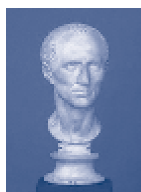
Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

Oxford DNB: the finest scholarship on the greatest people

One of the highlights of the *Oxford DNB* is the number of leading biographers and scholars who have contributed articles, often on the most influential figures in British history. Here sixteen dictionary authors among the 10,000 who participated reflect on writing the lives of well-known men and women, as well as a few surprises. For more information, and to read a new biography every day, please visit our website www.oxforddnb.com

Lawrence Goldman, Editor



T. P. Wiseman on Julius Caesar (100–44 BC)

I think I'm probably the only contributor to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* who reports the deification of his subject. Alas, there wasn't room to include Caesar's career as Divus Julius, such as the occasion in 42 BC when he appeared galloping across the battlefield of Philippi in his purple cloak. 'What more do I have to do, if killing you wasn't enough?' cried Cassius, as he turned and fled. In fact, there wasn't room for a lot of things. How do you do justice to Julius Caesar in two thousand words, when the focus has to be on the few weeks of his life when he was briefly in Britain?

The moment that sums up Caesar's career came in 49 BC, at the little River Rubicon which marked the boundary of Italy. The scene isn't in Caesar's own Commentaries on the Civil War, but one of his officers later reported it. Caesar stopped, weighed up the pros and cons, and then abandoned any attempt at rational calculation. 'What a story we shall leave for posterity!' he said. 'Let's throw the dice!' Again and again, in politics and war, Caesar threw the dice, taking appalling risks and getting away with it. He could easily have been defeated and killed in Britain, if the channel storm in the summer of 54 BC had wrecked all of his fleet instead of just most of it. He came within a hair's breadth of disaster in Belgium in 57, in France in 52, in Egypt in 47, in Spain in 45—but every time his luck held. There's a famous story of Caesar trying to cross the Adriatic secretly in a small boat in 48 BC. A storm blew up, the boatman was terrified, but Caesar told him not to be afraid: 'You're carrying Caesar's luck.'

Maybe that was why, as dictator, he dispensed with his bodyguard. How else could twenty-three armed men have got within striking distance of him on the ides of March? But he was a fatalist. 'Keeping me alive matters more to Rome than to me,' he said. 'There'll be worse things to come if I get killed.' And there were. Again, how many other *Oxford DNB* subjects are there of whom one could say that 'his name became synonymous with imperial autocracy throughout the history of Europe'?

Fiona MacCarthy on William Morris (1834–1896)

When Colin Matthew asked me to write the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry for William Morris I was only just emerging from a seven-year stint on Morris's biography. The hardback had been published and, in that year of Morris's centenary, the paperback was imminent. I thought hard about the prospect. I imagined I had finished with William Morris. Could I really start again? I was glad that I said yes. Rerunning William Morris at a different speed for a rather different audience produced its own excitements. What might have been a chore became an unexpected treat.

There was the technical challenge of reducing a life on which I had expended 300,000 words down to a narrative of just 7000. The epic had to be recast as the short story. I enjoyed the paring down, the concentration on essentials. In the end I felt the article was better than the book.

One of the things I'd admired in earlier editions of the *DNB* had been the immediacy of articles written by people who knew their subject personally, like the piece on Evelyn Waugh by Douglas Woodroffe. After seven years with him I felt that I knew Morris with the intimacy of a sibling or a long-term lover. Working on the book I had retracked Morris's journeys through the England he loved with such a passion, and to the wilds of Iceland. Writing the article I was travelling again! In reassessing William Morris for a new and, as I saw it, probably a younger readership I had the chance to emphasize his vast originality, those aspects of his politics that resonate into the twenty-first century: Morris the protestor against the dire effect of commercial profiteering; Morris the early Green.

The bonus was the pleasure of working on the piece with Colin Matthew, himself such a fount of knowledge on the period, whose bluff energy reminded me of William Morris's own. After Morris died his doctor suggested that the disease that killed him had 'simply been that of being William Morris and doing more work than most ten men'. I had evaded quoting this, feeling it might seem corny. Colin told me, quite rightly, that it needed to go in.

