PSYCHOBIOGRAPHY

AND

BERTRAND RUSSELL'S

CREATIVE QUEST

THE CAPTURING OF MULTITUDES OF THINGS
AT PRESENT FUGITIVE:

PSYCHOBIOGRAPHY
AND
BERTRAND RUSSELL'S CREATIVE QUEST

BY

GEORGE MALCOLM JOHNSON, B.A.

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AUTHOR: George Malcolm Johnson, B.A.
               (University of Western Ontario)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Andrew Brink

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Abstract

As an alternative to current trends in literary criticism, this thesis argues that the rigorous methods of obtaining knowledge as well as the concepts and insights developed in systematic psychology and psychoanalysis can and should be applied to both creative writers and their texts. Though the relationship between writer and text is a complicated one, a synthesis of well documented evidence from psychology can illuminate confusing aspects of the personality infused in the work and can thus move the critic closer to scientific literary truth, without dehumanizing literature.

The introduction outlines some of the reasons why psychological findings and insights should be useful and why there has not been widespread application of them in the humanities. Biography in particular, as an art form, can benefit from being psychologically informed. Conversely, the discipline of psychology has much to learn from the in-depth study of extraordinary individual lives. The first chapter provides a more detailed inquiry into the methodological problems associated with psychobiography and suggests some applications of scientific method to

biography. The example of Virginia Woolf, whose life and works are particularly intricately connected, will be foremost amongst those used to demonstrate the specific problem of hypothesis testing. Some of the proposed strategies will be executed in the second chapter through a case study of the early life of Bertrand Russell, who provides a good example of some of the difficulties likely to be encountered, as well as the advantages of a psychological approach, especially since his life spans the entire development of modern psychology. The hypothesis about the origins of Russell's creative impulse will be subsequently tested in the light of his creative works in the period from 1904 to 1914.

Preface

Having been, for the past four years, in the unusual position of straddling the two disciplines of English literature and psychology, which at least according to academic programming, apparently have little bearing on one another, I felt the need to address their similarities in some concrete form; hence this thesis. Though the one undergoes a "ceaseless mental fight" to become more scientific than a social science and the other has become as firmly entrenched a "humanity" as any other academic subject, my experience has been that the one is not complete without the other. Psychobiography, which I have mapped in broad outline, provides only one potential meeting ground. Applications of formal psychology to strictly textual criticism seem limitless. If I have in some way contributed to their meeting by using the figure of Bertrand Russell, whose interests extended over many disciplines, then I consider my object fulfilled.

Special thanks to the Psychology and English departments at Huron College, who facilitated my "dual" role, and especially to Dr. M. Sansom of the Psychology department, whose own double interest first sparked mine. Also, I wish to thank Dr. N. Rosenblood at McMaster for clarifying my own views, Dr. J. Roy of the Chedoke

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Introduction

PSYCHOLOGY AND THE CRITICISM OF LITERATURE:

AN INEVITABLE AFFINITY?

Although critics of "psychologizing" abound in
literature studies, psychology, as a discipline, has much to
offer the literary critic and biographer.[1] From the very
inception of psychoanalysis, which has had undeniable impact
on formal psychology, its practitioners were well aware, not
only of the debt they owed to the intuitions of creative
writers, but of the potential applications of psychological
discoveries to literature and its creators. Sigmund Freud,
the founder of psychoanalysis, wrote in 1907 that,

> the creative writer cannot evade the
> psychiatrist nor the psychiatrist the
> creative writer ... He has from time
> immemorial been the precursor of science, and
> so too of scientific psychology.[2]

Some years later, Ernest Jones, Freud's biographer,
elaborated on a similar theme, noting disturbing trends in
criticism:

> A work of art is too often regarded as a
> finished thing-in-itself, something almost
> independent of the creator's personality, as
> if little could be learned about the one or
> the other by connecting the two studies.
> Informed criticism, however, shows that a
> correlated study of the two sheds light in
> both directions, on the inner nature of the
> composition and on the creative impulse of
> its author. The two can be separated only at
> the expense of diminished appreciation,
> whereas to increase our knowledge of either
> automatically deepens our understanding of
> the other.[3]

In a 1916 summary of the earliest psychoanalytic studies of men of genius, Lucile Dooley acknowledges the origins of the field of applied psychoanalysis and confidently predicts a flourishing future for it:

> The first indication of the possibilities for psychoanalysis in art, literature, and biography, in fact, was found in Freud's "Interpretation of Dreams", which remains as the embryo out of which the whole structure of non-pathological applications of psychoanalysis has grown ... It has proved a most inviting field, and one in which there still remains much unbroken ground.[4]

While undoubtedly some ground has been traversed in this area since 1916, it is rather disconcerting to note a foremost critic and proponent of a psychological approach to literature, Leon Edel, claim, in 1982,

> that literary study (that is, biography and criticism) can no longer afford to close its eyes and look away from psychological truths in literary works: they are a part of the truths sought in literary criticism and in biography.[5]

Has literary criticism more often than not been 'asleep' with regards to developments in psychology and the social sciences in the past seventy years? If so, what is it that psychology can contribute? Perhaps more importantly, why has there not been widespread application of formal psychology to literature, and what are the limitations to this approach? These are the issues I hope to address in a general way in this introduction, before moving on in the first chapter to the more specific methodological problems of a particular branch of literary criticism, literary psychobiography.

Leon Edel claims that literature and psychology have been made to seem antagonistic, though they are not necessarily so.[6] In fact, both are often concerned with the exploration and explication of human behavior, though the means of doing so differ. In literature, through an act of the imagination, an individual highly sensitive to his environment articulates the human condition for the reader, who is often able to identify with various aspects of the presentation. Samuel Johnson, himself a great intuitive psychologist, describes the process at the beginning of his argument for the usefulness of biography (1750). He states that,

> All Joy or Sorrow for the Happiness or
> Calamities of others is produced by an Act of
> the Imagination, that realizes the Event
> however fictitious, or approximates it
> however remote, by placing us, for a Time, in
> the condition of him whose Fortune we
> contemplate; so that we feel while the
> Deception lasts, whatever emotions would be
> excited by the same Good or Evil happening to
> ourselves.[7]

Modern psychology attempts to probe the human condition either by examining subhuman organisms with the aim of making predictions about humans, studying individual humans in great depth in order to attempt to make claims about and provide diagnoses for other, similar humans, or by comparing groups of humans. Whereas the goal of psychology has tended to be the discovery of principles or laws applicable to most humans, or at the very least specified groups, literature tends to concentrate on specific individuals at a certain place and time in the history of

the race or in the imagination of the writer, yet the
highest art achieves a universal quality.

The similarities between the two branches of
knowledge about humans become clearer when we realize that,
for years, literary critics have applied their own intuitive
psychology to their work. Samuel Johnson is a case in
point. One can hardly conceive of a critic more able to
empathize with his subject matter than Johnson did in the
best of his Lives of the English Poets, such as the
Life of Savage. Repeatedly, with brilliant psychological
strokes, he moves from a particular idiosyncracy of his
subject to the general to portray the universal folly of
mankind. To illustrate, in that life, Johnson reports that
Savage lost the patronage of Sir Richard Steele because
Steele discovered that Savage had ridiculed him in public.
Johnson then proceeds to set Savage's imprudence into a
larger human context:

> A little knowledge of the world is sufficient
> to discover that such weakness is very
> common, and that there are few who do not
> sometimes, in the wantonness of thoughtless
> mirth or the heat of transient resentment,
> speak of their friends and benefactors with
> levity and contempt, though in their cooler
> moments they want neither sense of their
> kindness nor reverence for their virtue.[8]

Furthermore, when the modern critic studies the problems of
Hamlet's motivation or attempts to interpret symbols in a
work, is he not implicitly using psychology?[9] However,
instead of relying solely on his critical acumen or
psychological intuition (both of which may be biased) why

should the critic not incorporate information from the vast body of knowledge which now comprises the science of psychology? Indeed, how can the critic who deals with twentieth century authors as informed about the developments of psychology as D. H. Lawrence, W. H. Auden, William Faulkner, John Fowles, Margaret Atwood or Robertson Davies (to name but a few) afford not to make himself aware of the very concepts which he will inevitably be commenting on through his discussion of these authors' texts?

Psychology, that is, psychological insights and concepts as opposed to methods of therapy, can validate intuitions and can strengthen critical arguments. Some concepts, such as depression, have been well documented and are supported by research of diverse types (Arieti, 1980). Such concepts, which describe and explain behavior, enable the literary critic to organize otherwise disparate data in literature, without becoming reductionistic.

As Edel notes, reducing works of art to psychological labels, or making unjustifiable extrapolations, must be avoided, and can be avoided, if one keeps in mind the variability and complexity of human nature. Since nothing can be absolutely proven in psychology, all claims made about behavior in fiction or reality must necessarily be tentative. This does not make such claims any less valuable. Edel convincingly argues,

> Why should a psychological speculation, based
> on carefully gathered data and an observation
> of repeated patterns in a work, not be as
> valid as pages of endless and inconclusive

> speculation about the first night of
> <u>Twelfth Night</u>, or what Shakespeare
> actually wrote before Falstaff was made to
> babble of green fields?[10]

In addition, the literary critic willing to forage into the
largely unfamiliar territory of the psychologist must be
flexible while,at the same time,discriminating in order to
gather the best evidence pertaining to the area - in short
be able to provide a synthesis which best covers all aspects
of the literary problem he is trying to solve. William
Runyan, a clinical psychologist, and a strong proponent of
the approach, would add that, in a broader context, one must
integrate both the positive and negative aspects of the
psychological with the interpersonal, social and historical
in order to achieve a balanced portrait either of a
character, group of characters or a creative writer.

In its drive to become a legitimate science,
psychology has developed rigorous and sophisticated methods
of collecting, observing and evaluating phenomena, which
could well be translated and adopted by the literary
critic. To illustrate, knowledge of the scientific method
forces the critic to realize the necessity of formulating
various alternate hypotheses about a text or an author or
their relationship, instead of approaching the problem with
one preconceived notion of, for example, how a particular
text fits into a historical perspective and thus what it
must contain. After all, rational thought, unaided, has its
limits. Similarly, awareness and acceptance of the concept
of experimenter bias enables the critic to become more

conscious of, and sensitive to, his own theoretical limitations and biases.

Perhaps most importantly, psychology can provide the broad structures needed to address the central issue of the relationship between the writer and his works. For example, the role of genetic factors, as well as early deprivation, loss and trauma as the frequent precursors of depression, and the hysterical and obsessional defenses which can transform it from an illness into an energizer for the creative process, have been convincingly argued (Brink, 1977, 1982) and are well supported in the research literature (Storr, 1972, Ellenberger, 1970, Bowlby 1969, 1973, 1980).

If literary criticism and psychology often have common aims, and if psychology holds a potentially rich source of knowledge for the literary critic, why then has it not been tapped to any major degree? There are several related reasons. One of the most important, as well as obvious, stems from the failure of communication between the two disciplines with the resulting lack of knowledge about psychological discoveries on the part of literary critics. Since the James brothers went their separate ways - Henry to become a novelist and William to develop the principles of psychology - the two disciplines have never been as close. Each has developed its own specialized literature and an accompanying sophisticated technical language. Terms such as self-fulfilling prophecy, condensation, analysis of

variance and object split mean little to the literary

critic. Attacks on the jargon filled language of the social

scientist by the literary critic are often well-founded but

may occasionally mask lack of understanding. Edel

approaches the truth when he says,

> The answer to the misguided use of
> psychoanalysis is not to close our ears but
> to ask ourselves: How are we to deal with
> this difficult material while remaining true
> to our discipline - and avoid making complete
> fools of ourselves?[12]

Literary critics entering this fascinating field must be

willing to invest the time and energy not only to master the

material but to translate clinical diagnoses into terms

appropriate to their discipline. Perhaps increased emphasis

on interdisciplinary studies in academic settings will make

it easier for potential critics to obtain a thorough

grounding in psychology. Until that time it appears as

though, in many cases, ignorance has bred contempt. The

prevailing attitude of the academic English department seems

to be that psychology is a 'pseudo-science' and thus not

worthy of serious critical attention (or, for that matter,

of research grants). Academics tend to deny the emotional

in their studies and thus their resistances are high to some

of the psychological material, which inevitably will have

deep implications for the critic personally. Freud's

uncompromising advice to the psychoanalyst is equally

applicable and difficult to follow for the literary critic

embarking on such studies:

> Only those who have had the experience of
> examining and feeling their own dreams, and

>have learned what exists in their own
>emotional inwardness - within their personal
>abysses - can objectively attempt to look at
>what issues from the inwardness of
>others.[13]

On the other hand, social scientists must accept

some of the responsibility for the failure in

communication. The mainstream of psychology baulks at any

study which cannot be empirically tested and controlled in

some measure, considering such material "soft". Thus the

literary critic or the psychologist interested in exploring

the other's territory frequently finds himself up against

opposing and stifling attitudes. In order to probe more

deeply how these divergent attitudes evolved, it is

necessary to examine more closely the development of the

discipline which Freud claimed owed so much in its origins

to the intuitions of the creative writer.

Up until this century the relationship between the

writer and his works was rarely called into question and an

aura of mystery surrounded it. The oldest aesthetic

theories of Pindar and Plato held, however, that the

creative person was inherently flawed and the view expressed

by Burton in the seventeenth century that "All poets are

mad" was commonly accepted.[14] One of the first systematic

studies of men of genius, by the philosopher-psychologist

Havelock Ellis (1904), reinforced this view, emphasizing as

it did the role of psychopathology in creativity.[15] Freud

and his followers, in turn, initiated a process of

demythification in all areas of human behavior, which

extended to the realm of the creative imagination. However,

in its birth pains, at the beginning of this century,

psychoanalysis was not able to provide a comprehensive

theory to govern the complex writer-text relationship.

Instead, its members followed historical precedent and

stressed the psychopathological to the detriment of the

positive aspects of creativity with their belief in the

Kairos as a psychopathological decisive moment for the great

man.[16] Freud's (1907) warning that,

> Every poet who shows abnormal tendencies can
> be the object of a pathography. But the
> pathography cannot show anything new.
> Psychoanalysis on the other hand provides
> information about the creative process.
> Psychoanalysis deserves to rank above
> pathography,[17]

was not generally heeded by his followers, including

Hitschmann, Graf, and Sadger, the latter of whom especially

"wrote pathographies 'purely out of medical interest',

rather than to discover something about the process of

artistic creation."[18] In addition, their "methodological

vice," according to Coltrera, a historian of the movement,

was "psychosexual reductionism."[19] Combined with a

content which often shocked a public still living under the

illusions fostered by Victorian Society and an often

mechanistic rhetoric, it is no wonder that the plausibility

of some of the early applied theory was called into

question. Early enthusiasm about the explanatory power of

psychology for this complex relationship gave way to later

disillusionment even on the part of its practitioners.

Freud himself said that, "before the problems of the

creative artist, analysis must, alas, lay down its

arms."[20]

Thus, primarily because of psychoanalysis'
insistence on the psychopathological element in creativity,
it did not facilitate a relationship with contemporary
writers and poets. Understandably, many creators were
suspicious of a discipline which wished to delve into their
inner beings, only to reduce their artistic endeavor to a
neurosis, or worse. Although Virginia and Leonard Woolf,
amongst other "Bloomsberries", were instrumental in
disseminating the ideas of psychoanalysis in Britain through
their publishing of Freud's works at the Hogarth Press,
Virginia refused throughout her life to seek psychoanalytic
help despite the seriousness of her illness and although her
brother, Adrian, became a practising psychiatrist.[21]
Rilke, too, refused psychoanalysis saying "Leave me my
demons."[22] James Joyce denounced the entire
psychoanalytic movement and "recoiled when Jung offered to
analyze him".[23] Many additional examples could be given.

Literary criticism too, following upon T. S. Eliot's
apparent lead in Tradition and the Individual Talent
(1921), retreated from the relationship and denied the
common sense view, in its attempt to dissociate the writer
from his work. Eliot's claim that "honest criticism should
be directed at the poetry, not the poet" has had undeniable
impact on the course of literary criticism. For example, D.
H. Lawrence's advice to David Garnett to

Never trust the teller. Trust the tale. The
proper function of a critic is to save the

tale from the artist who created it,[24] has been so often held up by critics as justification for their approach that it hardly needs to be reproduced here.

Nevertheless, Freud remained hopeful that psychoanalysis would eventually overcome its limitations in order to more fully explicate the writer-text relationship. In 1930 he wrote,

> Psychoanalysis can supply some information which cannot be arrived at by other means, and can thus demonstrate new connecting threads in the 'weaver's masterpiece' spread between the instinctual endowments, the experiences and the works of an artist.[25]

Following the second world war, the development of ego psychology, which shifted emphasis, according to Bergmann, onto "the interaction between child and parent and later between endowment and psychic need on the one hand and the social and cultural situations, on the other,"[26] allowed a less restrictive approach to the problem of artistic creativity. Mack (1971) states that it became

> possible to study the product of the creative individual, not simply as revealing of childhood drives, experiences, traumata, disappointments and memories, but as complex transformations, efforts of the ego to "renegotiate" the settlements of childhood and to surmount these early struggles through work.[27]

In this era, Kris (1952) attempted to revise Freud's original linking of poetic activity with daydreaming by warning that the imaginative capacity of writers to reach beyond their personal lives in their writing had been seriously underestimated. "The artist has created a world

and not indulged in a daydream," he said.[28] The
preponderance of psychological studies encroaching on the
world of the artist, however, continued to overemphasize the
pathological and thus remained reductionistic.[29]

Only Erik Erikson, both Mack (1971) and Bergmann
(1973) agree, departed significantly and successfully from
the psychopathological approach in his psychological studies
of Luther (1958) and Gandhi (1967). His development of a
sequence of psychosocial phases which span the entire life
cycle promoted his broader concern not "simply with the
conflicts from which his subjects suffered, but with how
they surmounted these and adopted them to the historical
realities of their days. "[30] Erikson's unorthodox voice
was not strong enough though, and the mainstream of
psychology became increasingly concerned with the struggle
to achieve scientific legitimacy, which tended to narrow its
scope and to deflect it further away from the arts. Daniel
Levinson, a personality psychologist, comments on the
post-war period that,

> The new era was characterized by pedestrian
> conformity and a decline of imagination in
> politics, art and science.
> Personality-social psychology, reflecting the
> societal change, retreated from the exciting
> vistas that had emerged in the 1940's and
> became increasingly preoccupied with method
> and the measurement of narrowly defined
> variables. Psychology moved out of society
> and back into the laboratory.[31]

To some degree these "exciting vistas" were
approached once again in the 1960's with the renewed
interest in creativity, ironically induced by the American

fear of not keeping pace with Soviet technological advances. Psychology once again appeared to be closely allied to a practical end. Creativity was treated as a definable, testable "concept" and a literature flourished which aimed at producing methods of "boosting" creativity, particularly in the educational system (Guilford, 1968, Knellar, 1965). Several researchers even began to perceive creativity as a new sort of subject matter or skill that could be trained in an educational setting (Torrance, 1965, as cited in Vernon, 1977). Regardless of the efficacy of such approaches, this attitude towards creativity did much to reverse the trend of viewing the creative process as an "abnormal" function with psychopathological origins. However, the social scientists involved in this surge of exploration still did not speak to the arts, since their methodology and their goals were quantitative, that is to say, directed exclusively at enhancing creativity in most people under the widest range of situations. Their interest, for the most part, did not extend to the in-depth examination of extraordinarily gifted creative individuals.

In the 1970's psychoanalysis, that psychological system perhaps best suited to explicate the writer-text relationship, continued to discourage interest from the humanities by turning in upon itself. According to A. Roland (1978), the American Psychoanalytic Association has consistently failed to accept candidates of psychoanalysis from other disciplines, although the numbers of these

applicants are increasing.[32]

Only very recently have serious attempts been made by
social scientists to redress the balance between the
psychopathological elements and the benefits accruing from
"creative illnesses," and to draw upon the resources of the
humanities, particularly upon information about creative
writers.   In "Manic-Depressive Illness and Accomplishment:
Creativity, Leadership, and Social Class," Kay Jamison, a
psychiatrist, prefaces her discussion of a hypothesized
relationship between depression and accomplishment with the
claim that, "a psychopathological approach to mood disorders
has resulted in a psychiatric literature generally slighting
the positive aspects of affective illness, especially
manic-depressive illness and its variants."[33]   For
theoretical, clinical and social-ethical reasons, she
argues, the positive features of mood disorders need to be
studied.   Furthermore, the best sources are to be found in
literature, and especially biography and autobiography since
quantitative sources of data are rare and, at any rate,
cannot replace the in-depth treatment of the topic which
these confessional and artistic productions can provide.

