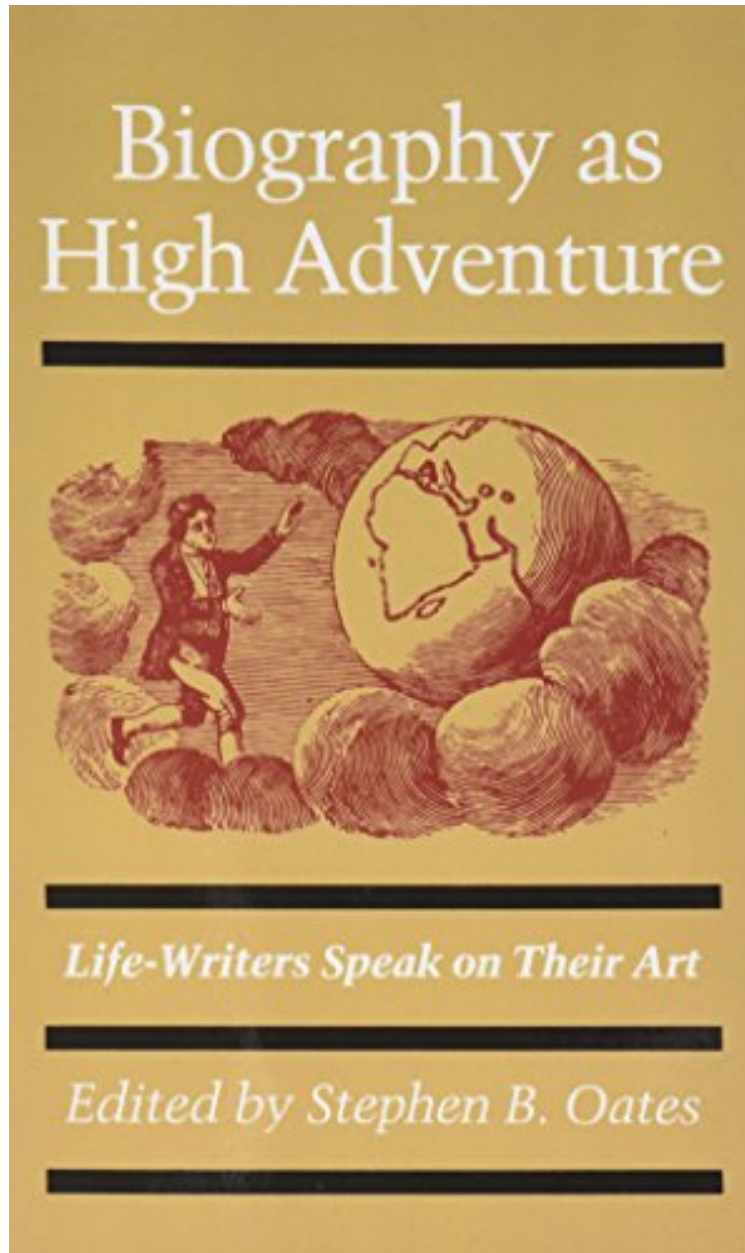


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These ten previously published essays may pique the interest of prospective "life-writers," although a majority of these pieces tend toward the theoretical rather than the practical--a circumstance no doubt arising from the fact that six treat the lives of literary figures. Although the writing is at least solid and is sometimes lively, my own preference in a collection of essays about biographical writing is the more engaging (and nearly contemporary) collection, William Zinsser, ed., *Extraordinary Lives: The Art and Craft of American Biography* (New York: American Heritage, 1986).

Book by

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In this volume ten distinguished biographers discuss the principles and practices of their craft. The literary biographers Paul Mariani (William Carlos Williams), Mark Schorer (Sinclair Lewis), and Leon Edel (Henry James) stress the importance and the difficulty of locating a subject's inner life. The historians are more cautious. Barbara Tuchman frets about risking personal involvement with her subject; Frank Vandiver bristles at those who rummage in the unconscious. All agree that scholarship should be rigorous and exhaustive, choice of details selective, and subjects dramatized in the theater of their own time. Although omitting music, art, and science, this is a useful book whose statements are often graceful and occasionally impassioned. Arthur Waldhorn, English Dept., City Coll., CUNY
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From the Back Cover
This volume is concerned exclusively with biography as a narrative art, comprising essays by ten people who have actually practiced the form.