

# Historicizing the Historian: Writing the life of Raymond Carr\*

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**A**DVENTURERS, ARTISTS, CERTAIN INTELLECTUALS, novelists, kings and queens, as well as politicians and revolutionaries of all kinds seem to be natural subjects for biography. When I decided to write the biography of the historian Sir Raymond Carr (b. 1919), I thought, quite naively, that it was a slightly eccentric thing to do.<sup>1</sup> I soon realized that I had entered a walled garden in which there grew a number of similar plants that fed on memory: historians' autobiographies, *égo-histoires*, interviews,<sup>2</sup> the customary potted biography one finds in *Festschriften*,<sup>3</sup> as well as biographies of historians written by other historians. There has been a steadily increasing output of the latter since 2000. In 2010, the year the Spanish edition of my biography of Carr was published, five other historians were the subjects of monograph-length biographies in the English language alone.<sup>4</sup> Not all historians are comfortable with the genre, and one of the doubters was E.H. Carr (no relative of Raymond). Despite his dictum “before the history study the historian” and despite being a biographer himself, E.H. Carr (1892-1982) was ambivalent towards biography, and wondered “whether good biography made bad history.” Unsurprisingly, he has also been the subject of a biography.<sup>5</sup>

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The trend towards auto/biographical analyses of historians by historians seems here to stay. It is fuelled in part by the more recent practice of self-exposure or “self-revelation,” in contrast with the previous tradition of “self-effacement.”<sup>6</sup> But it has come to the fore in recent years, above all among historians of the contemporary world. The intellectual autobiography of the Marxist Eric Hobsbawm (1917-2012) has somehow encouraged other members of the profession to follow his example, even when, as apostles of structuralism, they were previously hostile to such biographical or autobiographical approaches.<sup>7</sup> The autobiographies of Michael Howard (b. 1922), Asa Briggs (b. 1921), Tony Judt (1948-2010) and J.H. Elliott (b. 1930) are, from their differing perspectives (personal, intellectual, political), other recent examples.<sup>8</sup>

Students of the past are becoming increasingly visible as protagonists in their own right. Some historians use autobiographical narratives “to contextualize, explain and define not only their field of expertise, but also the process of historical inscription.”<sup>9</sup> But apart from the simple exercise of historiographical reflection, it would seem that we are witnessing a breakdown in the anonymous, scientific objectivity that historians once affected. In its place, we now have not only a quest for the “unseen hand behind the work,” but also a sort of celebration and, somehow, historicization or self-historicization of the historian as “memory person,” either as an active protagonist or simply as a window on the historical landscape.<sup>10</sup> His or her presence as expert-narrator-protagonist of a time is, it would seem, more appealing to the general public than is “dry-as-dust” history.

This new fashion is particularly evident when it comes to England, the paradise of biography and narrative history, where some charismatic historians and so-called “telly-dons” have even become media stars. But it clearly goes further and has now become an international historiographical trend, one that has to do with many factors, such as the post-modern emphasis on individuality and subjectivity, the return of narrative, the re-evaluation of the historical profession, and, of course, the revival of biography as performed and written by

some of its most “respectable” professionals.<sup>11</sup> However, the new historiographical landscape that is emerging keeps old inequalities and disproportions alive. As it happens, this new tendency has been born with a touch of “original sin”: the number of women historians among the selected subjects is very low. Indirectly women biographers, like myself, are contributing to this state of affairs by choosing male subjects—although some of us are sensitive to and concerned about the matter and openly discuss it. The reasons for our choices are various (among them filial, intellectual affinity or random, as in my case) but in part they reflect the demographic and power imbalance within the discipline that was so marked for so long, and to some degree still persists. So if a biographer selects a subject who exerted a strong historiographical influence, the statistical chances are that this person will be male. The fact remains, however, that three-quarters of biographies of historians written by women concern male subjects, and the trend is accelerating rather than decreasing. But I wonder if the alternative, a conscious and militant writing of the biographies of women historians by women, would be another type of “historiographical ghettoization.”<sup>12</sup>

There is also a profusion of recent literature (some of it unashamedly theoretical) that focuses on auto/biographies. A term coined some time ago—“cliography”—has recently been invoked to describe the “discrete genre” of biography of historians by historians. So I suddenly find myself dubbed a “cliographer,” an impressive-sounding title. Not only that, but I also find myself described as fitting a particular mould:

Cliographers... are nearly always formally trained historians holding academic positions and who work in the same or adjacent field as their subject.... Cliographers have nearly always written other histories first, although there are exceptions. They are generally middle-aged or beyond, apparently in keeping with the dictum that the young are insufficiently endowed with worldly experience to write about another person's life and that biography is a poor career choice for a budding academic.<sup>13</sup>

### **Choosing a subject**

There are, then, precedents for writing biographies of historians, and there seems to be a virtual craze for doing so. There has also been plenty of theorizing. Of all this I was blissfully unaware when I chose my subject. So the first question to be answered has to do with the choice itself: why the biography of Raymond Carr? How did the project come about?

Years ago I wrote the political biography of Antonio Maura (1853-1925), a controversial conservative politician and one of the most important Spanish statesmen of the early twentieth century.<sup>14</sup> I spent many years immersing myself in the politics of Restoration Spain, and the Spanish political “old boys’ network.” My next project, I decided, would be one that both embraced social history and explored the world of a woman revolutionary. The figure of Sylvia Pankhurst seemed to fit the bill and I began work on her. Yet, in the end, I have written about a male historian, the prestigious and charismatic British Hispanist Raymond Carr.

