



Writing the Lone Mother's Lifetime: Peter Handberg's *Den vita fläcken*

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Abstract

This article offers an analysis of a son's 'relational auto/biography' of his lone mother; Swedish author Peter Handberg's novel *Den vita fläcken* (The White Spot 2015). It focuses on how the book builds a sense of the mother Gunhild's lifetime through the use of three different temporal dimensions: historicization, extension, and relational weaving of life courses. Matrifocal books by sons are interesting in several ways. First, in that they counter the gendered convention of sons' patrifocal auto/biography, and cross over to the matrifocal auto/biography that has typically been linked to the mother-daughter relationship. Second, in contrast to patrifocal narratives that typically attempt to recover the parent who was absent or lost, they attempt to tell the story of the always-present parent: the mother. In their description of a close, ongoing, and often loving – although seldom unproblematic – relationship between a (now middle-aged) son and his mother, they furthermore counter ingrained cultural myths that envision 'mother-son separation as the precondition of manhood' (O'Reilly 2016, 15). Therefore, I argue, while sons' auto/biographical writing about their lone mothers can be an inroad to investigating how subjective narratives of (lone-parent) family lives are constructed in life writing, they can also be inroads to re-thinking conventional genderings in literary studies.

Keywords: Relational auto/biography, sons, matrifocal, filial life writing

Abstract

Denna artikel undersöker en sons "relationella självbiografi" om sin ensamstående mamma, den svenske författaren Peter Handbergs roman *Den vita fläcken* (2015). Analysen fokuserar hur texten konstruerar mamman Gunhilds livstid genom att använda tre tids-dimensioner: den historiserar mammans liv, den expanderar det, och den väver samman hennes livslopp med andras. Söners böcker om sina mödrar är intressanta på flera sätt. För det första går de emot den könade genrekonventionen att söner skriver om sina fäder, medan döttrar skriver om sina mödrar. För det andra bryter de mönstret i det (manliga) självbiografiska skrivandet om frånvarande, saknade fäder, och ägnar sig åt föräldern som alltid varit närvarande: mamman. Genom att skriva mammans liv som centralt för (den nu medelålders) sonen, och framställa mor-son-relationen som nära, fortgående och kärleksfull, om än inte okomplicerad, ifrågasätter de också seglivade myter om att "mor-son-separation" är en förutsättning för mäns vuxenblivande (O'Reilly 2016, 15). Därför menar jag att söners själv/biografiska skrivande om sina mödrar både kan öppna för nya perspektiv på hur berättelser om (ensamstående föräldrars) familjeliv konstrueras i litteraturen, och för nya perspektiv på genderiseringar och konventioner i litteraturkritiken som sådan.

Although 'time' seems to be most familiar to all of us, there is no such thing as time 'as such'.

– Jens Brockmeier –

Introduction

How does *lifetime* operate in a son's narrative about his mother? To address this question, this article analyses Swedish author Peter Handberg's novel *Den vita fläcken* (The White Spot 2015), which is one in a group of books written by middle-aged, middle class, heterosexual – that is, in some sense 'mainstream' – men about their mothers that have formed a small trend in Swedish publishing in the twenty-first century. These filial, matrifocal texts move on the spectrum between novel, memoir, and auto/biography,¹ and the mothers whose lives they tell are variously married, divorced, or widowed.² Whereas Dominique Viart's work has been crucial for naming

and historicizing '*récits du filiation*', that is, the genre(s) of literature by children about their parents in life writing and fiction, as a major sub-genre of French literature since the 1980s, I use 'filial' here in its narrowest sense, to denote 'sonly' texts.³ Typically, they are auto/biographical accounts which tell the mother's life while also telling the parallel story of the son's own development from childhood to young manhood and middle age.⁴

In this sense, however, Handberg's book is atypical in that he consistently centers on his mother's life story, placing his own life trajectory in the margins. *Den vita fläcken* is a 'relational auto/biography'⁵ of his mother Gunhild, who lives a lone-parent-family life from the late 1950s when she seeks divorce from her husband and gains custody of their two sons (then 3 and 7), to the early twenty-first century when she is the elderly and ailing mother of middle-aged sons. While the son recalls the life of the mother as he knew her, he is also invested in representing her as a complex human being with a life beyond motherhood. He writes her story in ways that focus many aspects of her life, including work, political and social engagement, friendship, and romance as well as her motherhood, always stressing her strength and resilience.

The book tells the story of a struggling working-class woman and a lone mother of a certain generation, whose story is seldom told in literary texts, as implied by the book's title which translates as *The white spot*. The title may reference the son's choice of centering her life, given that sons' writing about their lone mothers is, by and large, a blind spot, or uncharted territory in literature,⁶ but it may also reference Gunhild's own move into what to her is unknown terrain as a divorced, lone mother in the mid-1950s. Making her life into literature is therefore a mark of recognition.

Matrifocal books by sons are interesting in several ways. First, in that they counter the gendered convention of sons' patrifocal auto/biography, and cross over to the matrifocal auto/biography typically linked to the mother-daughter dyad; in other words, they offer re-gendered plots and narrative perspectives.⁷ Second, in contrast to patrifocal narratives that typically attempt to recover the parent who was absent or lost,⁸ they attempt to tell the story of the always-present parent: the mother. In their description of a close, ongoing, and often loving – although seldom unproblematic – relationship between son and mother, they furthermore counter ingrained cultural myths that, as Andrea O'Reilly observes, envision 'mother-son separation as the precondition of manhood'⁹ and pathologize a 'close and caring relationship between a mother and a son'.¹⁰ Exploring literature that moves beyond such myths and the narrative conventions they engender opens possibilities for rethinking meanings of sonhood and gender relations in literature and beyond.¹¹

While the son's memoir of his mother crosses gendered conventions in auto/biographical writing about parents' lives, research that focuses on this relationship – and this authorial perspective on motherhood – likewise crosses conventional boundaries in life writing criticism. Already in *How Our Lives Become Stories* (1999) John Paul Eakin pointed to a lack of such focus and confessed to sharing 'with [feminist critics] a desire to track relational identity across gender boundaries'.¹² In previous work I have explored how sons/authors use various narrative techniques to 'give voice to the mother'¹³ and to textually 'embody' the mother, especially as she is ageing, ill, and dying,¹⁴ and claimed that filial narratives about mothers should be explored, 'both because they have been neglected historically and because there currently seems to be a growing body of literature of this kind'.¹⁵ Such exploration is further warranted since this kind of life writing activates time and temporalities in particular ways.

