Lacework or Mirror?
Diary Poetics of Frances Burney, Dorothy Wordsworth and Mary Shelley

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By

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Table of Contents

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INTRODUCTION

> Should you wish to make sure that your birthday will be celebrated three hundred years hence, your best course is undoubtedly to keep a diary. Only first be certain that you have the courage to lock your genius in a private book and the humour to gloat over a fame that will be yours only in the grave. For the good diarist writes either for himself alone or for posterity so distant that it can safely hear every secret and justly weigh every motive. For such an audience there is need neither of affectation nor of restraint. Sincerity is what they ask, detail, and volume (Woolf 1967, 44).

> When did it become possible to address personal writings to the physical medium on which they are written? When did "Dear Diary" begin to be used as the heading for a journal entry? (Lejeune 2009, 93).

Women's diaries[1] seem to be a particularly suitable subject for a researcher into life writing.[2] As Beatrice Didier has it, "there is a certain 'femininity' to diary writing, and it is precisely this passivity, this casualness, this rather soft fluidity that bears some similarity to an image of femininity that was established in the nineteenth century" (qtd. Lejeune 2009, 150). This study aims to examine a selection of journals by Frances Burney (1752-1840), Dorothy Wordsworth (1771-1855) and Mary Shelley (1797-1851). Special attention will be given to determining those elements of their diary poetics which inform three concepts of the journal – whether the Lejeunean lacework, the Gusdorfian mirror, or a combination of both – as implemented by these three women diarists. The study is grounded in the belief that the journal, as a genre alongside autobiography, letters and other forms of life writing, deserves a place in broadly understood literature, and may hence be analysed with a selection of tools and methods used to approach literary texts.

For the purposes of the present study, however, these diarists have been selected as each represents a different, successive generation of the late-eighteenth to early-nineteenth centuries. In consequence, each was affected by different external circumstances, although the deaths of all

[1] In this book, the terms "diary" and "journal" will be used interchangeably. This choice will be justified in Chapter One.

[2] For the meaning of the term "life writing", see Chapter One.

three occurred within a decade and a half. Frances Burney wrote her journals from 1768 to the late 1820s; Dorothy Wordsworth diarised from ca. 1798 to 1828; and Mary Shelley from 1814 to 1844 – in all three cases the diarising was carried out alongside massive correspondence. Another common denominator for the three journal writers is the fact that all of them engaged in literary activity other than journal writing, the latter constituting the master key only to the oeuvre of Dorothy Wordsworth. For the purposes of this study, it is their journal writing, extending over several decades each, that provides ample material in which to seek evidence of individual journal poetics, concepts and practices. Altogether, they span the epochs from the Age of Reason to the late romantic and early Victorian periods.

Although the above criteria have provided the basis for my selection of diaries to be investigated, it must be remembered that the idea of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary periodisation with respect to women writers has already been challenged as "conceptually useless" and "perhaps even counterproductive" (Mellor 2001, 393). It can hardly be used to demonstrate development, testifying instead only to a certain continuity of women's writing. Yet Burney, Wordsworth and Shelley are interesting for reasons other than simple chronological succession. Each came from a different milieu, representative of her generation's culture and mentality. These were reflected in the writers' backgrounds and lifestyles and, naturally, in the journals which were consequently produced. Frances Burney's late-eighteenth-century culture was predominantly urban and society-oriented. The life of Dorothy Wordsworth, chronologically an older romantic, was rural and secluded not only due to romantic ideals of rustic simplicity but, primarily, because of the wars between England and France which made foreign travel dangerous, if not plainly impossible, over prolonged periods of time. The life of Mary Shelley's generation of younger romantics was, in turn, cosmopolitan and continental but, paradoxically, also secluded in its isolation from the home country. As a result, and expectedly, the most stationary and localised of the three is Wordsworth's serial life writing – with the exception of a few travel journals documenting her home tours and short trips to Europe. In contrast, Frances Burney's and Mary Shelley's travels consisted, to a large extent, in continental tours, far removed – due to varying historical conditions – from the original concept of the Grand Tour.

The epochs which produced the diarists certainly influenced their lives, but did they affect their journalising practices, together with ensuing diary poetics and overall concepts? Surprisingly, Burney, who lived to see the transition from the Age of Reason to romanticism, remained largely

unaffected by the momentous cultural developments of her times. The closest she ever came to romantic ideas was in her inscription of sensibility, but romanticism as such went virtually unheeded by her, apparently failing to impress its mark on her life writing. Wordsworth and Shelley, in turn, in view of their close relationships with literary celebrities of their day, remained well-versed with the now canonical romantic poetry as soon as it came into being. One may wonder if the fact that all three diarists were writers of literature themselves influenced their journal poetics and, if so, to what extent. After all, theirs are not strictly literary diaries – if a literary diary is taken to be "an essentially a-fictive narrative work written for publication, constructed according to a more or less calendaric sequence, … and possessing artistic and aesthetic value" (Kurczaba 1980, 1-2). Although the "artistic and aesthetic" appeal of their personal journals remains unquestioned, Dorothy Wordsworth and Mary Shelley did not plan to have them published. Frances Burney did, but only towards the end of her life. One could repeat, with Harriet Blodgett, that all three journals to be discussed here were, on the whole, "intended as private even if the diarists could not always be certain that their privacy would be respected and even if occasionally some of them chose to share parts of their diaries with others" (1988, 17). In this sense, Frances Burney's, Dorothy Wordsworth's and Mary Shelley's diaries are certainly representative of women's journals produced in their respective epochs. In addition, they all combine features of personal diaries, writers' diaries and travel diaries. Most importantly, they all experiment with and manipulate the journal genre, moulding the convention to meet their own ends.

