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Reality of the Extraordinary: Wartime Diary Writing

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Wartime Diary Writing

Arvi Sepp
Hans Vandevoorde

Guest Editors
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“Scholars (literary specialists and historians) can be judged based on their ability to deal with diaries, which calls for attention to the form (or genre), context, and individual subject simultaneously.” (1) It would thus appear that for Irina Paperno, diaries might be considered a litmus test for the quality of historians and literary specialists. Yet this quote goes beyond that, implying that with regard to the diary as object, there is no meaningful difference between the study of diaries in literary studies and in history. It is incumbent upon both specialities to address issues of form, genre, context and content.

In practice, however, there is still a divide between these two branches of scholarship. Historians are inevitably sceptical about the validity of diaries as a representation of reality (see the article by PÉRI in this issue), claiming that they do not lend themselves to generalization, not with regard to the purpose for which they are kept and even less so in terms of the authors' social backgrounds. Nevertheless, as Janosch Steuwer and Rüdiger Graf argue, there is certainly room for systematically exploring the relationship of the individual to history. What's more, diaries invite one to contemplate representations of the past. (2)

For their part, literary scholars believe historians have insufficient appreciation for the diary form. (3) While the spontaneous, often daily, notation imposes a particular closeness to what is being described, this closeness may admittedly complicate its use as a historical source. Because of the immediacy of the facts, diaries are full of unsubstantiated claims, or in the case of war diaries, full of rumours and rhetorical questions (see the article by AUGUSTYN and SEDERBERG). Editing processes involved in publication exacerbate the problem of using diaries as a source. The diary nevertheless has a versatility, (4) which is one of its defining genre characteristics:

facilitates consideration of all the aspects of daily life from both a critical literary and a historical perspective. (5)

Jochen Hellbeck describes the tension between the two disciplines, literary studies and historiography, as a frustration emanating from both sides:

In terms of its genre features and as a historical source, the diary has bedeviled literary and historical scholars alike. Its “uncertain” nature between literary writing, between fictional and documentary, spontaneous and reflected narrative, has frustrated many a literary specialist in search for canonical clarity. At least equally frustrating has it proved for historians to work with the diary’s personal testimony, which promises sincere, private testimony, yet which at closer sight reveals manifold connections to conventions governing the public world. (6)

While literary and historical studies still do not appear to be entirely on the same track, they do share commonalities in terms of arguing that it is time to treat the self and the world that emerge from diaries not as something predetermined, expressed with immediacy and authenticity, but as something created through the text itself and unearthed by the reader. (7) Both disciplines warn that there is no such thing as “unmediated access” to experience and facts. (8) In literary studies, the diary is thus “placed in its communicative situation”, (9) seen as a pragmatic speech act. More specifically, literary scholars often focus on rhetorical strategies. At the same time, this discourse has also increasingly become part of historical analysis. As occurs in literary studies, communicative context plays an important role in historical studies, though the historical context is often defined more broadly so as to identify patterns.

Finally, historical and literary analysis are converging in their interest in the diaries of ordinary people. Literary research into the diary has long been dominated by the study of the diaries of famous writers (e.g. André Gide, Max Frisch, Ernst Jünger, Ralph Waldo Emerson, etc.) or prominent cultural–historical figures (e.g. Victor Klemperer). Aesthetic quality and cultural value were what mattered. Since the emergence of the “oral history” in the 1970s and the Alltagsgeschichte of the 1980s, however, diaries of ordinary people (10) have become a growing object of research, given that these documents can provide


(10) That being said, Jennifer Sinor still believes that it is the diaries of literary authors that are truly “coherent, crafted, and whole”. See SINOR (Jennifer): 2002, “Reading the Ordinary Diary”, Rhetoric Review, 21, 2, p. 123.
insight into such areas as the “life-world” (Lebenswelt), the “environment” or the “identity” of the author from a micro-historical perspective.

Use and Purpose of the Wartime Diary

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the diary became pluralized into various forms. (11) It already comprised distinct categories, such as ship chronicles, travel diaries, dream journals, letter diaries, intimate diaries and so forth, (12) but from then on it was not only produced by common citizens, but also used for various objectives: it was kept for a multiplicity of purposes and reached a diverse audience. That protean form and meaning is also related to the diversity of approaches to the journal as form. Since the inception of diary scholarship in about 1900, a range of conceptualizations has been used in the analysis of diaries (psychological, genetic, cultural–historical, communicative, etc.). (13) Today, it would appear that the communicative approach has won out. Research is focused on the uses (autobiography, chronicling, etc.) and purposes of diaries, with the most important functions considered to be personal expression and growth and documentary value – or what Steuwer and Graf call “self-constitution” (Selbstkonstitution) and “world creation” (Welterzeugung). (14) The contributions to this special issue more specifically highlight the aspects of self-preservation and archival function, which are certainly intensified by wartime conditions.