“The provenance of a cliography,” it has been written, “is often a grand gesture of solidarity towards a person or a type of history.”<sup>15</sup> But my own project was born not out of any particular attraction or “kinship” I felt with the subject—although I had a good, if brief, previous professional and personal relationship with Raymond (and his wife Sara) and held his work in the greatest regard. The trigger was in fact pure accident, the result of an unexpected request. In the spring of 2003, I was approached by the Fundación José Ortega y Gasset to write a biography of Raymond Carr. They were ready to finance the project and to publish the resulting book. Of course, in order for all this to happen, my agreement was necessary. But so, too, was Carr’s. The plan was for an authorized biography and the emphasis was to be for the most part intellectual.

The idea was an exciting one; it sounded like a true challenge. But I was not at all sure that I wanted to do it. And Raymond Carr blew hot and cold about it all. After discussing it at some length, we resolved to meet that challenge, though it was never in any respect

going to be an easy task. For a start, the projected funding was cancelled after only a few months, though, by then, I was sufficiently involved in the project to decide to continue with it on my own initiative. As is often the case with biographies, there was already an element of obsessive commitment that remained undimmed to the end, some seven years later. Carr's life and work had become a jigsaw puzzle that I simply had to solve. I most probably became his nightmare.

### **Some methodological problems: sources**

"The smell of burning primary sources," suggests Midge Gillies, "lingers over the story of many literary biographies."<sup>16</sup> The same was true of my biography. Raymond Carr had, some time previously (I never found out when or why), destroyed almost all his personal papers. That meant that I would have to rely on interviews and would have to learn to identify, record, and negotiate my way around deliberate silences and personal or professional secrets, the tricks played by memory,<sup>17</sup> and the way we rework the past into something compatible with our self-image. It also meant I would have to learn how to protect myself against being lured into taking a particular line.

Yet, the extensive use of interviews meant, too, that some measure of "autobiography" would inevitably colour—in every sense—the end product. Carr's autobiographical reminiscences were vital to the biography, but they also worked against it: "*frente a ella y contra ella*," (confronting it, and against it) in Anna Caballé's words.<sup>18</sup> As a result, my biography sometimes weaves together my own perspective of history, or "what happens, seen from outside," with Carr's perception and memories, or "what happens seen from within."<sup>19</sup> Such interaction between biographer and subject was inevitable, and sometimes led to lively debate between us. Although I listened carefully and respectfully, I did my best to "filter" or edit his voice, imposing mine upon it in the text. I was determined not be dictated to either in the tone I wanted to establish or the conclusions I reached.

There was also the tactical problem of how best to interview an expert historian who would easily identify the purpose of one's questions and the possible uses to which his replies might be put. It was an exercise that the old Chinese proverb would describe as "interesting." We both also knew only too well the potential pitfalls involved in the interpretation of sources and the problems that inevitably arise when reconstructing the past. I questioned him, but he also questioned me. Often he did so in order to get a handle on my vision of his world—a world that I had to make my own, intellectually at least.

Our work began at Burch, the Carrs' beautiful farm deep in the English countryside. I would stay with them for a few days every now and then; during those occasions I taped interviews with them both. Then I would go back to my campaign headquarters in London to continue with my reading and research. Those stays in England took place during university vacations, whenever I was not involved in teaching. I recorded a huge number of such interviews, always trying to limit the sessions to under two hours. Yet, time and again, after we had broken for lunch or tea, our conversations would wander on, as conversations do. Inevitably, they also became, for me, "research stuff." It was an intense time. And I had, of course to learn on the job just how to be effective as an interviewer, something of which I had no previous experience.

"I am not in the least introspective," Carr repeatedly said when talking of himself. He even confessed to me that he never thought about himself till I made him do it with my questions. So there would also be a little bit of "psychohistory" in the biography. I also had to get to know the person behind the social and academic masks and to learn to separate that person from Carr's public persona. I do not know to what extent I have plumbed the depths of his "I," but I think I have got quite close to his "ME," the construction of his social self—as defined by sociologist George Herbert Mead—and *that* was far more important for the purposes of biography.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to the tapes of conversations with Raymond and Sara, I conducted almost one hundred interviews in London, Oxford,

France, Portugal, and Spain with his Society friends (Society with a capital “S”) and with international academic colleagues. By and large, my informants did not know each other and often had nothing in common. That in itself was interesting. They came from two almost-incompatible worlds, both of which were familiar to Carr and in both of which he moved with ease.<sup>21</sup> The ages of the informants ranged from sixty-odd right up to their early nineties and so, in many cases, I dared not wait too long before interviewing them. Indeed, quite a number have sadly died in recent years.<sup>22</sup> The majority of the interviewees were eminent academics, intellectuals, or outstanding public figures: diplomats, members of the House of Lords, and socialites. They constituted for me the most precious sources but were also often intimidating as interviewees and as potential future judges of my work: all of them were involved and had their own place and part (and their own “true” image) in the kaleidoscope of memories, which helped and encouraged me to reconstruct not only the many Carrs, but the trajectories and the spirit of a whole generation.

