

*Contemporary
Authors*

volume 127

Contemporary Authors®

**A Bio-Bibliographical Guide to
Current Writers in Fiction, General Nonfiction,
Poetry, Journalism, Drama, Motion Pictures,
Television, and Other Fields**

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volume 127



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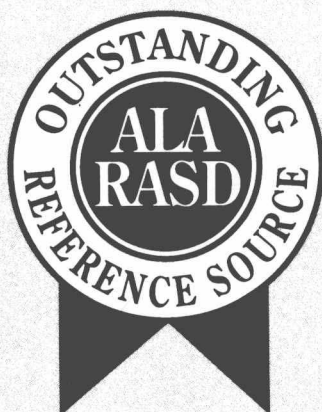
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Contemporary Authors[®]



Contemporary Authors
was named an
***"Outstanding
Reference Source"*** by
the American Library
Association Reference
and Adult Services
Division after its 1962
inception.

In 1985 it was listed by
the same organization
as one of the
twenty-five most
distinguished reference
titles published in the
past twenty-five years.

Authors and Media People Featured in This Volume

Peter Ackroyd (British writer)—Ackroyd gained acclaim for his Heinemann Award-winning nonfiction work, *T. S. Eliot: A Life*, and novels such as *Hawksmoor*, which in 1985 earned the Prix Goncourt, the Whitbread Award, and an award from the London *Guardian*. (Sketch contains interview.)

John Ash (British poet)—Ash is an experimental poet whose seemingly fragmented verse has earned comparisons to the works of American poet John Ashbery and to the nineteenth-century French symbolists. Collections of his writings include *The Bed and Other Poems*, *The Branching Stairs*, and *Disbelief*. (Sketch contains interview.)

James Bridges (American filmmaker)—Bridges has directed and written numerous Hollywood films inspired by contemporary social issues, among them “The Paper Chase,” a tale of careerist law students, and “The China Syndrome,” an expose of safety hazards at nuclear power plants.

David Bromwich (American educator and critic)—Bromwich is esteemed for his 1983 book, *Hazlitt: The Mind of a Critic*, which examines the critical, political, and literary philosophies of romantic poet William Hazlitt. He also wrote *A Choice of Inheritance*, a volume of essays. (Sketch contains interview.)

Peter Carey (Australian writer)—Considered one of Australia’s finest authors, Carey is known for his bizarre, quirky, and often surreal fiction. His award-winning writings include the short story collection *War Crimes* and the novels *Illywhacker* and *Bliss*, the latter of which he helped adapt for film. (Sketch contains interview.)

Hart Crane (American poet who died in 1932)—Crane is remembered for the lyricism of his verse collection *White Buildings*, in which he expressed his idealization of love and beauty, and for *The Bridge*, an ambitious poetic rendering of the American experience. He published only those two books before his suicide.

Jacques Derrida (French literary theorist)—Highly honored in his homeland, Derrida is a leader of the deconstructionist school of literary criticism. He articulates his ideas in such books as *Of Grammatology* and *Positions* and in his 1962 introduction to Edmund Husserl’s *Origin of Geometry*.

Ronald M. Dworkin (American educator and political philosopher)—A professor of law at New York University and of jurisprudence at Oxford University, Dworkin is best known for the controversial legal theories he advances in *Taking Rights Seriously*, *A Matter of Principle*, and *Law’s Empire*. (Sketch contains interview.)

Alain Elkann (American-born author living in France)—Elkann won Italy’s prestigious Premio Polifemo for *Piazza Carignano*, his 1985 novel about an Italian Jew who supports anti-Semitic Fascist Benito Mussolini during World War II. His short story collection *Le Due Babe* and novel *Montagne Russe* also won awards.

Anatole France (French writer who died in 1924)—Jacques Anatole Francois Thibault, who wrote numerous novels, short

stories, plays, and articles under the pseudonym Anatole France, won the 1921 Nobel Prize for literature. Many critics consider *The Gods Are Athirst*, his 1912 saga of extremism during the French Revolution, his finest work.

Helen Garner (Australian writer)—The author of novels, novellas, and short stories, Garner won an Australian National Book Council Award in 1978 for her first novel, *Monkey Grip*, and helped adapt the book for film.

Victoria Glendinning (British biographer)—Specializing in biographies of twentieth-century female literary figures, Glendinning has written books on the lives of Elizabeth Bowen, Vita Sackville-West, and Rebecca West. Her *Edith Sitwell: A Unicorn Among Lions* won the James Tait Black Prize and the Duff Cooper Literary Award in 1981.

Christopher Hogwood (British orchestra conductor and author)—An internationally renowned conductor, Hogwood champions the use of period instruments to perform the music of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Among his books on music is a 1984 biography of composer George Frideric Handel. (Sketch contains interview.)

Josephine Humphreys (American novelist)—Humphreys’s lyrical, evocative prose, detailed characterizations, and plots exploring family crises have elicited widespread praise. Her novels include *Dreams of Sleep*, which won the Ernest Hemingway Prize for best first novel in 1985, and *Rich in Love*. (Sketch contains interview.)

Ibuse Masuji (Japanese writer)—An accomplished fiction writer, essayist, and poet, Ibuse received international acclaim and several of Japan’s highest literary awards for *Black Rain*, his documentary novel about the aftermath of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Other writings by Ibuse include *Lieutenant Lookeast and Other Stories* and *Waves: Two Short Novels*.

Rachel Ingalls (American writer living in England)—Ingalls’s masterful Gothic tales have earned comparisons to the classic works of Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Critics consider her 1982 novel, *Mrs. Caliban*, among the best written since World War II. Her other works include the novel *Binstead’s Safari* and the novella collection *The Pearlkillers*.

