

The Faculty of Letters, "Babeş-Bolyai" University
"Sextil Puşcariu" Institute, The Romanian Academy,
Cluj-Napoca Branch

Call for Papers – Forthcoming conference

GIRL, INTERRUPTED

Testimonies, Silences and Self-Censorship

in Women's Life Writing

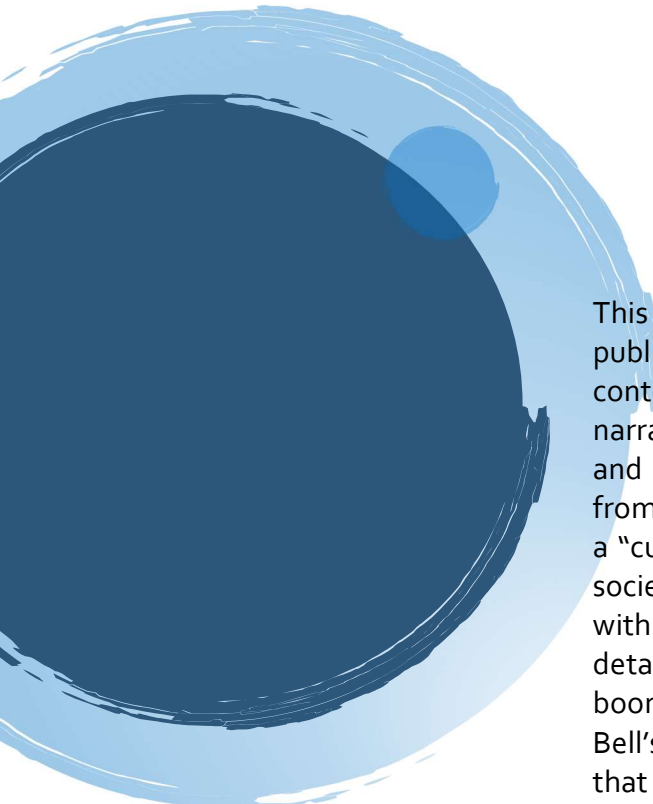
3rd edition

Global Perspectives on Gender Violence and Trauma in
Women's Life Writing

"Why is autobiography the most popular form of fiction?" (Conway, 1998). The demise of the Communist regime in Eastern Europe triggered a surge of memoirs, diaries, and correspondence, together with biographies, autobiographies of different personalities, either new or retraced from previously censored or self-censored writings. This inflation of ego-documents, which started in the early 1990s and has continued since, has served in many cases as a compensation to decades of state-mandated censorship and institutional surveillance. Thus, the major regime shift in 1989 initiated more than a political transition; it was followed by a life-writing boom on the literary market.



Cluj-Napoca,
Romania, October
15-16, 2026



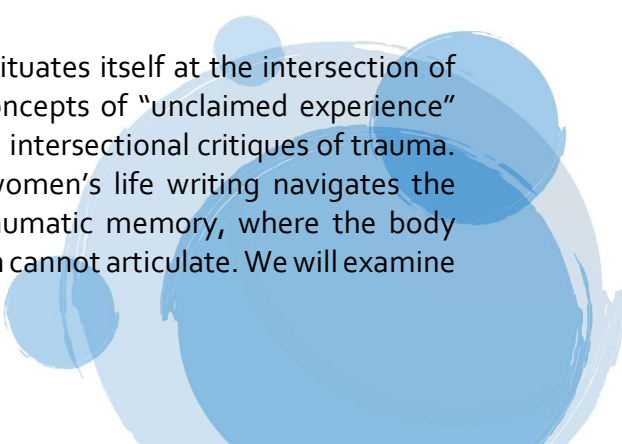
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This life-writing "boom" is not merely a quantitative increase in publications, but also a phenomenological shift, in an international context favouring such an approach. This fascination with narratives based on true characters and events, with all its varieties and spectrum of subgenres, from biographies to biofiction and from memoirs to heterobiographies or autotopographies has led to a "cult of memory" (Bell, 2006), especially in the post-totalitarian societies where transitional justice and the need to come to terms with a repressive past were involved in the process of retracing details of collective memory. The Post-communist "life-writing boom" is not a transparent window but a palimpsest. As Duncan Bell's framework suggests, these narratives are "parallel stories" that compete with official history. Ultimately, "defrosting silence" through Life Writing is an act of courage and resilience.

While Life Writing has flourished as an umbrella genre across Europe, women's personal narratives - memoirs, diaries, and correspondence - have faced a longer, more arduous journey toward academic and public recognition. Following the success of our first and second editions, this third international conference seeks to fill the remaining gaps by centring on a global phenomenon: the "literary boom" of female Life Writing. In the last decade, these accounts have moved from the margins to dominate the book market, serving as a natural, long-awaited compensation for historically silenced voices.

The 2026 edition expands our focus to the raw intersections of gender violence and trauma on a worldwide scale. For women - often treated as silenced political subjects - the act of writing is more than a creative endeavour; it is a vital testimony of survival. We aim to explore the tension between what can be verbalized and what remains censored, self-censored, or silenced in narratives of childhood, youth, and adulthood shaped by systemic violence and historical trauma.