David Lodge on Malcolm Bradbury (1932–2000)

Most of the men and women included in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* died some time ago and were not personally known to those who have written about their lives in its pages. I was asked to contribute the article on Malcolm Bradbury only a year after his death in November 2000. I had known him for almost forty years and he was one of my closest friends. In some ways this was obviously an advantage: I had a lot of information about my subject already stored in my memory, and I had every incentive to produce an article that would do him justice. I had previously written several obituary pieces and delivered a memorial service address in which I had articulated my thoughts about his life and character.

But an *Oxford DNB* article is not the same thing as a memoir. It requires a more objective, empirical stance towards the subject, and a cooler, more formal tone. I had to refer to my old friend as 'Bradbury' rather than 'Malcolm', and even to describe myself in the third person ('another young lecturer and novelist in the department was David Lodge'). I tried to produce a portrait that would be factually informative for the general reader but also recognized and approved by those who knew him. It wasn't easy to strike the right balance, and in the process I missed an opportunity to use my personal knowledge in the first draft.

The editors declared themselves pleased with it, but asked if I would add something about Malcolm's appearance, voice, and other characteristics. I immediately wrote a paragraph beginning 'Physically Bradbury was tall, but never used his height to intimidate' and concluded 'When he wrote on the typewriter or computer, the tip of his tongue flickered and curled between his lips as if in sympathy with the difficulty and delicacy of the task.' I enjoyed writing this passage more than any other part of the article, and I fancy it may do more to bring the man to life for readers in the future. The long life of a reference book like the *Oxford DNB* is another factor that influences its style, as I realized when I drafted the last sentence of my article: 'His friends cherish the memory of his wit, his sociability, his gentleness, and his generosity of spirit towards fellow writers.' On reflection (rather melancholy reflection) I changed 'cherish' to 'cherished'.

Patrick Collinson on John Tomkys (*d.*1592) and Anne Locke (*d.*1590x1607)

It is a challenge to tackle one of the larger subjects for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. My article on Elizabeth I is, at 36,000 words, one of the longest in the entire dictionary. For all that biographies of Elizabeth Tudor proliferate, the *Oxford DNB* account will no doubt be consulted for a hundred years to come.

But it is often harder to write on the more obscure figures who will be found in the dictionary in their thousands. Take John Tomkys, a preacher who was to Elizabethan Shrewsbury what John Calvin is to Geneva. Tomkys turned the town upside down with his puritan attacks on 'notorious sins', which included some of its seasonal festivities. His campaign led to a murder, a cause célèbre, and executions. But we know little enough about Tomkys, who was dead before this bloody climax. We know that he came from a respectable family in Wolverhampton, but we don't know how he acquired his education, except that he was helped financially by a wealthy neighbour. Had Tomkys studied overseas? The fact that he published translations from French and Latin of works by the Swiss reformer Heinrich Bullinger makes that a possibility. Ironically, John's son Thomas, who also appears in the dictionary, wrote a popular comedy, *Albumazar*, which amused James I.

Or take Anne Locke, who also answers to the names of Vaughan, Dering, and Prowse. Her first husband was Henry Locke, a wealthy merchant adventurer. As Anne Locke she is known as a very close friend of the Scottish reformer John Knox. In Mary's reign she followed Knox to Geneva, apparently with her husband's approval, taking their children (and burying one infant within days of her arrival). There she translated and published some of Calvin's sermons. Henry Locke's inscribed copy is to be found in the British Library. But, until recently, nobody knew that Anne Locke was the same woman as Anne Prowse, the wife of a leading Exeter man, who under that name took up her pen again to translate a work of Calvinist piety. In between her Locke and Prowse marriages Anne was married to Edward Dering, a fiery and popular preacher, who burned his boats when he subjected Elizabeth I to the most critical sermon she ever heard. Dering's letter of proposal to Mrs Locke survives, the earliest letter of its kind to have been written by a clergyman of the Church of England. Dering must have reminded Anne of her dear friend, John Knox.

J. D. North on Richard of Wallingford (*c.*1292–1336)

Richard of Wallingford, Oxford scholar and abbot of St Albans, was England's most original astronomer and mathematician of the middle ages. The way in which his life has been studied well illustrates a cyclical process in scholarship that might be compared with the ouroboros, the serpent that eats its own tail. The head is the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and the tail is the Victorian *DNB*, but let us not forget the segments between.