Leo Janos (American writer)—Former *Time* correspondent and speech writer for U.S. President Lyndon Johnson, Janos earned praise for his work on the memoirs of Chuck Yeager, the first pilot to exceed the speed of sound. In addition to co-authoring *Yeager: An Autobiography*, Janos wrote *Crime of Passion*, about a troubled youth’s experience with the criminal justice system.

Sarah Orne Jewett (American writer who died in 1909)—A prominent author of American regional fiction during the last third of the nineteenth century, Jewett is famous for her serene, detailed portraits of New England coastal characters and settings. Her 1896 novel, *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, is widely judged a masterpiece of local color fiction.

Mavis Jukes (American children's author)—Jukes, who has won awards for children's books such as *Like Jake and Me*, *Blackberries in the Dark*, and *Getting Even*, is highly regarded for her realistic and sensitive treatments of such topics as stepfamily relationships and the death of a loved one. (Sketch contains interview.)

Christopher Koch (Australian novelist)—Noted for his 1978 novel, *The Year of Living Dangerously*, Koch is considered one of the foremost figures on the Australian literary scene. His novels, which often contrast Western and Eastern cultures, include the Miles Franklin Award-winning *Doubleman* as well as *The Boys in the Island* and *Across the Sea Wall*.

Morton Kondracke (American journalist)—Deemed both a neoconservative and a neoliberal by his readers and peers, political columnist Kondracke wrote for *New Republic* for a decade before becoming the magazine's senior editor in 1986. He is a regular panelist on the talk shows "The McLaughlin Group" and "This Week With David Brinkley." (Sketch contains interview.)

Charles Krauthammer (American columnist)—Krauthammer, a regular contributor to *New Republic*, *Time*, and the *Washington Post*, won a Pulitzer Prize for commentary in 1987 for his nationally syndicated column on politics and society. A collection of his essays, *Cutting Edges: Making Sense of the Eighties*, was published in 1985. (Sketch contains interview.)

Flora Lewis (American columnist)—A Paris-based journalist, Lewis is widely known for her *New York Times* foreign affairs column. As a former bureau chief in Paris for the *New York Times* and in Bonn, London, and New York City for the *Washington Post*, she gained a cosmopolitan understanding of Europe that informs her 1987 book, *Europe: A Tapestry of Nations*.

Patrick McGinley (Irish novelist)—McGinley is consistently praised for his evocative depictions of Ireland's rugged landscape and his unsettling portrayals of human behavior. Among his best-known books are his black comedies *Bogmail*, *Foggage*, *The Trick of the Ga Bolga*, and *The Red Men*. (Sketch contains interview.)

Boris Pasternak (Russian writer who died in 1960)—Renowned in Russia for his postrevolutionary poetry, Pasternak achieved worldwide acclaim for his only novel, *Doctor Zhivago*, which was published in the West in 1957 but not in the Soviet Union until thirty years later. Under pressure from the Communist government, he declined the 1958 Nobel Prize for literature.

Jean-Francois Revel (French philosopher)—Revel has enraged leftists in Europe with his anti-Marxist, pro-American writings such as *Without Marx or Jesus* and *The Totalitarian Temptation*. In *How Democracies Perish* he contends that the United States underestimates the danger of Communist expansionism.

Jaroslav Seifert (Czechoslovak poet who died in 1986)—Winner of the 1984 Nobel Prize for literature, Seifert published more than thirty volumes of poetry in his six-decade career. His life and writings, including *The Plague Column* and *An Umbrella From Piccadilly*, continue to inspire the people of his homeland.

Vikram Seth (Indian poet, novelist, and travel writer)—Seth earned widespread admiration for his verse novel *The Golden Gate*, about young urban professionals in San Francisco. He also drew praise for his 1983 travel book, *From Heaven Lake: Travels Through Sinkiang and Tibet*, and for his poetry collection *The Humble Administrator's Garden*. (Sketch contains interview.)

Randy Shilts (American journalist and author)—Shilts wrote *The Mayor of Castro Street*, an acclaimed 1982 biography examining the murder of San Francisco politician and gay leader Harvey Milk, as well as *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic*, heralded in 1988 as the most definitive study of its subject to date. (Sketch contains interview.)

Kate Simon (American writer)—Known for her elegant and worldly "Places and Pleasures" travel guide series, Simon also wrote the well-received autobiographies *Bronx Primitive* and *A Wider World* and the historical study *A Renaissance Tapestry: The Gonzaga of Mantua*. (Sketch contains interview.)

Paul Starr (American sociologist and author)—Starr won several awards, including the 1984 Pulitzer Prize for general nonfiction, for *The Social Transformation of American Medicine*, an examination of the forces shaping the medical profession. He also collaborated on a survey of the medical, educational, and employment opportunities available to Vietnam veterans.

Sue Townsend (British novelist)—Featuring a humorous adolescent character, Townsend's novels *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13¾* and *The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole* have sold more than five million copies and spawned a popular stage play and television series. (Sketch contains interview.)

Dennis Wholey (American talk-show host and writer)—The host of the television talk show "LateNight America," Wholey has written several books, including *The Courage to Change*, a series of personal monologues in which he and other celebrities discuss their battles with alcoholism.

William Butler Yeats (Irish poet who died in 1939)—Yeats's elegantly wrought poems concerning Irish mythology and nationalism, immortality through artistic creation, and the interplay between physical and spiritual life are ranked among the greatest in the English language. His books include *The Wind Among the Reeds*, *Responsibilities*, and *The Tower*.

Preface

The over 800 entries in *Contemporary Authors (CA)*, Volume 127, bring to more than 93,000 the number of authors now represented in the *Contemporary Authors* series. *CA* includes nontechnical writers in all genres—fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama, etc.—whose books are issued by commercial, risk publishers or by university presses. Authors of books published only by known vanity or author-subsidized firms are ordinarily not included. Since native language and nationality have no bearing on inclusion in *CA*, authors who write in languages other than English are included in *CA* if their works have been published in the United States or translated into English.