Until recently, a discussion of any of the three authors (not just their life writing) was controversial as they were pushed to the margins of canonical literature of which they are now a well-established part. Life writing genres have, nevertheless, long been excluded from the literary canon: the journal, in particular, "is a social outcast, of no fixed theoretical address. It rarely receives the charity of careful study" (Lejeune 2009, 47). This attitude is representative as it results from an overall difficulty with formalising life writing genres (Langford and West 1999, 9-11) and their generic flexibility (Bunkers and Huff 1996, 1). The journal has even been viewed as a canker on the body of literature proper (Lejeune 2009, 209). However, the European and American scholarship of recent decades has been contesting this time-honoured approach, stressing the need to re-evaluate diaries in general, and women's diaries specifically. Before that, however, the journal genre was mostly used for biographical studies – as a source of historical information. With women writers specifically, the decades-long patronising attitude towards their life writing has caused the

records of their day-to-day fragmented life experience to fail the test of being recognised as significant, with a marked preference for male life writing pursuits, and with the two genders believed to sustain distinct visions of selfhood (Bunkers and Huff 1996, 1-5). Even the study of life writing as a set of literary genres in their own right seems to have been biased against women-authored texts to the point of exclusion from what was eventually found to merit scholarly attention. "A rhetoric of belittlement", a term coined by William MacCarthy (1988) to refer to the phenomenon of trivialisation of women's role in literature, seems more than adequate on that score.[3]

*

"The diary is not a text: it only becomes a text once the author dies. During the diarist's lifetime, it is … an *occupation*. … To turn [journals] into books, they are polished, cut, and reorganised. At that point, the diary is but a shadow of its former self", complains Philippe Lejeune (2009, 154; emphasis original). To Lejeune, what matters most in any discussion of a diary is that it is not simply a product, but – primarily – a written practice, belonging in the realm of real lives, charmed into manuscripts, rather than printed books (2009, 154; 181). The same practice-oriented view is embraced by Lejeune's disciples. Julia Rak's assertion that "diaries are not … literary documents, even though they can have aesthetic merit. They are records of a life process rather than finished narratives about a life, and as such they are only part of the practice of narrating and understanding what a life means" (2009, 19) is a case in point. As a logical follow-up to his position, Lejeune advocates the study of manuscripts as the starting point for any serious examination of journals. This book, however, will be based on scholarly editions, each containing carefully deciphered texts, read and verified by teams of dedicated students of life writing. In the circumstances, there is little justification for seeing these as inferior unless lack of the original materiality, manifested in the quality and weight of paper or the particular slant of a diarist's handwriting, is taken into account. Besides those, several major aspects of diaristic practice can effectively be studied on the basis of the published editions.

[3] MacCarthy's case study is Hester Lynch Piozzi, whose place in literary history has often been described as that of a hostess to Dr. Johnson rather than that of his biographer and a writer herself. As for Dorothy Wordsworth and Mary Shelley, the quotidian details concerning their helpmate roles with regard to canonical male romantics have been frequently highlighted by readers of their life writing and writers of William Wordsworth's or Percy Bysshe Shelley's biographies.

Underlying this book is the assumption that the journal has every right to be considered a literary genre and that, as such, it displays a set of characteristics, i.e. a poetics unique thereto. However polymorphic and syncretic the journal can be demonstrated to be, it tends to obey several generic principles. A diary's construction of a processual self relies on a number of features, which will be discussed in the following chapters. Resulting from the concepts of the diary as both genre and practice, the journal's major characteristics include serial yet autonomous entries; dating; a relatively loose and formless structure, manifested through varying amounts of fragmentation; metadiscursive reflection; the presence of the narrator with his/her personas, addressees, and possible conflicts between the narrating I and the narrated I; and lacunae (i.e. intended or unintended gaps and omissions), all set against a spatial and temporal backdrop (Lanser 1981; Hoffmann and Culley 1985; Lubas-Bartoszyńska 1993, 2003; Jackson 2010; et al.). The bare minimum of distinctive features is constituted by but two prerequisites of the journal form, i.e. dating and serial quality, which are needed to qualify a text as one of the genre (Lejeune 2009).

All things considered, the research method adopted in the present study is of an eclectic nature. My purpose here is not to investigate written artefacts, i.e. original manuscripts, but to study three journals by female writers – first and foremost – as literary texts. With this in mind, the texts will be examined with the use of concepts which are commonly employed for literary analysis. While relying extensively on close readings of selected passages representative of the journals' poetics, I will additionally make use of a number of narrative concepts proposed by Gérard Genette, as well as selected elements of the approach developed by Philippe Lejeune. Certain tenets of both these scholars' theories will be combined here, regardless of the differences between their conflicting ways of approaching what has been called "autofiction".[4] It is this combination of

[4] Autofiction (a 1977 term of Serge Doubrovsky's) is used by Francophone critics to refer to either autobiography or novels featuring protagonists with names identical to the authors' (Lubas-Bartoszyńska 2004; Lis 2006). A major source of disagreement between Genette's and Lejeune's approaches is the Genettean distinction between "constitutive" and "conditional" literary texts. According to this classification, fiction belongs to the former and is produced with an explicit artistic purpose in mind while non-fiction, including autobiography and/or autofiction, is part of the latter category. The term "conditional" refers to the fact that certain texts are perceived as carriers of literary value depending on changing epochs and tastes of the reading public (Genette 1997, 11). In his 2000 lecture delivered in Beijing, Lejeune opposed Genette's views on these issues on the

Lejeune's and Genette's approaches, far from being mutually exclusive in general, that forms the basic assumption and defines the research methods for this study. While Lejeune chooses to see the diary as a practice rather than a genre, application of some of Genette's narratological concepts to a study of journals enables a fusion of separatist and integratist approaches (in the sense of the diary's separation from or integration with the sphere of literature proper). If it is assumed that the diary is not only a genre, but also a practice, the scope of a study increases considerably as new fields to be examined are subsumed into a picture fuller than would be obtained with the use of one approach exclusively. In dealing with diaries of literary women, approaching diaristic texts as either textual artefacts or products of a writer's practice may not be enough. After all, as shall be repeatedly demonstrated in the following chapters, a single passage of diaristic metadiscourse can reveal facts concerning both diaristic practice – entry regularity or authorial revision – and representative features of a diarist's poetics. Hence my claim is that, in order to see the three journals in their totality, a combination of the two approaches is indeed indispensable.

*

The scope of this study also has its limitations. When discussing the outline of the book with several colleagues, I was sometimes asked why I chose not to make letters authored by the three life writers part of my analysis. The fact is that a discussion of each set of correspondence would merit a book of its own, and squeezing such a profusion of material into a study of diaries would simply not do justice to the task. For this reason, in this study, letters will only be used occasionally as a backdrop for the three authors' journals. At times, however, it may be difficult – if not impossible – to put a dividing line between the diary and letter genres: hence a section on Frances Burney's journal-letters, a typical eighteenth-century life writing form.

