

Heteroglossia and ‘hagiography’:
**Authorship, authorisation and the collective/
individual couplet in *Different Every Time* and
associated public works**

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Abstract

In this contextual statement, I critically reflect on the accompanying public works, including my authorised biography of the British musician Robert Wyatt. The contribution to knowledge is twofold. Firstly, there is the fact that, despite his status as a musician, mine is to date the only Robert Wyatt biography, while one of my journal articles has at least begun to fill the gap in academic literature about Wyatt. The three media articles I submit, meanwhile, are novel in presenting Wyatt not as a lone individual of innate 'genius' but as multiply determined – and an exemplar of collective, rather than individual, creativity. Studying Wyatt's career, then, sheds new light on the tension between the individual and the collective. Wyatt's career is also worthy of study because his music has been so influential and because Wyatt has been present at key moments in popular history over a prolonged period.

Secondly, my contribution to knowledge derives from critically reflecting, in this contextual statement, on what is at stake in writing a particular type of biography: the authorised biography of a living subject. To Renders (2017: 163), such 'texts by ghostwriters hired by famous people' can be dismissed as 'untrustworthy trash'; they are essentially hagiographic. In this contextual statement, I present a more nuanced argument, problematising notions of authorship – and the semantically linked concept of authorisation – with reference to the work of Bakhtin (1981) and Barthes (1977). I argue that, while, in both biography and autobiography, the 'author function' (Foucault 1984) is carried out by the subject, we can identify a whole spectrum of narrative authority in auto/biography – yet at no point on that spectrum is any individual 'real author' (Rimmon-Kenan 1983) in complete control. While I focus on one particular biography, I hope through this contextual statement to shed light upon authorised biography more broadly and to argue against its marginalisation, both within and beyond popular music studies.

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1 Introduction

This contextual statement, elements of which are being published in the peer-reviewed *Life Writing* journal (O'Dair forthcoming a), accompanies a number of my public works that appear in different formats (see appendix):

- *Different Every Time: the Authorised Biography of Robert Wyatt* (2014 a);
- a peer-reviewed journal article on the influence of alcohol on Wyatt's creativity and performance anxiety (O'Dair 2016);
- a peer-reviewed journal article about the Bob Dylan biopic *I'm Not There* (O'Dair 2017);
- a funded literature review of collective, co-operative and collaborative models in the music industries (O'Dair 2015).

I also submit one practice-based output:

- a compilation album I helped curate and which was released to accompany my biography, also with the title *Different Every Time* (Domino 2014).

Finally, I include three media articles I wrote around the time of the publication of *Different Every Time*:

- one on the influence of pataphysics upon Wyatt, for the *Pitchfork* website (O'Dair 2014 b);
- a second on Wyatt as collaborator, for the *Drowned in Sound* website (O'Dair 2014 c);
- and a third for the *Irish Times* (O'Dair 2014 d) on the under-acknowledged role of Alfreda Bengé, Wyatt's wife and collaborator, as manager, artwork designer and lyricist.

In themselves, the works listed above make up my first contribution to knowledge: the biography (O'Dair 2014 a) and the *Popular Music* article (O'Dair 2016), like my chapter on the impact upon popular music of pataphysics (O'Dair forthcoming b), in particular, go some way towards filling the gap in the academic and non-academic literature relating to Wyatt. Born in Bristol in 1945, Wyatt first achieved prominence as a member of rock groups Soft Machine (1966-1971), the first rock band to perform

at the BBC Proms, and Matching Mole (1971-2). Wyatt's solo albums include 1974's *Rock Bottom*, which has entered the popular music canon (Spicer 1999), and 2003's *Cuckooland*, which was nominated for the prestigious Mercury music prize. His version of 'Shipbuilding', first released in 1982 and re-released the following year, is considered one of popular music's most enduring and aesthetically successful political recordings (Thompson 2010). Wyatt has appeared on numerous magazine covers and, in 2010, was a guest editor on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme – in the same year as the artist David Hockney, the politician Shirley Williams, the physicist Martin Rees, the novelist P D James and the footballer Tony Adams took on the role. He has been the subject of TV and radio documentaries, and of book-length commentaries, including *Wrong Movements* (King 1994). Wyatt performed on Top of the Pops in 1974 and, in 2001, curated the Meltdown festival at London's Southbank Centre, joining a roll call of curators that includes David Bowie, Elvis Costello, Patti Smith, Morrissey, Nick Cave, Ray Davies and Jarvis Cocker.

Why study Robert Wyatt? In his lengthy career, Wyatt's music has impinged on the charts only twice: in 1974, with his cover of 'I'm A Believer', and in 1983, with the re-release of 'Shipbuilding'. Yet the value of his work, from Soft Machine through to the solo work and collaborations, is widely recognised by his peers, as is reflected by the various high-profile musicians I interviewed for my biography – among them Paul Weller, Brian Eno, Björk and David Gilmour. Though Wyatt is undoubtedly less famous than these respondents, the interviews reveal that they consider him to be a peer. As Hudson (2014) notes, Wyatt may, for decades, have been a marginal figure, 'but these days there's barely a significant rock artist – from Brian Eno and Paul Weller to Damon Albarn and a host of younger talents – who doesn't cite Wyatt as an inspiration.' Wyatt represents 'a persistent avant-garde tradition within music, born of a desire to fuse rock and jazz' (Street 2015: 531). In parallel to the music he has released as a featured artist, Wyatt has also made a large number of appearances on records credited to other artists, a feature I emphasise in my biography (O'Dair 2014 a: 391). While there is nothing remarkable about a solo artist making guest appearances, Wyatt is unusual in the number of such appearances he has made. Also unusual is the diversity of these appearances, both in terms of genre (from free jazz to electronic pop) and of Wyatt's own contribution: he might sing, or play percussion, or piano, or cornet or trumpet.ⁱ One of the arguments of my biography is that it is Wyatt's contributions to such a wide range of tracks that make him such an unusual musician. Such prolific collaboration, in addition to his solo work, also places him in an interesting position vis-à-vis the individual/collective couplet. Though

previously overlooked, this is a key aspect of Wyatt's career and a key reason he is worthy of study.ⁱⁱ Over his 50-year career, Wyatt has also been present at a number of key moments in the history of popular music, from psychedelia (Soft Machine were positioned alongside Pink Floyd at the forefront of the London 'underground', and toured the United States with the Jimi Hendrix Experience) to post-punk (Wyatt was signed to the Rough Trade label and worked with the likes of Jerry Dammers and Green Gartside) to electronic pop (Wyatt has collaborated, in recent years, with Hot Chip and Björk). Wyatt's career serves, then, to challenge the division of popular music into neat and discrete historical eras. Punk rock, to take only one example, is often presented (see, for instance, Dimery 2010) as a 'year zero', a moment of rupture in the history of popular music, and yet Wyatt, who had emerged in the earlier era of psychedelia and who was associated with progressive rock, continued to find relative success in the post-punk era. In fact, Wyatt's career is unusual in its consistency: he may not have experienced the commercial peaks enjoyed by contemporaries such as Paul McCartney or David Bowie, but the critical acclaim with which his work has met has been far more constant. Wyatt's career is also distinctive for its extraordinary diversity. In a Venn diagram of musical collaborators, Wyatt sits in a segment that is unusual, if not unique, in the whole of popular music: he has collaborated with Brian Eno and Paul Weller, for instance, but also the avant-garde jazz musicians Charlie Haden and Evan Parker.

One reason that Wyatt is of interest, then, is because of his music, and his place in popular music history. Popular music scholars are not only interested in musicology, however; the origins of the discipline are in sociology and cultural studies, as well as musicology (Frith 1998, Negus 1996, Shuker 2012). From this perspective, it is important that, Wyatt is also a political artist, who still describes himself as 'some kind of Marxist' (O'Dair 2014 a: 384). As Street (2015: 531) notes, my biography emphasises Wyatt as a political being, highlighting 'his long association with that least fashionable of leftist groupings, the Communist Party of Great Britain'. That this faction was seen as passé and out of touch during Wyatt's membership, even by many elsewhere on the left, suggests that Wyatt was not merely railing against 'the man' in order to sell records. In addition, Wyatt is important as a paraplegic artist, and one who performed – controversially (O'Dair 2014 a: 220) – from a wheelchair on Top of the Pops in 1974. Studying Wyatt's life and career will, almost inevitably, shed new light on disability studies; he was neglected, for instance, even in McKay's 2013 book on popular music and disability. He is also important as an artist who is committed to promoting marginalised artists, collaborating with the Bangladeshi

group Dishari on the 1981 track 'Trade Union', for instance, before the term 'world music' was even coined. He has consistently attempted to introduce the work of relatively neglected musicians, often from developing countries and to whose politics he is sympathetic, into the popular music canon, as well as to champion relatively obscure and avant-garde music such as Soviet jazz. Finally, studying Wyatt is important because it illustrates a tension between the individual and the collective: pop stardom, even in the relatively leftfield world Wyatt typically inhabits, is often considered a matter of individual talent, even though the labour of composers and performers is in fact deeply collaborative (Rojek 2011: 24). One feature of my biography, as Street noted in his *Popular Music* review, is that it positioned Wyatt as a collaborator, and the collaborative nature of creative work is also examined in other public works submitted alongside this contextual statement (for instance, O'Dair 2015, O'Dair 2014 d). Studying Wyatt, then, produces new knowledge in a number of fields. It also brings Wyatt – and biography – in line with a general thrust of popular music studies: to focus on collective practice rather than individual genius.

My second contribution to knowledge lies in critically reflecting, in this contextual statement, on the tensions inherent in writing an authorised biography, in particular the authorised biography of a living subject. In this statement, I examine my attempts, in the biography and other public works, to position Wyatt as something other than a 'lone genius' in the Romantic tradition, by dint of both an emphasis on creative collaboration and broad contextualisation. I also reflect on my approach to the status of interview data: in place of a 'factist' approach, more typical of both music journalism and popular press biographies, which assumes that such data has 'truth value', I have adopted what Alasuutari (1995) calls a 'specimen' approach, treating interview data as part of the general context provided by the interviews and other data as a whole. While many authorised biographers rely heavily on interviews with the subject, thereby emphasising the individual, I have adopted a more collectivist approach in which the subject's voice, though far from lost, is significantly less dominant. I also present Wyatt as multiply determined. The phenomenon of authorship has attracted considerable commentary in the last 50 years. Yet, while Foucault (1984), Barthes (1977) and Bakhtin (1981) are canonical in cultural studies, it is difficult to identify new theorists that have superseded their work. Further, while such notions as the 'author function' and the 'death of the author' are now firmly established within cultural studies, they are less established in the fields of practice on which cultural studies comments – for instance, the conceptualisation, practice

and writing of popular music biography. Nevertheless, the implications of these essays for biography remain highly significant, as I will demonstrate.

Although *Different Every Time* has a trade publisher (Serpent's Tail), and some of the articles submitted alongside this contextual statement were published as journalism rather than in traditional scholarly outlets, I argue that the portfolio of work submitted alongside this contextual statement does represent a methodologically rigorous and consistent approach to the collection and interpretation of data. Further, by putting into practice the theories of Bakhtin (1981), Foucault (1984), Barthes (1977), Rimmon-Kenan (1983) and Macherey (2006), as well as those of social construction (Gergen 2009, Holstein and Gubrium 1995, Mishler 1986, Silverman 2014), I have produced knowledge that would not have been available had I relied solely on interviews with the subject and recounting of the historical record. While these theorists are not present in the biography itself, they represent my own tacit assumptions and beliefs at the time of writing. I was impressed, for instance, by the critique of rugged individualism advanced by the journalist Malcolm Gladwell, who argues in *Outliers* (2009: 33) that it is a mistake 'to cling to the idea that success is a simple function of individual merit and that the world in which we grow up and the rules we choose to write as a society don't matter at all'. Success, for Gladwell, is down to circumstance and social context as much as individual ability and innate talent. Natural ability is not to be discounted but the 'born genius' is an illusion; she still needs to put in her 10,000 hours.

Although this statement makes reference to all the public works submitted alongside my contextual statement, as well as some dissemination activities, the main focus of the contextual statement is my Robert Wyatt biography, *Different Every Time* (O'Dair 2014 a). This is because the volume represents a substantial endeavour but also because, as a trade publication, my theoretical approach in that book is not made explicit in the work itself. The focus on the biography is also appropriate in that it is the 'hub' from which the other public works extend as spokes. I approached Wyatt with the proposal of a biography in 2008, having first interviewed him for a podcast I was presenting for the *Independent* newspaper. He remembered me from that interview, and agreed to the proposal. It was Benge, Wyatt's wife, manager and co-creator, who asked if she and Wyatt could read the manuscript prior to publication, and I agreed to the request: both were clear that it would remain 'my' book. This issue of 'ownership' is critical and I examine it in greater detail in Section 1.3 and Chapter 4. The point I would make here is that I did not begin working on *Different*

Every Time as an academic; rather, I was self-employed as a freelance musician, music journalist and music broadcaster. During the process of writing the biography, however, I began to deliver lectures, on an hourly paid basis, at a few higher and further education institutions and I went on to secure a full-time academic position, at Middlesex University, in 2012. This trajectory, by no means unusual in the field of popular music studies, helps to explain the fact that *Different Every Time* is less explicit in its theoretical underpinnings than the more scholarly works submitted alongside this statement, all of which have been written after taking up my full-time academic position. Yet while scholars routinely dismiss journalism as inferior, a point made specifically in the popular music context by Brabazon (2012: 31), it is important to note that such leading figures in popular music studies as Simon Frith and Dave Laing also have journalistic backgrounds – and both have continued their journalism alongside their scholarly careers. In fact, what Frith (1978) and McLeod (2002) refer to as a ‘double life’ as academic and music critic is not unusual: ‘writers often have a foot in each camp, or migrate between the two’ (Jones 2002: 8-9). While the shelves of the typical bookshop seem increasingly to feature only popular press titles, eschewing even those academic titles published in paperback, the division between academic and trade publishing is not in fact so stark. Arguably, rock was first theorised by practitioners, including journalists, rather than academics (Frith 2007: xi); the distinction between rock journalism and academic writing on popular music is frequently blurred (Shuker 2013: 147), and the same is true of long form music writing. We might think, for instance, of music journalists influenced by poststructuralism – Paul Morley, Ian Penman, Simon Reynolds – and of Greil Marcus, whose career has at times intersected with academia. All are discussed later in this contextual statement.

Unusually for a trade publication, *Different Every Time* was (positively) reviewed in academic journals, including *Association for Recorded Sound Collections* (Iannapallo 2015) and *Popular Music* (Street 2015). At the same time, the book was widely reviewed by broadsheet newspapers and music magazines. It was a book of the year, for instance, in the *Guardian*, the *Independent*, the *Times*, the *Sunday Times* and the *Evening Standard*, as well as in magazines including *Uncut* and *Mojo*. It was shortlisted for the Penderyn music book prize, the first UK prize specifically dedicated to music titles. Unusually for a popular music biography, *Different Every Time* was also a ‘book of the week’ on BBC Radio 4 in early 2015.ⁱⁱⁱ The point here is not simply that my publisher ran an effective public relations campaign; rather, that the sheer range of audiences that expressed an interest in *Different Every Time* reflects

Wyatt's highly unusual position as a popular musician. I gave a keynote talk on Wyatt at the Dark Sound conference at Falmouth University (2015), but also spoke in non-academic settings including the Queen Elizabeth Hall (2014) and the Edinburgh International Book Festival (2015). There was also international interest: I delivered talks in Italy (Novara 2015) and Norway (Oslo, 2015), while American (2015), Italian (2015) and French (2016) editions of the book have been published.

Having introduced Wyatt, and the circumstances in which I came to write *Different Every Time*, I now go on to examine its status as an *authorised* biography. This is necessary given Rendens' (2017:160) dismissal of authorised biographers as 'ghostwriters', and of their books as simply autobiographies 'disguised' as biographies (161). He goes on:

In American bookstores it is – regrettably – common to see biographies wrapped in a ribbon with the word 'authorised' printed on it in big letters. What was introduced as a warning, meant to inform readers they were dealing with untrustworthy trash, has in these past few years been turned into a mark of quality (Rendens 2017: 163).

Rendens' (2017) dismissal of authorised biographers as ghostwriters in disguise is particularly significant given his prominence in the field,^{iv} yet his hostility is shared, for instance, by Klein (2017) and Murray (2010). For Rendens, and others who share his viewpoint, authorised biographies are hagiographies: not in the original sense of depicting Saints' lives, but in the more recent, and pejorative, sense of being too reverential towards their subjects (Lee 2009). I address the issue of authorisation and hagiography in Section 1.3. First, however, I prepare the ground by examining the related issues of authorship and the individual/collective couplet.