Although *CA* focuses primarily on authors of published books, the series also encompasses prominent persons in communications: newspaper and television reporters and correspondents, columnists, newspaper and magazine editors, photojournalists, syndicated cartoonists, screenwriters, television scriptwriters, and other media people.

Starting with Volume 104, the editors of *CA* began to broaden the series' scope to encompass authors deceased since 1900 whose works are still of interest to today's readers. (Previously, *CA* covered only living writers and authors deceased 1960 or later.) Since the great poets, novelists, short story writers, and playwrights of the early twentieth century are popular writers for study in today's high school and college curriculums, and since their writings continue to be analyzed by literary critics, these writers are in many ways as contemporary as the authors *CA* has regularly featured.

Each volume of *CA*, therefore, includes a limited number of entries on authors deceased before 1960. Providing commentary about writers' lives and literary achievements, these sketches in addition offer both a historical and contemporary review of the authors' critical reputations. The entries in this volume on Hart Crane, Anatole France, Sarah Orne Jewett, and William Butler Yeats reflect the variety of early twentieth-century authors to be featured in future *CA* volumes.

No charge or obligation is attached to a *CA* listing. Authors are included in the series solely on the basis of the above criteria and their interest to *CA* users.

Compilation Methods

The editors make every effort to secure information directly from the authors through questionnaires and personal correspondence. If writers of special interest to *CA* users are deceased or fail to reply to requests for information, material is gathered from other reliable sources. Biographical dictionaries are checked (a task made easier through the use of Gale's *Biography and Genealogy Master Index* and other volumes in the "Gale Biographical Index Series"), as are bibliographical sources such as *Cumulative Book Index* and *The National Union Catalog*. Published interviews, feature stories, and book reviews are examined, and often material is supplied by the authors' publishers. All sketches, whether prepared from questionnaires or through extensive research, are sent to the biographees for review prior to publication. Sketches on recently deceased authors are sent to family members, agents, etc., if possible, for a similar review.

Format

CA is designed to present, clearly and concisely, biographical and bibliographical information in three kinds of listings: sketches, brief entries, and obituary notices. The series' easy-to-use format ensures that a reader needing specific information can quickly focus on the pertinent portion of an entry. Sketches, for instance, contain individual paragraphs with rubrics identifying addresses, memberships, and awards and honors. Furthermore, in sketch sections headed "Writings," the title of each book, play, and other published or unpublished work appears on a separate line, clearly distinguishing one title from another. This same convenient bibliographical presentation is featured in the "Biographical/Critical Sources" sections of sketches and brief entries and in the "Obituaries and Other Sources" sections of obituary notices where individual book and periodical titles are also listed on separate lines. *CA* readers can therefore quickly scan these often-lengthy bibliographies to find the titles they need.

Informative Sidelights

Numerous *CA* sketches contain sidelights, which provide personal dimensions to the listings, supply information about the critical reception the authors' works have received, or both. Some authors presented in Volume 127 worked closely with *CA* editors to develop interesting, incisive sidelights. Discussing her first novel, *Teot's War*, science fiction writer Heather Gladney tells *CA*, "If the book was just a snapshot of friendship's genesis, if it proved that cooperation has purpose in primate life, if it simply gave the reader a warm-fuzzy feeling of satisfaction, I'd feel I achieved something." The author strives to cover a variety of political, cultural, economic, and scientific concerns in her books, commenting, "Inventing a world properly takes a broad effort."

CA's editors also compile sidelights when authors and media people of particular interest do not supply sidelights material or when demand for information about the critical reception accorded their writings is especially high. Sidelights in Volume 127 for popular television talk-show host Dennis Wholey, a recovering alcoholic, discuss the self-help books he has written based on his personal experience and growth. Observes a *CA* editor, Wholey's writings "met with even greater success" than his public television program "LateNight America." Journalist Rafik Halabi, an Israeli citizen of Arab parentage, is also featured in this volume. His willingness to write fairly about Israel's enemies has made him "one of his country's most controversial television reporters."

We hope these sketches, as well as others with sidelights compiled by *CA*'s editors, provide informative and enjoyable reading.

Exclusive Interviews

CA provides exclusive, primary information on certain writers in the form of interviews. Prepared specifically for *CA*, the never-before-published conversations presented in the section of the sketch headed "*CA* Interview" give users the opportunity to learn the authors' thoughts, in depth, about their craft. Subjects chosen for interviews are, the editors feel, authors who hold special interest for *CA*'s readers.

Writers and journalists in this volume whose sketches include interviews are Peter Ackroyd, John Ash, David Bromwich, Peter Carey, Ronald M. Dworkin, Christopher Hogwood, Josephine Humphreys, Mavis Jukes, Morton Kondracke, Charles Krauthammer, Patrick McGinley, Vikram Seth, Randy Shilts, Kate Simon, and Sue Townsend.

Brief Entries

CA also includes short entries on authors of current popular appeal or literary stature whose full-length sketches are not yet ready for publication. Identified by the heading "Brief Entry," these short listings highlight the authors' careers and writings and often include a few sources where additional information may be found.

Obituary Notices Make *CA* Timely and Comprehensive

To be as timely and comprehensive as possible, *CA* publishes obituary notices on deceased authors within the scope of the series. These notices provide date and place of birth and death, highlight the author's career and writings, and list other sources where additional biographical information and obituaries may be found. To distinguish them from full-length sketches, obituaries are identified with the heading "Obituary Notice."

CA includes obituary notices for writers who already have full-length entries in earlier *CA* volumes—55 percent of the obituary notices in this volume are for such authors—as well as for authors who do not yet have sketches in the series. Deceased writers of special interest currently represented only by obituary notices will be scheduled for full-length sketch treatment in forthcoming *CA* volumes.