Brief and scientifically disengaged though C. L. Kingsford's original entry was, it prompted several forays into Richard's astronomical works. They were found difficult, and though there was some movement, earlier confusions largely persisted. A commemorative service was held in St Albans in the wrong year (1926), for example, and Richard's highly sophisticated calculating instrument 'albion' was regularly mistaken for the long-lost astronomical clock he had built for his abbey.

It was Kingsford's article which, in 1964, prompted me to consult manuscript copies of Richard of Wallingford's works in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Among them, almost by chance, I discovered his lost writings on the clock. The St Albans clock is now the oldest of which we have detailed knowledge, and the manuscript has disproved many an old guess about the invention of the mechanical clock—one of the great turning points in history.

Dragged in this way into the middle ages, there I remained. I spent the next seven years editing all of Richard's writings, largely from a sense of obligation to bring his genius into the light. That I eventually wrote the entry for the new dictionary is hardly surprising, but the circle of influence did not stop there. With the same broad readership in mind, I decided to write a new biography of the man (*God's Clockmaker,* 2005). My main problem had become painfully familiar. Science is a part of human life, but how are we to relate it to the rest—the care of souls, a journey to the papal court, the

building of a clock by a blacksmith's son, his conflicts with neighbouring townsmen, or his miserable death from leprosy? How, in a general account, can one even begin to do justice to a life devoted to mathematics and astronomy? Certainly not by forgetting a further point, that science is also something with a life of its own, something independent of the biography of any one individual. The *Oxford DNB*, by its nature, cannot satisfy an appetite for the intricacies of science. It may whet that appetite, however, and if it promotes the cycle of scholarly renewal in the process, so much the better.

Janet L. Nelson on Hæsten (*fl.*882–893)

Writing Hæsten's entry for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* was a challenge: a career in distinct places and phases, a life difficult to put together from awkward continental and English pieces, with a lot of sky. Hæsten's Scandinavian name and leadership of 'northmen' tell of his origins. Contemporary annalists document Hæsten's deeds in Francia, on the Loire, then in the Scheldt area. He manoeuvred nimbly between different Frankish allies and rival viking groups. Later, in England, Hæsten was equally willing to negotiate with indigenous leaders, including King Alfred, and to play one off against another. His religious trajectory is uncertain. He exploited the political benefits of Christian spiritual kinship when his sons, baptized in 893, acquired prestigious godfathers who would thus have become Hæsten's 'co-fathers'.

Yet there is no evidence to show whether Hæsten himself accepted Christianity at that time, or had done so some time before, or if he ever did so. For Hæsten, viking groups were also important allies. The author of the 892–6 section of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle identified Hæsten by name as well as describing his fort-building and raids in some detail, thus according him unique distinction among viking leaders active in the 890s. This, and probable longevity, could explain why Hæsten enjoyed legendary status in England and Francia centuries after his death.

Medieval audiences and modern historians see different kinds of exemplary significance in his career. Hæsten emerges now as the ninth-century viking leader best documented in contemporary sources, but also as one who typified viking mobility and flair for acculturation. He brought his wife and children with him when he came to England. Like so many other figures in the *Oxford DNB*, Hæsten started life elsewhere, came as an immigrant, and became a settler who made his mark. Writing him up was an absorbing and satisfying exercise.

Peter Holland on William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

It was Ian Donaldson's fault. I had always thought Ian was such a nice man, as well as a great scholar, but there must have been a slight streak of malice in his recommendation that I write the Shakespeare entry for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. I had provided one tiny entry already and expected to write a few more on that scale. But Shakespeare? As Colin Matthew made clear, this would be one of the dictionary's longest entries. Moreover, the life would be less than half the entry; it was the afterlife that would occupy most of the space.

The materials for a life of Shakespeare were not exactly obscure. There are dozens of Shakespeare biographies and there would be more before I finished. Rethinking the information, weighing up every scrap of evidence, and trying to make sense of the competing interpretations—that would be painful.

Just as I was worrying about how to cope, a helpful offer arrived from the Oxfordians: if I sent my entry to them, they would explain why the man from Stratford couldn't have written the plays. I declined, reasonably politely. The pages covering the life began to be drafted and I tried not to keep changing my mind about particularly tricky moments of dating the plays or places of residence.