Diaries present themselves as a rigid, almost ritualized, form of self-control and meticulous bookkeeping in regard to one’s own life. They are both a site of self-observation, self-description and self-interpretation and a medium for constituting identity. The diary occupies a specific position between past and present, between self and other, between public realm and private sphere. Even when the diary is no longer kept strictly secret, it still continues to imitate secrecy. The subject narrates its experience to itself, organizing it in stories. “Diaries want to be able to narrate, or emplot, their lives, but they cannot,” writes Kathryn Sederberg. (15) It is important that these stories appear in the plural, as the life story is not a stable construct, but rather a work in progress. Philippe Lejeune therefore characterizes the diary as brouillon de soi, a provisional concept of the self. (16)

Wartime diaries, the focus of this special issue, can be seen as a subgenre of the diary form. In such times, diaries serve the same purpose, individually and collectively, but they can also serve more specific functions. “It can become an alternative to such things as social communication, journalistic

(11) For more on this concept of pluralization, see Steuwer (Janosch) and Graf (Rüdiger), “Selbstkonstitution und Welterzeugung in Tagebüchern des 20. Jahrhunderts”, op. cit., p. 10 ff.
(12) For more forms, see Kalff (Sabine) and Vedder (Ulrike): 2016, “Tagebuch und Diaristik seit 1900”, Zeitschrift für Germanistik, 26, 2, p. 237.
writing or letter writing,” remarks Hélène Camarade. (17) In wartime, diaries are used by an abundance of diverse stakeholders, providing a kaleidoscopic view of various fields of experience in war. (18) For one thing, they are used by troops to record their war experiences and position themselves socially and morally in that context. In the introduction to his monograph on the diaries of Japanese soldiers in the Second World War, *Writing War: Soldiers Record the Japanese Empire* (2013), Aaron William Moore stresses the importance of wartime diaries as sources for historical and cultural research about the war. These diaries present the subjective agency and individual habitus of soldiers, thus providing insight into a history of mentalities (*Mentalitätsgeschichte*) of the war not otherwise thus expressed in systematically oriented studies on social and state institutions:

By selecting the content of the diary, servicemen exercised agency in the construction of their sense of self. This is a view of subjectivity that cannot be seen through a study of schools, hospitals, mass media, or prisons, and so it is even more important to understanding why individuals willingly sacrificed so much for state and nation. (19)

At least as prevalent as among soldiers, though, if not more so, is the use of wartime diaries among the occupied population, (20) in the occupiers’ home countries, (21) in concentration camps (22) and among opposition forces (23) or refugees (see the article by SEDERBERG). Moreover, just in refugee diaries alone, there is tremendous variety, as Sederberg argues in this special issue. The variation in the types of diaries analysed and methodological focuses in this issue allow us to explore the complexity of the diary writers’ divergent attitudes, value systems, scopes for action and networks. Indeed, research into


(18) In terms of this diversity of purposes, see, among others, BAJOR (Frank): 2015, “Das ‘Zeitalter des Tagebuchs’? Subjektive Zeugnisse aus der NS-Zeit. Einführung”, in BAJOR (Frank) and STEINBACHER (Sybille), eds., “… Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten”. Tagebücher und persönliche Zeugnisse aus der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust (Göttingen: Wallstein), pp. 7-21.


(20) On writers under occupation, see, e.g.: BOAL (David), Journaux intimes sous l’occupation, op. cit.; and AERTS (Janna): 2019, “‘Hoe heb ik u noodig dezer dagen’: Brusselse schrijversdagboeken tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog” (Brussels: VUB unpublished dissertation).

(21) See, e.g., the study by Elisabeth Krimmer, which focuses on diaries and memoirs by German women during the Second World War: KRAMMER (Elisabeth): 2018, German Women’s Life Writing and the Holocaust: Complicity and Gender in the Second World War (Cambridge/London: Cambridge University Press).