Contemporary Authors New Revision Series

A major change in the preparation of *CA* revision volumes began with the first volume of *Contemporary Authors New Revision Series*. No longer are all of the sketches in a given *CA* volume updated and published together as a revision volume. Instead, entries from a number of volumes are assessed, and only those sketches requiring *significant change* are revised and published in a *New Revision Series* volume. This enables us to provide *CA* users with updated information about active writers on a more timely basis and avoids printing entries in which there has been little or no change. As always, the most recent *CA* cumulative index continues to be the user's guide to the location of an individual author's revised listing.

Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series

Designed to complement the information in *CA* original and revision volumes, the *Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series* provides autobiographical essays written by important current authors. Each volume contains twenty to thirty specially commissioned autobiographies and is illustrated with numerous personal photographs supplied by the authors. The range of contemporary writers describing their lives and interests in the *Autobiography Series* encompasses authors such as Dannie Abse, Vance Bourjaily, Doris Grumbach, Elizabeth Forsythe Hailey, Marge Piercy, Frederik Pohl, Alan Sillitoe, William Stafford, Diane Wakoski, and Elie Wiesel. Though the information presented in the autobiographies is as varied and unique as the authors, common topics of discussion include their motivations for writing, the people and experiences that shaped their careers, the rewards they derive from their work, and their impressions of the current literary scene.

Autobiographies included in the *Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series* can be located through both the *CA* cumulative index and the *Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series* cumulative index, which lists not only personal names but also titles of works, geographical names, subjects, and schools of writing.

Contemporary Authors Bibliographical Series

The *Contemporary Authors Bibliographical Series* is a comprehensive survey of writings by and about the most important authors since World War II in the United States and abroad. Each volume concentrates on a specific genre and nationality and features approximately ten major writers. Volume 1, for instance, covers the American novelists James Baldwin, John Barth, Saul Bellow, John Cheever, Joseph Heller, Norman Mailer, Bernard Malamud, Carson McCullers, John Updike, and Eudora Welty. *Bibliographical Series* entries consist of three parts: a primary bibliography that lists works written by the author, a secondary bibliography that lists works about the author, and an analytical bibliographical essay that thoroughly discusses the merits and deficiencies of major critical and scholarly works. Complementing the information in other *CA* volumes, the *Bibliographical Series* is a new key to finding and evaluating information on the lives and writings of those authors who have attracted significant critical attention.

Each author's entry in the *Contemporary Authors Bibliographical Series* can be located through both the *CA* cumulative index and, beginning with Volume 2, the *Contemporary Authors Bibliographical Series* cumulative author index. A cumulative index to the critics discussed in the bibliographical essays also appears in each *Bibliographical Series* volume.

CA Numbering System

Occasionally questions arise about the *CA* numbering system. Despite numbers like "97-100" and "127," the entire *CA* series consists of only 93 physical volumes with the publication of Volume 127. The following information notes changes in the numbering system, as well as in cover design, to help users better understand the organization of the entire *CA* series.

CA First Revisions

- 1-4R through 41-44R (11 books)
Cover: Brown with black and gold trim.
There will be no further *First Revisions* because revised entries are now being handled exclusively through the more efficient *New Revision Series* mentioned below.

CA Original Volumes

- 45-48 through 97-100 (14 books)
Cover: Brown with black and gold trim.
- 101 through 127 (27 books)
Cover: Blue and black with orange bands.
The same as previous *CA* original volumes but with a new, simplified numbering system and new cover design.

CA New Revision Series

- *CANR*-1 through *CANR*-27 (27 books)
Cover: Blue and black with green bands.
Includes only sketches requiring extensive change; **sketches are taken from any previously published *CA* volume.**

CA Permanent Series

- *CAP*-1 and *CAP*-2 (2 books)
Cover: Brown with red and gold trim.

There will be no further *Permanent Series* volumes because revised entries are now being handled exclusively through the more efficient *New Revision Series* mentioned above.

CA Autobiography Series

- *CAAS-1* through *CAAS-9* (9 books)
Cover: Blue and black with pink and purple bands.
Presents specially commissioned autobiographies by leading contemporary writers.

CA Bibliographical Series

- *CABS-1* through *CABS-3* (3 books)
Cover: Blue and black with blue bands.
Provides comprehensive bibliographical information on published works by and about major modern authors.

Retaining CA Volumes

As new volumes in the series are published, users often ask which *CA* volumes, if any, can be discarded. The Volume Update Chart on page xiii is designed to assist users in keeping their collections as complete as possible. All volumes in the left column of the chart should be retained to have the most complete, up-to-date coverage; volumes in the right column can be discarded if the appropriate replacements are held.

Cumulative Index Should Always Be Consulted

The key to locating an individual author's listing is the *CA* cumulative index bound into the back of alternate original volumes (and available separately as an offprint). Since the *CA* cumulative index provides access to *all* entries in the *CA* series, the latest cumulative index should always be consulted to find the specific volume containing an author's original or most recently revised sketch.

For the convenience of *CA* users, the *CA* cumulative index also includes references to all entries in these related Gale literary series: *Authors in the News*, *Children's Literature Review*, *Concise Dictionary of American Literary Biography*, *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, *Short Story Criticism*, *Something About the Author*, *Something About the Author Autobiography Series*, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, and *Yesterday's Authors of Books for Children*.

Acknowledgments

The editors wish to thank Judith S. Baughman for her assistance with copy editing.

Suggestions Are Welcome

The editors welcome comments and suggestions from users on any aspects of the *CA* series. If readers would like to suggest authors whose entries should appear in future volumes of the series, they are cordially invited to write: The Editors, *Contemporary Authors*, Gale Research Inc., 835 Penobscot Bldg., Detroit, MI 48226-4094; or call toll-free at 1-800-347-GALE; or fax to 1-313-961-6815.