By the same token, a question could be posed as to why the book foregoes a more thorough presentation of the diarists' travel writing, and the answer is much the same: their travelogues are only presented inasmuch as they add to the discussion of the poetics and practices of personal journals as presented by the studied writers in their non-travel writing. Similarly, my examination of individual journal texts will not be

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grounds that autobiography does not necessarily tell the truth which it claims to be telling, thus situating autobiography closer to the realm of fiction. Yet, in this study, Gerard Genette's views on the execution of a narrative rather than his ideas on where life writing belongs will be drawn upon.

juxtaposed with a corresponding discussion of the three diarists' literary texts (poetry, fiction or drama) either, as my intention is not to focus on the relationships between the life writing and literary works. I believe, along with Julia Epstein, that "while it makes no sense to read intimate private writings as necessarily 'authentic' in contrast to the fictions that are always 'contrived', it also makes no sense to yoke the two kinds of writing and to read them in consequence merely as glosses on each other" (1989, 27).

This book will address the issues of diary poetics and practices in isolation from the poetics of the non-autobiographical oeuvre of the three diarists. Chapter One sets out to present an overview of life writing scholarship, with particular stress on the journal genre. It contains a discussion of the terminological confusion resulting from the decades-long neglect of life writing genres, together with several typologies, complete with a survey of critical ideas pertaining to the journal. It also features a concise survey of narratological tools, handy for examination of the selected specimens of the journal genre. Structured around three women's journals, Chapters Two, Three and Four provide, respectively, detailed presentations of Frances Burney's, Dorothy Wordsworth's and Mary Shelley's concepts of the diary as far as this can be ascertained on the basis of their poetics and extant traces of diaristic practices. Each contains a review of the literature on a particular author's life writing. These chapters themselves will be devoted to a thorough investigation of those aspects of genre poetics which are found to be most representative of a given author. One of the major textual categories to be explored in each case will be the narrator construct. To date, these aspects of Frances Burney's, Dorothy Wordsworth's and Mary Shelley's journals have not been subject to sustained scholarly investigation, and it seems that in view of the growing interest in problems related to life writing genres, the time has come for their in-depth analysis.

Finally, it must be noted that the arrangement and scope of issues to be discussed in individual chapters may vary according to the varying importance of individual aspects for the respective diarists. In order for the necessary close readings to be performed, selections of themed entries have been made from each diary.[5] In addition, as Małgorzata Czermińska reminds us, the autobiographical modes as inscribed in life writing require the reader to possess at least a minimum of extra-text knowledge of the

[5] This selective approach has been inspired by Magdalena Marszałek's reading of the Polish prose writer Zofia Nałkowska's journals (2004). Without it, the handling of such a profusion of material as is the case with, for example, Frances Burney's life writing would not be possible.

author's life (1987, 14), which is the reason for the inclusion of some biographical context for the writers at issue. As gender-oriented critics have found, the formalist and structuralist "isolation of texts from extraliterary contexts and from their ideological base" does not always prove to be a productive approach (Lanser 1981, 39). Consequently, in all the three case studies, whenever needed, ample quotation and/or background information will be provided to relate the phenomena under discussion to a relevant context.

In this book, my aim is not to find what is representative of whole generations of diarists, but to describe the three different concepts of the journal, as practised by the selected three writers. Ultimately, my objective is to further our understanding of the diary genre and practice by examining some of the multiple paths which it can take.

*

Several scholars have patronised Frances Burney with the diminutive form of her first name, Fanny. Some of those include Lewis Gibbs (1941); B. G. MacCarthy (1945); Ellen Moers (1986); P. M. Spacks (1988); Joanne Cutting-Gray (1992); Eva Simmons (1994); and Claire Harman (2001). The 1889 editor of Burney's *Early Journals,* Annie Raine Ellis, however, used the name of Frances, rather than Fanny, driven perhaps by her Victorian sense of propriety. In this study, I shall denote the writer as Frances Burney, or simply – Burney.[6] Following Susan Wolfson (1988) and Elizabeth Bohls (1997), I will be referring to Dorothy Wordsworth as

[6] The problem of how Burney should be referred to in critical debate has been acknowledged by more than one researcher. In 1988, Margaret Anne Doody recalls one of the early works of the Burney criticism-cum-biography which included an appreciation of her journals, entitled simply *Fanny Burney* (Dobson 1903) and reflects on how it initiated a fashion for using the homely variant of "Fanny" (Doody 1988, 6). Doody proceeds, however, to begin calling the novelist "Burney", reserving the first name of "Frances" (as Burney used it in her *Memoirs of Dr. Burney*) to talk about Burney the woman, not Burney the writer. In her *Iron Pen,* Epstein says, "'Fanny', a common and popular eighteenth-century woman's name, is a particularly diminutive, superfeminized, and private name. … Following the practice of the Oxford World's Classics editions of Burney's novels and of Margaret Anne Doody's major new literary biography, … [i]t is time to restore Burney's given name" (1989, 3). The several names of the diarist which are in use, i.e. Fanny Burney, Frances Burney, F. B. d'Arblay and Madame d'Arblay, have led Joanne Cutting-Gray to keep using the name of Fanny Burney "out of respect for her plurality and the wish not to energize patriarchy by either opposing it or by using her married name" (1992, 143).

"Wordsworth" or "Dorothy Wordsworth", and to her brother – as "William" or "William Wordsworth". Mary Shelley's name, in turn, shall often be abbreviated to "Shelley", and P. B. Shelley's contracted to "Percy" or used in full. Mary Shelley will also be referred to as Mary Godwin (before marriage) or Mary Shelley (after marriage), even though she also signed her name with her mother's surname, Wollstonecraft, as her middle name: Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, respectively.[7]

[7] Problems related to the politically (in)correct naming of this writer are discussed at length by Sheila Ahlbrand (1997, 42).

CHAPTER ONE

LACEWORK AGAINST THE MIRROR: THE ORIGINS OF THE JOURNAL GENRE AND ITS STATUS WITHIN AUTOBIOGRAPHY SCHOLARSHIP

> Autobiography appears as the mirror image of a life, its double more clearly drawn – in a sense the diagram of a destiny (Gusdorf 1980, 40).
>
> The "journal" or "diary" form … [is] defined as a *series of dated traces*; that is, a practice of making notations extended over time (Lejeune 2009, 61; emphasis original).