1.1 Problematizing the 'lone genius': the individual/collective couplet

The emergence of the author, in the modern sense, can be understood in terms of its imbrication with two phenomena. The first is the development of copyright (Saunders 1992, Woodmansee and Jaszi 1994). We might think, for instance, of such pivotal moments in British copyright law as the 1710 act known as the Statute of Anne, arguably the world's first copyright act, and the *Donaldson v. Beckett* case of 1774, perhaps 'the bedrock judicial decision in the English law of copyright' (Saunders

1992: 69). The second phenomenon is Romanticism, and its increased emphasis on individual genius (Bennett 2005, Burke 1995, Foucault 1984). Though Saunders, like Barron (2006a, 2006b), has downplayed the connection, the two phenomena are usually understood to be linked: as Woodmansee (1994: 291) states, 'our laws of intellectual property are rooted in the century-long reconceptualisation of the creative process' that began in the Romantic era. The Romantics held that the artist herself is primarily responsible for generating both the artistic product and the criteria by which that product should be judged: what Abrams (1953: 22) calls the 'expressive theory of art'.

The 'expressive theory of art', with its belief in the 'lone genius', has been remarkably enduring. It was central, for instance, to the notion of the *auteur* in film criticism of the 1950s and 1960s, following the work of Astruc (1968). *Auteur* theorists asserted that 'a film, though produced collectively, is most likely to be to be valuable when it is essentially the product of its director' (Caughie 1981: 9). In part an attempt to rescue film from its cultural industry overtones, *auteur* theory was centrally concerned with attributing to an individual a process of authorship that was in fact collective – and arguably shared between so many as to become 'unassignable' (Stillinger 1991: 174). Romantic notions of authorship have also endured in popular music (Moy 2015, Toynebee 2000) and jazz (Gebhardt and Whyton 2015), despite the existence of collectives who sometimes pool royalties.^v The tension between the collective and individual is built into legal structures of popular music, for instance in the distinction between writers and musicians, often expressed as a difference between 'featured artists' and session musicians. With reference to the link between individualism and copyright, we might think, too, of the difference between bands that split royalties evenly (U2, Nirvana) and bands in which, by contrast, only some members are granted *auteur* status: Mick Jagger and Keith Richards in The Rolling Stones; Brian Wilson in The Beach Boys; Morrissey and Johnny Marr in The Smiths (Moy 2015: 45).^{vi}

As well as informing our perceptions of film and popular music, Romantic notions of authorship also continue to inform our perceptions of biography, popularly conceived as an account *of* an individual (the subject) *by* an individual (the biographer). As Lee (2009: 29) points out, the emergence of the biography was historically linked to a renewed emphasis on the individual; the biography, Perchard (2007: 122) states, was designed to celebrate the Victorian 'Great Man'. Yet scholars such as Love (2002) have argued that works of literature are produced on a collaborative basis, not

unlike film. For Love, most acts of writing, historically, have been collaborative, rather than individual; books, he suggests, should really feature a 'roll call' of credits on the final page (2002: 37). I would argue that the creative process responsible for a book is typically far less collaborative than that for a film – yet Love is correct to point out that, while a book may have only a single name on the cover, there are in fact a number of other parties involved in its production, and that, directly or indirectly, those parties might have editorial input. Love's argument calls to mind the work of Woodmansee (1994), as well as Becker (1982) and other scholars (Bilton 2007, Hartley *et al* 2015, John-Steiner 2006, Miell and Littleton 2004, Paulus and Mijstad 2003, Peterson 1976, Sawyer 2003) who have sought to locate creativity in systems rather than individuals. I return to this point in Section 1.3 and in Chapter 4.

I have suggested, then, that authorship can be understood in its imbrication with the emergence of copyright; it can be understood as dovetailing with capitalism, as well as with a cult of personality that can be traced back to Romanticism and its celebration of the individual author-god. I have also suggested that creativity is a more collective process than the Romantics (or auteur theorists) would have us believe. I go on to examine challenges to the 'expressive theory of art', particularly those advanced by Foucault (1984), Bakhtin (1981) and Barthes (1977). First, however, I would note that the arguments I identify with Foucault and Barthes can be traced all the way back to the Soviet Writers' Congress of 1934. In the hands of Gorky, the argument about the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is a reflection on the individual and the collective: 'Bourgeois Romanticism, based on *individualism*, with its propensity for fantastic and mystic ideas, does not spur the imagination or encourage thought' (1977: 44; emphasis added). Gorky calls for Socialist literature, by contrast, to be 'organised as an integral *collective* body, as a potent instrument of socialist culture' (1977: 64; emphasis added). Individualism has been a product of the bourgeois project from the latter's inception. Of course, there have been many examples of Marxist humanism, and Stalin allowed the cult of the individual to define his leadership even while he brutally collectivised farms, yet there is a strong tradition of collectivity in Marxism (Althusser 2005: 11). Furthermore, Marxist theory – Marx, Engels, Lenin, Althusser – has generally stressed the collective as opposed to the individual.

Althusser's stance, which influenced theorists whose work informs this contextual statement, including Foucault (1984) and Macherey (2006), is significant. Edel (1959: 185) suggests that 'the most competent biographers seek a narrative technique

suitable to the subject matter'. Given Wyatt's hard-left political views, it was appropriate in my biography to attempt to move beyond a Romantic model of individual genius through both the collection of multiple accounts and broad contextualisation. To a significant extent, then, my actions were dictated by my choice of subject, as well as my own view of individuals as multiply determined.^{vii} The arguments I go on to associate with Barthes (1977) and Foucault (1984), then, have something in common with arguments put forward not only by the likes of Becker (1982) and Love (2002) but also by Soviet theorists such as Gorky (1977). Wyatt, as a Marxist, would share Gorky's awareness of the importance of the individual/collective opposition. Wyatt's sympathy for such arguments is evident, for instance, in his original wish for the *Different Every Time* compilation album (2014) to eschew all the music he had released as a 'featured artist' and, instead, to include only music attributed to collaborators – in particular those who are less well known.^{viii} Wyatt was also keen for me to interview a large number of respondents for the biography.

I now go on to examine other challenges to the 'expressive theory of art, as proposed by theorists such as Barthes (1977) and Foucault (1984), and to set out how we might analyse auto/biography in terms of the 'real' and 'applied' author.

1.2 Problematizing authorship: 'implied author', 'real author' and 'author function'

While the Romantic view of the individual genius has been enduring, not least in popular music and in film, I have also shown that it has also been challenged, for instance by the Becker (1982), Love (2002) and Gorky (1977). Perhaps the most forceful challenge is that issued by Barthes (1977: 143), who insists that the explanation of a creative product is never to be simply sought in the individual who produced it. Barthes declares:

We now know that the text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of an Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture (Barthes 1977: 146).

In locating the significance of cultural artefacts not in the personality and intentions of an all-powerful author but in texts alone, *The Death of the Author* can be understood as fundamentally anti-authorial, even 'author-icidal' (Toynbee 2000: xiii). I would argue, in line with Burke (1995: x), that Barthes' essay is significant not because it dethroned the author but because it called attention to the importance of authorship in our understanding of the world. In terms of authorised biography, Barthes' work casts doubt on the authority of *both* the biographer and the authorising subject, suggesting that the 'truths' in which they trade must always be multiple and subjective.

Foucault's (1984) assessment of the status of authorship is rather more carefully qualified than that of Barthes, to whose work he was responding, although the debt was not explicitly acknowledged (Bennett 2005: 19-20, Wilson 2004: 341). Foucault's major contribution to this topic was the notion of the 'author function'. The 'author function' 'is not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a discourse to its producer, but rather by a series of specific and complex operations' (Foucault 1984: 113). That is to say, 'the author' of a text is categorically distinct from the historical individual who wrote that text, for all that the two bear—or seem to bear—the same name' (Wilson 2004: 350). Crucially, the 'author function' 'does not refer purely and simply to a real individual, since it can give rise simultaneously to several selves, to several subjects – positions that can be occupied by different classes of individuals' (Foucault 1984: 113). This element of plurality is critical, and applies to all discourses endowed with the author function. Like Barthes, then, Foucault argues for a wholesale transformation in our conception of the author, one that can be read as an assault on the Romantic expressive theory of art as outlined (Abrams 1953).^{ix}

What does Foucault's theory mean for authorised biography? Biography is unusual in being typically filed – in shops, if not online – by subject, rather than by author. It is the subject rather than the biographer, then, that carries out the 'author function'. In this sense, biography is no different to autobiography. There is an important distinction between biography and autobiography, however, in terms of the distance between 'real' and 'implied' author, a distinction introduced by Booth (1961). Booth's major contribution was to make a distinction between the 'real', flesh-and-blood author and the 'implied author' that can be reconstructed from the text by the reader. The 'implied author', then, refers to the author evoked by, but not represented in, a work. The concept was developed by Rimmon-Kenan as a means of analysing the 'norms' of a text, 'especially when they differ from those of the narrator' (Rimmon

1976: 58), and by Chatman, for whom the concept served to inhibit 'the overhasty assumption that the reader has direct access through the fictional text' to the intentions and ideology of the 'real author' (1990: 76). For Chatman (1978) and Rimmon-Kenan (1983), the 'implied author' fits into a model not of simple 'transmission' from (active) author to (passive) reader but, rather, of six 'narrative levels'. The 'real author' and 'real reader' are the human beings at either end of the communication process; the 'implied author', 'narrator', 'narratee' and 'implied reader', meanwhile, are the four stages that exist between those two poles; unlike the 'real author' and 'real reader', these four stages can actually be identified within the text. For Renders and others who share his viewpoint, the only difference between authorised biography and ghostwritten autobiography is the way in which they are perceived. We can understand the complaint as relating to the distance between 'real' and 'implied' authors: for Renders, authorised biography is dishonest because, while the reader would assume, from the text, that it is written by the biographer, it is in fact written by the biographical subject; there is too great a distance, in other words, between 'real' and 'implied' author. I would argue, by contrast, that it is a mistake to assume that any individual is in control of a given text. I go on to argue that authorised biography is in fact co-constructed by biographer and subject (Section 4.2), as well as by other parties (Section 4.3). The balance of power between those parties, I suggest, varies from one text to the next, but in no instance is any individual in complete control.

I introduce the 'author function', and the notions of the 'real' and 'implied' author, in order to problematise authorship. Returning now to the criticism that the authorised biography is necessarily hagiographic, I now go on to problematise the related concept of *authorisation*, examining the relationship between 'real' and 'implied' authors of auto/biography.

1.3 Problematising authorisation: the spectrum of narrative authority

Renders (2017: 159) states simply that a biography 'is considered "authorised" if the subject of the biography has read the text and declared the facts revealed within to be correct.' In fact, both authorised biography and ghostwritten autobiography are much less homogenous categories than Renders suggests. Firstly, we must ask *who is doing the authorising*. Curiously, Renders himself includes an example of authorisation by someone other than the biographical subject: Sean Hepburn

Ferrer's biography of his mother, *Audrey Hepburn, an Elegant Spirit: a Son Remembers* (2005), was 'authorised' despite the fact that the subject had died before the book was even conceived. A biography might be authorised, then, not by the subject but by the subject's estate. Secondly, we need to ask *what, precisely, is being authorised*. Renders appears to be referring to checking 'for factual accuracy': allowing the subject to point out incorrect dates, for instance, or, in the case of popular music, album or track titles. This is distinct, however, from full 'copy approval', whereby the subject is permitted to influence the interpretation of events that occurred on those dates or the aesthetic judgements of those albums (a subject to which I return in Chapter 4). 'Copy approval' is looked down upon not only by academics but also by journalists, yet the same criticism is not leveled at 'sight of copy prior to publication to check for factual accuracy' (Stephenson 1998: 86). Authorisation, then, is not an either/or but rather a spectrum. The nature of the relationship between the subject, carrying out the 'author function', and the 'real' author is varied in the extreme. In fact, it is possible to identify a spectrum of auto/biographical narrative authority (fig. 1). In every case, the book's subject carries out the 'author function': even 'hatchet job' biographies are categorised in bookshops by subject, rather than by author. At the far left of the spectrum, there is a significant distance between 'real author' and 'author function', as carried out by the subject, although the distance between 'real' and 'implied' authors is relatively small. As we move to the right of the spectrum, the distance between 'real author' and the subject, carrying out the 'author function', diminishes – although a significant distance between 'real' and 'implied' author is evident, just one step from the far right, in the ghostwritten biography. I go on to briefly examine examples of each category identified in figure 1.

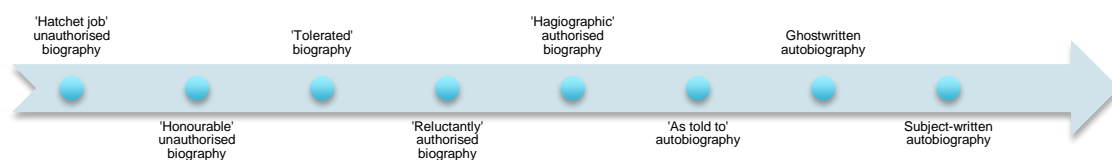


Fig. 1 Spectrum of narrative authority

It is important to remember that even *subject-written autobiographies*, at the far right of the spectrum, are not entirely the work of a lone individual author. What Charles Mingus submitted for the book that became *Beneath The Underdog* (2010), for instance, was a manuscript of over 1,000 pages, which then was drastically edited by screenwriter Nel King (Carmichael 1995). My paperback edition of that volume, published in 2010 by Canongate, also features an introduction by the critic Richard Williams. Even a subject-written autobiography, then, can be understood, to some extent, as a collective endeavour. The fact that Mingus himself is decidedly ambivalent – towards his own sexual conquests, for instance – is a reminder that even Mingus' own voice is, to cite Bakhtin (1981), 'heteroglot'. Heteroglossia is defined by Bakhtin as follows:

Heteroglossia... is *another's speech in another's language*, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way. Such speech constitutes a special type of *double-voiced discourse*. It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. In such discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions (Bakhtin 1981: 324; emphasis in original).

Renders (2017: 162-3) is also too simplistic in declaring 'everyone will realise that an autobiography is written for the purpose of self-justification'. There is a tradition of self-flagellating autobiographies that extends as far back as Rousseau's *Confessions* (1996), and the Mingus that emerges from *Beneath the Underdog* is complex and multiple. Bob Dylan's *Chronicles*, another subject-written autobiography, is also heteroglot, not only because, at one point, Dylan appears to directly lift a passage from Mark Twain (Scobie 2015: 192) but also because Dylan himself 'seems to be reading back into his youth some of the attitudes he struck later on' (Marqusee 2004). The notion that, in a subject-written (rather than co-authored) autobiography, the 'real author' and the subject carrying out the 'author function' are identical is conceptualised by Lejeune (1989) as the 'autobiographical pact': the assumption that the author, the narrator and the protagonist are, in autobiography, one and the same. And yet Lejeune points out, in terms that resonate with the argument proposed by Bakhtin (1981), there is a 'multiplicity of authorities' involved in *all* writing (1989: 186). Burke (2008: 212) agrees that there is a sense in which the autobiographical pact is *always* broken, due to the distinction between the 'detached subject who reads a

past from a vantage of superior knowledge and the past self who lives through experiences without realising what place they will occupy in narrative reconstruction’.

Moving to the left across the spectrum of narrative authority (fig.1), we next encounter two categories of co-written autobiography – a common phenomenon, however much the co-written autobiography might seem a contradiction in terms (Douglas-Fairhurst 2017, McCrum 2014).^x These two categories are the *ghostwritten autobiography*, in which the ‘real author’ is not acknowledged at all, and the ‘*as told to*’ autobiography, for instance, *I’ll Never Write My Memoirs* ‘by’ Grace Jones (2015) and *Mo’ Meta Blues* ‘by’ Ahmir ‘Questlove’ Thompson (2013), each in fact a collaboration with a prominently credited co-writer. By their very nature, it is difficult to identify examples of the former category, but Barbara Feinman Todd, to cite one example, is reported (for instance by Wagner 2017) to have written three-quarters of the 1996 bestseller *It Takes A Village*, yet her name appears nowhere in the volume; the book’s stated author is Hillary Clinton. The involvement of ghostwriters, let alone the nature and extent of that involvement, often remains the subject of speculation. As Merritt writes:

There is a delicate balancing act between acknowledging the hand of the ghost and spoiling the make-believe. The favoured word among publishers is ‘collaboration’, which usefully fudges the question of authorship; only the celebrity and her ghost know the exact division of labour between the suggestion of ideas and characters and the work of marshalling them into a story, but as long as she doesn’t deny that she had help, there has been no deception and no one really minds (Merritt 2008).