Although time in narrative has been investigated in literary studies,¹⁶ time in life writing has mostly been addressed in relation to autobiography and memory, by, *inter alia*, Jens Brockmeier.¹⁷ However, relational (filial, matrifocal) auto/biography is not autobiography. How time operates in life writing may differ across its genres and sub-genres, as well as across geopolitical locations and history. In other words, narrative temporality is complex and warrants further critical attention. I have claimed previously that filial matrifocal texts often have three narrative strands linked to different temporalities: the present/'now' of the telling, a recent past, and a distant past.¹⁸ However, while present and (different) pasts serve to structure the filial narrative, here I want to suggest further complexities to time and temporalities in filial life writing. Inspired by the words of Brockmeier that epigraph this study, 'there is no such thing as time "as such"', I hope to offer a point of entry into these complexities, via the concept of *writing lifetime*, a narrative phenomenon which is, I argue, fundamentally relational. Hence, the relative lack of critical investigations of sonhood or 'sonliness' as it relates to mothers in contemporary literature, together with the need for critical investigation of time and temporalities as they operate in filial narratives form the rationale for the present article, which addresses questions about time and temporality in filial matrifocal life writing.

My selection of *Den vita fläcken* as primary text comes from a general interest in filial matrifocal writing, but also in representations of lone parents in particular. This article is linked to an ongoing project on single parents in Twenty-first century Swedish media, literature, and film, and Handberg's book is an example of how lone – or single – parenthood,¹⁹ and lone-parent familial experience is represented in life writing.²⁰ Although, as Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have pointed out, parenthood is a central

thematic in life writing,²¹ and research on life writing has addressed narratives about parents, including ageing and elderly mothers and fathers, lone parenthood over the life course is relatively underexplored. Therefore, this article focuses on a filial auto/biography that centers a lone mother, with the aim of investigating the narrative construction of *lone mother lifetime*.

As Jens Brockmeier notes, while time is a central aspect of autobiographical textual constructions, a close look reveals that 'these constructions are not so much about time but about times. They encompass and evoke a number of different forms and orders of time, creating a multi-layered weave of human temporality'.²² To the contemporary, perhaps post-postmodernist, reader, such multiple or mixed temporalities, and the 'multi-layered weave of human temporality' that is the result are perhaps unsurprising. To refine my initial question: what are the 'times' in Handberg's book; what is being 'woven' here? And what are the effects, what do these different times and temporalities accomplish in the son's telling of his mother's life? The article argues that Handberg constructs Gunhild's lifetime through the use of three different temporal dimensions: historicization, extension, and relational weaving of life courses. But also, and beyond this particular primary text, it proposes that in order to understand such filial auto/biographical writing, and particularly how it narratively constructs inter-generational relations, time and temporalities need to be investigated as structuring devices, as well as thematic – and existential – concerns.

The filial project: capturing the mother's life

A basic premise for the son's matrifocal auto/biography is that time has already run out; he is writing her story after her death. Another basic premise is that time – lifetime – must be retrieved and reconstructed. Handberg reconstructs the mother's life partly based on his own memories, partly on a maternal archive consisting of her photographs, diaries, letters, and newspaper clippings; what Viart has referred to as the 'archaeological' aspect of 'narratives of filiation'.²³ However, he must also invent, dramatize, fictionalize. The son/narrator notes that Gunhild, an avid reader and an intellectually curious woman throughout her life, would have wanted to 'write the book about her life, which she wondered so much about'²⁴ but that she lacked the self-confidence needed to undertake such a project. Instead, it is he, the son who grew up to be a writer, who is the author of her book. He states that his mother 'wanted control. Her whole life was about gaining control, or at least freedom from the limitations and control of others'.²⁵ However, it is necessarily he who controls the narrative. Although this creates some tension between the matrifocal text as an act of recognition, and as

an act that controls maternal lifetime via re-constructing it, this is not explicitly commented on by the narrator. Since Handberg writes, not an autobiography, but a relational auto/biography of *his mother*, there are additional twists to how times play out. Furthermore, although the book follows the biographical convention of 'tracing a life from birth to death'²⁶ the linearity suggested by that formulation is only part of the matrifocal story.

Born in 1921, Gunhild is the only child of the police officer Gosvin, and Mandis, a housewife. Although Gunhild does very well in school, her father refuses her any further education. She leaves her small-town home for Stockholm at 21, to make her own way as a hairdresser. She is an independent, lively, socially outgoing, physically confident, and athletic woman who builds lasting friendships, and has a long succession of suitors. At 28 she marries Bengt, and they move into an apartment in Blackeberg, a newly built area in Stockholm which in the post-World War II period of the late 1940s symbolizes modernity and hope for the future. Within four years they have two sons, Kaj born in 1952 and Peter in 1956, and the marriage has begun to grate on Gunhild. It turns out that, much like her father and her previous suitors, her husband wants to control her and cannot abide her independent nature.

During her second pregnancy Gunhild initiates a divorce, a process that will take several years. She will never remarry, although she has male partners throughout most of her life. For almost fifty years, she lives in her apartment, first with her sons, later alone. Her mother Mandis is widowed in her middle age, and is Gunhild's best friend and supporter until her death. Gunhild continues to work as a hairdresser, and her economy gradually improves as she complements her regular job with selling Oriflame products, so that she can afford to travel abroad on her holidays. As a lone grandmother she is a steady presence and a dear playmate in her grandchildren's (Peter's children) lives. Peter describes Gunhild even in her eighties as energetic, witty, vital, and as demonstrating 'a pronounced desire to be happy'.²⁷ In her seventies, however, she is diagnosed with uterine cancer, and she dies in 2003, aged 82.

The above chronological account of Gunhild's life can be pieced together from reading *Den vita fläcken*, but the book as such has a broken chronology, and is, temporally speaking, multi-faceted. The following sections analyze how three different temporal dimensions operate in Handberg's book, to orientate the filial narrative and build Gunhild's lone mother lifetime: historicization, extension, and weaving relational time.