"Autobiography", George Landow tells us, "is a rare and very late phenomenon in the growth of the human spirit, requiring literacy, individuality, and a sense of history" (1979, xvi). According to Georg Misch (1950), the earliest attempts at autobiography are to be traced back to ancient Greece and Rome. True autobiographical impulse for entering daily records, Philippe Lejeune maintains, originated from ancient Roman account books, needed for the purposes of commerce, as well as impersonal family chronicles containing records of important events (2009, 51-53), but "the modern journal arose from paper" (2009, 567). In his essay entitled "Self Writing" (1997), poststructuralist Michel Foucault recalls the ancient Greek concept of the so-called *hupomnemata*, notebooks containing narratives of the self in the form of memorable quotations and thoughts for rereading or future use. In Foucault's view, this practice contributed to the formation of individual selfhood and should hence be seen as a precursor of autobiography, if not – strictly speaking – of the journal. The majority of life writing critics date the beginnings of autobiography to St. Augustine's *Confessions* (397-98 CE).[1] Georges

[1] See Shumaker 1954; Pascal 1960; Mandel 1968; Beaujour 1977; Renza 1977; Starobinski 1980; Gusdorf 1980; Nussbaum 1989; Lejeune 1996; Olney 1998; Anderson 2001; et al. In contrast, in *Poetics of the Literary Self-Portrait* (1991),

Gusdorf credits late-medieval manufacturing of silver-backed mirrors with sparking contemporary interest in the self which, in time, led to increased production of autobiographical texts (1980). The manufacture of large mirrors in seventeenth-century Venice has likewise been considered a factor contributing to subsequent growth of human self-awareness (Lacan 1949).

Philippe Lejeune (2009, 51-69) dates the European origins of the journal to the late Middle Ages. Starting from that time, many of the early journals were spiritual, an invention whose status was reinforced by Ignatius of Loyola and his followers. Although certain forms of serial writing, such as ship logbooks, account books and chronicles, had been known in Europe since the Middle Ages, if not the Antiquity, it was not until the late sixteenth to mid-seventeenth century (England) and the mid-eighteenth century (France) that notebooks containing the private experience of ordinary people became popular, and thus culturally significant. In fact, the first wave of popularity of diaries in England has been dated back to the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603), when they were still simply extended versions of household account books (Latham 1987). In 1565, for example, the first printed almanac (or datebook) to function as a diary, with blank spaces to be filled by the user, appeared on the English market (Mascuch 1996).

This early modern popularity of serial life writing is generally linked to the appearance of new concepts of the self, i.e. the rise of individualism – a complex cultural phenomenon, brought about by a wide variety of social, political, intellectual and other forces (cf. Watt 1979; Bunkers and Huff 1996; Mascuch 1996; et al.). In England, the growth of autobiographical writing was additionally supported by the seventeenth-century habit of daily spiritual soul-searching, common to a range of Protestant denominations. Tracing the rise of the novel genre, J. Paul Hunter connects this habit to early practices of the so-called Occasional Meditation which, originally, was not only spiritual, with the meditator expected to focus on a natural object such as a snail, a toad, an apple or a blade of grass. The illiterate could do this orally, while the literate were encouraged to keep a written track of their thoughts, which later took more abstract directions (Hunter 1990, 200).

"The practice of self-examination dictated the practice of diary keeping and the habits of the mind that went with it", claims J. Paul Hunter (1990, 288). Soul-searching was a popular exercise, believed to increase the

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Michel Beaujour declares St. Augustine's *Confessions* (Book X in particular) to be a self-portrait.

practitioners' chances for salvation by making them aware of their defects and thus equipping them with the tools to take corrective action before it was too late. Conspicuously, Puritans were among those who applied themselves to this practice most meticulously, perceiving their daily records as important steps in their progress heavenward (Lejeune 2009, 74; et al.). Thus, spiritual diaries entered the life writing scene at an early stage, later giving way to spiritual autobiographies.[2] Consequently, the original private notes on one's moral conduct gradually came to be replaced with public texts produced with the edification of others in mind. All in all, the concept of a self which emerged from both spiritual and non-spiritual journals and autobiographical writings may be summarised as a sense of being "a unique individual who consciously reflects on his/her differentness from others" (Nussbaum 1988, 153). Two breakthroughs in

[2] It is generally agreed that spiritual autobiography originates from St. Augustine's *Confessions.* The term is sometimes used to denote Puritan, or – more universally – Protestant autobiographical texts which follow certain well-defined patterns. Starting from the earliest models, they depict the author's sinful life, impressive conversion experience and subsequent life of sanctity. Rather than stressing the author's individuality, this type of autobiography focuses exclusively on giving testimony to God's grace, at the total exclusion of aspects of individual selfhood (Czermińska 1993, 243; 2000, 63). Spiritual autobiography relies on Old Testament figures and incidents as prefigurations of the New Testament (Peterson 1985, 304). A later version replaces the concept of salvation through God's grace (as in John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding,* 1666) with that of salvation through art (cf. William Wordsworth's *The Prelude,* 1850). Yet in England, spiritual autobiography was first practised by medieval women, cf. Julian of Norwich's 1393(?) *Showings of Divine Love* or *Book of Margery Kempe* (1436-38). Particularly from the seventeenth century onwards, large numbers of spiritual autobiographies were authored by English women (Nussbaum 1989, 154-77).

As for typologies of spiritual autobiography, researchers differ. Wayne Shumaker subdivides the genre into apology and confession (1954, 56; 85). Another subcategory of spiritual autobiography appears to be the Puritan autobiography *sensu stricto*, by and large credited with the rise of American autobiography. Representing what Thomas Couser (1979) calls the "prophetic mode", it does not necessarily involve a claim to supernatural inspiration. Instead, it relies on "interpret[ation of] the history of [the autobiographer's] community in the light of God's will" and "immediate concern with the community's destiny" (Couser 1979, 3). The Catholic variant of the spiritual autobiography is the mystical autobiography, its beginnings dating back to St. Theresa of Avila (1515-82) and St. John of the Cross (1542-91). The traditions of mystical and spiritual autobiography come together in John Henry Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua* (1864). Whichever the type of spiritual autobiography, typical of the genre is the obliteration of the autobiographers' individuality (Pascal 1960, 97).

history have notably come to be regarded as major contributors to the recognition of the value of an individual and the subsequent growth of autobiography: these were the American and French Revolutions, of the years 1772 and 1789 respectively, as well as their aftermaths. The ultimate provision of equal rights to personal expression, which they helped trigger, should not be underestimated (Kasperski 2001, 11).