Theoretically, this conference situates itself at the intersection of Cathy Caruth's foundational concepts of "unclaimed experience" and more recent decolonial and intersectional critiques of trauma. We seek to interrogate how women's life writing navigates the "crisis of truth" inherent in traumatic memory, where the body remembers what the mind often cannot articulate. We will examine





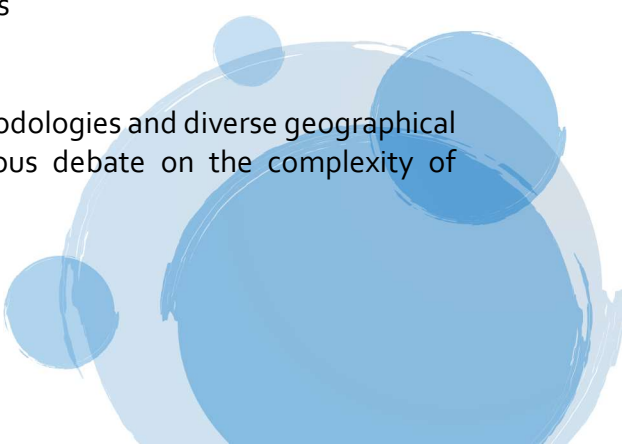
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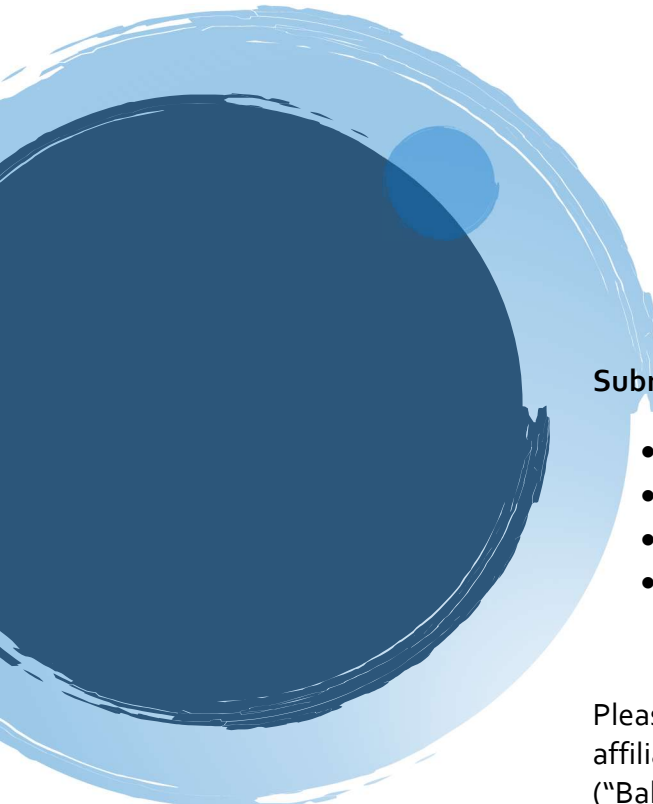
whose lives are deemed "writable" and how the act of narrating gender violence serves as a performative reclamation of agency. Furthermore, we invite discussions on Leigh Gilmore's limits of autobiography, exploring how female authors innovate Life Writing forms to bypass the constraints of traditional testimony, thereby transforming the "secondary status" of women's voices into a primary site of global cultural resistance.

We welcome interdisciplinary proposals on topics including, but not limited to:

- **Testimony, Memory and Post-Memory.** Comparative and Interdisciplinary Perspectives and Challenges on European Women's Life Writing.
- **Mapping the Trauma:** Comparative perspectives on gender violence in women's life writing worldwide.
- **Politics, Violence and Trauma in 20th and 21st century Life Writing.** Narratives of Psychological and Physical Violence
- **The Mirror Crack'd:** Representing physical and psychological trauma and the process of re(dis)covery.
- **Working/writing through Trauma:** Narratives of resilience, resistance, and recovery in the face of gender violence
- **A Room of One's Own vs. The Panopticon:** Privacy, state surveillance, and domestic intrusion in personal narratives.
- **Girls Unchained:** Memoirs of political interrogation, imprisonment, and resistance under oppressive regimes.
- **Girls Uninterrupted.** How Post-Communist Women's Life Writing Became Post-Communist Book Market Stars
- **Long-Lasting Legacies vs. Silence Legacies.** Unsilencing Endurance, Healing the Trauma vs. Silencing Trauma. Intergenerational Echoes

We encourage innovative methodologies and diverse geographical perspectives to foster a rigorous debate on the complexity of women's testimonies today.





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Submission Guidelines & Deadlines:

- Abstract submission deadline: April 30, 2026
- Notification of acceptance: May 20, 2026
- Conference dates: October 15-16, 2026
- Location: Onsite, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Please submit your 300-400 words abstract, your university affiliation and a short bionote to Dr. Hab. Andrada Fătu-Tutoveanu ("Babeş-Bolyai" University, The Faculty of Letters, The Department of Foreign Languages for Specific Purposes, andrada.pintilescu@ubbcluj.ro).

We look forward to receiving your interesting contributions and welcoming you to Cluj. Once accepted, we will be happy to assist you with the practicalities and travel information. The conference will include a welcome cocktail, a city tour and a one-day optional trip to discover beautiful Transylvania.

