



Lives of the Novelists

By Carl Rollyson

iUniverse, Inc. Paperback. Condition: New. 160 pages. Dimensions: 8.8in. x 5.9in. x 0.5in. Is there a right way to write a literary life? In this collection of columns from the New York Sun, Carl Rollyson explores the relationship between narrative and literary analysis. Should biographies be written in the style and form of novels? How to balance the life and the work? How much literary criticism can a biography absorb into its narrative? Rollyson proposes a number of apologies for biography—including the thought that in the right hands the literary biography is a continuation of the writers' work and life. In such instances there seems to be a symbiosis between biographer and subject. In other cases, biographies spearhead the rediscovery of important writers. He rejects the idea that literary figures are not good subjects for biography because they are not men and women of action. That literary biography is a kind of strip mining, a pathography laying bare the subjects' life to no good purpose is another canard this book demolishes. The pieces here also expose the genre's weak points: a proclivity for overstatement and excessive length, the failure of biographers to build upon their predecessors' work (Rollyson invents a term—biographology—in...



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