As a youngish middle-class foreign woman, I was received with kindness as well as curiosity, though I was probably ill prepared for many of the interviews. I am sure in many cases I did not ask the “right” questions, or they were clumsy, not least because I had to forge for myself an amalgam of the requisite knowledge of the British academic or social worlds, of the lives and work of the people involved or those they mentioned, and the socio-cultural referents I was only now beginning to discover. Some of the latter I understood only after having recorded the interview, when I transcribed them or compared them with other information that had come my way. In many cases there was no choice, and the only way to apprehend these worlds so foreign to me was to throw myself into them, even though I had no instruction manual, just as the novice cyclist has to keep pedalling to keep on the saddle and learn how to progress. In all, I ended up with some two hundred tapes of recordings.

Apart from the interviews and correspondence with any number of people, my other primary sources were the letters to which I could obtain access from personal archives, as well as photographs,

unpublished memoirs, newspapers, the archives of Oxford University and its constituent colleges, of the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, the Madrid records of the SEP (Sociedad de Estudios y Publicaciones), and some CIA declassified reports. I had no access to MI6 papers. Cameos of Carr in other biographies or autobiographies were also useful, as well as his tendency to insert sketches of his own life and ideas on history in the countless reviews he produced for *The Spectator* (something that, he confessed to me, made them more appreciated by readers—an indication that self-revelation would appear to make history more engaging). His handwritten comments in the margins of books and typed drafts were useful, too. Historical and sociological bibliography helped to analyse the context, as did some period novels which, as Raymond would have put it, “lent life and colour to history, put flesh on the bare bones provided by statistics and history books.”<sup>23</sup>

I also made a great deal of what Antonia Fraser terms “optical research” that enabled me to describe scenarios and to get some sense of atmosphere and some additional sociological input from the environments in which Carr had lived his life.<sup>24</sup> I watched Raymond closely as well—his reactions, the way he worked or spent his leisure time, his habits, his likes and dislikes. Sometimes, indeed, I felt rather like a spy.<sup>25</sup> I was soon following in his footsteps too—wandering around Oxford and its colleges (and particularly the corridors and gardens of St Antony’s, where he was Warden) as well as certain old pubs; visiting his posh London clubs (although in some of them women are not allowed); walking the Swiss Cottage area where he lived during the war; getting into the beautiful St Paul’s Church in Knightsbridge, where he married, one rainy day; and making excursions to the West Country. The idea was to immerse myself in his world, the better to understand his “dialogue” or interaction with his times. I never attended a foxhunt (nor wanted to), but I read books on foxhunting, and of course I eagerly read all those atmospheric novels that he himself read or which described his early years: the works of Anthony Powell, Evelyn Waugh, Philip Larkin, and Kingsley Amis, but also Hardy, Proust, and many others. I even bought and enjoyed



the music of his times, for instance, jazz-band records by Al Bowly, among others. I always was a tea-lover, but to get “that old-time British flavour” I tried and became addicted to the quintessentially Oxonian Patum Peperium anchovy paste or “Gentleman’s relish,” drank port and the occasional Pimm’s No. 1 Cup. (I know that all that was not necessary, but I persuaded myself, rather as might a method actor, that it was a way into the subject.)

### **Historicizing the historian**

If the purpose of writing biographies of historians is to find some deep structural connection between their lives and their work, the result can be slightly artificial and disappointing. It is formulaic that Marxist historians chronicle the lives of Marxist historians. Raymond Carr, for instance, as A.J.P. Taylor (1906-90) once said of himself when talking about his choices of subject matter, was “accident-prone.”<sup>26</sup> It is also true that familiarity with his life enabled me to read his work in a new light.

On the other hand, one can write a biography “simply” in order to understand how the subject was shaped as a historian, the origins of his or her vocation, the key features of their training or development, or as a way of analysing the work they produced. That might serve as a form of intellectual enquiry “capable of illuminating the best practices of history” or as inspirational or historiographical “meta-knowledge” for future students or historians.<sup>27</sup>

But writing the biography of a historian, apart from any intrinsic historiographical value derived from the study of his or her work, methodology, and ideas—all of which could be easily dissociated from the life itself—and apart also from any analysis of the subject’s particular contribution to academic or public life, may well involve something else. The biography of any individual can also be a cultural and social biography “intended to explore both the individual and the broader social context.” It can also focus on the interaction on the subject of public and private pressures (or the personal and the professional). “The test, then, for biography,” says Nick Salvatore, “is not whether the subject is representative, whatever that may

mean, but rather what it is that we might learn from a study of a specific life.”<sup>28</sup> That is the same principle which informs interest in the historicization of the historian.

Generally speaking, historians do not have a leading role in the socio-political arena and their lives tend to be uneventful. Students of the past would not seem to be so different from any other “Mr. Everyman,” as defined by Carl Becker (1873-1945).<sup>29</sup> But, somehow, a historian’s professional activity inevitably casts its shadow and enriches in retrospect any auto/biography.<sup>30</sup> It is as if that activity becomes the whole of their identity. Obviously, if the life under scrutiny is also interesting, creative, controversial, and one that has repercussions for any fields of human endeavour, it will be one worth recording. As the saying goes, “No problem... no story.” Or, to rephrase that for the biography of historians, “placid lives” lived out in cloistered academe “do not make good biographical copy.”<sup>31</sup>

