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Lorna Martens  
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*The Just Vengeance of Heaven  
 Exemplify'd.*

IN A  
**JOURNAL**

Lately Found by  
**Captain MAWSON,**  
 (COMMANDER of the Ship COMPTON)

ON THE  
**Island of Ascension.**

As he was Homeward-bound from  
*India.*

In which is a full and exact Relation of the AU-  
 TROU's being set on Shore there (by Order of  
 the Commodore and Captains of the *Dutch*  
*Fleet*) for a most ENORMOUS Crime he had been  
 guilty of, and the extreme and unparallel'd  
 Hardships, Sufferings, and Misery he endur'd,  
 from the Time of his being left there, to that  
 of his Death.

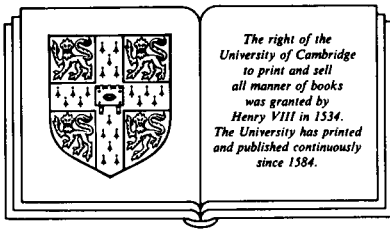
*All Wrote with his own Hand, and found lying  
 near the SKELETON.*

L O N D O N:  
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 (Price Six-pence)

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LORNA MARTENS



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*To my students at Yale, for their encouragement*

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## Preface

When one thinks of the diary novel, it is mainly famous twentieth-century examples that come to mind: works like Rainer Maria Rilke's *Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, André Gide's *Pastoral Symphony*, or Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea*. But is the diary novel a twentieth-century genre? It is true that the diary novel has become particularly popular in the twentieth century. In fact, however, the diary novel has a long history, one that originates in the eighteenth century. One of the main purposes of this book is to trace that history. The diary novel is an important subgenre of the first-person novel. Any typology or theory of first-person narration would benefit from some insight into one of its prominent forms, and interpretations of specific works would profit from information about the horizon of expectation against which a work was written. Although several articles and dissertations have been written on the diary novel as a genre, however, no history even of a limited period of time, such as we have for the epistolary novel or the picaresque novel, exists. Not even as much as a bibliography is available. The only exceptions are Peter Brang's short survey of diary fiction in Russian and Valerie Raoul's bibliography in her book on the French fictional journal.<sup>1</sup>

To compensate for this lack of information and to provide theoreticians of narrative and critics of the novel with a basis from which to work, I give interpretative summaries of the main stages of the history of diary fiction from the eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century in roughly chronological sequence, concentrating on the development in England, France, and Germany. The considerable Russian and Scandinavian traditions are beyond the scope of this study; they are mentioned only in passing. Titles of French and German diary novels are cited in the original languages. Other foreign-language titles are given in English if a published translation exists. Quotations from foreign-language sources are given in English translation in the text. The translations are mine except where otherwise indicated. For reference, and for those



interested in pursuing the study of the genre, chronological bibliographies are given near the end of the book.

By showing a concrete pattern of change, the study provides new insights into factors that influence genre development. I discuss theoretical issues in Part I. The reader may well wish to read Chapter 2 (on genre theory) and Chapter 5 (on the interpretation of first-person narrative) of Part I last, after having finished the rest of the book, because these sections do not specifically concern the diary novel but address more general theoretical questions. Genre is conceived not in strictly typological or “logical” terms but as a historical manifestation. I agree with the premises of structuralist genre theory: Genre should be viewed as a set of historically constituted norms that serve as a frame of reference against which individual works are written and understood. Structuralist studies tend to emphasize the synchronic aspect of genre at the expense of history, however. I believe that any characterization of a genre should take into consideration its diachronic dimension. Some of the questions I ask are: How does a genre originate? How does it change? To what extent are our reflections on literary typology, on the abstract “logic” of literary forms, confirmed by the actual history of these types? The enterprise of tracing the history of a genre reopens theoretical questions that have hitherto been treated mainly in the abstract. Some speculative questions that should not be ignored or quickly settled merely for the sake of completing the study at hand include the following: How does one define the constitutive features of a genre? Where does this initial definition lead? Depending on the formulation of the object of inquiry, the investigation can go in very different directions. The question of generic definition, of generic closure, thus becomes a question of the specific nature of generic openness, or in other words, of a genre’s relation to other literary and nonliterary systems.

Other literary systems constitute a horizon that, at a given point in time, permits or limits the realization of a given form’s potential. In the historical chapters I attempt to show not only how writers used the diary form in fiction but to what extent the diary novel was influenced by its model, the actual diary, and by the historical horizon for fiction. The presentations of material are linked by certain themes: the relation of narrative to narrated time in periodic narration, and the use of the present tense; the fiction of writing; and the implications of secrecy. One central issue of wider scope is the question of authority in first-person discourse. In first-person narratives we hear only a single voice. How are we to evaluate what the narrator says? I address this traditional question by discussing various techniques for establishing consonance (where the author validates the narrator) and dissonance (where the author undermines the narrator).

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## PREFACE

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Some of the chapters are devoted to interpretations of well-known or particularly significant works. Chapter 14, on unreliable narration, for example, focuses on an interpretation of Gide's *La Symphonie pastorale*, in which the narrator, assuming the role of reader and interpreter, draws his entire milieu into the specious world of his discourse. Chapter 15, on reliable narration, focuses on Rilke's *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*, a mosaic of Malte's perceptions, visions, and memories in which Malte, in Rilke's metaphor for creative power, holds up a mirror to the invisible. In Part IV, on the contemporary diary novel, I select three works for close analysis: Max Frisch's *Stiller*, Michel Butor's *L'Emploi du temps*, and Doris Lessing's *Golden Notebook*. These works are particularly successful realizations of a traditional form. The authors disengage the structural attributes from their traditional functions, and so exploit the diary's potential for discontinuity and open-endedness. The resulting construction is designed not just to carry and reinforce the plot but to express a message obliquely, through form.

I wish to thank several people for reading the manuscript and making useful suggestions and criticisms: George Schoolfield, Peter Demetz, Jeffrey Sammons, Dorrit Cohn, W. Wolfgang Holdheim, Valerie Raoul, and H. Porter Abbott. Special thanks go to Howard Stern for his painstaking critique of several chapters. I am grateful to Klaus Martens, Ulli Johst, and Angela Odenwald, who helped in the early stages of the project with the dusty job of searching stacks in the university library at Göttingen, as well as to Sarah Westphal, Gary Wihl, Tony Niesz, and Saïd Chébili, who helped at a later stage with proofreading, and to Olga Bush and Nancy Pollak for their help with the Russian bibliography and transliterations. Finally, I would like to thank those people who gave their time, energy, and moral support in the final stages of the project: Geoffrey Hartman and Chuck Grench for their invaluable practical advice, and Sam Fleischacker and, above all, Betsy Kolbert for helping me edit the manuscript when I was under great time pressure.