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## Ethics of Writing—From Autobiography to Hetero-Thanato-Biography; A Reading of Derrida's *Circumfession*\*

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### Abstract

Autobiography as a genre has been the locus of debate since Saint Augustine's *Confessions*. This paper sketches shifts of focus the term autobiography undergoes in different periods, before examining how Jacques Derrida regards the term in the light of ethics. During the discussion, thoughts on life, death, language, community and writing from certain deconstructionists, including Jean-Luc Nancy, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Paul de Man will be introduced to complicate Derrida's ideas. Even though autobiographical interpretation goes through the transformation of focus from *bio* to *auto* and

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to *graphy*, this paper, with Derrida's thoughts in the foreground, contends that autobiography indicates the intense relation to *bio* that writing is. In the final section, Derrida's *Circumfession* serves as an example of how autobiography is always already hetero-thanato-biographical writing with the other, for the other and by the other. Directed towards the affirmation of ethical writing, the narrative of the self is preempted by the writing of the other's death under the other's name.

**Key Words:** Singular, trace, signature, survival,  
*Circumfession*