In time: historicizing Gunhild's lone motherhood

Handberg writes Gunhild's lone mother status as premised on the specificities of Swedish history, not least the history of women's developing rights in Sweden during the twentieth century. Born in 1921, Gunhild is of an age with two important legislative changes: Swedish women's right to vote, and the recognition of married women as legal adults (Sw. *myndiga*), whereas formerly, married women had been under the legal guardianship of their husbands.²⁸ Handberg frames his mother's story within the development of the Swedish welfare state, and against a backdrop of changing workers' rights and women's rights. Her awakening to the possibility of divorce is described as coming about in the mid-1950s, triggered in part by the politics of her cousin, who encourages her to engage in the syndicalist women's movement. He tells her: 'Bengt is not for you. He belongs to the past. He is pitiful, since men like him cannot learn anew. But you, Gullan, you are the future'.²⁹ Looking at some political flyers 'her eyes fell on lines such as "the isolated situation of women in the home" and "break male dominance"'.³⁰ It is becoming clear to her that she has married a very conservative husband.

In a rare passage, Handberg envisions his father's attitude: 'He works, she stays at home. He demands it. He, the executive-to-be, the creator of The Great Invention, will make enough money for them, and more! That his wife should work is out of the question!'³¹ The father's conservative idea of marriage makes Gunhild's own openness and independent personality stand out by contrast. In another passage, Handberg envisions his mother's thoughts about the marriage: 'She was completely fed up with it all. Each day, the bitterness grew: her husband [...] had proven to be a liar and a cheat [...] He became aggressive if she spoke back to him or "yapped" and "fussed," as he called it. The money was short, and yet he frowned upon her "working extra" at the salon'.³² Hence, there are material as well as emotional and existential reasons for Gunhild's wish to divorce; her identity as an intellectually and otherwise independent woman, as well as a skilled worker, is at stake.

However, divorce is not an easy decision. That the process is drawn out is reflected in the way Handberg devotes long dramatized passages to describing Gunhild's route to becoming a lone mother.³³ One example is a passage set in an artists' café, where her friend Kjerstin and an old man called the Philosopher discuss the inhumane constraints of her marriage, and they both encourage her to divorce. Kjerstin says: 'Leave him [...] leave the bastard. For your own sake. And for the boy's. Anything else is slavery. No child wants a prisoner and a slave for a mother'.³⁴ The Philosopher, on the other hand, tells her that 'both husband and children want nothing better than having a slave in the house'.³⁵ Gunhild protests: 'I pay the rent which I cannot even

make enough money for [...] I pay his debts, clean, cook, mind Kaj while Bengt goes to [very posh restaurants] Operakällaren and Riche'.³⁶ At this, the Philosopher agrees with Kjerstin: 'Leave him!'³⁷ Bengt's failure to be the family breadwinner is part of what makes the situation untenable, but also his lack of recognition of his wife's efforts to make ends meet, and his inability to see her as a full human being. While the narrative focuses on Gunhild's growing sense that her marriage cannot last, Handberg on his part places Bengt as an example of a 'traditional father,' stuck in time, and his mother as marked by modernity and progress.

In another passage, Gunhild writes a letter to the 'Dear Abby' page of a newspaper, which gives the impression that Gunhild knows she must choose lone motherhood over marriage. At the end of the letter she formulates a question, which demonstrates her proto-feminist consciousness: 'how can it be that women allow the most unworthy men to hold guardianship over wife and family' and 'remain loyal to them?'³⁸ The answer from 'Abby' reads as follows: 'It seems that You hold the answer to your own question [...] Is it out of love and tenderness for your man that you have borne your situation? Is it out of fear for what people will say about divorce? Is it out of loyalty, for loyalty's sake in a hopeless case? Is it because of the idea that the children are better off with a bad father in a disharmonious home than alone with a capable mother who can support them very well, given what you describe?'³⁹ This response signals clearly that divorce is not entirely socially unacceptable, and may be infinitely preferable to staying married.

Although the above passages suggest lone motherhood as a choice to be considered, social stigma still attached to lone motherhood in the late 1950s, as signaled by 'Abby's' references to 'fear for what people will say about divorce.' A woman who sought divorce, unless she was found to be 'at fault' by the court, was likely to gain custody of the children, and this would have been true in Gunhild's case. However, the process was protracted and demanding, since spouses first has to accept mediation (by a member of the clergy or a lay person), then had to live apart for one year before being allowed to file for divorce, and then go through the divorce as such.⁴⁰ After the dramatized crisis moment in the café, and the letter quoted above, it is still several years before Gunhild goes through with seeking divorce, and during those years, Peter is born.

Finally, in 1957, just as Peter is about to turn one, Gunhild packs her bags and leaves Bengt. Numerous letters follow between husband and wife. Bengt at first pleads with her to return, then becomes threatening. But she insists, 'she will file for divorce [...] she, alone, will have custody of the boys', and she tells him that she has 'hired a lawyer' and will not return to the apartment 'until he has moved out and handed over

all the keys'.⁴¹ Gunhild eventually gains sole custody. Handberg quotes the court minutes verbatim: 'The Municipal Court ordains that from this day [...] the cohabitation of spouses be lifted, and that they may not visit one another or they will be sentenced to one month in jail, that the wife shall have custody of their joint children, that the husband shall pay to the wife an alimony of 60 crowns per month, per child, to be paid in advance each calendar month, and that the wife shall own the right to the home'.⁴² Through the use of other voices from the time, and by representing Gunhild's liberation process as drawn out and difficult, Handberg historicizes his mother's decision to be a lone mother as a struggle and an achievement; he also emphasizes her becoming a lone mother as more significant than becoming a mother, as such.

