STEIN HAUGOM OLSEN

BIOGRAPHY IN LITERARY CRITICISM

I

Since, in its reaction against the biographical criticism that tended to make the study of literature into a study of the literary personality, the proponents of the 'New Criticism' simply legislated against biography *tout* court as a part of *genuine* criticism, there has been little significant theoretical discussion of the proper role of biographical accounts in literary criticism. Of the theoretical 'schools' that became popular after the 'New Criticism', structuralism with its emphasis on the work as an autonomous structural unit, the meaning of which was a function of a syntagmatic combination of minimal units, left no room at all for the notion of an utterer or an author as an origin of the literary work. In poststructuralist criticism the author was reintroduced, but as the 'figure in the carpet', a function of the text, and not as a person-in-the-world:

> If the author is a novelist, he inscribes himself in his text as one of his characters, as another figure sewn into the rug; his signature is no longer privileged and paternal, the locus of genuine truth, but rather, ludic. He becomes a 'paper author': his life is no longer the origin of his fables, but a fable that runs concurrently with his work. There is a reversal, and it is the work which affects the life, not the life which affects the work: the work of Proust and Genet allows us to read their lives as text. The word 'biography' reassumes its strong meaning, in accordance with its etymology. At the same time, the enunciation's sincerity, which has been a veritable 'cross' of literary morality, becomes a false problem: the *I* that writes the text, is never itself, anything more than a paper I.[1]

In this type of theory the notion of an independent, individual self is held to be a bourgeois fiction. Consequently, all that one can mean when one talks

[1]Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text', English translation in Josué V. Harari ed., *Textual Strategies. Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, (London, 1980) pp. 78-79. *Originally published in Revue d Ésthetique*, 3 (1971)as 'De l'oeuvre au texte'.

about the author is the author-inscribed-in-the-text. Again, this amounts to a ban in criticism on biographical accounts of flesh-and-blood authors. Only reference to other texts and codes would figure in *genuine* criticism: the text is an intertext constituting the author-in-the-text. Facts about the-person-in-the-world would not be relevant in genuine, non-naive ('naive' readers and critics are those who do not share the post-structuralist perspective) understanding of texts: since there are no persons-in-the-world, there are no such facts, but only fictions masquerading as facts.

In spite of the lack of relevance accorded to biographical accounts by these various literary theories, the use of such accounts in literary criticism is still widespread. This may indicate that practical critics are ignorant of theory and that they go on committing the same old mistakes even after they have been exposed by literary theory. Or it may indicate that critics find these theories irrelevant to literary criticism. The different types of theory do not dismiss biographical accounts from criticism for the same reason. It is, strictly speaking, wrong to say that structuralism and post-structuralism *dismiss* biographical accounts from criticism. These types of theory develop conceptual schemes where biographical accounts simply have no place. What is more, they also throw out the traditional notion of literary criticism. They take their point of departure in theoretical frameworks developed in areas other than literary practice, and any connection or analogy between the sort of 'textual practice' which their conceptual schemes permit, and traditional literary practice is incidental. Biographical accounts in criticism therefore present no problem for these types of theory. Consequently, they have nothing to contribute to a discussion of the question about the role and limits of the biographical account as a critical instrument. If critics are accused of ignoring the implications of these theories for their work, they can defend their practice by pointing out that they have no such implications, except that they should stop doing literary criticism and start doing something else.

The proponents of the 'New Criticism', on the other hand, developed a philosophy of criticism which tried to make explicit the underlying assumption of literary practice by analyzing its central notions. This led to an argument against biographical accounts roughly along the following lines. The concept of a litterary work can only retain its integrity if it is differentiated from other human utterances and actions. If biographical information is introduced and accepted as an integral part of literary criticism, then the object of attention is no longer the literary work, but a range of behaviour that include other utterances by the author as well as his actions, private and public. If one admits that this larger area is the proper object of critical attention, then the concept of literature as we know it, as a canon of works,

would be threatened. This is something that critics and teachers of literature cannot accept, since they see literature as embodying some of the most fundamental values of our civilisation. If, however, it is only the literary text itself that is the object of criticism, then biographical accounts simply draw attention away from the literary work. The conclusion drawn from this by the 'New Critical' theorists, is that biographical information logically has no place in literary criticism. This is an argument that has force, since it applies to the sort of practice that most critics today believe themselves to be contributors to. It is also an argument that is widely known among critics. However, when critics ignore it, this indicates that biographical accounts also has a use in criticism that is felt to be important and sound. And here lies the problem about the usefulness and limits of the biographical account as a critical instrument.