Similarly, William Runyan in Life Histories and
Psychobiography, using biographies of both writers and
political leaders, shows the benefits of making individual
life histories the focus of systematic, rigorous
psychological reserch.   He maintains that,

> The in-depth understanding of particular
> individuals is also a legitimate objective of

> intellectual inquiry and one of the
> fundamental levels of analysis. The study of
> life histories has much to contribute to the
> social sciences, both in its own right and in
> complement to other forms of research.[34]

It now remains for the humanities to take up the challenge

and to respond to the issues raised by these more inclusive

and balanced approaches of psychiatrists and psychologists.

     Runyan is also important for his illumination of a

fundamental reason why psychology has not concentrated on

the individual level of analysis, an argument which provides

yet another reason why psychological findings have not been

as relevant to critics of English literature as they should

have been. In psychology the nomothetic view has prevailed,

which states that the primary goal of the discipline should

be

> the development of generalizations of ever
> increasing scope, so that greater and greater
> varieties of phenomena may be explained by
> them, larger and larger numbers of questions
> answered by them, and broader and broader
> reaching predictions and decisions based upon
> them.[35]

These generalizations are then applied to explain and

predict particular behaviors. Thus, social scientists have

been skeptical of the reverse approach, that is, the study

of single cases, since the lack of control makes it

difficult to generalize from these types of studies.

Campbell and Stanley (1965), whose research design text has

been widely followed, disparage the method, stating that

what they term "one shot" case studies,

> have such a total absence of control as to be
> of almost no scientific value... such studies

> often involve tedious collection of specific
> detail, careful observation, testing, and the
> like, and in such instances involve the error
> of _misplaced precision_... It seems
> well-nigh unethical at the present time to
> allow, as a thesis or dissertation in
> education, case studies of this nature...[36]

And yet these sorts of studies are the ones literary critics
are most likely to embark on in the examination of a writer
and his texts.

But, as Runyan points out, there is an alternate
approach to obtaining knowledge about human psychology.
Kluckhohn and Murray claim that, "Every man is in certain
respects (a) like all other men (b) like some other men (c)
like no other man."[37] Whereas the mainstream of
psychology has concentrated on the discovery of what is true
of all human beings, at a universal level of generalization,
there are actually two other semi-independent levels of
legitimate inquiry, the level which asks what is true of
groups of human beings and one which attempts to divine what
is true of individual human beings. The latter category
especially, which aims at making generalizations about
specific individuals, has been quite neglected. This
situation needs to be changed because the application of
universal level generalizations to specific individuals has
been shown to be limited. The nomothetic approach often
cannot interpret fully the flux of an individual human life
or the idiosyncracies of especially talented individuals.
As Runyan claims,"... broad generalizations can be applied
only with great caution to particular individuals, as the

relationship between variables in a group study may be very different from the relationship of these variables within a single individual."[38]

A good example of the limitations of the nomothetic perspective occurs in the research on creativity, mentioned earlier. Jamison claims that those in the best position to link the two worlds of mood disorders and creative achievement, ie. students of creativity, have not done so. What they have concerned themselves with instead, by adopting the nomothetic view, is the development of quantitative and, as far as possible, objective measures of the rather amorphous concept of creativity. However, the most widely used tests, Guilford's Alternate Uses test and Plot titles test, Wallach and Kogan's Patterns test, Torrance's tests and Mednick's Remote Associates test (1962) have several drawbacks derived from their approach. In order to be applicable and comprehensible to the average "subject", most have had to resort to very superficial questions. For example, why should anyone, especially a highly creative person, be motivated to think creatively about the uses of a brick, as one is asked to do in Guilford's Alternate Uses test? Second, the broad assumption upon which most are based - that all manifestations of creativity require the same kind of verbal fluency and unconventionality - may be wrong. There may be a difference, for instance, between scientific and literary creativity. In addition, the reliability and validity of

such "objective" tests have been called into question.
Vernon (1977) demonstrated that the conditions of testing,
including the ambiguity of task instructions and the frame
of mind of the tester, have an effect on subsequent
performance on creativity tests.[39] As well, contradictory
evidence has been produced about whether these standardized
creativity tests are actually measuring something different
from especially verbal intelligence. The Mednick Remote
Associates Test (R.A.T.), for example, which considers
creativity from an associative or behavioristic basis, has
often been highly correlated with standard measures of
intelligence like the W.A.I.S., which suggests that it may
be measuring an aspect of intelligence and not creativity.
Even between tests of creativity, the correlations have not
been high, indicating that each test may be measuring
dissimilar types of abilities. Whether the unusual
associations required by most of these tests tap the same
kind of originality traditionally associated with creativity,
as shown by the creative artist or scientist, is debatable at
best.

It is interesting to note that one quantitative test
which does overcome some of the difficulties of the other
creativity tests, the Barron-Welsh Art Scale (Welsh and
Barron, 1963), was derived by assessing, through interviews,
individuals considered to be creative by their peers.[40]
Significantly, the test, which has a much higher reported
predictive validity than either the Mednick or Guilford

tests,[41] is based on a generalization at the individual level, which says that a creative person is "likely to possess, in addition to superior intelligence and cognitive skills, a distinctive motivational structure and personality."[42] This test, as objective as the others, does, however, suffer from superficiality and has occasionally failed to differentiate those selected as creative by other means from non-creative groups.[43]

These problems with the measurement of creativity by nomothetic, objective means have prompted researchers like Vernon (1977) to return to the common sense view and to state that the best test of any aspect of creativity should be as nearly as possible a sample from individuals of the kind of behavior or thinking that creativity is supposed to involve.[44] Though he would likely deny it, he thus admits the limitations of the nomothetic approach and implicitly advocates research at the individual level, though supplemented by other types of research. It seems to me that the English critic, armed with formal psychological knowledge, is thus in a good position to fill this void in understanding, having at his disposal the cumulative insights and discoveries of an entire tradition of highly creative individuals.

One further important reason for the failure of the widespread application of psychological findings to literature, implied in the discussion thus far, needs to be clarified. Systematic psychology is barely one hundred

old
years ^ and, as is inevitable in any energetic quest for
knowledge, there has been a clash of scientific viewpoints
and theories; this is, in fact, a necessary but not
sufficient condition for the advancement of science. Almost
from the divergence of psychology from philosophy, various
psychological schools emerged, each one vying with the
others to propagate its views. There can be no doubt that
one of the competitors, Freudian psychoanalysis,
revolutionized psychology. It also was, in some ways, the
best suited to explain creators' motivations, and was
certainly more often applied to that end than any other
contemporary psychology. Bergmann (1973) mentions, for
instance, that, aside from the eight psychobiographical
monographs published under Freud's editorship between 1918
and 1925, there were dozens of other "Freudian" studies, at
varying levels of sophistication, published in the 1920's.
However, it was this method of inquiry, psychoanalysis, that
aroused hostility amongst psychologists, psychiatrists and
philosophers from its inception, for at least two reasons.
Aside from its content, the roots of psychoanalysis are
quite different from those of formal psychology. Freud,
trained in medicine, was heavily influenced by Darwinian
thought and was indoctrinated by the then new dynamic
physiology of Ernst Brucke. Freud's biologically based,
dynamic "psychology" usurped and surpassed earlier mainly
descriptive and static models of the mind, derived from
philosophy by psychologists like Gustav Fechner. J.A.C.
Brown claims that, "academic psychology had been content to

observe and describe behavior; Freud saw the need to explain
it."[45]   Also, his methods of approaching psychological
problems, using the technique of free association and
through the case study, were not considered sufficiently
empirical, which effectively estranged psychoanalysis from
academic psychology.   These criticisms of its "softness"
continue to plague psychoanalysis to the present day.   Karl
Popper argues that Freud's theories were "simply
non-testable, irrefutable.   There was no conceivable human
behavior which could contradict them."[46]   Despite these
perceived differences, Freud himself saw his system fitting
into the larger framework of psychology.   He claimed that,

> Psychoanalysis falls under the head of
> psychology; not of medical psychology in the
> old sense, nor of the psychology of morbid
> processes, but simply of psychology.   It is
> certainly not the whole of psychology, but
> its substructure, and perhaps even its entire
> foundation.[47]

In order to make sense of this statement it is necessary to
view Freud as a moulder of thought, a perpetrator of a
"substructure" of ideas, rather than a discoverer of facts
or of a method of psychotherapy.   Even Popper acknowledges
that Freud's ideas and explanations of behavior "may well
play their part one day in a psychological science which is
testable."[48]   In fact, a movement has begun to test
various aspects of Freud's theory using rigorous scientific
methods.[49]   Undeniably, Freud's controversial ideas
contributed to schism in psychology, but Freud also,
according to Brown, "almost irrespective of theoretical
details...changed the whole tenor of human thought so that

even those who most violently denounce his views attack them
in Freudian clichés and with arguments which would have been
incomprehensible had he never existed."[50]

By the end of the second decade of this century
opposing systems, including structuralism, founded by
Wilhelm Wundt, Gestalt psychology, and John B. Watson's
behaviorism, were all firmly established. Although all of
these schools, including the doctrinaire Freudian school,
have subsequently been found to be too narrow to encompass
more recent findings about human behavior, the schizmatic
nature of the discipline has persisted up until the present
time. The Encyclopedia of Psychology (1973), for
example, lists twenty-six schools influential in the
development of psychology, almost as many as there are
"notable figures" in its brief history.[51] Within
psychoanalysis alone, several schisms developed almost
immediately, headed by Alfred Adler and Carl Jung. Since
Freud's death departures from the classical view have
increased to include the English school (ie. Melanie Klein),
and its variants (British object relations - ie. Fairbairn,
Winnicott) the American neo-Freudians (ie. Karen Horney) and
ego psychoanalysts (Kohut), and a more interdisciplinary
French school (ie. Lacan).
What this amounts to is that the perceived fragmentary
quality of the discipline and the conflicting evidence
available for any given problem have not inspired confidence
outside of the discipline itself. The plethora of

explanations instead tends to confuse and discourage the

uninitiated layman. In addition, continual developments

have rendered many relatively recent findings unstable. A.

Brink, for instance, notes that the development of John

Bowlby's recent controls system approach to the ties between

a mother and her child means that,

> object relations theory is in rapid
> transition, posing a problem to those like
> myself who are trying to apply the findings
> in other areas of study. Awkward choices
> must be made, even after narrowing to object
> relations the kinds of psychology most likely
> to yield insights about artistic
> creativity.[2]

Fortunately there has always been a small number of

social scientists willing and able to integrate the best of

various theories from both within their discipline and

outside it. One early such "hybrid

clinician-humanist-scientist" was Henry Murray, who

dedicated his Explorations in Personality (1938) to

Sigmund Freud, A.N. Whitehead, Carl Jung and a

biologist-psychologist Laurence J. Henderson. In the book

he reflected the diverse qualities of these men, stating as

his aim that,

> Our work is the natural child of the deep,
> significant, metaphorical, provocative and
> questionable speculations of psychoanalysis
> and the precise, systematic, statistical,
> trivial and artificial methods of academic
> psychology. Our hope is that we have
> inherited more of the virtues than the vices
> of our parents.[3]

Murray also drew heavily on the other social sciences,

especially sociology, and on the humanities, as is reflected

in his life-long interest in the biography of Herman

Melville.

More recently an intellectual climate appears to be
developing which realizes the need for a synthesis of
seemingly disparate ideas, in order to provide a _sufficient_
condition for scientific advancement. Surprisingly, some of
the impetus for such an amalgamation has come from the
'hard-nosed' discipline of sociobiology, which provides an
organizing structure involving a synthesis of personality
theories. J. P. Rushton claims that previous to the attempt
at integration, situationalists, those who concentrate on
what happens just prior to behavior, tended to be skeptical
of social learning theorists, who in turn discounted trait
theory, the idea that there are personality traits which are
consistent across time and situations. The latter theory
has minimized or ignored the contributions of behavior
genetics, sociobiology, and evolutionary theory.
Unfortunately, as Royce (1982) observed, most personality
theorists "seem devoted to an exclusive orientation" and
are, therefore, unwilling or unable to synthesize.[34]
Nevertheless, much of the controversy over the best
explanation of personality differences arises, as J. P.
Rushton (1984) has shown, out of a proximal-distal
orientation. If explanations of personality move from
distal to proximal levels, that is, from evolutionary
biology to situational factors, there is much less
friction. From this perspective the major theories can be
seen as additive and most aspects of behavior explained.[35]

Distal   Proximal

Evolutionary   Psychodynamic   Social
    theory   Learning

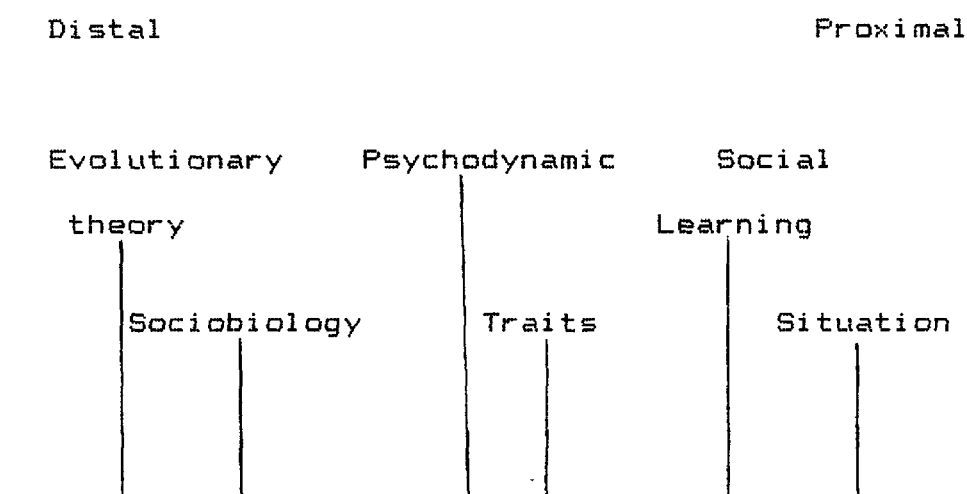   Sociobiology   Traits   Situation

Figure 1: Adaptation of Rushton's distal-proximal
          orientation of levels of explanation in
          psychology

Sociobiology also provides some evidence about the
proportion of behavior, or, in statistical terms, the
proportion of variance which can be explained by any given
theory. Based upon as varied techniques as both classical
and "raised apart" twin studies, and adoption studies on
diverse traits such as intelligence, altruism and
criminality, the empirical evidence suggests that the genes
or heritability explain up to fifty percent of the variance
in individual differences on personality traits. The
remaining proportion of variance appears to be due to
environmental differences, an interaction between genetics
and environmental effects, and error. Whereas this
proportioning of explanation for behavior seems very neat,
based as it is upon controlled experimental conditions, when
one tries to apply it in the humanities at the level of

individual psychology it becomes somewhat more complicated,
if not absurd. For example, it is extremely difficult to
deal with the genetic predispositions of a deceased writer
since the critic normally cannot obtain the necessary
information. Environmental explanations are somewhat easier
to postulate from reading biographies, letters and diaries,
and interviewing contemporaries, but at best remain
speculative. Inevitably Rushton's approach has its
limitations. As an experimental psychologist who has
adopted, in Runyan's scheme, the nomothetic view, he tends
to ignore the rich contributions of depth psychology and in
particular, of psychoanalysis, to the understanding of human
behavior. However, he does address the problem of division
and competing explanations, albiet in a crude statistical
manner, which has alternately fostered and plagued
psychology from its birth. Finally, his contribution of a
broad structure within which to evaluate explanations of
behavior can be applied at Runyan's level of individual
generalization, as will be seen, and his spirit of synthesis
could well be adopted by the literary critic attempting to
provide the best explanations for an individual's
motivations to be creative.

Thus, poor communication between literary criticism
and psychology, stemming from deeply entrenched attitudes,
the emphasis in psychology on the psychopathological in the
exploration of creativity, the over-emphasis of the
nomothetic view, and the lack of comprehensive theory and

synthesis in psychology have hindered the development of an
affinity between literature and psychology, considered so
natural at the time of the latter discipline's origin.
There are signs, however, in all these areas that the
traditional problems are being surmounted as psychology
achieves a new maturity, although realistically there will
always be elements in both literary criticism and in
psychology which will have no direct bearing on one another,
just as there will always be literary critics and social
scientists suspicious of encroachments on their territory by
those untrained in their specialized field.

Having established the potential of psychological
insights and findings for literary criticism in general, and
especially for the delicate relationship between the writer
and his texts, the next chapter examines some specific
methodological benefits which psychology can offer and also
the problems which have occurred for the practitioners who
have applied psychology to literature and lives in the field
of psychobiography.

Bertrand Russell has been chosen as the primary
"case study" in subsequent chapters, for a number of
reasons. Few men of our century have achieved so much in
such diverse fields as Russell (1872 - 1970). His career
development spans more decades than most mens' entire lives
and his personality development is correspondingly as
complex. Not only has he emerged as one of the most
influential thinkers and writers of the twentieth century,

but he also became a public figure, as much in the public
eye as many political leaders. As a philosopher he was
involved, throughout his life, in a passionate search for
knowledge and truth and yet, in his private life, as
recorded in his autobiography, he is frequently unaware or
obtuse about aspects of his personality. Thus his public
and private lives do not always correspond, which poses
interesting problems for the critic attempting to achieve
psychological accuracy about his life and works. On more
practical levels, since he lived within the last century he
was himself aware of developments in psychology; these
developments are most appropriately applied to figures of
this century. Also, there exists a tremendous amount of
evidence and supporting documentation with which to make
reliable assessments, which is not the case for most writers
from earlier centuries. And yet, since Russell is deceased,
it is possible to be somewhat objective about the events he
was involved in and the issues he supported, without denying
his spirit of passionate inquiry, or empathy with the
subject, often so important to success in psychobiography.

Were biography generally accepted
as an important branch of psychology,
the high standards inherent in that
science would impose their own
discipline and sanctions.
White-washing would be considered as
nefarious as malignity; inaccuracy of
representation more culpable even than
inaccuracy of fact... and this ideal
of scientific honesty would free
biography from the entanglements by
which it is at present obstructed and
obscured.

Harold Nicholson, The Development
of English Biography, 1928.

CHAPTER ONE

EXPERIMENTS IN LIVING:

A CASE FOR PSYCHOBIOGRAPHY

Biography attempts to capture the flux of a life and
to interpret these vicissitudes in order to reach a greater
understanding of an individual in his society. The
biographer and theorist Leon Edel argues that "...
inevitably the biographical process is a refining, a
civilizing - a humanizing - process."[1] In our age, these
aims should link biography with the discipline of
psychology, which provides explanatory power about the
individual psyche. Unfortunately, biography, which has
always occupied a rather precarious position in literary
history, has often suffered because of inadequate
understanding of its principles and inept or insensitive
practitioners. Even its most avid supporters have been
moved to criticize. Samuel Johnson, who enunciated some
fundamental principles of biography in Number Sixty of his
Rambler Series, well realized that,

> ...Biography has often been alloted to
> Writers who seem very little acquainted with
> the Nature of their task, or very negligent
> about the Performance. They rarely afford
> any other Account than might be collected
> from publick Papers, but imagine themselves
> writing a Life when they exhibit a
> chronological Series of Actions or
> Preferments; and so little regard the Manners
> or Behavior of their Heroes, that 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, begun with his Pedigree,

and ended with his Funeral.[2]

Instead, he stressed that the truth must reign supreme; he held to that principle throughout his life-writing career. For instance, in defense of his life of Lyttleton, he stated that the biographer must not conceal or invent but that it was the _duty_ of a biographer to state all the failings of a respectable character.[3]

Looking back over the Victorian age, in which biography proliferated, Virginia Woolf, another perceptive biographer, remarked the "high death rate" of biographies. She also reiterated Johnson's complaint when she discussed the problem of

> why it is so difficult to give any account of
> the person to whom things happen. The person
> is evidently immensely complicated ... In
> spite of all this, people write what they
> call 'lives' of other people; that is, they
> collect a number of events and leave the
> person to whom it happened unknown.[4]

More modern critics have made less favourable appraisals of the questionable art of biography. W. H. Auden argued that biography was "always superfluous" and "usually in bad taste",[5] and Nabokov called biographers "psycho-plagiarists", implying that they prey and thrive on the work of others. In 1983, the well-known critic, Hugh Kenner, himself the author of a critical biography of T.S. Eliot, went so far to claim that,

> Biography is a minor branch of fiction,
> fairly old-fashioned fiction, too. It's hard
> to think of a biographer's stratagem that
> hasn't its antecedents in Walter Scott or
> Dickens. No matter whether you've invented
> your central character or gleaned his dossier

from "sources" you can footnote, what you do
next is nothing but tell his story in the way
of the Victorian masters. So Joseph
Blotner's Faulkner, Mark Schorer's
Sinclair Lewis, Richard Ellman's Joyce
are all for better or worse fictional
creations. Each biographer had no choice
save to flesh out his man from his idea of
his man: from what he was capable of
imagining. "Creation of character," it used
to be called.[7]

Can it be then that biography depends solely on the
strength of the biographer's imagination? Is it necessary
to tell the story of a life in the way of the Victorian
masters? Should biography's highest form be as a "minor
branch of fiction"? Are some of the criticisms justified
which claim that biography has often resulted in "formal and
studied Narratives," which concentrate on the externals and
leave the person unknown? After all, it is an undeniable
fact that relatively few biographies have survived the test
of time in comparison with original literary works.   And
was Samuel Johnson, a melancholic throughout his life, being
overly optimistic when he insisted that the truth of a life
could (and should) be revealed? Finally, if biography has
not achieved the success and status of other forms of
literature, then why? A brief survey of some of the
highlights and weaknesses in development of the form
provides answers to some of these questions. The
distinctions between biography and fiction should become
clear along the way.