From the divorce in the late 1950s, Gunhild's life stretches over five more decades, during which different meanings attach to 'lone motherhood'. One episode describes how a day on the beach when Peter is 5 turns into a scandal, as Gunhild pushes a man into the water in an attempt to defend herself from his unwanted attention (he touched her breasts). However, she is accused by bystanders of having approached him, pushing herself upon him. The crowd yells at her, letting her know that 'there were plenty of witnesses' and '[e]verybody knew what she was after. [...] The likes of her'.⁴³ From the stigmatization of the 'unwed mother' in the mid-twentieth century that made some people feel they had license to bully Gunhild, there is a growing social acceptance of lone motherhood from the 1970s – a part of the second wave of the women's movement – to the easy-access divorces and normalization of single parents in the 2000s. As a result, Gunhild's 'lone grandmotherhood' around the millennium does not carry any stigma either. In other words, by writing about his mother's lifetime as that of a lone mother over the life course, Handberg accomplishes an (albeit personal) historicization of lone parenthood, which links the mother to social developments, but also emphasizes her political agency and courage.

Out of time? Extending lone mother lifetime

Against these historical specificities that place Gunhild's lone motherhood firmly 'in time', Handberg employs another temporal dimension that is more clearly linked to his own relationship to her and that seems the reverse of historical time: this is extended time, even eternity. The extension of her lifetime, and of her life as a lone mother, serves to represent her as *always* a lone mother. This is accomplished in several ways: by representing her pre-motherhood life as already marked by lone

parenthood; by thematizing her poor luck at finding a permanent male partner; and by stretching her presence in the son's life – and narrative – beyond her lived years. One way of extending Gunhild's lone mother lifetime figures in passages that suggest that lone motherhood defines her life from an early age. Imagining her as a 14-year-old, Handberg describes her as a girl who wants to be a mother, but has doubts about finding a male partner: 'Will she ever love anyone like she loves her mother? But she is supposed to have a husband, so they say'.⁴⁴ These desires and doubts are re-stated when Handberg quotes from her diary, written at age 27: 'What if I had a daughter who I could love like mother loves me. But with whom?'⁴⁵ In this way, the son represents Gunhild's lifetime as a lone mother as beginning decades before the divorce. This can be understood as an effect of 'lone mother' being the only role in which the son ever knew her, but also as an effect of the 'retrospective teleology' according to which, since the end is known '[a] life story starts in the here and now and reconstructs the past as if it were teleologically directed towards this specific present'.⁴⁶

This notion of Gunhild as always a lone mother is strengthened by the emphasis on her numerous rejections of male companions, and her many derisory comments about men, which return as a chorus throughout the book: the men who are interested in her are all cheats, humbugs, and bullies. Interesting at first, they all end up disappointing her, since they are not only inferior to her in physical and mental strength and stamina, but also jealous and controlling. The quoted passage from her diary at age 27 comes after going through a number of suitors, who all fall short. The reference to 'useless men', and the many breakups she experiences are repeated in her life story.

While in her life these events may have been 'breaks', in the narrative they create a thematic coherence, a narrative continuity that links different decades of her life together. To her son, Gunhild's resistance to being subjected to the will of any man explains why she becomes, and remains, a lone mother. As he writes, '[s]olitude was the price'.⁴⁷ And Handberg establishes that Gunhild herself saw a pattern to her rejection of men and her preference for other relations, when he observes that in her middle age she 'seems to find her way back to life before marriage, when she would often anger her suitors by choosing a night with her girlfriends or [her mother] Mandis over them. It is a reoccurring feature [...] in the diaries [...] which stretch until the early 90s, she looks back and sees this as a steady pattern in relation to men and boyfriends through the years'.⁴⁸ Once divorced, Gunhild remains a lone mother for the rest of her life. Although she falls in love easily, is flirtatious, and longs for a really loving partner, she continues to be disappointed in men into her old age; they are liars

and fantasizers first, who then reveal themselves as controlling, belittling, and at times violent.

Gunhild's only long-term relationship, with Lasse, begins as a romance in the early 1970s and continues for about 12 years, with joint family vacations and Christmases, but ends when Lasse becomes possessive and develops alcoholism. As if by-the-way, Handberg recalls how at a point during the good phase of their relationship, Lasse asked Gunhild whether she and the boys would like to move in with him and his daughter in their big house, which he now sees was 'some kind of marriage proposal'.⁴⁹ When Gunhild asks her sons – then teenagers – if they want to move, they refuse to leave their neighborhood, and that settles it for her. Handberg reflects: 'Hence, she declines. If we did her a favor? I am inclined to think so. Life would have turned out different, but hardly better. Soon enough she would have felt trapped, the way she always seems to have done together with a man'.⁵⁰ In other words, Handberg's idea of the mother is, again, that of a woman predestined to live as a lone mother. His wording suggests that he and his brother only helped her stay on the track she was made for, by nudging her away from living with Lasse. But clearly, he simultaneously presents himself as having held on to Gunhild as his lone mother, perhaps in ways that perpetuated that situation against her own wishes.

Writing Gunhild as always his lone mother is also an act to counter the reality of her death. Learning that Gunhild has cancer, her son is taken aback and thinks: 'From my very first years, she was eternity, the maternal eternity that stretches between life's horizons. That couldn't go away, could it?'⁵¹ The son's perception of Gunhild as 'maternal eternity' is underscored by the temporally stretched-out narrative, which in a sense redefines his lone mother's lifetime: Gunhild lived from 1921 to 2003, but *Den vita fläcken* begins in 1910 and ends around 2010, in a sense imaginatively extending her lifetime beyond her actual lived years.

Temporal relationality: weaving lifetime(s)

While historicizing and extending are narrative strategies for writing Gunhild's lone mother lifetime, a third temporal dimension is part of this sonly project: that of weaving lifetimes together. This is one of the effects of the broken chronology of the novel, which consists of four sections (and a total of 20 chapters of various length) that keep moving back and forth in time, reminding us that 'autobiographical remembering is a paradigmatic case of relating temporally distinct events and places. It is a back-and-forth movement between the past and the present.'⁵² But, in this case,

it is also a back-and-forth movement between different family members, including the son-narrator, the mother, the grandmother and the great-grandfather.

