

Chapter 1

Introduction

Michelle M. Dowd and Julie A. Eckerle

As growing numbers of Englishwomen participated in manuscript and print culture in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, they produced a remarkable number of autobiographical narratives, or life writings.¹ Historical developments during this period, including the spread of Protestant doctrines about introspection and unmediated relationships with the divine, the political and religious upheavals of the Civil Wars, and the development of experimental science, helped to produce a cultural environment that privileged both self-reflection and an ideologically nuanced approach to individuality that set the stage for women's unprecedented production and publication of life writings.² These texts took many forms, ranging from the more explicitly autobiographical—such as diaries, letters, and memoirs—to less obvious choices like religious treatises, fictional romances, and even cookbooks. In still other cases, writers combined generic elements from traditional forms in new and creative ways. In the process, they produced rhetorically sophisticated discourses of the self and demonstrated how textual form and the subjectivity it produces are mutually constitutive. Significantly, these life writings were ultimately circulated to a wide variety of readers, and they played an important role in women's understanding of—and articulation of—female identity in early modern manuscript and print culture.

The essays in this volume, the first critical collection that focuses exclusively on women's life writings during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England,³ consider the ways in which early modern women made use of formal and generic structures to constitute themselves in writing. By working at the intersection of genre and personal identity, the contributors reveal early modern women's familiarity with various aspects of an increasingly textual world,⁴ as well as the creativity with which women sought suitable forms for the expression of unique selves. The volume as a whole thus demonstrates how generic choice, mixture, and revision shape the construction of the female self in early modern England. To this end, we have collected essays on a range of female writers, including well-known figures like Margaret Cavendish alongside more obscure ones like Martha Moulsworth, and on a range of textual forms, from the preface to

the novel. In other words, we bring together the familiar and the unfamiliar, the now canonical and the noncanonical.

By situating women's life writings within the broader literary culture of which they were a part, this volume makes an important contribution to the ongoing conversation about early modern women and to scholarship that has attempted to position women's texts, which are often still marginalized in critical discourse, within a wide range of historical, textual, and social perspectives. Through our focus on genre, we offer a new and illuminating context for reading Englishwomen's life writings that eschews the tendency to read these texts as unmediated representations of the experiences of "real" women. Our contributors demonstrate that the rich and varied literary tradition of early modern England was as valuable a resource for these writers as were the events and emotions that made up their daily lives. Diarists and letter-writers, for example, could deploy the strategies of romance or chronicle history to produce politically motivated narratives of the self. Women writers could also marshal the seemingly marginal space of the preface or the literal margins of a cookbook to create intimate bonds with their readers or to legitimize their domestic knowledge. In short, by interrogating the discursive contours of gendered identity, our volume suggests new ways to understand the textual production of women's "selves" in early modern England.

Genre and Women's Life Writing in Early Modern England has been influenced and, indeed, made possible by the nuanced historical and theoretical work done on early modern Englishwomen's life writings in recent years. Scholars have brought these life writings to the public eye; reexamined theories of the self, self-construction, and autobiography that may have inhibited critical attention to these texts before; demonstrated how life writing considerably blurs the distinction between public and private experience; and highlighted the perhaps unexpected diversity and richness of women's lives in early modern England.⁵ All of this work has helped to break down significant if erroneous assumptions about early modern England's social landscape and has given new credibility to early modern Englishwomen's life writing.

Moving beyond traditional approaches to genre, particularly autobiography, has been a crucial first step in the study of women's life writing from any period. Numerous feminist critics, for example, have critiqued traditional definitions of autobiography, such as those posited by influential theorists James Olney and Georges Gusdorf. In Gusdorf's foundational essay, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," he asserts that autobiography is simultaneously "a document about a life," "a work of art," and most importantly "a work of enlightenment," for "[t]he author of an autobiography gives himself the job of narrating his own history; what he sets out to do is to reassemble the scattered elements of his individual life and to regroup them in a comprehensive sketch."⁶ According to Mary Beth Rose's useful articulation of this approach, autobiography is "an individual's struggle to define his or her experience by the narrative creation of a