In England, the growing specialisation of society, together with the ensuing valorisation of an individual as well as his/her identity and subjectivity, has been connected with early capitalism (Watt 1979). Michael Mascuch has defined the early modern individualist self as "a person who speaks about and values his own and other persons' identities as independent, autonomous units – 'selves' – who have a hand in crafting their separate and therefore individual destinies" (1996, 20). With respect to the eighteenth century, this tendency has been termed "affective individualism", one of its key components being enhanced demand for privacy and personal liberty (Stone 1979, 149). The growth of literacy among various strata of English society was another significant contributing factor (Stone 1979, 154; Smith and Watson 2001, 112). So were the falling prices of paper and other writing accessories from the seventeenth century onwards, which seemed to go hand in hand with the growing eighteenth-century tendency to turn out written artefacts of privacy. Also significant were alterations in housing standards, whose climax was constituted by the invention of the closet (Stone 1979, 169-70; Hunter 1990, 157). The closet was to become a predominantly feminine private space in which to explore and write about the self – i.e. diarise (Stone 1979, 252). However, it has been stressed that in early modern days feminine privacy, including opportunities for journal keeping, was difficult to obtain. Parents had every right to inspect their unmarried daughters' writing, and – once the daughters were married – this right was taken over by their husbands. Hence the tendency towards increased secrecy in feminine life writing, not infrequently involving the use of some form of cipher or shorthand (Blodgett 1988, 57-59).

The connection between early English diaries, the popularisation of clocks and the invention of portable watches in the late seventeenth century, which changed contemporary perspectives on time, has also been examined (Sherman 1996). This, in turn, was reflected by the growing popularity of several diurnal forms, such as calendar-style almanacs for personal day-to-day writing, account books in which to note down prices and expenses, sea logbooks, sea voyage journals and memorandum books – the "forebear[s] of the Filofax" (Sherman 1996, 171) – with blank space available for each date. As for other European countries, Lejeune (2009,

51-60) has likewise linked the early popularity of the journal in France with time-keeping (cf. the invention of the first mechanical chamber clocks, as contrasted with the hitherto popular communal clocks installed in bell towers), as well as early accounting practices (given the increasing availability of paper in Europe).

In England, the eighteenth century produced the so-called dailies, i.e. newspapers which typically featured a blank page to be filled in by the readers with their own news. They were then sent on to relatives in the countryside (postage being considerably lower in the case of newspapers than of letters) (Sherman 1996, 121; Haslett 2003, 125). Also worthy of special attention are the eighteenth-century memo books, manufactured with female buyers in mind. Apart from a limited blank space to go under each date, they contained a selection of verses, songs, descriptions of signs of the zodiac, puzzles and charades, as well as lines for recording household expenses (Blodgett 1988, 24-25).

The literary potential of personal diaries was first recognised at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Fothergill 1974). The motivations behind diary writing had changed: before the eighteenth century, diaries were written mainly for self-improvement (children and young people were advised to keep them to reflect on the errors of each day and to improve their time management skills; cf. Lejeune 2009, 129-43). From the eighteenth century onwards, the objective had become, gradually, to preserve one's memories (Blodgett 1988, 64-65), thus perpetuating one's sense of self. Consequently, personal diaristic practices were gaining in popularity (Popkin 2009, 7). In the nineteenth century, no debate on the diary's legitimacy was needed; the form continued to flourish and had come to be taken for granted as the large body of these texts, written by both well-known and anonymous male and female life writers, demonstrates.

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The term "life writing" was first used in the broad sense of "autobiography" by D. A. Stauffer in 1941, but it has increased in popularity since James Olney employed it to mean more than the so-called "autobiography proper" (Roy Pascal's 1960 term) in his 1998 *Memory and Narrative*. Both before and after Olney, autobiography scholars have been providing their own terms to talk about autobiographical writing. These terms have included "books of the self" and "personal-historical documents" (Fothergill 1974), "personal narratives" (Hoffmann and Culley 1985), "non-traditional literature" (Schilb 1985), "self-reflexive writing" (Nussbaum

1988), "self-life-writing" (Mellor 1993), "self-representational writing" and "discourse of self-representation" (Gilmore 1995), "ego documents" (Porter 1997; Baggerman et al. 2011), "self-oriented writing" (Marszałek 2004) or "personal documentary literature" (Zimand 1990; Czermińska 2009a). Besides, Leigh Gilmore has used the larger sense of "autobiographics" to refer to constituents of the concept of the self, originating from St. Augustine (1998, 184). To keep up with the above profusion of terms, criticism of autobiography has produced works such as Donald J. Winslow's 1995 *Life-Writing: a Glossary of Terms in Biography, Autobiography, and Related Forms* – an exhaustive attempt at a life writing taxonomy, whose entries encompass almost seventy pages. To a similar effect, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have proposed a detailed classification of life writing genres, with a list of as many as fifty-two. Some of them have received very narrow definitions, for instance the witness autopathography (a narrative of one's illness or disability), the autothanatography (a death narrative), the oughtabiography (a narrative of what one should have done in life) or the trauma narrative, to name but a few of the less popular (2001, 183-207).

At present, life writing is frequently referred to as "self writing". Broadly speaking, both terms subsume all genres which depict an individual's own life, thoughts and experiences, whether in narrative or non-narrative form. Life writing genres comprise the journal (or the diary), including the travel journal, the writer's diary and other types; the autobiography proper; the memoir (occasionally called the reminiscence or the recollection); the chronicle; the self-portrait; the letter; and several other, less common, forms.

To date, the term "autobiography", another frequent synonym for life writing, has been used in two ways: one to signify autobiographical (life/self writing) genres in general; the other – to mean the so-called autobiography proper, i.e. a retrospective narrative of its author's life, or a significant part of it, with a stress on the formation of his/her personality (Lejeune 1996, 14). Because the broadly conceived autobiography is an umbrella term that includes a whole range of genres, some critics have observed that it "is indeed everywhere one cares to find it" (Candace Lang, qtd. Anderson 2001, 1). Such inclusionist definitions are a natural follow-up of Georges Gusdorf's now classic view that "the artist's entire work [i.e. both fiction and non-fiction]… takes up the same material in complete freedom and under the protection of a hidden identity" (1980, 46). The problem with inclusionist definitions of autobiography is that any work by any writer can, either to a certain extent or in its totality, be considered autobiographical. This ambiguous situation has produced a

need to redefine the boundaries of life writing, something which has proved a considerable challenge to life writing scholars (de Man 1979; Gusdorf 1980; Anderson 2001; et al.).