Section one covers Gunhild's life from her birth in 1921, through her childhood and youth, her move to Stockholm at 21, and her life in the city, with suitors, friends, and work. It ends with her return to Stockholm in 1949, aged 28, having spent a year working as a Nanny in England. However, the section begins with an episode set in 1910 involving Gunhild's maternal grandfather Lars (b. 1852), a widowed café owner, sea captain and socialist, and Lars' daughter Mandis, Gunhild's mother (b. 1898). The remaining chapters in the section tell the story of Mandis meeting her husband, and marrying him four months after the child (Gunhild) is born. Mixed in with these chapters set in the early twentieth century, and the ones tracing Gunhild's first 28 years in life during the 1920s–40s are other chapters or passages set in the 1960s when Peter and his brother are boys, and others again, set around the millennium, when Gunhild, in her eighties, is undergoing cancer treatment with Peter accompanying her to the hospital. The movement back and forth through several decades places the son's time next to the mother's time, blurring boundaries between what they have experienced together and what she alone has experienced, and what neither of them has experienced, thereby creating a weave of shared, relational time.

Section two focuses on the late 1940s and early 1950s. These are the decades of Gunhild's marriage and divorce, as well as her becoming a mother, and, some years later, a lone mother. But this section, like the first one, mixes in several chapters that represent the elderly Gunhild's illness, physical deterioration, and hospital treatment, and another backwards glance to 1910. Section three focuses on the period from the 1970s to the 2000s. In the 1970s, Mandis suffers from senile dementia and dies, and Lasse becomes Gunhild's partner, a relationship that lasts over a decade. In excerpts from her diaries we learn about Gunhild's longing for experiencing true love with a man. Chapters set in the 1990s and early 2000s describe her confined to the sick bed in her apartment. At home, she is surrounded by the enormous collections of papers, diaries, newspaper clippings, and photographs she has hoarded there. Peter finds clues to her past in these archives, including the court documents about the custody of the children. At the end of this section, Gunhild dies. Section four is the only one with a consistent temporal setting: here we stay in the time after the mother's death in 2003. Peter buries the urn, accompanied by his young children Saskia and Wilhelm. Some months later, Gunhild comes to him as an apparition, telling him to take better care of himself, and in another passage a blue tit flies past him, and he perceives the bird as his mother's spirit.

The passages that describe the mother's 'returns' are comforting to the grieving son; they are also means by which Gunhild's lifetime is extended by Handberg. Such narrative choices can be read as charms against death and loss, as a way, to speak with Lisa Baraitser, of 'enduring time' when deep personal loss creates a sense that time is suspended, even 'stops, and then wells up into a large pool [and you] live inside a great circle with no rim'.⁵³ At the same time, Handberg's book itself can be understood as the mother's 'afterlife' manifest.

Hence, Handberg's novel about Gunhild's life works with a frame narrative set in the present, or near-present of the mother's death, as well as a broken chronology. In the 'present' of the book, time has already run out, the mother is dead, and the book is evidently written to recall her; it is, to speak with Susan Bainbrigge, a form of 'writing against death'⁵⁴ which insists that the mother-son relationship is not only crucial, but is ongoing for the bereaved narrator. There is a weaving together of times and experiences that only the mother had access to with those shared by mother and son. But also times and experiences that lie beyond their life trajectories. Including chapters about Peter's maternal great-grandfather who was a lone parent – a widower – and Gunhild's mother Mandis who became a lone parent when she was widowed reminds us that, as Vanessa May has observed, there exists a 'hierarchy of lone mothers, based on the route into lone motherhood'⁵⁵ according to which widows are seen as more respectable than divorcees. It also creates a multi-generational family line that explains where Gunhild came from, and serves to write her – and the author who himself becomes a divorced parent – into a family history of lone parenthood. This interweaving of life courses is a central part of the son's project of writing his mother's lifetime, and a narrative choice that emphasizes relationality.

The book about the mother is clearly written in part to explore Handberg's own, filial perspective on his mother's life from the situation of his late middle age. Therefore, in *Den vita fläcken*, time and temporality are bound to age and ageing, and to intergenerational relationship. Indeed, Handberg writes himself into Gunhild's life in certain passages, linking his own life trajectory and lone parenthood to hers, thereby creating echoes between her life and his. For example, in a passage set in the care home, Gunhild in her 80s is being tended to by a nurse who asks Peter if he is married. His mother answers for him: 'Soon to be divorced' and smiles 'as if this was the right answer'⁵⁶ Her words echo his own thoughts in a preceding passage, but which is set in the time after her death: 'Soon I would be divorced too'.⁵⁷ Another instance is the passage where Gunhild, asked by a reporter whether she believes in an afterlife, responds: 'no, I don't think I do... but imagine how fun it would be to get to meet mother again!',⁵⁸ a passage which finds its echo in Peter's own experience of

meeting his mother again as an apparition, as a free bird. But Handberg goes further in this intergenerational chain, linking his own life, and his mother's, to previous generations of lone parents, with the effect of constructing relational lifetimes. In the process he also writes these lifetimes into social history – and to specific historical temporalities – in ways that underscore the shifting social meanings, values, and gendered (im)possibilities of lone parenthood.

Concluding Discussion: Filial Narration of Lone Mother Lifetime as Historical, Extended, and Relational

How should we understand the son's project of telling his lone mother's life, and the ways that time figures in the telling? As I have demonstrated, Handberg represents Gunhild's life as a lone mother as historically located. He uses specific located temporalities in at least two ways to build her story and construct a sense of Gunhild's lifetime as a lone mother: first, historically specific time, decades of Swedish modernity, family politics and family law, the developing welfare state, workers and women's rights; and second, the specific life trajectory of a struggling, intellectual working-class woman. The effect of situating the mother in historical time is a recognition of her strength and determination: she chooses to become a lone mother rather than follow the convention and stay married at a time when this took courage because, besides causing practical and financial difficulties, it carried social stigma. Nevertheless, divorce was possible for Gunhild in a way it had not been for her mother Mandis, who stayed married in spite of her conviction that 'marriage is nothing but suffocating shackles'.⁵⁹ and who as a housewife depended on her husband's salary. Whereas Mandis bore Gunhild in the 1920s, a time and place where 'a lone mother with children [had] no future',⁶⁰ and married to escape life as an 'unwed mother', Gunhild, a self-sustaining professional, could divorce her husband in the late 1950s, even though this was by no means simple, and entailed a drawn-out legal process. In other words, historicizing the mother's lifetime places her in time-bound contexts. Furthermore, via historicizing his family of lone parents – widowers and divorcees – in several generations, Handberg illustrates that historical locatedness is key to how lone parenthood is lived, viewed, and valued.