Virginia Woolf attributed part of the reason for the
weakness of the biographical method to its relatively short

history of development. Harold Nicholson says that the
story of English biography is one of "arrested development;"
[8] there is some truth in both of these assertions. The
actual term "biography" only entered English in 1683 on the
pen of Dryden. According to Nicholson, before 1791 its
legitimacy was hardly recognized and there were few bright
spots.[9] In the sixteenth century isolated advances were
made by William Roper in his <u>Life of Sir Thomas More</u>
and George Cavendish in his <u>Life of Wolsey</u>. Both of
these pioneers made fewer didactic comments than had
previous biographers about the institutions which their
subjects represented, and both shifted emphasis from
external actions onto the inner character of their
subjects.[10] Both, however, were limited by their
commemorative tone. In the "age of the character sketch,"
the seventeenth century, only Izaak Walton's delightful
"Lives" of Donne, Herbert and others significantly
contributed to the genre. Nicholson claims that Walton was
the first deliberate biographer who was absolutely sincere.
Unfortunately, his works suffered because he had "no sense
of actuality" and failed to imbue his subjects with
distinctive characteristics; "they are all flat and
uniform," says Nicholson. With the exception of these
extraordinary cases, realism, and curiosity about the
individual and his inner state did not flourish in the
writing of lives until the eighteenth century. Even then
pioneering novelists, notably Daniel Defoe, engendered
confusion between the two infant forms by mingling fact and

fiction. Since novels were thought to be the fodder of
servant girls, these early novelists often cloaked their
productions in the respectability which the writing of 'life
histories' and history in general afforded them.
Unfortunately for biography this more often than not meant
altering the very principles of the form. Laurence Sterne,
for example, author of the highly successful fictitious
Life of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman, not only broke
recently established conventions of the novel but played
havoc with Johnson's precepts for good biography set down
some ten years prior to the release of the novel. He took
Johnson's remark that "the business of a biographer [is] to
lead the Thoughts into domestic Privacies, and display the
minute details of daily life"[12] to an hilarious extreme,
of which the most outrageous example occurs at the outset of
the novel. The reader's thoughts are abruptly led into
"domestic privacies" through the conversation in bed between
Mr. and Mrs. Shandy, at which time Mr. Shandy's animal
spirits are disrupted.[13]

Johnson himself, in his Lives of the Poets
(1779-81), did not adhere as closely to fact as he could have
with more thorough research, and his occasional lapses
annoyed some of his learned contemporaries. His now famous
statement about Congreve's Incognita (1691) "I would
rather praise it than read it" raised some scholarly
eyebrows.[14] Nevertheless, Johnson, in his essays on
biography and more importantly in his fifty-two lives,

advanced the interest in, and methodology of, biography

tremendously. His practical argument for the dual purpose

of biography compels by its enthusiasm as well as its logic:

> Those parallel Circumstances, and kindred
> Images to which we readily conform our Minds,
> are above all other Writings, to be found in
> Narratives of the Lives of particular
> Persons; and therefore no Species of Writing
> seems more worthy of Cultivation than
> Biography, since none can be more delightful,
> or more useful, none can more certainly
> enchain the Heart by irresistable Interest,
> or more widely diffuse Instruction to every
> Diversity of Condition.[13]

Some of Johnson's success can be attributed to his

own battles with melancholy and his sensitive personality in

general, which enabled him to empathize with, and make

shrewd guesses about, his subjects. He falls short, not so

much because of his own shortsightedness, but because he

lacked the psychological tools to probe the complex relation

between the life and the artistic products of his

poet-subjects. In his Life of Pope, for example, he does

not explore the effect Pope's suffering and physical

deformities had on his writing. He thus often falls back on

description instead of delving into motivation, though he is

usually perfectly candid about his lack of information. In

his Life of Savage he admits that he cannot understand

the psychology which would make Savage's wealthy mother

neglect and abuse her child:

> It is not indeed easy to discover what
> motives could be formed to overbalance that
> natural affection of a parent, or what
> interest could be promoted by neglect or
> cruelty. The dread of shame or poverty, by
> which some wretches have been incited to
> murder or abandon their children, cannot be

supposed to have affected a woman who had
proclaimed her crimes and solicited reproach,
and on whom the clemency of the legislature
had undeservedly bestowed a fortune, which
would have been very little diminished by the
expenses which the care of her child could
have brought upon her.[16]

Another peak in the form was reached soon after
Johnson's endeavors with Boswell's Life of Johnson.
Several critics of biography agree that it represents the
first great modern biography.[17] Certainly Boswell had at
least one distinct advantage over Johnson in his Lives; he
not only knew Johnson well, but during the third of
Johnson's life in which Boswell associated with Johnson, he
often took a deliberate hand in creating, or at least
shaping, his subject's life. It was Boswell who engineered
Johnson's trip to the Hebrides, which provided a nice
variation in scene for the eventual author of the "Life".
In addition, Boswell took extensive notes of Johnson's
conversations and was able to cross-examine his subject's
wide circle of friends. As Edel points out, we must keep in
mind when assessing Boswell's achievement "that Boswell was
aided in his invention of actuality because Dr. Johnson was
actual to him."[18] To write the lives of the dead is
quite another matter; thus Boswell should not be taken as
the sole model for biography.

But Boswell was also limited by his method. His
proximity to Johnson and his hero-worship of him
occasionally clouded his perceptions. Edel argues that,
clever as he was, Boswell was not always able to catch the

tone of irony in Johnson's conversation.[17] Furthermore,
perhaps because of his friendship, there were areas of
Johnson's personality and past which Boswell could not
probe. W. J. Bate, a biographer of Johnson, claims that
Boswell did not care to dwell on Johnson's belief that at
times he had come close to insanity. Bate claims that,

> Boswell preferred - as would most others in
> his own situation - to consider Johnson's
> fears of insanity as a fanciful delusion
> resulting from a perfectionistic notion of
> sanity.[20]

Aside from these distortions, we also know that Boswell had
a great deal of difficulty in writing Johnson's life, since
he constantly felt the moral and censuring presence of
Johnson while at work.[21] Finally, Boswell's pride at
being associated with, and at having a hand in shaping the
actions of such a great man, often caused him to place
himself at the centre of his biography of Johnson so that
the distinction between autobiography and biography became
obscured.

The unrealistic spirit of the nineteenth century
seems to have been antipathetic to truth in biography. The
few candid biographers like Sir Edward Cook, in his Life
of Florence Nightingale, and Froude, in his sincere
study of Carlyle, worked against the grain.[22] Virginia
Woolf has vividly summarized the efforts of the century:

> ... the majority of Victorian biographies are
> like the wax figures now preserved in
> Westminster Abbey, that were carried in
> funeral processions through the street -
> effigies that have only a smooth superficial
> likeness to the body in the coffin.[23]

The early Freudian school did much to dispel this sort of
myth-making in biography, although the opposite criticisms
levelled at the Freudians of psycho-sexual reductionism, and
the overemphasis of symbolic interpretations of childhood
memories, were often justified. Freud's major practical
contribution to biography, his 1910 study of Leonardo da
Vinci, was long held up as the ideal psychoanalytic
biography until factual flaws were discovered in it, which
revealed some of the limitations of the approach. Partially
because of the dearth of evidence about da Vinci's early
life, Freud based an important interpretation on the
symbolic meaning of the vulture in a screen memory of
Leonardo's. Unfortunately, in his sources, the original
Italian word 'nibbio' had been mistranslated and actually
referred to the bird 'kite', not vulture, which altered the
meaning of the passage.[24]

The Victorian panegyrics also, however, provoked a
reaction by a younger generation of biographers, headed by
Lytton Strachey. Up until his publishing of Eminent
Victorians, highly analytical Freudian biographies had had
little impact on more traditional biography. Strachey,
whose brother James had been analyzed by Freud, and who was
himself aware of the new psychological discoveries, changed
that and should thus be known as the father of modern
psychologically informed biography.[25] His talent was
for distilling the essences of his Victorian subjects,
including their foibles and hidden motives, from masses of

documents available.   One side of him - his best side -

clamoured for the truth; Harold Nicholson said of him that

Strachey believed in intellectual honesty with

> an almost revivalist dislike of the
> second-hand, the complacent, or the
> conventional; a derisive contempt for
> emotional opinions... a respect, ultimately,
> for man's unconquerable mind.[26]

His darker side, however, allowed his animosity towards

Victorian rigidity and prudery to discolour his portraits;

his biting irony occasionally resulted in caricature.[27]

Most unfortunately for biography, his imitators

often captured his worst side.   Mack (1971) says that,

> ... Strachey's delight in exposing the
> virtuous and reducing the mighty stimulated a
> whole "debunking" school of crude imitators
> for whom Freudian concepts of sexuality and
> psychopathology, misunderstood and
> misapplied, furnished splendid ammunition
> with which to attack the subject under the
> pretense of providing greater
> understanding.[28]

Although these imitations flourished in the 1920's and

1930's, perhaps the most notorious example of a work whose

goal appears to be disparagement is Bullitt's and Freud's

biography of Woodrow Wilson.[29]   The extent of Freud's

participation in the project is unknown, but it is almost

certain that he penned the introduction, in which he

confesses that,

> the figure of the American president ... was
> from the beginning unsympathetic to me, and
> this aversion increased in the course of
> years the more I learned about him and the
> more severely we suffered from the
> consequences of his intrusion into our
> destiny.[30]

Though Freud went on to claim that some objectivity had been reached, the entire disparaging tone of the work contradicts the statement.[31]

Lytton Strachey developed his talents in two later works: <u>Queen Victoria</u> and <u>Elizabeth and Essex</u>. In the former, Virginia Woolf claims that Strachey succeeded admirably because he had ample documentation and he kept within the limitations of the biographical form. Though she blames the failure of <u>Elizabeth and Essex</u> on the limitations of the art of biography, she does criticize Strachey for his flouting of those limitations. Since little could be discovered about either Elizabeth or her era, Strachey invented, but the few historical facts available clashed with his invention: "fact and fiction refused to mix", she says, and his novelistic experiment in biography foundered.[32]

At the other extreme, Harold Nicholson, a contemporary of Strachey's, and a biographer and theoretician, predicted the death of biography as an art form. It would be subsumed as a purely scientific endeavour:

> I would suggest that the scientific interest
> in biography is hostile to, and will in the
> end prove destructive of the literary
> interest. The former will insist not only on
> the facts, but on all the facts; the latter
> demands a partial or artificial represenation
> of facts. The scientific interest, as it
> develops, will become insatiable; no
> synthetic power, no genius for
> representation, will be able to keep
> pace...[33]

During this period of fervent interest in biography
Virginia Woolf provided a third perspective on the state of
the art, which clarifies the distinction between biography
and fiction. Hers was a unique position, since she not only
created novels of almost poetic intensity, but she wrote two
fictionalized biographies, Flush and Orlando, as well as
a traditional biography, of her friend the art critic Roger
Fry. She called her fanciful writing in Orlando "scrambled
and splashed" and "yet gay and quick reading I think: a
writer's holiday"[34], whereas the writing of Fry's life she
described as a "terrible and appalling grind" and asked "How
can one cut loose from facts, when there they are,
contradicting my theories."[35] Orlando allowed her
imagination free reign; her life of Fry forced her to
harness her fancy to fact. Those experiences shaped her
succinct comment on biography in the Art of Biography.
She said,

> At any rate, here is a distinction between
> biography and fiction - a proof that they
> differ in the very stuff of which they are
> made. One is made with the help of friends,
> of facts; the other is created without any
> restrictions save those that the artist, for
> reasons that seem good to him, chooses to
> obey. That is a distinction; and there is
> good reason to think that in the past
> biographers have found it not only a
> distinction but a very cruel distinction.[36]

Clearly then, in the eyes of an artist who worked in
both genres, biography is not a minor branch of fiction. If
anything, biography tends to fail when it enters the world
of fiction in content rather than simply in form. Kenner

seems to have misrepresented biography by choosing as his examples those written in a Victorian manner.[37] As Edel points out, the only resemblance biography has to fiction is that it uses existing forms of narration.[38] How then can it be classified? Strachey viewed it as an art; Nicholson saw it becoming a specialized science. Woolf may have arrived closest to the truth when she claimed that it was a craft "lived at a lower degree of tension" than either novel writing or poetry.[39] Doubtless though, Johnson's argument that biography is both a most useful as well as entertaining form continues to apply.

At the time of writing, biography, which has become increasingly prominent and controversial, seems to have reached a crossroads. On the one hand the debunking school thrives. Many popular biographies concern themselves less with the truth than with satiating their reader's desire to discover the so-called 'sordid' side of the lives of political leaders and of current 'stars' of the entertainment industry.[40] On the other hand, the cheapening and abuses of the form have spawned a significant literature concerned with methodology, which suggests that biography is about to come of age. Although social scientists have become interested in biography as a method, Harold Nicholson's forebodings that biography could become highly technical have proved groundless. Instead there is a growing awareness that the wedding of biography with psychology is a necessity and that the union holds great potential for illuminating the human predicament. In the

political sphere a debate rages about how much access the
public should have to the private lives of potential
political candidates, as an aid in the political
decision-making process. Ernest Jones' prediction that the
need to understand the motivations to seek power would
become a most pressing problem for psychology and biography,
has been borne out. He claimed that,

>   The necessity for power and force in some
>   measure and, on the other hand, the almost
>   invariable abuse of such power provide
>   problems the solution of which would benefit
>   the world enormously. There is a
>   psychological approach available, the
>   investigation of the particular type of
>   person who seeks power. The motivation here
>   will probably turn out to be more complex
>   than might appear and to be connected with
>   mysterious inner needs which impel toward
>   that particular expression. Such
>   considerations have also an obvious bearing
>   on the overridingly important matter of
>   international relations if these are ever to
>   be lifted above their present childish level
>   of fear, suspicion and enmity.[41]

Mack (1971) claims that the approach referred to by Jones
would logically be psychoanalytically informed. I would
extend the approach by using the broader term of
psychologically informed biography. My purpose in the
remaining pages will be to explore that psychological
process in general, first by examining the issue of the
definition of psychologically informed biography and then by
surveying the limitations of the form, drawn from the
historical examples discussed and suggested in the
methodological literature. Some of these limitations can be
overcome if psychological procedures and decision-making
processes derived from scientific method, as well as the

best of psychological findings, are applied to the
biographical process. In some cases I will only be making
explicit procedures which are often implicit in good
biographies, but my hope is that this will serve to
strengthen the argument for applying psychology to
biography.

Perhaps because of the abuses of biography, or
because of its greater relevance in our culture, there have
been increasing attempts to secure psychologically informed
biography a place in literary studies by providing an
acceptable definiton of it. Leon Edel formulated the terms
literary psychology and literary biography, by which he
means criticism and biography informed by the observations
of the social sciences and especially "the explorations of
the individual psyche opened up by Freud",[42] in order to
distinguish these endeavors from psychoanalytic therapy and
psychobiography (respectively). Literary biography is a
branch of history which concerns itself with shaping the
lives of literary figures (as opposed to politicians or
military leaders). It is not a form of psychotherapy
because the biographical subject cannot be considered to be
a patient and theories of motivation cannot be checked in
the course of analysis. Only some of the methods and
insights of psychoanalysis, like the methods of
interpretation of manifestations of the unconscious, can be
applied to biography. Throughout his discussions he
stresses the importance of form and the necessity of

translating psychological terms into language appropriate to
literary criticism. Documents must be arranged and
distilled into a homogeneous, synthetic whole, which is
accomplished by the use of fictional devices like
"flashbacks, retrospective chapters, summary chapters, jumps
from childhood to maturity, glimpses of the future, forays
into the past...."[43] For these reasons the term
psychobiography, which he calls cumbersome, is not
appropriate. According to Edel, "psychobiography" describes
technique rather than form.[44] However, because of his
overemphasis on the aesthetic aspects of form, Edel's
narrative, though often highly entertaining, tends to
obfuscate the distinction between fact and interpretation.
Although he makes bold claims about his subjects, he
frequently does not provide sufficient documentation, which
is frustrating since it forces the reader to trust that Edel
has interpreted correctly and not unjustly extrapolated.

William Runyan's definition of psychobiography,
which he views as an appropriate term, is more inclusive,
and thus preferable. In his estimate, psychobiography is a
branch of psychohistory. It can be defined as "the
application of psychological concepts, data, and methods
from any branch of psychology to biography."[45] The most
applicable branches are psychoanalysis, developmental,
social and personality psychology, and possibly
psychobiology. He also distinguishes between the case
study, which represents the broad social scientific

technique, and psychobiography, a particular form of that technique. Psychobiography out of necessity incorporates narrative as a method and shaping form; narrative can be used in biography in at least two ways: the historical-scientific perspective emphasizes description and interpretation of the course of events, whereas literary aesthetic biography attempts to simulate in words aspects of a man's life.[46]   In this light, Edel's portraits tend toward the latter category.

Also, although Runyan does not make this explicit, I see no reason why biography cannot borrow some of the terms of the social sciences, as long as they are properly applied and adequately explained for the lay reader. Consider that literary criticism has throughout its history incorporated various languages from fields as diverse as philosophy and computer science, not to mention the coinage of its own terminologies.

Defining the term psychobiography is a much easier task than establishing it as a legitimate and worthwhile field of inquiry for the traditional biographer and literary critic. Detractors of the larger field of psychohistory, which includes psychobiography, have been vocal and are occasionally justified in their claims. S. Freidlander argues, for instance, that because psychobiographers have typically not been trained in the methods of history, early efforts especially were no more than "dilettantish studies, superficial at best."[47]   Stannard's (1980) attacks are

even more harsh. He claims that,

> from the earliest endeavours to write
> psychohistory to those of the present,
> individual writings of would-be historians
> have consistently been characterized by a
> cavalier attitude toward fact, a contorted
> attitude toward logic, an irresponsible
> attitude toward theory validation, and a
> myopic attitude toward cultural difference
> and anachronism.[46]

Certainly there have been more methodologies than

excellent biographies. It is not hard to fathom why since

good biographies require biographers who are able to handle

several roles simultaneously. They must be masters of the

subject's field of endeavor, be thoroughly familiar with the

subject's canon, display critical and literary skills, and

be able to employ rigorous procedures to ensure accuracy.

W. Runyan speculates that,

> In order to produce a competent biography the
> amount of knowledge and expertise about the
> subject's professional world may approach the
> amount of knowledge needed about psychology
> or the techniques of biography.[47]

Furthermore, psychoanalytic biographers have claimed that

virtually nothing can be learned about psychoanalysis from

textbooks and that the best route is to undergo analysis

before attempting to apply its insights.[50]

Does this mean then that the psychobiographical

enterprise is an overwhelming task? I think not.

