

The Volume 5 of *LLIDS* broadly explores the area of Life Narratives through its four Issues—5.1: *Life Narratives: Prismatic World of the Author and Beyond*, 5.2: *Legacies of Trauma: The Tragedy of Before and After*, 5.3: *Poetics of Travelling Self: Discursive Formations and Purposiveness of Travel*, and the present Issue, 5.4: *Telling Life Stories: Ethos, Positionality, and Structures of Narrative*. In understanding ethos and positionality as intricately interconnected with Life Narratives, the thematics of this Issue concentrates on the aspect of narrative construction from the position of the subject who is/becomes a site for expression, contestation, and constitution of perspectives. Fashioning of the subject through any kind of discourse thereby is perceived as an exercise in understanding ethos and positionality, that is, *from where does one speak?*

Ethos is argued to be carried through in multiple forms, from individual embodiment, the use of language, the nature of narrative voice, to the style of narrativization. The discourse on ethos then can be seen as wide enough to examine how different entities involved in narrative production and interpretation gain a position of responsibility and create a meaning that is the basis of their identity construction. The ‘presence’ of the speaker and the receiver in this dynamic is the foundation for understanding ethos as an in-between space that is relevant for the interpretation of narratives. How writing participates in the production of ethos has to do with conceptualizing subjectivity as part of the process. Embedded in differing positionalities, life stories attempt to bring out a flavour of existential ‘authenticity’ of one’s time and place. Historical and social situatedness of narratives contextualize a text, simultaneously eliciting modes of cognition and representation. Integration of subjectivity, the cultural, and the political within life writing, thereby, provides a self-critical/reflexive cultivation of ethos.

The transitioning nature of ethos influences and is influenced by ethical, epistemological, and technological shifts through the ages. It is definitive of an age; deployed within cultural space as a nodal point of this socially, ideologically, and discursively shaped realm. Ethos appropriates its legitimacy from culturally fostered inferences and, also in turn weaves the fabric of culture through which subjectivities evolve. Ethos is the cultural ‘habitus’ that allows a character to be seen through its embeddedness in and negotiation with discursive formations of an age. In narrative construction, authorial posturing is an aspect of the author’s locatedness in a particular geographical, socio-cultural, and historico-political space that is affectively relative to personal connectedness to events, sense of perception, and respective intellectual position. In this respect, ethos is determinant in theorising the personal and cultural dimensions of narrative construction; it establishes author’s responses, representations,

and perspectives via narrative's lifeworld. Writing, through imaginative and affective involvement, thus, becomes the source and framework for understanding our encounters and experiences, and enacts our motivations and instincts. Reading and interpretation, in this regard, bring together the world projected by the text and the lifeworld of the reader.

As individuals narrativize their life stories, a shared ethos is established that gives meaning to lives. The author and the narrative voice they adopt propose a certain ethos that engages the discursive and aesthetic aspects. As a cultural mediator, the author places the text in a social milieu that structures the reading; it introduces not a theory or dictum on how to lead lives but rather how the culturally, politically, and historically situated systems can be re-negotiated. The porosity between text and reality suggests an exchange of experiences, development of ideologies, as well as shaping of culturally responsive art. Such posturing of the author is reflective of the commitment that is based on the immediacy of his/her experiences. As the author projects a particular self-image, it cultivates an ethos that works as an interface between the self that is constructed and the one in becoming. The 'encounter' between different experiential domains—that is, that of the author and the readers—allows a heterogeneity and autonomy of meaning-making through the process of evolvment of differing perspectives. In this way, the projection of ethos evokes self-reflexivity as well as forms of enquiry in the social space.

This Issue explores how the approach towards life narratives situates the practices of writing within the imperative of thematization of the self and new perspectives on narrative construction. The Forum introduced in this Issue by our Guest Editors, James S. Baumlin and Craig A. Meyer, investigates the experimental forms of textual representation and critical practices in academic scholarship vis-à-vis life narratives. With this aim in view, the Forum includes individual musings on ways of seeing and ways of knowing to reinterpret the precepts of narratorial posturing and voice in academic writing and pedagogy. Authors of the Forum pieces have presented their ways-of-being through critical interventions in pedagogical strategies, place-based thinking, theories of reading, academic writing, authorial voice, and ethics of narrative construction.

