

SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER AND THE BIOGRAPHER'S 'MORAL SENSE'

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T.H. WHITE

1906-1964

AUTHOR

WHO FROM A TROUBLED HEART

DELIGHTED OTHERS

LOVING AND PRAISING

THIS LIFE

This beautifully exact epitaph written by Sylvia Townsend Warner can be seen as the kernel of her full-length *T.H. White* (1967), a classic biography by a major artist of narrative with a lifetime of experience and achievement behind her (she was seventy when she began the book) yet still at the height of her powers. She was asked to write it shortly after White's death in 1964 because as she later explained, 'the agent was doing all he could to give the job [of biography] to a very inferior flashy protégé of his, and White's friends were frantic to avert this'.¹ She took it on partly as a challenge to acquire a new technique, partly because she enjoyed the scholarly work of researching a biography, but most of all as a memorial to a man whose presence was still vivid.²

This choice of biographer proved to be brilliant. Although the two never met, each had long admired the other's

writings, White declaring Warner's *Mr Fortune's Maggot* (about a missionary's love for a Polynesian boy) 'the greatest and tenderest novel of this century', Warner having 'admired him and found him congenial' ever since reading his first publication, *Loved Helen* (1932).³ Very different from White, she yet had much in common with him, sharing his deep love of the countryside and of animals (though unlike him she detested blood-sports) and his feeling for English landscape and weather. Both were expert in many practical skills. White's accomplishments included hawking, fishing, shooting, riding, flying, archery, ploughing, training dogs and sailing; Warner, a fine musician and scholar and a talented gardener, cook and needlewoman, could both respect his expertise and gauge its limitations: 'His enthusiasms whirled him from being creative into being authoritative. The better informed dismissed him as a smatterer, the uninformed supposed him an expert. In fact he was neither; he was a man whose enthusiasm had an unusually low flashpoint.'⁴

Also she, like White, was homosexual, although her experience of tabooed sexual love was clearly very different from his. He was a lonely man, hopelessly at odds with his own desires, whereas her lifelong love for Valentine Ackland seems to have been remarkably free from sexual guilt. (Valentine seems to have been guilt-ridden enough for two, but not - or not overtly - about her own sexuality.)⁵ The only discernible identifications of biographer with subject in T. H. White are indirect ones. Warner's portrait of White in many ways resembles what is known of her own lover Valentine: both were solitaires, lovers and killers of animals, for Valentine like White kept dogs, was skilled at fishing with rod and line and was a good shot. Unlike Warner until she fell in love with Valentine, both were lifelong homosexuals burdened with neurotic, demanding mothers; both were insecure self-tormentors with loving hearts who struggled - Valentine successfully, White not - against alcoholism.⁶ Valentine's presence can sometimes be felt when Warner writes about White's feeling for young boys - 'his solicitude for what was young and wild and dauntless and dependent

and had to be fed on the best beef steak.' The adjectives suggest a hawk (falconry was another of White's enthusiasms), but they also recall the young Valentine; perhaps an erotic identification here reinforces the biographer's sympathy with her subject. After finishing the book, she mused in her journal: 'it has been a strange love-story between an old woman and a dead man. I deliberately say love, not friendship or intimacy. One cannot have friendship or intimacy without some foothold in living memory.'⁷

As freelance writers, each produced an original, many-sided oeuvre that resists classification. White's publications include poems, novels, detective thrillers, romances, children's stories, a translation of a medieval Latin *Bèstiairy* and books about fox-hunting, shooting and falconry, besides reviews, letters and diaries. Sylvia Townsend Warner wrote fantasy novels, historical novels, short stories, fables and fairy stories, *libretti*, a translation of Marcel Proust's *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, poems, reviews, a guidebook and a biography of Gilbert White's tortoise, as well as marvellous letters and diaries. She shares with White a feeling for English history; they both wrote long fictions set in the English late Middle Ages, though her *The Corner That Held Them* (1948), an ironic, materialist chronicle of a fourteenth-century East Anglian convent, is quite unlike *The Once and Future King*. And their gifts as writers are similar though not identical. Warner's imagination was characteristically excited by *things*; her work is full, as Wendy Mulford has well said, of 'the tang of things tasted, smelt, handled, known in their quiddity and their essence'.⁸ Objects excited her mind as living concentrations of memory and imagination, much as they did her admired Proust: for her 'an old tea-pot, used every day, can tell me more of my past than anything I recorded of it'.⁹ Later, she told William Maxwell how she was moved to write the biography by visiting the dead man's house and sensing him in his possessions:

His sewing basket with an unfinished hawk-hood; his litter of fishing-flies, his books, his awful ornaments presented by his hoi polloi friends, his vulgar toys bought at Cherbourg Fairs, his neat

rows of books on flagellation - everything was there, defenceless as a corpse. And so was he, suspicious, morose and determined to despair. I have never felt such an *imminent* haunt.’¹⁰

White himself was fascinated not so much by the quiddity of things as by their behaviour. He would note how ‘a magpie flies like a frying-pan’, how fir-cones ‘open in spring, segment by segment, with sharp clicks’; and he clinches an analysis of his hated mother with the devastating sentence, ‘She had a way of grinding her teeth.’¹¹ The two also have in common a streak of precisely imagined fantasy. There are obvious similarities between the Lilliputians in White’s *Mistress Masham’s Repose* or the flood in *The Elephant and the Kangaroo* and the fairies in Warner’s late *Kingdoms of Elfin*, or between the liberating possibilities of Merlyn’s magic in *The Sword in the Stone* and Laura’s discovery of her powers as a witch in *Lolly Willows*.¹² On the other hand, she is a far more objective writer than he is. Many of White’s opinions such as his pacifism and anti-feminism were alien to her, and his enthusiasm for blood-sports may have been positively distasteful, yet she remains sympathetic about White’s hero-worshipping of Chamberlain on his return from Munich ‘with his tidings of peace and safety and capitulation’ and his exhilaration in goose-shooting.¹³

‘CHOSSES DE MÉTIER’ AND THE ‘MORAL SENSE’

What do I want of Zed? Not his body, merely the whole of him, all the time. It’s equivalent to a confession of murder.

-T. H. White¹⁴

When *T. H. White* came out in 1967, the biographer George Painter wrote to Warner praising the book for its ‘moral sense’:

That is where it struck me deepest. What a *choses du métier*! what courage . . . It is the most difficult thing of all to weigh every action & feeling of a writer’s soul, imperceptibly & accurately, & it is the most important. You have accomplished it.

Warner’s reply, which is partly a homage to Painter himself, takes up and redefines his phrase:

You know how profoundly I admire your Proust, you must have guessed that I had your example before my eyes as I wrote my White - though the tone had to be entirely different; for White was a single talent inattentively employed; I could not pretend he had a purpose or a star to steer by. I had to keep my head and a little to lose my heart. *Choses de métier* . . . Dear George, it is such a satisfaction to be able to discuss these distinctions of difficulty and know one is understood. And strictly between ourselves, out of earshot of all critics, all clerics, we can agree that moral sense is the THING. And how sternly one must apply it to oneself as one writes, examining one's own motives, merits, failings as much as one examines those of one's subject. And then to fill the sentence in the right direction, to fill a form, not merely pages, to know when to press the tempo, when to relax it . . .¹⁵

The key terms in this illuminating exchange are 'moral sense' and '*choses de métier*' - an untranslatable phrase whose precise meaning varies with its context but always carries a general sense of 'craftsmanship'. Painter's congratulatory 'What a *chose du métier!*' seems to mean 'What a piece of craftsmanship!'¹⁶ Writing as a fellow-artist, he invokes with the term a post-Jamesian aesthetic of biography, praising the book for achieving a fusion of moral alertness with technical skill such that the interpretation of the man emerges from the shape and direction of a detached, sympathetic narrative informed but not dominated by the 'moral sense'. (He notes acutely that Warner has managed to weigh her subject's 'feelings and actions *imperceptibly* and accurately' [my italics]). Warner, responding with pleasure to Painter's insight and praise, alters his phrase to '*choses de métier*' - 'the problems of the craft of writing', and although her last sentence is about the technical challenges of story-telling, the thing that most excites and interests her seems to be 'the moral sense', a quality firmly distinguished from moralising. It can be discussed only 'out of earshot of all critics, all clerics', presumably because these would claim the authority to approve or to condemn, and she does not. Yet her book does continually pass judgement, one of its pleasures being the succession of aphoristic verdicts:

The circumstances of a British Raj childhood are discouraging to parent-child intimacy. The climate is too hot, the servants too numerous. A ruling race has other things to attend to.