Undoubtedly it requires dedication and breadth of knowledge

but once basic procedural principles are mastered then

advice is usually available on the finer points of

interpretation, with collaboration possible between

specialists in a subject's field of interest and

professional psychologists or psychiatrists.[51]

Writers on methodology have tended to stress the limitations of psychobiography and, although most have identified at least six major problem areas, solutions have not been as readily forthcoming. Several theorists have perceived the relation of the biographer to his subject as being at the heart of the biographical enterprise. [52] Essentially a Boswellian problem, this issue has tainted otherwise fine biographies ever since (i.e. Lytton Strachey's Eminent Victorians). The psychoanalytic terms transference and countertransference have often been invoked to explain this potential downfall. Countertransference, the more appropriate one,

> refers to the analysts' transfering his
> accustomed way of viewing others, along with
> the unconscious strivings which he originally
> developed during his own childhood, to the
> patient, with the result that he sees the
> patient in a distorted way.[53]

Though there is no patient in the biographical process, the relationship between biographer and subject is analogous; distortions can take at least two forms: idealization and disparagement. Freud first described the former in his Leonardo study. Biographers become "fixated on their heroes in a quite special way";

> In many cases they have chosen their hero as
> the subject of their studies because — for
> reasons of their own emotional life — they
> have felt a special affection for him from
> the very first. They then devote their
> energies to a task of idealization, aimed at
> enrolling the great man among the class of
> their infantile models — at reviving in him,

> perhaps, the child's idea of his father. To
> gratify this wish they obliterate the
> individual features of their subject's
> physiognomy; they smooth over the traces of
> his life's struggles with internal and
> external resistances, and they tolerate in
> him no vestige of human weakness or
> imperfection.[54]

Whether or not one would go as far as Freud concerning the

origins of the idealization, his comment about the result,

that these biographers "thereby sacrifice truth to an

illusion" seems quite accurate.[55] Certainly Freud's

insight holds true in the case of Boswell. It is generally

agreed that the young Scotsman searched for and found a

father figure in Johnson; on occasion he became too closely

identified with his biographical subject.[56]

The other type of relationship, which results in

disparagement, need not be as obvious as in the

Freud-Bullitt biography of Woodrow Wilson or even conscious

on the part of the biographer. Anderson (1981) shows that

the Georges' otherwise fine biography of Woodrow Wilson

suffers because of subtle denigration. The Georges' rely

too heavily on their pathologically based thesis that

"political leadership was a sphere of competence Wilson

carved out for himself...in order to derive therefrom

compensation for the damaged self-esteem branded into his

spirit as a child,"[57] they downplay Wilson's early

political accomplishments, his strong leadership during

World War One, and exaggerate his later failures.[58]

Such unconscious shifting of emphasis may at first

seem almost impossible to safeguard against, but several

methodologists have suggested possible ways to help avoid

both forms of distortion. Most importantly, prospective

psychobiographers must thoroughly scrutinize their

motivations for choosing a particular subject. In a

statement equally applicable to psychobiography, the

historian E. H. Carr (1961, as cited in Mack, 1971) claims

that every historian has the responsibility for examining

himself,

> the motive - perhaps hidden motives - which
> have guided his choice of theme or period and
> his selection and interpretation of the
> facts, the national and social background
> which has determined his angle of vision,
> the conception of the future which shapes his
> conception of the past. [57]

Several theorists have iterated similar claims

(Mack, 1971; Edel, 1982; Anderson, 1981) which amount to the

argument that the biographer must possess a high degree of

self-knowledge. Edel, for example, has made a tentative

foray into the motivation of biographers, though he stops

short of publicly probing the personal motivation which kept

him at work for nineteen years on his multi-volume biography

of Henry James. He speculates that,

> There must, I take it, be a strong and
> persistent attraction of some kind to keep
> the biographer at his work: a boundless
> curiousity, not unmixed I suppose with a sort
> of "voyeurism", a drive to power, common I
> suppose to most professions; a need for
> certain forms of omniscience. And there is
> sometimes that other element - we have all
> encountered it - the impulse toward
> accumulation and ingestion of data. [58]

Some biographers have even perceived that the unique

relationship between a biographer and his subject can become

an asset. Mack (1971) states that it may enable a
biographer to have insights that other biographers would not
necessarily have.[61] Anderson (1981), who notes Erikson's
success at acknowledging and coping with his biases, states
that the reactions of the biographer to the subject "can
offer an indicaton of how people who interacted with the
subject during his lifetime may have felt about him."[62]
At any rate, it is important to keep in mind Carr's (1961)
point "that objectivity does not mean absence of bias, but
rather recognition in oneself of where one's prejudices
lie."[63]

     In addition, the biographer must develop a rapport
with,or empathy for,his subject. As both Edel and David
Holbrook, in his study of Dylan Thomas, have recognized, his
role should be that of the participant-observer, and in that
role, "He must be sympathetic yet aloof, involved yet
uninvolved".[64] The point at which a healthy empathy
becomes a distorting identification is, however, debatable.
Since these qualities of self-knowledge, awareness and
empathy remain elusive, or at least are in practise
difficult to monitor, they are not in themselves sufficient
safeguards against distortion; the limitations in the
otherwise very good biographies by Boswell, Strachey and the
Georges make this clear. As will be seen, additional more
rigorous methods can be developed to help ensure
consciousness of biases.

     Another recurring criticism of psychobiography is

that it often makes claims based upon three types of
inadequate evidence: insufficient evidence, evidence of the
wrong kind (exterior or superficial as opposed to dream
reports or free associations) and not enough evidence from a
crucial period (i.e. childhood or during adult traumas).
Runyan states that, although this criticism needs to be
taken more seriously than it has been so far, there is no
need for total rejection of the psychobiographical method
because of it.[65] Instead, certain common sense
restrictions must be placed on the field. Comprehensive
studies should not be undertaken of subjects for whom there
is insufficient documentation to make interpretations. It
should be acknowledged that some questions simply cannot be
answered about some subjects. Finally, some developmental
theories are best avoided if they cannot be substantiated
through evidence. [66]

Many of the criticisms regarding evidence stem from
comparisons made between psychobiographical processes and
psychoanalytic therapeutic processes. One common one,
according to Runyan, asserts that one cannot place the
subject of a biography on the couch and thus cannot posit
and reformulate hypotheses based on the defenses and
feedback of the patient.[67] However, there are at least
five advantages which the psychobiographer has over the
psychoanalyst because of these very differences in method.
The psychobiographer, assuming he studies a deceased person,
is able to perceive the subject's life as a whole whereas

the psychoanalyst is restricted to memories from the past
and the insights of the present of a patient who has not yet
completed his life cycle. Runyan claims that reactions to
major life crises especially may be revelatory of
personality.[68] Also, unlike the psychoanalyst, the
psychobiographer typically can draw on a multitude of
outside sources, ranging from documents like letters,
diaries and autobiographies to interviews of relatives,
friends and colleagues. Although these documents, as Barzun
claims[69], form a rather random and possibly haphazard
record of a subject, viewed together they can often
corroborate one another. Mack (1971) states that each type
of written document presents problems about the soundness of
its evidence but the interview has its own special problems
and limitations. The interviewer must determine the
accuracy of the information he receives, which may be
coloured not only by the emotional relationship of the
interviewee to the biographical subject, and the inevitable
lapses of memory, but by the relationship which develops
between the interviewer and interviewee. As a result of
these well documented problems (Gorden 1969), historians,
claims Mack,[70] have tended to regard written documents as
more accurate sources of information than interview
material. Nevertheless, if the biographer recognizes and
makes explicit the fact that psychological truths are not
equivalent to facts, then interview material can be used to
supplement and provide a deeper understanding of a subject's
influence.[71] Anderson mentions, for instance, that

Erikson was only able to ascertain the full impact of Gandhi

upon his followers, which became a central theme of his

Gandhi's Truth, by interviewing many followers of the

Mahatma.[72]

The advantage most relevant to the literary critic

turned psychobiographer concerns the wealth of creative

material generated by a literary subject. Again it must be

stressed that one should proceed with caution in making

links between creative works and artistic personalities.

Mack (1971) argues that those writings produced under

extreme pain (like T. E. Lawrence's Pillars of Wisdom)

often provide the most valuable psychological data since the

inner conflicts of the writer may gain ascendancy over his

aesthetic sense.[73]

Anderson (1981) originally stated a fourth evidential

advantage of the psychobiographer over the

psychotherapist.[74] Substitutes may be available for free

associations and dreams. Examples include artistic

analysis, as in the case of Theodore Roosevelt's adolescent

drawings of himself and his family transformed into animals,

or examination of free association-like books or dream

books, such as Beethoven's conversation books.[75]

Finally, psychotherapists typically do not have the

benefit of the critical examination of their hypotheses and

interpretations as do psychobiographers, whose work becomes

public. Thus it is untenable to make the blanket statement

that information and evidence are not as available for the

psychobiographer as for the psychotherapist.

Part of the problem of inadequate evidence arises because of the misuse of available evidence, which can occur because of inflated expections about what psychobiography can or should do, reductionistic interpretations, and methods of reconstruction. Anderson (1981) quite rightly points out that psychobiography cannot solve all the problems of biography, although there is a tendency to rely too heavily on the psychological, whether informal or formal. Biographers must still research thoroughly and evaluate all possibilities of form, as well as make difficult decisions about selection of content. Ideally, psychological interpretations do not preclude political or historical explanations but will dovetail with them. Another limitation which has not always been adhered to is that psychological explanations are necessarily speculative. They should thus be clearly identified as such and their plausibility evaluated by the reader. Perhaps the biggest psychobiographical pitfall resulting from inflated expectations is the assumption that psychological theory, formulated in the twentieth century, is equally valid for earlier centuries and in different cultures. Stannard put forth the harshest charge that psychobiography is "ahistorical" since it does not take account of fundamental differences between various historical periods in thought and emotion and even in the ways of perceiving both inner and external events.[76] Runyan acknowledges that this

criticism has been justifiable, although the problem is not insurmountable. He says,

> As a first step, the psychobiographer must
> learn enough about the subject's social and
> historical context to have an adequate frame
> of reference for interpreting the meaning of
> specific actions, statements, artistic
> practices, and so on.[77]

Once the biographer develops the empathy and insight necessary to perceive life from his subject's cultural viewpoint then he must select those aspects of psychological theory which are so well-founded that they continue to appear to be valid, and may indeed have universal application.[78] Whatever other criticisms may be launched against Erikson's work, it seems to me that his study of Luther achieves that broader awareness of cultural context necessary for the limited scope of his study. Although Erikson continually forges links between Luther's sixteenth century world and modern society, and specifically between Luther's crisis of identity and the similar crises evident in contemporary young people, in order to demonstrate the universal applicability of his psychosocial theory of human development, he refrains from straining the comparison. Instead he points out both the external and internal idiosyncracies of the age, and of Luther within that age. As an example of the former, he mentions that Luther's act of nailing ninety-five theses to the door of the Wittenburg Church was not such an earth-shattering departure from the norm as it might seem, since "it was a custom generally used whenever one wished to invite the public disputation of a

controversy."[79]   That he has reached an understanding of

the psyche of the age becomes clear when he comments that

Luther's preoccupation with the devil is not extraordinary

since demons had a heightened reality for the common people,

which they have lost in our rational, scientific age.[80]

Erikson has also been foremost in delineating the

reductionist problem.   Two of the larger reductionistic

problems have been mentioned earlier - focusing on

psychological factors in motivation to the exclusion of

historical and cultural ones, and overemphasizing the

psychopathological, which belittles achievements of the

subject.   Aside from these there are several more subtle

traps specific to the psychobiographical method.   Erikson

formulated the term "originology" to describe

> that habit of thinking which reduces every
> human situation to an analogy with an earlier
> one, and most of all to that earliest,
> simplest, and most infantile precursor which
> is assumed to be its "origin".[81]

This process, which involves making direct links between

childhood and adulthood, does not allow for later formative

processes and influences or for the renegotiations which

occur on the path to adulthood, and thus distorts.   Two

other reductionist methods are really oversimplifications,

frequently made for stylistic purposes.   The "critical

period fallacy", according to Runyan,

> attempts to build a study of a man's life
> around a certain 'key' period of development,
> and 'eventism', the discovery in some
> important episode in a man's life of not only
> the prototype of his behavior but the
> turning point in his life from which all

subsequent events and work are described.[82]

Reconstruction, the final problem area under consideration, refers to the use of psychological generalizations to piece together events of the past for which documentary evidence is not available, especially those occuring in childhood. Reconstruction is almost always necessary since psychobiography, like other methods of obtaining knowledge, relies on an inductive process of inferring meanings and intentions from mental representations of things in words not present to the senses. The problem arises over the degree of reconstruction. The worst excesses occur when, in Runyan's words, "an earlier event is retrodicted and then is later assumed to have been firmly established."[83] In practise often only the grosser features of childhood relationships can be hypothesized from adult characteristics and repetitive actions. Runyan arrives at the cautious conclusion that, "if retrodiction is to be practised at all, it is essential that reconstruction be labelled as such and kept distinct from events for which there is documentary evidence."[84]

Some of the solutions which have been offered to the five problems mentioned, including the biographer's relation to the subject, inadequate evidence, inflated expectations, reductionism and reconstruction, appear to involve only common sense, which is a strength but also a weakness. In practise these problem areas are more complex,

carry further reaching implications, and are more difficult
to surmount. If, as I have argued, intuitive or common
sense psychological explanations can be strengthened by
drawing on psychological concepts, it should prove
beneficial to biographical method to institute more rigorous
methods of analysis, using the fundamental principles of
psychology as they are derived from scientific method. I
should stress before attempting such an alignment that I do
not offer the scientific method as a panacea (social
scientists should be the first to acknowledge that
scientific inquiry frequently proves more erratic in
practise than as explained in text books) but as a
supporting structure of procedures and checks, which force a
psychobiographer to become more aware of potential pitfalls
and of ways of overcoming them than if left to his own
devices. Following an examination of the important
components of the scientific method and their potential
applications, I will show how some of these decision-making
procedures can be implemented in the study of Russell, even
before the actual writing of the 'life' occurs.

At the most fundamental level of discussion it
should be realized that scientific method offers one way of
generating a body of knowledge. According to Fred
Kerlinger, whose Foundations of Behavioral Research
is a standard text, the method differs from the common sense
approach in several ways. The most important for our
purposes are that the scientist systematically and

empirically tests his theories and hypotheses, he tries to
implement control, and he consciously pursues relations.[85]
Christensen (1980) points out that the objectives of the
approach are fourfold: description, explanation, prediction,
and control. The first three of these at least appear to
coincide with the aims of biography. Of the four, the key
aspect is controlled inquiry since controls enable
researchers to identify the causes of their
observations.[86] Control in its scientific sense conveys
three meanings:

> First, control refers to a check or
> verification in terms of a comparison.
> Second, control refers to a restraint,
> keeping conditions constant or eliminating
> the influences of extraneous conditions from
> the experiment. Third, control refers to a
> guidance or directing in the sense of
> producing an exact change or a specific
> behavior.[87]

The first meaning most applies to biographical method,
although control in this sense has traditionally been
achieved by providing a comparison group or set, which is
similar to the experimental group except that it does not
receive the experimental effect. One of the most
challenging tasks before us will be to demonstrate that a
degree of control can be achieved through comparisons made
within a single case.

One of the basic components of the scientific method,
and one of its aims, is theory, in other words, is to find
general explanations of natural events.[88] Another less
well developed aim, at least of the social sciences, as
Runyan (1982) has shown, is to explain phenomena at an

individual level. Regardless of the level, theories,
according to Kerlinger, "present[] a systematic view of
phenomena by specifying relations among variables with the
purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena."[69]
Although theorists have raised the issue of the inadequacy
of psychological theory in general for explaining and
predicting behavior[70], the scope of the present paper does
not permit that sort of consideration. However, suggestions
have been made about the type of theory best suited to
psychobiographical endeavors, and they deserve mention.
Whereas Friedlander insists on the use of a single type of
theory and proposes that the psychoanalytic is the most
historical, I would suggest that there is no need to choose
one theory exclusively.[71] Anderson's (1981) view is more
flexible since he only limits the possible theories to those
which are psychodynamic.[72] Although these are probably
most easily adaptable for psychobiographical purposes, there
is no reason why other theoretical viewpoints cannot
supplement them. For instance, consider that criminal
biographies have attracted the curiosity of the public since
the eighteenth century, when they were particularly
popular.[73] If such a study were undertaken in the
present, Eysenck's causal theory of
extroversion-introversion and neuroticisim-emotionalism,
based on the inherited reactivity of the autonomic nervous
system, would be crucial for shedding light on the subject
since it has been used to demonstrate the existence of a
criminal personality and has had some success in predicting

criminality.[74] As a practical example of what can be done, Anthony Storr's study of Winston Churchill testifies to the efficacy of a multiple viewpoint approach. He supplements his psychodynamic perspective by considering Churchill's genetic endowment and by applying W. H. Sheldon's theory of somatypes.[75] Thus, eclecticism, as I have stressed throughout, almost always proves more valuable than the adoption of a single theoretical viewpoint. Rather, choice of theories should be based upon the available evidence of the subject's particular conflicts, preoccupations and needs.

The type of study most congenial for psychobiographical purposes also needs to be determined. Psychobiographical inquiries are typically not true experiments since variables are not manipulated by the experimenter. Instead the psychobiographer gathers his data, finds an "experiment in living" placed before him, and must try and make sense of it. Therefore, the most appropriate type of research will be correlational. Unlike experiments, which seek to determine causal relationships, correlations do not involve manipulation or as much control and thus cannot specify that some phenomenon X was the cause (to the exclusion of other causes) of the observed effect Y. However, correlational research may imply causation since, according to Christensen, one gains "the ability to predict one variable from another variable."[76] In other words, correlations attempt to construct the strongest

account of an event from a number of possibilities. The

most perceptive theorists and psychobiographers have

recognized that correlations are often the best that can be

achieved given the tools of psychobiography. Coltrera says

that,

> I feel that psychobiography and psychohistory
> fail as applied psychoanalytic method
> whenever they concern themselves less with
> the vicissitudes of meaning — the proper work
> of interpretation — and more with
> generalizing statements about root
> origins.[77]

This is because "generalizing statements about root origins"

are most effectively generated under experimental conditions

not typically available to the psychobiographer. Erik

Erikson's procedure in <u>Luther</u> is to discuss various themes

in Luther's life and work, like those found in his first

lectures, "side by side with psychoanalytic insights".[78]

Each variable contributes to the understanding of the

other. In <u>Dylan Thomas, The Code of the Night</u>, Holbrook

advocates a similar correlational approach: he states,

> What I shall boldly do, at any rate, is to
> place my interpretations side by side with
> fragments of the history of my subject and
> with conjectures about his life experience
> derived from the internal evidence of the
> poetry, leaving the reader to judge whether
> the one illumines the other or not. The
> conjectures will be about his experience of
> psychic parturition.[79]

The empirical part of the scientific method requires

that beliefs or, in Holbrook's term, "conjectures" are put

to the test. Hypotheses are really the working instruments

of theories since good ones (ie. those which are potentially

verifiable) carry, according to Kerlinger, "clear

implications for testing the stated relations."[100] The

problem of generating and testing hypotheses is also at the

core of the psychobiographical enterprise. The single most

persistent criticism, put forth by theorists like Popper

(1962) and Gergen (1977), that any theory can be validated

by the "appropriate selection of 'facts'", remains to haunt

the psychobiographer.[101] Are there any facts about lives

lived or only factual hypotheses? The situation is not

hopeless, argues Runyan, and the criticisms have been

overstated:

> It may be possible to interpret any life with
> any theory, but often only at the cost of
> distortion or selective presentation of the
> evidence.[102]

Any method can be poorly used and psychobiography is

certainly no exception. How then can hypotheses be

effectively generated and to what extent verified? The

first important step is to view narrative as a method

involving choices, both in the situation of analyzing

sources (like an autobiography) for the purpose of drawing

out hypotheses, and when critically analyzing or writing a

biography. In the former context, perspective largely

determines the starting point. Since the literary critic is

primarily concerned with texts, the logical place for him to

begin shaping a literary biography is by searching the works

for themes, preoccupations and recurrent character types.

Based on a writer's canon, he then makes tentative

hypotheses about the life. The psychologist turned

psychobiographer might initiate his study by finding out all

he can about the life of his subject from letters, diaries,

biographies, interviews and so on, and then checking his

formulations against the creative works. Both researchers

would then immerse themselves in the historical period of

the subject and modify their hypotheses accordingly.