But still the afterlife loomed. How much time would I have to find out about Shakespeare productions in Japan or on radio, about Shakespeare and the Victorian novel, or in comic books and advertising? Then, with perfect timing, Michael Dobson and Stanley Wells published their superb *Oxford Companion to Shakespeare* and taught me (almost) everything I needed to know. But the article's projected length was still tight for such vast materials. For the first time in my experience an editor started to offer me more space, not less. Was there some kind of competitive game going on in the *Oxford DNB* office: which would be the longest entry of all? Cromwell's just arrived; have another 3000 words. Churchill's turned up; have another 2000.

All complete and exactly on the final target length. Space for mention of George Eliot and the influence on cigar names, as well as the founding dates of various national Shakespeare societies. Did I get it all right? No. New work published while the *Oxford DNB* was in proof has changed my mind about one or two details. Never mind; I'm sure the editors will let me revise it one day! But perhaps I should pass that job to Ian Donaldson.

Anne Hudson on John Wyclif (*d.*1384)

John Wyclif from his own lifetime has been a figure of controversy: some of his opinions were condemned in 1377, more in 1382, a massive 267 at the Council of Constance in 1415, and finally his bones were exhumed from their Lutterworth grave in 1428, burned, and the ashes scattered in the river Swift. Yet he was described by some of Jan Hus's followers as 'Doctor Evangelicus, above all the evangelists'; in the sixteenth century John Bale and John Foxe propagated his position as the 'morning star of the Reformation', and John Milton denounced the persecuting bishops who had deprived England of 'the glory of reforming all our neighbours'. Heresiarch or evangelist? Add to this that Wyclif's views extended beyond philosophy and theology to what we would describe as sociology and politics: his comments on the community of ownership could readily be assimilated to the views of Karl Marx.

To strike a balance for a modern biography is not easy, but the imperative to do so is exhilarating. Equally demanding is the need to have justifying evidence for every detail. As with most medieval figures, the checklist provided for all contributors to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* raises unanswerable questions: date of birth and names of parents are unknown, as are details of his pre-university education. A very few records of shifting Oxford associations, of a sequence of benefices, of a few political events, survive; a little more can be extracted from Wyclif's own writings.

All of Wyclif's works that can certainly be regarded as his are in Latin, that international language of the medieval academic and clerical world. Many of them only survive in manuscripts written in Bohemia, now preserved in libraries in Vienna and in the Czech

Republic, notably in Prague. They were produced by the followers of Jan Hus, who found in Wyclif views which could be assimilated to those taken from the native reforming tradition. One of the unexpected bonuses of working on Wyclif over the years has been the need to visit many continental libraries and to consult Czech scholars, the latter a process which has been notably easier since 1989. Wyclif's works evidently excited many across Europe, from Oxford to 'the coasts of Bohemia' in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; it would be good if the *Oxford DNB* prompted further investigations of this exciting figure.

Edward Wilson on the Gawain Poet (*fl.c.*1375–1400)

'Everything I write has autobiographical components. It's just more satisfying to do it in fiction', said John Updike at the 2004 Hay festival; and there's the rub. Even when we know a considerable amount about an author's life, how much is transcribed into the fiction without alteration, how much is transfigured by the imagination, and how much is sheer invention? Only when we can construct a detailed biography from evidence external to the literary text is there a chance of answering these legitimate questions.

In the case of the Gawain Poet, however, all we have is a manuscript datable to about 1400, and in a dialect which can be localized in south-east Cheshire, close to the Staffordshire border. Though some have even doubted that all its four poems are the work of the same author, we can say that they display the same habits of mind: the tormented relation between perfection and imperfection, a love of ingenuity, psychological realism, and above all a constant reversal of our expectations—'millions of surprises' in George Herbert's phrase. It is a reasonable inference that there was but one man with these individual and quirkish traits of poetic identity at the same time and in the same dialect area.

A much earlier generation of scholars, unable to bring biographical evidence to bear on the poems, used them to construct what Sir Israel Gollancz called an 'imaginary biography' in which, for example, in Cleanness and Patience 'vivid descriptions of the sea . . . perhaps justify the inference that the poet may have sought distraction in travel, and may have weathered the fierce tempests he describes'. Ignoring the poet's capacity for purely imaginative insight has released the biographer's own speculative faculty. There are some certainties in the evidence of the poet's reading: the Bible, the *Roman de la rose* (and Jean de Meun's part of it), Mandeville's *Travels*, and a knowledge of the technical terms used in mystical writing. He also had a command of the vocabularies of courtesy, hunting, armour, feasts, and ships.

