



Editorial

Dear Reader,

During the Founding Conference of the European Chapter of the International Auto/Biography Association (IABA Europe) at VU University in Amsterdam in 2009, it was decided that an open access, peer reviewed e-journal on Life Writing would be founded and published by IABA Europe. Four years later, and after a lot of work carried out by authors, editors, reviewers, VU University Library employees and copy editors alike, we are very proud to present you with the first volume of the Journal of European Life Writing, published by the VU University Library Amsterdam and IABA Europe.

So what is this new journal all about? To some, the title of our journal might suggest that there is a distinct European tradition of life writing as well as a distinct European tradition of analyzing auto/biographical texts. To be sure, neither one nor the other exists. In fact, what distinguishes European life writing – and its scholarly analysis – is the specific relationship between its cultural diversity and heterogeneity and its coexisting “Europeanness”. Just as there is no exemplary model of the European life, no authoritative paradigm of European auto/biography, but a great variety of forms and genres ranging from the religious confession to the personal blog, so there is no specific mode of studying life writing peculiar to European academia. European life writing scholarship is interdisciplinary in its alignment: literary studies, linguistics, history, sociology, psychology, anthropology and philosophy and other disciplines – they have all developed their own particular interest in auto/biography as well as their own apparatus of methodological and theoretical approaches. Nevertheless, these diverse modes of studying auto/biography do not merely coexist. Rather, they engage in productive acts of dialogue, cross-fertilization and exchange. Perhaps it is this intense negotiation between disciplines, theories and methods that constitutes the “Europeanness” of European life writing scholarship. Such interdisciplinarity characterizes much life writing

scholarship around the world; what EJJLW offers additionally is a space in which to explore what might be distinctively European in experience and approach.

For what is Europe if not a space of intercultural exchange – a space which has been evolving for centuries in a history of alternating conflict and negotiation? Europe is no monolithic entity but a patchwork of cultures. For their part, these cultures are hybrid constructs based on practices of transfer and appropriation. As national boundaries within Europe have eroded, the processes of exchange and hybridization have intensified. Nowadays, under the influence of globalization, not only Europe's internal, but also its external boundaries have become permeable. As part of a system of global networks, Europe has developed into a transit zone in which European and non-European cultural forms intermesh.

More than ever, Europe is an open structure, a space of dense interaction with fluid boundaries. As Marijke Huisman puts it in her introduction to *Life Writing Matters in Europe*, “the concept of ‘Europe’ is as flexible as the notion of ‘Life Writing’ ” (2012:14). It is in this sense that we employ the term “European” in the title of our journal. Therefore, we would like to stress its “openness” and catholicity. It is interdisciplinary in its outlook and welcomes articles on life writing from a wide range of disciplinary fields: literary and cultural studies, history and sociology, anthropology and ethnology, philosophy and psychology; digital culture, film and media studies. It cherishes all kinds of theoretical and methodological approaches to auto/biography and enhances their interaction. And it accommodates studies that relate to diverse aspects of “Europeanness”, ranging from the metropolitan core to its putative margins – and beyond.

On a more practical note: as we will work with volumes instead of issues, you are kindly invited to send us submissions, or propositions for articles, book reviews or clusters on specific themes whenever you like. During the calendar year we will publish articles as soon as they are ready for publication. At the end of each calendar year we will list all articles published during that particular year, plus the names of all external reviewers.

We would like to ask you to check the “author's instructions” on the journal's website before you submit an article. Please do not hesitate to contact Journal Manager Monica Soeting at m.f.soeting@vu.nl if you have any questions. More details about the Editorial Board and the Advisory Board can also be found on the journal's Website.

We greatly value your participation in this exciting venture and look forward to receiving your comments, suggestions and submissions.

The Editors