unified personality, through which the author attempts to reconcile the public and private aspects of being, often represented as conflicting.”⁷ However, although Gusdorf’s arguments are more complex than traditionally assumed, Shari Benstock and others have noted that such theories rely on the construction of a cohesive self over time and on an authoritative perspective that consistently controls the presentation of this self, neither of which is realistic or always appropriate to women’s experience. Indeed, Gusdorf seems to assume a mature man of some importance reconstructing his life from a moment of apparent leisure. By contrast, Benstock argues, “The self that would reside at the center of the text is decentered—and often is absent altogether—in women’s autobiographical texts. The very requirements of the genre are put into question by the limits of gender.”⁸ Other critics join Benstock in arguing that gender fundamentally affects the way in which we read autobiography and the “self” it purportedly creates.

In order to challenge the traditional understanding of autobiographical writing, scholars have developed a series of creative approaches to generic categorization. Some distinguish between the forms of “diary” and “autobiography” or propose new terms entirely,⁹ and others highlight the fictionality of the autobiographical act. Perhaps most notably, scholarship on autobiography has emphasized the way in which these texts frequently resist generic categorization altogether. By reconsidering definitions of a variety of forms, as well as juxtaposing texts from multiple genres in order to highlight the indeterminacy of generic labels, scholars have contributed to a new perception of autobiographical texts not as one genre or another but as “an amalgamation of autobiography and/or biography and/or fiction and/or chronicle, thus defying traditional generic classification.”¹⁰ Consequently, literary critics and historians have increasingly turned to the term “life writing,” defined by Marlene Kadar as “a less exclusive genre of personal kinds of writing.”¹¹ This term is particularly useful for describing the writings of early modern Englishwomen since, as scholars have noted, their personal narratives were characterized by numerous subgenres of autobiographical expression, including conversion narratives and diaries. Indeed, Elspeth Graham argues that “[t]he exploration and exploitation of a variety of forms, rather than adherence to a recognised format for articulating the self” is the most significant characteristic of women’s life writings during the early modern period.¹² We thus use the term “life writing” throughout this volume to emphasize the diversity and formal fluidity of these texts.

In whole, by questioning the distinction between the genres of “life writing” and traditional autobiography, investigating subgenres of life writing, and asking why life writing as a genre might appeal especially to women writers, scholarship on this genre—and on *early modern* life writing in particular—has usefully interrogated the nature of generic categorization.¹³ But it has rarely explored how autobiographical texts intersect and engage with *other* genres, such as romances, novels, prayer books, or recipes, and it has only recently begun to consider the productive relationship between the “life” or “self” represented in a text and the

mechanics of that text.¹⁴ By contrast, *Genre and Women's Life Writing in Early Modern England* shifts focus to the textual, artistic, and rhetorical choices that inform individual texts. Our contributors thus consider not only the genre or genres of each text but also how autobiographical narratives are in dialogue with other textual forms. In unearthing the formal complexity of early modern women's life writings, the essays in our volume pay homage to the genre's linguistic roots, demonstrating exactly how, "[i]n the word 'autobiography,' *writing* mediates the space between 'self' and life."¹⁵

The contributors of the present volume focus their critical energies on personal narratives written by women in the late sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth century. This particular period in English history witnessed exciting developments in both the theories and forms of genre and the opportunities for written expression available to women. Influenced by classical texts by Cicero and Quintilian, early modern writers published widely popular and highly influential rhetorical handbooks that attested to the growing interest in wordplay and language theory in the period.¹⁶ These linguistic interests in turn produced a literary culture that was fascinated with genre theory and generic innovation. Rosalie Colie, for example, claims that "literary invention—both 'finding' and 'making'—in the Renaissance was largely generic."¹⁷ Generic modes were thus not viewed as fixed entities or strict rules for literary production in the period but as flexible guidelines that were constantly evolving and yielding new meanings. This rich literary environment provided "a diversity of narrative models upon which autobiographers could base their textualised self-portraits"¹⁸ and encouraged writers of the period to experiment with various combinations of different forms.