The important point is that the division into ‘as told to’ and ‘ghostwritten’ autobiography is far from clear-cut: a whole range of acknowledgement can be identified and analysed with reference to Genette’s (1997) pioneering work on the ‘paratext’ – those ‘liminal devices and conventions, both within the book (*peritext*) and outside it (*epitext*) that mediate the book to the reader’. We can consider, for instance, the ‘ranking’ of co-writer acknowledgement on front, inside front, and back covers, as well as the spine. We can situate Greenman (credited on the front cover, but not the spine, of my paperback edition of *Mo’ Meta Blues*, published by Grand Central in 2013) at one end of the continuum, and Morley (credited on the back cover of my paperback edition of *I’ll Never Write My Memoirs*, published in 2015 Simon &

Schuster) as one step down. At the opposite end of the continuum, of course, are the numerous 'invisible' ghostwriters.^{xi}

Moving towards the centre of the spectrum set out in figure 1, we encounter the authorised biography, which is again far from homogenous: I have divided the category into the *hagiographic* and the '*reluctantly*' authorised. *Paul McCartney: Many Years From Now* (Miles 1998) is an example of the latter category: the book was explicitly criticised as a hagiography (Sheffield 2012). With its focus on songwriting credits, and an emphasis on McCartney's avant-garde credentials over those of John Lennon, *Many Years From Now* can be seen as representing a particularly acute form of biographical hero-worship, linked to the subject's hands-on role in 'authorising' the text – McCartney reportedly vetted the manuscript and took 75% of earnings (Sounes 2010). Significantly, Miles and McCartney were also friends before the writing of the book. This is the type of authorised biography that Renders seems to have in his sights when he declares that the authorised biography is simply a dishonest form of ghostwritten autobiography, yet it is not necessarily representative, as I go on to argue. It is also the case that, even here, others' voices can be detected, for instance that of John Lennon (Miles 1988: 271). *Steve Jobs* (Isaacson 2011) and *The World Is What It Is* (French 2008) are both authorised biographies, yet are markedly less hagiographic than *Many Years From Now*. Naipaul later claimed that it was 'painful' to see how he was depicted in *The World Is What It Is* (Cole 2012), yet he reportedly gave no direction or restriction to that biography and, although he had the opportunity to read the completed manuscript, requested no changes (French 2008: xiii). Jobs apparently co-operated with Isaacson on *Steve Jobs*, granting more than 40 interviews, yet reportedly exerted no control over what was written, and did not insist on reading the manuscript before it was published.

It is worth reflecting, then, on what it actually *means* for a biography to be authorised. If *Paul McCartney: Many Years From Now* feels at points as though the subject was looking over the biographer's shoulder, the same is not true of the authorised biographies by Isaacson or French. Here too, then, we should resist sweeping generalisations. Indeed, some texts are not easily categorised as authorised or unauthorised. One example of such a text would be Culshaw's 2013 book on Manu Chao, known anecdotally for a period as the *tolerated* biography, since Chao co-operated with the book at points while at others seeming more reluctant. Patrick Humphries' 1982 *Meet On The Ledge*, which features original interviews with Fairport

Convention but which is not billed as authorised, could also be considered a 'tolerated' biography. In terms of popular music documentary, similarly, *Oasis: Supersonic* (2016) is not billed as 'authorised', yet both Noel and Liam Gallagher granted new interviews for the film and both are listed as executive producers. Authorisation, then, is not necessarily clear-cut. Gillies (2009: 49-50) points out that 'the amount of co-operation [between biographer and subject or estate] can vary from allowing the biographer to quote from certain letters, diaries and works held in copyright to giving them unrestricted access to all archives'. Authorisation, I argue, is best understood as a spectrum, and the position of a given text on that spectrum is not necessarily fixed in time: biographies can be 'de-authorised' (Lenta 2007) if subject and biographer do not agree on appropriate changes to a manuscript.

Having examined autobiography and authorised biography, I turn, finally, to unauthorised biographies, which we can divide into the *honourable* and the *hatchet job*. An example of the latter would be Goldman's notorious biographical exposés of Elvis Presley (1981) and John Lennon (1998), which sought to undermine the celebratory perception of these stars by highlighting the scandalous aspects of their lives (Shuker 2012: 150). Goldman may be emblematic of the sensationalist unauthorised biography, but he is by no means alone: beyond music, we might think of Donald Spoto's 1983 biography of Alfred Hitchcock or, more recently, A N Wilson's 2017 biography of Charles Darwin. Not all unauthorised biographies, however, are so hostile; in the typology developed by Frith (1983), some are 'honourable', distancing themselves from the 'despicable' (Frith 1983) tradition represented by Goldman. Frith's examples of honourable popular music biographies are Scaduto's account of Bob Dylan (1971) and Norman's biography of The Beatles (1981), although Frith still criticises both books for their journalistic obsession with uncovering 'truth' through conducting interviews. Johnny Rogan, who has written biographies of artists including Neil Young (1982, 2000), Van Morrison (1984, 2006) and Ray Davies (2015), is a more recent example of this trend in the field of popular music biography. In his 2015 *Guardian* review, Ian Penman portrays Rogan's Ray Davies biography (2015) as akin to a hatchet job: Rogan's main aim, Penman suggests, seems to be to demonstrate 'what a horror show it was dealing (separately) with Ray or Dave [Davies], or with Dave and Ray together'. He goes on:

At times, Rogan gives the impression of hurrying through the inconvenience of discussing the music at all to get back to the real meat of things – someone

new popping up to verify that Ray was indeed an awful, awful man (Penman 2015).

In his 1981 biography of Hank Williams, Chet Flippo, similarly, adopts a hatchet job approach, assuming that 'the "truth" means the sordid truth' (Frith 1983: 276). The hatchet job unauthorised biography might seem the antithesis of the authorised biography. Yet unauthorised biographies can be every bit as hagiographic as authorised biographies. Especially if the writing concerns a living subject, it is possible that self-censorship will occur. Participating in a panel discussion on music biographies at Stoke Newington Literary Festival in 2015, for instance, Chris Salewicz suggested that he was wary of authorised biographies such as *Different Every Time*, since he suspected that they would omit reputation-damaging aspects of the subject's life and career. Salewicz went on, however, to concede that he himself omitted certain details relating to Joe Strummer's promiscuity from his biography of the Clash frontman (2012), due to concerns over upsetting Strummer's widow. Even unauthorised biographers, then, can self-censor.

Authorisation, then, is a spectrum, rather than an either/or, and we can identify a whole spectrum of auto/biographical narrative authority. The key point is that complete narrative control does not lie with the ghostwriter or authorised biographer, whom we might consider the 'real author'; nor does it lie entirely with the subject, who carries out the 'author function'. Even in the unauthorised biography and the subject-written autobiography, which might be least obviously co-constructed categories identified in figure 1, no single individual has complete narrative control.^{xii} All texts, to cite Bakhtin (1981), are heteroglot.

Maintaining reference to the spectrum of narrative authority identified in fig.1, I now review the literature relating to biography, particularly popular music biography, and to Robert Wyatt specifically.

2 Research context

Having set out the difficulties inherent in the concepts of authorship and authorisation, and having also challenged the notion of the individual genius, I now examine possible reasons for the relative neglect of biography, in particular the authorised biography of a living subject, both in academic work more broadly and within popular music studies in particular. I also review the literature relating to Robert Wyatt. My intention, ultimately, is to position my own work as both distinct from 'hack work', despite having been published by a trade publisher, and as original, eschewing conventional biographical approaches that privilege individualism.

2.1 The (popular music) biography

That the topic of authorised biography is neglected in the literature of popular music studies is in part due to a historic neglect of most auto/biographical writing, both in popular music studies and in academia more generally. This neglect seems to be closely related to the fact that the biography is very much a generic form of writing, often standardised and industrialised in contrast to more 'remarkable' work. The genre is also associated with 'betrayal', 'prurience' and 'intrusion' (Lee 2009: 17), as well as with anecdote and gossip (Edel 1959: 23). There has been a persistent belief that, since 'it is the work [of the biography's subject] that matters', biographies are 'at best superfluous' (Holroyd 2003: 7). In addition, there are those who believe 'the genre's literary emplotment and narrative demands can waylay the scholarly search for objective historical "truth"' (Perchard 2007: 119). In terms of academic acceptance, the genre may have suffered from its multidisciplinary nature (de Haan 2017: 54) and, perhaps, its very popularity, which to some academics 'reeks of journalism, not scholarship' (Rollyson 2017: 178).

If biography as a whole has been neglected, at least until recent years, then particularly noteworthy has been the neglect of one specific form of biography: the authorised biography, in particular the *authorised biography of a living subject*. I would argue that the question of what is at stake in writing the authorised biography of a living subject is neglected in the academic literature because most popular press biographers of living subjects are not academics, and are therefore unlikely to critically reflect on the process of writing in a scholarly context. There are notable exceptions to this generalisation, including Hermione Lee and Roy Foster and, in

music, Jerry Thackray and Tom Perchard. Some fields do also have something of a tradition of academic biographies: in film studies, for instance, we might think of Colin MacCabe's work on Godard (2003). Yet it remains the case that most life-writing scholars are not themselves biographers. Crucially, those academics who do produce biographies as part of their contribution to a field or discipline are typically either writing unauthorised biographies or are writing authorised biographies, often literary biographies, of deceased subjects; authorisation in this instance is typically located in the estate of the subject. To write a biography authorised by a living subject is, I suggest, a significantly different process, and one that is particularly unusual within academia, perhaps because an authorised biography would imply an advance for the author, something that is less common in academic than in trade publishing, but also because it might be perceived as trammelling 'pure objectivity' and 'truth'.

There is evidence, however, that the situation has changed since Skidelsky (1988: 1-2) lamented that 'biography is still not taken seriously as literature, as history, or as cogent intellectual exercise'; see, for instance, Leader (2015: 2) and Lee (2009: 94). Burke (2008: 199) suggests that 'biography' is a resurgent term, while Renders *et al* (2017: 3) have identified a recent 'biographical turn' with the emergence, since approximately 1980, of biographical research as an accepted method of scholarly investigation. This 'biographical turn', they suggest, is related not only to 'the quantitative rise of biographies in terms of output' but also the acknowledgement that 'the biographical perspective can function as a highly critical methodology' (Renders *et al* 2017: 10). De Haan (2017: 54) dates the moment at which biography developed a foothold in the academy is dated slightly later: to the 2000s. It is unarguable, however, that such a foothold is now developing; we might consider, for instance, the recent explosion of biographies published by university presses (Rollyson 2017: 183-4), although these are not always held in high regard.

The scholarly writing on the biography that does exist is primarily concerned with *literary* biography and some of the foregoing criticism is from that field. Within popular music studies, the relative neglect of the biography is still more striking, despite the fact that auto/biography, particularly of 'elder statesmen and women', is a resurgent form within popular music. While Shuker (2012: 149) asserts that biographical studies play an important role in popular music, and Frith (1983: 271) states that biographies are the dominant source of pop information, the subject has traditionally been marginalised. The specific neglect of the popular music biography

may well be linked to the fact that popular music studies only just has a foot in the door of academia, having been doubly marginalised as both a form of *popular* culture, and as a form of *music*, distrusted by positivists in the social sciences and humanities (Bennett *et al* 2005: 5). Popular music's entrée as an academic object was made possible, in part, by the opening up of the study of culture by Raymond Williams (2017) to include as its object 'a whole way of life', in contrast to Matthew Arnold's (2009) insistence on studying only 'the best that has been thought and said'. Early strands of popular music studies typically focused on the sociological phenomenon of audiences (Lewis 1992) and subcultures (Bennett 1999, Bennett 2001, Hall and Jefferson 1976, Hebdige 1979, Thornton 1995), or on musicological analysis (Middleton 1990, Moore 2012), rather than the more traditional concerns bound up with authorship. Frith and Goodwin (1990: 1) state that 'the academic study of pop and rock music is rooted in sociology, not musicology', and musicology vs. sociology remains, for Negus (1996: 4), 'one of the great disciplinary divides'. I would suggest that one reason for the neglect of the biography in popular music studies specifically, as well as in academia more generally, relates to the fact that popular music studies divides so starkly between 'musicology' and 'cultural studies' factions, and the origins of the latter camp, at least, are informed by Marxist perspectives. Left-leaning scholars have been more inclined to focus on 'the people', whether this meant audiences or the collective enterprise of making music, than on the individual author-gods featured in the typical biography. In fact, so great has the emphasis on subcultures remained that Baker *et al* (2013) have recently called for the 'urgent' consideration of the neglected area of the popular music mainstream. It is notable that the popular music autobiography (Swiss 2005: 287, Stein and Butler 2015) and the popular music biopic (Inglis 2007: 79) have also been neglected by scholars, as has the popular music documentary (Dibben 2009).

Even within popular music studies, however, there is some evidence of an increased acceptance of biography in recent years: for instance, the 19th Biennial IASPM (International Association for the Study of Popular Music) Conference, held in Kassel, Germany in 2017, included papers on popular music biographies, and I have presented papers on popular music biography at IASPM conferences in Cork (2014) and Brighton (2016). We might think too of Off the Page, the 'literary festival of sound and music' organised by the *Wire* magazine; I spoke about *Different Every Time* at Off the Page events in Bristol (2014) and Oslo (2015). A comparable event is Manchester's annual Louder Than Words conference, which celebrates academic writing about popular music, as well as trade publications and journalism on the

subject; I was interviewed about *Different Every Time* at the 2014 conference. Simon Warner, now Visiting Research Fellow at Leeds University, has been an important part of the team responsible for *Louder Than Words*, and Warner's 2013 book *Text and Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll* serves as an illuminating example of the intersections of literature and popular music; another example of examining such intersections would be *Litpop: Writing and Popular Music* (Carroll and Hansen 2014). I hope that this contextual statement, along with the accompanying public works, can further expand the field, in particular in relation to popular music biography.

2.2 Literature and other media relating to Robert Wyatt

Robert Wyatt has not written an autobiography and no biography existed prior to *Different Every Time*. Given his status, this is a significant gap in the popular music literature. The only book about Wyatt in the English language is *Wrong Movements* (King 1994). Subtitled 'a Robert Wyatt history', *Wrong Movements* is a discography and 'gigography', listing recording dates and concerts as well as personnel, together with the odd interview fragment. It is not quite clear how many interviews King conducted himself: he thanks 92 people in the acknowledgements but we are not told whether or not they are all interview respondents, and he also includes quotes from individuals (Dudley Moore, for instance) who do not appear in the acknowledgements. Certainly, *Wrong Movements* is not a biography: the book, which lacks a narrator, has more in common with oral history (although, as with any oral history, King remains an important mediating presence). In terms of the spectrum of narrative authority identified in figure 1, however, King's approach has something in common with the 'tolerated' biography: Wyatt was made aware of the book but only once the manuscript was complete. As a result, *Wrong Movements* features no original interviews with Wyatt. King's account also ends in 1993 and so omits the last two decades of Wyatt's career – something of an 'Indian summer' (O'Dair 2014 a: 363). My own book, fortuitously completed at precisely the time Wyatt announced his retirement from music, is naturally more comprehensive. More generally, King's focus on Wyatt as an individual subject results in a neglect of other important figures, for instance Alfreda Benge, as well as of the broader social and political context that inevitably influenced Wyatt's work.

The other most significant text relating to Wyatt, at least in the English language, is *Out-bloody-rageous* (Bennett 2005), a book about Soft Machine. Since Bennett's

book only sets out to cover Soft Machine, it is hardly fair to point out that Wyatt's subsequent band, Matching Mole, and his 'solo' (in fact highly collaborative) career – in my view, the most interesting part of his professional life – are hardly mentioned. It does, however, leave a significant gap in the literature for a biography of Wyatt himself. *Out-bloody-rageous* also suffers from a particular weakness in its depiction of Wyatt: unlike other former members of Soft Machine, Wyatt declined to be interviewed for the book. This need not have posed a problem: some of the most acclaimed writers on popular music have eschewed interviews in favour of textual analysis. We might think, for instance, of Greil Marcus and of those journalists influenced by poststructuralism – for instance Ian Penman and Paul Morley, who emerged writing for the *NME* in the aftermath of punk, as well as Simon Reynolds, who made his name writing for *Melody Maker* in the mid-1980s. Reynolds, interviewed by Thackray, has openly questioned the value of interviews to the popular music biography: 'Biographers often list the number of people interviewed or hours spent interviewing in their indexes, as if it increases the authenticity of the story, but is this even relevant?' (Thackray 2015: 198-9). Paul Morley appears to have carried out no primary interviews for his *The Age of Bowie* (2016), for instance, in stark contrast to the interview-based approaches to David Bowie adopted by Trynka (2010) and Jones (2017). Unlike Morley, however, Bennett does not engage in the detailed textual analysis characteristic of Morley *et al.* Instead, Bennett *does* draw on primary research with other respondents: he interviewed every other band member he could reach. As a result, *Out-bloody-rageous* is lopsided, restricted to secondary sources in its presentation of Wyatt, while other interview subjects, by contrast, are quoted at length. Wyatt's role in the band, as well as his perspective on the events depicted, is sidelined as a result. Bennett's use of secondary sources is also problematic, since he often fails to make clear the sources of his quotes. Although Bennett does cite some secondary sources (2006: 13), it is not clear how and where these sources are used. Bennett also seems to have interviewed only a fairly paltry 15 respondents, and his selection of respondents is narrow (2005: 11). The result is a focus on Soft Machine and their immediate contemporaries in the so-called 'Canterbury scene', rather than on broad contextualisation. My own method, by contrast, was intended precisely to depict Wyatt within a broader musical context than that of the 'Canterbury scene', as well as multiply determined by a number of social, cultural and political factors.