(22) For more information on Holocaust diaries, see, e.g.: GOLDBERG (Amos): 2017, Trauma in First Person: Diary Writing During the Holocaust (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press); and GARBARINI (Alexandra): 2006, Numbered Days: Diaries and the Holocaust (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press).

(23) For more information on occupation diaries, we refer you to e.g.: RIONDET (Charles): 2016, “Journaux intimes de clandestinité”, *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’histoire*, 4, 132, pp.139-145, which analyses French occupation diaries against the German occupiers and the Vichy regime in the Second World War (with a focus on Léo Hamon’s).
a wide-ranging corpus of wartime diaries paves the way toward depicting the multilayeredness of often-contradictory, temporally unstable discourses. With regard to German diaries from the First World War, Roger Woods stresses that any study of wartime diaries is capable of transcending presumed dichotomies, such as those between nationalistic and pacifist diaries:

Cultural, military, and political historians have in the past maintained that First World War memoirs and diaries published in the Weimar years fell into one of two categories: either they showed the war as a heroic event or as a senseless torture. In nationalist writings, war was said to be a test of manhood and heroism, whereas in pacifist writings it was the collapse of humanity […]. (24)

Another advantage for scholars is that no other genre so strongly foregrounds the interweaving of personal history and history with a capital H. As demonstrated by the diaries of Astrid Lindgren (see the article by ŁAWNICKA), in non-military forms, too, wartime diaries – or rather, occupation diaries – can embrace two stances at one and the same time: they can be simultaneously addressed to the outside world (as a chronicle and research document) and to the private world. (25) Despite underlying differences, the diary form plays an important role for diarists in reflecting on this state of exception. In this context, in The Cambridge Companion to War Writing, Kate McLoughlin points out the difficulties of representing war: “War reconfigures nations, displaces populations, devastates land. Difficulties in finding words for all this arise immediately.” (26) Diaries offer an opportunity for depicting in detail the conflict between the everyday and the exceptional circumstances of war.

Indeed, in the analysis of diaries from the First and Second World Wars, the perspective focuses primarily on the diaries of ordinary people, while also taking into account the specific circumstances under which these were written, namely during a crisis. (27) Diary-keeping turns out to be extremely widespread, especially during times in which human subjectivity seems to be at risk – with an incredibly large number of diaries written during the Second World War, as emphasized by Saul Friedländer. (28) Against this background, critical diaries are viewed in such times as offering a counterweight to the de-individualization and instrumentalization of the individual:

Offering opposition to the dictatorship of the technologized masses, the concealing or secret diary is a force of nature. The individual I that

(25) For the wartime diary as chronicle and historical research document, see CAMARADE (Hélène), “Le journal intime, un genre propice à l’écriture contemporaine de la Shoah”, op. cit., p. 84.
(27) Kathryn Sederberg (SEDERBERG (Kathryn), “Writing through Crisis”, op. cit., p. 323) and others borrow the term “crisis diary” from Philippe Lejeune.
had known freedom in Europe no longer wants to give that up. The constrained, tamed, insulted and bruised ego rebels with a determined, desperate force against the death grip of the only–we. (29)

For the civilian population, the war represented not just a fundamental social crisis, but also an existential–psychological one. This latter aspect, the war as an existential crisis situation, is characterized by a categorical uncertainty about future developments. Moreover, the uncertainty caused by the crisis makes it impossible for those affected to continue imagining a teleological, forward-looking life and social project: “With its diagnostic, and prognostic, agency, the term ‘crisis’ is an indicator of a new consciousness. [...] Crises are immune to any form of planning or rational control emanating from a belief in progress.” (30) In times of crisis, then, people must fend for themselves, and their time perspective becomes radically curtailed, limited to the immediate present: “Crises do away with the question of the historical future.” (31) In the face of the dissolution of the perception of temporal continuity caused by war, diaries would seem a preeminent medium for dealing with the immediate present or finding an appropriate form for writing down one’s daily experiences and everyday observations. Gustav René Hocke calls attention to this merging of the personal that occurs in the diary genre from a social–historical perspective, which a fortiori applies to wartime diaries. (32) Diaries in times of crisis (33) are cultural–historical sources that reflect the precarious situation of the individual in a state of emergency: “The most exciting diaries in Europe are [...] those in which an individual crisis is just as much a diaristic mainspring as the crisis-ravaged environment.” (34)
The diary has, in fact, long been known as a “crisis genre,” but in wartime, that crisis can assume certain specific forms, ranging from food shortages to identity crisis, from intellectual crisis to writer’s block (see AERTS and PERRI). The most distinctive thing about the crisis element in diaries is, however, that it disrupts the normal perception of time and expectations, as Sederberg has so aptly demonstrated in an article on time perception in wartime diaries.