As the essays in our collection demonstrate, the penchant for generic experimentation that characterized sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literary production opened up a variety of textual possibilities for those Englishwomen who chose to write about their lives in manuscript or print.¹⁹ Not only were these life writings produced "*before* the advent of autobiography as a recognized genre,"²⁰ but, as noted above, the experimentation with form was a fundamental characteristic of women's life writing in early modern England.²¹ In *Literature and Revolution in England 1640–1660*, Nigel Smith argues persuasively that the "generic inventiveness and eclecticism" among seventeenth-century women authors was directly related to genre's ability to construct identity and to serve as "a means through literary structure of exploring potentials and acknowledging limitations in relation to the world."²² The categories of genre, gender, and identity were thus mutually constitutive in early modern England. Women such as Margaret Cavendish, Anne Clifford, Dorothy Osborne, and Anne Halkett took full advantage of the wide range of generic and rhetorical models at their disposal, and in the process they produced self-narratives that are more textually (and intertextually) complex than previous scholarship has tended to acknowledge.

Clearly, then, early modern England was a particularly important period in the development of women's life writings. But we have also chosen to use the phrase

“early modern” to characterize the scope of this study because it helps to highlight the historical emergence of new discourses that were significant to women’s personal narratives. The essays in our volume, for instance, point to several historical trends in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England that would eventually result in recognizably modern literary, political, and cultural phenomena. As Josephine Donovan’s essay attests, seventeenth-century women’s life writings often experiment with narrative structures that would, by the end of the century, come to characterize the early novel. As Catherine Field and Lara Dodds demonstrate, women’s recipe books and the writings of women such as Margaret Cavendish discursively engage with new scientific developments, particularly the emerging interest in experimentation. The political turmoil of the Civil Wars and the religious and cultural transformations that they produced influenced the writings of Lady Anne Halkett, as Mary Ellen Lamb makes clear in her contribution to the volume. More generally, many of the essays in the collection discuss the significance of the development of print culture during the period as well as the effects of the Protestant Reformation, which encouraged a heightened focus on introspection as a component of personal and religious identity. As a whole, this volume reveals the formal and cultural developments in women’s life writing that were unique to the early modern period.

The essays in the collection differ in their individual approaches to these narratives and in their particular thematic and historical concerns, but they all share methodological interests in feminist, historicist, and formalist inquiry. *Genre and Women’s Life Writing in Early Modern England* is committed to a historicist reading practice that insists on situating women’s life writings within their multivalent historical contexts, including the textual. This emphasis stems in part from feminist theories of women’s autobiographical narratives, such as those previously discussed, which understand the self as a socially constructed entity whose coherence or unity is a textual fiction.

But the historicist readings of early modern Englishwomen’s life writings in the present volume also constitute a continuing refusal to essentialize or universalize women’s experience. Literary scholars frequently tend to read the work of women writers—far more so than their male counterparts—in terms of its relationship to the writer’s biography, assuming an important and potentially illustrative connection between the writer’s life and her text. Too often this critical impulse decontextualizes female identity by positing a female “experience” that exists independent from or even in opposition to language. We maintain instead, as Joan W. Scott has argued in her essay “Experience,” that “it is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience”; “the emergence of a new identity” is thus always “a discursive event.”²³ Women’s visibility as subjects and individuals, in other words, occurs only through language, and as scholars interested in literary history, we need to look to the details of that language if we want to discern how women’s “experience” manifests itself in it. By interrogating the relationship between “self” and “text” that is often over-

simplified in contemporary criticism, the essays in our volume reveal the various ways in which early modern Englishwomen's selves became visible in discourse.