In its narrower sense, the term "autobiography" was influentially used in *English Autobiography* by Wayne Shumaker, an American classic of life writing criticism. Shumaker's "autobiographies in the modern mode" (i.e. autobiographies proper) receive a somewhat fuzzy definition: they are "works like those that modern readers instinctively expect to find when they see *Autobiography*, *My Life,* or *Memoirs* printed across the back of a volume" (1954, 4). In a well-known metaphor, Georges Gusdorf represents the writing of an autobiography as looking at one's reflection in a mirror and seeing another self, a double (1980, 31-32). This act, he remarks, in primitive, myth-reliant societies is an omen of death, witness the myth of Narcissus, enamoured with his own reflection in the water and ultimately unable to leave it behind (Gusdorf 1980, 32). Gusdorf declares, however, that "if it is indeed true that autobiography is the mirror in which the individual reflects his own image, … the genre appeared before the technical achievements of German and Italian artisans" (1980, 33). It must also be remembered that "autobiography is not simple repetition of the past as it was, for recollection brings us not the past itself but only the presence in spirit of a world forever gone" (Gusdorf 1980, 38). Consequently, autobiographers remain in a perpetual quest to meet their previous selves in this confrontation with what they imagine to be the real past (Gusdorf 1980, 43), a mirror of sorts – a point somewhat timidly acknowledged by Philippe Lejeune (2009, 125; 284).[3]

Philippe Lejeune (b. 1938) is without doubt the most prominent figure of today's Francophone autobiography criticism. He has made it his lifelong mission to vindicate the status of life writing genres: first, he dealt with autobiography and then shifted his attention to the diary. Lejeune's most influential work on autobiography in the sense of a retrospective narrative remains *Le Pacte autobiographique* (1975; English translation: *Autobiographical Contract*, 1982), which examines the prerequisites for occurrence of autobiography from the standpoint of reception theory. The central idea of the eponymous pact may be summarised as follows: the

[3] In the past, the mirror was not always a metaphor for the autobiography. A case in point is Marc-Antoine Jullien (1775-1848), an educationalist and man of letters, who recommended that tutors keep detailed diaries of their pupil's progress and make him read these aloud on a regular basis so that "the young boy gets used to seeing himself reflected in *the mirror* of the text" (qtd. Lejeune 2009, 107; my emphasis). In England, similar parallels between the journal and the mirror were drawn by James Boswell in his *Life of Johnson* (1791).

author of an autobiography undertakes to tell the truth, unlike the author of fiction who invites the reader to participate in a game. Autobiography occurs when the author declares an intention to tell the truth about his/her life: hence the notion of the "pact", or "contract", as proposed by Lejeune. Thus, one meaning of Lejeune's "autobiographical pact" is the agreement between the writer and the reader of an autobiographical text pertaining to the former's telling of a verifiable story, and the latter's approaching the text as such. The other meaning pertains to a textual-level pact, in the sense of identity of the writer, the narrator and the protagonist of a life writing text.[4]

Philippe Lejeune's early theory offers an exclusionist understanding of the term "autobiography" to the point of downright disregard of other genres, such as the memoir, the biography, *le roman personnel* (a French term, used to denote novels in which the narrator and protagonist are identical), the autobiographical poem, the intimate journal and the self-portrait (Lejeune 1996, 14). This is because Lejeune believes it necessary for the autobiography proper to jointly fulfil the following four conditions: 1) it must be a prose narrative; 2) its subject must be an individual fate combined with personal development; 3) its narrator and protagonist must be identical; and 4) it must contain retrospection (1998, 22). If one or more of the above conditions are not met, a text represents a genre relative to autobiography.

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So what is the standing of the journal genre against the backdrop of the autobiography proper? To answer this question, major critical disputes concerning both genres will be outlined. If considered in the non-inclusionist manner, autobiography – in the sense of the autobiography proper – can be defined as "the reconstruction of the movement of a life, or part of a life, in the actual circumstances in which it was lived" (Pascal 1960, 9), which must present a consistent view of the autobiographer's past (Pascal 1960, 5). Philippe Lejeune's definition of the autobiography

[4] Almost concurrently with Philippe Lejeune's *Le Pacte,* in her 1976 *Autobiographical Acts: the Changing Situation of a Literary Genre,* Elizabeth Bruss puts forward a theory of what she calls "autobiographical acts", formulated with reference to the speech act theories of J. L. Austen, J. R. Searle and others. Approaching the subject of autobiography from the viewpoint of a linguist rather than literary scholar, Bruss sets out to itemise the pattern of "everybody's biography", an archetypal text which draws attention to autobiography as an act rather than a form (1976, 19).

proper, rendered into English, is the following: "a retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on the individual life, in particular on the development of his personality" (Lejeune 1982, 193). In like manner, John Sturrock's definition of autobiography pertains to retrospective texts exclusively:

> An autobiography is a text that seeks to draw us into itself without reservations and one in which we are invited to read a being sanctioned by a "metaphysics of presence", its formal nature being belied by the intimacy and truthfulness with which it seems to address us. ... Autobiography is the certificate of a unique human passage through time (1993, 3),

and

> it is the story of a singularisation, or of how the autobiographer came to acquire the uniqueness that has impelled him to write (1993, 14).

Despite the apparent ease with which such definitions can be offered, the beginnings of systematic life writing scholarship are marked by profound confusion. At the early stages, in particular, there is little clarity as to terminology which is to be used or typology of autobiographical genres. The major issues, such as whether life writing belongs with fiction or non-fiction, and how closely – if at all – it relates to the novel, the biography and other long-established genres, are endlessly debated (Shumaker 1954; Frye 1957; Pascal 1960; Renza 1977; Sturrock 1977; de Man 1979; Gusdorf 1980; Cockshut 1984; Eakin 1985; et al.). It is only recently that, in this respect, the gap between the opposing factions has been recognised, and the factions themselves named. Those who approach fiction and life writing in like manner have come to be termed integratists, and those who stress a clear distinction between the two – separatists (Lubas-Bartoszyńska 2004). Yet some scholars' theories evade this neat distinction: Louis A. Renza, for example, has claimed that "autobiography is neither fictive nor non-fictive, not even a mixture of the two. We might view it instead as a unique, self-defining mode of self-referential expression" (1977, 22).

Anglophone life writing scholars have naturally been interested in the study of their field in other countries, particularly in France. They have come to believe that, more than in English-speaking countries, "in France the habit (especially among writers) of keeping diaries, journals and notebooks is deeply engrained" (Cuddon 1991, 243). In consequence, Francophone scholars have had a relatively long tradition of life writing criticism, considerably less popular in English-speaking countries

(Spengemann 1980; Smith and Watson 2001). One of the seminal texts of Francophone autobiographical scholarship is Georges Gusdorf's 1956 essay, entitled "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography", translated into English by James Olney in 1980 (original title: "Conditions et limites de l'autobiographie"). In "Conditions and Limits", Gusdorf vindicates the status of autobiography as "a solidly established literary genre" (1980, 28-31), as well as advocating recognition of the autobiography as a work of art, and autobiographical writing as a creative act (1980, 45). Nevertheless, Gusdorf's work omits to discuss the journal genre as such.

