EDITORS' NOTE

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Since 1980s, the novelty of "institutional study of narrative for its own sake," remains in opposition "to the examination of individual narratives, narrative features, or correspondences between them" (Kreiswirth 377–78) within Social Sciences and Natural Sciences: Walter R. Fisher in "Narration as a human communication paradigm: the case of public moral argument" (1984) points out the central role of narrative in Politics and of narrative analysis in Political Sciences (Czarniawska 3); Jerome Bruner in *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (1986) develops a narrative mode of knowing and claims that stories are "especially viable instruments for social negotiation" (qtd. in Czarniawska 9); Donald E. Polkinghorne, in *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences* (1987), likewise extends the insights around narrative into the domain of Psychology by way of his focus on plot; Louis Mink, Frank Ankersmit, and Hayden White radically question the enterprise of historiography and problematize conventions of historical representation by way of narrative discourse. In making a clarion call to engage with narrative in sociological research, Laurel Richardson in "Narrative and sociology" (1990) states that "Narrative rejuvenates the 'sociological imagination' in the service of liberatory civic discourses and transformative social projects" (133); in the discipline of Economics, Deirdre McCloskey (1990) observed that "Economists are tellers of stories and makers of poems, and from recognizing this we can know better what economists do" (qtd. in Czarniawska 108). Within philosophy, Alasdair MacIntyre theorizes on how social life is a narrative in *After Virtue* (1981); Paul Ricœur's three-volume study *Time and Narrative* (1984–1988) ingeniously reinterprets Aristotle's insight into plot and brings out temporality to bear on the complexity of narrative rhythms of life; and Charles Taylor's *Sources of Self* (1989) argues that "we must inescapably understand our lives in narrative form, as a 'quest'" (52).

As apparent from the above broad strokes, a singularly decisive interest in the narrative as an object of study is a major signpost of the second half of twentieth-century thought in Humanities, Social Sciences as well as Natural Sciences, which continues to be a force to reckon with in the contemporary intellectual climate of twenty-first century. This remarkable interest marks a departure from previous forms of narrative inquiry, as it is not limited to specific genres—epic poetry, drama, the folktale, the novel or more generally fiction—within the bounds of literary studies. Marie-Laure Ryan observes that "It was the legacy of French structuralism [...] to have emancipated narrative from literature and from fiction, and to have recognised it as a semiotic phenomenon that transcends disciplines and media" (qtd. in Hyvärinen 72–3). The repertoire of narrative—as developed early in Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of Folktales* and followed by the structuralist discourse of 1950s and 60s—travels from discipline to discipline to transcend the boundaries of literary enclave that, in the words of Kreiswirth, is the "narrative's original disciplinary domicile" (378).

The transmission and proliferation of engagements with the "narrative," in almost all major disciplines of inquiry, is the recognition and foregrounding of a story "not just […] as story but with storied forms of knowledge" (Kreiswirth 380). This epistemic

engagement with "storied forms," account for four different turns with different agendas and attitudes: a) the turn in literary theory in the 1960s; b) the turn in historiography following literary narratology; c) the turn in Social Sciences from the 1980s onwards; and d) a more broadly cultural and societal turn to narration. (Hyvärinen 69). The theme of the current Issue, that is, life narratives, may well be understood in the context of the fourth turn.

The literature that we designate by the term life narratives is a protean one, resisting easy demarcations and distinctions. The issue of describing life narratives is succinctly captured in Margarette Jolly's words: "the hope of describing fully a subject of such celebrated ambiguity and disciplinary iconoclasm is certainly vain" (ix). Smith and Watson also express a similar concern in noting life narrative as a "moving target, a set of ever-shifting self-referential practices" (3). On one hand, such remarks sensitize about the complexity of the subject as well as provide a sort of caveat for any reductive take. On the other, however, they seem close to paralipsis, for they end up doing what they seek not to do.