The rest should be not conjecture, but silence: a rather modern kind of certainty.

Juliet Barker on Emily Brontë (1818–1848)

As someone best known for producing 800-page biographies, I was not, perhaps, a natural choice to write for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. My remit was to produce a new article on Emily Brontë in just 4000 words.

How does one distil a whole life and career into a mere 4000 words? I was fortunate, even if my subject was not, in that Emily Brontë lived a comparatively quiet life, produced only a single major work, and died at the age of thirty. Yet in those few short years and in that one great book, she inspired more enduring interest, comment, and controversy than many a prolific octogenarian. Generations of her readers have been intrigued by the question, where did *Wuthering Heights* come from? How could all that passion, brutality, and amorality have originated in the head of the reclusive, unworldly spinster daughter of an obscure provincial clergyman? Many theories have been put forward over the years. Did Emily have a secret lover? Did her brother Branwell write the book? Was she a lesbian? An anorexic? Readers may be surprised to find that not one of these merits a mention in my article, for the simple reason that the limitations of its length meant that I could not afford to introduce them merely to dismiss them for the untruths that they are. In their place I offer what I hope is a cogently argued and compellingly persuasive biographical piece which makes it obvious how and why Emily came to write *Wuthering Heights* without the aid of either lovers or brother.

Limitation of space also meant I had to jettison many colourful anecdotes which have become part of Brontë mythology. I could afford to include only those that fleshed out the bare bones of Emily's character. Her comment when she left her teaching post that she preferred the house dog to any of her pupils therefore went in because it illustrates both her misanthropy and her love of animals.

The constraints of the remit have one great benefit. They force the biographer to focus on what is truly important for an understanding of Emily's life and work: her family, particularly her siblings, because their creativity was interdependent; her idiosyncratic education which helped to shape her character and her literary style; and, probably most important of all, Gondal, the imaginary kingdom she created with her sister Anne, which obsessed and inspired her from her early teens until her death. These are the real reasons why Emily wrote *Wuthering Heights*.

Even so, I still had to ask for an extra 500 words.

Claire Cross on Frances Matthew (1550/1–1629)

Frances Matthew had always been revered locally as the founder of the present York Minster Library. But who she was and the reason for her donation of the largest private collection of theological books in Caroline England had long been forgotten. I wanted to make amends by nominating her for inclusion in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, but it was only while working on her article that I came to realize the formative part bishops' wives and daughters had played in the construction of the Tudor and early Stuart Church of England. Of all these pioneering women Frances Matthew must surely take the palm.

In 1569 Frances had married the younger son of Archbishop Matthew Parker, only for her husband to die four years later. She found refuge with her sister, wife of the provost of Eton, and it may well have been there that she met and married her second husband, Toby Matthew. In 1583 he secured his first major promotion as dean of Durham and won a reputation as an indefatigable preacher, ably seconded by his wife 'ever upon all occasions wont to be as busy with Scripture as if it had been some glove upon her fingers' ends'. Local gentry families competed to place their daughters in Frances Matthew's household for their education. In 1595 Toby Matthew was appointed to the bishopric of Durham and later in the same year his brother-in-law, William Day,

became bishop of Winchester. Frances was moved to set up a monument to her recently deceased mother (in her brother's church at Easton, Hampshire) to celebrate the fact that the husbands of her five daughters had all become bishops. In 1606 Toby Matthew progressed yet further to the archbishopric of York.

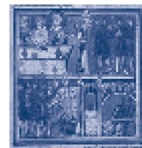
But public success masked family tragedy. Their youngest son died while at Cambridge; their second son, John, turned out to be a wastrel; and their wayward eldest son, Toby, travelled to Italy, converted to Rome, entered the priesthood, and later secretly joined the Jesuits. In his will the archbishop virtually disinherited Toby and John and left the disposition of his entire estate to the discretion of his beloved wife of almost fifty years. Equally disappointed in her sons, in the year before her own death Frances Matthew gave all her husband's books to York Minster. 'A rare example', as her monument records, 'that so great care to advance learning should lodge in a woman's breast!'