II

As a preliminary to a discussion of this problem, it is useful to introduce two distinctions. Initially a distinction can be made between biography as a historical discipline and biography as an instrument for literary criticism. As a *historical discipline* biography will make use of any work an author may have written, as a source for saying something about the poet's life. The aim of biography, in this sense, will be to give a historically correct presentation of the author and his environment, and the works of art he may have produced will be source-material, among other types of source material, for drawing conclusions about the author's personality, opinions, emotional life etc. It is the greatness of the works of art that makes the author an interesting subject for biography, but these works do not have any special status as sources for drawing these conclusions. As a historical discipline biography does not belong to criticism and does not present any special philosophical problems that have to be addressed by literary aesthetics. In this discussion it is without further interest. As a *critical instrument* biographical information is used to understand the works produced by the author. The focus is not on the life of the author, but on his works, and biographical information is used to illuminate the works.

As a point of departure for the discussion of biography as a critical instrument, it is useful to make a distinction between the *appreciation* of a literary work and an *understanding* of it[2]. Both appreciation and understanding

[2]I have explored this distinction in 'Criticism and 'Appreciation' in Peter Lamarque ed., *Philosophy and Fiction. Essays in Literary Aesthetics*, (Aberdeen, 1983); reprinted in Stein Haugom Olsen, *The End of Literary Theory*, Cambridge, 1987).

are *modes of apprehension*. Appreciation differs from understanding in that it is a form of apprehension that involves the recognition of a type of value, aesthetic value. Understanding involves merely a recognition of features of the literary work and its relation-ships, not a recognition of these features as constituting a value. The concept of appreciation is thus meant to focus the mode of apprehension which constitutes a production of some sort, as a work of art for the reader or audience. Appreciation, in its turn, is constituted by literary interpretation. This is a logical or formal point: literary interpretation can be distinguished from other types of interpretation of literary works which constitute modes of understanding rather than appreciation.

In *The Rise of the Novel* Ian Watt has a discussion of the incoherence and discontinuities of Defoe's *Moll Flanders*. The most striking example which he mentions, is the meeting house scene where Moll attempts, but fails, to steal a gold watch from 'a gentlewoman'. When she is transported to Virginia she gives a watch to her son that she maintains to have stolen from 'a gentlewoman's side, at a meeting house in London'. Says Watt,

> Since there is no other episode in *Moll Flanders* dealing with watches, gentlewomen and meeting-houses, we must surely infer that Defoe had a faint recollection of what he had written a hundred pages earlier about the attempt on the gentlewoman's gold watch, but forgot that it had failed.
>
> These discontinuities strongly suggest that Defoe did not plan his novel as a coherent whole, but worked piecemeal, very rapidly, and without any subsequent revision. This is indeed very likely on other grounds. His main aim as a writer was to achieve a large and effective output -- over fifteen hundred pages of print in the year that saw *Moll Flanders;* and this output was not primarily intended for a careful and critical audience.[3]

And Watt goes on to give further facts from Defoe's personal history to make the point that Defoe's attitude to his writing was 'casual'. He identifies apparent incoherence and inconsistencies in Defoe's work, and he explains them as a consequence of Defoe's way of working, of his aims, and of his attitudes, all of which are easily documented biographical facts. His explanation contributes to an understanding of ders, in the sense that the reader comes to see how these inconsistencies have arisen, what attitudes Defoe had to his novel and how the attitudes of which Defoe probably had as a man, manifest themselves in this

[3]Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel. Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*, (London, 1957), p. 99.

novel. Watt's discussion contributes to an understanding in general of Defoe as an artist, of his artistic methods and his attitudes to his art. These insights are valuable and interesting. What is more, Watt's argument takes for grantes the notion of an integral literary work. The identification of *Moll Flanders* as a literary work, is not affected by his use of biographical accounts. On the other hand, Watt's arguments do not contribute to the appreciation of the novel. If they were to do that, they would have had to show that the inconsistencies were really not inconsistencies at all, but part of an aesthetic design. Watt identifies the features which constitute the incoherence and discontinuities, but he does not attempt to assign an aesthetic function to them.