Uneventful, boring, placid or conventional are *not* adjectives that can ever be applied to Carr’s life (sometimes stranger than fiction): imprisoned in Cuba, swimming with the octopus pet of Ian Fleming, inspiring a famous film, dealing with prisoners of Franco’s regime, CIA agents and other spies, exploring Latin American history and rainforests, hunting foxes, or trying hard to domesticate students, fellows and bureaucracies. My original intention, nevertheless, was simply to focus strictly on Raymond Carr’s intellectual development in his work as a historian and, specifically as a Hispanist. Apart from the undoubted quality of his work, the phenomenon of “the Hispanist” was one that struck me. So, too, did the extraordinary influence in Spain of his work—and the veneration of its creator—and, indeed, of other Hispanists at a particular moment in the development of modern Spain. Carr was the historian whose work enriched and breathed new life into the contemporary history of Spain at a decisive moment during Franco’s last years and during the transition period, influencing more than one generation in Spain and inspiring what was considered a “school” of historians, as well as motivating some other British historians’ interest in Spanish contemporary history. But he also was the revered “Hispanist” who was con-

sulted by politicians, admired by Spanish students, prized and celebrated (even pestered) by the media and greeted by local authorities sometimes like a “popular football hero or a saint” as Auberon Waugh put it. “[I]t was like travelling with royalty,” wrote Richard Cobb after touring in Spain with him in 1990: “Raymond is quite rightly a National Institution.”<sup>32</sup> I found nothing comparable among Italianists or Russianists or even among specialists in Greece or Portugal. His remarkable popularity in Spain as a historian (which would be totally inconceivable in many countries) was the consequence of the quality of his work as well as his own personality and charisma, but it was also the product of a particular time and cultural circumstances in Spain, which come to light in the book. So the study of the figure of the Hispanist and his work and its repercussions in Spain was to be my initial goal and leitmotiv.

But as I began to delve into Raymond Carr’s past, other aspects of the story seized my attention, and people, facts, and places started to tempt me to expand the scope of the enquiry and to attempt a reconstruction of a whole fascinating period of history and the individuals who played their parts in it. This was especially true when I realized, during the course of our interviews, the way certain questions, social landscapes, and particular figures would recur time and again in his conversation. As the research progressed, three main lines of enquiry emerged, each of them linked to the other two by coincidence (Raymond Carr would use the word “accident”) but also by cause-and-effect: there was the developing story of the central figure; the intellectual and social world that was Oxford; and the socio-political structures of the England of the day.

As a result I decided to present the story as a series of scenes and settings, none of them attempting to paint a complete picture but each of them to some extent helping to recreate the world in which this English Hispanist grew up and has lived his life. This was also the moment when I decided how I was going to set about the biography itself. I would not make of him a static object of appraisal. Instead, he would be the dynamic guide to his times—an actor, a presenter, or even at times a silent but active recipient in the back-

ground. Sally Cline has put it very well: the question is “whether the life of the person is a window on the times or whether the times are a window onto the life of that person.”<sup>33</sup>

Life, milieu, and work, then, were the three thematic threads from which the biography was woven. It is a quite conventional structure. And that structure is organized in a thematic-cum-chronological pattern which is also standard, save that it takes us from the cradle not to the grave, but rather to a nice flat in the West End.

### **The central figure and the environment**

Even if I was not going to write a personal biography, my main interest was to capture as best I could the essence of Raymond Carr the person; to bring to light his personality (Virginia Woolf’s intangible rainbow) to make him recognizable to his friends, colleagues, and pupils. It was to be as lively and as honest a human portrait as possible. Carr and I agreed that we would strenuously avoid it becoming a panegyric—no flowers by request; none of the “insipid authorised biography.”<sup>34</sup>

But then another question arose. Where was the line to be drawn? Or, “how much should a biographer tell?,” as Stephen Spender put it.<sup>35</sup> The biographer must be ruthless,” said one of the interviewees, who made a number of very critical personal observations. Write “as if everyone involved in the story is dead” is Hermione Lee’s advice.<sup>36</sup> But, none the less, there are, I think, limits. I inevitably had access to material of a personal nature and to private correspondence touching on sensitive questions which I did not wish to use. It was not simply a question of ethics or respect for people’s privacy. I could have used such things in other circumstances, in another type of biography, and with a different central character.

I suppose that in any biography there is a different “natural” threshold when it comes to the use of personal material. But, in the type of biography I was writing, the question was, or so it seemed to me, what was the point of using it? What purpose was served by crossing that threshold? Would it add something that might help the

biography to fulfil its main objective? Or would it be unhelpful? Might it distract and distort? If we call something a biography (or autobiography) there is clearly the need for a human face and soul... as well as body. We have seen that only too well, in quality portraits or self-portraits of several historians: of the insensitivity of E.H. Carr, the manipulative selfishness of A.J.P. Taylor, the coldness of Hugh Trevor-Roper (1914-2003) and the eccentricities of Richard Cobb (1917-96).<sup>37</sup> We also find accounts of historians' sexual orientation, as in the disclosed homosexuality of George Mosse (1918-1999) and Michael Howard or the transsexuality of Deirdre McCloskey. But do we need all the details in what Eric Hobsbawm described as a "saleable confessional mode"?<sup>38</sup>

As I strove to understand Carr's world and to depict the environment in which he grew up and lived, some important questions emerged. First, it became immediately clear that the world in which I was immersing myself was almost exclusively male. The colleges and the clubs, the fabric of social life, the old boys' networks, and the circles in which power and influence were exercised, the arenas in which intellectual debate took place, the transatlantic connections, and all posts in government were exclusively male preserves. The world in which Carr moved was, as was typical for the time, a man's world. My biography inevitably follows (and highlights) that conventional male trajectory and, as I said, I am very conscious of the fact that I wrote the biography of a male historian.