The feminist and historicist commitments of our volume, grounded in the belief that language and selfhood are mutually constitutive, also carry over to our interests in early modern forms. In arguing that women's use of generic structures in their life writings helped them to produce historically specific narratives of the self, we join practitioners of a critical methodology within literary studies that has come to be called "historical formalism." As an approach to literary analysis, "historical formalism" builds on the work of Raymond Williams and Fredric Jameson in theorizing the ways in which form mediates between the content of a text and its historical context, including the social and economic conditions under which it was produced.²⁴ If language constitutes women as subjects, as Scott argues, then language and the specific forms that it takes deserve precise, historical analysis. As we have seen, generic forms, narrative structures, and rhetorical tropes were not fixed, ahistorical categories in early modern England, but rather rich and evolving resources from which women could draw when composing their life writings. In their work on these writings, the contributors to the present volume speak to the cultural significance of early modern forms and the roles they played in shaping women's "selves."

In thus attending to the complex textual genealogies of early modern Englishwomen's life writings, the essays in our volume ask the following kinds of questions: How exactly do generic conventions influence narrative constructions of women's selves? What representations or subject positions do they make available for early modern women writers? How do differences between print and manuscript mediums affect the generic development of these writings? How did women's life writings from the period engage with the disciplines of science, history, religion, culinary arts, housewifery, and legal theory? And how did women's life writings influence or even spawn other genres? By posing these types of questions, this collection aims to situate women's life writing within the broader textual culture of early modern England while maintaining a focus on the particular formal mechanisms and narrative structures that comprise individual texts.

It seems logical, therefore, that our volume trace the generic development of women's life writing loosely in terms of England's transition from a manuscript to print culture, especially since—as Margaret J.M. Ezell argues so convincingly in her contribution to this collection—"our understanding of the authorial practices of life writing" is deeply affected by the material form such writing took. The transition from manuscript to print was, of course, a complicated one, and many of the writers addressed in this collection produced writings in both forms. The way in which we have organized these essays is, therefore, necessarily imprecise. But we have chosen to begin with those essays primarily about manuscript documents and to move toward those essays primarily about print documents in order to highlight how intimately linked were issues of genre, form, medium, and textual

self-presentation, as well as how the development of women's life writing reflected larger trends in England's textual culture.

The first two essays, Helen Wilcox's "'Free and Easy as ones discourse'? Genre and Self-Expression in the Poems and Letters of Early Modern Englishwomen" and Ezell's "Domestic Papers: Manuscript Culture and Early Modern Women's Life Writing," establish many of the terms, theories, and avenues of inquiry that are central to *Genre and Women's Life Writing in Early Modern England*. Wilcox, for example, offers an overview of the constraints of genre on the rhetoric of self-expression, arguing that early modern Englishwomen's self-representation varied according to the "'masks' or 'dress' of language." In other words, through her case studies of two letter writers (Arbella Stuart and Dorothy Osborne) and two poets (Mary Wroth and Martha Moulsworth), Wilcox demonstrates that the aspects of selfhood expressed through different literary forms may themselves vary according to the individual generic or rhetorical context. This is, of course, a central argument of our volume as a whole. As Wilcox notes, "Each genre comes with its inherited conventions, contexts and functions; these make possible, but also determine and limit, the expression of identity that might occur within it."

Ezell broadens this line of thought to consider the impact of the manuscript or print medium on a woman's self-presentation, as well as on our understanding of the genre of life writing itself. As she asks in her essay, "what issues might be revealed about the genre of early modern women's life writings when one takes as the primary focus the mode of their textual creation and transmission[?]" To demonstrate just how women's reading, writing, and thinking practices—in addition to their approach to genre—are affected by the physical materials with which they compose, Ezell draws our attention to the "'fossil' remains" of women's handwritten documents that appear in other texts and to women's "domestic papers," specifically "manuscript spaces which served writers for more than one purpose" and, at times, accommodated more than one writer. None of these forms are considered "genres" in the conventional sense of the word, and yet they are forms of life writing that emerge distinctly from a manuscript culture. Further, they reveal conventions of life writing and attitudes toward life writing that are not evident in print variations.