Diaries also document and portray how a particular individual’s socialization evolved day-to-day and how the diarist developed through the process. The material dimension of diary writing acquires special significance in times of war because as a paper medium, the diary leaves a legible trace of itself and its environment. The diaries of diarists who were critical of a belligerent power – such as the Third Reich or the Soviet Union – were therefore always carefully preserved, often hidden away or given to good friends for safekeeping. Even in the most elemental material sense – through the traces of pencil or pen on paper – a diarist inscribes his or her presence, his or her name. Every diary entry testifies to the existence and survival of the author. The extraordinariness of war and the obliteration of the presumed naturalness of one’s own existence are expressed through the diary.

Ritualistic and Material Aspects

“The extraordinary has become the real,” wrote Hélène Berr on 7 April 1942 in the first entry to her diary from the war. This comes after she has explained how she had gone to see Paul Valéry’s concierge to pick up a book the master had dedicated to her. That, for her, is something extraordinary that has become reality. In those early pages of her diary, the extraordinariness did not yet lie in what was happening to the Jewish population in France and elsewhere, though that would soon come to define her entire existence. It still lay for her much more in what was happening with her personally, for example, what was going on between her and J.M., with whom she was in love, and in the extraordinariness of love, something entirely normal for outsiders. “The extraordinary has become the real” could, however, stand as the definition of everything that happened during that war, because a permanent state of emergency became normal back then. The extraordinary became real, became a daily thing in the war, and everything that had always been ordinary of course also remained so.

One thing that can aid in the experience of the ordinariness of even extraordinary wartime experiences is the daily practice of keeping a diary. Not only is it a means of recording matters of everyday life, but the repeated

(35) In this context, Sabine Kalff and Ulrike Vedder also refer to a previous study by Albert Gräser: GRÄSER (Albert): 1955, Das literarische Tagebuch. Studien über Elemente des Tagebuchs als Kunstform (Saarbrücken: West-Ost Verlag). See KALFF (Sabine) and VEDDER (Ulrike): 2016, “Tagebuch und Diaristik seit 1900”, op. cit., p. 239.

(36) SEDERBERG (Kathryn), “Writing through Crisis,” op. cit., p. 331.


act of writing turns it into something normal, banal even, such as washing clothes or brushing teeth. Yet at the same time, that repetition becomes something almost sacred, through the adherence to certain solemn actions, such as pulling a chair up to a table or laying the notebook on one’s lap. And as with every ritual, that ritual, too, combines the sacred (which is related to the extraordinary nature of what is taking place) with the ordinary (the repetition of an activity that is not necessarily extraordinary in its own right).

All of the articles in this issue on wartime diaries share two recurrent themes: that ritualistic nature of diary writing and the material condition and provenance of the diaries. One of the ritual acts in diary writing — and indeed all writing — is, as mentioned, retrieving and setting out, or simply taking up, pen and pad. The ritual is inextricably bound up with the material elements: the notebook, the pencil, the ink, the table, the room and other settings. In the war, the setting takes on a specific character of its own: the trenches, the march, the safe house, the ghetto, the kitchen or the sole place with heat and so forth.

These material conditions of production affect the writing process. In times of crisis, the length and neatness of entries, for example, are determined by the transience and speed with which the writing has to be done: entries are sometimes made hastily; the writing is sometimes extremely succinct; and there can be long breaks between entries. All of this serves to obstruct or interfere with the ritual, even in instances free of violence or open repression (see the articles by SEDERBERG and AERTS). Accordingly, diaries from such times of crisis are often damaged or incomplete by the time they reach us: they were buried underground and later dug up; parts have been cut out so as to contain nothing compromising in case of discovery; they were stored for years in an attic or basement so that they are moth-eaten or mouldy; or they become lost during an escape or imprisonment. All of this generally affects the means by which they are preserved or made accessible. Fragmentary or damaged diaries become difficult to publish years later.