Handberg also envisions Gunhild's lone motherhood as temporally extended, both across her own lifetime and beyond the years of her life, thereby writing her lifetime as, subjectively speaking, boundary-less, stretched out, ongoing; he represents his mother as always, and inevitably, a lone mother. Such extension is a temporal dimension of the text that functions to place her lifetime into/alongside of his own.

Given that this temporal extension is as much about the son as the mother, it can also perhaps be read as an effect of the 'atemporality of mourning'.⁶¹ While the weaving of multi-generational lone parent family lives in a sense contributes to such extension, and further links son and mother, it also brings additional layers of time and temporalities to Handberg's auto/biography of his mother, building lone mother lifetime as relational.

Together, these elements narratively construct lone mother lifetime, illustrating that literature, to speak with Brockmeier, 'is a rich and indispensable terrain for the study of the intricacies of human experiences, including their temporal multilayeredness . . . the laminarity of our being in the world'.⁶² Moving beyond the complex simultaneities of the autobiographical 'I' explored by Brockmeier however, I have argued here for the relational temporalities that connect the narrating son and the narrated mother. Because of the layering of maternal experience and shared (mother and son) experience in the narrative, there is, as well, a layering and interweaving of the mother's lifetime and his own; the effect is that Handberg's auto/biography constructs a deeply subjective relational temporality. Indeed, the book project as such can be understood as a way of narratively extending the mother-son relationship, as well as Gunhild's lifetime, beyond the point of her death. This is the 'control' exerted by the son/narrator/author, who has time in his hands.

Telling the mother's story – even when the son, as in Handberg's case, does not claim much space in the plot – is clearly a 'sonly' project. Nevertheless, the filial matrifocal narrative has feminist potential since it entails a fundamental recognition on two counts. First, a recognition of the 'unremarkable' lone working-class mother whose story, by and large, remains untold, and, in order to be heard, must be told by the author-narrator-son. Second, a recognition of the mother-son relationship as crucial for men across the life course. In the process of telling Gunhild's lifetime, that is, Handberg fills a 'white spot' on the (literary) map of familial relations.

Whereas Bainbrigge has claimed that it is in women's autobiography that 'notions of [...] interconnectedness have served as counterpoint to the model of the autonomous individual'⁶³ I would argue that in books like the one I have focused on here, that is, filial matrifocal auto/biography, interconnectedness, and relationality are central elements also in life writing by men about mothers. Such narrative reconstructions of the 'always present' parent can therefore provide crucial knowledge about the son-mother relation in literature, in life writing criticism, and in life in general.

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Notes

¹ For an extended discussion of definitions of genre and problems of clear distinctions between biography, autobiography, life writing and (auto)fiction, see Smith, Sidonie and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, 2nd Ed., Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010, 5–11.

² Titles include Torbjörn Flygt's *Underdog* (2001), Mustafa Can's *Tätt intill dagarna* (Close to the days 2006), Theodor Kallifatides' *Mödrar och söner* (Mothers and sons 2007), Kristoffer Leandoer's *September* (2013), Ison Glasgow's *När jag inte hade nåt* (When I had nothing 2014), Tomas Bodström's *Det man minns* (What you remember 2014), Eriks Wijk's *Bara de riktiga orden* (Only the right words 2015), Alex Shulman's *Glöm mig* (Forget me 2017), and Patrik Lundberg's *Fjärilsvägen* (Butterfly Road 2020).

³ Cf. Viart, Dominique. 'Les récits de filiation. Naissance, raisons et evolution d'une forme littéraire', in: *Cahiers ERTA* 19 (2019) 11–27; See also Zekri Masson, Souhir, 'Marina Warner's *Inventory of A Life Mislaid: An Unreliable Memoir*. From Memoir to Filiation Narrative', in: *European Journal of Life Writing* 13 (2004) 28–53.

⁴ In some cases, they follow upon a book about the author's father, and this is also true for Handberg, whose novel *Skuggor* (Shadows 2012) deals with his absent father.

⁵ See Freadman, Richard, 'Decent and Indecent: Writing My Father's Life', in: *The Ethics of Life Writing*, John Paul Eakin (ed.), Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004, 121–146, 128.

⁶ The general lack of maternal presence in men's life writing was noted by Christine Cohen Park in her own brief exploration of four sons' memoirs of their mothers, where she stated that such narratives are '[s]till rare.' Cohen Park, Christine, 'Close Comfort? Sons as Their Mothers' Memoirists', in: *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 19:1–2 (2004) 118–128, 128.

⁷ For insightful discussion of sons' patrifocal writing, see Freadman, Richard, 'Decent and Indecent: Writing My Father's Life', in: Eakin, John Paul (ed.), *The Ethics of Life Writing*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004, 121–146; Redman, Martin C., 'Sons Writing Fathers in Auto/Biography', in: *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 12:1–2 (2004) 129–136; Couser, Thomas, 'In My Father's Closet: Notes of a Critic Turned Life Writer', in: *Literature Compass*, 8:12 (2011) 890–899; Gimenez-Rio, Isabel Duran, 'Patrimony, Solitude and Obligation: Prodigal Sons and Absent Fathers', in: *European Journal of Life Writing* 3 (2014);

and Mansfield, Stephen, *Australian Patriography: How Sons Write Fathers in Contemporary Life Writing*, London: Anthem, 2014. For a central study of the mother-daughter plot, see Hirsch, Marianne, *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989; for more recent scholarship on life writing in particular see O'Byrne, Cheryl, "'A Search for Presence or a Reflection on Absence?': Aesthetics and Ethics in Kate Grenville's *One Life: My Mother's Story*", in: *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, 37:1 (2021), 1–23; and Wahlström Henriksson, Helena, Anna Williams and Margaretha Fahlgren (eds.), *Narratives of Motherhood and Mothering in Fiction and Life Writing*. Palgrave, 2023.

⁸ Couser, Thomas, 'Genre Matters: Form, Force, and Filiation', in: *Life Writing* 2:2 (2004) 139–156, 151.