Ezell's assertion that the study of life writing in manuscript has much to teach us becomes immediately apparent with the next essay, Catherine Field's study of early modern women's manuscript recipe books. In "'Many hands hands': Writing the Self in Early Modern Women's Recipe Books," Field gives much-needed attention to this genre, arguing that it "allowed for the construction of a female self that was ... fluid and in flux between individual practice and coterie. Through the receipt book's close relationship to the house ... , its emphasis on collaboration as well as empirical practice, and its foregrounding of the female body, it became a textual space that enabled women's positive expression of the self." Through Field's thorough examination of how women constructed and used recipe books in

their daily lives, she further demonstrates how the genre calls into question theories of authorship, ownership, and textual stability that have heretofore been used to define and categorize early modern women's textual production.

Although Megan Matchinske considers a more conventional autobiographical form—the diary—in her study of Lady Anne Clifford, she, too, interrogates our traditional understanding of how the form works to construct and convey identity, especially the identity of a woman in a male-defined world. In “Serial Identity: History, Gender, and Form in the Diary Writing of Lady Anne Clifford,” Matchinske explores Clifford's extensive autobiographical writings in multiple manuscripts as both private history and history-in-progress. She argues that Clifford's serial navigation of her environment (as she moves from room to room and from property to property) and the work-in-progress state of her diaries are a direct result of her need for documentary evidence in her ongoing legal battles for her land and property. Matchinske further links Clifford's approach to the plight of early modern women generally, asserting that the “peculiar iterative patterning” used by Clifford is necessarily distinct from men's use of the diurnal form and particularly suited to women's needs at this time. In Clifford's case, for example, the “diaries offer constant and repetitive pronouncements that operate directionally, spatially, and metaphorically in opposition to patrilineal networks that would regularly deny such connections.”

In “Merging the Secular and the Spiritual in Lady Anne Halkett's Memoirs,” Mary Ellen Lamb turns to the issue of generic hybridity in another familiar autobiographical form, the memoir—specifically Halkett's romantically thrilling spiritual autobiography. Indeed, it is precisely this generic complexity that makes Halkett's manuscript an ideal case study of “the entanglements possible between subject positions,” as well as “the forms of religious selfhood available to Royalist women during and after the Interregnum.” In her examination of this text, Lamb explores the dynamic relationship between its secular modes (such as romance and tragicomedy) and its devotional modes (including the confession, the Puritan “case of conscience,” and the defense), arguing not only that they are quite compatible in Halkett's construction of subjectivity but also that in their interaction one can trace the most difficult conflicts in Halkett's intensive self-examination and ultimate construction of a devout, Royalist selfhood.

Implicit in many, if not all, of the essays in this collection is the recognition that early modern women's self-presentations in even the most personal autobiographical texts are constructed with a reader or readers in mind; Halkett, for example, seems deeply concerned about defending her reputation in her memoir even though it was never intended for publication. With women's movement into the print sphere, however, concern for the reader's response by necessity takes a much more prominent role. As Julie A. Eckerle notes in “Prefacing Texts, Authorizing Authors, and Constructing Selves: The Preface as Autobiographical Space,” this is especially apparent in writers' prefatory statements. In her essay, Eckerle considers the preface as genre and examines early modern women's

unique use of the prefatory space, a space that has its own very specific generic requirements and yet is, significantly, remarkably open to innovation. Because women entering the world of print needed not only to defend their authorial choices (as all preface writers must do) but—in the process—their very identities as respectable women, Eckerle argues that they manipulated conventional prefatory strategies and developed new ones to suit their needs. She considers a number of women's prefaces from the period, considering both the particular rhetorical strategies early modern women used to authorize themselves as authors in and from the space of the preface and the use of autobiographical accounts in this space to produce a new conception of women's selves. Ultimately, Eckerle argues that these writers used the preface to create new identities for themselves (and for women in general) as authors, as women, and as women with authority enough to enter the public stage.