Legend dies of asphyxiation when it gets among the educated classes.

White, who was modest about his creative powers, was conceited about his intellect - which was second-rate.¹⁷

The paradox of the book is that although it is, as George Painter saw, a profoundly moral work, the basis for its judgements is peculiarly hard to define. This appears most clearly in the handling of two difficult areas of White's life: his homosexuality which she shared and, not so obvious but still important, his conservative pacifism which she did not. (These topics raise related questions in the recent studies of Sylvia Townsend Warner herself, which I discuss below.)

Her handling of White's sexuality is indeed extraordinarily well done. She writes about his scandalous desires (these included flagellation and pederasty, so that gratifying them could have got him into gaol even today) with detached, sympathetic candour, neither condemning him as wicked nor pathologising him as a 'case' who failed to achieve well-adjusted heterosexual normality. Painter's admiring 'what courage!' does not, presumably, allude only to her pioneering candour which is anticipated and equalled in his own biography of Proust (not to mention the memoirs of T. C. Worsley and J. R. Ackerley¹⁸), but rather to her constant questioning of conventional wisdom, her refusal to privilege a heterosexual norm - a courageous standpoint to take in 1967, when homosexual acts between males were still illegal in Britain. Warner's own experience of homosexual love is clearly relevant here, and her remarks about the self-scrutiny required of a biographer might suggest that she was writing White's life as a way of taking stock of her own. Yet though her wit, compassion and verbal elegance make her a strong presence in *T. H. White*, she does not write, so to speak, 'as a lesbian'. Even in hindsight the book does not read as an implicit demand for gay rights, though its outlook is certainly consistent with that aim. Her point is rather that the process

of judging another's life demands a 'stern' examination not so much of one's actions as of one's 'motives, merits, failings' - that is, one's identity and one's right to judge. It is an attitude best summed up by the Latin tag '*Homo sum: nihil humani alienum mihi puto*': 'I am human; I consider nothing in humanity alien to me'.

This exercise of the 'moral sense' also affects Warner's chosen narrative method, which includes an unusually high proportion of quoted material. She never met White, and in writing the story of his life she worked from White's voluminous private papers, from copies of his correspondence with others and from the testimonies of those who had known him. One can work out from remarks in *T. H. White* and in her letters that she must have visited his old haunts in Alderney, Stowe and Stowe Ridings, Northamptonshire, as well as Doolistown and Belmullet in Ireland,¹⁹ but the book never mentions her biographical journeys. Her usual method of representing White is to quote a heavily edited selection of his own words, or less often those of a witness, and to comment on them in her own person. (She did not use footnotes, though she did date her quotations and identify the authors.) So the subject of White's desire for boys is introduced not by anecdotes about his passions but by an early angry poem about the routine subjection of a 'pretty boy, handsome and chaste and stupid / With bouncing bum and eyes of teasing fire' to a public school's emotional hell of puritanical repression and sexual guilt:

Send your bright dreaming angel then to Dr Prisonface
 So that he may be taught his 'beastly' loins to rule,
 So that he may be learned what is and isn't cricket,
 So that he may be a product of the good old school.²⁰

Similarly, the narrative of White's painful love for the boy known as 'Zed' is told mainly through extracts from White's private journal. When the boy's father takes alarm and demands that a third person should be present at all future meetings,

White wrote back agreeing. He knew that the decision would rest with Zed. Whatever the decision, his love would still be thwarted. What he wanted was that equivalent to a confession of murder, 'merely the whole of him, all the time.' He felt no guilt; the relation had been a gay, shameless consent in enjoyment:

'The love part, the emotional bond, is the agonizing one, and this I have spared him. I never told him I loved him, or worked on his emotions or made any appeals or forced the strain on him.'²¹

This passage itself raises problems about judging the biographer's judgement. The description of the relation as 'a gay, shameless consent in enjoyment', plus the slightly defensive tone of White's self-vindication, strongly suggest that he and Zed had had sex. Given the difference in age, experience and status between the man and the boy, this description could well be read as a whitewash of sexual exploitation. On the other hand, the statement that 'the decision would rest with Zed' (that is, not with White or Zed's parents) suggests that the boy knew how to get his own way. In the absence of independent testimony it is impossible to decide.