⁹ O'Reilly, Andrea, 'In Black and White: African American and Anglo American Feminist Perspectives on Mothers and Sons', in: Muhonja, Besi Brilliant and Wanda Thomas Bernard (eds.), *Mothers and Sons: Centering Mother Knowledge*, Bradford Ontario: Demeter Press, 2016, 14–44, 15.

¹⁰ O'Reilly 'In Black and White', 33. O'Reilly begins her chapter by referencing Audre Lorde, who names two foundational myths about mother-son relations: 'Jocasta/Oedipus, the son who fucks his mother, and Clytemnestra/Orestes, the son who kills his mother', (the text O'Reilly references is Lorde, Audre, 'Man Child: A Black Lesbian Feminist's Response', in: *Sister Outsider*, New York: Quality Paperback Book Club, 1995, 72–80, 76; Lorde's book was first published in 1984, and has been republished many times.). O'Reilly then goes on to discuss the tremendous impact of these myths on literature and culture, particularly in the US. Besi Brilliant Muhonja and Wanda Thomas Bernard similarly note about US society, that it 'stigmatizes particular closeness of sons to mothers, which spawns the pejorative label "mama's boy"'; see Muhonja, Besi Brilliant, 'Introduction: Mothering at Intersections: Towards Centering Mother Knowledge', in: Muhonja, Besi Brilliant and Wanda Thomas Bernard (eds.), *Mothers and Sons: Centering Mother Knowledge*, Bradford Ontario: Demeter Press, 2016, 1–13, 3.

¹¹ Relationality is at the heart of children's writing about their parents, and has been explored in the literature. Often, however, 'relationality' has been gendered in the research, linked primarily to writing by women. In a 2004 special issue of *a/b: auto/biography studies*, editors Richard Freadman and John Gatt Ruttner wrote that '[a]s one would expect given the emphasis that scholars of women's life writing have placed on relationality – both textual and extra-textual – the essays on women's texts here tend to highlight their relational character'. See Freadman, Richard and John Gatt-Ruttner, 'Introduction: Life Writing and the Generations', in: *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 19:1-2 (2004) 1–9, 2. My point here is that where we, as researchers, look for 'relationality' may also be following gendered clichés; we are, after all, products of our culture even as we critique (aspects of) it.

¹² Eakin, John Paul. *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1999, 56. The feminist critics named by Eakin are Nancy K. Miller, Susanna Egan, and Shirley Neuman.

¹³ Wahlström Henriksson, Helena, 'Sons Write Mothers in Contemporary Swedish Literature: Mustafa Can's *Close to the Days* and Erik Wijk's *Only the Right Words*', in: Muhonja, Besi Brilliant and Wanda Thomas Bernard (eds.), *Mothers and Sons: Centering Mother Knowledge*, Bradford Ontario: Demeter Press, 2016, 109–125, 116.

¹⁴ Wahlström Henriksson, Helena, 'Moms, Memories, Materialities: Sons Write Their Mothers' Bodies', in: *a/b: auto/biography studies* 36:1 (2021) 139–160.

¹⁵ Wahlström Henriksson, 'Moms, Memories, Materialities', 141. While mother-daughter plots and father-son plots certainly still seem to dominate life writing and fiction alike, I maintain that there is a slight shift towards more filial matrifocal narratives in the past couple decades. It is beyond the scope of this study to bring in examples from other national contexts, but publications like Eduard Louis' *Combats et métamorphoses d'une femme* (2021) and Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (2019) signal that there may be opportunities for future comparative research on filial matrifocal writing across several national contexts.

¹⁶ Perhaps most famously by Paul Ricoeur. See Ricoeur, Paul, *Time and Narrative, Vols 1–3*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984–1988.

¹⁷ See e.g. Brockmeier, Jens, 'Autobiographical Time', in: *Narrative Inquiry* 10:1 (2000) 51–73; Brockmeier, Jens, 'Stories to Remember: Narrative and the Time of Memory', in: *Storyworlds: a Journal of Narrative Studies* 1 (2009) 115–132; Brockmeier, Jens, 'Narrating a life: Between Diachrony and Synchrony', in: *CoSMo: Comparative Studies in Modernism* 18 (2021): 65–72.

¹⁸ Wahlström Henriksson, 'Moms, Memories, Materialities', 143.

¹⁹ I choose to speak of 'lone' mothers here because 'lone' is closer to the Swedish term *ensamstående*, but also because during most of Gunhild's lifetime, unlike today, 'single' (Sw. *singel*) was not in use.

²⁰ The project which I pursued with Professor Disa Bergnehr, Linnaeus University, was funded for 2020–2023 by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond for the Advancement of the Humanities and Social Sciences (P19–0790:1).

²¹ Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, 270–271.

²² Brockmeier, 'Autobiographical Time', 56.

²³ Viart, 'Les récits de filiation', 13–15. Drawing upon Viart's work on *récits de filiation*, Souhir Zekri Masson has introduced the concept in English translation in this journal; See Zekri Masson, 'Marina Warner's *Inventory*'.

²⁴ '...och skriva boken om sitt liv, det som hon undrade över så'. Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 87. Since the novel has not been published in English, all translations from Swedish are mine.

²⁵ 'Hon ville ha kontroll. Hela livet gick ut på att skaffa sig kontroll, eller åtminstone frihet från andras inskränkningar och kontroll'. Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 211.

²⁶ Bainbrigge, Susan, *Writing Against Death: The Autobiographies of Simone de Beauvoir*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 168.

²⁷ 'den utpräglade viljan att vara lycklig'. Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 36.

²⁸ For a brief overview of the development of gender equality and family policy in Sweden, see *Women and men in Sweden*, Stockholm: Statistics Sweden, 2020.

²⁹ 'Bengt är inget för dig. Han tillhör ett förflutet. Det är synd om honom, för män som han kan aldrig lära om. Men du Gullan är framtiden'. Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 184.

³⁰ 'ögonen fastnade på rader som "kvinnornas isolerade ställning i hemmet" och "krossa mannens dominans"'. Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 184.

³¹ 'Han arbetar, hon är hemma. Det är ett krav. Han, direktören i vardande, skaparen av Den Stora Uppfinningen, ska tjäna tillräckligt med pengar och mer än det! Att hans hustru jobbar är uteslutet!' Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 153.