While attending to generic innovation in the mother's manual genre, Michelle M. Dowd also demonstrates how a woman could construct a textual identity that defied an easy division between public and private personae. "Structures of Piety in Elizabeth Richardson's *Legacie*" is a study of Richardson's 1645 mother's manual and its structural basis in a series of prayers to be said on specific days of the week or on specific occasions. As Dowd convincingly demonstrates through her analysis of *A Ladies Legacie to her Daughters*, generic hybridity could be a politically useful and spiritually efficacious literary tool for Richardson and other authors of mothers' legacies. Through an in-depth exploration of the historical and textual idiosyncrasies of Richardson's book, Dowd details exactly how it participates in mid-seventeenth-century Protestant print culture and enables the construction of a maternal self. But the study further demonstrates how attending to formal hybridity—one of the key structural features of Richardson's text—can offer a new critical method for studying the mothers' advice manuals as a genre. Like many of the other women writers considered in this volume, Richardson's creative use of form and her attentiveness to the needs of both her family and spiritual community suggest a woman in command of multiple discourses and textual styles.

In the first of two essays on the prolific and autobiography-obsessed Margaret Cavendish, Elspeth Graham considers a quite different kind of writer, but one whose self-presentation is also intimately linked to questions of form. Indeed, as Graham argues in "Intersubjectivity, Intertextuality, and Form in the Self-Writings of Margaret Cavendish," Cavendish's "scientific thought and her experimentation with form provided an intellectual correlative to her personal dilemmas." Graham's essay offers a new approach to Cavendish by refusing to isolate particular genres within Cavendish's corpus as objects of study but instead considering the autobiographical impulse that characterizes *all* of her work. The essay thus "explores a range of texts, connecting them through [Cavendish's] recurrent return to the autobiographical."

While Graham argues “that Cavendish’s generic innovations derive from a coincidence of the very particular forms and circumstances of her subjectivity, her life, and her literary preoccupations,” Lara Dodds considers Cavendish’s particular appropriation of scientific discourse in her development of a theory of life writing. In “Margaret Cavendish’s Domestic Experiment,” Dodds offers a quite different perspective on Cavendish’s use of science, by approaching it through the lenses of the romance and domestic conduct book genres. Dodds begins by arguing that Cavendish “replac[es] romance with ‘work,’ ... and appropriates and contests the model of the female self constructed by the domestic genres of housewifery manuals and cookbooks, transforming the language of domesticity into the basis for a writing self.” In so doing, Dodds suggests, Cavendish “interrogate[s] the construction of women’s experience” and, in turn, traditional approaches to experience itself. Finally, Dodds links this critique to Cavendish’s critique of experiment, a concern that inevitably encompasses contemporary scientific theories and methods. Addressing several of the genres and discourses that appear in Cavendish’s work, Dodds offers a compelling argument for how Cavendish’s theory of life writing connects to and in fact depends on her philosophical and scientific concerns.

Such generic experimentation and innovation necessarily lead to new forms and, as in the case of Cavendish, to new theories of life writing itself. In the final essay of the volume, “‘That All the World May Know’: Women’s ‘Defense-Narratives’ and the Early Novel,” Josephine Donovan adds an important closing chapter to this study of early modern women’s life writing by considering its influence on yet another genre, the novel. In so doing, Donovan brings us a long way from the manuscript fragments with which we begin. And yet, her essay makes similar arguments to those that come before it, thus demonstrating once again that generic innovation is a consistent thread in early modern women’s life writing. By tracing how women’s need to “defen[d] themselves in writing” becomes the subgenre Donovan calls the “women’s defense-narrative” and that this subgenre in turn becomes a common ingredient of the novel, Donovan argues for women’s rhetorical ingenuity in their textual self-presentations. But she also provides a new and significant perspective on the history of the novel itself. As she notes, “none of the major histories of the novel has recognized the role played by the women’s defense-narrative in its formation.”