The equally difficult matter of White's interest in cruelty is similarly handled by quotation and commentary. Warner the biographer says nothing at all about White's sexual practices or his fantasies, though she knew about both; she wrote of them only in her own diary and in private letters to friends.²² But she does show how White's sadism bedevilled all his loves after his dog Brownie's death, especially the one-sided relationship with Zed. He did not judge his own desire for the boy as wicked - 'I do not believe that some sort of sexual relations with Zed could do him harm - he would probably think and call them t'riflic . . . I do not think sex is evil, except when it is cruel or degrading, as in rape, sodomy etc, or that I am evil or that he could be',²³ yet he was haunted by the combination of sadistic aggression and murderous possessiveness which were for him an inextricable part of sexual desire. It seems from Warner's account of White that cruelty went almost deeper than sexuality in him, being bound up not only with his sexual feelings but with the interest in animals that made him a naturalist. Thus in Doolistown, 1939,

he noted a further Irish flavour. 'Calves aged as much as eighteen months are dishorned with a saw; they stand in the field, bloody and bedimmed.' White had a sadist's acute intelligence for pain (when he hooked a salmon he was so conscious in himself of the steel lodged in the living flesh that he could not 'play' it until it was safely exhausted but dragged it to the bank). He saw the calves with a stern acceptance: he felt with them, not for them.²⁴

That phrase 'a sadist's acute intelligence for pain' does not, obviously, imply that sadism is a good thing, but rather that it is inappropriate for the reader either to condemn White's desires or to approve them, that cruelty was part of his love for living creatures and was inseparable from one of his personal and writerly virtues: namely the possession of a precise, vivid imagination. All of which is extremely relevant to the relation between White's own violence and the pacifism which kept him in neutral Eire between 1939 and 1945. Warner's editorial choices are as important for her portrait of White as her particular judgements. One of the reasons why *T. H. White* is so good is that it does not represent White's sexuality as the only significant thing about him. The theme of homosexuality is important but not dominant: the book concentrates much more on White as a friend, correspondent, teacher, writer, naturalist, pacifist, lover and killer of birds and animals, and inhabitant of moors, islands and coastlines. The only relationship of love which is presented in any detail is the story of his setter bitch, Brownie. How she came into his life, the crisis in 1937 when she nearly died of distemper and he experienced the emotional release of discovering a creature he could love and be loved by, their life together in Ireland, her death in White's absence and his consuming grief - these things are represented as forming the emotional heart of White's life. Brownie was closely connected with his existence as a sportsman and a naturalist, and more indirectly with his writing since this supported them both (he was in Dublin seeing publishers when she had her fatal heart attack); but her relation to his sexuality was distant and indirect. Warner calls Brownie 'the only unhaunted love possible to him'²⁵ because she gave him an emotional fulfilment unconnected with

sexual desire and consequent guilt. (An obvious parallel example is J. R. Ackerley, also a homosexual man of letters who found emotional happiness only in his love for his Alsatian bitch Queenie.²⁶)

Throughout the book, Warner presents White mainly as a writer. Discussing his early unpublished fragment beginning 'John rolled out of bed wakening Tonino', she takes for granted the story's autobiographical basis but shows no interest in identifying the original of 'Tonino'. Instead she treats the affair as raw material for White the writer, observing that he did not complete the story because 'the experience was real enough to leave him temporarily disabled from treating it as fiction'.²⁷ The shape of her narrative enforces this emphasis on White as writer. The first twenty-three years of his life occupy less than ten per cent of the book's 345 pages, and the account of White's school-mastering at Stowe and of his early writings up to 1936, very little more. The two years before Munich while he wrote *The Sword in the Stone* and *The Goshawk* get more sustained treatment and the six creatively fertile wartime years in Eire occupy 101 pages. After Brownie's death, the narrative becomes noticeably more condensed; the years from 1946 to 1964 during which White's talent dried up as his fame increased, are given only 124 pages.²⁸ White had several stormy affairs during this period, which one might think would be jam for a biographer, yet Warner deals with these very briefly, except for White's love for Zed between 1957 and 1961 on which she quotes substantially from his self-scrutinising diaries. The boy's name could not of course have been published, but other, less scandalous, lovers go unnamed as well. She does record an abortive and traumatic engagement in 1946 but suppresses the fiancée's name, and similarly that of the 'débutante' who stayed with White for six weeks in 1953. True, biographers had to be more discreet about sex in 1967 than they do today; and in any case, as Claire Harman records, 'there were those who did not want their names mentioned in connection with White and one of them turned up on the doorstep . . . ready to harangue.'²⁹ But Warner's own letters to David Garnett show that her narrative