Despite all the difficulties and glitches, diary writing still often becomes a ritual that offers the scribe a sense of stability and continuity in an upended daily life (see the article by CRINQUAND). The diarist processes experiences and records them for posterity. Oftentimes, this is reflected on directly in the text itself. There are indirect ways, too, that diaries signal they originated out of need, through perhaps language use or the care with which they are saved; they are part of the self-preservation and personal growth of the subject. The few diaries published during a war will not usually contain anything disagreeable to the authorities in power at the time. They tend to be ideological, such as evident from Soviet diaries (see the article by LECLERC and PERI). But even without censorship and auto-censorship, writings published during or after the war will often have been partly or fully edited, such as the diaries of Martha Hillers (see the article by KALFF). Thus the ritual act of writing ultimately acquires another meaning. With publication, a diary writer also establishes or re-establishes a reputation, which is tied to

(39) “Wartime crisis limits and contours the length and content of entries”, SEDERBERG (Kathryn), “Writing through Crisis”, op. cit., p. 331).

(40) SEDERBERG (Kathryn), “Writing through Crisis”, op. cit., p. 333.
the object’s perceived authenticity, thus potentially entering the realm of the literary (see the article by CRINQUAND).

A Call for a Comparative Approach

Above, we have emphasized adopting an approach that combines the strengths of historical studies and literary science. We believe this can be found in the comparative method, as in fact applied in more than one of the accompanying articles (see, e.g., LECLERC). Comparative analysis can assume many forms: one obvious tactic involves comparing similar types of diaries from different language regions – such as Berr’s with that of Etty Hillesum, for example, (41) – or from the East and the West, but equally frequent are comparisons between the diaries of men and women, or people in different age groups and classes or with different occupations, (42) or those from different places or with divergent ideological positions. A less common avenue is to compare literary diaries – from known and unknown authors – with ordinary diaries. And might there be a specific type of woman’s diary that exhibits both empathy and impassivity, as the article by Hélène Leclerc on diaries in the First World War seems to demonstrate?

Related to this issue of the distinction between literary and non-literary diaries is that of the comparison between published and unpublished, edited and unedited, and private or public diaries. (43) Perhaps we can use reading notes and dreams as a searchlight in comparing and contrasting subjects. Subgenres such as dream protocols and reading logs could thus be reviewed side by side. We might even decide to search for fictional elements in these, by definition, non-fictional writings. From an intermedial perspective, written diaries could be equated with artists’ notebooks. Linguists and literary scholars could work together to study the specific language characteristics of a diary. Study corpora are usually made as homogenous as possible, but dissimilarities might also yield interesting perspectives. Why not, for example, lay the diaries of collaborators next to those of victims?

In the context of this special issue, it feels appropriate to call for a truly comparative European history of the diary in the First and Second World


(42) For example, Kylie Cardell analyses the diaries of war correspondents, while Brendan Ciarán Browne takes a hard look at those of social scientists performing fieldwork in conflict zones. See CARDELL (Kylie): 2006, “Bloodsport: Thomas Goltz and the journalist’s diary of war”, Biography, 29, 4, pp. 584-604; and CIARÁN BROWNE (Brendan): 2018, “Attempting to ‘write’ the wrongs: Keeping diaries and the benefits of continuous reflective practice when conducting conflict research”, in MARÍA-RIVAS (Altea) and CIARÁN BROWNE (Brendan), eds., Experiences in Researching Conflict and Violence: Fieldwork Interrupted (Bristol: Policy Press), pp. 187-205.

(43) Regarding these dichotomies, see KALFF (Sabine) and VEDDER (Ulrike), “Tagebuch und Diaristik seit 1900”, op. cit., p. 238.
Wars. Comparative criticism seems somewhat out of fashion these days, or only appears cloaked in any variety of transnational approaches, but it could still yield very useful insights. The benefits of this approach are wide-ranging. First, comparatism makes it possible to conduct analysis at the supra-national level for a large historical event such as the Second World War, where the European context plays a significant role. It enables comparison between diaries from different countries and analysis of how their authors each experience and represent the same war in their own way. We can compare the differences and similarities between these different “national” traditions and how they might possibly contribute to a “European” diary tradition and examine the evolution of/infuences on the diary genre throughout Europe/ the world and how diary characteristics spread geographically and infuence local diary authors.

Second, existing blind spots in the scholarship are revealed through comparative study: geographically, for example, we see that Belgium has no central databank for wartime diaries, whereas the Netherlands does. Digitization is on the rise. (44) Of course, what is needed for such comparative study is databanks filled with texts (reliably edited and transcribed). A few initiatives are underway in Europe, but these are not all equally scholarly.