In reflecting on the problematic assumptions that undergird truth claims in fiction and non-fiction, George H. Jensen in his Forum piece argues to move beyond “the ethics producing writing that corresponds to facts,” and brings out the importance of what Bakhtin calls answerability. Patrocínio Schweickart's Forum piece draws upon the sub-genre of literacy autobiography to ruminate on how “[l]earning to read different kinds of stories carefully and with pleasure is one important way to develop and strengthen a culture of care.” While Schweickart argues for fostering an ethic of care in academic and pedagogical practices, Cathie English underlines the importance of ecological consciousness and realising one's connectedness with their natural surroundings in her work. English shows how her pedagogy on place-conscious writing is geared towards developing intimate bonds with nature and the place one inhabits. Craig A. Meyer, in his piece, ruminates upon his experience with stuttering to provide insight on how authorial voice becomes bound by personal dysfluencies and stereotypical perceptions. Aimee

Morrison in her Forum piece pushes readers to rethink existing standards of academic conventions, and argues for the personal and academic to coexist in writing. Taking issue with the reigning agreement that the use of first-person pronouns “ought” to be avoided in academic writing, she argues in favour of “writ[ing] in our own voices, from our acknowledged subject positions.” Taking a panoramic view of human species, James S. Baumlín characterizes human as *homo narrans* in his work and discusses the emergence of new models of ethos in the face of scientific technoculture, transhumanism, and posthumanism.

Engaging with the theme of “Telling Life Stories: Ethos, Positionality, and Structures of Narrative” the papers published in this Issue enter the discourse around ethos and life narratives from differing vantage points and tease out ways in which reading and writing of life narratives bear on contemporary concerns. In the article titled “Complete Truth and Fuzzy Genres: Reading Karl Ove Knausgaard’s *My Struggle*” George H. Jensen problematizes the received notions on truth claims in the genre of nonfiction. His reading of Knausgaard’s *My Struggle* extends the ways in which one makes sense of life narratives and invites the reader to see how truth claims in nonfiction are neither self-evident nor transparent but part of a complex process where answerability and community play a significant role. Drawing upon Aja Martínez’s approach to counterstory and Walter D. Mignolo’s decolonial thinking, Charles McMartin’s work, “Teaching a Decolonial Counterstory: 1551 Valladolid Debate and Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*,” reads a particular scene from Silko’s novel as a ‘decolonial counterstory,’ with a view “to illustrate how colonial epistemologies set up ‘linguistic frames’ that silence coexisting epistemologies.” Underscoring certain fault lines in rhetoric and composition studies, McMartin’s reading brings out pedagogical imperatives of incorporating and teaching foundational decolonial concepts of pluriversality, delinking, biopolitics, and geopolitics. James S. Baumlín’s two-part paper—“Empathy and Abjection after Burke (1): On the Rise and Fall of ‘Listening-Rhetorics,’ 1936–2023” and “Empathy and Abjection after Burke (2): Embodied Narrative and the Resistance against Persuasion”—traces the history of rhetorics since Kenneth Burke’s agonistic model to arrive at the contemporary advances in embodied narrative, cognitive science, and neuro rhetorics. Putting them in conversation with an understanding of how empathy, abjection, and persuasion work, Baumlín teases out implications of neuroscience for the discipline of rhetoric in twenty-first century and argues that now “we must learn to speak of persuasion, not as a change of mind, but as a change of brain chemistry.” While doing so, his articles interlace a timely meditation on the state of public discourse in the United States in contemporary times. Naveen John Panicker’s paper “To Tell or Not to Tell: Nature and Objectives of Mental Illness Narratives/Autopathographies” explores the reliability and difficulty of representing the experiences of mental illnesses due to the ambiguous nature of memory and the struggle for “finding suitable vocabulary to express the seemingly inexpressible.”

We would like to take this opportunity to extend our gratitude to the guest editors, James S. Baumlín and Craig A. Meyer, for making this Issue possible. The entire team

of *LLIDS* deeply enjoyed the experience, and we thank you for your support throughout the process of this publication—from its conception, extension of the discourse herein to the writing of life narratives, to editorial feedback on the submissions. We would also like to thank James for the extensive discussions we have had with him. We have developed a more nuanced understanding of rhetoric and research through these interactions, and we look forward to continuing this exploration with you!

This Issue completes the publication of Volume 5 of *LLIDS*. The focus of the upcoming Volume 6 is on Body Studies. In addition to inviting critical deliberations pertaining to body in relation to embodiment, sexuality, gender, biopolitics, disability, and identity, the volume through its four Issues seeks to bring together focused inquiries on themes as varied as carnal hermeneutics, somatophobia, ageing body, corporeal narratology, virtual bodies, among others. Looking back at our journey, we have come a long way from where we started. Last year alone saw the journal transformed by the Continuous Publication Model and the website user interface redesigned through the searchable publication format. This research venture would not have been possible without the consistent support of our authors and the salient contribution of our peer reviewers and advisory board. No publication is complete without its readers, and we are most grateful to you for your continued support and engagement with *LLIDS*.