their formative years, note the increasingly revelatory nature of historians’ memoirs generally and go on to discuss the overlap between family histories and autobiographies of childhood as well as teasing out many of the dominant themes of the

6 Philippe Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique* (Paris: Seuil, 1975).

7 Sheila Fitzpatrick, *My Father’s Daughter: Memories of an Australian Childhood* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2010), 5.

8 See, for example, David Lamb, ed., *Just Beyond Reach: Peter Noel Lamb: Selected Memoirs* (Sydney: Rankin, 2003), 66, 77–8. The former page reference reads, ‘anything I write about family dynamics runs the risk of being seen as partial, incomplete, arbitrary, misleading, inaccurate or worse – memory clouded with emotion is a problematic archive to be mined – so I won’t even try to apologise in advance for my selection of “facts.”’

9 See A.J.P. Taylor, *A Personal History* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1983), x; Adam Sisman, *A.J.P. Taylor: A Biography* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1994), 397.

subgenre.¹⁰ They also identify the increasing tendency of autobiographies of childhood, and historians' memoirs generally, to adopt the methods of conventional monographs – although often lacking in the trappings of footnotes, bibliographies and index. Notwithstanding variability in quality, historians' autobiographies are now normally the products of careful deliberation and research, which their authors approach and execute as they would any other piece of serious historical writing. This is in contrast with, say, the earlier autobiographies of male Australian historians where there is some, but not much, internal evidence of them having an archival basis rather than being written from memory.¹¹ Munro and Gray's message is that historians' autobiographies of the better sort represent serious scholarship and ought to be so regarded.

Finally in this section, Ann Moyal examines autobiographical writing by women historians in Australia over an extended period of two centuries, placing special emphasis on the distinctively gendered elements of autobiographies by such historians as Jill Ker Conway and Sheila Fitzpatrick, as well as her own autobiographical work. Moyal situates these works within a wider Australian tradition of women's autobiographies that – by contrast with the 'personal odysseys of pioneering endeavour' that suffused male autobiography – were 'franker, relational, concerned with childhood, people and places, some masquerading as regional or local history'. They were often adjudged by male critics to be trivial, but Moyal shows how they collectively represented a unique cultural influence, and also how by the 1980s women's autobiographies, notably those by historians, came to embody 'an emerging awareness of the advent of professional careers'. While not all of the historians considered in this section of the book are women – John Rickard and James Walvin are the exceptions –

10 Jill Roe, *Our Fathers Cleared the Bush: Remembering Eyre Peninsula* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2016) also illustrates the indeterminate boundaries and the extent to which autobiography is a mixed genre, the author using her own experiences and those of her family to introduce aspects of a regional story while explicitly deploying her training as a historian to contextualise and historicise.

11 G.V. Portus, *Happy Highways* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1953); W.K. Hancock, *Country and Calling* (London: Faber & Faber, 1954); Hancock, *Professing History* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1975); Paul Hasluck, *Mucking About: An Autobiography* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1977); Fred Alexander, *On Campus and Off: Reminiscences of the First Professor of Modern History at the University of Western Australia, 1916–1986* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1987); Russel Ward, *A Radical Life: The Autobiography of Russel Ward* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1988); Manning Clark, *The Puzzles of Childhood* (Ringwood: Viking, 1989); Clark, *The Quest for Grace* (Ringwood: Viking, 1990); Clark, *A Historian's Apprenticeship* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1992). One never knows: in an email, Geoffrey Gray suggested to us that Hasluck often made the claim that he wrote from memory, including the writing of *Mucking About* – but 'with a file at his elbow'.

nevertheless, the three essays, taken together, offer confirmation of the value of gender-based analysis of historians' autobiographies and of the distinctness of women's autobiographical writing.

Moyal's chapter also underlines the sheer prevalence of historians' autobiographies by Australian women. By Moyal's count, 13 Australian women historians have, between them, written 23 book-length autobiographies – a number that probably rivals those by counterparts in the rest of the world combined.¹² Arguing, indeed, that Australian historians, both men and women, are the world's most productive at the autobiographer's art, Jeremy Popkin suggested a convergence of reasons for this proliferation.¹³ In Popkin's view, these autobiographies are often of high literary quality and are recognised as having made 'an important contribution to their society's overall tradition of first-person writing'. The autobiographers are often prominent historians who are well integrated into the country's intellectual and national life, and so have cultural authority. The cumulative effect is to impart to historians' autobiographies a respectability and legitimacy that encourages imitators. As Popkin says, one can now 'speak of a genuine corpus of historians' autobiographies, as opposed to a few isolated individual initiatives',¹⁴ and the genre is