P. J. Marshall on Munni Begam (1723?–1813) and others

An important feature of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* is that its editors have taken a more liberal and extensive view of who belonged to the nation and ought therefore to be included in the dictionary. The *DNB* (1885–1900) gave full attention to colonial governors and to others from Britain who worked in British territories overseas. It was, however, somewhat sparing in its inclusion of people born and bred in British dominions, even though they were undoubtedly British subjects until their territories became self-governing and they established their own nationalities.

Indians featured in the *DNB*. Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy (1783–1859), the great Parsi medical man and philanthropist, was probably the earliest of them. But there were not many others. Professor Judith Brown, the dictionary's associate editor for nineteenth- and twentieth-century India, remedied this situation for her period. I wished to do the same for the eighteenth century, which was my responsibility, even though—unlike colonial Americans—Indians were not technically British subjects until 1813 when sovereignty was declared over those provinces ruled by the East India Company. To exclude Indians would, however, give a most misleading impression of the way in which the British commercial connection with India changed into a territorial empire. India was not conquered by an overwhelming force from outside; it was infiltrated with much Indian co-operation.

So the *Oxford DNB* contains memoirs of the rulers of post-Mughal states subordinated and incorporated by the British, of those who administered Bengal for the company, of 'banians' or personal agents to men like Warren Hastings, of a dynasty of bankers who lent the company money, of a very miscellaneous body of travellers who ventured to Britain, and of a remarkable Muslim woman. This was Munni Begam. She began life as a slave and dancer. A great nobleman, who became nawab of Bengal, took her up, and her children succeeded him. She made herself useful to the British and was rewarded by the support of Warren Hastings who kept her in office for many years in the Bengal court. She came to be known as 'the mother of the company'. Her career is a striking example of how even a woman in purdah could create a role for herself in the upheavals that were bringing the British to power in India. She needed them for her purposes just as they needed her for theirs.



Frank Barlow on Thomas Becket (1120?–1170)

I was delighted to be offered Thomas Becket by the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. I had been interested in him from my schooldays and had published a full-length biography of him in 1986. Most of the materials were easily accessible: the twelve or so biographies written within little more than a decade after his death and the volumes of correspondence exchanged by the principal actors in 'the Becket affair'. And I was also aware of the main problem: how to express my own views of his character and achievements while not appearing eccentric.

Writing for a work of reference, I had to produce a character which most readers would accept; I had to be fair to both him and his eventual destroyer, Henry II. This I did not find difficult for I have always admired both Becket and Henry. Moreover, the story in outline is clear enough. But to get closer in was not easy. Becket's private life is heavily curtained, and almost all the literature—the lives, the letters, and other documents—is in Latin, none of it written by Becket himself. The light-hearted banter, in French, with Henry II went unreported; none of the long discussions with his entourage during his exile in France was put on record. We cannot see the private man.

There is just one description of his person by a rather remote witness, one suggestion that he sometimes stammered. And what of his character? He is reported to have lived a celibate life. No charge of immorality seems to have been made against him by any of his enemies. There is something to be said for the view that he was a cool customer who climbed easily one ladder of preferment after another—a careerist, who threw it all away just when he had reached the top. When Becket became archbishop of Canterbury his relationship with the king was bound to change. The archbishop refused to remain a tool; a quarrel was inevitable. The story of the quarrel and its tragic ending can be told in some detail. The murder of an archbishop by the minions of a well-respected king was astonishing and it was well reported. It also led to Becket's rehabilitation, indeed promotion. He became almost England's patron saint, one of the most popular saints of all time. It is a fascinating story, an extraordinary drama, and each of us may view it differently.

Louis James on Andrew Salkey (1928–1995)

My article for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* was something of a labour of love. My contact with Andrew began in 1966 as a fellow member of the London-based Caribbean Artists' Movement (CAM). Salkey had been born in Panama, but aged two was sent back to his parents' home in Jamaica. He grew up passionately interested in the island's vibrant popular culture, and when he emigrated to read English at University College, London, in 1952, he became involved in black working-class causes. While still in Jamaica he had contributed to the BBC's *Caribbean Voices*—a seminal link between London and the West Indies—and after university he became a freelance broadcaster.

Andrew's Bayswater flat became a meeting place for expatriate and transient writers from the Caribbean. Soft-spoken, with an encyclopaedic memory, a gift for friendship, and a genius for recognizing new talent, he played a significant though unobtrusive part in what George Lamming rightly called the remarkable 'phenomenon' of Caribbean writing in English in the sixties and seventies. Himself a creative writer, he published novels, short stories, books for children,

and travelogues, for which he was to win several literary awards.