Other than *Different Every Time*, then, the two main English language books about Wyatt feature no original interviews with Wyatt at all. There is also a lack of rigour, in

both Bennett (2005) and King (1994) relating to the treatment of sources, and a both tend to treat data from both primary and secondary research as having ‘truth value’. There remained a gap in the literature, then, for a book that includes interview data from primary research conducted with Wyatt himself, even though in my method this data is synthesised with interview data from a number of other respondents, together with my own interpretative and contextual comments. There also remained a gap for a take on Wyatt that eschews the factist perspective, instead adopting a ‘specimen’ perspective to qualitative data as ‘*part of the reality being studied*’ (Alasuutari 1995: 5; emphasis in original). Moving to books about Wyatt published in other languages, Marinoni (1990) and Chianura (2009), who write in Italian, and Dréan and Theyre (2009), who write in French, show some similarities to Bennett and King. These titles are not biographies but, in terms of the spectrum of narrative authority identified in figure 1, they can be likened to the ‘honourable’ unauthorised approach to that genre. They do not feature interviews with other respondents and fail to place Wyatt within a broader context; in that sense they serve to reinforce the perception of Wyatt as lone genius in the Romantic tradition. They also tend to adopt a factist perspective, treating interview data from both primary and secondary research as having ‘truth value’, and making little attempt to synthesise or interpret this data.

Arena (2014), who also writes in Italian, eschews interviews and instead adopts a text-based approach to analyse Wyatt’s politics, lyrics and singing voice. The lens throughout is philosophical: Arena is a lecturer in History of Contemporary Philosophy and Eastern Philosophies at the University of Urbino. Arena does, then, engage in interpretation. Yet the lack of primary research obliges him to rely entirely on secondary sources as the basis of his text and this can be considered a weakness when contrasted with the methods employed in researching *Different Every Time*. Arena also has a tendency to mythologise Wyatt in epic and somewhat bizarre terms: for instance as a medieval ‘elf’ from outer space who has changed the course of rock, jazz and folk. Though I agree with Strachan (2003) that biographies create and reinforce, as well as challenge, popular music myths, I have attempted to steer clear of such openly mythologising statements in my own work.

To conclude my discussion of literature about Wyatt, I turn now to books, chapters and journal articles that focus on specific aspects of Wyatt’s life and work. Elliott (2014, 2016) examines Wyatt’s ‘nonsense’ lyrics; Bennett (2002, 2004) and Palmer (2001) his involvement in the ‘Canterbury scene’; Hegarty (2008) the dada influence on Wyatt’s humour, and on the ‘Canterbury scene’ more broadly. I have contributed

to this body of academic literature myself, with an article on the relationship between alcohol and creativity in popular music that features Wyatt as a case study (O'Dair 2016); the article makes up part of this thesis submission. Wyatt's bands Soft Machine and Matching Mole have received coverage in the context of progressive rock (Anderton 2010, Borthwick and Moy 2004, Cutler 1992, Hegarty and Halliwell 2011, Holm-Hudson 2001, Keister and Smith 2008, Macan 1997, Martin 1998, Stump 1997) and jazz (Heining 2012, McKay 2005, Nicholson 1998, Shipton 2007).

Different Every Time differs from these titles in its methodology, in that it is based in part on interviews I conducted with Wyatt and numerous other respondents. My biography also differs from these chapters and articles in that they all examine only one aspect of Wyatt's music: the 'Canterbury scene' connections, the Dada influence and so on. In *Different Every Time*, by contrast, I have approached Wyatt's life and career as a whole, and it is this combination of an account of Wyatt's entire musical oeuvre and the attempt to situate this body of work in the social and commercial conditions of its production that makes my biography stand out. Such a methodology, as Street (2015: 531) acknowledged in his *Popular Music* review, allowed me to examine 'the interplay of the personal, the political and the aesthetic in Wyatt's music'.

Beyond academia, Wyatt is featured in thumbnail sketches of 'outsider musicians' (Unterberger 1998, Williamson 2008) and appears in a number of auto/biographies (Allen 2007, Hunt 1996, Mason 2005, Mitchell and Platt 1990, Oldfield 2007, Peel and Ravenscroft 2005, Summers 2007, Wyatt and Ellidge 1958). The depiction of Wyatt in trade publishing, then, has either taken the form of 'bit parts' in conventional auto/biographies of subjects other than Wyatt, or of 'hack jobs' that compile existing interview fragments. Like the media depictions of Wyatt, trade publishing has tended to ignore the salient issues in his creative output – failing, for instance, to examine the important influence of pataphysics on Wyatt or to subject to scholarly scrutiny Wyatt's own belief that alcohol assisted his creative process. Wyatt has also been the subject of considerable media interest and there are a large number of magazine and newspaper interviews dating back to the 1960s; the most representative include Chapman (1997), Dombal (2012), Goldman (1980), Kopf (2011), Lewis (2001), Trousse (2007) and Watson (1991). Both trade publishing and journalistic accounts, however, tend to treat interview data as having 'truth value', and journalists – like some trade titles issued by trade publishers – rarely include quotes from third parties. Journalists and trade titles, then, tend to position Wyatt as a lone genius in the Romantic tradition, although my articles for *Drowned in Sound* (O'Dair 2014 c) and

the *Irish Times* (O'Dair 2014 d), submitted alongside this contextual statement, are exceptions, focusing on Wyatt's collaborations and on the Benges's contribution respectively. My *Pitchfork* article (O'Dair 2014 b), meanwhile, depicts Wyatt as determined by multiple factors, for instance pataphysics. By contrast, academics who have written about Wyatt tend not to employ interviews at all, giving no sense of Wyatt's own perspective. No article, whether journalistic or academic, has drawn on anything like the range of respondents I interviewed for my biography. My biography, like the other public works submitted, also goes much further in building up an overall portrait of Wyatt as an artist – and an artist constituted by external factors rather than the internally located genius of Romantic thought. Finally, my biography, like the other public works I submit alongside this statement, has gone further than any existing literature in placing Wyatt's life and career in its broader social, cultural, political and economic context. The works I cite above have not reflected the enduring nature of Wyatt's musical influence, or his importance in popular music history. Neither have they managed to convey his importance as a political artist; a paraplegic; an internationalist; and as an artist whose career illustrates an important tension between the individual and the collective.

Treatments of Wyatt do not exist solely in written form. Inglis (2007) hints at similarities between the biography and the 'biopic', and the link between the biography and the documentary is perhaps even stronger (Lee 2009: 6). *Free Will and Testament* (2003), aired on BBC4, was an important step in Wyatt's canonisation: however, like *Little Red Robin Hood* (1998), it features far fewer interviews than my biography, and the interview subjects are drawn from a narrow pool of fellow musicians. Tacitly, both documentaries also treat interview data as having 'truth value' and, given the time restrictions, are unable to provide the same depth of interpretation or contextual breadth. Also important in Wyatt's canonisation have been a number of radio programmes: *Soup Songs: the Music of Robert Wyatt* (2005), *The Voices of Robert Wyatt* (2012) and *Soul Music* (2013). *Soup Songs* is an edited selection of previously available interview fragments from Wyatt himself; it is 'honourable', to use Frith's (1983) term, but it lacks original research. *The Voices of Robert Wyatt* does feature new interviews but, like the documentaries, cannot provide the depth or breadth of *Different Every Time*. The *Soul Music* episode features new interviews and some interpretation. It does, in other words, have depth. It is, however, necessarily limited in terms of breadth, since the programme is only about one song: Wyatt's version of 'Shipbuilding'.

The key point about the various depictions of Wyatt I examine in this section, be they in print or broadcast form, is that they are conventional; several, including Unterberger (1998), Williamson (2008) and *Soup Songs: the Music of Robert Wyatt* (2005), might be dismissed as 'hack jobs'. As a result of my sympathy towards my subject and his collectivist political beliefs, I have approached Wyatt, by contrast, from a less individualistic perspective. Unlike King (1994), Bennett (2005) or Arena (2014), *Different Every Time* features interview data deriving from primary research carried out with Wyatt. Unlike Marinoni (1990), Chianura (2009) or Dréan and Theyre (2009), I have not relied only on interviews with Wyatt but, instead, conducted interviews with a large number of respondents, combined with extensive secondary research. Unlike almost all the sources examined above, *Different Every Time* features a 'biographical layer' (Perchard 2007) of interpretation, synthesising facts into arguments around the cultural, historical and musical significance of the life.

I will now outline my research methods in greater detail, focusing in particular on how these methods generated data that other methods would have missed.

3 Methodology

The central argument put forward by Renders (2017), that the authorised biography is akin to a selfie, subverts the familiar metaphor of biography as portrait (Lee 2009) by suggesting that the authorised biography is in fact a flattering *self*-portrait. Renders' image also suggests that authorised biographies are lacking in scope, with excessive focus on the subject. 'Prudent biographers,' by contrast, 'will certainly make use of the views these subjects have of themselves, but should do so only as one of the many different facets that make up the final result' (Renders 2017: 162). Yet Renders is wrong to assume that authorised biographers necessarily fail to treat 'the views these subjects have of themselves' as only 'one of the many facets' that make up a biography. In fact, there are authorised biographies that find room in the frame for far more than the subject alone, and that was my aim with *Different Every Time*. The research methods I selected – archival research and in-depth interviews – were congruent with that aim, and allowed for the broad contextualisation of Wyatt as biographical subject – a subject constituted by external factors, rather than a 'lone genius' in the humanist tradition. Like my biography, other public works submitted alongside this contextual statement employ qualitative methodologies for primary research, as well as featuring secondary research. In all cases, my aim is to position the music under discussion within a broader context, be it economic, political, cultural or social. I examine these methods in greater detail below.

3.1 Secondary research

Binne de Haan (2017: 63) states that the biographer should make 'visible use of sources', allowing the reader 'to check the critical value of the narrative based on a transparent – i.e. peer reviewable – detection and interpretation of sources'. Needless to say, the scholarly articles I submit alongside this contextual statement adhere to these academic virtues, but the secondary research is meticulously referenced even in *Different Every Time* – a trade publication. I have suggested that neither Bennett nor King, by contrast, are explicit as to how they have drawn on secondary sources, and Frith (1983) is critical of *Your Cheatin' Heart*, Flippo's 1981 life of Hank Williams, for precisely the same reason:

Flippo claims that [his] 'reconstructions' are based on 'a private collection of the papers of Audrey Williams, Hank's first wife, but he does not say what

was in these papers (letters? diaries?) or how he used them, and the book is dogged by his journalistic yearning for new truths (Frith 1983: 276).

There were two main aspects to my secondary research. Firstly, for information on social, musical and political context, I read fiction (Burroughs 2010, Coe 2001) and poetry (Graves 2003) that had influenced Wyatt in some way, as well as a much larger quantity of non-fiction. I examined titles about specific musical genres, including psychedelia (Boyd 2006), post-punk (Reynolds 2005), jazz (Ansell 2005, McGregor 1995, Shipton 2007), progressive rock (Cutler 1992) and folk (Young 2010), and titles about particular record labels (Ogg 2009, Southern 1995, Taylor 2010, Young 2006). Other titles were socio-historical, relating to post-war British society (Marwick 2003, Morgan 2001) as well as 1960s counter-culture (Miles 2003)^{xiii}, the 1970s (Beckett 2009) and the 1980s (Turner 2010). Still other books (Brown 2010, Chomsky 2008, Dean 2012, Douzinas and Zizek 2010, Eagleton 2011, Samuel 2006, Service 2007, Westad 2007) provided political context. I also examined such diverse subjects as evolution (Dawkins 2009), because Wyatt dedicated a track to Dawkins on 2003's *Cuckooland*; art criticism (Berger 2008), because Wyatt asked Berger to provide an alternative 'thought for the day' when guest editing the Today programme on BBC Radio in 2010; political comedy (Thomas 2011) because Wyatt asked the anarchist comic Mark Thomas to join the line-up at the Meltdown festival he curated at the Southbank Centre in 2001; and anthropology, since Wyatt took terms from *Our Grandmothers' Drums* (Hudson 1990) as track titles for his 1992 EP *A Short Break*. Most esoterically, I read several books on pataphysics (Bök 2002, Brotchie 2011, Fell 2010, Hugill 2012, Jarry 1996, Jarry 1997, Jones 1995, Shattuck 1968), which forms the basis of my subsequent academic chapter on the subject (O'Dair forthcoming b) as well as the media article submitted alongside this contextual statement (O'Dair 2014 b). I also undertook comparative reading of autobiographies that mention Wyatt, from figures as varied as John Peel (Peel and Ravenscroft 2005) and Robert Graves' sons William (Graves 2001) and Tomas (Graves 2009), and the biographies of related figures such as Jimi Hendrix (Lawrence 2006, Shapiro and Glebbeek 1990), Syd Barrett (Chapman 2010) and Robert Graves (King 2008). Finally, I scrutinised those books for which Wyatt has written introductions (Searle 2012) or forewords (Clayton 2008). These, of course, are in addition to the books about Wyatt himself, examined in Section 2.1.

The second aspect of my secondary research entailed identifying and analysing feature articles and reviews from newspapers and magazines, both in the British

Library (which contains relevant articles dating back to the 1960s) and in Wyatt's own cuttings archive (which comprises approximately 20 A4 box files of newspaper and magazine articles published since the 1970s). Contemporaneous reviews provided an insight into the critical reception of Wyatt's various albums; news stories, meanwhile, were useful in revealing the attitudes of contemporary music journalists. Interview fragments from secondary research, as much as interviews I conducted myself, contribute to the heteroglot quality of *Different Every Time*, as do reviews where quoted or paraphrased. Wyatt's archive, access to which has not been extended to previous writers, also contained some correspondence of a professional nature, for instance a postcard discussing track sequence sent to engineer Jamie Johnson during the recording of *Shleep* (1997). The scanned image of that postcard is included in *Different Every Time* (O'Dair 2014 a: 326) and again contributes to the book's heteroglot properties.

Secondary research was valuable in three main regards. Firstly, it provided necessary context. Secondly, it allowed me to cite interview data from those subjects I was unable to reach, in some instances because they were no longer alive. Finally, reading interviews Wyatt had conducted in the past allowed me to gauge the extent to which his views had shifted over time (Burke and Innes 2007: 3). I was able to contrast, for instance, a 1972 interview in which Wyatt referred to a particular incarnation of Soft Machine as his favourite, with my own interview in which he expressed a preference for a different era of the band (O'Dair 2014 a: 120). Similarly, I cite Wyatt's negative comments about his album *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*, made around the time of the album's release in 1975, with his more positive feelings about the album today (O'Dair 2014 a: 230). I also state that Wyatt's comments about his song 'O Caroline' have been contradictory (O'Dair 2014 a: 158). In addition, I cite a comment Wyatt made in 1992, that he 'left' Sort Machine, and suggest that it is an example of 'self-deception' (O'Dair 2014 a: 179).

While archival research is standard practice for a biography, my selection of material is unusual in that I interpreted qualitative data, as I have noted, from the 'specimen' perspective. Rather than pursuing 'the truth', I treated data gathered from secondary research as part of the 'tissue of quotations' (Barthes 1977: 146) that make up a necessarily heteroglot biography. In contrast to the 'expressive theory of art', my secondary research was informed by a sense of the subject as multifaceted rather than the unified individual self of Romantic and naturalist thought, an approach derived from both poststructuralism and social construction. I present Wyatt in

Different Every Time as characterised by ‘a central duality’ (O’Dair 2014 a: 173), contradictory, for instance, in his attitude towards the importance, or unimportance, of music and the arts (O’Dair 2014 a: 319). Reviewers stated that *Different Every Time* presents Wyatt as ‘multifaceted’ (Street 2015) and ‘complex’ (Hudson 2014).^{xiv}

Several of my public works, including my biography, also drew on original interviews, a method I now examine.