was shaped around White's writing, not his love affairs: 'White is killing me. I don't see how I can give the book any air of proportion. Do you realise that all his creative work was over by 1945? From then on, he splutters and gutters.'³⁰ But because she quotes so much and so intimately from White himself, the effect of her candid reticence is not censorship but rather an insistence that White was first and last a writer whose *métier* was to turn his life into words, not a homosexual who happened to write. The period when his creativity failed is therefore of less interest than the fertile years in Eire - 'the centre arch of the story', as she called it³¹ - and consequently does not need or get the same leisurely treatment.

EXPLANATION VERSUS UNDERSTANDING

The desires of the heart are as crooked as corkscrews.

-W. H. Auden³²

The vice of much twentieth-century biography is overconfident explanation of the supposed motives of the 'biographees'. As Robert Skidelsky has observed, post-Freudian biographers tend to write as if 'every achievement is actually "something else" displaced and it is this something else which ought to be the focus of biography'.³³ *T. H. White* is admirably free of such reductionist psychologising; though full of insight, it is not a psychological study, one of its most marked features being a steady refusal to explain its subject's motives. Thus, although the narrative of White's decline as a man and a writer suggests several causes (emotional unhappiness - there were the three unsuccessful love affairs, but he never seems to have found another creature to love deeply and happily after his dog Brownie died in 1945; drink; tax exile in Alderney; prosperity and consequent lack of pressure to write), Warner never actually cites any of them as causes of his behaviour. And though she consistently relates his homosexuality to his writing, she never invokes the psychological model of writing as compensation for personal inadequacy, nor does she attempt to diagnose the causes of his sadism. On the other hand, the book shows plainly the

influence of Freud. This is partly because Warner chose to represent White as far as possible in his own words, and he had been psychoanalysed.³⁴ Unreconciled to his own desires, he blamed his sadomasochism on his public school where the ritual beatings 'had the effect - unless something earlier had the effect - of turning [him] into a flagellant' and his homosexuality on his mother - 'she managed to bitch up my loving women'. The phrase 'bitch up' suggests a complex, obscure connection between White's avowed dislike of women's bodies (he wrote in his diary: 'I dislike the shape of women very much and can scarcely bring myself to draw it'), his hatred of his mother and his love of his red setter bitches Brownie and Killie. A tight-lipped 1938 diary entry remarks:

My mother was (is) a woman for whom all love had to be dependent . . . Her husband, her lover and her only son all . . . fled from her possessive selfishness, and she was left to extract her need of affection from more slavish minds. She became a lover of dogs. This meant that the dogs had to love her. I have inherited this vice.

Femininity in dogs did not repel him - he wrote tenderly about Brownie's thwarted maternity: 'my sweetheart . . . longing for the babies she never had'.³⁵

In blaming his psychic troubles on mother and his old school, White was entirely typical of his literary generation. The recurrence of the school motif among writers of the 1930s is well known; so is the tendency of male 'Auden Generation' writers to represent possessive mothers as devourers of their sons' psyches.³⁶ Warner certainly links White's lifelong insecurity with the jealous mother who 'dismissed the ayah of whom he was extremely fond simply (she admitted this) because children "must not prefer going out with the ayah to staying with their parents"',³⁷ but she does not suggest that his homosexuality was pathologically determined by Constance White's possessiveness: that is White's own diagnosis, not hers. Yet one cannot call the biography anti-Freudian. White saw himself as a wounded Oedipal victim, and his biographer does not dissent from that judgement; she simply implies that pathology is not the right word or category for him because it assumes a norm which White fails (as, of course, would Sylvia