12 Autobiographies by non-Australian women historians include Nechama Tec, *Dry Tears: The Story of a Lost Childhood* (Westport, CT: Wildcat, 1982); Carolyn Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives* (London: Virago, 1986); Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *From that Place and Time: A Memoir, 1938–1947* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989); Annie Kriegel, *Ce que j'ai cru comprendre* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1991); Arlette Farge, *Le goût de l'archive* (Paris: Seuil, 1989); Susan Groag Bell, *Between Worlds: In Czechoslovakia, England, and America* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1991); Deirdre McCloskey, *Crossing: A Memoir* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999), doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226556727.001.0001; Régine Pernoud, *Villa Paradis: Souvenirs* (Paris: Stock, 1994); Lousa Passerini, *Autobiography of a Generation, Italy, 1968* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1996); Maria Tippett, *Becoming Myself: A Memoir* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1996); Jenifer Hart, *Ask Me No More: An Autobiography* (London: Peter Halban, 1998); Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Généalogies* (Paris: Fayard, 2002); Sheila Rowbotham, *Remembering the Sixties* (New York: Verso, 2002); Gerda Lerner, *Fireweed: A Political Autobiography* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002); Lerner, *Living with History/Making Social Change* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), doi.org/10.5149/9780807887868_lerner; Antonia Fraser, *Must You Go? My Life with Harold Pinter* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2010); Fraser, *My History: A Memoir of Growing Up* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2015). There are also several collections of autobiographical essays by women – such as Eileen Boris and Nupur Chaudhuri, eds, *Voices of Women Historians: The Personal, the Political, the Professional* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999) – as well as numerous stand-alone journal articles.

13 Jeremy D. Popkin, 'Ego-histoire Down Under: Australian Historian-Autobiographers', *Australian Historical Studies*, 38:129 (2007), 107, doi.org/10.1080/10314610708601234.

14 *Ibid.*, 106. Biographical study of Australian historians also shows no sign of abating, as instanced by the recent publication of Tom Griffiths, *The Art of Time Travel: Historians and their Craft* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2016).

propelling itself forward under its own momentum. The autobiographies have often, Popkin adds, made an important contribution to national debates, not least on the recurring question of national identity.

This latter point also connects with the essays in the book's second section – one on an Australian historian, one on a Canadian – which focus on historians who have taken a crucial role in articulating and explaining national senses of identity. Mark McKenna's examination of the autobiographical writings of the profoundly influential Australian historian Manning Clark shows that these works represented 'the final expression of Clark's fictive historical style' and can be read as 'allegories of [Australian] national awakening'. Thus, Clark engaged in a form of self-invention through the telling of stories both about himself and about the emergence of the modern nation. Donald Wright, meanwhile, examines the early life of the Canadian historian Ramsay Cook, finding there the elements of the outlook of a historian very different from Clark, but who nevertheless grappled with comparable currents of national emergence – centrally concerned in this case with the development of a bilingual and multicultural Canada during the 1960s and 1970s, and the resulting need to attend to minority rights and to explain French-speaking to English-speaking Canada. The interrogation of the history of each national experience by each respective historian was profoundly influenced by personal formation and evolution, and each historian in turn conceptualised uniquely influential interpretive patterns in the understanding of Australia and Canada as national societies. And, therefore, both McKenna and Wright engage deeply with the relationship between analysis and imagination both in the lives of their subjects and in their own practice of the biographer's art.

Part of this grappling with questions of national emergence involved the portrayal of a very public figure, notably in the case of Manning Clark as a partisan for the cause of the Australian Labor Party. In turn, it entailed questions of self-definition, and in this respect Clark made much of pivotal moments in his life. One of these was walking through the streets of Bonn in November 1938, the morning after *Kristallnacht*. Viewing the broken glass and contemplating the violence, said Clark, affected his outlook on life – only that Clark was in England at the time, arriving in Bonn a fortnight later. Instead, he had appropriated his wife Dymphna's account of the immediate aftermath of *Kristallnacht*. For the sake of a good story and the moral that went with it, he continued to place

himself among the broken glass, even when he knew this to be untrue. He was knowingly in contravention of the autobiographer's pact that he tell the truth and be accurate.