As Leon Edel points out, writers invariably leave

behind "psychologic signs" in their works. They have made

choices of inclusion-exclusion, whether consciously or

unconsciously, and for various artistic or personal

reasons.[103] Learning to read those signs is one of the

main skills that the craft requires. A comparative example

from Woolf's autobiographical Moments of Being and

Russell's Autobiography shows the types of strategies

involved. The process is certainly aided if the

confessional material is intimate and sensitive, as is

Moments of Being. Woolf's emphasis throughout on the

role of her mother in her life, the repeated references to

the tragedy of her death when Virginia was thirteen, and the

upheaval it caused, provide ample evidence to start

investigating and evaluating the importance of this

relationship over Woolf's life span and on her creative

works. Eventually in the course of the narrative Woolf does

straightforwardly announce an obsession with the ghost of

her mother, though this statement without the other evidence

of a concern would not likely have been sufficient to

warrant a full scale investigation. She says that,

> Until I was in the forties -- I could settle
> the date by seeing when I wrote To the
> Lighthouse... the presence of my mother

> obsessed me. I could hear her voice, see
> her, imagine what she would do or say as I
> went about my day's doings. She was one of
> the invisible presences who after all play so
> important a part in every life.[104]

In order to evaluate whether Woolf's relationship was in any
way extraordinary one would look for a theory which deals
with familial relationships and specifically the relation
between a mother and her children and the effect of early
loss. In this case one might come up with some form of
object-relations theory. For someone like Churchill, who
Storr says "showed little interest in the complexities of
his own psychology,"[105] or in our case Russell, the
search is more difficult. Over the three volumes of his
Autobiography Russell increasingly distances himself from
the material by providing more narrative coverage of
external events and less about his inner being.
Nevertheless, as Brink demonstrates, some clues about
preoccupations can be generated even by considering the
ordering of the narrative. For instance, Russell introduces
his arrival at Pembroke Lodge where he was raised by his
grandmother and then his parent's death before he comes to
his birth, which Brink posits may correspond to an affective
ranking of the importance of these traumatic events in his
life.[106] At any rate, these events would likely provide
important focal points for determining Russell's
representational model of the world.

Whereas this sort of analysis might seem natural to
the literary critic, from a social scientific perspective it
is novel since, as the psychologist Runyan notes, narrative

is not normally considered a method in the sense that

measurement, quantitative analysis and experimentation are

used as methods. Runyan examines the logical and empirical

features of narrative from the perspective used when

critcally analyzing a biography; I will draw upon both his

illustrations from biographies of Woodrow Wilson, Woolf and

Samuel Johnson, and his discussion to summarize these

features. Runyan began his inquiry with the assumption that

biographies consist of the description and explanation of a

life course, a commonly held notion.[107] However, he found

that even the best biographies contain few explicit

explanations. If explanations are given at all there is

usually only a single one proposed for an event, accompanied

by consistent evidence. Possible alternate explanations are

neither mentioned nor is inconsistent evidence tendered.

For example, it is known that Woodrow Wilson was a slow

learner and did not become familiar with the alphabet until

age nine. In their biography the Georges' propose the sole

hypothesis that,

> One wonders whether Tommy's capacity to learn
> was not reduced by his father's perfectionist
> demand... Perhaps, too, failing --
> refusing -- to learn was the one way in
> which the boy dared to express his resentment
> against his father.[108]

A second common organizing principle involves making a

descriptive generalization followed by instances of the

behavior, which corroborate it. A slightly different tactic

is to construct an idiographic generalization which holds

only for the individual and is more analytic. The Georges'

claim that Wilson was unwilling to compromise is an example, "derived from the perception of a pattern of similar events throughout Wilson's career."[109] A more complicated feature of narrative is that it often works on several levels of abstraction at once. Runyan cites Quentin Bell's analysis of the Stephens' social position in its historical context, in his biography of Virginia Woolf. Bell weaves summary statements like, the Stephens belonged to "the lower division of the upper middle class", with detailed particulars about their household and more general statements about the meaning of their position at that period in English history.[110]

Imaginative portrayals of events, which the biographer creates from his immersion in the historical period or from his own experience and knowledge of the world, constitute another feature of biography. Bell's account of the young Stephens' moth gathering expeditions, though likely not historically accurate, vividly conveys more of what the attraction and meaning of such an experience must have been than a straight, "truthful" account would have.[111]

Life history narrative also frequently contains statements linking past events to the audience's experience and those which evaluate a subject's historical significance. Much of the relevance of Erikson's Young Man Luther depends upon his comparison of Luther's identity crisis to similar crises Erikson observed in

twentieth century youth in his clinical practice. In
another example, W. J. Bate begins evaluating his
biographical subject Samuel Johnson's impact with the claim
that, "Samuel Johnson has fascinated more people than any
other writer except Shakespeare."[112]   Biographers also
expose the relation between the intentions and actions of
their subject. Finally, narrative is used to set the
achievements of a subject into context. According to Bate,
as a lexicographer Samuel Johnson accomplished in nine years
with the help of a few assistants what other institutions
which have compiled dictionaries have taken twenty,
fifty-five and seventy years to complete.

Runyan concludes that these features of narrative
make it a far superior method for arriving at an
understanding of an individual in his social and historical
context than more traditional social scientific methods of
analysis.[113]   Thus, viewing narrative as a method is
essential for both of the processes involved in hypothesis
testing: the one which involves formulating hypotheses from
sources, an expanding process analogous to divergent (or
creative) thinking and the one concerning the critical
analysis of hypotheses either when examining a biography or
when constructing a life history narrative. These two
latter functions are contracting processes which are
analogous to convergent thinking. It is the latter,
critical process which needs to be developed in more detail.

All biographers take measurements - they "size up"

their subjects either implicitly or explicitly, in an
organized or haphazard fashion, as we have seen; they use
the features of the narrative method in order to do so.
Scientific method offers several ways of evaluating these
features and thus of checking the measurements taken. One
way of deciding on the acceptability of a measurement is to
ascertain its validity, or the extent to which something
measures what it is supposed to measure. In order for a
measurement to be valid it must also be reliable, that is,
providing that the amount of something being measured
remains constant, if a measurement is repeated on a
subsequent occasion from the original the results will be
able to be replicated. Both checks supplement one another
and in fact are necessary since a measuring device can
consistently measure something incorrectly, that is it can
be reliable and not valid. According to Kerlinger (1965),
the issues of reliability and validity are the two major
problems facing the researcher because, "If one does not
know the reliability and validity of one's data little faith
can be put in the results obtained and the conclusions drawn
from the results."[114] In the sphere of life history
writing the discussion of these checks inevitably raises the
issue of the consistency of personality, as we shall see,
though the importance of establishing a degree of
consistency depends upon the biographer's theoretical
perspective.

Of the several forms of validity which researchers

typically attempt to establish, face validity is the most commonly applied. It involves being able to make the statement that on the face of things (ie. from what I have been able to gather from careful examination of my methods and data) I appear to be measuring what I set out to measure - in the psychobiographer's case certain aspects of the personality of X, possibly in his social or historical context. Kerlinger claims that on an objective test face validity can be increased by careful wording and consideration of the representativeness of questions for the purpose in mind.[115] In psychobiography, that might translate into checking that every sentence, paragraph and chapter is on target or broaches complementary aspects of the biographical problem. A similar form, content validity, asks the question, "To what extent did I cover the content area of the subject under study in a representative manner?"[116] If I set out to describe and offer explanations of the subject's social, political, spiritual and psychological interests, his early years or final years, did I cover these areas adequately? - in what proportions? Can my emphasis be justified? The obvious weakness of both face and content validity are that they are basically judgemental.[117] However, the achievement of both also depends on the number and quality of the original hypotheses. Initially it is necessary to ask whether the hypotheses cover all questionable aspects of a person's life, or at least those which are relevant. It helps too if "relevancy" or the "universe of content" is clearly defined

at the outset. Finally, if in addition to specifications of what is being judged there are explicit directions for making judgements (such as may be supplied by a psychological theory) then validity will be enhanced.

Concurrent validity, a stronger form than either face or content, is also more difficult to employ, especially in the psychobiographical enterprise. It involves the examination of the extent to which the measurement obtained compares with an exterior, known valid measurement of the same variable. An extremely battered form would consist of writing about an aspect of a subject's life from primary sources, independently of the standard biography of that person. Assuming that the "standard" biography is generally perceived as accurate and is acceptable to experts in the field, then the extent to which ones' independent observatons and conclusions coincided with the standard biography would provide a degree of concurrent validity. The problem here is that it is difficult to assess the accuracy of even highly acclaimed current biographies like W. J. Bate's Samuel Johnson, since any inadequacies may not be revealed immediately. Also, one's biographical perspective might differ from the standard biography.

Predictive validity, a fourth test for accuracy, has more practical applications for psychobiography. Kerlinger makes the point that, "in science, prediction does not necesarily mean forecast."[118] In this broader than usual sense it is possible to predict something in the past since "pre" only implies "prior to completed knowledge." To

obtain a degree of predictive validity then, it is necessary to check the measuring instrument against some outcome which it predicts. Again, in battered form, several possibilities exist. It may be possible to compare a subject's reminiscences late in life about a specific earlier period with his statements about events and feelings as recorded at that earlier period in his life in journals and diaries. The extent to which the reminiscences "predict" the statements from the earlier period provides a degree of validity. For instance, volume one of Russell's autobiography, begun in 1931, placed side by side with his Journal of 1902-1905, not published until recently, might yield a certain amount of validity. Similarly, the biographer could compare published contemporary sources about an event or period in a person's life with unpublished ones (like letters). Validity would depend on the sources' similarity (over and above differences in purpose of the writing and level of intimacy, etc.) In Russell's case, the attitudes and ideas expressed in his 1914 essay "Mysticism and Logic" could be used to predict the content of his correspondence just prior to the publishing of the essay. A third possibility would be to read only the first half of a standard, chronological biography and then to make predictions about the subject's preoccupations and the themes of the latter portion of his life. In the methodological literature Anderson mentions a strategy of Zonis', which is really a method of arriving at predictive validity, although he does not identify it as such:

>The careful investigator can use his
>empathically derived understandings as
>hypotheses which can be applied to subsequent
>events in the life of the subject. As those
>hypotheses are refined in terms of the way in
>which the subject apparently responded to
>those subsequent events, the investigator can
>assume with greater and greater confidence
>that he has succeeded in uncovering the
>meanings which the subject must be bringing
>to his historical circumstances in order to
>have responded to them in the ways in which
>he did respond.[119]

Anderson also outlines a "cleaner" form of predictive

validity, which can only rarely be obtained. If hypotheses

have been formed, or even whole biographies written and a

new primary source (like papers) is uncovered, then

hypotheses can be checked and revised as necessary.[120]

The form which has the greatest implications for

psychobiography is, however, construct validity since it is

in many ways the strongest form and because it is most

directly concerned with "inquiry involving the testing of

hypothesized relations."[121] Normally, the personality

variables which a biographer implements to help "explain"

the motivations of his subject are linked with some form of

theory. For example, Erikson's term identity crisis, which

he uses in his Luther study, is one of the stages in his

psychosocial developmental theory. As part of an

encompassing theory these variables are expected to change

in certain ways under certain conditions. To illustrate,

the variable "learning" is expected to increase with

reinforced practise and to decrease with disuse. To the

extent that a purported measurement of a personality

variable reflects the changes predicted by the theory, it can

be assumed to be a valid measure of the variable in

question.[122] Rushton, Brainerd and Pressley (1983)

address the problem of establishing construct validity.[123]

They claim that very stable relationships in developmental

research have been obscured by weak measurements and that

the failure to use aggregate measures of psychological

variables has impeded psychology. Their argument says

basically that a researcher would never consider testing a

person using just a single item or question from a test, so

why should he place any confidence in using only one

behavioral measure to test and predict a whole range of

behaviors? This idea has been formed into the principle of

aggregation, which states that sampling a number of

behavioral measures provides a more accurate and reliable

estimate of psychological reality than using only two

measures. Accuracy is increased by numbers of measurements

because each measurement by itself contains some random

error. These errors cancel out when several estimates are

combined and true estimates accumulate averaging over

situations.[124] For example, it has been found that judges

ratings of any event from a beauty contest to the

effectiveness of teaching become more accurate the more

judges used and observations made, and as a result, have a

higher predictive validity of behavior.[125]

The principle of aggregation has bearing on the

psychobiographical enterprise both at a theoretical level,

since it addresses the personality consistency issue, and as
a technique which strengthens the concept of an idiographic
(individual case) generalization. Most psychobiographers
either assume, or want to confidently make the statement,
that their subject has a personality which is relatively
consistent over time and across situations. Ordinarily they
will speak of his traits or characteristics. However much
this attitude contributes to the organization of the chaos
of a life, there has traditionally in psychology not been
much evidence to show that the idea of traits has great
explanatory power. The personality consistency controversy,
otherwise known as the "specificity versus generality"
debate, has centred on the massive Hartshorne-May studies
(1928-30, as cited in Rushton et al, 1983). These consisted
of thirty-three different behavioral tests, including five
measures of "service" or altruism, as well as teacher and
classmate ratings of children's reputations. By emphasizing
the low correlations of around .20 to .30 found between any
two of the behavioral measures, Hartshorne and May argued
that there was little evidence to support the notion that
there are unified character traits of, in their case, deceit
or honesty. Walter Mischel (1968) and others supported
their situation specific viewpoint by pointing out that .20
to .30 is the average correlation between behavioral
instances of a "trait".[126] Whereas Mischel's idea that
people often adapt to situations or demonstrate
"discriminative facility" is important, it does not preclude
the existence of consistent behavior or traits.[127] " Using

the principle of aggregation and examining the
predictability achieved from a number of measures", Rushton
(et al, 1983) have obtained correlations of .50 to .60
between multiple behavioral instances of a trait.[126]   If
the Hartshorne-May data is reexamined using the principle of
aggregation, it is found that the five altruistic measures
combined correlated .61 with teacher and classmate
measures of a student's reputation and that student's
ratings of their peers correlated even higher (+.80) with
teacher's perceptions of their student's altruism.[127]
What these results show in a statistical way is that
individuals' single behaviors can be explained to a
substantial degree by their consistent personality traits.
The existence of traits does not counter genetic theory
since genetics may explain a partial origin of traits.
These results should encourage the psychobiographer to look
for consistent behaviors over the course of a life. It
should also be realized that, though the statistical
apportioning of variance in behavior is not practical in
biography, we now have a principle on which to decide the
strength of evidence. Traits or characteristics of an
individual should only be argued for on the basis of many
behavioral instances and not just one, or even a few
examples. Edel, for example, says of his study of Henry
James that the pattern of the work yielded a pattern in the
life.[130] Patterns are essential for psychobiography. In
this sense the principle of aggregation addresses the
problem of reliability since it involves consistency. In

order for a variable to be reliable it must be consistent, that is it must provide the same reading on two different occasions, providing other factors remain the same.

" Alternate forms" is one way of establishing the reliability of a subject's statements. If interviews are involved, a weak type of alternate forms can be implemented by asking questions and then rewording them in a later interview. If the answers agree then a degree of reliability can be assumed. Or if a person (say Russell) addresses an issue (like pacifism) in a lecture and later speaks of the same in another form (say in a book or pamphlet) then the extent to which the statements agree provides some reliability.

To ascertain the investigator's reliability interobserver reliability is often used. It requires that at least two researchers independently look at and interpret data; on the strength of their agreement reliability is established. Edel (1982) describes an experiment in which this sort of technique was used, although the researchers did not work totally independently. A psychiatrist, G. Moraitis, was invited to examine the transference reactions of an historian studying Nietzche, and in fact both arrived at perceptions of their biographical subjects from their different fields.[131] Eventually they combined their observations, which provided deeper insights than either could have realized on his own.

The split-half approach involves randomly dividing a

data set in half and then interpreting one half. The extent
to which interpretations formed about the second half agree
with those made reading the first half would provide a
degree of reliability. For example, the technique could be
applied to the vast correspondence of over 3,500 letters
written between Russell and Lady Ottoline Morrell from 1911
to 1938 in order to determine their dependability as
documents. Thus, if a psychobiographer takes the pains
necessary to consciously and formally establish a degree of
subject reliability, then it is not difficult to realize that
he is in a much better position to make idiographic
generalizations, which hold for a single case only.

Having shown that the elements of scientific method,
particularly the checks or measurements offered by tests of
reliability and validity, have potential application in
psychobiography, I now propose to provide some more concrete
examples of how alternate examples can be checked, borrowing
from Runyan's excellent discussion and then implementing
some of the techniques in a preliminary discussion of the
cases of Woolf and Russell.

Alternate explanations occur on two levels: the
macrocosmic, in which differing explanations are offered of
an entire life in its social-historical context, and the
microcosmic, where differing explanations may be proposed of
a single event within a life. At the macrocosmic level
differing explanations occur, as Runyan explains, for two
fundamental reasons: either there is too much information

available (as in the case of Abraham Lincoln, as well as

many more modern figures) so that one perspective cannot

possibly encompass the volume of data, or there is too

little information available (as in the lives of Shakespeare

and Jesus) in which case the temptation is to fabricate.

The life of Jesus is a particularly good example of the

latter because of the great interest in the sparse details

of his life - it is estimated that over 60,000 biographies

have been written within the last two centuries - and

because of the heated controversy surrounding those

"facts". Although the traditional approach is to view him

as a saint, the son of God and a performer of miracles, this

has been challenged by diverse accounts. Portraits of him

range from S. Reiman's view that he was a political Messiah

whose task was to establish a new political state to

Hirsch's opinion that Jesus was psychopathological and

represents a classic case of paranoia.[132] Runyan examines

some of the conditions and processes which have led to such

a multitude and diversity of accounts of Jesus' life, which

can be generalized. Alternative accounts

> have been shaped by different sources
> (different opinions about the priority of the
> Gospels), different conceptual frameworks (a
> rationalistic or supernatural approach to the
> miracles), different principles of selection
> (selecting data to portray a picture of
> psychopathology), and different purposes
> (writing a life of Jesus for religious,
> anticlerical, or historical purposes). [133]

Instead of responding to the diversity of accounts

by admitting that biography is "hopelessly arbitrary" or by

claiming that these biographies require more thorough

research, in which case they would converge, Runyan
advocates a position of epistemological relativism.
According to this perspective, individual inquirers are
"central coordinates in their own subjective frames of
reference."[134] Though there is an irreducible "core of
diversity" in accounts, rigorous inquiry is employed within
one's frame of reference. In practice, good biographers
implicitly state their frames of reference. For instance,
Quentin Bell, who Runyan criticizes for his scanty
psychological treatment of Virginia Woolf's early life,[135]
admits that he is no psychologist and does not know enough
about mental illness to make links between Woolf's
adolescent traumas and later manifestations of her
illness.[136] The adoption of epistemological relativism
also does not run counter to the implementation of some of
the checks provided by scientific method; rather, these
positions complement one another.

Not too surprisingly, accounts at a microcosmic
level, of a single event, can vary almost as much as entire
life accounts. Runyan provides the outstanding example of
Van Gogh's act of cutting off his ear on December 23rd,
1888 and presenting it to a prostitute named Rachel.[137] I
will comment on it in order to shed additional light on the
process of critically evaluating hypotheses at this level.
Based on Lubin's (1972) analysis, Runyan presents thirteen
psychodynamic explanations of the event, ranging from
symbolic explanations to those based on a single incident in

Van Gogh's past to those grounded in a number of past and
future events in Van Gogh's life. An example of a religious
symbolic explanation is that Van Gogh cut off his ear
because he identified with Jesus' disciple Peter, who cut
off the ear of a servant at the Garden of Gethsemane. Van
Gogh had attempted to paint the scene earlier in the year
and may have role played it the night of the incident.[138]
A psychologically based symbolic explanation would be that
the act was one of symbolic self-castration, carried out
because of a homosexual conflict "aroused by the presence of
Gaugin", who left Van Gogh immediately following the
incident.[137] One based on a past incident considers that
the masochist Van Gogh may have been influenced by stories
in the newspapers "about Jack the Ripper, who mutilated the
bodies of prostitutes, sometimes cutting off their
ears."[140] An account based on multiple events suggests
that Van Gogh was upset by the perceived loss of his brother
Theo, who had become engaged. Two later breakdowns occured
when Vincent learned of Theo's marriage and the birth of his
beloved brother's first child.[141] Again, different
approaches can be taken to the variance in explanations.
According to Runyan, one route is to perceive the
explanations as complimentary, but this is not sufficiently
critical. Another is to claim that several explanations are
concerned with different aspects of the problem. However,
there remains a sufficient number of explanations which
concentrate on one item -- for instance, why Van Gogh chose
his ear to cut off. A more critical attitude would claim

that one, or possibly some, of the explanations are more
credible than others. A final position entertained by
Runyan is to consider the symbolic interpretations somewhat
arbitrary, easily formulated and multiplied.[142]
Bergmann's view coincides. He says that, "the reliability
of any interpretation based on symbols alone should be
questioned for symbols are overdetermined and their meaning
is less constant and less universal than Freud
assumed."[143] How then should we deal with these differing
explanations and the varying responses which Runyan
enumerates? According to the principle of aggregation, for
instance, the strongest explanation would be based on a
pattern of behaviors, since the truest account of Van Gogh
would eventually emerge over several instances. Only the
multiple events interpretation, which identifies three
similar events concerning Van Gogh's brother, in which Van
Gogh's reaction was similar, demonstrates any degree of
consistency. It should therefore be considered the
strongest interpretation of the ear cutting event, though
possibly not the only satisfying one. Runyan's view is in
accordance.[144] Runyan also provides a rule of thumb
sketch of other considerations necessary to evaluate
hypotheses:

> Explanations and interpretations can be
> evaluated in light of criteria such as (1)
> their logical soundness, (2) their
> comprehensiveness in accounting for a number
> of puzzling aspects of the events in
> question, (3) their survival of tests of
> attempted falsification, such as tests of
> derived predictions or retrodictions, (4)
> their consistency with the full range of

available evidence, (5) their support from
above, or their consistency with more general
knowledge about human functioning or about
the person in question, and (6) their
credibility relative to other explanatory
hypotheses.[145]

In the light of the psychological framework

established, some comments can now be made about how one

might hypothetically approach the life of Virginia Woolf,

and about the kinds of decisions which need to be made

before embarking on an actual preliminary sketch of Russell.