Like Donovan’s essay, our volume as a whole works to resituate early modern women’s life writing in the history of early modern writing generally. Although life writing has traditionally been understood as a less important genre than high literary forms and women’s life writing as somehow less valuable than men’s because of women’s supposed isolation in the private and domestic spheres, the essays in *Genre and Women’s Life Writing in Early Modern England* demonstrate just how intimately connected to the larger textual world were these seemingly self-concerned texts. The result is a fresh look at early modern women’s textual

literacy and their contributions to the exciting experimentation with genre that characterized the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England.

Notes

- 1 On women's participation in manuscript and print culture, see Margaret J.M. Ezell, *The Patriarch's Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1987); Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993); and Margaret W. Ferguson, "Renaissance Concepts of the 'Woman Writer,'" *Women and Literature in Britain 1500–1700*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), pp. 143–68.
- 2 For good overviews of these and other explanations for the increased production of autobiographical writings during the early modern period in England, see David Booy, general introduction, *Personal Disclosures: An Anthology of Self-writings from the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Booy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 1–19, esp. pp. 15–16; Elspeth Graham, Hilary Hinds, Elaine Hobby, and Helen Wilcox, introduction, *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen*, ed. Graham et al (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 1–27, esp. pp. 1–2; and Mary Beth Rose, "Gender, Genre, and History: Seventeenth-Century English Women and the Art of Autobiography," *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Rose (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1986), pp. 245–78, esp. p. 247.
- 3 There are, however, several useful *anthologies* devoted exclusively or in part to early modern Englishwomen's life writing. These include *Personal Disclosures; Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450–1700*, ed. James Daybell (New York: Palgrave, 2001); and *Her Own Life*. See also *Women's Life Writing in Early Modern Scotland: Writing the Evangelical Self, c. 1670–c. 1730*, ed. David George Mullan (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), and—for a comprehensive overview of early modern women's autobiographical expression, including their use of a number of textual models—see Sheila Ottway, "Autobiography," *A Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Anita Pacheco (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 231–47.
- 4 For women's literacy in the early modern period, see David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980); Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and Its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1981); Suzanne W. Hull, *Chaste, Silent and Obedient: English Books for Women 1475–1640* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1982); and Eve Rachele Sanders, *Gender and Literacy on Stage in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999).
- 5 Texts include *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Shari Benstock (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1988); *Women's Life-Writing: Finding Voice/Building Community*, ed. Linda S. Coleman (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State U Popular P, 1997); Rose; and Helen Wilcox, "Private Writing and Public Function: Autobiographical Texts by Renaissance Englishwomen," *Gloriana's Face: Women, Public and Private, in the English Renaissance*, ed. S.P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1992), pp. 47–62.