Volume Update Chart

IF YOU HAVE:	YOU MAY DISCARD:
1-4 First Revision (1967)	1 (1962) 2 (1963) 3 (1963) 4 (1963)
5-8 First Revision (1969)	5-6 (1963) 7-8 (1963)
Both 9-12 First Revision (1974) AND <i>Contemporary Authors Permanent Series</i> , Volume 1 (1975)	9-10 (1964) 11-12 (1965)
Both 13-16 First Revision (1975) AND <i>Contemporary Authors Permanent Series</i> , Volumes 1 and 2 (1975, 1978)	13-14 (1965) 15-16 (1966)
Both 17-20 First Revision (1976) AND <i>Contemporary Authors Permanent Series</i> , Volumes 1 and 2 (1975, 1978)	17-18 (1967) 19-20 (1968)
Both 21-24 First Revision (1977) AND <i>Contemporary Authors Permanent Series</i> , Volumes 1 and 2 (1975, 1978)	21-22 (1969) 23-24 (1970)
Both 25-28 First Revision (1977) AND <i>Contemporary Authors Permanent Series</i> , Volume 2 (1978)	25-28 (1971)
Both 29-32 First Revision (1978) AND <i>Contemporary Authors Permanent Series</i> , Volume 2 (1978)	29-32 (1972)
Both 33-36 First Revision (1978) AND <i>Contemporary Authors Permanent Series</i> , Volume 2 (1978)	33-36 (1973)
37-40 First Revision (1979)	37-40 (1973)
41-44 First Revision (1979)	41-44 (1974)
45-48 (1974) 49-52 (1975) ↓ ↓ 127 (1989)	NONE: These volumes will not be superseded by corresponding revised volumes. Individual entries from these and all other volumes appearing in the left column of this chart will be revised and included in the <i>New Revision Series</i> .
Volumes in the <i>Contemporary Authors New Revision Series</i>	NONE: The <i>New Revision Series</i> does not replace any single volume of <i>CA</i> . All volumes appearing in the left column of this chart must be retained to have information on all authors in the series.

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Indexing note: All *Contemporary Authors* entries are indexed in the *Contemporary Authors* cumulative index, which is published separately and distributed with even-numbered *Contemporary Authors* original volumes and odd-numbered *Contemporary Authors New Revision Series* volumes.

As always, the most recent *Contemporary Authors* cumulative index continues to be the user's guide to the location of an individual author's listing.

Contemporary Authors®

*Indicates that a listing has been compiled from secondary sources believed to be reliable but has not been personally verified for this edition by the author sketched.

ABEL, Christopher (Graham) 1946-

PERSONAL: Born November 27, 1946, in London, England; son of Deryck (a journalist) and Gertrude (a headmistress; maiden name, Kent) Abel. **Education:** Trinity College, Cambridge, B.A., 1968; London School of Economics and Political Science, London, M.A., 1969; St. Antony's College, Oxford, D.Phil., 1974.

ADDRESSES: *Home*—London, England. *Office*—Department of History, University College, University of London, Gower St., London W.C.1, England.

CAREER: University of London, London, England, lecturer in Latin American history, 1978—. Visiting professor at Universidad Nacional, Colombia, 1987-88.

WRITINGS:

(Editor with N. Torrents) *Jose Marti, Revolutionary Democrat*, Duke University Press, 1981.

(Editor with C. M. Lewis) *Latin America: Economic Imperialism and the State*, Athlone Press, 1985.

Politica, iglesia y partidos en Colombia, Universidad Nacional (Colombia), 1987.

WORK IN PROGRESS: *Welfare, Politics, and Poverty in Latin America; A History of Public Health in Colombia*.

* * *

ACKROYD, Peter 1949-

PERSONAL: Born October 5, 1949, in London, England; son of Graham and Audrey (Whiteside) Ackroyd. **Education:** Clare College, Cambridge, M.A., 1971; attended Yale University, 1971-73.

ADDRESSES: *Home*—London, England. *Agent*—Anthony Sheil Associates Ltd., 43 Doughty St., London WC1N 2LF, England.

CAREER: Writer.

MEMBER: Royal Society of Literature (fellow).

AWARDS, HONORS: Somerset Maugham Award, 1984, for *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde*; Prix Goncourt, Whitbread Award, and fiction prize from *Guardian*, all 1985, all for *Hawksmoor*; Heinemann Award for nonfiction from Royal Society of Literature, 1985, for *T. S. Eliot: A Life*.

WRITINGS:

POETRY

London Lickpenny (also see below), Ferry Press, 1973.

Country Life (also see below), Ferry Press, 1978.

The Diversions of Purley, and Other Poems (contains poems from *London Lickpenny* and *Country Life*; also see above), Hamish Hamilton, 1987.

NOVELS

The Great Fire of London, Hamish Hamilton, 1982.

The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde, Harper, 1983.

Hawksmoor, Hamish Hamilton, 1985, Harper, 1986.

Chatterton, Grove Press, 1988.

First Light, Grove Press, 1989.

NONFICTION

Notes for a New Culture: An Essay on Modernism, Barnes & Noble, 1976.

Dressing Up, Transvestism and Drag: The History of an Obsession, Simon & Schuster, 1979.

Ezra Pound and His World, Scribner, 1981.

T. S. Eliot: A Life, Simon & Schuster, 1984.

OTHER

(Editor) *P.E.N. New Fiction*, Quartet Books, 1984.

Work represented in anthologies, including *London Tales*, edited by Julian Evans, Hamish Hamilton, 1983.

Principal book reviewer for *London Times*, 1986—. Contributor to periodicals, including *London Times*. Literary editor of *Spectator*, 1973-77, managing editor, 1977-81, film critic, until 1986.

WORK IN PROGRESS: A biography of Charles Dickens, publication expected in 1990-91.