Third, the comparative lens helps us better understand how certain diary writers were encouraged in their undertaking by reading diaries in other languages. Moreover, the breadth of our outlook with such an approach prevents having the same canon of diaries analysed over and over again. Fortunately, with an eye to such comparative objectives, some of the existing international theory has either been translated into other languages (see, e.g., Lejeune) or is in English as the common language. Although it is worth noting that contemporary diary research is still primarily nationally oriented, international cross-pollination efforts are on the rise. In that respect, this special issue also presents theories about the diary in Russia and Poland, for instance (see the articles by PERI and LAWNICZAK).

The most compelling and acute comparison that still needs to be made – and not just in the field of diaries – is that between the First and the Second World Wars. (45) The evolution in war technologies and different forms of occupation led to different kinds of diary production, even in terms of their material and ritualistic aspects. The essays presented in this issue enable just such a comparison. They have been written by historians and literary scholars alike, providing proof of what we emphasized at the beginning: despite their different focuses, these two disciplines are complementary. As far back as


(45) Recently, at a workshop, theatre and film productions from the two wars were also compared to one another. See Leen Engelen, Chantal Kesteloot and Roel Vande Winkel (organizers), “Cultures of Spectacle in German-occupied Belgium. Parallels and Differences between the First and the Second World War”, Cegesoma, 12-13 March 2020.
2004, Hellbeck programmatically prioritized that complementarity with regard to future research, stating that “only a combined application of literary and historical tools of analysis can disclose a multidimensional, literary and extraliterary, notion of self in the personal document”. (46)

The First and Second World Wars and the existential and societal crises they invoked produced a fluidity in the “notion of self”, which had previously generally been regarded as unalterable but had to be recast day-by-day during the war. The self-practices – and sometimes even tactics – involved in the act of writing in diaries relate to ways of appropriating discourses and ideas dominant during the war. The exercise not only consists of an explicit self-observation of the subject as the object of his/her own thoughts, but is also based even more fundamentally on the continuous activity of collecting and recording circulating discourses. As Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann puts it in his essay on German diary writing in the year 1945:

The diaries certainly do not contain any kind of authentic (or resistant) subjectivity beyond the hegemonic political discourses of the era. On the contrary, the diaristic monologue was a standard practice of the politicization of the self in totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century […]. (47)

Indeed, war diaries describe the socialization of the self in everyday history, which corresponds to a proliferation of historical details. Against this background, the journal becomes a valuable micrological archive of daily life during the war, in which information on the availability of food, restrictions on the purchase of clothing and the precise micrological chronicle of the loss of civic rights and other such matters are recorded. The diarists endeavour to collect these, at first glance seemingly unimportant, details to record what has already been said, what circulated in their time in various contemporary discourses. It is exactly this ephemeral diaristic view of contemporaneity that the contributions in this special issue engage with by opening up a vibrant space of interdisciplinary research on wartime diary writing.

In light of the comparative nature of this special issue, it is our aim to bring nationally focussed studies on war diaries into dialogue with one another. The transnational examination of testimonies of war across a range of European countries allows for comparisons to be made between the varying perceptions and practices of diary writers in different contexts during both World War I and World War II. In this respect, the present issue is divided into two geographically determined and distinct sections. The first part provides a forum for a range of explorations on German-language war diaries, highlighting an inverted spectrum of experience that spans from German-Jewish diarists (Sederberg and Augustyns) to German and Austrian women’s diaries (Kalff and Leclerc), thus going beyond the common focus on the accounts of German/Austrian military violence. The comparative European orientation of the issue is clearly discernible in

the second part, in which the contributions enable a multi-faceted overview of often contradictory perceptions and opinions in Soviet, British, Swedish and Belgian diaries. In closely scrutinizing the historical, political, and cultural environment of literary diarists in Belgium (AERTS) and Sweden (ŁAWNICZAK) recurrent literary, ideological, and political cross-references are examined. The kaleidoscopic everyday front experience represented in diaries of British soldiers in World War I (CRINQUAND) and Red Army soldiers as well as civilians in the Soviet Union in World War II (PERI) complicates and fragments the myth of consistent national ideologies and military narratives during wartime.
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GOLDBERG (Amos): 2017, Trauma in First Person. Diary Writing During the Holocaust (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press).