3.2 Interviews

I used interviews to collect data for a number of the public works submitted alongside this contextual statement, including *Different Every Time*.^{xv} The method allowed me to collect data that would not have been available by any other means. Although Wyatt has been widely interviewed, he has never been interviewed in such depth, and there are numerous subjects – his alcoholism being only one – that are either avoided altogether in media interviews or dealt with only superficially. Interviewing respondents other than Wyatt, meanwhile, allowed me to collect data from those whose views on Wyatt are not on the record, from family members to “star” respondents (Marshall and Rossman 2006) including David Gilmour, Björk and Julie Christie.

Wengraf (2001: 1) states that ‘one problem with interviews is that they at first glance so closely resemble natural conversations: as a result, ‘researchers sometimes use them thoughtlessly in an under-theorised way, assuming that the respondent is providing an unproblematic window on psychological or social realities’. Many academics are wary of the contention that interviews guarantee veracity. The musicologist Dai Griffith (2004: v), for instance, dismisses interviews as ‘a stupid and lazy way of getting at a fake idea of truth’. Yet while Griffith seems to assume that interviews are necessarily journalistic, I would point out that not all academic disciplines shun interviews: they have in fact become a major tool in a number of academic fields associated with qualitative research methodologies, for instance oral history (Hamilton 2017, Perks and Thompson 2016). At the same time, as I have already noted, some music *journalists* – notably, Paul Morley, Ian Penman, Simon Reynolds and Greil Marcus – have tended to shun interviews.

As a research method, the interview has a number of clear advantages. Interviews yield data in quantity quickly (Marshall and Rossman 2006: 101) and facilitate immediate follow-up and clarification (202). They allow the interviewer to follow up on ideas, to probe responses, and to investigate motives and feelings; unlike a questionnaire, responses can be developed and clarified (Bell 2010: 161). Ultimately, in-depth interviews were the most appropriate research method for *Different Every Time* as they enabled me to most fully investigate the diversity of lived experience (Marshall and Rossman 2006: 56), and to construct Wyatt as a tissue of impressions and interpretations rather than a unified individual subject. Certainly, the qualitative research interview is distinct from the journalistic interview (Wengraf 2001), a difference Marshall and Rossman (2006) summarise as being one of depth versus breadth.^{xvi} At the same time, however, the fact that, as a journalist and broadcaster, I had already conducted a number of media interviews prior to conducting research for *Different Every Time* had allowed me to develop skills that were of significant use in my research interviews, among them listening skills and the kind of personal interaction, question framing and gentle probing for elaboration that Marshall and Rossman (2006: 102) suggest are key to the research interview. I have also learnt techniques for effectively and quickly building rapport with respondents (Silverman 2014: 166).

I chose the interview method in the full knowledge that interviewees might be unwilling to share all I hoped to explore (Marshall and Rossman 2006: 102). I was also aware that interviews are labour intensive, generating a large amount of data (Bell 2010: 161). I would therefore dispute Griffith's suggestion that interviews are 'lazy'. As regards whether or not interviews are adopted in pursuit of 'a fake idea of truth', I would respond that I did not collect interview data as part of a pursuit of 'truth'. My interest in the interview method – embracing heteroglossia, rather than authorial unity – was influenced by oral history, particularly the notion that 'the final result of the interview is the product of both the narrator [i.e. the interview respondent] and the researcher' (Portelli 2016: 55). I was also aware that, from a social constructionist perspective, the person collecting the data will actually affect the data, since meanings are contextually grounded, jointly constructed by interviewer and interviewee (Mishler 1986: 117) and emerging through interaction (Silverman 2014). Interviews are social productions and respondents are narrators or storytellers who actively construct a story and its meaning in conjunction with the interviewer (Holstein and Gubrium 1995); the interviewer is *active*, exercising a level of control in deciding which parts of the conversation to follow up, when to open and close topics

and so on, and the interviewee is *also* active, not a passive 'vessel waiting to be taped' (Gubrium and Holstein 2004: 7). This sense of both interviewer and interviewee as 'active' is important in countering the perception of the authorised biographer as essentially passive: a ghostwriter or amanuensis.

I go on, in Chapter 4, to examine whether or not the process of authorisation affected the interpretation of data. The critical question to address here is whether or not the process of authorisation, via the process of collection, affected the data itself. Isaacson apparently interviewed more than a hundred family members, friends, adversaries, competitors and colleagues for his authorised biography of Steve Jobs (2011). I too set out to collect multiple accounts for my authorised biography. Such an approach is markedly different from that of the ghostwriter, who all too often presents a 'raconteur's compilation of [conversational] greatest hits', recycled from previous speaking engagements or interviews (Douglas-Fairhurst 2017). Even more important than the number of interview respondents, however, is their diversity – and this is the point neglected by those dust jacket blurbs, mentioned by Reynolds (Thackray 2015), that simply call attention to the number of interviews conducted for a given biography. My 75 respondents included representatives, both personal and professional, from all eras of Wyatt's life. I interviewed family members, musical collaborators, industry figures, political associates and even former girlfriends such as Caroline Coon.

It might be assumed that, since *Different Every Time* is an authorised biography, Wyatt himself selected the interview respondents. In fact, I made the selection without any consultation with Wyatt. I also made contact with almost all respondents myself, the exception being that small number of individuals I could not easily reach directly, for instance Wyatt's son, Sam Ellidge. As I argued in my *Popular Music* article (O'Dair 2016), one significant advantage of writing the authorised biography of a living subject is *access*. Since the biography was authorised, I was able to ask Wyatt for contact details for these few respondents. Also, although I selected and approached interview subjects myself, I am aware that several checked with Wyatt before accepting my request. Again, authorisation provides access not only to the subject but also to those collaborators who will speak to a biographer only with that subject's blessing. An authorised biography, then, can produce knowledge of a kind that an unauthorised biography cannot. Authorisation, Iannapolo (2015: 145) notes in his ASRC review of *Different Every Time*, 'seems to have opened a lot of doors for

O'Dair by giving him access to many of Wyatt's old cohorts and they seemed willing to talk'.

My interviews took place over an extended period, from August 2009 to July 2013, although most were conducted during 2010 and 2011. I spent approximately 50 hours interviewing Wyatt and also interviewed 74 other subjects, including Wyatt's musicians, friends and family members – in particular his wife and creative partner Alfreda Bengé (O'Dair 2014 a: 414). Where possible, my interviews took place face-to-face, although I did employ email, phone and Skype interviews when necessary, for instance for respondents who lived abroad. I do not believe that there were subjects about which I only asked respondents other than Wyatt or Bengé: no subject was declared 'off limits' and my interviews with Wyatt included, for instance, such topics as his suicide attempts, promiscuity, alcoholism and paraplegia. It is probably the case, however, that I approached certain potentially sensitive subjects more cautiously with Wyatt and Bengé than with other respondents, for instance in the sequencing and phrasing of questions. It is also the case that the mere fact that no subject was formally declared 'off limits' does not mean that my interviews with Wyatt covered every conceivable aspect of every potentially sensitive subject. This is most notable in relation to the 1973 accident – a fall from a fourth-floor window – that left Wyatt paraplegic. Wyatt has described the incident in slightly different terms over the years, but in interviews with me he insisted that he was too drunk at the time of the accident to remember any of the circumstances immediately prior to the fall. This leads to a significant 'narrative gap' (Macherey 2006) in the biography, on which I critically reflect in Section 4.4.

My interviews with Wyatt and Bengé differed from those with other respondents in that they were more extensive and in that, unlike with other respondents, I often interviewed them in their home. Since I interviewed Wyatt and Bengé on multiple occasions, I also had the opportunity to go back over the same events on different occasions. Keats (2000: 55) has set out the potentially complex branches and feedback loops that can be detected within an interview: the interviewer may take into account multiple aspects of responses at each step in the exchange, and return to earlier questions and responses. This is even more relevant when conducting multiple interviews with the same respondent: since I would sometimes discuss with Wyatt events we had already discussed in a previous interview, I was collecting multiple accounts not just from a number of respondents but multiple accounts *from Wyatt himself*. My interviews also varied considerably with respect to duration, as

well as in whether or not they were conducted face-to-face. For some star respondents, particularly those who live abroad, I was offered only 15 minutes on the phone. At the other extreme, I always interviewed Wyatt and Bengie not only face-to-face, often for several hours at a time – not once, but numerous times and over a prolonged period. This raises a central issue for qualitative researchers: that of positioning relative to the participants (Marshall and Rossman 2006: 98). It must be noted that, in the terms set out by Marshall and Rossman (2006: 73), my interviews with Wyatt and Bengie differed from my other interviews in terms of both ‘intensiveness’ (the amount of time spent in the setting on a given day) and ‘extensiveness’ (duration of the study).

In transcribing each interview from audio recordings, interview data from Wyatt and Bengie was treated in the same manner as that from other respondents. I did not seek respondent validation, though I did send transcripts for the approval of subjects when requested; respondents other than Wyatt had the ability to confirm the factual accuracy of the interview transcription, though not to approve my interpretation of that data. It is critical that respondent validation only extended as far as the interview transcript; I was free to use extracts from that transcript as I wished in the eventual biography. Wyatt did not ask to see his interview transcripts but, as ‘authoriser’, he – and, to a lesser extent, Bengie – was unique in having, at least in theory, some control over how interview data was used in the final book. I return to the subject in Section 4.2.

3.3 The ‘fish’ and the ‘stream’

While I have argued that interviews, and secondary research, were highly appropriate research methods for *Different Every Time*, neither method alone is sufficient to create a credible biography. Frith (1983) criticises those popular music biographies, such as those by Humphries (1982) and Rogan (1982), with too narrow a focus on their respective biographical subjects:

Humphries' book is better than Rogan's because it is better illustrated and he did, at least, talk to Fairport Convention themselves (Rogan depends on other people's conversations for his Young quotes) but both authors are content to re-tell the stories the stars want told. They do not challenge their data, ask the interesting questions: what is the relationship between Fairport Convention's

folk interests and their middle-class suburban roots? Is Neil Young's awkward egocentricity a necessary part of his rock personality? (Frith 1983: 273).

The critical issue, for Frith, is that the biographer must not be too blinkered. The subject does not exist in a void, but within a social, cultural, political and economic framework. We might think, beyond popular music, of the point made by Virginia Woolf: that the individual life should be placed in the context of family, inheritance, influences, environment, and 'invisible presences'; the 'fish' should be placed within the 'stream' (1985: 80). Marshall (2007: 4) criticises the 'subjectivist' approach of the typical popular music biography, for instance, in which an explanation for the stardom of any individual is sought solely within the life story of that individual; the achievements of a particular star in fact depend to a significant extent on factors outside her control. Frith, similarly, is critical of those biographers who fail to place the music within a context broader than biographical facts, for instance by organising the narrative around album releases and concert tours rather than commerce and business deals. Frith is much more positive about what he calls 'biographies in passing': books such as such as *Hellfire* (Tosches 1989), *Jerry Lee Lewis Rocks!* (Palmer 1981) and *Rod Stewart* (Nelson and Bangs 1981), which are 'more interesting for their critical speculations than for their biographical facts' (1983: 275). The trick, for Frith, is to use the subject's life to illustrate a broader point – about the meaning of rock 'n' roll for 1950s southern teenagers, in the case of Palmer, or to brood on stardom, fantasy and fame, in the case of Bangs. We might think, too, of works by Greil Marcus (1991, 2001) that place music in a broader cultural and historical context. Marcus' work, though issued by trade publishers, embodies the approach Frith (1983: 276) describes as 'scholarly': situating the subject and analysing the 'musical, commercial and social conditions of production'. As regards more strictly academic titles, Frith cites the Hank Williams biography *Sing a Sad Song* (Williams 1981) as an example of such an approach. We might think, too, of the work of Perchard (2006), whose biography of jazz trumpeter Lee Morgan takes in the broader social, aesthetic and economic context; of Wiseman-Trowse (2013), who reflects on the construction of 'Englishness' in his biography of Nick Drake; and Cohen (2010), who strives to place Duke Ellington within the broader context of American history.

In *Different Every Time* and other public works^{xvii} I too have attempted to address both 'fish' and 'stream'. In the biography, I set out to discuss Wyatt's work as *constituted from without*, by factors impinging, rather than as *constituted from within*,

as part of some mythical, unified identity. Wyatt was born at a particular time, into a particular milieu, with a particular formative background and so on. The relation of the individual to the age is, Lee (2009: 4) argues, ultimately a political issue – setting a ‘great life’ centre stage can be ‘part of the machinery for preserving the status quo’ – and Wyatt, as I have stated, is more sympathetic to the collective than the individual. The extent of contextualisation can have a significant extent on the extent to which the subject is presented as a lone genius in the Romantic tradition. The same approach is evident in the other public works submitted alongside this contextual statement. I have noted that Frith, for instance, is critical of those biographers who neglect commerce and business deals, and I agree with Frith (2007) that an understanding of the music industries is integral to an understanding of popular music. In *Different Every Time*, as in the other public works submitted alongside the contextual statement, I operate from the premise that what is often considered to be an individual artistic statement is actually the product of industrial negotiation and collaboration. I refer on several occasions to Wyatt’s dealings with the music industries: the alleged payola scandal around the ‘Love Makes Sweet Music’ single (O’Dair 2014 a: 67); the difficulties that Soft Machine experienced with their various managers (109-110) and the financial strains of the Soft Machine septet (119); the financial strain of running Matching Mole (178); Wyatt’s reasons for signing to (207-209) and leaving (234-5) the Virgin record label; his signing to the Rough Trade (252) and Rykodisc (329-31) labels, even outlining the unusual terms of the deal with the latter company; his signing to Domino, on the same terms (370); and, finally, the fact that, unusually, Wyatt has been able to survive financially despite the fact that he has essentially refused to perform live since 1974 (392).

In this chapter, I have argued that my methods – interviews, secondary research and broad contextualisation – have allowed me to generate knowledge, both in my biography and in the other public works that accompany this contextual statement, that would not have been available by other means. Having justified my methods for collecting data, in the process of carrying out research for *Different Every Time* and other public works, I turn now to the way in which this data was interpreted.

4 Interpretation of data

The duty of the biographer – at least since Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* marked the move from 'coy' (Gillies 2009: 46), 'prim' (Holroyd 2003: 23) Victorian biography, towards more modern, 'warts and all' subject depictions – is 'to lay bare the facts of some cases, as he [sic] understands them' (Strachey 2003: 6). The emphasis is usually understood to be on the first part of Strachey's declaration: the biographer's duty is to state the facts, even if those facts are unflattering. Yet Marcus (1994: 113) points to a striking ambiguity in Strachey's statement, between objective 'facts and truth', on the one hand, and the subjectivity of interpretation on the other. Strachey's contemporary, Virginia Woolf, also highlighted this ambiguity:

On the one hand there is truth; on the other, there is personality. And if we think of truth as something of granite-like solidity and of personality as something of rainbow-like intangibility and reflect that the aim of the biography is to weld these two into one seamless whole, we shall admit that the problem is a stiff one and that we need not wonder if biographies have for the most part failed to solve it (Woolf 2008: 95).

As a biographer, then, my task was not only to collect data from interviews and secondary research but also to interpret it. Keats (2000: 60-1) states that researchers employing the interview method may face such challenges as inconsistency, non-cooperation, evasion, inaccuracy in recall, lack of verbal skills, conceptual difficulty, emotional state and bias – although, as I go on to argue, these are not necessarily problems if viewed from a perspective informed by poststructuralism and social constructionism. Since witnesses, friends, and enemies have their own agendas, or misremember events, or embroider their anecdotes over the years, 'biographers have to treat all testimony with scepticism and care' (Lee 2009: 7). The same is true, of course, of secondary research: understanding those hesitations, repetitions and digressions not fully represented in the transcription is even more difficult when an interview has been carried out by another researcher (Burke and Innes 2007). Burke and Innes also point to a number of reasons for questioning interview data, including the mood of the interviewee and the nature of the interaction between interviewer and interviewee. One response to these idiosyncratic variables, they suggest, is to set interview data in the broader context of other published accounts: 'The key point is that the academic interview is only one mode of inquiry, which is no more authoritative than other modes' (Burke and Innes 2007: 11). This does *not* mean,

Burke and Innes insist, that interview data is only valid when corroborated from other sources: they caution against ‘a consensualist conception of truth’. Instead, Burke and Innes argue that we should treat the very subjectivity of interviewee responses as instructive. Triangulation, Marshall and Rossman (2006: 204) have suggested, can, for qualitative research, be less a question of finding ‘the truth’ than of finding multiple perspectives for knowing the social world. Webster and Mertova (2007: 90) also question the value of triangulation, with its assumption that we can find ‘the one, ultimate truth’. Instead, in language that calls to mind the work of Barthes (1977) and Bakhtin (1981), they identify a multiplicity of truths and of valid interpretations. This informed my approach to conducting research for *Different Every Time*, an approach in keeping with Wyatt’s own politics and his stated desire to emphasise his role as a musical collaborator.