There are a variety of competing terms to refer to writings about life, whether one's own or others, or both, for example, life writing (unhyphenated), life-writing,[1] autobiography (according to Smith and Watson "the most widely used and most generally understood term for life narrative" (3)), auto/biography studies,[2] and life narrative. The driving concern for the choice of terminology has been the question of inclusivity. Marlene Kadar[3] prefers life writing for this reason, so does Margarette Jolly.[4] Though Smith and Watson also follow the logic of inclusivity, they exclude biography from their assessment when they opt for the term, life narrative.[5] In their characterization, life writing is a general term for "writing of diverse kinds that takes a life as its subject," whereas life narrative is taken to be a "somewhat narrower term that includes many kinds of self-referential writing, including autobiography" (3). We take a departure from Smith and Watson's view as we include biography under the generic term, life narrative. Following the rationale of inclusivity, we encompass many varieties of life stories within the category of life narratives, ranging from travel writing, autobiographical fiction, marginalia, graphic forms, writs, court proceedings, scientific writings, obituary, poetry, letters, illness narratives, visual arts, artifacts, testimony, films, oral history, digitally

[1]Zachary Leader notes that term is usually traced to Virginia Woolf, who first used it in "A Sketch of the Past" (1939), "in connection with the difficulties and inadequacies of conventional biography, a word which itself literally means 'life-writing'" (1). See, in particular, the choice of term for the title of Leader's edited book, *On Life-Narrative*.

[2]See the journal *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*. Ricia Anne Chansky in the "General Introduction" to *The Routledge Auto/Biography Studies Reader* writes that the slashes in the title of the journal suggests that it would not privilege "self-life writing over life writing" (qtd. in Howes 3).

[3]"Life writing, put simply," Kadar writes, "is a less exclusive genre of personal kinds of writing that include *both* biography and autobiography, but also the less 'objective' or more 'personal' genres such as letters and diaries" (4).

[4]"The term "life writing" itself, recorded in the 18th century, and gaining wide academic acceptance since the 1980s, has been chosen for the title [*Encyclopedia of Life Writing*] because of its openness and inclusiveness across genre, and because it encompasses the writing of one's own or another's life" (ix).

[5]Smith and Watson note that they "opt for 'life narrative' as a similarly wide-ranging term for exploring diverse modes around the autobiographical, but one that signals the exclusion of biography from our investigations" (223).

mediated new forms of expression in social media to autobiography, biography, memoir, diary, and so on. Scholars include diverse forms of writing related to life in their respective choice of terminology, however, the accent on 'writing' in such formulations tend to be limited in scope in embracing modalities of expression in media other than writing. We contend that the framework and intellectual currency of 'narrative' is more encompassing and congenial in the fast-changing landscape of twenty-first century.

On the level of narrative structuring, life narrative portrays a hermeneutic of existential world by the narrating self of the experiencing self. The dynamics of these two selves is pivotal to understand the work of interpretation that goes in the making of life narratives. Paul Ricœur says, "A life is no more than a biological phenomenon as long as it has not been interpreted" (27). In other words, it can be said that the biological life acquires the character we call human life with/in the act of interpretation. Life narrative may be understood through a dual frame of archaeology and genealogy where both work in an interlocking way to the formation of subjectivity vis-à-vis discursive formations in society. The retrospective mode of life narratives uses the frame of archaeology to fashion and foreground the self through its trials and tribulations, eventful moments, and their traces on the shape of the author's life. In this sense, it can be seen as an archaeology of the experiencing self by the narrating self. However, the archaeological frame is not to be understood as a mere unearthing of the past experience from the point of present. Neither is it aimed at a discovery of the self or its essence. In fact, archaeology here is taken to be interpretive in nature, attempting to recollect autobiographical memory to imaginatively form an intelligible narrative through selective reconstruction.[6] Autobiographical memory, argues Antonio Damasio, is an "aggregate of dispositional records of who we have been physically and of who we have usually been behaviourally, along with records of who we plan to be in future" (qtd. in Eakin 127).

In the making of life narratives, which is to say making of a self, the dynamics of forgetting and remembering play a crucial role as what is remembered and what is forgotten shape the contours of self-identity. "Autobiographical memories that are consistent with the goals and values of our current working self are prioritized for remembering," write Sutton, Harris, and Barnier, "while memories that conflict with our working self are more likely to be forgotten" (215). The construction of the self by way of life narratives is in fundamental relation with autobiographical memory. In fact, Joseph Ledoux and Richard Brown view "the self as a set of autobiographical memories about who you are and what has happened to you in your life, and how you think, act, and feel in particular situations" (E2020). What is, therefore, involved here is the temporality of the auto/biographical subject—its sense of past, present as well as future. The memories of past experiences form an archive of the self but the narrative interpretation of that archive in view of the present and future goals configure what Ricœur calls narrative identity of the subject of life narrative.