One of the biographical issues raised by comparison of the two chapters was famously addressed in Samuel Johnson's dismissive comment on Oliver Goldsmith's treatment of the life of Thomas Parnell: 'nobody can write the life of a man, but those who have eat and drunk and lived in social intercourse with him'.¹⁵ It can, of course, cut both ways. McKenna did not know Manning Clark, but – via Clark's massive archive, through interviews, and in communication with Dymphna – he probably ended up 'knowing' his subject better than all but Clark's closest associates.¹⁶ Wright, by contrast, has interviewed Ramsay Cook, who preferred to stay at arm's-length. Biographers, moreover, are only likely to have known their subjects for a phase of their lives, usually in the latter stages. Adam Sisman mentioned this with regard to Hugh Trevor-Roper. There were two Trevor-Ropers, with the younger firebrand being quenched by an older, mellower version, and it is this later persona that comes out more strongly in Sisman's account. Sisman himself recognises that he 'may have been influenced by feelings of loyalty, affection and gratitude' to a man he only got to know in his softer twilight years.¹⁷ Such caveats apart, it is surely doubtful whether any biographer would claim it a *disadvantage* to have known his or her subject. With the unexpected death of Ramsay Cook in July 2016, Wright experienced a sense of personal loss as well as being deprived of a key source.¹⁸ McKenna, on the other hand, has different sentiments with regard to his own subject. Given Manning Clark's desire to control the narrative of his life and his intolerance of criticism, he probably would have disliked reading *An Eye for Eternity*, and McKenna notes that 'when it comes to writing Clark's life, I'd rather him dead than alive'.¹⁹ All the same, to have known Clark at some point in his life might well have been useful to his biographer.

15 John Wilson Croker, ed., *Boswell's Life of Johnson: Including their Tour to the Hebrides* (London: John Murray, 1848), 235.

16 On Clark's archive, see Mark McKenna, *An Eye for Eternity: The Life of Manning Clark* (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2011), ch. 2. McKenna was given unimpeded access to the Clark Papers by Clark's eldest son and literary executor, Sebastian Clark.

17 Adam Sisman, *Hugh Trevor-Roper: The Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2010), xvi.

18 See Don Wright, 'Ramsay Cook, 1931–2016: Scholar and Friend', activehistory.ca/2016/07/ramsay-cook-1931-2016-an-obituary (accessed 17 October 2016).

19 McKenna, *An Eye for Eternity*, 23. The other major biography is Brian Matthews, *Manning Clark: A Life* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2008). See also Doug Munro, "'How Illuminating It Has Been': Matthews, McKenna, and their Biographies of Manning Clark', in Philip Payton, ed., *Emigrants and Historians: Essays in Honour of Eric Richards* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2016), 98–131.

The third section turns to the biographical study of historians who exerted a major influence on the definition and emergence of the discipline of history. Alastair MacLachlan's study of the intersecting lives and careers of G.M. Trevelyan and Lytton Strachey underlines how, in the context of the development of professionalised history, two historians who shared social and intellectual influences in nineteenth-century England could move in contrasting directions. While Trevelyan ultimately became part of the academic mainstream at Cambridge, and politically well-connected, Strachey remained as 'an irritating gadfly – and a supercilious intellectual' in the eyes of formal historians.

Ironically, Strachey is the better known of the two, largely thanks to their divergent personalities and despite the efforts of Trevelyan's biographer, David Cannadine.²⁰ Whereas Trevelyan was a high-minded model of rectitude, Strachey moved in the free-thinking Bloomsbury circle, which makes for better copy. Strachey's higher profile also owes something to films such as *Carrington* (1995) and to a lesser extent *Al sur de Granada* (2003). Far more influential is Michael Holroyd's 'full-frontal' biography of Strachey, which was a circuit-breaker in that it exponentially expanded the licence of biography to expose and disclose, and to venture into the realms of what had previously been considered off-limits and purely private.²¹ The result would have horrified Trevelyan, who wrote an unrevealing autobiography and laudatory biographies, most notably his Garibaldi trilogy. Trevelyan had to have conquering heroes (and vanquished villains) to write about, in the same way as Strachey needed hero-figures to debunk. Ultimately, for MacLachlan, 'history is written with ideas and philosophies as well as with words', and to explain the movement of Strachey and Trevelyan from friendship to antipathy requires the biographer's engagement with 'their families, backgrounds, lifestyles, assumptions, moments and milieus'.

Studying the early years of a much later and very different British historian, Sophie Scott-Brown also probes these biographical elements in emphasising the emergence of Raphael Samuel as an organiser – in a political sense and in the development of his intellectualism. For Scott-Brown, it is important to recognise that 'thinking is a fundamentally social activity',

20 David Cannadine, *G. M. Trevelyan: A Life in History* (London: HarperCollins, 1992); and more recently Laura Trevelyan, *A Very British Family: The Trevelyans and their World* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006).