Initially, if one adopts Rushton's distal-proximal

orientation, it is necessary to acknowledge that some

proportion of behavior (of up to about fifty per cent

depending on one's theoretical stance) will have a genetic

origin.   This does not necessarily mean that hypotheses

about genetic endowment are impossible to make but they will

likely be more tentative than environmentally based ones.

In a typically perceptive passage of <u>Moments of Being</u>,

Woolf herself toys with the idea that there may be a genetic

or instinctual component which predisposed her to react in a

certain way to her half-brother Gerald's fondling of her

when she was a child. She says,

> This seems to show that a feeling about
> certain parts of the body; how they must not
> be touched; how it is wrong to allow them to
> be touched; must be instinctive.   It proves
> that Virginia Stephen was not born on the
> 25th January, 1882, but was born many
> thousands of years ago; and had from the very
> first to encounter instincts already acquired
> by thousands of ancestresses in the past.[146]

For Woolf genetic hypotheses could be proposed based on

known family geneologies and incidents of mental illness.
Another significant component of behavior is shaped by the
environment, and the evidence has been presented which
suggests that traits have a degree of explanatory power. In
addition, some behaviors appear to be situation specific,
following Mischel's (1968) observations. On the basis of my
reading of Woolf's works and several biographies and
sketches, including Quentin Bell's standard one and Spater's
and Parson's A Marriage of True Minds (1977), many
complimentary hypotheses could be generated at different
stages along the distal-proximal spectrum. Psychological
concepts could be used as starting points. For instance,
Woolf's behaviors might be illuminated by the concepts of
toxic psychosis (a term used in medical psychiatry), basic
anxiety (derived from Horney's post-Freudian theory), need
for achievement (based on personality trait-theory) and
object loss and repair (from Brink's object relational based
theory). Following the principle of aggregation all of
these would have to be substantiated by many instances of
behavior throughout the life course in order to be
considered valid. For instance, toxic psychosis would
likely have to be discounted since evidence about medical
treatments of Woolf is not available. These hypotheses
would be considered in the light of Woolf's social position
in the upper middle class in Britain during the first
decades of this century. In her case the historical events
of the two world wars had dramatic impact on her outlook.

As far as Russell is concerned, a similar program could be implemented. From a genetic perspective his case is particularly promising since the geneology of his prominent ancestry is well documented. Among his close relations, the mental predispositions of his parents, his Uncle Rollo, Aunt Agatha and his Grandmother need to be established. Based on his popular writings, his autobiography, letters, the biographies by Clark (1975) and Wood, (1957) and papers by Brink (1976, 1979, 1982) and the Simons (1974), hypotheses could be generated about Russell's apparently inherited predisposition to depression (a genetic factor), his obsessional characteristic and his need (similar to Woolf's) to compensate for object-loss (both psychodynamic terms), his strong need for achievement and power, and his tendency towards dogmatism (all personality traits). These perspectives would be supplemented by consideration of both his social position at the summit of British society in the late nineteenth and better part of the twentieth centuries, his reactions against the ideology of that class, and finally by his intense reactions to major historical events like the Boer War, the two World Wars and the dropping of the atomic bombs in 1945.

Realistically, however, my sphere of knowledge and the limitations of space necessitate placing several limits on my sketch of Russell. Since I am functioning as a literary critic armed with psychological tools of investigation, my frame of reference will be limited to a

consideration of Russell's personality as it is reflected both in his literary ability and his productions. I am not an historian of the period, a philosopher, mathematician or social reformer so these aspects of Russell's life will not receive a proportionate consideration.

There are other parameters which should be delineated in psychobiographical studies, and specifically in the case of Russell. Time span should be indicated. Will the entire life course be interpreted or only a slice? In the present study Russell's early years up to 1914 will be concentrated on, with especial focus on the years 1911-1914. Which activities of the subject will be examined? This sketch will emphasize Russell's relationship with Lady Ottoline Morrell, although the groundwork will be laid by interpreting his prior relations with his Granny and his first wife Alys. Perhaps most importantly the aim needs to be established. My purpose is to outline Russell's relations with these three important women in his life to see if they illuminate Russell's motivatons to be creative and help explain his eventual limitations in both the confessional and fictional form. It is thus a correlational approach. I have not set out to disparage Russell (I admire both his capacity for struggle and his accomplishments) or to discredit his early literary achievements, since they were so important to his later development, but to explain why they are not considered works of art and why Russell did not pursue this field further. Finally a narrative form must

be chosen which effectively fuses the chaos of the life into

a coherent whole both logical and readable. The aim of my

inquiry has dictated a non-chronological approach. Although

these sorts of parameters should be expressed in some form

in every psychobiography, they do not constitute a method of

absolving all criticism but merely define the parameters

within which criticism is appropriate. As we shall see,

attempting a gestalt of even a particular fragment of a life

is a most demanding task. Perhaps after all Lytton Strachey

was not so far off the truth when he stated that biography

is "the most delicate and humane of all the branches of the

art of writing."[147]

...everything has turned out as you
predicted 10 years ago. You are a
great psychologist.

T. S. Eliot to Bertrand Russell, April
21, 1925

CHAPTER TWO

BERTRAND RUSSELL'S CREATIVE QUEST

FOR EMOTIONAL TRUTH

Bertrand Russell, to use Mr. Ramsay's terms in
Virginia Woolf's To The Lighthouse, is one of those men
who reached at least the letter P in intellectual
achievement in a world where most men only reach D or E. As
a social critic and reformer Russell's impact on the current
moral milieu has yet to be assessed (if it ever can be). In
the Prologue to his Autobiography, he outlines the three
governing passions of his life: "the longing for love, the
search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering
of mankind". Of these, the search for knowledge predominated
and provided impetus for him throughout his long and
variegated career. That search is inextricably caught up
with his search for emotional truth beyond logic. The
frequency of Russell's statements to Lady Ottoline Morrell
such as, "It is my business in life to do my best to
discover the truth...and to explain what I have come to
think, and why..."[1] provide them with a degree of
reliability.

Nowhere do the implications of the quest surface
with more clarity than in Russell's most important
relationship with Lady Ottoline Morrell, at its most intense
in 1911 and 1912. Although the love affair lasted only
until about 1916, after which it levelled out into a

friendship, it in some sense transformed Russell so that much of his later writing can be seen either as a repudiation or a justification of the events of these momentous years. In March 1911, at a very early stage in the affair, Russell informs Lady Ottoline that,

> I will always tell you everything. I feel, as
> much when it is painful as when it isn't. We
> must always build on truth — there is nothing
> real or good without truth.[2]

Gradually they do until their quest for truth about their relationship and about the universe becomes a central preoccupation.

Thus, it is rather disturbing to discover such a wide variance in the accounts of the affair as are found between excerpts from Lady Ottoline's Journals of the period in her memoirs, Russell's autobiography, begun in 1931, Ronald Clark's biography of Russell, and Russell's and Lady Ottoline's vast correspondence of over 3,500 letters written between 1911 and 1938, the year Ottoline died. Russell's brief seven or eight page treatment of the burgeoning affair in his Autobiography is particularly unrepresentative and unsatisfying. In attempting to recreate the relationship so many inconsistencies emerge that one soon feels as though, to borrow Andrew Brink's image, one has entered into a hall of shattered mirrors, each fragment of which reflects one facet of the truth. In both Russell's activity during the relationship and his later reporting of it, the only thing which appears to be consistent is his inconsistency.

However, perhaps this is not being fair to Russell since, as Runyan has shown, the meaning of a term such as truth partially depends on one's framework of reference. In the case of their relationship, does the truth represent the immediate impressions of the correspondents, as encapsulated in the letters, or the wisdom of hindsight? Instead of focusing on single instances of behavior, I have attempted to find patterns in the discrepancies in interpretations of the truth of the affair and preceding events to reveal various aspects of Russell's personality, including his obsessionality, an outgrowth of his Jocasta mothering, his need for power and his dogmatism. These characteristics in turn can be placed side by side with the literary products of Russell's and Ottoline's relationship in order to illuminate the limitations of these works.

Before proceeding further, it might be useful to note that Russell himself was the first to admit the hopeless complexity of his nature, both in his autobiography[3], and in numerous letters such as that which he wrote to Ottoline April 10th, 1911: he states, "My best is worthy of you, but I am complex, full of diverse motives, and changes of mood - reasonable and unselfish for long times, and then quite suddenly the reverse."[4] According to Rushton, who provides evidence to suggest that large amounts of behavior have genetic origins, there are some aspects of that complexity which will be difficult to unravel, since information has been lost about Russell's

early life. In any case, we do not yet have precise enough
tools to measure the interaction between genetic endowment
and early environment for anyone, let alone such an
extraordinary individual as Russell. The situation is
certainly not hopeless, although Russell's complexity is
revealed even in such a seemingly fundamental aspect of his
personality as his attitude towards the truth. Running
parallel to his continuing desire and quest for the truth is
an ambivalence about it, which has its roots deep in his
past. As early as the "Greek Exercises", begun when Russell
was 15, Russell questions the benefits of truth seeking. On
June 3rd he writes,

> ...I used never for a moment to doubt that
> truth was a good thing to get hold of. But
> now I have the very greatest doubt and
> uncertainty. For the search for truth has
> led me to these results I have put in this
> book, whereas, had I been content to accept
> the teachings of my youth, I should have
> remained comfortable. The search for truth
> has shattered most of my old beliefs, and has
> made me commit what are probably sins where
> otherwise I should have kept clear of them.
> I do not think it has in any way made me
> happier; of course it has given me a deeper
> character, a contempt for trifles or mockery,
> but at the same time it has taken away
> cheerfulness, and made it much harder to make
> bosom friends, and worst of all, it has
> debarred me from free intercourse with my
> people, and thus made them strangers to some
> of my deepest thoughts, which, if by any
> mischance I do let them out, immediately
> become the subject for mockery which is
> inexpressibly bitter to me, though not
> unkindly meant. Thus, in my individual case,
> I should say, the effects of a search for
> truth have been more bad than good...Hence I
> have great doubts of the unmixed advantage of
> truth."[5]

Truth as an abstract concept is not the only object

sought after towards which Russell manifests ambivalence.
Conflicting emotions about his family (in which Russell's
grandmother was the dominant figure) are implied in the
entry as well. It appears as though already Russell has
learned to mask, or distance himself from, personal
conflicts by placing them in the guise of conflicts on an
abstract level. That process becomes a reliable pattern as
it is repeated all along Russell's passage to
self-knowledge.

Not only does Russell's ambivalence about truth have
its roots deep in his past. In order to aggregate instances
of Russell's behavior in relationships and thus understand
the complexities of Russell's relation to Ottoline, it is
necessary to delve at least as far back as to Russell's
conversion of 1901. Prior to that conversion Russell had
had revelations of self-knowledge of which the passage cited
from the "Greek Exercises" is but one example. The
difference with the 1901 conversion, as its title implies,
was that it effected a more permanent change in Russell's
character and, most importantly, it was projected from the
self outwards onto external objects. In its essence it
involved Russell accessing lost knowledge about himself and
then applying that knowledge. Although Russell's 1894
marriage to Alys Pearall Smith had been reasonably happy, a
dangerous cleavage in Russell between reason and emotion had
been developing unnoticed. During the conversion he
realized that,

> Ever since my marriage, my emotional life
> had been calm and superficial. I had
> forgotten all the deeper issues, and had been
> content with flippant cleverness.[6]

As far as his consuming passion for mathematics was

concerned, the period between 1894 and 1900 had been

productive but, in retrospect, he claimed that,

> I did a great deal of work, and succeeded in
> it beyond my hope; but it was entirely
> technical and dry. Somehow or other the
> awakening was bound to come. As I look back
> on the happiness of those years, I feel it to
> have been not of the best kind. It was
> associated with hardness and conceit and
> limitation.[7]

How exactly did Russell's awakening occur? Andrew

Brink, who terms the conversion the first stage in a

"creative illness", points out that it was "no doubt the

dramatic manifestation of tensions that had been long

incubated..."[8] As one would expect, from H.

Ellenburger's outline of the stages of a creative illness,

Russell's conversion was preceeded by a period of intense

intellectual effort from October to December 1900, which was

to result in Russell's The Principles of

Mathematics. February of 1901 saw Russell and Alys

staying in Cambridge with his colleague and future

collaborator A.N. Whitehead and his wife Evelyn. Having

been "profoundly moved" by Gilbert Murray's reading of the

Hippolytus, Russell and Alys returned to the Whiteheads

and,

> When we came home we found Mrs. Whitehead
> undergoing an unusually severe bout of pain.
> She seemed cut off from everyone and
> everything by walls of agony, and the sense
> of the solitude of each human soul

overwhelmed me...Suddenly the ground seemed
to give way beneath me, and I found myself in
quite another region. Within five minutes I
went through some such reflections as the
following: the loneliness of the human soul
is unendurable; nothing can penetrate it
except the highest intensity of the sort of
love that religious teachers have preached;
whatever does not spring from this motive is
harmful, or at best useless; it follows that
love is wrong, that a public school education
is abominable, that the use of force is to be
deprecated, and that in human relations one
should penetrate to the core of loneliness in
each person and speak to that...At the end of
these five minutes, I had become a completely
different person.[7]

Russell had found a way to contact his depression

and to convert its pain and sadness into something more

positive and stable.[10] Russell himself wrote that he felt

some triumph at the time "through the fact that I could

dominate pain, and make it, as I thought, a gateway to

wisdom...."[11] The first object of Russell's empathic

reaction was the Whitehead's three year old son, who Russell

led away from the painful scene, and who Russell must have

identified with owing to Russell's early experiences of pain

and loss. Before this time Russell had not noticed the boy

but, according to Russell, "From that day to his death in

the war in 1918, we were close friends."[12] However, the

charge of "eventism" might be laid if we uncritically

accepted Russell's statement that in five minutes he had

become a completely different person. Personalities do not

change overnight - let alone in five minutes. Even so,

Russell later acknowledged that the conversion was partly

delusion and its effects impermanent. He states,

For a time a sort of mystic illumination

> possessed me.   I felt that I knew the inmost
> thoughts of everybody that I met in the
> street, and though this was, no doubt, a
> delusion, I did in actual fact find myself in
> far closer touch than previously with all my
> friends, and many of my acquaintances... The
> mystic insight which I then imagined myself
> to possess has largely faded, and the habit
> of analysis has reasserted itself.[13]

His continued failure to reconcile the reason seeking and
emotional aspects of his life is implied in a letter to a
confidante, Lucy Donnelly, following the conversion:

> Abstract work, if one wishes to do it well,
> must be allowed to destroy one's humanity;
> one raises a monument which is at the same
> time a tomb, in which, voluntarily, one
> slowly inters oneself.[14]

In a brief attempt to circumvent the problems he was now
encountering in abstract work, he wrote the passionate, "The
Free Man's Worship" which, as Ronald Clark points out,
Russell later claimed was "the total result of so much
suffering"[15].   Russell then retreated from his emotions
and immersed himself in the depths of mathematical
logic.[16]

Also, his new-found empathy did not extend to his
wife Alys.   In his autobiography Russell describes, with
characteristic flippancy, the scene which resulted in his
estrangement from Alys.

> I went out bicycling one afternoon, and
> suddenly, as I was riding along a country
> road I realized that I no longer loved Alys.
> I had had no idea until this moment that my
> love for her was even lessening.[17]

Though the conflicts must have been brewing for some
time, the upshot was a personal storm which drove both
Russell and Alys close to suicide at various times and which

left Russell emotionally isolated. In the period from 1902
to 1910 Russell was also in a sense driven to seek oblivion
from personal strife through the technical work required to
produce Principia Mathematica, a major achievement in
mathematics. In his autobiography Russell comments that,

> The strain of unhappiness combined with
> severe intellectual work, in the years from
> 1902 till 1910, was very great. At the time
> I often wondered whether I should come out
> the other end of the tunnel in which I seemed
> to be.[16]

During these years several of the more puzzling aspects of
Russell's personality are illuminated. They have direct
bearing on his relationship with Lady Ottoline, which
became, for Russell, the light at the end of the tunnel.

Discrepancies in Russell's accounts of his
relationship with Alys are immediately striking. In the
Autobiography Russell makes the claim about Alys that:

> I had no wish to be unkind, but I believed in
> those days (what experience has taught me to
> think possibly open to doubt) that in
> intimate relations one should speak the
> truth. I did not see in any case how I could
> for any length of time successfully pretend
> to love her when I did not. I had no longer
> any instinctive impulse toward sex relations
> with her, and this alone would have been an
> insuperable barrier to the concealment of my
> feelings.[17]

However, in a journal entry of March 9, 1905 he writes a
much more revealing passage about what must have been going
on: he confesses that,

> "...I have grown aware of new possibilities
> of wrong-doing. The habit of not speaking to
> Alys about anything that really interests me,
> and the instinct of concealing my feelings
> from her make it hard not to be untruthful

> with her and not to keep silence about things
> that I ought to tell her about. I do not
> always resist this temptation successfully;
> and what is worse, it is making me generally
> secretive.[10]

This passage has striking similarities to the one I cited
earlier from Russell's "Greek Exercises". In both he feels
sinful or at least guilty about the withholding of his
innermost thoughts from those close to him. Alys, it
appears, has merely replaced his family and specifically his
grandmother as both the instigator and the victim of his
secretiveness and manipulations. Thus, accumulating
evidence, suggesting a pattern of behavior, makes it likely
that the information in the less intimate Autobiography is
the less reliable in this case.

Anthony Storr has shown that the need to control
information both about oneself and about the environment is
the dominant characteristic of the obsessional.[21] Brink
adds that Russell learned obsessional ego defenses in order
to withstand, originally, the manipulations of his
grandmother so that, by this time,

> As an intellectual Russell needed mind
> control over ideas; he had to think through
> to first principles, every idea that
> interested him. He also needed to control
> people in his ambit, sometimes subordinating
> them to his mental activities, but keeping
> them available to meet his romantic and
> affiliative needs.[22]

Several other characteristics of the obsessional are
to be found fully developed in the Russell of this period,
all of which derive from original Jocasta mothering, or
grandmothering, in Russell's case. Matthew Besdine writes

that the Jocasta mother makes the child her love object as a result of her own emotional starvation. Symbiosis with the child is maintained long after the child needs its independence so that the child begins to feel the love of the mother as a bondage.[23] The resultant character structure, according to Besdine, is

> marked by an unresolved Oedipus problem, the fear of love, strong ambivalence in human relations, strong paranoid trends, a tenuous ability to conform or accept authority, an underlying sense of guilt and masochism, a strong homosexual component, latent or overt, and high ambitions. They are unusually oral and demanding, easily disappointed and regress readily to panic, with states of emptiness, withdrawal and depression. The Jocasta reared child differs from the emotionally deprived child in several important respects, among them his intelligence, his inactivity and his leadership qualities.[24]

There are many implications here, which need to be examined separately for Russell's case. His wild fluctuations in his feelings toward Alys are best captured in his Journal of 1902-05 but surprisingly enough the ambivalence surfaces in the Autobiography as well, which provides some degree of alternate forms reliability. He acknowledges that,

> During my bicycle ride a host of such things occured to me, and I became aware that she [Alys] was not the saint I had always supposed her to be. But in the revulsion I went too far, and forgot the great virtues that she did in fact possess.[25]

In his relations with males Russell also demonstrated a characteristic ambivalence throughout his life. Although a tendency to homosexuality is not immediately apparent, especially since Russell was adamant

about the fact that there were no homosexuals in the
Apostles at Cambridge until a later generation than his,
there are indications of a latent homosexuality. I hesitate,
to use this term because of its deprecating connotations and
because latent implies that the impulse was not manifest in
behavior, which weakens its explanatory power.
Nevertheless, for lack of a better term, it must suffice,
with qualifications. Instances of at least an ambivalance
begin to appear in Russell's relationship with Edward
Fitzgerald, a boy Russell befriended while attending the
Crammer's school in 1889. He recounts that, "Having been
lonely so long, I devoted a somewhat absurd amount of
affection to Fitzgerald."[26] Russell goes on to say,
however, that following a European tour,

> I came to hate him with a violence which, in
> retrospect, I can hardly understand. On one
> occasion, in an access of fury, I got my
> hands on his throat and started to strangle
> him. I intended to kill him, but when he
> began to grow livid, I relented.[27]

Periods of intense attraction to and overvaluation of male
friends, followed by sudden swings to the opposite extreme,
mark later relationships as well, including that with his
student Wittgenstein, himself a homosexual.