Below, I critically reflect on the reliability and validity of data gathered through interview and archival research, before examining the co-construction of authorised biography; the heteroglot qualities of authorised biography; and specific narrative gaps (Macherey 2006) in *Different Every Time*.

4.1 Reliability and validity

Having collected far more interview data than I would have room to include in the eventual book, I was highly selective in choosing what data to include and to exclude in *Different Every Time*. Was this process of selection, and then interpretation, of data affected by authorisation? How in other words can I guarantee reliability and validity?

There is such a thing as factual credibility, and this can be checked. If I asked whether Wyatt played the trombone, or was born in 1843, or was Chinese, there is a correct answer (that answer, in all three cases, is no). Yet, as interviewer, I also asked questions of a different sort, often along the lines of: ‘What did you think about X?’ It would have made little sense to evaluate the answers to such questions in terms of ‘truth value’. Many of my questions, instead, were intended to generate ‘specimen’ answers that showed the *perceptions* of my interviewees. For these questions, I have followed Silverman (2014: 197) in treating the interviews not simply as reports on reality but as displays of perspectives. This is reflected by my use of phrases such as ‘the way Wyatt recalls it’ (O’Dair 2014 a: 123) and ‘Wyatt won’t

admit to' (204), and my acknowledgement that accounts of the social conflict within, and ultimate disintegration of, Soft Machine vary depending on who is asked (127). My criteria for selection, then, related less to 'truth' than to 'plausibility', in the sense understood by Wood and Kroger (2000: 174): 'whether or not a set of claims is acceptable', or *seemingly* true; whether it seems reasonable, given what readers already know. Webster and Mertova (2007) make a similar argument when they state that what matters in narrative research is 'verisimilitude' – that the results have *the appearance of truth*.

Gergen (2009: 58-61) questions the assumptions on which empirical research is based, arguing convincingly that to measure a phenomenon is not to reflect an independent world, but rather to give voice to the cultural traditions of which researchers are a part; that no research is morally and politically unbiased, since all researchers participate in social traditions; that numbers do not depict the world any more adequately than words; and, finally, that there is no single array of words, graphs or pictures than is uniquely suited to portraying the world. Mishler (1986: 52) suggests that interview data can only be properly understood if we acknowledge the fact that meaning emerges as a result of interaction between interviewer and interviewee. Meaning, Mishler argues, is jointly constructed: 'an adequate understanding of interviews depends on recognising how interviewers reformulate questions and how respondents frame answers in terms of their reciprocal understanding as meanings emerge during the course of an interview'. Holstein and Gubrium (1995: 9) agree that the 'truth value' of respondents' replies cannot be judged simply in terms of whether they match what lies in a 'vessel of objective answers'. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) also argue that we should rethink the traditional concepts of 'reliability' (the extent to which enquiry yields the same answers whenever it is carried out) and 'validity' (the extent to which the enquiry yields the 'correct' answers). Instead, they suggest, our assessment should be 'centred on how meaning is constructed, the circumstances of construction, and the meaningful linkages that are assembled for the occasion':

One cannot expect answers on one occasion to replicate those on another because they emerge from different circumstances of production. Similarly, the validity of answers derives not from their correspondence to meanings held within the respondent but from their ability to convey situated experiential realities in terms that are locally comprehensible (Holstein and Gubrium 1995: 9).

I refer, on occasions, to these 'situated experiential realities' in *Different Every Time*, noting, for instance, that Wyatt is uncomfortable discussing certain subjects (O'Dair 2014 a: 143, 153), and that, when 'pushed', his answer to a given question might change (220). Silverman (2014: 277) states that constructionists do not evaluate texts in terms of their truth value: to do so would be naturalist, playing into the Romantic myth of 'authentic' lived experience, and failing to recognise the problematic analytic status of interview data which are never simply raw but both situated and textual. The notion that meaning, in the social world, cannot be separated from context (Wood and Kroger 2000) has important consequences for the interpretation of data, since interpretation is contextualised and provisional. This is not to state that there are no criteria for selecting one version of events over another, but simply that the selection criteria are 'socially constructed, disputable, negotiated and arguably arbitrary'; it is impossible for a researcher to be 'value-neutral' (Wood and Kroger 2000: 166). As Gergen (2009: 15) argues, one's values inevitably lead one to select certain ways of putting things and not others. I go on, in the following section, to critically reflect upon my own values as biographer and to consider how these may have affected the interpretation of data in *Different Every Time*, as part of the broader consideration of how the process of authorisation affected the interpretation of data.

4.2 The co-construction of authorised biography

I have already examined, in Chapter 3, the extent to which the process of authorisation can be understood to have affected the collection of data for *Different Every Time*. I now address the issue of whether authorisation affected the interpretation of that data – an issue central to the accusation that authorised biography is too close to ghostwritten autobiography.

Certainly, Wyatt, as authorising subject, did affect interpretation to a certain extent. As authorising subject, most obviously, he was in a position to withdraw his authorisation at any point, although happily he did not ever make such a threat. Given that some respondents checked with Wyatt before to agreeing to an interview, this would have significantly limited my access.^{xviii} I would also suggest that, just as the very fact that I was conducting interviews in the role of authorised biographer will have affected the data I gathered, so my status as authorised biographer will, even if

only subconsciously, have affected my interpretation of that data. I will have been influenced, apart from anything else, by knowing there would be a ‘this is your life’ moment when I would present my manuscript to Wyatt for authorisation. (In that sense, writing the authorised biography of a living subject is subtly different, I suggest, even from writing a biography of a deceased subject, authorised by the estate.) An element of self-censorship, then, cannot be discounted.

At the same time, Wyatt spoke more than once about supporting ‘free speech’: it was particularly important, he laughed, for someone who ‘still gets called a Stalinist’.^{xix} By encouraging me to interview a number of respondents, he also increased the chances that I would encounter views that did not correspond with his own. In fact, Wyatt has stated that there are passages of the biography with which he is uncomfortable.^{xx} There are certainly points in the book when I present views that diverge from Wyatt’s own. I state, for instance, that, despite Wyatt’s protestations, his half-siblings both describe their upbringing as ‘bohemian’ (O’Dair 2014 a: 27) and quote respondents who insist, contrary to Wyatt’s memories, that there were music-making sessions in his adolescent home, Wellington House (35). I also suggest, contrary to Wyatt’s own view, that his music can, to be an extent, be understood as part of the ‘Canterbury scene’ (O’Dair 2014 a: 52, 119) and I acknowledge that Wyatt could seem ‘churlish’ (O’Dair 2014 a: 343) for refusing to perform, as was customary for curators, at the Meltdown festival in 2001. I also include details that are unflattering: Penman (2014) notes that I include details of Wyatt’s promiscuity his struggle with alcoholism. *Different Every Time*, then, is far from being a ghostwritten autobiography in all but name. It is significant, perhaps, that the book was my idea, rather than Wyatt’s, and also that, unlike Miles and McCartney, Wyatt and I were not friends when I began work on the book. It is also important to remember that, while Wyatt carried out the ‘author function’ for *Different Every Time*, the book was still published under my name. It may have been in Wyatt’s interests that the book didn’t seem whitewashed, since it made it more credible, but it was also in *my* interests. This would not have been true of an ‘invisible’ ghostwriter, motivated by financial gain rather than recognition or reputation: ‘I don’t care if my name is on the jacket – as long as it’s on the cheque’ (Campbell 2010). It was also in the interests of my editor and publisher, since an obviously whitewashed account would be likely to achieve less commercial success.

Asif Kapadia, the director of the Amy Winehouse documentary, *Amy*, claims to have approached his subject with ‘total objectivity’ (Berliner 2015). By contrast, I make no

claim to have been value-neutral in approaching my biographical subject. As Street (2015: 531) notes, I also approach Wyatt as an admirer.^{xxi} Penman (2014) describes the book as 'affectionate', and says he 'occasionally wondered' if I had 'become too close' to Wyatt and Bengé. Yet it is hardly unprecedented to begin a biography as an admirer of the biographical subject. Frith (1983: 272-3) notes that 'rock biographies are most commonly written by rock fans', and this kind of fandom is not exclusive to popular music. Edel, to take only one example from the field of literary biography, could be understood as a 'fan' of Henry James,^{xxii} and Lee suggests that biographers in other fields share this 'fandom':

Even biographers that resist the notion that the story they are telling has anything to do with them, and who put themselves in the narrative as little as possible, have to admit that their choice of subject has been made for a reason, and that there is no such thing as an entirely objective treatment (Lee 2009: 12).

Indeed, I would argue that it is naïve to imagine that any researcher can escape her values. Negus (1996: 3) makes the point that 'popular music cannot be known in any neutral, immediate or naively experimental way'. Instead, our understanding is grounded in cultural activities, which are 'expressed through languages and symbol systems... within particular social circumstances and subject to different types of political regulation'. In language that echoes Abrams' (1953) work on Romantic ideology, Negus also declares that popular music cannot be considered simply a 'mirror', reflecting society. Instead, 'music is created, circulated, recognised and responded to according to a large range of conceptual assumptions and analytical activities that are grounded in quite particular social relationships, political processes and cultural activities' (Negus 1996: 4). My biography, of course, is part of this process of mediation, and will inevitably be influenced – just as Negus acknowledges that *his* book was influenced – by my own background and experience of living in a particular country at a particular time. Because I was born in 1981, for instance, I did not experience Wyatt's output – prior to 1997's *Shleep* – in chronological order, and have a perspective on Wyatt's work that is different to that of those who experienced earlier work (*Soft Machine*, *Rock Bottom*, 'Shipbuilding' and so on), as it was released.

Renders is correct, then, that the process of biographical authorisation affects the interpretation of data. At least in my experience, however, Renders is mistaken in

assuming that this affect is manifested through overt censorship. Wyatt did not seek to change either interview data or my interpretation of that data. It is, instead, a much more subtle process, more closely related to the biographer's own fandom and the possibility of self-censorship. To Renders, this is a fundamental flaw of the authorised biography. I would suggest, however, that the fandom of the biographer and the possibility of self-censorship are also pertinent to *unauthorised* biography: not every unauthorised biographer is Albert Goldman. The subjects of unauthorised biographies, or their estates, also exercise a degree of control. Barney Hoskyns' 2009 biography of Tom Waits is illustrative of the challenge of securing interviews without the co-operation of the biographical subject: the book includes an appendix of correspondence with subjects who turned down his interview requests at the behest of Waits and his wife and manager, Kathleen Brennan. Similarly, lack of co-operation from the Jimi Hendrix estate meant that director John Ridley was unable to use any Hendrix compositions or recordings for his 2013 biopic *Jimi: All Is By My Side*. It is important to acknowledge that biographies are an aspect of the star-making process, whether they are authorised or not; both forms, for Frith (1983: 272), can be considered 'hagiographies', in the sense of 'making lives into legends'.^{xxiii} To this extent, *Different Every Time* is indeed hagiographic – but so too are unauthorised biographies. I return here to the point that biographies do not only challenge, but also create and reinforce, popular music myths (Strachan 2003), just as music documentaries validate particular moments and narratives in 'rock history' by celebrating the mythic status of stars and consolidate the mythic status of events (Shuker 2012: 105). While I make no attempt, in *Different Every Time*, to disguise the fact that I approach my subject as a fan, Street (2015: 531) is clear that the book is not 'mere hagiography'. It is a point also made by Iannapollo in the ASRC journal:

While the biography is 'authorised', O'Dair doesn't whitewash Wyatt's life. His late-60s rock star lifestyle was par for the course. The internecine battles within Soft Machine are recounted and present Wyatt as much as provocateur as victim. Details regarding two suicide attempts (one as a teenager and one in his early 20s) are deftly handled. Wyatt's bouts with alcoholism (both pre- and post-accident) and depression are addressed quite frankly by Wyatt (Iannapollo 2015: 112).

As I have shown, the notion that a subject might claim to be less than content with an authorised biography is far from unprecedented. This suggests that the subject does not have total control. Moreover, this balance of power and responsibility may suit

the subject very well. For Foucault (1984: 119), the construction of the author is an attempt to impose limits: 'the author is... the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning'. By authorising 'at a distance', insisting on more than one occasion that *Different Every Time* was 'my' book, Wyatt maintained some measure of influence while also allowing meaning to proliferate. The authorising subject, in other words, has a disclaimer: *it isn't my book*.^{xxiv} The crucial point, then, is that the authorising subject of a biography – unlike the autobiographical subject, even one that employs a ghostwriter – does not accept responsibility; that responsibility remains with the biographer. After all, as Genette (1997: xviii) points out, there is a legal distinction between biography and autobiography: even if the subject of a ghostwritten autobiography has not always read the text, then she does at least accept legal responsibility for it. In the case of biography, by contrast, legal responsibility remains with the biographer, whether or not the biography is authorised. The authorised biography, as a result, appears more detached – 'a biography has more status precisely because it is not a selfie' (Renders 2017: 162) – and this, paradoxically, may better serve the authorising subject.

The point then is that Renders' image of the authorising subject breathing down the neck of the authorised biographer is misguided: the authorising subject, unwilling to take on responsibility for the biography, may have no desire to exercise complete control. Complete narrative control is, in any case, impossible. If it is true that the subject of an authorised biography will influence the text, this is also true of the subject of an *unauthorised* biography. Rather than the picture Renders paints of the authorised biographer as a ventriloquist's dummy, I would argue that, in fact, the process of interpreting data is one of co-construction between biographer, authorising subject and, indeed, other parties, just as meaning too was co-constructed during the interviews that generated some of that data, as Mishler (1986) suggests. I now go on to examine the other parties that contribute to this process of co-construction, and the heteroglossia that results.

4.3 Heteroglossia and the determination of the biographical subject

I have suggested that biography is best understood as the result not of individual labour but, rather, of a process of *collective* authorship. The obvious collaboration is between biographer and subject: Holroyd (2003: 19) states that the biographer 'can

stretch out a hand to his subject and invite him, invite her, to write one more work, posthumously and in collaboration', and the idea of 'co-partnership' between biographer and subject dates at least as far back as Boswell (Lee 2009: 46). We can understand authorised biography, then, as co-constructed between biographer and authorising subject. Yet the process of producing an authorised biography in fact involves many parties, not only the biographer and the authorising subject (or estate). St Clair (2015: 49), for instance, points out that publishers, printers, designers, engravers and manufacturers, as well as the biographer and the subject, have historically all played a part in presenting a life in biographical form. Although I am named on the cover of *Different Every Time*, and Wyatt, the authorising subject, carries out the book's 'author function', a number of others were also involved in its creation, among them my agent; my editor, Mark Ellingham, who, for instance, largely wrote the 'discography' section; Jonathan Coe, who wrote the preface; the translators of the French and Italian editions; and so on. Also with relation to the individual/collective couplet, it is also noteworthy that Wyatt was not the book's only authoriser: as I stated earlier in this statement, it was Benge, Wyatt's wife, manager and co-creator, who asked if she and Wyatt could read the manuscript prior to publication, and those interview subjects who asked to make certain comments 'off the record' typically explained their request with reference to fear of offending or irritating Benge rather than Wyatt.

Rather than wholeheartedly adhering to the Romantic myth of the individual author-god, I set out in *Different Every Time* to present a number of accounts. Oral history and 'micro-history' were important influences in this respect; Loriga (2017: 38) suggests that 'the historian's task is not to create unity from heterogeneous material, nor to construct a single discourse about the past, but rather to enrich the orchestral score of multiple discourses.' We can understand the resulting biography as polyphonic, akin to an orchestral score. We can also understand it with relation to Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia, to which I have referred hitherto in this statement. For Bakhtin, the novel is 'multiform in style and variform in speech and voice' (1981: 261), and these various languages and verbal-ideological belief systems are socially located. They are also beyond the control of the narrator. Instead, readers are allowed to find authority where it is most appropriate for them, 'often in defiance of the narrator's dictates' (Cobley 2014: 95). While Bakhtin's primary focus is the novel, the notion of heteroglossia is also relevant to auto/biography: 'at any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom' (Bakhtin 1981: 291); all narrative is dialogical and resistant to closure (Cobley 2014: 203). If

anything, the genre of biography may have even greater heteroglossic potential than the genre of the novel, since biographies typically contain a profusion of other voices facilitated by way of interviews. The biographer is not only balancing his or her voice with that of the subject, but also with the voices of multiple interviewees. *Different Every Time* is very much a heteroglot text, made up as it is of my own interviews with Wyatt and numerous other respondents; lyrics; liner notes; and various secondary sources including published interviews with Wyatt and others, record reviews, auto/biographies and TV and radio appearances by Wyatt and others. I draw, occasionally, on press releases on and Wyatt's own correspondence, and even on novelists and poets: Philip Larkin, Jean Rhys, Jonathan Coe. The concluding sections of the book, which contain a discography, a list of online resources, notes and sources, photo credits, thanks and an index, introduce yet more voices.