Andrew was a founder member of CAM and, as a fellow committee member, I got to know him well during the movement's heyday from 1966 to 1972. His knowledge of new writing and his expertise on the wider Caribbean, including Spanish-speaking Cuba, were an important contribution to its success. Through its conferences, meetings, journals, and above all personal contacts, CAM had a major if largely unsung influence on the evolution of today's multicultural Britain.

Writing the article made it clear that Andrew cannot be identified with one single nationality and the *Oxford DNB* entry involved more than British sources. His life touched cultures in Britain, the Caribbean, continental Europe, and the Americas. In his later years, he moved to the United States to become professor of creative writing at Hampshire College, Amherst. But England remained Andrew's pivotal home and, on his death, his family brought his body back to be buried in Mill Hill cemetery, London.

Paul Addison on Winston Churchill (1874–1965)

In January 1965 I was in the crowd that gathered to watch Churchill's funeral train pass through Oxford station. I vividly remember the sight of the coffin draped in the Union Jack and a glimpse of his son Randolph, gazing white-faced from a carriage window. I was a PhD student working on British politics in the Second World War at a time when the historical study of Churchill had scarcely begun and most of the relevant archives were closed.

In the summer of 1967, much to my surprise, I was recruited by Randolph Churchill as a research assistant on the official biography. It was great fun working with Randolph and his team and although it was a brief experience, ended by Randolph's death a year later, I was fascinated ever after by Churchill, the massive body of work that grew up around him, and the many different interpretations of his career. I added to the literature myself with a book on his domestic politics, but I had originally planned to write a full-scale biography. In the end I was baffled by the problem of how to combine the telling of a very detailed story with the unfolding of a complex analysis, and came to the conclusion that it could not be done. I was left with many files of unused research notes, several shelves of books, and the nagging sense of a project unfulfilled. Colin Matthew's invitation to write the article on Churchill for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* was therefore not only flattering but therapeutic: a chance, if only as miniaturist, to have another go. The official biography, in Martin Gilbert's hands a stupendous scholarly achievement, ran to millions of words. At 30,000 words the *Oxford DNB* article would have to leave almost everything out, but that was what made it such an interesting challenge. The aim was to depict with a few quick strokes the diversity of Churchill's character and career, and something of the nature of his achievements and failures. It was another impossible assignment, of course, but very enjoyable to attempt.

Martin Postle on Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792)

I'm writing this in May 2005 in a gallery at Tate Britain, surrounded by a selection of Reynolds's greatest works. We're busy installing our latest exhibition, 'Joshua Reynolds: the Creation of Celebrity'. The exhibition opens with a group of self-portraits in which Reynolds effectively produces his own visual autobiography, from aspiring art student to the grand old man of British art. What comes across in these pictures, and throughout Reynolds's portraits, is how much he was preoccupied with fame and success—particularly with the question of how his own reputation would stand the test of time. This is one of the things that make him such a fascinating subject for the biographer.

Reynolds, more than any other British artist I can think of, was determined to carve out his place in history, and he wasn't averse to making even his physical defects into attributes. In later life he sported a flamboyant silver ear trumpet, attributing his deafness to a chill he had caught in the Sistine Chapel. Of course he didn't let on that several members of his family who had never been to Italy also shared this affliction. For Reynolds securing his place in history meant forming personal associations with the other great figures of his time—Johnson, Burke, Garrick, Gibbon, Goldsmith, Sterne, and so on. In order to get to grips with Reynolds you also have to get to know his friends.

Towards the end of his life, Reynolds was casting about for a potential biographer. His first choice was Boswell. Unfortunately, Boswell, brought to his knees by his exertions on the *Life of Johnson*—as well as other less salubrious exertions—politely declined. Twenty years or so after his death a statue was erected to Reynolds in St Paul's Cathedral. Typically, it had been his own idea. At the same time, those less enamoured of his exalted status—writers such as Blake and Hazlitt—were determined to knock him off his pedestal. As I sit here in the company of his various masterpieces, pondering my own small part in his afterlife, I would like to think that Reynolds might quite enjoy reading about himself in the *Oxford DNB*, even if he didn't agree with everything I have to say about him.

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