As far as the Jocasta mothered characteristic of
being ambitious is concerned, there can be no doubt that
Russell's Principia Mathematica became an enormous and
almost overwhelming undertaking. Along with Whitehead,
Russell virtually created a new branch of Mathematics — a
method of deducing mathematics from symbolic logic.

Complimentary to the ambition needed for such a task is the
obsessional's "meticulous concern with exactness" and
especially his need for "absolute precision in the meaning
of words and sentences."[28] Unfortunately, as Storr
claims, for the writer, "this is a double-edged
characteristic".[29] It turned against Russell during the
summer of 1903 and 1904 when, in his own words, he reached a
"complete intellectual deadlock". His description of the
period in his autobiography demonstrates his descent into
the obsessional's ritualistic behavior.

> Every morning I would sit down before a blank
> sheet of paper. Throughout the day, with a
> brief interval for lunch, I would stare at
> the blank sheet. Often when evening came it
> was still empty...It was clear to me that I
> could not get on without solving the
> contradiction, and I was determined that no
> difficulty should turn me aside from the
> completion of Principia Mathematica, but it
> seemed that the whole of the rest of my life
> might be consumed in looking at that blank
> sheet of paper.[30]

Locked into a withered and eventually destructive
relationship with Alys and worried about the negative
effects on his intellectual future, Russell fell prey to
severe depression. However, as Storr notes, the obsessional
activity which results in a ritual such as Russell created
"may actually serve a valuable purpose by putting a person
in touch with his own inner life."[31] Russell's stand as
Women's Suffragette Candidate in the British election of
1907 is the first evidence of a tenuous attempt by Russell
to make contact with his inner life and to use his
depression in a positive way by creating a bridge between

his self-absorption and the external world. He wrote to
William James about his experience that, "Ten days of
standing for Parliament gave me more relations with concrete
realities than a life time of thought."[32]

Though it was necessary for Russell to ascend once
again into the realm of abstract thought, in order to write
out _Principia Mathematica_ after he had solved the
logical contradictions,which had plagued him for so long,
the stage was set for a second phase of creative illness.
This time the incubation period of eight years was much
longer,but in the final stage of completing the manuscript
of _Principia_ Russell once again found himself in a "state
of strange and unusual excitement"[33] comparable to that
experienced in 1901. Upon completion, as he notes in his
autobiography, "...I felt somewhat at a loose end. The
feeling was delightful, but bewildering, like coming out of
prison."[34]

Although casually introduced in his autobiography,
Russell's chance meeting of Lady Ottoline, during her
husband Philip's election campaign of 1910, had about as
sudden an impact on Russell as his conversion of 1901.
According to Russell, Ottoline "fed something in me that had
been starved"[35], and in virtually one evening together
they had decided to become lovers . For once, the
autobiography "predicts" the content of the letters in the
Russell archive. Since they reveal a similar picture, a

degree of alternate forms reliability and some validity can
be claimed for the information about the abruptness and
impact of their relationship. From a brief, almost cursory
note from Russell on March 18, 1911, asking if he might stay
at the Morrell's in London, Russell launches into a most
passionate letter just three days later, which begins, "My
dearest — my heart is so full that I hardly know where to
begin."[36] Begin he did, however, and with a fervour
difficult to imagine. Certainly a more complete
transformation took place than in 1901, although a similar
pattern of events unfolded. As Maria Forte claims, whereas
Mrs. Whitehead's illness and her close friendship with
Russell acted as a catalyst and an inspiration for his
attempt at emotional writing, Lady Ottoline went much
further by becoming a communicant and an influential guide
along Russell's path to self knowledge.

Ronald Clark makes the rather bold claim that,in
1911, "Lady Ottoline was one of the most striking women in
Britain"[38]. Perhaps more importantly, as Andrew Brink
notes, Ottoline had a similar aristocratic upbringing to
Russell's, including a pattern of loss -- in her case of her
father when she was four.[37] Whereas Russell, in his early
years, learned to retreat from conflicting emotions into a
world of abstract thought and certainty, Lady Ottoline
reacted to love and disruption by taking refuge in a deep
belief in a spiritual life, which was never shaken. In one
sense the relationship revolves around Russell's attempt to

come to an understanding of, and to reconcile himself to,
Lady Ottoline's very different perspective on the value of a
spiritual life, including a belief in immortality. By the
end of the first week of their correspondence Russell is
already aware of their vast differences in religious
belief -- he writes that,

> I cannot understand the wish for a future
> life - it is the chief consolation that in
> the grave there is rest.[40]

Their spiritual, emotional, erotic and aesthetic quest also
enabled Russell to develop his aesthetic sensibility. Lady
Ottoline herself, in her memoirs, acknowledges this facet of
her role of "helping to bring back to life his [Russell's]
imaginative and poetic side, which he had almost atrophied
during the long years of intense self-suppression."[41]

Andrew Brink refers to the dynamics of the
relationship in terms of a shift on Russell's part from a
"worship of reason" to a "worship of beauty", which Russell
later retreated from.[42] The position became too extreme
largely because of Russell's obsessional characteristics,
already documented, and well established by the time he met
Ottoline. Not only do the sheer quantity of the letters and
their repetitiveness (which Russell later lamented) attest
to Russell's continuing obsessionality, but within even the
earliest letters there is evidence of probably unconscious
attempts on Russell's part to control and manipulate
Ottoline's feelings. During the first week he implores
Ottoline to keep up the intensity of their love:

> But you must, you shall, be worthy of the
> love that is best in you and me; you shall
> not kill the new-born infant. A great love
> is a great responsibility; do not degrade us
> both by not living up to the best.[43]

And in his next letter his tone becomes, briefly, more

threatening:

> ...if you continue to sleep with Philip and
> I don't break with you, I shall hate him,
> probably more and more as time goes on, till
> it becomes madness.[44]

In mid-July 1911, a similar tone emanates in several

letters, since Russell has failed to persuade Ottoline to

leave Philip and Julian: on one occasion he states,

> If you give love to anyone else, tho' I could
> acquiesce and remain a devoted friend, and
> not, in any way alter my opinion of you, I
> should not continue to give love. Altogether
> you would have a first class tragedy on your
> hands.[45]

During the same period he carried his manipulations

of Alys to an extreme. Following Alys' insistence that she

would bring Ottoline's name into their divorce case, Russell

carefully thwarted her plans by quietly informing her that

he would "commit suicide in order to circumvent her."[46]

Even in deepest love with Ottoline, Russell was not free

from a contrary destructive force: he muses that, "It is

love makes me hurt you and when I love most I feel most need

to hurt you - I don't know why."[47] One answer is that

Russell's obsessional defense against an internalized Granny

had generalized to a fear of his lover's over-control.[48]

On the other hand, Russell idealized their love and

placed them both on a heroic level. In one particularly

insightful letter Russell claims that he has the "feeling of the doomed Titan wearily upholding a world which is ready to slip from his shoulders into chaos."[49] Further on he transforms Ottoline into "the goddess who raises the storm and then gives healing and comfort to the shipwrecked sailors".[50] Repeatedly he refers to Ottoline's "divine power of loving" and in more than one instance he makes such a claim as,

> You have become to me something holy; my
> touch will be gentle because I reverence
> you. Our love shall always be sacred...[51]

The latter quotes aggregated imply an element of mothering in the affair, which indeed gradually replaced their love relationship. And yet there are just as many cases of Russell denying Ottoline's claims that he idealizes her. He doth protest on one occasion, "I don't idealize you — there is no need."[52]

By viewing Russell's tendencies to control and to distort reality through idealization of his loved one and subsequent denial of it, as being manifestations of Russell's need for power, additional light is shed on his motivation and the consequences of the relationship with Ottoline. Theseinsights do not conflict with Storr's more distal psychodynamic obsessional theory. Based on a large body of empirical evidence, David Winter, in The Power Motive, shows that a need for power is related to both a concern with not being controlled by others and to the distortion of information.[53] In addition, he claims that

"Men high in need for power are resistant to illusions
fostered and cherished by others but they are subject to the
illusions they create about themselves."[94]   R.
Gathorne-Hardy's comment that Russell and Ottoline "were
lovers but she was never 'in love' with him"[95] begins to
make sense.   Also, Ottoline's much less ecstatic and thus
probably more objective judgement of Russell in her Journal,
including her note of her lack of physical attraction to
Russell and his lack of gentleness and sympathy[96], even at
the emotional height of their affair, further demonstrates
how Russell paradoxically deluded himself about his
relationship with Ottoline while he gained self-knowledge
from the affair.

Need for power, according to Winter, is the sum
total of a person's hope of power, and his fear of power
since both involve a concern with power.   Not only does such
a person "construe the world in terms of power and use the
concept of "power" in categorizing human interactions...but
[these people] also want to feel themselves as the most
powerful."[97]   Though Winter's formulation of the origin of
the power motive is somewhat speculative, he has
demonstrated that younger sons with an older sibling or
siblings score higher in fear of power than other siblings.
According to Winter, they have experienced high imposed
inhibitions,

> the greatest power of others, the least
> personal power, and hence the greatest
> powerlessness. For them, in short, the area

of power is most likely to be associated with
evasive consequences because there are so
many more people likely to punish them (and
especially to punish them for trying to have
power.)[58]

In later life those high in Fear of Power tend to "opt for

autonomy and avoid structure from others".[59] In

relationships they "try to avoid rejection rather than

strive for affiliation".[60] Not only is Russell the

youngest sibling but he also found himself in an environment

with at least three powerful adults imposing inhibitions on

him. In fact, the entire Russell lineage seems to have been

concerned with power, having been in ruling positions for

centuries and having finally produced a Prime Minister.

Though it does not seem likely that a personality trait

like need for power could be genetically transferred, Clark,

in the biography, speaks of "the inherited desire for power"

in the family.[61]

Throughout his life Russell demonstrated an

ambivalence toward power. In a Journal entry of 1905 he

fears that, "I am in danger of getting a love of power...the

power of the father confessor."[62] Russell's references to

his 'hunger' to be with Ottoline, which through repetition

become a dominant theme in his correspondence, make one

wonder if he would have devoured Lady Ottoline if he could

have. Finally, his preoccupation with power during the time

of the relationship with Ottoline is strikingly revealed in

a letter to his friend Lucy Donnelly. He says, "Power over

people's minds is the main personal desire of my life; and

this sort of power is not acquired by saying popular

things."[63] Fortunately, his insecurity about power

resulted in a reaction formation against using overt power,

at least in a social context, as seen in his early

involvement in pacifist causes.

        Winter describes the Don Juan legend as an archetype

of the power motive and this too is certainly applicable to

Russell. Although Winter does not use Besdine's term of

Jocasta mother, like Besdine, he describes Don Juanism as

"arising from an ambivalent fear of a powerful and binding

mother, and symbolized by the sexual degradation of

women".[64] Thus, Besdine's more distal psychodynamic theory

is not precluded by the more proximal trait theory of

Winter's, but rather they supplement one another. As Winter

points out, the Don Juan with a lust for power does more

than seduce women — he tricks and abandons them as well.

While 'tricks' is perhaps too harsh a word to apply to

Russell, his profession of passionate love for Helen Dudley

and his subsequent reversal of feeling in 1914 provides one

of many possible examples of his inconsistency. It

certainly caused more than a little resentment in Lady

Ottoline. After acting as mother confessor to the

devastated Helen, Ottoline records in her journal that,

        I feel very keenly the disappointment in
        Bertie myself. He used all these extravagant
        terms of devotion to me such a short time
        ago, and now they are all gone, and he
        professed to her all the things he professed
        to me.[65]

However, before Russell had in some sense left
behind Lady Ottoline for Constance Malleson he had produced
several literary 'children' in collaboration with Ottoline.
By the time of their relationship Russell, according to
Brink, "in practise believed in the omnipotence of
verbalized thought, in the power of words to encompass and
to control all experiences."[96] Russell's intense need for
power and his obsessional tendencies both help explain what
prompted these works and why they were eventually aborted.

Prisons, which both Ottoline and Russell referred to
as their child, was the outcome of Russell's second
conversion, otherwise known as the summer crisis. It
apparently occured in late July 1911 and developed, as Maria
Forte notes, in response to Lady Ottoline's refusal to
become imprisoned by Russell, and to his mystical feeling
that "something passed" from her to him during the
crisis.[97] He later wrote to Ottoline of the experience
that,

> I had not supposed it possible to learn
> wisdom in the midst of happiness...You make
> me dare to think and feel what it really is
> my best nature to think and feel...it is like
> emerging into sunlight from a cavern. I feel
> such new power...as tho' shackles had fallen
> from my mind.[98]

Though Russell definitely did feel liberated by Lady
Ottoline's sharing of her love and religious feelings with
him, Prisons is not really about mental prisons at all --
he probably wrote more about prisons at the time he was
incarcerated in 1918 for his pacifist writings. Instead, in

its essence, "Prisons" is Russell's attempt to reconcile
opposites and to achieve a wholeness or union. On one level
Russell tries to align his faith in reason with Ottoline's
faith in a spiritual world. He intellectualizes his
ambivalence towards her faith -- that is, his ability to
accept religious feeling but not her belief in God and the
dogmas of religion. Russell concentrates on this compromise
in the Prisons I section. He allows that it is important to
preserve religion,but only if traditionally accompanying
beliefs about the universe are discarded. Demands of the
Self, which divide the world into good and bad, must be
subordinated in order to achieve a union with the universe.
That ultimate union, he claims, is the essence of
religion.[69]

On a deeper, psychological level, Russell is
desperately striving to repair a split ego. Throughout most
of the other sections of "Prisons" Russell describes various
polarities and a highly intellectualized method of
overcoming them,so that the reliability of this claim is
firmly established. In the 'Contemplation' and 'Action and
Contemplation' sections Russell claims that of the "two
attitudes possible towards objects: action and
contemplation, the latter is by far superior since it is
impartial whereas the active depends on oppositions between
good and bad or useful and useless"[70]. In "Freedom and
Bondage" he phrases the conflict in terms of unsatisfied
desires, which result in bondage, versus satisfied desires,

or better still, no desire, which results in freedom. The
Good of the Intellect fragment sets up an opposition between
self and not-self, the instinctive intellect and the
rational intellect. Rational contemplation overcomes the
conflict since it "finds its satisfaction in every
enlargement of the not-Self, in everything that magnifies
the object contemplated and thereby the subject
contemplating."[71] The instinctive intellect merely
desires to assimilate and subordinate the known world to the
Self. Similar oppositions are created in the 'Good of the
Emotions', the 'Good of the Will' and the 'Wisdom' sections.

Psychologically, the work can also be viewed as the
obsessional's repeated attempts, through ordering and
precisely describing his conflicts, of expelling, in
Russell's case, the internalized demon granny, the source of
his ambivalent feelings. In addition, Russell's prevalent
use of words such as 'hostile camps', 'warfare',
'damnation', 'subdue', 'self-assertion' and 'power' affirms
the validity of the claim that he construes the world in
terms of power. Throughout "Prisons" Russell struggles with
his unacceptable, overwhelming desires for total power or
omnipotence. In the "Action and Contemplation" part Russell
is really speaking of an imaginative way to overcome
impingement by powerful others. He claims that "the active
side aims at Power, the contemplative at Wisdom".[72]
Contemplation of an object is the better route since it "is
not limited like Power, and does not demand that the object

shall be made small. It enlarges the soul to the greatness
of the object."[73] One wonders how much of this thought
was originally formed by a Russell who found that he could
not obtain power over an overcontrolling granny, or indeed
any of his surrogate parents through his actions, but that
he could achieve omnipotence in his world of thought.
Russell's ambivalence toward power may also explain his
inability to bow down before Ottoline's God. Years later
when he was no longer trying to reconcile himself with
Ottoline's point of view he wrote,

> The whole idea of throwing away your life
> blindly, in an imagined service to Christ, is
> a form of glorifying masochism and of
> self-abasement before power.[74]

Although it is difficult to criticize "Prisons" since
only fragments remain of a manuscript which reached at least
129 pages by March, 1912, there do exist criticisms
indicative of its flaws by two readers of the manuscript --
Lady Ottoline and Mrs. Whitehead. Whereas Lady Ottoline
described it in general as "most beautiful", she admitted
that, in style, it was "too much like a lecture"[75]. Mrs.
Whitehead was probably a more objective reader since by
then she was emotionally distanced from Russell. According
to Russell, she said it was "dull", "that the emotions
spoken of are not spoken of so as to be felt, and that the
intellectual and emotional parts don't belong
together."[76]

Early in 1912 Russell himself admitted his failure

to bring together his feelings and his intellect in the
work. Nevertheless, upon completion in September 1911 he
had written to Ottoline that he felt "Prisons" had
"strengthened the bond between them"[77]. If nothing else,
he realized that he had tapped some vital inner source by
writing it, which he was determined not to relinquish.
Though "Prisons" was abandoned, the first chapter, "The
Nature and Value of Religion" became the basis for "The
Essence of Religion", published in October, 1912.[78] In
that essay Russell takes a slightly more extreme view by
claiming that religion can and should be preserved without
reliance on such "unreasonable" beliefs as dogma, a belief
in God or immortality. Three religious values -- worship,
acquiescence, and love -- can still function to provide one
with a vision of the infinite. Here the poles become the
finite and the infinite. Only the infinite world
encompasses both reason and vision or emotionality. Again
Russell's attempted integration with Ottoline's beliefs
failed, this time because it necessitated a distinction
between impartial worship and worship of God. Lady Ottoline
could not be reconciled to a worship "given to anything that
exists in spite of its goodness or badness"[79] because it
did not adequately replace in her mind a worship or love of
God.

By February 1912 Russell had come to believe that
form and not the idea imprisoned both "Prisons" and "the
Essence of Religion". He wrote to Ottoline, "Prisons was

wrong, I think, simply because it was expository. One must have a more artistic form".[80] Shortly thereafter, in a characteristic burst of enthusiasm, Russell launched into "The Perplexities of John Forstice", an autobiographical novella.