Swiss (2005: 288) states that rock musicians often become autobiographers in order to make a financial profit, and this may also be true of those who agree to an authorised biography: we might think back to McCartney allegedly taking 75% of income for 1998's *Paul McCartney: Many Years From Now* (Sounes 2010). Wyatt, by contrast, did not profit financially from my book, although it may, perhaps, have increased record sales and streaming income. Swiss suggests that rock musicians may also write autobiographies 'to seize narrative authority' (2005: 288). This may also be true of those who authorise biographies although, as I have suggested, the ability of the subject to seize narrative authority is diminished if there are a large number of interview respondents. This was the approach I took in *Different Every Time*: I collected a large number of interview accounts, as well as carrying out archival research, and set out to position interview data in the context of other published accounts as well as other interviews I conducted in the course of my research. I have suggested that Wyatt, like Steve Jobs, *wanted* to be decentred – an impulse reminiscent of Gorky (1977) and his rejection of bourgeois, individualist Romanticism, as well as of the tendencies of many academics within popular music studies. This impulse was evident not only in the biography but also in the accompanying compilation album (2014).^{xxv}

The scenario envisaged by Renders, of the passive biographer being dictated to by the active authorising subject, then, is too simplistic. An authorised biography is made up of competing voices, and the final text is beyond the control of any single individual. This is most clear in the treatment of Wyatt's fall and his subsequent paraplegia, a subject that requires some extended comment here.

4.4 Narrative gaps

I have argued, following Bakhtin (1981), that texts should be seen as heteroglot and unstable. Macherey (2006: 22), too, argues that works are not 'organic' and unified, but rather made up of a series of conflicting elements; 'though it may appear finite and closed, the work is perhaps torn and gaping'. He continues:

To explain the work is to show that, contrary to appearances, it is not independent, but bears in its material substance the imprint of a determinate absence which is also the principle of its identity. The book is furrowed by the allusive presence of those other books against which it is elaborated; it circles about the absence of that which it cannot say, haunted by the absence of certain repressed words which make their return (Macherey 2006: 89).

Macherey (2006: 95) asserts that 'the book is not self-sufficient; it is necessarily accompanied by a *certain absence*, without which it would not exist. A knowledge of the book must include a consideration of this absence.' Wood and Kroger (2000: 91) also highlight the notion of absence, calling, in their work on discourse analysis, for particular attention to be paid to silence; the absence of talk, they argue, is not *nothing*, but *something*. *Different Every Time*, like any other text, features such 'narrative gaps'. One, for instance, concerns Wyatt's decision to spend the best part of the 1980s as a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). Given that this was a deeply unfashionable decision even among those on the far left, Wyatt's membership might be considered puzzling. I have not attempted, however, to offer the 'missing piece' of narrative that neatly completes the puzzle. Rather, I present a number of related factors, including Wyatt's Fabian Society upbringing, his dissatisfaction with the Labour party and with British foreign policy and his perception of growing racism in the country at large, presenting Wyatt's move towards the CPGB as a gradual, and not entirely 'knowable', drift rather than a single 'lightbulb moment' (O'Dair 2014 a: 243-4). This is a clear distinction from so-called 'psychobiography', that field of biography most overtly influenced by psychology. Edel, a strong proponent of psychobiography, is insistent on the requirement for the biographer to look for:

the figure under the carpet, the evidence on the reverse of the tapestry, the life-myth of a given mask... [the psychological signs] that enable us to understand what people are really saying behind the faces they put on, behind the utterances they allow themselves to make before the world Edel (1959: 162).

For Edel, there is a 'key' that 'unlocks' the biographical subject. My own view is that no such single explanation exists, an approach influenced by Lee (2005: 218).

In the *Different Every Time* compilation album (2014), as well as the biography, Soft Machine could also be considered to be, to an extent, a narrative gap – although, I would suggest, not as complete a narrative gap as Wyatt might have desired. This is because, in the biography, I was restricted in part by the fact that I was not able to secure interviews with any former members except Daevid Allen, who left Soft Machine in 1967 – a full four years before Wyatt.^{xxvi} In an attempt not to make the account of Wyatt's time in the band too one-sided, I have employed secondary sources (see, for instance, O'Dair 2014 a: 125, 147) to present the views of the other members of the band, but this is not as effective as being able to conduct my own interviews. Another partial narrative gap in *Different Every Time* concerns Wyatt's alcoholism. My interview respondents – who, after all, I was interviewing in the capacity of Wyatt's authorised biographer – were typically reluctant to speak on record about Wyatt's alcohol dependency, although I include those comments I have managed to collect, primarily from Benge (see, for instance, O'Dair 2014 a: 372-4). I also refer, in the biography, to the fact that Wyatt's alcohol dependency is to an extent a narrative gap, addressing in the text the fact that respondents tend only to address the topic briefly and euphemistically (O'Dair 2014 a: 232).

I could have said more in the biography, then, about Wyatt's membership of the CPGB, about Soft Machine and about his alcoholism. The most significant narrative gap in *Different Every Time*, however, concerns the precise circumstances of the evening of June 1 1973. That evening, Wyatt attended a party in London's Maida Vale. At some point that evening, he fell out of a fourth-floor window, breaking his back. He has been paraplegic ever since. In the years since, Wyatt has tended to downplay the accident, at one point going so far as to tell me that it was an 'incidental detour' (O'Dair 2014 a: 189). My own view is that this understates the significance of the accident, not least because, quite apart from its physical and psychological impact, paraplegia forced a fundamental change in Wyatt's

professional life, from band member to 'solo' (albeit highly collaborative) musician.^{xxvii} The accident could, in fact, be considered the pivotal moment of Wyatt's life, and *Different Every Time* is divided into two sections – Side A and Side B – at precisely this point in the narrative. Yet it is possible to identify instability, even absence, right at the book's heart, since I deal with the party and the fall in less than 1,000 words. I include only 200 words on the subject from my own interviews with Wyatt, and no quotes from my other interview respondents aside from a brief quote from Benge. I simply make brief references to Wyatt's own previous accounts of the accident, and include a short comment from an article by the journalist Vivien Goldman that the accident was the result of 'a typical party tangle' (O'Dair 2014 a: 186).

There are a number of rumours in circulation about the precise circumstances of Wyatt's accident, and to summarise these rumours under such a short and euphemistic phrase as Goldman's might be considered evidence of censorship. What I want to suggest, however, is that it is something more complex: Wyatt never instructed me to neglect the accident. For one thing, I simply did not have much interview data: even those few respondents I interviewed who had been at the party were unwilling to speak about it on the record. Wyatt himself also had little to say on the subject, insisting that he was simply too drunk at the time to remember anything more than what he told me. This could be an example of censorship on his part, of course, but it is impossible to say for sure. At the same time, I must acknowledge that I could probably have pushed Wyatt and other respondents further in interviews, so there may also be an element here of *self-censorship*. As I have argued, however, *self-censorship* is not exclusive to authorised biographies.

The crucial point is that I do not view biography as a search for 'truth'. I make reference, in *Different Every Time*, to the fact that Wyatt has described the accident in slightly different terms over the years, and quote Wyatt to the effect that he does not like discussing the subject (O'Dair 2014 a: 186). I do not set out, then, to 'explain' the incident, an approach influenced by oral history. 'Wrong' statements, Portelli (2016: 52) suggests, can still be psychologically 'true', and this truth may be no less important than factually reliable accounts; 'the first thing that makes oral history different... is that it tells us less about *events* than about their *meaning*'. It is also the case that my interest is less in revealing the precise circumstances of the accident than in Wyatt's lived experience of his subsequent paraplegia. While Wyatt is keen to downplay this too, I would suggest that, while the accident may, to an extent, be a narrative gap in *Different Every Time*, Wyatt's resultant paraplegia is not. Although I

have little interview data from Wyatt on the subject of his paraplegia, I do comment in the biography that, contrary to Wyatt's insistence, the accident must have affected the music he made at least in its immediate aftermath (O'Dair 2014 a: 199), and state that his claim that the paraplegia was an incidental detour might 'stretch credulity' (189). In fact, Wyatt's paraplegia returns again and again (O'Dair 2014 a: 201, 224, 231-2, 250, 286, 297-8, 308, 314, 318, 373). I draw upon sources other than Wyatt to present perspectives on his paraplegia, for instance data from interviews with Bengé, Wyatt's son Sam Ellidge and his half-sister Prue Anderton (O'Dair 2014 a: 187). I also cite a postcard Wyatt wrote to his friend and collaborator Hugh Hopper (O'Dair 2014 a: 279), in which Wyatt suggests that his physical condition did, indeed, contribute to his creative inertia. Finally, I cite Bengé to the effect that Wyatt is 'in denial' (O'Dair 2014 a: 189) on the subject of his paraplegia and its effects.

Wyatt's fall, then, is to some extent a narrative gap in *Different Every Time*, even if his subsequent paraplegia is less of a narrative gap than Wyatt might have wished. As discussed, I also decline to offer a single explanation – a 'lightbulb' moment – that 'explains' Wyatt's joining the Communist Party of Great Britain. What is true of Lee's approach to documenting Woolf's suicide in her 1997 biography of the author, is also true of Wyatt's various suicide attempts: they are mysterious, and not entirely explicable. Jonathan Coe (who, incidentally, wrote the foreword to *Different Every Time*) makes a similar point in his 2004 biography of the novelist, poet and critic B S Johnson. Coe had the co-operation of the Johnson estate, and during his research he drew on Johnson's large archive of letters, diaries, manuscripts and notebooks. Unlike most biographers, however, Coe is candid about the fact that he does not entirely understand all aspects of Johnson's life and, in particular, death (Johnson killed himself, at the age of 40, in 1973). I too understand Wyatt's life and career as less than entirely knowable, and also consciously reject psychobiography: the 'figure in the carpet' (Edel 1984) that 'explains' a life in terms of a single formative event. Crucially, I would argue that the narrative gaps I have identified should be seen not as problematic but as a *virtue* of my biography. I have argued that my particular approach to collecting and interpreting data generated new knowledge: the narrative gaps are the natural corollary of this approach. Narrative gaps, after all, are a feature of all texts.^{xxviii} Iannapolo (2015) regards my treatment of Wyatt's accident in *Different Every Time* as a strength, noting in particular the fact that the reader is given a number of perspectives from which to choose.

While my biography, like all texts, features narrative gaps, it is an error to understand these as simply the result of censorship on the part of the authorising subject. Following Iser (1989), I would suggest that the reader fills such narrative gaps or 'indeterminacies'. Although Barthes (1977) may have pushed the point too far with his insistence that the 'birth of the reader' must come at the expense of the 'death of the author', it is nonetheless true that we should not assume that 'an isolated individual author simply encodes in narrative form a message with a strictly limited set of meanings which is subsequently to be decoded... by an intrepid reader in tune with the imperatives of the author' (Cobley 2014: 107). Instead, as I argued in Section 1.2, various intermediaries exist between 'real author' and 'real reader' (Rimmon-Kenan (1983), and texts are made up of multiple voices (Bakhtin 1981); the author cannot control where the reader ultimately locates authority. The notion that the authorising subject is in complete control is misguided to say the least.

5 Conclusion

Robert Wyatt may in some respects be an underground figure but he is worthy of study because his music has been so influential; because he has been present at so many key moments in popular music history; because of his unusual (hard left) political commitment, his paraplegia and his commitment to promoting marginalised musicians; and because he sheds new light on the individual/collective couplet. It is remarkable, then, that *Different Every Time* is to date the only Robert Wyatt biography. It is precisely by situating Wyatt's life and work in the social and commercial conditions of its production that I have generated new knowledge, examining the interplay between the personal, the political and the aesthetic. The academic literature relating to Wyatt is also surprisingly sparse. My peer-reviewed article on alcohol is an initial step in filling this gap, as is the pataphysics chapter currently in press (O'Dair forthcoming b). Although there is no shortage of journalism relating to Wyatt, media portrayals typically focus on him as subject – 'fish' – without paying sufficient attention to the contextual 'stream'. In the three media articles I submit alongside this contextual statement (O'Dair 2014 b, c, d), I set out, instead, to portray Wyatt as multiply determined, and as an exemplar of collaborative rather than individual creativity – a theme that also characterises the *Different Every Time* compilation album (2014). Beginning to fill these gaps, then, is my first contribution to knowledge.

My second contribution to knowledge lies in critically reflecting, in this contextual statement, on what is at stake in writing the authorised biography of a living subject. While my biography and some other public works focus on Robert Wyatt, my work sheds light upon authorised biography more broadly, making the case for biography's increased acceptance – both within and beyond popular music studies. The work of Simon Warner, edited collections such as *Litpop* (Carroll and Hansen 2014), and conferences such as Louder Than Words and Off the Page can be taken as early signs of an increased emphasis on the relationship between popular music and the written word. Yet there is much more to be done, particularly in the field of popular music and jazz biography, to build on the work of Frith (1983), Toynbee (2000), Thackray (2015) and Perchard (2006). In particular there is work to do on *authorised* biography, given the prominence of the view that the authorised biographer is essentially a ghostwriter and the authorised biography a form of secular hagiography. I have shown, instead, that I have not relied solely on the account of my authorising subject in writing *Different Every Time* but instead conducted interviews with

numerous other respondents and carried out extensive secondary research. I have also attempted to place Wyatt, as subject, in a broader social, cultural and political context. I present Wyatt's career as multiply determined (by his upbringing, by pataphysics, by alcohol and so on) rather than the result of some innate genius. Playing against the Romantic stereotype, I also emphasise the collaborative nature of Wyatt's music making – a feature noted by Street (2015) in his review of *Different Every Time*. Collectivity, as opposed to individualism, is something I also emphasise in the other public works that accompany this contextual statement, including the media articles (O'Dair 2014 c, O'Dair 2014 d) and the *Different Every Time* compilation album (Domino, 2014).

Renders would be correct in assuming that I, as biographer, was not in complete control of *Different Every Time*. Yet this is by no means to acknowledge that I was simply passive, or that the book is Wyatt's in all but attribution. *Different Every Time* is a deeply heteroglot work, featuring numerous interviews (both primary and secondary research) as well as lyrics, liner notes, record reviews and so on. It can be considered the result of co-construction, not only by biographer and subject but also by others including my editor and translators and it is beyond the role of any individual. To the extent that we can identify a primary 'selector and combiner of voices' (Toynbee 2000: 43), however, it is not Wyatt, as authorising subject, but me, as authorised biographer. In Foucault's conception, Wyatt carried out the 'author function' for the book, and, as authorising subject, undoubtedly affected both the data presented within it and the interpretation of that data. Yet *Different Every Time* remains distinct from a ghostwritten autobiography, with its gulf between 'real' and 'implied' author. I chose who to interview and what questions to ask; I chose to adopt the interview method, alongside archival research, in the first place. I was also primarily responsible for *interpreting* the data and, given that I collected a large number of interview accounts and conducted extensive archival research, for deciding what to include and what to omit. Inevitably, I was influenced by my own background: a different biographer would have differed in terms of both methodology and interpretation, emphasising and omitting different aspects of Wyatt's life and work. Indeed, a different biographer might not have begun from the premise that the 'individual' artistic statement is in fact better understood as the result of collaboration. Equally inevitably, I was influenced by the fact that I conducted research and interpreted data in the role of Wyatt's authorised biographer. This gave impressive access to interview subjects, but also resulted in a particular type of book: the very fact of the book's authorisation will have affected not only whether respondents

would agree to be interviewed but also the data produced in those interviews. Working as an authorised biographer will have affected me too, and could have resulted in an element of self-censorship on my part – although, as a Wyatt admirer, it is possible that this would have occurred even had the biography not been authorised. I exercised more control, then, than an authorised biographer such as Miles (1998). Yet it is only a matter of degree. All texts, mine as well as Miles' are heteroglot, and the notion that the subject, or the author, is ever in complete control is misguided.

The lack of academic writing on the authorised biographies of living popular music subjects is likely to be, in part, because those popular music scholars with a background in cultural studies and sociology have been more inclined to focus on audiences and the collective enterprise of making music than on individual popular music stars. Yet biography, with the partial exception of literary biography, is also neglected beyond popular music studies, in part due to its associations with gossip, prurience and anecdote. Bourdieu (1986), for instance, argues that it is an illusion to think of presenting a life as a succession of different interdependent occurrences that can be told in a coherent, successive form.

Klein (2017: 85) urges us to embrace the illusion identified by Bourdieu:

It seems hardly productive to debate whether or not there is such a thing as a 'life (story)' that can be particularly well told in a biographical format, or whether biographies were instrumental in defining the very concept and perceptual category of a life story. It is more interesting to consider these as interconnected elements, and to read *the biography as a concept of thought* that develops in the exchange between – and mutual influence of – lived lives and mediated representation (Klein 2017: 85).