Whether life writing offers genres which are to be studied in the way in which fiction genres are studied is another problem. Paul de Man, a Belgian structuralist and deconstructionist, expresses concern with what he deems to be an artificial elevation of autobiography to genre status. This phenomenon, he claims, is observed not "without some embarrassment" (de Man 1979, 919). De Man concludes that "autobiography … is not a genre or a mode, but a figure of reading or of understanding that occurs, to some degree, in all texts…. Which amounts to saying that any book with a readable title-page is, to some extent, autobiographical" (1979, 921-22) – a viewpoint recalling Gusdorf's. De Man's stand on this issue is certainly interesting: on the one hand, he notes that fiction and autobiography are very close and that the distinction between them is blurred (to him, this resembles being caught inside a revolving door); on the other hand, he toys with the idea that – just as it may be stated that all texts are autobiographical – it may also be said that "none of them is or can be" (De Man 1979, 921-22).

Among the first to discuss autobiography in a methodical yet inclusionist manner is the already-mentioned James Olney. Olney is no believer in the evolution of autobiography (1972, 3), seeing autobiographical impulses in explicitly fictional literary works. In his early study, *Metaphors of Self* (1972), Olney proposes his well-known theory of two types of autobiography, classified according to how autobiographers employ metaphors inherent in life narratives as organising principles, even though this metaphorisation may not be a conscious artistic endeavour on the autobiographer's part. Consequently, Olney distinguishes between what he calls "autobiography *simplex*" (the single metaphor autobiography) and "autobiography *duplex*" (the double metaphor autobiography). The single metaphor autobiography is one in which the autobiographer has a "daimon, his personal genius and guardian spirit, a dominant faculty or function or tendency that formed a part of his whole self and from which there was no escape, even had he wished it" (Olney 1972, 39). In contrast, "for the autobiographers duplex, … the daimon, in every case, can only be

described as the self", Olney claims (1972, 39). Olney's examples of the former type are *Autobiographies* by Charles Darwin or John Stuart Mill, and – to a certain extent – John Henry Newman's *Apologia pro vita sua*; of the latter – Michel de Montaigne's *Essays* or T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* (viewed as the poet's spiritual autobiography).

Autobiography scholars from other European countries have also contributed to the discussion of where life writing belongs. In her discussion of personal journals and letters (1977), initially based on an assumption that life writing is located on the margins of literature, Polish researcher Małgorzata Czermińska focuses on the somewhat blurred contact zone between life writing and *sensu stricto* literary works. In her later work, in contrast, she views life writing as a branch of documentary literature which attracts its readership by offering information as the goal of reading (Czermińska 1987, 8-9). Autobiography, Czermińska claims, represents cultural value as it implies autointerpretive effort and a singular viewpoint (1987, 16). Likewise, Roman Zimand's 1990 notion of "personal documentary literature" merits attention in terms of his approach towards autobiographical fictionality. Firstly, Zimand insists that readers of both fiction and personal documentary literature are governed by the same impulses: the need to follow stories, to know about others' lives and to believe this knowledge to be true, as well as the hunger for fantasy, fabrication and imagination (1990, 9). In Zimand's view, there exist three differences between personal documentary literature, which creates "a world of unmediated writing about oneself" (1990, 17; my translation), and fiction. Firstly, the former contains occasion-related statements which cannot be understood without a grasp of the circumstances or the context. The second issue is that of referentiality: personal documentary literature contains information which can be verified by means of juxtaposition with historical fact. Without this, the interplay between truth and fabrication would not appear. Thirdly, while even poor works of fiction are automatically categorised as literature, inclusion of life writing into the sphere of *belles lettres* is selective (Zimand 1990, 24-25).

Another major question debated by twentieth-century students of autobiography is its relation to the genre of biography. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, for example, there exists no distinct borderline between the two (1986, 208). In contrast, Wayne Shumaker has claimed that "whatever the similarity of their purposes, biography and autobiography are, materially speaking, often nearly as widely separated as history and the novel because the one draws facts from reading, observations, and interviews; the other raises memories into consciousness" (1954, 35). Two decades later, in his essay entitled "The New Model Autobiographer",

John Sturrock observes that "there are small but crucial grammatical differences between biographer and autobiographer" (1977, 51). Biography, he tells us, may be an occupation, whereas "autobiography [is] a subsidiary and unrepeatable event" (1977, 51). In his view, many autobiographical writings are in fact pseudobiographies, the only difference being the use of pronouns (first- or third-person). At the same time, Sturrock draws attention to reader expectations for an extra degree of intimacy and privacy in autobiographies, as opposed to the greater objectivity of biographies (1977, 54).

At present, the problem of how to differentiate between the autobiography proper and other life writing genres, the journal in particular, no longer continues to confuse, although it posed a major problem at the early stages of autobiography studies. Brian Dobbs, for instance, when discussing St. Augustine's *Confessions,* has placed the text under "Christian diaries" (1974), clearly failing to recognise the distinction between the journal and the autobiography for what it is. Jean Starobinski (1980) has commented on the issue of the diary mingling with the autobiography proper, and an autobiographer's occasional transformation into a diarist. Others, like Roy Pascal, have found it problematic to draw the line between the autobiography and the memoir. Yet, to Pascal, the difference between the autobiography and the journal is simpler to pinpoint. The autobiography is

> a review of a life from a particular moment in time, while the diary, however reflective it may be, moves through a series of moments in time. The diarist notes down what, at that moment, seems of importance to him; its ultimate, long-range significance cannot be assessed. It might almost seem that the best diarists are those least concerned with long-term significance (Pascal 1960, 3).

Moreover, diaries can display "uncertainties, false starts, momentariness", as opposed to the coherence of the autobiography proper (Pascal 1960, 5). Another difference is that while it may be said that autobiographies, paradoxically, take their beginning from the end (Pascal 1960, 12), this does not hold true for the diary, for which the exact opposite is the case. Diaries, Philippe Lejeune maintains, are easily distinguished from autobiographies because the latter are global and retrospective, while diaries are divided, display no fixed form and simulate contemporaneity (1971, 32-34).

It is not until the 1980s that researchers come to discuss the journal as a separate category of autobiographical writing, possessed of a flexible form, the latter characteristic conducive to interdisciplinary approaches. A

major step towards understanding the journal as a fully-fledged genre and, at the same time, a voice in the debate on the distinctions between the diary, the novel and autobiography, is offered by Margo Culley:

> While the novel and autobiography may be thought of as artistic wholes, the diary is always in process, always in some sense a fragment. That is not to say that diaries do not have distinct shapes, but that their shapes derive from their existence in time passing. Some are shaped by external events in the diarist's life, which, even from the writer's point of view, have a beginning, middle and end. Courtship diaries ending with a marriage and travel diaries ending with the arrival at a destination are examples of such texts (1985, 19).