Russell's expanding imagination now enabled him to transform the conflict into one between science and vision. Though the work is autobiographical, Russell detaches himself from the conflict by splitting his ego into various characters who each express a facet of his thought, especially about his strivings for identity. The story maps the social and emotional awakening of a shy physicist, described as "a single-minded enthusiast, innocent as a child in wordly matters"[81], who reluctantly attends a garden party. There he meets, listens to, and subsequently rejects the world visions of the Empire builder Hatfield Lane, Shifsky, a socialist, and Brietstein, a pessimist financier who suffers from ennui. Through their conversations Forstice is led to consider, for the first time, his own degree of happiness. Subsequently he reacts to the previously bottled emotions of his wife, who he discovers is dying of cancer. His identification of her pain causes some new wisdom to struggle into birth and he embarks on a physical voyage with "a sense of undiscovered mystery."[82] He winds up in Italy with a group "united only in the belief that clear candid thought is the greatest of human activities."[83] Each member in turn propounds an

aspect of Russell's own thought. Forano the mathematician
derives pleasure from exactness and certainty -- in short
the perfectness of mathematics -- as Russell had done.
Nasispo the philosopher finds a similar complete world in
abstract "contemplation not fettered by desire"[84], an
attitude Russell had adopted around the time of the writing
of "Prisons". The poet Pardicretti asserts that man is
active as well as contemplative, creative as well as
receptive, and that he redeems himself by supremacy of
thought as well as passion. Chenskoff, the Russian
novelist, outlines his view, very similar to Russell's, that
pain can be reconciled to beauty through the creative act.
Alegno, "a spokesman for ordinary mortals", dismisses the
earlier theories because of their inaccessibility to the
common people and proposes in their place "merely courage
and the habit of not reflecting on our own misfortunes."[85]

Perhaps Russell could never fully understand Alegno's
supposedly 'simple' solutions; certainly Alegno perplexes
Forstice. Forstice's search thus continues in the third
section of the story, in the encounter with Catherine
Belasys, a character created almost entirely by Ottoline
from her own experiences with her spiritual mentor, Mother
Julian. Forstice becomes a messenger of spiritual love,
from his dying Uncle's Tristram to Catharine, Tristram's
former lover turned nun. Possibly realizing that Forstice
will not be able to understand, Catharine expounds some of
the themes of "Prisons", such as her belief in universal

love. Forstice returns to the world of harsh reality but he
sees it from a new perspective, "with those eyes of vision
which had been filling his soul with new light."[86]

Of particular interest is the theory of creativity
dramatized in the novella, especially since Russell's desire
to write creatively peaked during the writing of Forstice.
To Ottoline, Russell claimed that "my whole impulse in
mental things is towards imaginative writing."[87]
Chenskoff's speech on creativity probably reflects what
Russell himself had discovered through the exercise:
Chenskoff muses that,

> I doubt if there can be really great
> achievement except through pain; it is pain
> that gives clear sure beauty, the sense of
> having been wrought in the fire. It is pain
> that gives the quality of yearning; without
> that a man may be an appreciator but not a
> creator.[88]

Further on the writing becomes more autobiographical:

> And looking back over my own life I saw the
> same dread of the infinite pain, driving me
> hither and thither in restless passion,
> making my life a fever except in a few rare
> moments of courage which had partially
> redeemed it. Suddenly, as with a new
> insight, I saw that all the noise and fury
> was mere cowardice, mere shouting in the
> night to keep the ghosts away. There was, I
> saw, another way to deal with this pain, to
> turn and fight it, to face it and subdue it
> and make it minister to wisdom; to take it
> into the soul and endure while it stabbed and
> stabbed again; and so to rise above it, and
> learn through it the vision of heaven, the
> mysterious unity of all life in the search
> for liberation.[89]

Although Russell found a way to contact his pain and
to use it to advantage to repair, in the end he once again

found himself unable to reconcile reason with emotion. As a
literary work the novella foundered for a number of reasons.

Its most distinguished critic, Joseph Conrad, who became a
"soul mate" of Russell's, advised that the middle section
should be expanded into a book "with conversations of the
various characters singly."[70] Significantly, he liked the
character of the nun. The other characters, it seems to me,
are not well enough developed and are too transparent. They
are voices or thoughts divested of their bodies and thus
lacking in human idiosyncracies. There is too much of
Russell the intellect penetrating the prose, always needing
to tell his own story, and not enough sublimation and
artistic control. In "Forstice" Russell uses the more
flexible narrative form but is not flexible enough himself
to achieve with it. It is as if he cannot creatively play
with his characters but instead has to set down their
governing rules or parameters before he begins. Images
wither on his vine because he has for too long been involved
in using symbolic logic to extract the life juice -- the
essence•out of prose. In short he is the obsessional who
cannot quite release himself or, to use Milton Rokeach's
complementary concept, he is the highly dogmatic person who
has developed a mental set or a rigidity in thought which
limits his openness to change and new input.[71]

Russell himself partially recognized this disability
as early as in his "Self Appreciation" of 1897, in which he
writes,

> My faults are a tendency to nagging, and to
> overestimating my own importance, so that
> what thwarts my pursuit seem wicked, though
> essential to other people's happiness. Also
> dogmatism. I used to try and improve my
> character and I used to succeed. Now I only
> care for efficiency.[72]

During the writing of "Forstice" Russell became fully aware
of the debilitating effect of his "analytic intellect." He
fumes that imagination "is constantly checked and thwarted
by reason"[73]. Significantly, in the novella Forstice,
though a changed man, returns to the study and teaching of
physics. Russell too, though changed for the better by his
brief foray into the world of fiction, retreated to the more
rigid formal essay form in "Mysticism and Logic" of 1914.
Once again he returns to the dichotomy between reason and
emotion and this time cites historical and philosophical
precedents showing the need for both science and mysticism.

Though the accumulated instances of changed behaviors
leave no question that Russell was transformed through his
relationship with Lady Ottoline Morrell, and that he
benefited psychically from his experiences at writing
creatively in the years 1911 to 1914, the fact remains that
both Russell's autobiography and the literary products of
his relationship with Ottoline are to some extent flawed.
The autobiography consists of a series of episodes and pithy
statements but lacks a core. Russell makes little attempt
to explain his motivation, which makes the work
unsatisfactory as confessionalism. Occasionally it even
descends into untruthfulness. The literary products remain

fragments, or at most strive to reconcile essentially
irreconcilable concepts. Only the letters, with all their
repetitions and fluctuations, probe deeply enough to reach
the essence of Russell the man, if such a multifaceted
personality can be said to have an essence.

Conclusion

Some answers to the original questions posed in this thesis should now be apparent. English literature criticism can no longer afford to sustain its divorce from psychology, especially if it desires to realign itself to the needs of its readers. Both psychological insights, based on sound psychological theory, and rigorous methods of inquiry, derived from scientific method, can be profitably applied to the biographical-critical enterprise. The accompanying risks, of generating confusion by the admixture of two fields of inquiry, and of covering the ground of common sense using psychological terms, are worth it. Even the best historical examples of biography — sometimes brilliant, often erratic — have their limitations. Awareness of the biographical problems of the biographer's relation to his subject, inadequate evidence, inflated expectations, reductionism, and reconstruction, strengthen and in some cases surpass common sense. In addition, safeguards against unconscious error are provided by elements of scientific method. These include realizing that the approach will likely be correlational, ensuring initially that hypotheses are numerous and carefully formulated to suit the problem at hand, viewing narrative as a method, and implementing the checks on validity and reliability of the information.

Not only does the much maligned form of biography provide a vehicle to demonstrate the limitations of intuitive psychology in English criticism, but it also

illustrates the limitations of the nomothetic approach in

psychology. Psychobiography as a form provides a means of

overcoming both limitations. Far from being a hopelessly

complicated task, the exercise in illuminating a segment of

Russell's life has shown that psychobiographical links can

tentatively be made between personality and written words.

They should be made since, as Brink convincingly argues for

poetry (which can be applied to other forms),

> A poem standing alone is surely an
> interesting object, but a poem placed in the
> life context of its maker's conflict and hope
> takes on quite another aspect. Formal
> criticism -- style in relation to theme -- is
> modified by considerations of personal motive
> and meaning. The poet's poetry becomes a
> single intelligible statement that readers
> can more directly relate to the life they
> themselves experience and seek to
> understand.[1]

Lives of artists need not be reduced through

psychobiography, to neuroses, if their struggle and

achievement figures prominently and if it is realized that

such complex personalities do not yield a single truth.

Instead, fragments of "truths" composed complement one

another.

Although I have not attempted to be comprehensive, I

have tried to provide, from the perspective of the literary

critic, a rough map of the psychobiographical issues, which

needs to be filled in. Though several avenues of approach

to Russell's life have been suggested, his need for power in

particular should be tested in the light of his later

"social cause" activities, such as his involvement with the

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. It may prove the most important facet of his life because of the further reaching implications of this need in other extraordinary individuals.

The obsessional drive for power and often accompanying manifestations of aggression should be more thoroughly scrutinized in leadership because of the potential dire consequences to society. Speeches and written documents of potential leaders need to be analyzed and psychobiographies constructed as aids in predicting stability of personality and efficacy of leadership. The public should have access to the relevant information to facilitate the political leadership decision-making process.

Whereas these tasks may not fall directly on the literary critic, armed with psychological tools he can more effectively bring to the attention of the public possibly disturbing attitudes towards power which have filtered down through the ideology of society into its literature. These possibilites bring to mind the role of the literary critic. Should he, for instance, become involved in carrying out empirical "psychological" research in order to make generalizations about the needs of students and the requirements of the reading public? An antecedent could be found in I. A. Richards' Practical Criticism (1929). Richards carried out an "experiment" on his students in order to test his hypothesis that literary value judgements were highly subjective. It involved asking his students to

evaluate poems, without providing their titles or authors.[2] I see no reason why these sorts of projects could not be entertained, possibly in collaboration with social scientists, since they do have bearing on the critical enterprise, though they will never be the main object of inquiry for the literary critic.

Critics also need to take a more serious look at autobiography and memoirs as texts, not only to clearly distinguish their features from those of biography and psychobiography, but to develop methods for criticizing them, by considering their narrative as a method of disclosing certain information and withholding other types. Samuel Johnson considered autobiography "more valuable" than biography since the biographer has "many temptations to falsehood" including "the zeal of gratitude, the ardour of patriotism, fondness for an opinion, or fidelity to a party,"[3] along with a host of less noble ones. The autobiographer, on the other hand, has no motive to distort, except "self-love, by which we have so often been betrayed that all are on the watch against its artifices."[4] Others, like Harold Nicholson, have held that there has not been an autobiographer yet who has attained the detachment necessary for an objective rendering of "truth".[5] What exactly is the position of autobiography in relation to biography and criticism?

Whatever the potential applications of psychological findings and methods to psychobiography and criticism, it

cannot be stressed enough that these psychological

frameworks must be applied with care and discrimination in

order to avoid "Procrustean bed" criticism; instead,

"applied psychology" must fit the art and artist which it

serves.

Introduction

1. In <u>Writing Lives: Principia Biographica</u> (New
York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1984) Leon Edel notes
that the so-called "New Critics" especially have done
criticism a disservice because of their insistence on the
divorce between biography and criticism. They thus deny
that the psychology and motivations of a writer have a
bearing on both the form and content of the text. For
example, Edel cites I.A. Richard's response of "No
biography! No biography! Stick to the text" to Edel's
reading of Henry James' anxieties between the lines of "The
Turn of the Screw." (p. 137). More recent attacks have
centred on the use of systematic psychology in history and
historical biography. See, for instance, D.E. Stannard,
<u>Shrinking History: On Freud and the Failure</u> of
<u>Psychohistory</u> (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

2. Joseph T. Coltrera, "Lives, Events and Other
Players: Directions in Psychobiography", in Coltrera (ed.)
<u>Lives, Events and Other Players: Studies in</u>
<u>Psychobiography</u> (New York: Jason Aronson, 1981) 15.

3. Ernest Jones, as cited in Leon Edel <u>Stuff of</u>
<u>Sleep and Dreams</u> (New York: Avon Books, 1982) 231.

4. Lucile Dooley, "Psychoanalytic Studies of Genius",

American Journal of Psychology 27 (1916): 363.

5.   Edel, Stuff of Sleep ix, x.

6.   Edel, Stuff of Sleep 218.

7.   Samuel Johnson, "The Rambler: Number 60" in
Eighteenth Century English Literature, ed. G. Tillotson et
al. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1969) 985.

8.   Samuel Johnson "Life of Savage", in Lives of
the English Poets, ed. John Birbeck Hill, vol. 2
Smith-Savage (1905; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) 333-334.

9.   Edel, Stuff of Sleep 218.

10.   Edel, Stuff of Sleep xv.

11.   William McKinley Runyan, Life Histories and
Psychobiography: Explorations in Theory and
Method (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984) 209.

12.   Edel, Stuff of Sleep 218.

13.   Sigmund Freud, as paraphrased by Edel, Stuff of
Sleep 43.

14.   Coltera 14.

15.   Kay Redfield Jamison, "Manic Depressive Illness and
Accomplishment: Creativity, Leadership and Social Class", in
press.

16.   Coltrera 14.

17. Coltrera 15.

18. Martin S. Bergmann, "Limitations of Method in Psychoanalytic Biography: a historical inquiry," <u>Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association</u> 21 (1973): 834.

19. Coltrera 14.

20. Sigmund Freud, as cited in Edel, <u>Stuff of Sleep</u> 36.

21. Quentin Bell, <u>Virginia Woolf: A biography</u>, 2 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1973) 2:20.

22. Edel, <u>Stuff of Sleep</u> 134.

23. Edel, <u>Stuff of Sleep</u> 134.

24. D. H. Lawrence, as cited in R.P. Draper, <u>D. H. Lawrence</u> (New York: Twayne Books, 1964) 9.

25. Sigmund Freud, as cited in John E. Mack, "Psychoanalysis and Biography: Aspects of a Developing Affinity", <u>Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association</u> 28 (1980) 546.

26. Bergmann 840.

27. John E. Mack, "Psychoanalysis and Historical Biography", <u>Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association</u> 19 (1971) 150.

28. E. Kris, as cited in Bergmann 840.

29. Coltrera 15.

30. Mack, "Historical Biography" 167.

31. Daniel J. Levinson, "Exploration in Biography: Evolution of the Individual Life Structure In Adulthood", in Further Explanations in Personality, ed. A.J. Robin, et al (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1981) 50.

32. Alan Roland, introduction, Psychoanalysis, Creativity, and Literature: A French-American Inquiry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978) 5.

33. Jamison 2.

34. Runyan 13.

35. Runyan 6.

36. Donald C. Campbell and Julian C. Stanley, Experimental and Quasi-experimental Designs for Research (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966) 6-7. Campbell has since revised his views. Runyan 122.

37. C. Kluckhohn and H. A. Murray, "Personality formation: The determinant," in C. Kluckhohn, H. Murray, and D. Schneider (eds.), Personality in Nature, Society and Culture (New York: Knopf, 1953) 53, as cited in Runyan 7.

38. Runyan 9.

39. P.E. Vernon, G. Adamson and D. F. Vernon, _The Psychology and Education of Gifted Children_ (London: Methuen and Co., 1977) 92.

40. G. Welsh and F. Barron, _Barron-Welsh Art Scale_ (Palo Alto, California: Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc., 1963).

41. G. Welsh, _Creativity and Intelligence: A Personality Approach_ (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: Institute for Research in Social Science Press, 1978).

42. Welsh, 57.

43. E. M. Hitchfield, _In Search of Promise_ (London: Longman Group, 1973) 118.

44. Vernon 66.

45. J. A. C. Brown, _Freud and the Post-Freudians_ (London: Cassell, 1963) 2.

46. Karl R. Popper, _Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge_ (New York: Harper and Row, 1965) 37.

47. Calvin S. Hall, _A Primer of Freudian Psychology_ (New York: New American Library, 1954) 19.

48. Popper 37.

49.   Brown vii.

50.   Brown 2 .

51.   Encyclopedia of Psychology (Guilford Connecticut:
Dushkin Publishing Group, 1973) 218.

52.   Andrew Brink, Creativity As Repair: Bipolarity
and Its Closure (Hamilton: Cromlech Press, 1982) 11.

53.   Henry Murray, as cited in Levinson 45.

54.   J. R. Royce, as cited in J. P. Rushton, "Toward a
theory of Individual and Group Differences in Personality
and Social Behavior", Annals of Theoretical
Psychology, Vol. 2, ed. J. R. Royce and L. P. Mos (New
York: Plenum Press, 1984) 4.

55.   Rushton 3.

Chapter One

1.   Leon Edel, Writing Lives: Principia Biographica
(New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1984) 33.

2.   Samuel Johnson, "The Rambler: Number 60" in
Eighteenth Century English Literature, ed. G. Tillotson et
al. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1969) 987.

3.   Samuel Johnson. "Johnsonian Miscellanies", in
Biography as an Art, ed. J. Clifford (London: Oxford
University Press, 1962) 49.

4. Virginia Woolf, _Moments of Being_, ed. Jeanne
Schulkind (Sussex: University Press, 1976) 69.

5. Edel, _Lives_ 20.

6. Edel, _Lives_ 20.

7. Hugh Kenner, as cited in Edel, _Lives_ 184.

8. Harold Nicholson, _The Development of English
Biography_ (London: The Hogarth Press, 1968) 16.

9. Nicholson 16.

10. Nicholson 36.

11. Nicholson 68.

12. Samuel Johnson, "The Rambler" 986.

13. Laurence Sterne, _The Life and Opinions of
Tristram Shandy, Gentleman_, ed. James Work (New York:
Odyssey, 1940) 4-5.

14. G. Tillotson et al, eds., _Eighteenth Century
English Literature_ (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich,
1969) 1076.

15. Johnson, "The Rambler" 986.

16. Samuel Johnson, "Life of Savage", in _Lives of the
English Poets_, ed. John Birbeck Hill, vol. 2 Smith-Savage
(1905; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) 323.

17. See Nicholson, 107 Also, Edel, _Lives_ 55.

18. Edel, _Lives_ 56.

19. Edel, _Lives_ 56.

20. W. Jackson Bate, _Samuel Johnson_ (New York:
Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1975) 117.

21. Edel, _Lives_ 55.

22. Cook's biography is the only one for which Lytton
Strachey has any praise. See L. Strachey, _Emminent_
Victorians (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966) 8.

23. Virginia Woolf, "The Art of Biography", in _The_
Death of the Moth and Other Essays (London:
Hogarth Press, 1942) 120-121.

24. Meyer Schapiro, "Leonardo and Freud: An
Art-Historical Study", _Journal of the History of Ideas_,
XVII (1956): 147-8, as cited in M. Bergmann, "Limitation of
Method in Psychoanalytic biography: a historical inquiry,"
Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association 21
(1973): 835.

25. In _Writing Lives_ Edel calls Strachey simply the
"father of modern biography" after already having bestowed
that title on Boswell. 55, 82.

26. Nicholson, _Biography_ 150.

27.   Woolf, Biography 122.

28.   John E. Mack, "Psychoanalysis and Historical
Biography, Journal of the American Psycoanalytic
Association 19 (1971) 148.

29.   W. C. Bullitt and S. Freud, Thomas Woodrow
Wilson: A Psychological Study (Boston:
Houghton-Mifflin, 1966) N.B. this was written between 1930
and 1932.

30.   James W. Anderson, "The Methodology of
Psychological Biography", Journal of Interdisciplinary
History 11 (181) 462.

31.   Anderson, "Methodology" 462.

32.   Woolf, Biography 123.

33.   Nicholson, Biography 154.

34.   Virginia Woolf, Orlando (1928; New York:
Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1956) 190.

35.   Edel, Lives 206.

36.   Woolf, Biography 122.

37.   Edel, Lives 185.

38.   Edel, Lives 185.

39.   Woolf, Biography 125.

40. This phenomenon has been observed in biographies of current literary figures. For example, Anthony Burgess concludes a recent review of _Mailer: His Life and Times_ by Peter Manso, which he considers undigested, "a bound file of minutes on Mailer", by stating that, "It was an unworthy thing to unleash so much mere gossip on that sensibility [Mailer's]." Anthony Burgess, "The Prisoner of Fame", _The Atlantic_ 6 (June, 1985): 100-104.

41. Mack, "Historical Biography" 177.

42. Edel, _Lives_ 27.

43. Edel, _Lives_ 31.

44. Edel, _Lives_ 143.

45. William Runyan, _Life Histories and Psychobiography: Explorations in Theory and Method_ (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984) 202.

46. Runyan 75.

47. Saul Friedlander, _History and Psychoanalysis: An Inquiry into the Possibilities and Limits of Psychohistory_, trans. Susan Suleiman (New York: Holmes and Meier Inc., 1978) 43.

48. D. E. Stannard, _Shrinking History: On Freud and the Failure of Psychohistory_ (New York: Oxford

University Press, 1980) as cited in Runyan 193.

49. Runyan 232.

50. Edel.

51. One successful example is described by the
psychiatrist G. Moraitis, as cited in Edel, _Lives_ 154.
See also pages 82-83 of the present paper.

52. These include: Mack, "Historical Biography";
Runyan; Edel, _Lives_.

53. Anderson, "Methodology" 464.

54. Sigmund Freud, Leonardo da Vinci and a memory of
his childhood, trans. Alan Tyson, ed. James Strachey (New
York: Norton, 1964) 80. Freud himself seems to have chosen
Leonardo for no apparent methodological reason but rather
out of a personal interest.

55. Freud, "Leonardo" 80.

56. See Bate; Edel, _Lives_.

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