



## POSTMODERNISM.

Who says your way is right? MAND  
BAILEY

Who says your way is right? People are constantly asking themselves and other people this question. Our different contexts based on such things as gender, profession and location construct our views and perceptions to fit into that context.

As a biographer, and an intensely involved one at that, this questioning ~~and~~ of correctness is inevitable and frequent. We live in a time where the uncertainties of time and space influence our lives and perceptions. Each one of us, in our own perhaps unnoticed way, ~~challenges~~ enhance or alter our view points with a playful challenge of fundamental beliefs or conventions of life. Especially as a biographer, I must be able to explore the works of other people, written in a different context than my own, and

naturally my interpretations of literature will be altered by my own context and the somewhat philosophical paradigms currently determining our existence.

But then, who says my way is right? I know that my point of view and my interpretation of text is generally contextually feminist. It is a result of my ~~to~~ upbringing and family influences, as well as years of researching the intricately feminine works of poetess Miss Christabel La Motte. I feel as though my life transcends the barriers of natural time - I live in my present as well as deeply involving myself in Christabel La Motte's past. This serves to question the uncertainties of time and space, an influence of the postmodern historical period.



The life of a biographer, to an onlooker, probably seems ridiculous or exaggerated, many an adjective can be used to generalise our ~~obsessive~~ obsessive profession. And in a moment of clarity I could definitely agree. For one who takes their job seriously, one may cross the barrier between researching another's life, to actually living it, though quite unintentionally. To an extent I fall into this, well, interesting category. My husband, Roland Mitchell and I met through our mutual biographical profession and love of literature. I studied the works and intricacies of Christabel La Motte, he was involved in the 'Ash Factory', where they dealt with the life and literature of Randolph Henry Ash. As each of our work progressed, it seemed our two predecessors were

involved in a love affair. This was music to our ears, a feast of knowledge for our eyes and hidden secrets of the past at our fingertips. As it turned out, our ~~journey~~ journey through their lives and romance brought Roland and I together. In a sense it was as though we were living a completely unoriginal life, determined by two lovers of the past. But, again, who says our way is right? Perhaps obsessive involvement in the biographical profession takes too far ~~to~~ the concept of the past defining the present, underpinning the contextual uncertainties of time and space.

The postmodern historical period, following the two world wars, is a defining way of thinking for us all, biographers or not. Context influences



everyone's perceptions and fundamental principles define texts, literature or visual, and it seems an author creates meaning in some way or another for the responder. Well this is perhaps how we would like it to be, yes? No need for thinking, meaning handed to us on a plate. With the postmodern influence in society, playfully challenging conventions, questioning originality and authorship, the process of gaining meaning from a text is up to the responder. The concept 'death of the author' infers that once the text is out of its author's hands, he or she are unable to make the meaning for us as a responding world. This is where contextual influence on perceptions leads to the question 'who says your way is right?' ~~The~~ The biography

industry, naturally, has to ask one another this question constantly. ~~The~~ Our profession is, to an extent, underpinned by the 'death of the author' ideal, well I certainly know mine is. Christabel La Motte did not leave a step by step guide to understanding <sup>the</sup> alternately brilliant works of which she left ~~many~~ for me to study. Not that her work was postmodern, as ~~and~~ naturally it was before the period, but now in my time, we are a postmodern world, and that influence creates the openings for an abundance of perceptions and interpretations of ~~the~~ literature from the past.

Ultimately, as a biographer, my colleagues and I are forever on a journey to find the 'truth' about the past, about our favourite poets' lives



and their works of literature. And it must be said that <sup>in</sup> this all consuming profession, we all think ~~that~~ we are correct, for the most part. We all want to fill in the gaps and silences of our ~~contemporary~~ poets' lives, we want to uncover the absolute truth about their birth, relationships, death - but this is something the uncertainties of today lead us to believe is impossible. Who are we thinking that we ~~we~~ should ~~own~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~possibly~~ could own a persons private past, their absolute truth? A group of biographers will piece together ~~data~~ ~~and~~ personal interpretations, combined with others, to create the fullest picture available. But it's simply that, the fullest available, not the FULL picture. ~~But this personal and exclusive~~ <sup>We, as biographers, question the</sup> correctness of other people, 'who says



'your way is right?' Because in an industry as such, and a challenging time as such, people's ~~ways~~ ~~ways~~ ~~and~~ interpretations and ways to view a text are excessively different, far beyond the imagination.

So it seems the biography industry has become an object or, victim if you will, of the postmodern historical period. A time ~~the~~ presenting the uncertainties of time and space. So whose way is right?