Watt's book has established itself as one of the classics of modern criticism, everywhere known and everywhere quoted by opponents as well as by supporters of his views. Though the whole thesis of this book is built round facts about authors and their background, there would seem to be little point in legislating Watt's comments on Defoe as out of bounds for literary criticism. Since Watt's argument do not threaten the notion of an integral literary work with aesthetics value, his use of biographical accounts is unproblematic from a theoretical point of view. The function served by the biographical information is clear. The argument explains by linking certain features of the work to Defoe's habits, aims, and attitudes. This, then, is a legitimate use of biography as a critical instrument. And I would suggest that it is generally true that the use of biography in literary criticism is unproblematic from an aesthetic and philosophical point of view as long as it is used to develop or enhance forms of understanding of literature and is not attempted introduced into appreciation.

This does not mean that there cannot be irrelevant literary criticism of this type, based on biographical fact, that is criticism shich fails to be illuminating because it is impossible to see the point of the information provided. In stanza two of Yeats' 'Easter 1916' the following lines occur:

> This other man I had dreamed
> A drunken vainglorious lout.
> He had done most bitter wrong.
> To some who are near my heart.

It may increase the reader's understanding of these lines to know the story of Yeats' lifelong devotion to Maud Gonne, who kept refusing his proposals, of her unhappy marriage for patriotic reasons to Major John MacBride who had a drinking problem, of the breakup of the marriage after two years etc. But it is unclear what purpose this understanding would serve. In this case a critical

comment which provided this bit of personal history and did nothing else, could justifiably be judged to be bad or aimless criticism.

III

The use of biographical information in criticism does however, give rise to theoretical problems when it occurs as a part of an argument aimed at contributing to or changing the reader's appreciation of a literary work. Consider the followwing comment on Yeats' *Meditations in Time of Civil War:*

> Yeats wrote *Meditations in Time of Civil War* during the summer of 1922 - the war broke out in June - and, significant enough in his country's history, the event had a particular mening for the poet. He had already (certainly by 1922, but the following passage was probably drafted in 1916-17) come to accept that fact that the dream of my early manhood, that a modern nation can return to Unity of Culture, is false; though it may be we can achieve it for some small circle of men and women, and there leve it till the moon brings round its century.
>
> He had, that is, given up the hope that Ireland would produce, and that he would contribute to, an art both major and popular. What remained was the limited achievement of writing for a sympathetic coterie, and the verse-play of *Four Plays for Dancers* (1921) are precisely that. 'In writing these little plays I knew that I was creating something which could only fully succeed in a civilization *very unlike ours*'-- Yeats is adjusting his ambition to the restricted community of 'some fifty people in a drawing room', and the achieved content is correspondingly thin. But in *Meditations,* the old dream reasserts itself in a exception to the historical rule has come true in the most tragic terms: the fact of the war resurrects in Yeats' mind the whole structure of youthful hopes, and involves him in a more thorough abandonment of those hopes than he had expected.[4]

This critic goes on to develop the point that *Meditations* are Yeats' response to his disillusionment with the Irisch people as a nation that could realize his dream of a sound national culture that would inspire love and not hate. With the coming of the Civil War, the critic argues, Yeats had to live through the consezuences of the failure of the dream of sound nationalism. What is more,

[4]Graham Martin, 'The Later Poetry of W.B. Yeats' in Boris Ford ed., *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature,* Vol.7, *From James to Eliot,*(Harmondsworth, 1983), pp. 233-34

Yeats himself felt guilty about the 'troubles' because he saw the dream of a sound national culture, that he had helped to foster, as a partial cause of the violence to which the Civil War led. This, according to this critic, is what the following stanza is about:

> We had fed the heart on fantasies,
> The heart's grown brutal from the fare;
> More substance in our enmities
> Than in our love; O honey-bees,
> Come build in the empty house of the stare.
> ('The Stare's Nest by My Window', part VI of *Meditations*.)