[6]Though not fully intelligible, fragments too lend themselves to contextual intelligibility and constitute a significant part of life narrative literature, for it draws attention to life stories that remain at margins and figure in fragment. Archaeology of fragments then may result in recovering such voices. See Marlene Kadar's take on fragment in the context of women's writing, Holocaust writings, and genre of samizdat in "Marlene Kadar interview with Sidonie Smith – May 15, 2017," *a/b: Auto/ Biography Studies*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2018, pp. 523–531.

The genealogical frame accompanies the archaeological one. Genealogy in the Foucauldian sense of the term implies "history of the present" (qtd. in Kelly). Life narratives unequivocally employ the genealogical dimension in telling the history (story) of the self to mark and interpret how the subject comes to be constituted in a particular way in relation to historically contingent discursive formations of society. Such a frame is most readily recognizable in life narratives embodying resistance to various oppressive structures of power relations that seek to dominate and supress people. Charles E. Scott says genealogical knowledge can function as "'reversal of a relationship of forces,' appropriate a vocabulary, and turn it 'against those who had once used it'" (qtd. in Scott 167). In being subjective and individualistic, such narratives create, to use Foucault's phrase, 'counter-memory' to dominant versions of narrative. In doing so, it presents an alternate stance on past experiences with an employment of interpretive strategies that function to subvert and transvaluate "current values by the power of a new kind of knowledge that is formed by a genealogical approach to those values" (Scott 165).

Each paper under the themed section of this Issue, titled "Life Narratives: Prismatic World of the Author and Beyond," brings focus on a range of relevant thematics of life narrative. Abhilasha Sawlani teases out configurations of autobiographical memory that constitute nostalgia and project utopic imagination. The uncritical imaginary of the harmonious milieu in Sindhi partition narratives is problematized to argue how, in eliding underlying ruptures, 'fictions of memory' take hold in the face of dissatisfaction with temporal present and result in a desire for a utopia constructed on "the syncretic traces of the past." James Baumlin's contribution to the Issue returns us to fundamentals of life narrative by building on the insights of Jim W. Corder, a late-20th century pioneer in postmodernist life narrative, to indicate a model of creative nonfiction—his term for life narratives—that fosters a careful balance of honesty, intimacy, authenticity, and privacy, and aims for health and community as its highest values. Extending the idea of "ethic of care" as conceptualized by Martha Nussbaum and Nel Noddings to the domain of life narrative, the paper foregrounds a necessary space of empathy in reader-writer relationship. While these two papers incorporate the authors' personal narratives into their research by deploying the methodology of autoethnography, the next one bases its critical discussion on autobiographical texts. Summer Sutton takes issue with the prevailing culture of transparency in life narratives. Building on Judith Butler's framework of spectrality to read gestures of emotional unruliness as spectral testimony in the accounts of domestic abuse in American memoirs, the paper problematizes the assumption of home as a haven. It reads the question of domestic violence vis-à-vis state disciplinary technologies and shows how the latter is implicated in the former. Under the Special Submissions section, Sounak Das seeks to understand the nature of untranslatability as encountered in the praxis of translating a work of art. Towards this aim, the paper draws upon continental thinkers—Husserl, Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricœur, and Deleuze—to argue that the notion of untranslatability as hinderance is a consequence of interpreting works of art from epistemological vantage point. Instead, it makes a case to interpret thingness by shifting to ontological understanding which allows us to engage with untranslatability as a horizon of becoming.

Enabling individuals to write and rewrite themselves in the act of writing is the characteristic feature of life writing and the intent behind introducing the theme of Life Writing in Volume 5 circles around understanding the negotiations between word and life as a constitutive practice of meaning making. The perspectives presented by authors of the first Issue of Volume 5 are well placed as well as go beyond the theme we proposed for engagement. Since the editorial process is fundamentally collaborative, we would like to thank our Authors, Peer Reviewers as well as Editorial Board Members for their contributions to this Issue.

With the publication of the first Issue of *LLIDS*'s volume 5, we wish all our contributors and readers a happy and safe New Year 2022.

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