



CENTRE FOR LITERARY &  
INTERMEDIAL CROSSINGS  
RESEARCH GROUP



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Flanders  
Opening new horizons

## *Call for Papers*

*Sounds of a Lifetime: Exploring Life Writing in Audio Media (29–30 January 2026, Vrije Universiteit Brussel)*

This conference aims to expand the boundaries of life writing studies by focusing on the often overlooked domain of audio life narratives. As Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson highlight in the preface of *Reading Autobiography*, “[l]ife narrative studies has become an expansive, transnational, multimedia field” (xi), going far beyond the written word. In the latest edition of this seminal work, they touch upon the concept of mediated voice and the aural qualities of social media messages, indicating the varied manifestations of auto/biographical acts (129).

Building on the exciting new work being done in studies of life writing, auto/biography, literary studies, sound studies, and media studies, this conference seeks to explore the multifaceted realm of sonic life narratives, with a particular emphasis on their literary and artistic features, as well as listeners’ individual and collective experiences. More specifically, it seeks to examine how audio life writing represents, mediates, and (re)constitutes lives; what aesthetic strategies are used and what effects they generate; how audio life narratives are received and remediated; as well as their inherent politics.

Potential topics include, but are not limited to:

- Theoretical/methodological reflections on audio life writing
- Audio life writing in specific genres and media (radio drama, podcasts, rap and spoken word poetry, ...)
- Voice, sound and music in audio life writing
- Audio life writing and cultural memory
- Audio life writing and identity (individual and collective)
- Audio life writing and politics
- Audio life writing and intermediality
- Adaptations of life stories to audio media
- Audio archives and life narratives
- Fact and fiction in audio life writing
- Listening to audio life writing
- ...

The conference will be held in English, but research on non-Anglophone contexts is strongly encouraged. Please note that we are aiming for an in-person conference.

The following keynote speakers have confirmed: **Julia Lajta-Novak** (University of Vienna), **Jarmila Mildorf** (University of Paderborn), **Matthew Rubery** (Queen Mary University of London).

Please submit your abstract (250–300 words) as a PDF or Word document, including your name, affiliation, and contact details, along with a brief biography (100 words) via email to [soundsofalifetime@vub.be](mailto:soundsofalifetime@vub.be) by **February 15, 2025**. Notifications of acceptance will be sent by March 20, 2025. Selected papers will be considered for publication in a special issue of an international peer-reviewed journal or an edited volume.

Please follow updates on our conference website: <https://events.vub.be/sounds-of-a-lifetime-exploring-life-writing-in-audio-media>

### **Selected bibliography:**

- Arteel, Inge. "Experimental Acoustic Life Writing: Gerhard Rühm's Radio Plays." *CounterText*, vol. 5, no. 3, Dec. 2019, pp. 332–51, <https://doi.org/10.3366/count.2019.0169>.
- Barker, James. "Dolly Parton's Mythologised Persona, Collective Life Writing, and Building a Home for LGBTQ+ Listeners in Country Music." *Persona Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1, Sept. 2022, pp. 143–55, <https://doi.org/10.21153/psj2022vol8no1art1541>.
- Bernaerts, Lars, and Jarmila Mildorf, editors. *Audionarratology: Lessons from Radio Drama*. The Ohio State University Press, 2021.
- Birdsall, Carolyn. "Tracing the Archival Lives of Radio: Recorded Sound Collections in Belgian and Dutch Radio (1930s–1950s)." *TMG Journal for Media History*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2022, pp. 1–30.
- Davison, Claire. "Aerial Creations of Poets'? New Biography and the BBC in the 1930s." *A Companion to Literary Biography*, edited by Richard Bradford, Wiley, 2019, pp. 87–106.
- Lindgren, Mia, and Jason Loviglio, editors. *The Routledge Companion to Radio and Podcast Studies*. Routledge, 2022.
- Lolavar, Soosan. *Embodied Research through Music Composition and Evocative Life-Writing*. Taylor & Francis, 2024.
- Mildorf, Jarmila. *Life Storying in Oral History*. De Gruyter EBooks, De Gruyter, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111073101>.
- Novak, Julia. *Live Poetry*. Editions Rodopi, 2011.
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- Smith, Sidonie, and Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography Now*. U of Minnesota Press, 2024.
- Van Puymbroeck, Birgit. "Between Genre and Medium: Hilda Tablet, Henry Reed's Fictional Metabiography for Radio." *Biography*, vol. 46, no. 2, University of Hawaii Press, Jan. 2023, pp. 313–31, <https://doi.org/10.1353/bio.2023.a928374>.