The critic sketches an intellectual biography for Yeats and places *Meditations* in that intellectual biography. This also permits him to see a Thematic development from 'Easter 1916' (1916), where 'Yeats could describe the bloody Easter Rising which destroyed a good part of O'Connell Street, as having given birth to 'a terrible beauty'[5], to the *Meditations* where the bloody violence has become a metaphor for the modern condition of destructive social change that isolates the poet and dissolves culture[6]

The Yeats presented by this critic, is not Barthes' 'paper author', whose life 'is no longer the origin of his fables, but a fable that runs concurrently with his work'[7] it is the Yeats of the Abbey Theatre and the Irish Literary Revival who was dreadfully disappointed at the reception of Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* and upset at the Hugh Lane controversy. He is not an 'suthorial function' whose name 'does not pass from the interior of a discourse to the real and exterior individual who produced /the work/', and who instead 'manifests the appearance of a certain discursive set and indicates the status of this discourse within a society and a culture'[8]. This Yeats can be identified in many ways independently of any works he wrote as a man with many opinions and interests, and it is incidental to his identity that he also wrote the literary works that he did.

In this case, biographical information is used to illuminate the *Meditations*, but the poems are not read as expressions of Yeats' personal preoccupations. Instead Yeats' intellectual biography is used as a point of departure for a themativ analysis of the poems:

---

[5]*Ibid*. p. 235.
[6]*Ibid*. pp. 236-40.
[7]Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text' in Josué V. Harari ed., *op.cit.*,p, 78
[8]Michel Foucault, 'What Is an Author?' in Josuè V. Harari ed., *op.cit.*, p.147.

> There are seven sections to the poem. In the first, 'Ancestral Houses', Yeats evokes only to discard a familiar image for Unity of Culture, the house-and-garden of the eighteenth-century Anglo-Ireland.
>
> ...now it seems
> As if some marvellous empty sea-shell flung
> Out of the obscure dark of the rich streams,
>
> And not a fountain, were the symbol which
> Shadows the inherited glory of the rich.
>
> The very excellence of past creations has exhausted the creative energies, and the present impulses have yet to crystallize. In poems II to IV, he erects symbols appropriate for a poet isolated by destructive social change. In poems V and VI he shows his response -- part-envy, part-revulsion -- to the actual business of war. Finally, in poem VII he prophesies the threatening future which 'the indiffeerent multitude' is likely to command.[9]

The poems are not used as 'documents' for saying something about Yeats, but Yeats' biography provides a background for the identification of the themes of the poems. It is a type of criticism which is practised by many critics, and it has been around so long that it would be easy to apply the now so derogatory label 'traditional' to it. Yet it is illuminating, and one would recommend this article on Yeats to second term students without hesitation.

And this use of biographical information to *enhance* appreciation is just one type of use of biography to influence appreciation. Equally important are cases where biography is used to *block* a certain type of literary interpretation. One of the most prominent and important cases of this type is where irony has been attributed to a work and this is conclusion is challenged. Again Ian Watt's treatment of *Moll Flanders* provides a clear example. In *The Rise of the Novel* he attacks the view of Defoe as a master of irony by pointing out that apparently central examples of such use of irony are much more plausibly understood as non-ironic expressions of Defoe's values. Watt identifies groups of apparent ironies that can be explained in this way. In particular he focuses on the episodes where Moll takes a moralizing stance and episodes where Moll is concerned with the value of worldly goods. One such example is the episode where Moll gives an account of how the reception of the rich gifts given her by her son in Virginia, made a sincere penitent of her Lancashire Husband. 'No writer,' says Watt,

[9]Graham Martin, *op.cit.* p.236.

> who had allowed himself to contemplate either his he-roine's conscience, or the actual moral implications of her career, in a spirit of irony, could have written seriously... the account of James' moral reformation, in which Moll Flanders tells us how she brought him the riches given her by her son, not forgetting 'the horses, hogs, and cows and other stores for our plantation' and concludes 'from this time forward I believe he was as sincere a penitent and as thoroughly a reformed man as ever God's goodness brought back from a profligate, a highwayman and a robber.' We, not Defoe, laugh at the concept of reformation through hogs and cows.[10]

It is impossible to see Defoe as dispalying ironical awareness here, Watt argues, because Defoe

> was not ashamed to make economic self-interest his major preise about life; he did not think such a premise conflicted either with social or religious values and nor did his age. It is likely therefore that one group of apparent ironies in *Moll Flanders* can be explained as products of an unresolved and largely unconscious conflict in Defoe's own outlook, a conflict which is tyåical of the late puritan disengagement of economic matters and moral sanctions.[11]

Watt's argument has force and has been widely accepted among critics. It seems simply wrongheaded to insist in the face of this approach that we can ignore Defoe's background. Of course, it is possible to argue that there are other internal features of texture and structure in *Moll Flanders* that must weigh heavier than these biographical facts, but such an argument would credit biographical information as important in literary appreciation.