SIDELIGHTS: Peter Ackroyd is considered an accomplished, versatile writer, with successful publications as a poet, novelist, critic, and biographer. He began his literary career in the early 1970s with the poetry collection *London Lickpenny*, which emphasizes the quirkier aspects of life and art. A reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement* wrote that "Ackroyd makes not only an odd poetry, but a poetry out of the oddness of the world." The reviewer, who described Ackroyd as a "delicate

and insistent stylist," commended both the beauty and humor of these poems.

In 1976 Ackroyd turned to criticism and published *Notes for a New Culture*, a condemnation of British intellectual traditions—notably the philosophical schools of empiricism and positivism—as staid and uninspiring. In the work he also dismisses literary realism as an outmoded, invalid concept and defined language as self-referential. Critics would later note that his own novels reflect his disdain for conventional form and narrative.

Prior to publishing a novel, Ackroyd produced another poetry collection, *Country Life*, and two more nonfiction volumes, *Dressing Up, Transvestism and Drag* and *Ezra Pound and His World*. In *Dressing Up, Transvestism and Drag*, Ackroyd traces cross-dressing from classical Greek times to the present. He also delineates its use in public performances—ranging from Japanese No drama to Elizabethan-era productions—and even provides accounts of transvestism's famous practitioners, including the Roman emperor Caligula. *Ezra Pound and His World*, Ackroyd's contribution to a series by publisher Thames & Hudson, recounts the poet's colorful, controversial life and offers brief but incisive analysis of Pound's often difficult and obscure verse. Steve Ellis, who reviewed *Ezra Pound and His World* in the *Times Literary Supplement*, wrote that Ackroyd "produced a concise and well-proportioned account of Pound's life." Ellis added that "Ackroyd copes manfully with the task of writing intelligently on Pound's poetry . . . in so short a space."

In 1982 Ackroyd published his first novel, *The Great Fire of London*, which concerns several oddballs involved with (or affected by) a project for filming Charles Dickens's novel *Little Dorrit*. Ackroyd's unconventional work presents itself as a continuation of the Dickens novel, which concerns a young girl's trials and tribulations in Victorian England. *The Great Fire of London* begins with a summary of Dickens's work, then introduces its own cast of distinctly Dickensian characters, including Spenser Spender, a filmmaker who plans the adaptation of *Little Dorrit*; Sir Frederick Lustlambert, a bureaucrat who arranges the film's financing; and Rowan Phillips, a Dickens scholar who writes the film's script. Another important figure is Little Arthur, an adult so named because he ceased growing at age eight. Little Arthur is proprietor of an amusement park near Marshalsea Prison, a key setting in *Little Dorrit*. When Arthur's park closes, he loses his grasp on reality and commits murder. Apprehended, he is sentenced to Marshalsea Prison, where Spender is filming his adaptation. Spender's insistence on realism—an insistence so contradictory to the nature of Ackroyd's own novel—eventually sparks the disaster of the novel's title, a raging inferno resulting from a mishap on the film set.

Galen Strawson, in his review of *The Great Fire of London* in the *Times Literary Supplement*, acknowledged Ackroyd's novel as an extension of Dickens's *Little Dorrit*. "Ackroyd is clearly intrigued by the idea of past fiction working great changes in present (fictional) reality," Strawson wrote, "and he misses few chances to make further connections and to elaborate the network of coincidences." Strawson was also impressed with Ackroyd's insights into human nature, writing that "he is continually alive . . . to that hidden presence in many people's lives which he calls 'the vast sphere of unremembered wishes,' and to the effects it has on their conscious thoughts and actions."

Ackroyd followed *The Great Fire of London* with *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde*, a novel purporting to be Wilde's

own autobiography produced during the final months of his life in Paris, where he had exiled himself after serving two years in prison for indecency. Many critics praised Ackroyd's duplication of Wilde's own writing style and commended the work for its compelling insights into the notorious Irish writer. Toronto *Globe and Mail* critic William French, for instance, declared that Ackroyd "does an uncanny job of assuming Wilde's persona." Similarly, London *Times* reviewer Mary Cosh, who called Ackroyd's novel "a brilliant testament in its own right," lauded Ackroyd for fashioning a well-rounded portrait of Wilde. Cosh wrote, "Not only does Peter Ackroyd exert a masterly command of language and ideas that credibly evokes Wilde's sharp wit in epigram or paradox, but he captures the raw vulnerability of the man isolated behind his mask."

When *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde* appeared in 1983, Ackroyd was already working on the biography *T. S. Eliot: A Life*. In fashioning this work Ackroyd surmounted imposing obstacles: he was forbidden by Eliot's estate from directly quoting Eliot's correspondence and unpublished verse, and he was allowed only minimum citations of the published poetry. Critics generally agreed, however, that Ackroyd nonetheless produced a worthwhile account of the modernist poet. As A. Walton Litz wrote in the *New York Times Book Review*: "Given all these restrictions, Peter Ackroyd has written as good a biography as we have any right to expect. He has assimilated most of the available evidence and used it judiciously." Rosemary Dinnage, who wrote of *T. S. Eliot* in the *New York Review of Books*, also praised Ackroyd's difficult feat, observing that he "illuminates Eliot's poetry and criticism more acutely than many a ponderous academic volume." And *Newsweek*'s Paul Gray contended that Ackroyd's biography "does more than make the best of a difficult situation; it offers the most detailed portrait yet of an enigmatic and thoroughly peculiar genius."