Second, the "class question" cropped up at every turn, in an almost obsessive fashion, during our discussions: the store Carr set by social milieux, and the way he referred time and again to his origins and the process by which he had overcome them. The peculiar structures of British society become a powerful point of reference. In dealing with this issue, the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) proved a covert ally, helping me to understand what and how much was involved in what I came to call Carr's "social migration," which was something very natural to him, but also a very "conscious" process which is presented in the book through a series of vivid scenes and situations.<sup>39</sup>

Third, British educational institutions inevitably became another point of cultural reference. Carr's childhood speaks of an idyllic rural world tainted with the side effects of a strict class system which had enormous impact in education. But I was also interested in the public school system and, more specifically, the particular microclimate in which Carr moved for some fifty years, in which he was educated, and which became in turn his own intellectual point of reference: Oxford. His adolescence as a student in pre-war Oxford reflects a mostly male world in a very politicised moment, but at the same time, in a somehow nostalgic and evanescent atmosphere which inspired (and fed back from) some literary hits and myths about decadent aristocracies. Since 1938, Carr was a student, fellow, don and finally warden in four different colleges in Oxford, in none of which he passed unnoticed, becoming a paradigmatic example of the most remarkable qualities and rarities of that university. One of his pupils defined him as "Oxford in motion." Some have elevated him to the category of an "Oxford legend."<sup>40</sup> But it was fundamentally the nature, vitality, and impact of the historical and philosophical debates that took place behind the college walls in that centuries-old university that helped to recreate what was a simmeringly rich intellectual environment.

Finally I aimed to examine Carr's academic career, his output as historian—the aspect that initially interested me when contemplating this biography. His career and his academic work tell us so much about the post-war democratisation of British society and about Cold-War politics, the anti-communist crusades, the Atlantic alliance, and the beginnings of international collaboration in politics as well as academia. But above and beyond his many-sided career, there remains always the indefatigable and passionate historian—the scholar who surprisingly turned his attention to Sweden, the revered Hispanist, whose contribution to the writing of the history of Spain was crucial, the daring Americanist, and the all-consuming intellectual, so prolific in his production of articles and reviews. It becomes clear that a life can encompass a whole world and the biographer acquires the quality of an explorer.

### Denouement

The final point concerns the relationship between the biographer and his or her subject. “The labour of writing a biography,” asserted Bernard Crick, “involves a prolonged and strange mix of love and critical distance, of commitment and restraint.”<sup>41</sup> Michael Holroyd has suggested that “writing the life of a living person is to enter a minefield.”<sup>42</sup> By its very nature, the relationship between biographer and subject is apt to be intense and even volatile. Much ink has been spilt on this issue. Biographers have been defined as “hunters, lovers and betrayers” of their subjects.<sup>43</sup> I should like to reiterate a number of points in this regard.

First, I was not invited by Carr to be his biographer. I gained his acceptance gradually and warily. Till the end he had mixed feelings about the project. I have since learned that his was not such an uncommon attitude, as witness Michael Ignatieff’s account of Isaiah Berlin’s “complex” attitude to his own biography. Ignatieff confessed that Berlin initially viewed the prospect of a biography as a “ludicrous idea” (as did Carr). It was only after three years of interviewing, during which Ignatieff “would ask him a question at the beginning of the hour and another at the end” that Berlin began to show interest and started to engage with the project. Ignatieff observed the cautious change as Berlin “came to trust me and grew comfortable,” although he “took a fundamentally passive approach to my project, waiting for the right question before proffering the answer, and I had to wait for years for him to disclose what he took to be essential elements of his life and thought.” Berlin even “retold” him some stories “with a new twist or nuance.” Apart from this, Berlin forbade the publication of the biography during his lifetime.<sup>44</sup>

Carr’s apprehensions were somewhat different. His attitude was, “Better read what I’ve written” and “my life is not important.” Comments like these were offered by Carr in order to channel the biography towards strictly intellectual issues. The fact is that, unlike Berlin, he accepted that his biography would be published in his lifetime, warts and all. Such acceptance speaks of generosity and trust in

my work (and also courage). Being able to discuss particular ideas and events with the person about whom I was writing was a privilege and an advantage, even when we agreed to disagree or I had to proceed with caution. Sometimes, however, I would have preferred to have a large cache of personal papers: “palest ink is stronger than brightest memory.”<sup>45</sup>

My relationship with Carr changed over time. Who exactly was I? A pupil? A colleague with whom to discuss things? The foreigner who didn’t really know about the British world? A friend? A spy? The traitor within the gates? “Every great man nowadays,” wrote Oscar Wilde, “has his disciples, and it is usually Judas who writes the biography.”<sup>46</sup> Indeed, personal nearness can be overwhelming, as well as demythologizing. In order to ensure a balanced, “scientific” approach I tried to “objectify” Carr. The decision to maintain an aseptic distance between us dictated our work schedule, although many of our meetings were followed by social occasions that for me became an extension of fieldwork. I could not suppress the feeling that I was sometimes invading his privacy. And as I have indicated, age and gender also had their roles to play. In the old boys’ and academic circles in which Carr lived and moved, you have to earn your spurs. That is not something that is asked of the biographer who works on a historical figure.

During my work with him, Carr was at one and the same time the master historian and my (sometimes reluctant) research object. This same duality applied to our relationship, both personal and professional. It was sometimes difficult to separate the two. During the lengthy process of research and writing, a number of high-intensity situations arose, among them the sad death of Carr’s wife Sara and the fatal illness of his son Matthew. The biographer who writes about historical figures is unlikely to be faced with such situations or the feelings to which they give rise.