IV

There is, then, a conflict between the theoretical considerations counting against admitting biographical information into literary appreciation because of the consequences it would have for the concept of literature, and the apparent force and usefulness of arguments employing such information. However, it is possible to make various distinctions that will siddolve at least part of the conflict. One can deal with the irony example from Defoe by making a

[10]Ian Watt, *op.cit.* pp.125-26.
[11]*Ibid.* p.127.

distinction between, on the one hand, information that is introduced into and form an integral part of literary appreciation, and,on the other, *background information* that is *presupposed* by appreciation, but that does not enter into the interpretative argument. Background information both constrains interpretation and suggests possible ways that interpretation may take. Such background information is *always* presupposed by an author. It consists in a set of assumptions about the real physical and social world into which the work is introduced. The author then makes use of these assumptions to constitute the world of the work. For it is a part of the conventions governing literary practice that the readers should assume, unless they are informed otherwise, directly or by implication, that the world of the work is similar to the real world. The assumptions constituting the background information will concern social and ethical as well as physical aspects of this world. That is, it includes assumptions about social structures, relations, and values as well as assumptions about the physicalappearance and laws of this world. In the Defoe example from *The Rise of the Novel* Watt bases his argument on the possibilities for evaluating the character of Moll Flanders offered by the society and community in which Defoe lived and whose ideas and attitudes he eas likely to share. The biographical information that Defoe was a dissenter and a tradesman is important since he must be assumed to share the values of exonomic individualism which were important to these classes. If he had been a high-church Tory, the world he would have assumed his readers to know, would have been different.

The distinction between biographical accounts that provide background information and biographical accounts that provide information integral to the interpretative argument which constitutes appreciation, must be supplemented with another, logically different distinction, between biographical accounts that place an author in a public realm, and biographical accounts that provide information concerning the author merely as a private individual. The information that Defoe was imprisoned in Newgate for five months after having published *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* concerns him only as a private individual, and may give us the assurance that Defoe knew Newgate and did not 'make up' the horrors h e describes. Unlike the information about Defoe's background and career, it does not locate him in a community or a society with common values and beliefs which can form the framework of interpretation. *Background information,* on the other hand, is of the former type. It is biographical only to the extent that it places the author in a world of shared beliefs, assumptions and values which the author is seen to represent or reflect. It does not concern the author as an individual but as a member of a group or society.

Accounts providing background information will not be an integral part of literary interpretation but provide a set of constraints which have to be in place before interpretation can begin. Consequently, their use in criticism does not threaten to undermine the concept of a literary work as a logically separate type of human utterance with its own peculiar aesthetic value. The use of biographical background information must therefore be accepted as a legitimate use of biography as a critical instrument.

An illegitimate use of biography as a critical instrument, a use that undermines the concept of a literary work as a logically separate type of human utterance with its own peculiar aesthetic value, can only occur when the biographical account used concerns the author merely as a private individual. Only in such cases will it be impossible see biographical accounts as providing a part of the background information for the literary appreciation of a work. However, as was pointed out above in the discussion of the Yeats example, such cases represent a standard type of criticism, and are therefore of central rather than marginal interest in a discussion about the uses and limits of biography as a critical instrument. In that example, the critic used biographical conslusions and facts to promote an *appreciation* of *Meditations*. The biographical account was used to identify the subject as well as the theme of the poem. It apparently entered into the literary interpretative argument itself, and became constitutive of theobject of interpretation. And this criticism was considered relevant and illuminating exactly because it contributed to appreciation. Consider again stanza four of Yeats' 'The Stare's Nest at My Ww':

> The bees build in the crevices
> Of loosening masonry, and there
> The mother birds bring grubs and flies.
> My wall is loosening; honey-bees,
> Come build in the empty house of the stare.
>
> We are closed in, and the key is turned
> On our uncertainty; somewhere
> A man is killed, or a house burned,
> Yet no clear fact to be discerned:
> Come build in the empty house of the stare.
>
> A barricade of stone or wood;
> Some fourteen days of civil war;
> Last night they trundled down the road
> That dead young soldier in his blood.
> Come build in the empty house of the stare.
>
> We had fed the heart on fantasies,
> The heart's grown brutal from the fare;
> More substance in our enmities
> Than in our love; O honey-bees,
> Come build in the empty house of the stare.