- 6 Georges Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," ed. and trans. James Olney, *Autobiography* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980), pp. 28–48, esp. p. 43, p. 45, p. 35.
- 7 Rose, p. 249.
- 8 Benstock, "Authorizing the Autobiographical," *The Private Self*, pp. 10–33, esp. p. 20.
- 9 See, for example, Harriet Blodgett, introduction, "*Capacious Hold-All*": *An Anthology of Englishwomen's Diary Writings*, ed. Blodgett (Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 1991), pp. 1–14, esp. p. 10; Elizabeth Clarke, "Diaries," *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, ed. Michael Hattaway (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 609–14; Judy Nolte Lensink, "Expanding the Boundaries of Criticism: The Diary as Female Autobiography," *Women's Studies* 14.1 (1987): 39–53; and Valerie Raoul, "Women and Diaries: Gender and Genre," *Mosaic* 22.3 (1989): 57–65. Gusdorf, too, distinguishes between a journal, created "without any concern for continuity," and autobiography, which requires the creation of a "unity and identity across time" (35).
- 10 Susan Groag Bell and Marilyn Yalom, introduction, *Revealing Lives: Autobiography, Biography, and Gender*, ed. Bell and Yalom (Albany: SUNY P, 1990), pp. 1–11, esp. p. 5.
- 11 Marlene Kadar, "Coming to Terms: Life Writing—From Genre to Critical Practice," *Essays on Life Writing: From Genre to Critical Practice*, ed. Kadar (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1992), pp. 3–15, esp. p. 4.
- 12 Graham, "Women's Writing and the Self," *Women and Literature in Britain 1500–1700*, pp. 209–33, esp. p. 213. See also Henk Dragstra, Sheila Ottway, and Helen Wilcox, introduction, *Betraying Our Selves: Forms of Self-Representation in Early Modern English Texts*, ed. Dragstra et al (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 1–13, esp. pp. 4–7.
- 13 Pertinent texts that discuss genre and early modern life writing in particular include *Betraying Our Selves*; Graham, "Women's Writing and the Self," *The Rhetorics of Life-Writing in Early Modern Europe: Forms of Biography from Cassandra Fedele to Louis XIV*, ed. Thomas F. Mayer and D.R. Woolf (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1995); and Rose.
- 14 The editors of *Betraying Our Selves*, for example, stress the relationship between self, life, and textual mechanics in the introduction to their volume. Mayer and Woolf note in their introduction to *The Rhetorics of Life-Writing in Early Modern Europe* that they "are concerned less with the accuracy of any biographical or autobiographical representation than with the manner of its presentation." See pp. 1–37, esp. p. 4.
- 15 Benstock, "The Female Self Engendered: Autobiographical Writing and Theories of Selfhood," *Women's Studies*, 20.1 (1991): 5–14, esp. 8, emphasis added. Booy similarly argues that "the way [these authors] understood themselves and the meaning of their lives was dictated by a particular genre and its ideological matrix." See his introduction to *Personal Disclosures*, p. 6.
- 16 Aesthetic manuals such as Thomas Wilson's *The Arte of Rhetorique* (1553), Henry Peacham's *The Garden of Eloquence* (1577 and 1593), and George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589) are notable for their widespread appeal and their impact on a variety of writers throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For a useful discussion of rhetoric and rhetorical manuals in early modern England, see Marjorie Donker and George M. Muldrow, *Dictionary of Literary-Rhetorical Conventions of the English Renaissance* (Westport, CT: Greenwood P, 1982). See also Russ McDonald, *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001), esp. chapter 2,

- “Shaping the Language: Words, Patterns, and the Traditions of Rhetoric”; Wayne Rebhorn, *The Emperor of Men’s Minds: Literature and the Renaissance Discourse of Rhetoric* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995); Brian Vickers, *Classical Rhetoric in English Poetry* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1989); and Richard Lanham, *The Motives of Eloquence: Literary Rhetoric in the Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1976).
- 17 Rosalie Colie, *The Resources of Kind: Genre-Theory in the Renaissance* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1973), p. 17. See also Jean E. Howard, “Shakespeare and Genre,” *A Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. David Scott Kastan (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 297–310, esp. p. 300.
- 18 Dragstra et al, introduction, *Betraying Our Selves*, p. 4.
- 19 Of course, the emphasis on rhetoric and genre in the early modern period also allowed male writers to experiment with generic forms in their own life writings. Though the present collection is limited in scope to the works of early modern Englishwomen, the generic and rhetorical dimensions in the writings of their male counterparts certainly deserve further critical study. *The Rhetorics of Life-Writing* marks an excellent step in this direction.
- 20 Dragstra et al, introduction, *Betraying Our Selves*, p. 1, emphasis added.
- 21 See also Rose, who argues that the lack of a stable form at this point actually allowed women to write more freely and thus to contribute more fully to the genre’s development (247).
- 22 Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640–1660* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1994), p. 5.
- 23 Joan W. Scott, “Experience,” *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. Judith Butler and Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 22–40, esp. pp. 25–6, p. 34. See also Felicity A. Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989), who argues that “the ‘self’ is an ideological construct that is recruited into place within specific historical formations.” See introduction, pp. xi–xxii, esp. p. xii.
- 24 See Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991), esp. pp. 187–8; Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981); *Renaissance Literature and Its Formal Engagements*, ed. Mark David Rasmussen (New York: Palgrave, 2002).