

Anita Brookner:

An Inventory of Her Notebooks at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Brookner, Anita, 1928-2016
Title:	Anita Brookner Notebooks
Dates:	Circa 1986-1994
Extent:	2 boxes (.63 linear feet)
Abstract:	The papers of Anita Brookner consist of ten notebooks containing untitled drafts of her novels and reviews. The notebooks are undated but appear to date from about 1986 to 1994.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-00534
Language:	English
Access:	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Purchase, 1995 (R13385)
Processed by:	Katherine Mosley, 2007
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Novelist and art historian Anita Brookner was born in Herne Hill, a suburb of London, England, on July 16, 1928. Her father, Newson Bruckner, was a Polish immigrant, and her mother, Maude Schiska, was a singer whose father had immigrated from Poland and founded a tobacco factory. Maude changed their surname to Brookner due to anti-German sentiment in England. Anita Brookner had a lonely childhood, although her grandmother and uncle lived with the family, and her parents, nonreligious Jews, opened their house to Jewish refugees during the 1930s and World War II. Brookner, an only child, never married and took care of her parents as they aged. Her personal history influenced her first novel, *A Start in Life*, which she published in 1981 at the age of fifty-three. She continued to write, producing a novel every year or so. Her fourth novel, *Hotel du Lac* (1984), won the Booker Prize for Fiction and was adapted for television in 1986. Brookner is highly regarded as a stylist, and her novels typically depict intellectual, middle-aged women who suffer emotional loss and isolation, especially disappointment in romantic love.

Brookner received a B.A. in history from King's College in 1949 and a doctorate in art history at the Courtauld Institute of Art in 1953. Her specialty was late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century French art, and she studied the art of Jean-Baptiste Greuze in Paris on a French government scholarship for three years. She began her distinguished career teaching art history as a lecturer at the University of Reading in 1959. In 1964, she returned to the Courtauld, where she was promoted to reader in 1977 and taught until her retirement in 1988. From 1967 to 1968 she was the first female Slade Professor of Art at Cambridge University. Her first book, *J. A. Dominique Ingres*, was published in 1965, and her subsequent art history books are as well-regarded as her works of fiction. In addition to her careers as a novelist and art historian, Brookner has worked as a critic and began reviewing fiction for *The Spectator* in 1986.

Anita Brookner was made a CBE (Commander of the British Empire) in 1990. She died on March 10, 2016.

Sources:

British Council Contemporary Writers in the UK website, <http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth19> (accessed 14 March 2007).

Contemporary Literary Criticism, <http://www.galegroup.com/> (accessed 14 March 2007).

Contemporary Authors Online, <http://www.galegroup.com/> (accessed 14 March 2007).

Fullbrook, Kate. "Anita Brookner." *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 194: British Novelists Since 1960, Second Series*. Detroit: Gale Research, 1998.

McCrum, Robert. "Just Don't Mention Jane Austen," *The Observer*, 28 January 2001, <http://books.guardian.co.uk/departments/generalfiction/story/0,6000,429694,00.html> (accessed 16 March 2007)

Scope and Contents

The papers of Anita Brookner consist of ten notebooks containing untitled drafts of her novels and reviews. The notebooks are undated but appear to date from about 1986 to 1994.

As a novelist, Brookner writes a first draft by hand, with little revision, and then types a subsequent draft. Handwritten drafts of her novels *A Closed Eye* (1991), *A Family Romance* (1993), *Fraud* (1992), *Latecomers* (1988), and *Lewis Percy* (1989) are present. The notebooks for *Fraud* and *Lewis Percy* also contain drafts of Brookner's reviews of works by authors Margaret Atwood, Alice Thomas Ellis, D. J. Enright, Alexandre Jardin, Erik Orsenna, Marcel Proust, Andrew Stephen, Alain Robbe-Grillet, François-Olivier Rousseau, Colin Thubron, and John Updike.

Index Terms

Subjects

Authors, English--20th century.

Authors, English--21st century

Novelists, English.

Series I. Notebooks, ca. 1986-1994

- A Closed Eye* (1991)--see folder 1.7 **Box 1**
- A Family Romance* (1993)
- Handwritten notes and draft, in notebook **Folder 1**
- Handwritten draft, in five notebooks **Folder 2-6**
- Fraud* (1992)
- Handwritten notes and incomplete draft, in notebook. Also in notebook: handwritten notes and draft fragment of *A Closed Eye*; and handwritten drafts of reviews of *Roger's Version* (1986) by John Updike; *The Suzy Lamplugh Story* (1988) by Andrew Stephen; *Cat's Eye* (1988) by Margaret Atwood; *Remembrance of Things Past* (1913-1927) by Marcel Proust; *The Summer House: A Trilogy* (1994) by Alice Thomas Ellis; and *Falling* (1989) by Colin Thubron **Folder 7**
- Handwritten incomplete draft, in notebook **Folder 8**
- Latecomers* (1988)--see folder 2.1
- Lewis Percy* (1989) **Box 2**
- Handwritten notes and incomplete draft, in notebook. Also in notebook: handwritten notes and draft fragments of *Latecomers*, and handwritten draft of review of unidentified book of interviews with women **Folder 1**
- Handwritten incomplete draft, in notebook. Also in notebook: handwritten drafts of reviews of *Fields of Vision: Essays on Literature, Language, and Television* (1988) by D. J. Enright; *Ghosts in the Mirror* (1988) by Alain Robbe-Grillet; *L'Exposition Coloniale* (1988) by Erik Orsenna; *La Gare de Wannsee* (1988) by François-Olivier Rousseau; and *Le Zébre* (1988) by Alexandre Jardin **Folder 2**