Townsend Warner herself). By recording how White tormented himself over his forbidden desires, she also shows him as a victim of his society's norms, which are up for judgement as much as he is. But again she leaves that for White to state explicitly in the late poem 'DID HE WHO MADE THE LAMB MAKE THEE?', which elaborates angrily on Lear's tirade against hypocrisy in robes and furred gowns, attacking the 'crooked hangman/Frigging judge and fiery bish . . . Saying That is right or This'.³⁸

Warner shows a similar detached sympathy when dealing with the relation between White's pacifism and his own violence - not just his sexual taste for flagellation, but his proneness to furious rages and his passion for fox-hunting, shooting and hawking. This objectivity is the more remarkable because her political opinions about the Second World War were opposed to his. She joined the Communist Party in 1933; she seems to have drifted out of it some time in the 1950s but she never reneged on her left-wing convictions³⁹ and her hatred of fascism was lifelong. Told in 1967 that she was labelled a 'premature anti-fascist' in the USA, she wrote sarcastically, 'Oh the inexhaustible solemn fatuity of the official mind . . . Prematurely anti-Fascist. Not in step with us, but we will overlook that. Thank God you told me. I might have died in the night and never known.'⁴⁰ It is impossible that she could have shared White's rosy view of the Munich Settlement, yet she permits herself no irony at his expense when quoting his hero-worshipping description of Chamberlain, 'the old gentleman . . . with his umbrella and his baggy overcoat on the wrong buttons, talking to us without theatricals: with a voice of love and culture and decency which did not threaten'.⁴¹ In the long chapter dealing with White's anxieties about whether to declare himself a pacifist or not, she quotes without comment his 1939 description of war-fever:

The timbre of the voices which sing about Hitler and death is a sneering, nasal mock-timbre. Devils in hell must sing like this . . . 'Berlin or Bust' sings the wireless, and suddenly I find I am a madman. I am grinning like a comedian, then a wolf, then a devil in hell.⁴²

Both implicitly by selecting this passage and others like it, especially White's own horrified account of being fitted for a gas-mask ('this obscenity'), and by explicit commentary on White's arguments with himself - 'Only a shallow judgement would laugh at his vacillations'⁴³ - Warner presents White not as a case of pathological over-compensation but as a man who passionately abjured cruelty and violence, not least because he knew them too well in himself. This refusal to explain away White's own morality even while showing the complexity of his feelings results from that fine 'moral sense' which George Painter rightly admired.

NOTES

This essay was first published in 1993.

- 1 Sylvia Townsend Warner interviewed by Michael Schmidt and Val Warner in 'Sylvia Townsend Warner: A Celebration', *PN Review*, 23, Nov-Dec. 1981, p. 36.
- 2 Sylvia Townsend Warner, 22 July 1967, in William Maxwell (ed.), *Selected Letters of Sylvia Townsend Warner* (London, Chatto & Windus, 1982), pp. 226-7.
- 3 John Verney, in Warner, *T. H. White*, p. 17; Sylvia Townsend Warner, *Mr Fortune's Maggot* (London and New York, Chatto & Windus, 1927); Warner, in Maxwell (ed.), *Selected Letters*, p. 211.
- 4 Warner, *T. H. White*, pp. 23-24, 267; Harman, *Sylvia Townsend Warner*, pp. 38-43, 268.
- 5 Mulford, *This Narrow Place*, pp. 238, 265; Valentine Ackland, *For Sylvia: An Honest Account* (London, Chatto & Windus, 1985), p. 119.
- 6 Mulford, *This Narrow Place*, pp. 64, 83, 238, 265; Ackland, *For Sylvia*, pp. 31-6, 114-18, 119; Warner, in Maxwell (ed.), *Selected Letters*, pp. 25, 51, 125, 180, 192; Warner, *T. H. White*, pp. 131-2, 302.
- 7 Sylvia Townsend Warner, *The Diaries of Sylvia Townsend Warner*, ed. Claire Harman (London, Chatto & Windus, 1994), p. 308 (entry for 20 March, 1967).
- 8 Mulford, *This Narrow Place*, p. 109.
- 9 Warner, in Maxwell (ed.), *Selected Letters*, p. 212.
- 10 Warner, in Maxwell (ed.), *Selected Letters*, p. 226.