Similarly, Małgorzata Czermińska (1987, 8) makes a clear distinction between autobiographies, as a rule written for posterity and for publication, and diaries, designed to be private documents. The same view is voiced by Felicity Nussbaum, who vindicates the "diary [as] the thing itself, not a failed version of autobiography" (1988a, 137). The status of the journal, then, as a genre in its own right, is thus gradually beginning to be legitimised in the later 1980s. Nonetheless, the journal continues to be viewed in opposition to the already recognised genre of the autobiography proper.

In many of the above debates, a major issue is that of autobiographical truth, which – if it can be demonstrated to be present – makes a text autobiographical. If absent, it enables classification of a text with works of fiction. On that score, truthfulness, sincerity, and spontaneity of life writing have been discussed over several decades by the classics of autobiography criticism, including Arthur Ponsonby (1923), Wayne Shumaker (1954), Roy Pascal (1960), Robert Fothergill (1974), John Sturrock (1977), Jean Starobinski (1980), A. O. J. Cockshut (1984), Paul John Eakin (1985), Roman Zimand (1979; 1990), Leigh Gilmore (1995), Regina Lubas-Bartoszyńska (2003) and Philippe Lejeune (2009), to name but a few. It has been pointed out that a life writer need not be a professional, and literary talent may even pose an obstacle to autobiographical sincerity (Ponsonby 1923, 1). The assumption that ordinariness and spontaneity constitute springboards to life writing, untainted with an awareness of principles of composition and driven by the simple need to express oneself, has been for some the starting point for developing a scholarly interest in life writing genres (cf. Ponsonby,

Trilling, Starobinski, Lejeune. et al.). Yet the very first to mention the problem of truth in autobiographical writing was St. Augustine.[5]

On closer inspection, however, it transpires that autobiographical writing, whichever the genre, can contain more than one kind of truth. The most obvious may be truth understood as historical records, such as the writer's personal data and the setting at a certain historical moment. But autobiographical truth is a category different from that: it pertains to subjective truth concerning the protagonist of a life narrative as presented by the narrator of that narrative (Smith and Watson 2001, 10-13). In this sense, the notion of autobiographical truth comes close to the Johnsonian understanding of moral truth, its distinction from physical truth formulated thus:

> Physical truth, is, when you tell a thing as it actually is. Moral truth, is, when you tell a thing sincerely and precisely as it appears to you. I say such a one walked across the street; if he really did so, I told a physical truth. If I thought so, though I should have been mistaken, I told a moral truth (Boswell 2005, 426).

In general, this predominant attitude of truth-seeking has adversely affected life writing scholarship, Paul John Eakin argues, by limiting autobiographical truth to a set of facts which can be verified. Instead, autobiography ought to be seen as a truthful record of a self in progress: "autobiographical truth is not a fixed but an evolving content in an intricate process of self-discovery and self-creation, and, further, … the self that is the centre of all autobiographical narrative is necessarily a fictive structure" (Eakin 1985, 3). "The writing of an autobiography is the creation of another self, identical but – at the same time – inevitably different," remarks Małgorzata Czermińska (1987, 61; my translation) on a similar note.

> Must we settle, then, for that compromising, commonplace conception that depicts autobiography as a formal mutation, a hybrid genre, a vague, unresolved mixture of "truth" about the autobiographer's life dyed into the colors of an ersatz, imaginative "design"? Or can we formulate autobiography as a unique phenomenon, definable neither as fiction nor non-fiction – not even a mixture of the two? (Renza 1977, 5).

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[5] See Book X of St. Augustine's *Confessions*: "What have I to do with men, that they should hear my confessions ... ? When they hear me speak about myself, how do they know if I speak the truth, since none among men knows what goes on within a man but the spirit of man which is in him?" (qtd. Helsinger 1979, 39).

As already indicated, the above query is largely representative of much British and American life writing criticism of the twentieth century. The central question of Roy Pascal's landmark work, *Design and Truth in Autobiography*, concerns the relationship between autobiographical truth and the autobiographer-imposed structure of the text. Pascal distinguishes between two types of modifications of autobiographical truth, the over-writing (i.e. applying the present perspective to past events, commonplace in narratives of childhood) and under-writing (i.e. omission of important elements of an autobiographical narrative due to excessive modesty, shyness, embarrassment etc.) (1960, 79). Both modes, with special emphasis on the latter, may be equally pertinent to those journals where fictionality comes centre stage. If entries are written or read in the present time, it is unavoidable that they no longer pertain to contemporaneity, and the person who wrote them in what is, by now, the past has in the meantime turned into a sort of the Other (Renza 1977, 5).

As Czermińska aptly puts it, "the reading of life writing has become a new problem for literary critics" (1977, 109; my translation). The problem has become substantial, especially in recent decades, as can be seen from the number of pages listing the annual "Bibliographies of Works about Life Writing", which ballooned from sixty-one in 1999-2000[6] to a hundred and ten in 2005-2006.[7] Recently, Ronald Tulley (2008) has remarked that autobiography is one of the most debated genres (or anti-genres, as he has it), since it does not easily yield to definition or classification. At the same time, he has stressed the fact that non-scholarly readers paradoxically "have little trouble identifying texts as 'autobiographies'" (Tulley 2012; cf. Gruszewska 1998, 406, for a similar opinion). Earlier, Patricia Meyer Spacks has noted that "biography, autobiography, published letters and diaries attract wide readership but rarely belong to any generally accepted canon" (1985, 65). In a sense, their popularity lies in the same source as that of gossip: "curiosity, voyeurism, exhibitionism" (Spacks 1985, 48), with the assumption that "words kept to oneself can do no harm; words shared make one vulnerable" (Spacks 1985, 31). In the case of the diary, the appeal consists primarily in the alleged privacy and secrecy of the text. After all, "we assume that diarists set down what they don't want everyone to know, perhaps what they don't want *anyone* to know" (Spacks 2003, 48). More generally, part of the attraction of broadly understood autobiography is the desire to share the lived experience of fellow human beings and reconfirm the purpose of ordinary existence (Spacks 2003, 48).

[6] *Biography*, Vol. 23, No. 4, Fall 2000, 694-755.
[7] *Biography*, Vol. 29, No. 4, Fall 2006, 615-725.