Returning to fiction in 1986 with the novel *Hawksmoor*, Ackroyd created an unusual work combining elements of the detective and horror genres. One of the work's two principals is Nicholas Hawksmoor, a police detective trying to solve a series of grisly murders at various eighteenth-century churches in London. Alternating with the account of Hawksmoor's progress are chapters on eighteenth-century London architect Nicholas Dyer. Though ostensibly Christian, Dyer actually adheres to demonic principles and consecrates his churches with human blood sacrifices to please Satanic creatures. Dyer's antithesis in his own time is Christopher Wren, his superior, who contends that science and rational thought will bring an end to superstition. Also faithful to rationalism is detective Hawksmoor, and when he fails to perceive the connection between the two sets of murders he finds himself slowly going insane.

Like Ackroyd's earlier novels, *Hawksmoor* impressed critics as a daring, technically innovative work. *Newsweek*'s Peter S. Prescott called it "a fascinating hybrid, a tale of terrors that does double duty as a novel of ideas." Similarly, *Time*'s Christopher Porterfield, who noted that Ackroyd possessed "a gift for historical pastiche," acknowledged "the eerie interplay between the earlier age and our own" and commended *Hawksmoor* as "a fictional architecture that is vivid, provocative, and as clever as . . . the devil." Another of the novel's many enthusiasts was Joyce Carol Oates, who wrote in the *New York Times Book Review* that *Hawksmoor* was "primarily a novel of ideas, a spirited debate between those who believe . . . that 'the highest Passion is Terror' and those who believe . . . that the new science of rationalism and experimental method will eventually eradicate superstition." Oates deemed Ack-

royd a “virtuoso” and lauded *Hawksmoor* as “an unfailingly intelligent work of the imagination.”

Ackroyd continued multiple-narrative storytelling in *Chatterton*, his novel revolving around seventeenth-century poet Thomas Chatterton, who killed himself at age seventeen. In Ackroyd’s novel, Chatterton appears through an autobiographical document which hints that he may have faked his suicide. The document is owned by Charles Wychwood, a minor poet obsessed with an old portrait whose subject might be Chatterton. The painting, however, is dated 1802, thus serving as further indication that Chatterton might not have died in 1770. Another storyline concerns the creation of an actual painting, Henry Wallis’s *The Death of Chatterton*. But this painting, too, is misleading, for Wallis finished it in 1856, long after Chatterton’s death, and thus relied on another young man, writer George Meredith, to represent Chatterton. Further discrepancies of authenticity and originality abound in the novel—a writer steals plots from second-rate Victorian novels, and an artist’s secretary completes his employer’s canvases. And even Chatterton confesses to chicanery of a sort, having attributed his own poems to fictitious fifteenth-century clergyman Thomas Rowley.

With *Chatterton*, Ackroyd strengthened his already substantial reputation as a unique and compelling storyteller. Dennis Drabell, in his review for the *Washington Post Book World*, called Ackroyd’s work a “witty, tricky new novel” and “the genuine article, a contrivance of the highest order.” Denis Donoghue, writing in the *New York Times Book Review*, was likewise enthused, describing *Chatterton* as “a wonderfully vivid book” and “superb.” And *London Times* reviewer Victoria Glendinning praised the novel as “agile and entertaining.” She added, “In *Chatterton* [Ackroyd] has at least three balls in the air, and [he] keeps them up there.”

CA INTERVIEW

CA interviewed Peter Ackroyd by telephone on November 18, 1987, at his home in London.

CA: In an article you wrote for the *London Times*, you alluded to when you were twelve years old and you stole a copy of *T. S. Eliot’s Four Quartets*. You wanted to be a poet, and you felt that in order to do that, you’d have to understand his words and cadences. Has being a successful poet remained your principal ambition?

ACKROYD: No. It was my ambition until I began writing fiction. When I was at school and at university, being a poet was my one real interest. I didn’t become interested in fiction until much later. I published two or three volumes of poetry, and the collected poems came out here in January, 1987, in a volume called *The Diversions of Purley*. Poetry was my ambition, my real interest, my obsession. But then, quite by accident almost, I began writing fiction, and almost at once I stopped writing poetry, as if I had accidentally made a transition in my own life. What I have noticed is that some of the cadences and the images and the ideas and the perceptions and even the very phrases which occurred in my poetry have re-occurred in the fiction. It’s not as if I’ve lost the poetry; it’s just been transformed into another context. I don’t suppose I’ll ever go back to writing poetry again.

CA: When you were at Cambridge, you were interested in the Enlightenment, that watershed period of European history when

traditional values were being challenged and the idea of the perfectibility of man began to emerge. Did you even consider becoming a cultural historian?

ACKROYD: Cultural history interested me to a certain extent when I was at Cambridge, even modern cultural history. But my interest wasn’t so much in European history as in the cultural history of the twentieth century and its roots back in the past. And that really sprang out of my interest in poetry. We had to write a paper for our degree at Cambridge, on any subject, and the subject I chose was black American literature.

The idea of writing cultural history did appeal to me, in fact. When I went to Yale, immediately after Cambridge, I wrote a history of modern aesthetics that was published in 1976, *Notes for a New Culture*. I suppose I had an ambition to make a synthesis of all my interests in cultural matters. It went hand-in-glove with my interest in poetry. But I never actually thought I would make a career out of it. There was a point in my life when it appeared that I would take up a university career. Immediately after I came back from Yale, it seemed likely that I would go back to Cambridge in some capacity or other. But fortunately, as it turned out, I went instead into what you might call journalism for a few years.

CA: You’ve written four novels in a historical context: *The Great Fire of London*, *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde*, *Hawksmoor*, and *Chatterton*. Does it strike you that there’s a revival of interest in historical fiction?

ACKROYD: There does seem to be a revival. It’s certainly become something of a fashionable genre. I don’t know why that should be so; it’s a remarkable coincidence if nothing else. My own interest isn’t so much in writing historical fiction as it is in writing about the nature of history as such. It’s a different thing. I’m not so much interested in writing costume dramas or anything of that kind; I’m much more interested in playing around with the idea of time. But even that might be said to be a temporary preoccupation, because the novel I’m writing now has no connection with English history except in the very loosest terms. It’s set in the contemporary period, not in the historical past in any sense, and not in London like my other books.