- 11 Warner, *T. H. White*, pp. 121, 193, 28.
- 12 T. H. White, *The Sword in the Stone* (London, Collins, 1938); T. H. White, *Mistress Masham's Repose* (London, Cape, 1947); T. H. White, *The Elephant and the Kangaroo* (London, Cape, 1945); Sylvia Townsend Warner, *Lolly Willowes* (London and New York, Chatto & Windus, 1928); Sylvia Townsend Warner, *Kingdoms of Elfin* (London and New York, Chatto & Windus, 1977).
- 13 Warner, *T. H. White*, p. 110.
- 14 White, quoted in Warner, *T. H. White*, p. 278.
- 15 Warner, in Maxwell (ed.), *Selected Letters*, pp. 230-1.
- 16 I am indebted to Michael Worton for these definitions.
- 17 Warner, *T. H. White*, pp. 24, 81, 183.
- 18 George D. Painter, *Marcel Proust: A Biography*, 2 vols (London and New York, Chatto & Windus, 1959 and 1965); T. C. Worsley, *Flannelled Fool: A Slice of Life in the Thirties* (London, Alan Ross, 1966); J. R. Ackerley, *My Father and Myself* (London, Bodley Head, 1969).
- 19 Warner, in Maxwell (ed.), *Selected Letters*, pp. 212, 226, 234; Warner, *T. H. White*, pp. 65, 171, 174.
- 20 T. H. White, quoted in Warner, *T. H. White*, p. 54.
- 21 T. H. White, quoted in Warner, *T. H. White*, p. 296.
- 22 Warner, *Diaries*, pp. 304-5; Warner, in Maxwell (ed.), *Selected Letters*, pp. 226-7; Richard Garnett (ed.), *Sylvia & David: The Townsend Warner/Garnett Letters* (London, Sinclair Stevenson, 1994), p. 93.
- 23 Warner, *T. H. White*, p. 278.
- 24 Warner, *T. H. White*, p. 120.
- 25 Warner, *T. H. White*, p. 297.
- 26 See J. R. Ackerley, *My Father and Myself, We Think the World of You* (London: Bodley Head, 1960); J. R. Ackerley, *My Dog Tulip* (London, Secker and Warburg, 1957).
- 27 Warner, *T. H. White*, p. 41.
- 28 Warner, *T. H. White*, pp. 25-48 (Chapters 1, 2); pp. 49-84 (Chapters 3, 4), pp. 85-117 (Chapter 5); pp. 118-218 (Chapters 6-9); pp. 219-342 (Chapters 10-14).
- 29 Harman, Warner, p. 285; Warner, *Diaries*, p. 305.
- 30 Warner, in Garnett (ed.), *Sylvia and David*, p. 83.
- 31 Warner, in Garnett (ed.), *Sylvia and David*, p. 92.
- 32 W. H. Auden, 'Death's Echo', in W. H. Auden and Louis MacNeice, *Letters from Iceland* (London, Faber, 1936.), p. 228.
- 33 Robert Skidelsky, in Eric Homberger and John Charmley (ed.), *The Troubled Face of Biography* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1988), p. 12.

- 34 Warner, *T. H. White*, pp. 82-3.
- 35 Warner, *T. H. White*, pp. 31, 28, 152, 123-4, 217.
- 36 Bernard Bergonzi, *Reading the Thirties* (London: Macmillan, 1978), pp. 10-37; Janet Montefiore, *Men and Women Writers of the 1930s: The Dangerous Flood of History* (London, Routledge, 1996), pp. 84-94.
- 37 Warner, *T. H. White*, pp. 28.
- 38 T. H. White, quoted in Warner, *T. H. White*, pp. 320-1.
- 39 Mulford, *This Narrow Place*, pp. 3, 246.
- 40 Warner, in Maxwell (ed.), *Selected Letters*, p. 225.
- 41 Warner, *T. H. White*, p. 111.
- 42 Warner, *T. H. White*, pp. 155-6.
- 43 Warner, *T. H. White*, pp. 109, 170.