Life practices and mediated representation are interconnected, and biography studies, as well as providing an academic methodology for generating knowledge, 'are also part of this knowledge and offer a fundamental way of understanding the world' (Klein 2017: 85). Studying biographies certainly provides a fundamental way of understanding popular music. And yet, despite the fact that a great number of popular music biographies are published every year, scholars have not extensively studied them. Particularly neglected is the authorised biography, especially the authorised biography of a living subject and the biography published by a popular,

rather than academic, press. Popular music studies, I would argue, should take these titles far more seriously, examining biography – authorised or not – as a ‘concept of thought’, at the confluence of ‘lived lives and mediated representation’. I hope, with this submission, to go some way towards filling that gap in knowledge, in popular music studies beyond: Booth (2015: 86) suggests that biography might be the least studied and theorised of all forms of writing. The gap is significant: although I disagree with Renders about the value of authorised biography, we are as one on the value of the biography as an object of study:

[it] leads not only to new data and factual knowledge about our past, but contributes to our evaluating, assessing and plausibly also correcting and reshaping the established narratives and interpretations of the past. Biography can, therefore, be regarded as an indispensable and important critical activity for the humanities and for society at large (Renders et al 2017: 10).

6 Bibliography

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Films

Amy. 2015. Directed by Asif Kapadia. Film4/On The Corner Films

Free Will and Testament: the Robert Wyatt Story. 2003. Directed by Mark Kidel. Somethin' Else

Jimi: All Is By My Side. 2013. Directed by John Ridley. Darko Entertainment/Freeman Film/Subotica Entertainment/Irish Film Board/Matador Pictures/AIBMS

I'm Not There. 2007. Directed by Todd Haynes. The Weinstein Company.

Oasis: Supersonic. 2016. Directed by Mat Whitecross. Lorton Entertainment/Mint Pictures/Nemperor/On The Corner Films

Robert Wyatt: Little Red Robin Hood. 1998. Directed by Carlo Bevilacqua and Francesco Di Loreto. Polygram

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Radio

Shipbuilding. *Soul Music*. BBC Radio 4. First broadcast 05.03.13.

Soup Songs: the Music of Robert Wyatt. BBC Radio 2. First broadcast 24.09.05.

The Voices of Robert Wyatt. BBC Radio 4. First broadcast 06.10.12.

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Recorded music

Grasscut 2012. 'Richardson Road'. Vinyl. Ninja Tune.

Imogen Heap. 2015. *Tiny Human*. MP3. Megaphonic

Matching Mole. 1972. 'O Caroline'. Vinyl. CBS

Nine Inch Nails. 2008. *Ghosts I-IV*. CD. The Null Corporation

Robert Wyatt. 2003. *Cuckooland*. CD. Hannibal

Robert Wyatt. 1997. *Shleep*. CD. Hannibal

Robert Wyatt. 1992 EP *A Short Break*. CD. Blueprint

Robert Wyatt. 1982. 'Shipbuilding'. Vinyl. Rough Trade

Robert Wyatt/Dishari. 1981. 'Grass' / 'Trade Union'. Vinyl. Rough Trade

Robert Wyatt. 1974. 'I'm A Believer'. Vinyl. Virgin

Robert Wyatt. 1974. *Rock Bottom*. Vinyl. Virgin

Robert Wyatt. 1970. *End of an Ear*. Vinyl. CBS

Soft Machine. 1967. 'Love Makes Sweet Music'. Vinyl. Polydor

Various artists. 2014. *Different Every Time*. CD/vinyl. Domino

Appendix: list of public works

Public work number	Category	Public work
1	Biography	O'Dair M. 2014 a: <i>Different Every Time: the Authorised Biography of Robert Wyatt</i> . London: Serpent's Tail
2	Academic article	O'Dair M. 2017: 'Even the ghost was more than one person': authorship and authorisation in <i>I'm Not There</i> . <i>IASPM@Journal</i> , 7:1
3	Academic article	O'Dair M. 2016. Pardon me I'm very drunk: alcohol, creativity and performance anxiety in the case of Robert Wyatt. <i>Popular Music</i> . 35: 2, 207-221
4	Academic literature review	O'Dair M. 2015. Collaborative, co-operative and collective business models in the 'new' music industries: a literature review. Accessed 04.10.17, http://www.nemode.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/ODair-2015-Collaborative-cooperative-and-collective.pdf
5	Journalism	O'Dair M. 2014 b. Pataphysics: your favourite cult artist's favourite pseudoscience. <i>Pitchfork</i> . Accessed 04.10.17: https://pitchfork.com/features/article/9527-pataphysics-your-favorite-cult-artists-favorite-pseudoscience/
6	Journalism	O'Dair M. 2014 c. Robert Wyatt and benign dictatorships. <i>Drowned in Sound</i> . Accessed 04.10.17, http://drownedinsound.com/in_depth/4148367-robert-wyatt-and-benign-dictatorships
7	Journalism	O'Dair M. 2014 d. Why Robert Wyatt's wife Alfie is his most important collaborator. <i>Irish Times</i> . Accessed 04.10.17, https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/why-robert-wyatt-s-wife-alfie-is-his-most-important-collaborator-1.2032866
8	Compilation album	Various artists. 2014. <i>Different Every Time</i> . CD/vinyl. Domino

ⁱ The *Different Every Time* compilation album (2014), which is submitted alongside this contextual statement, contains numerous examples of Wyatt's collaborative work – including the Grasscut track 'Richardson Road' (2012), on which I play double bass. I curated the compilation with Wyatt and with the former Rykodisc general manager and A&R, Andy Childs; Jonny Bradshaw, A&R at the Domino record label, naturally had some input, too. It was, then, even more obviously co-constructed than the biography with which it shares a title, even aside from the fact that the compilation features numerous artists. The curator is, after all, a means of attributing to an individual author a creative process that is more accurately understood as collective, and the curator has in recent decades moved from a 'caretaker' role to that of 'auteur', 'almost solely responsible for the *authorship* of an exhibition's concept' (O'Neill 2012: 28; emphasis added). My article for the *Drowned in Sound* website (O'Dair 2014 c), submitted alongside this contextual statement, also focuses on Wyatt as collaborator.

ⁱⁱ The strongest strain of Romanticism within popular music is within rock, which is largely focused on groups rather than individual performers; rock's Romanticism is focused on both the 'individuality' of groups and on individuals *within* groups. Arguably, technological change has only enhanced the collective nature of popular music production. In my review of the literature on collaborative, co-operative and collective business models in the music industries (O'Dair 2015), submitted alongside this statement, I examine the erosion of boundaries between professionals and amateurs characteristic of 'participatory cultures' (Jenkins *et al* 2013), with reference to albums including *Ghosts I-IV* by Nine Inch Nails (2008).

ⁱⁱⁱ There were several other biographies featured in that slot during the course of the year – Moore (2015), Sisman (2015), Coveney (2015), Parini (2015), Gordon (2015) – yet the only other popular music title was Elvis Costello's *autobiography* (2015). Even beyond popular music, the only other music Radio 4 'book of the week' in 2015 was another *autobiography*: by Philip Glass (2015).

^{iv} Renders is Professor of History and Theory of Biography, and Director of the Biography Institute, at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands. He is also co-founder and Vice President of the Biography Society

^v I examine the phenomenon of pooling royalties in the article about collaborative, collective and cooperative business models (O'Dair 2015) that I submit alongside this contextual statement.

^{vi} Grasscut's approach to allocating royalties is akin to that adopted by U2 and Nirvana: 'Richardson Road' by Grasscut, which features on the *Different Every Time* compilation album submitted alongside this contextual statement, was written by my Grasscut colleague Andrew Phillips – yet I claim a share of songwriting royalties.

^{vii} I suggest in *Different Every Time*, for instance, that a left-leaning, 'bohemian' upbringing was an important factor in Wyatt's development: he was not simply a 'born genius'. I also draw attention to a number of other fortuitous circumstances: Wyatt met a number of musicians who would be critical to his early career while still at school; he arrived in London and co-founded Soft Machine just in time for 1967's 'summer of love'; he happened to share a manager with Jimi Hendrix, and so was able to tour the United States as Hendrix's support act; and so on. I also examine formative influences on Wyatt, notably alcohol (2016) and pataphysics (2014 b), in other public works that accompany this contextual statement. Also currently in press is a book chapter concerning the influence on popular music of pataphysics, which draws heavily on Wyatt's work as solo artist and band member (O'Dair forthcoming b).

^{viii} In the end we made two compilations, available together (on CD) or separately (on vinyl). One included only his collaborations; the other served as introduction to his work as a featured artist.

^{ix} In my *IASPM@Journal* article (O'Dair 2017), submitted alongside this contextual statement, I have drawn on Foucault's work to suggest that the 2007 Bob Dylan biopic *I'm Not There*, directed by Todd Haynes, can be understood as part of Dylan's active negotiation of his own star image.

^x While there are many subject-written titles amongst the recent rash of popular music autobiographies, most rock autobiographies are written collaboratively, listing the musician's name first and then adding 'with' (Swiss 2005). Stein and Butler (2015) suggest that one reason for the academic neglect of music autobiographies is that most are co-written, and some scholars regard co-authored work as inauthentic (although within popular music studies, by contrast, there is a tendency to value the collective over the individual). In fact, there is plenty of co-authored work within academia. The issue, then, seems to be with this particular type of co-authored work, in which the work is not by two writers but by a ghostwriter or 'real author', while the reader would assume from the text that it is written by the subject, who carries out the 'author function'; the subject, in other words, is the 'implied author'.

^{xi} As well as the placement of the co-writer's acknowledgement, we should also consider – in paratextual terms – the size of type relative to that in which the subject's name is written, and of how the relationship between subject and 'real author' is described ('with', 'and', 'as told to' and so on).

^{xii} We might consider, for instance, the unusual situation in which Julian Assange attempted and failed to cancel the contract for his memoir, having fallen out with his ghostwriter, Andrew O'Hagan. That Canongate were able to publish *Julian Assange: the Unauthorised Autobiography* (2011) against Assange's wishes, listing Assange as author, raises important questions not just about the role of ghost

– far from invisible, since O’Hagan went on to speak publicly against both the book and its subject – but also about the role of the publisher and the subject’s right to ownership (Knapp and Hulbert 2017: 136).

^{xiii} This is the same Miles who wrote *Paul McCartney: Many Years From Now* (1998).

^{xiv} Secondary research was also critical to the other public works submitted alongside this contextual statement. My article on *I’m Not There* (O’Dair 2017), for instance, examines Dylan’s stated views on the biopic *I’m Not There* (2007) as expressed in interviews; I have not taken these statements as having truth value but rather I have understood them as part of Dylan’s active negotiation of his own star image. Although it is still in press, and therefore I do not submit it alongside this contextual statement as a public work, I also draw on the stated opinions of musicians as expressed in published interviews in my chapter about the influence of pataphysics on popular music (O’Dair forthcoming b).

^{xv} My *Popular Music* article (O’Dair 2016), for instance, draws on interviews I conducted with Wyatt and various associated musicians and family members between 2008 and 2013. Wyatt had not previously talked in detail about his alcoholism, and neither had other respondents. That I was able to interview Wyatt and others – from Bengé to studio engineer Jamie Johnson and collaborator Paul Weller – on the subject, and particularly that I was able to do so in the role of Wyatt’s authorised biographer, allowed me to create knowledge that would not have been available had I employed other methods..

^{xvi} For the professional interviewer in the television and radio media, as Keats (2000: 14) notes, the interviewer’s skill lies in producing the most entertaining or provocative few minutes at their disposal while still being informative’. Media interviews, at least for broadcast media, tend to be much briefer than research interviews. Keats also points out that, for television and radio media, the interview itself is the culmination of a process; my interviews, by contrast, were conducted not as ends in themselves but as part of a more long-term research project. There are also important ethical differences: the instructional literature for journalists, for instance, talks of trying to ‘manoeuvre’ the subject into saying what you want them to say, which would be highly dubious in a research interview (Smith 2007: 85). Another difference between research and media interviews is that it would be considered extremely poor practice, in research terms, to ‘tidy up’ quotes – something Harcup (2009: 138) describes as standard among journalists.

^{xvii} My *Popular Music* article (O’Dair 2016) depicted Wyatt as impinged upon by one particular external factor: alcohol. Although it is not submitted alongside this contextual statement, my chapter on the influence of pataphysics on popular music (O’Dair forthcoming b) is congruent with my other works in its determination to place music in its broader cultural context, in this instance with reference to the influence of Alfred Jarry.

^{xviii} With regard to Michael Holroyd’s 1998 biography of George Bernard Shaw, for instance, Shaw’s Estate were in a position ‘to withdraw their authorisation if they felt the book was badly written, but they could not stop its publication as an unauthorised life – instead, they would charge fees for quotations that would otherwise have been free’ (Gillies 2009: 50). More recently, John le Carré seems to have fallen out with his authorised biographer, Adam Sisman, to the extent that le Carré published his *autobiography* (2017), just one year after the publication of Sisman’s authorised biography – a move depicted by Sisman (2016) as an attempt by le Carré to ‘wrest back control of the agenda’.

^{xix} Wyatt R. Independent Music interview with Marcus O’Dair on 28.08.08. Louth, Lincolnshire

^{xx} At one launch event (An Audience with Robert Wyatt, at the Arnolfini, Bristol, 26.09.14) Wyatt described having such a biography written as an ‘unnerving’ experience, with ‘an element of being on trial’; at another (An Evening With Robert Wyatt, at the Southbank Centre, London, 23.11.14) he declared: ‘It’s not a book I would have written’.

^{xxi} In terms of my positionality, it is significant that, in addition to being Wyatt’s authorised biographer, I also collaborated with Wyatt on the track ‘Richardson Road’, which is included on the *Different Every Time* compilation (2014) submitted alongside this contextual statement.

^{xxii} Edel won a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award for his five-volume biography of the American novelist and critic, later distilled into a one-volume edition (2008), yet he has also been dismissed as ‘far too staunch an adherent of the James cult’ (Rahv 1972). Edel worked hard to win the trust of the James family, and collaborated closely with his estate, attempting for a period, for instance, to minimise any mention of James’ homosexuality.

^{xxiii} There are aspects of *Different Every Time* that *do* play into Romantic ideology: Wyatt is named in the subtitle, for instance, and pictured on the front cover. While Street (2015) notes in his *Popular Music* review that the book positioned Wyatt very much as a collaborator, and I attempted to achieve something similar in the accompanying compilation album (2014), I recognise that even to structure the book around the singular author-figure of Wyatt does to an extent play into the Romantic myth of solitary genius. Bengé is a critical figure in Wyatt’s professional, as well as his private life, something I have attempted to reflect in the book (O’Dair 2014 a: 206-10, 252, 258, 306, 333-5, 383); yet she is unnamed on the cover of my book as she is on the front covers of Wyatt’s records – the very covers she designed. At the same time, however, I would argue that even to have begun to pull against biography’s inherent Romanticism is part of the book’s methodological contribution.

^{xxiv} Similarly, when Jobs asked Isaacson if there was material in *Steve Jobs* that he (Jobs) might not like, and Isaacson answered in the affirmative, Jobs is said to have replied: ‘Good, then it won’t read like an in-house book’ (Bywater 2011). This is an intriguing reply, not least because, as an authorised biography, Isaacson’s book *is* to an extent an in-house job. It is important to note that Jobs does not say

he does not want it to be an inside job, merely that he does not want it to be perceived as such. It is also noteworthy that Jobs *did* ask to be involved in designing the book's front cover (Isaacson 2011: xviii).

^{xxv} My article for the *Irish Times* (2014 d), submitted alongside this contextual statement, similarly strives to decentre Wyatt, with its focus on Benge's contribution as manager, co-lyricist and artwork designer. I am also currently co-editing about the Mute record label (Beaven *et al*, forthcoming) which sets out to tell the story of the Mute label not through a single narrative but rather as 'fractured', and multiply determined, with each chapter addressing a particular artist on the label. Record label histories can be considered a form of institutional biography (Shuker 2012: 28).

^{xxvi} Hugh Hopper and Elton Dean were both dead; my requests for an interview with Kevin Ayers were declined by Ayers' manager, while my requests for an interview with Mike Ratledge went unanswered.

^{xxvii} Although Wyatt released one solo album, 1970's *End of an Ear*, prior to the accident, it is reasonable to see his solo career as essentially beginning with 1974's *Rock Bottom*.

^{xxviii} *Oasis: Supersonic* (2016) contains no mention of the band's tussle with Blur for the Britpop crown, Noel Gallagher's explicit endorsement of Tony Blair or the group's decline after their peak in 1996; *Amy* (2015) has very little to say about the final years of Winehouse's short life and ignores Reg Traviss, whom Mitch Winehouse claims his daughter was planning to marry at the time of her death.