('The Stare's Nest by My Window', part VI of Meditations.)

Without the knowledge of Yeats' dream of a sound national culture and the loss of that dream, the stanza becomes, it may be argued, even in the context of the whole of 'The Stare's Nest by My Window', vague, if not unintelligible. Knowledge of Yeats' dream and what he suffered, makes the content clear and increases the poignancy of the poem.

To deal with this type of case, it is, first of all, useful to introduce a distinction similar to the distinction between background information and accounts that form an integral part of the interpretation. It is possible to distinguish between the use of a biographical account as a heuristic instrument and its use as an integral part of literary interpretation. At first sight it may apperar that the analysis of Yeats' *Meditations* presented above, introduces knowledge of Yeats' biography into the appreciation of the poem. However, the analysis makes use of biographical information to specify the subject, and to provide concepts for the formulation of the theme of the poem. Once the subject is focused and the concepts introduced, the interpretation stans and falls with its applicability to the poem. What makes the poem valuable, is that the themes are general themes and that the concerns expressed by the speaker are general concerns which are not tied to yeats' situation. Yeats' biography displays an instantiation of the concerns of the speaker of the poem, but the actual interpretation of the poem is logically independent of the biographical information. The biographical facts could, strictly speaking, be dispensed with. In such a case, the use of biographical information as a critical instrument poses no threat to the integrity of the literary work of art.

It may, however, be objected to this move that it misrepresents what the critic is doing. In this type of case, it may be argued, the critic is genuinely saying something about both the poem and the author and about what the author specifically did have in mind when we wrote the work that is being interpreted. It is artificial to separate out a heuristic function for the biographical account that the critic provides, since the focus of interest is not merely the a poem, but Yeats' poem. The critic is reading the poem, this argument would go, as *Yeats'* statement. The biographical account therefore has an integral rather than an incidental part in the appreciation of the poem.

This argument can be met by invoking again the distinction between understanding and appreciation. It is possible to *understand* the poem as a *personal statement*, just like one understands any other personal utterance by a speaker. In this case, one would naturally use knowledge of the speaker as an integral part of the interpretative argument. However, if a reader attempts to *appreciate* the utterance as a poem, then he is trying to apprehend the value

which, as a literary work, such an utterance is conventionally expected to yield. In this latter case, the information that Yeats in the years from 1916 to 1921 finally gave up the dream of a sound national culture and came to see the Irisch for what they were, is interesting to the reader of the *Meditations* only when he has come to see that poem as Yeats' *Waste Land* poem, where a situation is presented in which culture is shattered in war and violence. And it is interesting because it deals with an experience that is an example of the humanly interesting experience that the poem presents. A reader that approaches a poem in this way, is trying to grasp not what Yeats may have meant by a personal utterance which he incidentally gave the form of a poem, but how Yeats menat the poem he wrote to be appreciated. Literature is a much more sophisticated form of communication that the Personal statement.

It is not necessary for the critic always to keep these two approaches separate, and the critic whose discussion of Yeats has been used as an example here, certainly does not do this. However, an awareness of the logical distinctions involved is necessary if the critic is not to overstep the borderline between the legitimate and relevant use of biographical accounts, and the merely interesting but illegitimate and irrelevant. Because here there is a borderline which the critic cannot cross if his purpose is to guide and promote *appreciation* of literature. This is the real limitation of the use of biography in criticism and the core of truth in the New Critical strictures on biographical criticism. It is a borderline which is easy to cross and not always easy to recognize since biographical information always has the interest of gossip. And as C.S. Lewis remarked at the beginning of this modern debate about biographical criticism, 'Very few care for beauty; but anyone can be interested in gossip'[12] Thus there will be no clear intuitive reaction against biographical accounts as uninteresting even if they may be irrelevant to appreciation. However, gossip is not the province of the critic. Beauty is.

[12]C.S. Lewis and E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Personal Heresy*, (London, 1939) p.28.