³² 'Allt stod henne upp i halsen. För varje dag växte bitterheten: hennes äkta man [...] hade visat sig lögnaktig och svekfull. [...] Han blev aggressiv och hotfull om hon sa emot eller "bjäbbade" och "tjafsade", som han kallade det. Pengarna sinade, och ändå fnös han åt hennes "extraknäck" på friseringen'. Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 180.

³³ Sweden made no-fault divorce possible as early as 1915. At the time when Gunhild divorced Bengt, divorce rates were increasing, especially in the cities; in 80% of cases, it was women who sought divorce.

³⁴ 'Lämna honom [...] lämna fanskapet. För din egen skull. Och för pojkens. Inget barn vill ha en fånge och slav till mor'. Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 190.

³⁵ 'både mannen och barnen vill ingenting hellre än att ha en slav i huset'. Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 192.

³⁶ 'Jag betalar hyran som jag inte ens får ihop till [...] Jag betalar tillbaka hans skulder, städar, lagar maten, passar Kaj medan Bengt går på Operakällaren och Riche'. Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 192–93.

³⁷ 'Lämna honom'. Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 195.

³⁸ "hur kommer det sig att kvinnor låter de mest ovärdiga män ha förmyndarskap över hustru och familj" och ändå "förblir dem lojala?" Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 239.

³⁹ "Det verkar som ni själv vet svaret på frågan. [...] Är det av kärlek och ömhet gentemot mannen som ni har hållit ut? Är det av rädsla för vad folk ska säga om en skilsmässa? Är det av lojalitet för lojalitetens skull i hopplös sak? Är det på grund av tanken att barnen har det bättre med en dålig far i ett disharmoniskt hem än ensamma med en duktig mor, som mycket väl kan försörja dem, enligt vad ni själv säger? Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 239.

⁴⁰ 'Until 1974 one had to apply for separate living [hemskillnad] first, and only after that, for divorce [äktenskapsskillnad]'. Andersson Catrine, *Hundra år av tvåsamhet: Äktenskapet i svenska statliga utredningar 1909–2009*, Uppsala: Acta Sociologica; Diss., 2011, 109; my translation.

⁴¹ 'att hon tänker ta ut skilsmässa och [...] hon, ensam, ska ha vårdnaden om pojkar. [...] Hon har anlitat en advokat [och kommer inte hem] förrän han har flyttat ut och lämnat över alla nycklar'. Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 242–243.

⁴² 'Rådhusrätten förordnar för tiden från denna dag [...] att sammanlevnaden mellan makarna skall vara hävd med förbud för makarna vid vite av en månads fängelse att besöka varandra, att hustrun skall hava vårdnaden om makarnas barn, att mannen skall till hustrun utgiva underhållsbidrag för vardera barnet med 60 kronor i månaden att utgå förskottsvis för kalendermånad, samt att hustrun skall äga sitta kvar i hemmet'. Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 288.

⁴³ 'Det fanns gott om vittnen! [...] Alla visste vad hon var ute efter. [...] En sån som hon'. Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 209.

⁴⁴ 'Kommer hon kunna älska någon så som hon älskar sin mamma? Men en man ska hon ju ha, säger de'. Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 64.

⁴⁵ 'Tänk om jag fick en dotter som jag kunde hålla av precis som mamma håller av mig. Men med vem?' Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 124.

⁴⁶ Brockmeier, 'Autobiographical Time', 60.

⁴⁷ 'Ensamhet var priset'. Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 211. Living in the family apartment in Ibsen Road seems another charged sign pointing to what must happen; like Ibsen's Nora, Gunhild will have to leave her husband, but unlike Nora, she will not leave her children behind.

⁴⁸ '[Hon] tycks söka sig tillbaka till livet innan hon var gift, då hon ofta till uppvaktarnas stora ilska valde en kväll med väninnorna eller Mandis före dem. Det är ett återkommande inslag [...] i dagböckerna [...] som sträcker sig fram till början av 90-talet, ser hon tillbaka och ser det nu rent av som ett genomgående drag i förhållandet till män och pojkvänner genom åren'. Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 157.

⁴⁹ 'Något slags frieri', Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 249.

⁵⁰ 'Alltså tackar hon nej. Om vi gjorde henne en tjänst? Jag är benägen att tro det. Livet skulle ha blivit annorlunda, men knappast bättre. Så småningom skulle hon ha känt sig fångad, så som hon alltid verkar ha gjort tillsammans med en man'. Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 249.

⁵¹ 'Från mina första år var hon evigheten, den moderliga evigheten som sträcker sig mellan livets horisonter. Inte kunde väl den försvinna?' Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 37.

⁵² Brockmeier, 'Autobiographical Time', 54.

⁵³ Riley, Denise, *Time Lived, Without its Flow*, London: Capsule Editions, 2012, 10.

⁵⁴ In her study of Simone de Beauvoir's autobiographical book about her mother's death, *Une mort très douce* (1964) Bainbrigge argues that 'the resurrection of the mother's life and death in the text highlights the writing of thanatography as a dialogue with death and the dead'. Bainbrigge, *Writing Against Death*, 27.

⁵⁵ May, Vanessa. *Lone Motherhood in Finnish Women's Life Stories: Creating Meaning in a Narrative Context*. Diss. Turku: Åbo Akademi, 2001, 48.

⁵⁶ 'hon hade bara svarat "snart skild" och hon hade lett som om det var det rätta svaret'. Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 365.

⁵⁷ 'Snart var jag också skild'. Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 356.

⁵⁸ 'Nej det gör jag väl kanske inte [...] men tänk så kul det skulle vara att få träffa mamma igen!' Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 325.

⁵⁹ 'Äktenskapliga band är inget annat än kvävande fjättrar', Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 23.

⁶⁰ 'En ensamstående kvinna med barn har ingen framtid'. Handberg, *Den vita fläcken*, 25.

⁶¹ Butler, Judith, 'Time "is" the person: an essay on *Time Lived, Without Its Flow* (Riley, 2012)', in: *Feminist Theory* 21 (3) 331–337, 331.

⁶² Brockmeier, 'Narrating a Life', 67.

⁶³ Bainbrigge, *Writing Against Death*, 12.