21 Michael Holroyd, *Lytton Strachey: A Critical Biography* (2 vols; London: Heinemann, 1967–8).

and that Samuel's early life shows that values and skills are inseparable. The young communist activist moved on to become the central figure in the efforts of the History Workshop movement to democratise the writing and dissemination of history, and Scott-Brown defines the importance of Samuel's 'distinctive form of applied intelligence', which provides insight into the political approach of the Workshop as well as into Raphael Samuel's own 'complexity as an individual thinker'. The essay also provides an implicit reminder that matters of reputation lie at the heart of biography. Historians typically have short 'shelf lives'; their writings are soon overtaken and readily forgotten by the next generation of practitioners. Samuel died as recently as 1996 and despite his being the subject of several journal articles, he may already be entering that liminal phase of being remembered or else forgotten. Scott-Brown's analysis of the linkage of intellect and biography goes far to establishing that distinctiveness in Samuel's life and work that will continue to be recognised for its influence on the discipline of history.

Finally in this section, Sheridan Palmer connects the search for identity of Bernard Smith, the eminent Australian art historian, with the sense of anonymity that stemmed from being an illegitimate child and a fostered ward of the state. Smith emerged as a scholar fiercely committed not only to subverting uncritical views of Australian culture but also to the establishment of an Antipodean identity and of the country's cultural autonomy. Smith was thus comparable in some respects with Manning Clark who, in his different way, was also deeply involved in addressing such concerns.²² Yet Smith also shared with Raphael Samuel the crucial influence of Marxism, never surrendering his 'Marxist humanism', or – as he himself put it towards the end of his life – his ability as 'a utopian communist' to believe in a future characterised by human progress. As an intellectual and in his influence on history as a discipline, however, Smith was especially noteworthy for his deployment of the skills and sensitivities of the art historian to trace the emergence of an 'Antipodean psyche' and to frame antipodeanism by disentangling 'the historical, scientific, cultural and political forces that moulded Australian art and its modern cultural identity'. His often polemical but always historiographically sophisticated challenge to imperial forms of cultural hegemony was a defining element in the emergence of modern Australian cultural history.

22 See also Sheridan Palmer, *Hegel's Owl: The Life of Bernard Smith* (Sydney: Power Publications, 2016).

The fourth and final group of essays deals with collective biography. While having some affinities with histories of the historical profession – such as Peter Novick's study of the fate of the 'noble dream' of objectivity among US historians, Donald Wright's analysis of the professionalisation of the discipline in English Canada, or Tamson Pietsch's examination of the British academic world in the era of settler colonialism²³ – collective biographical studies nevertheless have a different and distinctive goal. They are characterised primarily by their focus on the intertwining of the lives of historians brought together by networks of varying kinds – whether, in terms of the essays in this section, those in a formative era of Australian historiography, those associated with a scholarly endeavour such as the *Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB)*, or those associated with an approach to US colonial history embraced by the 'imperial school' at Yale – but are frequently disparate in personal, social or gender-related background. While having the additional value of placing individuals in wider historiographical and institutional contexts, such studies more importantly define the impact on the lives of multiple individuals of their professional and other interactions.

Thus, Geoffrey Bolton's study of the networking that underpinned the emergence of a professionalised body of historians in Australia spans the era from the founding of state universities to the establishment of the Australian Historical Association in 1973. The role of Oxford connections, notably through Balliol College, is examined, as is that of post-Second World War growth that stimulated the desire for a specifically disciplinary organisation through which networks could be formalised. Bolton draws attention to the role of the School of History at the University of Melbourne. Under the leadership of R.M. Crawford, the Melbourne history school was regarded as the finest in the land from the mid-1940s through to the mid-1960s, and strategically placed to

23 Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511816345; Donald Wright, *The Professionalization of History in English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Tamson Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars: Universities, Networks, and the British Academic World, 1850–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), doi.org/10.7228/manchester/9780719085024.001.0001. There are also histories of history departments, notably William Palmer, *From Gentleman's Club to Professional Body: The Evolution of the History Department in the United States, 1840–1980* (Charleston, SC: BookSurge Publishing, 2008).

exercise patronage and exclusion.²⁴ Women had little place in the scheme of things before 1973. It was only in the 1970s that a younger generation of female historians began consciously to organise their own networks that sought to avert the constraints of reliance on male patronage – especially as innovative fields developed in areas such as women’s history and Indigenous history. Bolton’s chapter provides a solid basis for further exploration of his theme, informed by his insistence on the dynamism of ‘the conversations that enabled communication among historians from both the newer and the older fields of historical endeavour’.