I should like to finish on a quotation from Adam Sisman about Boswell’s feelings while writing his biography of Samuel Johnson: “In the process Boswell experienced an extraordinary degree of exhilaration and depression, pride, humiliation, confidence, doubt, sat-



isfaction, hurt, loneliness, disillusionment.”<sup>47</sup> All that sounds pretty familiar to me. And also the sensation of having lived an unrepeatable experience. Sisman adds “grief” to the list of feelings. Apart from my sadness for the deceased members of his family, fortunately, that is not the case with Carr. He is happily still with us, living on and so producing an unpublished chapter of his own biography.

**Appendix: Biographies of Historians—The Gender Imbalance**  
(English-language texts only)

compiled by Doug Munro

**Biographies of male historians written by female authors**

1946. LODGE, Margaret, *Sir Richard Lodge: A Biography* (London: Blackwell, 1946).
1956. SMITH, Charlotte Watkins, *Carl Becker: On History and the Climate of Opinion* (Carbondale/Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1956).
1971. COLE, Margaret, *The Life of G.D.H. Cole* (London/New York: Macmillan/St Martin's Press, 1971).
1971. NAMIER, Julia, *Lewis Namier: A Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).
1973. MILLGATE, Jane, *Macaulay* (London/Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973).
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### Family histories

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### Summary

Biographies of male historians by male authors	well over 100
Biographies of male historians by female authors	23
Biographies of female historians by female authors	12
Biographies of female historians by male authors	3
Biographies of male historians with a female co-author	3
Biographies of married couples by male author	4
Biographies of married couples by female author	7
Family histories (both written by females)	2

- \* An earlier version in English was presented at V Encuentro de la Red Europea sobre Teoría y Práctica de la Biografía (ENTPB), Universidad de Valencia, June 7-8, 2013. Some of the flavour of the verbal presentation has been retained. My gratitude to Nigel Griffin for his revision of the English and to Doug Munro for his inspiring and valuable suggestions. A different version of this paper will be published in the Spanish language.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> María Jesús González, *Raymond Carr: La Curiosidad del Zorro: Una Biografía* (Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg/Madrid: Círculo de Lectores, 2010); González, *Raymond Carr: The Curiosity of the Fox*, transl. Nigel Griffin (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2013).
- <sup>2</sup> There is, for instance, a collection of 28 recorded interviews of British historians held by the Institute of Historical Research (only 3 of the 28 interviewees were women). The stated purpose of the interviews was to demonstrate how the “background and experiences of those historians affected their work.” Roger Adelson and Russell Smith, “Videotaped Interviews with British Historians, 1985-1998,” *Albion* 31:2 (1999): 257-68 (258). See also the website of the Institute of Historical Research and the interviews for the project Making History: <http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/resources/interviews>. An advantage of videotaped interviews is that “aspects of personality are evident in expression and gesture as they are not in the written or spoken word.” Pat Thane, “Interviews with Historians,” *The Historian* (London) 36 (1992), 19.
- <sup>3</sup> For example, Golfo Alexopoulos, Julie Hessler, and Kiril Tomoff, eds., *Writing the Stalin Era: Sheila Fitzpatrick and Soviet Historiography* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
- <sup>4</sup> Jim Davidson, *A Three-Cornered Life: The Historian WK Hancock* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2010); Paul Millar, *No Fretful Sleeper: A Life of Bill Pearson* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2010); Eric Miller, *Hope in a Scattering Time: A Life of Christopher Lasch* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2010); Carl Mirra, *The Admirable Radical: Staughton Lynd and Cold War Dissent, 1945-1970* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2010); Adam Sisman, *Hugh Trevor-Roper: the biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2010).
- <sup>5</sup> Quoted by Michael Cox, “Will the Real E.H. Carr Please Stand Up?,” *International Affairs* 75:3 (1999): 643-653 (645); Jonathan Haslam, *The Vices of Integrity: E.H. Carr, 1892-1982* (London/New York: Verso Books, 2000).
- <sup>6</sup> See remarks about “Self-revelation” and “self-effacement” (as well as a penetrating account of the evolution of autobiographies of historians) in Michael