CA: For the novel *Hawksmoor*, published in England in 1985 and here in 1986, you immersed yourself for six months or so in the language of the early eighteenth century so that you could write it instinctively.

ACKROYD: Yes. That novel was written half in the style of the eighteenth century and half in the style of the twentieth. The whole point of the novel was the transition between the two epochs. Certainly I had to do a lot of research for that in terms of actually reading. I did it because I thought the best way for both the reader and the writer was to enter the language of the period. The whole point of the exercise in reconstructing the past was to give it immediacy, so I read everything I could from that period with the aim in mind of writing the language as easily as I could write ordinary twentieth-century English. It did take quite a lot of preparation.

CA: You believe, then, that one of the best ways to reclaim the past is through its language?

ACKROYD: Yes. I believe it’s the most successful way of doing it. After *Hawksmoor* I did it in the more recent novel, *Chatterton*. It can become something of a trick—you can do

it too often; then it becomes simply pastiche. I didn't want to fall into that trap, so I'll probably never do it again. It came to me as an idea with *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde*. It was completely fortuitous that I chose that method. Once I discovered I could do it, I used the method with more self-consciousness in *Hawksmoor*, because I had other ideas in mind. And I think it worked in terms of those two novels—but it's not something I would endlessly recapitulate.

CA: In his review of *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde* in the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, William French said your intention was to show that Wilde was a very different man after being released from prison from the man he was before. Was he on target?

ACKROYD: I think that was partly true, because the whole point of the book was to have Wilde look back over his life after he'd failed, as it were. In a sense, it was his life recapitulated in tranquility, at least to a certain extent.

CA: You've been a film critic for *Spectator* in the past. How much journalism are you doing now?

ACKROYD: The only journalism I do now is a long weekly review in the *London Times*, for which I'm the lead reviewer. I gave up the *Spectator* column about a year ago.

CA: So you spend the rest of your time now writing fiction or biography?

ACKROYD: I write my novels in the morning. At the moment I'm getting ready to start work soon on a biography of Charles Dickens, and my afternoons now are spent researching and organizing the material for that book.

CA: How did you happen to choose Dickens?

ACKROYD: It was a process of elimination, in a way. I had finished *T. S. Eliot*, which came out in 1984. At that point in my life, before the success of *Hawksmoor* and *Chatterton*, I didn't think I could earn a living simply by writing fiction, so I agreed to write another biography. I wanted to choose someone who would be a difficult subject, as Eliot was, so I chose the opposite extreme. With Eliot, everyone told me I couldn't write his life because it had never been done before and it was impossible to do. That was one of the reasons I tried to do it. With Dickens, there have been so many biographies that it's an equal challenge to do something different. It's always the challenge of doing a subject that attracts me.

CA: There's a Dickens figure that appears in *The Great Fire of London*. Had you already done some work on Dickens when you started that novel? Is there a connection?

ACKROYD: No. I did that book out of sheer boredom, really. I wanted to write something and so I started writing it. I knew nothing very much about Dickens then, and I certainly had no idea of writing his life at that point.

CA: Will your life of Dickens be on the same scale as the *T. S. Eliot* biography?

ACKROYD: I hope it will be on a larger scale; there will be more material to work on. I reckon it will be quite a long book, maybe twice or three times the length of the *T. S. Eliot* book. It's a much more elaborate project than the Eliot life,

which was certainly a difficult book to write and was a rather provisional book in a way because not all the material is available yet.

CA: *The Dickens* should be much easier to research.

ACKROYD: Sure. There's much more material on hand, and none of it is barred legally. In that sense it's easier. But in another sense it's just as difficult simply because there is so much material, and because it has been interpreted and reinterpreted so many times. The great challenge is to make something that is original and inventive. There's not so much hassle involved, as the Americans say, in researching the life of Dickens; but in terms of actually writing it, it's an equal challenge.

CA: In doing a biography of a figure like Dickens, do you try to steer clear of reading all the earlier ones so that you can approach the life without being influenced by them?

ACKROYD: No. I set myself the task of reading everything that had been written about Dickens, which has taken me two years or so. I don't think I'll be terribly much affected in my own writing by what I've read; it doesn't stick in that way. But I always think one has to read everything to see if there are any mistakes.

CA: Your first biography was Ezra Pound and *His World*, published in 1981. What was the main challenge of Pound?

ACKROYD: That was only a short study—the challenge there was to recapitulate everything I had thought about Pound, and about modernism, in what was essentially a long essay.

CA: And did Pound lead you to Eliot?

ACKROYD: Yes. I had been primarily interested in these two poets—the two great modernist poets—and it seemed natural to move from Pound to Eliot, albeit on a much larger scale.

CA: John Updike, reviewing *T. S. Eliot* in *New Yorker*, noted that you found Eliot quite elusive—but then he quickly added that that was to be expected because you didn't have access to a lot of material held by the Eliot estate. Was he correct in this statement?

ACKROYD: I don't think John Updike was right about that. Most of the letters were available in various university collections, mainly in America. In terms of actually amassing his letters to people, that wasn't a great problem—except geographically, because I had to travel back and forth across the Atlantic. It's certainly true that there's less material available on him than on other people, but in the end, I found in writing the book that I had more than enough material. The real problem came in not being able to quote him.

CA: Was that always a disadvantage?

ACKROYD: I thought it was going to be, and it caused me a lot of problems in the actual writing. But as it turned out, it was rather a blessing in disguise because, as the critics said (I didn't really notice it myself at the time I was writing it), that really made for a better book because I had to do much more work, I had to be much more inventive about how I brought him to life. Most biographers are in the comfortable position of being able to quote a lot of letters and other material and then leave it to the reader to make up their minds about what