The interaction of older and newer directions of enquiry is also central to Melanie Nolan’s examination of the evolution of Australian biographical writing in the context of the role of the *ADB*, including consideration of the historians who have been contributing authors and of its biographies of historians. The *ADB* began under the influence of W.K. Hancock at The Australian National University. Hancock exerted a profound personal influence on the project, but also worked in close association with the leading historians of his era. One of his earliest initiatives was to call a major, four-day conference in 1957, which brought together academic and non-academic historians from all parts of Australia, with the twin goals being ‘to gauge the state of Australian history and to begin a conversation among Australian historians’.²⁵ From the first, therefore, the *ADB* was not just an indispensable work of reference but also a living project, thriving on the interchanges among diverse historical authors whose lives and careers were profoundly influenced by their participation in this collective enterprise. Not surprisingly, the result was an evolutionary process that linked the *ADB* with broader currents in history and biography. These included the increasing prominence of biographies of women, in a sophisticated gender-related context, as well as the conspicuous development of an interest on the part of both male and female historians in writing about their families in a way that melded biography and autobiography. Within the academy, Nolan concludes, historians have tended recently to return to

24 See also Fay Anderson, *An Historian’s Life: Max Crawford and the Politics of Academic Freedom* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2005); Geoffrey Bolton, ‘The Problem of History’, The Kenneth Binns Lecture, given at the conference, ‘An Open Book: Research, Imagination and the Pursuit of Knowledge’, National Library of Australia, 29 April–1 May 2005, www.nla.gov.au/professor-geoffrey-bolton/the-problem-of-history (accessed 31 December 2015).

25 Melanie Nolan, “Insufficiently Engineered”: A Dictionary Designed to Stand the Test of Time’, in Melanie Nolan and Christine Fernon, eds, *The ADB: Story* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2013), 16.

the genre of biography 'to write about themselves and/or other historians', on the principle that 'how, and in what circumstances in all its fullness, one writes helps to understand the history that a historian constructs'.

Finally, John G. Reid seeks to define the explanatory power of collective biography in reference to a group of aspiring and established women historians in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century. The so-called 'imperial school' at Yale has been credited by some historians with providing a nurturing intellectual space for women doctoral students, and collective biographical analysis reveals some truth in this assertion, although also important limitations. The unquestioned leader of this grouping of historians was Charles McLean Andrews, who had come to Yale from a short sojourn at Johns Hopkins but also a much longer one at Bryn Mawr, where he became accustomed to supervising the work of women graduate students. While Andrews was no radical in gender terms, the evidence suggests that at Yale, female graduate students in the US colonial field did believe that they benefited from an environment in which their work was valued both by mentors and in the context of their own networks. The women were characterised by a degree of social diversity – showing that their Yale careers had profound biographical significance – although those who attained their doctoral degrees gravitated disproportionately to faculty positions in women's colleges. This in itself showed, of course, that important constraints remained. Yale provided, the essay concludes, 'a fragile ecology' within which women from varying social backgrounds could pursue their scholarship and even aspire to 'life patterns that allowed for the balances between employment and research and between career and family to become negotiable, though always within limits'.

In all of these areas, therefore, this book links biography and autobiography with broader intellectual and social currents that influenced historians and their discipline. The goals of the collection include not only bringing forward the substantive findings of the contributing authors but defining their combined significance and identifying productive directions for future research. Barbara Caine's reflective concluding chapter addresses these wider questions, and underlines the inseparability of biography and autobiography from historical understanding in the context of the evolving historiographies of the early to mid-twenty-first century. Indeed, Caine identifies the emerging focus on the lives of historians as nothing less than 'a new way of writing the history of history, both as a discipline and as a profession'. Purely institutional or methodological approaches

thus give way to studies informed by 'the impact of particular forms of family life and education, of personal outlook, and especially of social networks on the work of historians'. While challenges inevitably arise from acknowledging the role in historical writing of imagination and indeed of personal myth-making by the historian, nevertheless Caine is confident – as expressed in a phrase that we are happy to make the conclusion of this Introduction, as well as ultimately of the book as a whole – that the currently 'wide and ever-growing interest in historians' autobiography and biography will fundamentally change the ways in which we see, think about and write history'.

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