- Dintenfass, "Crafting Historians' Lives: Autobiographical Constructions and Disciplinary Discourses after the Linguistic Turn," *Journal of Modern History* 71:1 (1999): 150-65. The major work on this topic is Jeremy D. Popkin, *History, Historians, & Autobiography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). On the differences between "égo-histoire" and autobiography see Luisa Passerini and Alexander C. T. Geppert, "Historians in Flux: The Concept, Task, and Challenge of Ego-Histoire," *Historien* 3 (2001): 7-18.
- <sup>7</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times: A Twentieth-Century Life* (London: Allen Lane, 2002). As Richard Vinen puts it, "[Hobsbawm] was a touchstone of academic respectability and historians often cited him as a means of underlining their own credentials." Richard Vinen, "The Poisoned Madeleine: The Autobiographical Turn in Historical Writing," *Journal of Contemporary History* 46:3 (2011): 531-54 (538).
- <sup>8</sup> Michael Howard, *Captain Professor: A Life in War and Peace* (London/New York: Continuum, 2006); Asa Briggs, *Secret Days: Code-Breaking at Bletchley Park* (London: Frontline Books, 2012); Briggs, *Special Relationships: People and Places* (London: Frontline Books, 2012); Tony Judt, *The Memory Chalet* (London: William Heinemann, 2010); Tony Judt, with Timothy Snyder, *Thinking the Twentieth Century* (London: William Heinemann, 2012); J.H. Elliott, *History in the Making* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2012).
- <sup>9</sup> See Jaume Aurell, "Del Logocentrismo a la textualidad: la autobiografía académica como intervención historiográfica. From Logocentrism to Textuality: Academic Autobiography as Academic Autobiography as Historiographic Performance," *Edad Media Rev. Hist* 9 (2008): 193-222 (194).
- <sup>10</sup> Vinen ("Poisoned Madeleine," 539) uses for Hobsbawm the term "*homme mémoire*," on which I base my gender-neutral preference "memory person." This approach can induce historical enquiry to shift from "What happened?" to "How was it for you?," as David Blackburn puts it in "How Was it for you?" *London Review of Books*, 30 October 1997, 24, quoted by Dintenfass, "Crafting Historians' Lives," 150.
- <sup>11</sup> Biographies of historians (in the English language) since 2011, in addition to my own on Raymond Carr, are: Michael Bentley, *The Life and Thought of Herbert Butterfield: History, Science and God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); John Lewis Gaddis, *George Kennan: An American Life* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2011); Hugh Gault, *The Quirky Dr Fay: A Remarkable Life* (Cambridge: Gretton Books, 2011); Scott Hamilton, *The Crisis of Theory: EP Thompson, The New Left and Postwar British Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011); Eric Larson, *In the Garden of the Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin* [a biography of William E. Dodd] (New York: Crown, 2011); Kenneth B. McIntyre, *Her-*



*bert Butterfield: History, Providence, and Skeptical Politics* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2011); Mark McKenna, *An Eye for Eternity: The Life of Manning Clark* (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2011); Niklas Olsen, *History in the Plural: An Introduction to the Work of Reinhart Koselleck* (New York: Berghahn, 2011); Martin Duberman, *Howard Zinn: A Life on the Left* (New York/London: New Press, 2012); Helen Forsey, *Eugene Forsey: Canada's Maverick Sage* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2012); Brad Faught, *Into Africa: The Imperial Life of Margery Perham* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012); Catherine Hall, *Macaulay and Son: Architects of Imperial Britain* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2012); Albert L. Hartado, *Herbert Eugene Bolton: historian of the American Borderlands* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012); Doug Munro, *J.C. Beaglehole: Public Intellectual, Critical Conscience* (Wellington: Steele Roberts, 2012); Victoria Schofield, *Witness to History: The Life of John Wheeler-Bennett* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2012); Pattie Wright, *Ray Parkin's Odyssey* (Melbourne: Pan Macmillan, 2012); Ciaran Brady, *James Anthony Froude: An Intellectual Biography of a Victorian Prophet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Lawrence Goldman, *The Life of R.H. Tawney: Socialism and History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013); Elizabeth Kleinhenz, *A Brimming Cup: The Life of Kathleen Fitzpatrick* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2013); Susan Reynolds Williams, *Alice Morse Earle and the Domestic History of Early America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix 1: Biographies of Historians – The Gender Imbalance.

<sup>13</sup> John Clive coined the term “cliographer” in 1989. The phrase “discrete genre” is taken from Doug Munro, “Biographies of Historians – or, The Cliographer’s Craft,” *Australian Historical Studies* (special issue, “Biography and Life-Writing) 43:1 (2012): 11-27 (11).

<sup>14</sup> María Jesús González, *Antonio Maura: Biografía y Proyecto de Estado* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> Munro, “Biographies of Historians,” 14.

<sup>16</sup> Midge Gillies, *Writing Lives: Literary Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 10.

<sup>17</sup> I witnessed the fickleness of memory and the subjectivity of perception, for example, in Carr’s “recreation” of his grandfather’s death, and also in the very different and utterly incompatible accounts of Oxford atmosphere in the early war years given me by Raymond and by his wife Sara (who were both there throughout 1939-40). There is also a beautiful example about reinvention or “appropriation” of memories in the text by Oliver Sacks “On Memory,” *The Threepenny Review*, 100 (Winter 2005), 20.

<sup>18</sup> Anna Caballé, “Biografía y autobiografía: Convergencias y divergencias entre ambos géneros,” in *El otro, el mismo: Biografía y Autobiografía en Europa*,

- (*siglos XVII-XX*) ed. James C. Davis and Isabel Burdiel (Valencia: PUV, 2005), 49-61 (53).
- <sup>19</sup> The definitions are from Agnes Heller and quoted by Eric Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, xiv.
- <sup>20</sup> George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934).
- <sup>21</sup> This is similar to the case of George Orwell, who also had Spanish connections. Orwell had different groups of friends who were unaware of each other's existence, because Orwell successfully kept them apart. Bernard Crick, *George Orwell: A Life*, 2nd ed. (London: Secker & Warburg, 1981), xxvi, xxx, 97.
- <sup>22</sup> Maurice Cardiff (1915-2006), Susan Crosland (1927-2011), Sir William Deakin (1913-2005), Peter Ganz (1920-2006), Manuel Fraga (1922-2012), Stuart Hampshire (1914-2004), Sir Nicholas Henderson (1919-2009), Eric Hobsbawm (1917-2012), Geoffrey Lewis (1920-2008), Francisco José Mayans (1921-2011), John Lowe (1928-2009), Lord Quinton (1925-2010), Joshua Sherman (1934-2013), Harry Shukman (1931-2012), Dorothe Storry (1917-2005) and Penry Williams (1925-2013).
- <sup>23</sup> As Carr said, "Poets and novelists can in just a couple of sentences shine light into those darkest recesses into which even the best calibrated document microscope cannot penetrate." González, *Raymond Carr*, 145.
- <sup>24</sup> Antonia Fraser, "Optical Research," in *Lives for Sale: Biographers' Tales*, ed. Mark Bostridge (London: Continuum, 2004), 113-17 (113).
- <sup>25</sup> "As a burglar breaking into a house, rifling through certain drawers," says Jill Lepore, "Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography," *Journal of American History* 88:1 (2001): 129-44 (134); Brenda Maddox, "Biography: A Love Affair or a Job?," *New York Times*, 9 May 1999.
- <sup>26</sup> A.J.P. Taylor, "Accident-Prone, or What Happened Next," *Journal of Modern History* 49:1 (1977): 1-18.
- <sup>27</sup> "Intellectual enquiry capable..." in Munro, "Biographies of Historians," 11; "Meta-knowledge" and "égo-histoire" in Passerini and Geppert, "Historians in Flux," 12.
- <sup>28</sup> Nick Salvatore, "Biography and Social History: An Intimate Relationship," *Labour History* (Sydney) 87 (2004): 187-92 (188 and 190).
- <sup>29</sup> Carl Becker, "Everyman His Own Historian," *American Historical Review* 37:2 (1932): 221-36.
- <sup>30</sup> Hobsbawm, for instance, explained during an interview that he felt he had lived a "very Central-European experience"—that of a society disintegrating and with no possibility of returning to the past: an "end-of-the-world atmosphere"—whereas Carr and the British did not live that experience, but lived (or so he says) very strongly the feeling of "decline." Were they really as conscious of living that as they claim? Or is it a construction *a posteriori*?

- <sup>31</sup> Munro, “Biographies of Historian,” 12.
- <sup>32</sup> The expression “hero or saint” comes from Auberon Waugh, “Homage from Rioja, or Travels with my cousin Raymond,” unidentified press cutting from April 1989 (Papers of Raymond Carr); Tim Heald, ed., *My Dear Hugh: Letters from Richard Cobb to Hugh Trevor-Roper and Others* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2011), 192.
- <sup>33</sup> Sally Cline and Carole Angier, *The Arvon Book of Life Writing: Writing Biography, Autobiography and Memoir* (London: Methuen Drama, 2010), 25.
- <sup>34</sup> Doug Munro, “On the Relationship between Biographer and Subject,” *History Now* (New Zealand) 8:3 (2002): 12-16 (14).
- <sup>35</sup> Stephen Spender “How much should a biographer tell?,” *Saturday Review*, 23 January 1964: 16-19.
- <sup>36</sup> Hermione Lee, “The Art of Biography” 4, Interviewed by Louisa Thomas, *The Paris Review* (Summer 2013), No. 205.
- <sup>37</sup> Haslam, *The Vices of Integrity*; Adam Sisman, *A.J.P. Taylor: a biography* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1994); Sisman, *Hugh Trevor-Roper*. Cobb wrote five autobiographies, not to mention an edition of his correspondence: Heald, *My Dear Hugh*.
- <sup>38</sup> In the case of George Mosse, that was fundamental to a better understanding of his work; in the case of Michael Howard, fundamental to understanding his society and environment. See Jeet Heer, “George Mosse and the Academic Closet,” *National Post*, 30 September 2004; George Mosse, *Confronting History: A Memoir* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000); Howard, *Captain Professor*; Deirdre N. McCloskey, *Crossing: A memoir* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). “Saleable” in Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, xii.
- <sup>39</sup> Bourdieu explains that when a class barrier is crossed, tastes, mores, and behaviour can feel as different as they might if one had travelled to another country, therefore my idea of “migration”. See Pierre Bourdieu: *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, tr. Richard Nice (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984); see also the interview with Carr by Naim Attallah, *Singular Encounters* (London: Quartet Books, 1990), 105. I later discovered that the term “social migration” is also used by Eric Hobsbawm (*Interesting Times*) to reflect that same gulf between classes and the difficulties involved in negotiating it.
- <sup>40</sup> “Oxford in motion” and more in interview with Ezequiel Gallo, 15 January 2009.
- <sup>41</sup> Crick, *George Orwell*, xxx.
- <sup>42</sup> Michael Holroyd, “Finding a Good Woman,” in Bostridge, *Lives for Sale*, 160-65 (161).

- <sup>43</sup> Munro, "On the Relationship," 12; Lepore, "Historians Who Love Too Much," 137. "Be excited by, be appalled at, be envious of, be angry with—these are all possible responses, often with the same subject in the course of a day's writing. The subject is always an enemy; a pursuit is always in progress." "Does the hunter 'like' the fox? Not necessarily": Brenda Maddox, "Biography."
- <sup>44</sup> Michael Ignatieff, "Berlin in Autumn," in *Telling Lives: From W.B. Yeats to Bruce Chatwin*, ed. Alistair Horne (London: Papermac, 2000), 365-76 (373).
- <sup>45</sup> John Milton Cooper, "Conception, Conversation and Comparison: My Experiences as a Biographer" in *Writing Biography. Historians and their Craft*, ed. Lloyd E Ambrosius (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 92.
- <sup>46</sup> Oscar Wilde, "The Butterfly's Boswell," *Court and Society Review*, 20 April 1887, 378.
- <sup>47</sup> Adam Sisman, *Boswell's Presumptuous Task: Writing the Life of Dr Johnson*, (London: Penguin, 2001), xxii.