

ARTISTIC AND COMPOSITIONAL FEATURES OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WORKS

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Abstract. *This article explores the concept of autobiography, highlighting the author as the central figure in their autobiographical works. It discusses how authors often portray themselves as the main character, using personal experiences and emotional events to create a dramatic narrative that resonates with readers. The article examines the evolution of autobiographical writing, tracing its origins from St. Augustine's Confessions to more modern examples, and outlines key methodologies for analyzing autobiographies, including qualitative content analysis and comparative literary analysis.*

Keywords: *narrative, autobiography, diary, first-person perspective.*

INTRODUCTION.

It is noticeable that every writer himself is considered to be the main hero in his autobiographical works, and he can leave a deep impression on the reader through the artistic interpretation of emotionally impactful events in his life. The reason for this is, that the lives of well-known, famous writers are rarely smooth and uneventful; rather, they often go through numerous adventures and face spiritual and physical hardships throughout their lives. These aspects enhance the dramatic quality of such works and increase their instructiveness.

What's more important is that although the main themes of autobiographical works may revolve around difficult periods in history such as war and famine, or major social and political upheavals, the central character of the autobiographical work remains the author himself. In the narrative, this figure emerges as an

independent protagonist, and his inner world is vividly reflected. The word "autobiography" comes from Greek: "autos" – "self," "bios" – "life," and "graphein" – "to write."¹

Furthermore, the word "autobiography" was first used by William Taylor in 1797 in the *Monthly Review* journal. In 1809, the poet Robert Southey also used the word "autobiography" for the first time in the *Quarterly Review* journal. The earliest example of autobiographical elements can be seen in St. Augustine's work *Confessions*, written in 397 AD.

METHODOLOGY.

Qualitative Content Analysis involves analyzing the themes, narrative structure, and characterization within autobiographical works. Key components of autobiographies, such as the "self" of the writer, the portrayal of events, and their emotional impact, can be examined through this approach. The researcher would focus on identifying patterns in autobiographical works across different authors, highlighting how their personal experiences are woven into their literary works.

Comparative Literary Analysis can be used to compare autobiographical works from different time periods, regions, or literary traditions. For instance, comparing European and American autobiographies, as the article mentions, or contrasting the works of different authors (e.g., Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Jack London, and H.G. Wells) will provide insight into how the genre evolves over time and how authors from different cultures engage with their own life stories.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.

In English literature, the first autobiographical work was created in 1630 by John Smith. African-American writer Jarena Lee (1783–1864) authored an autobiographical work in American literature.

Roy Pascal states that "*a certain period of a person's life is described in autobiography. The writer, relying on their memories, reconstructs the events of their life.*" The autobiography as a genre was formed in Europe. According to Roy

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autobiography#Definition>

Pascal, the emergence of autobiographical works served as an impetus for the development of European civilization.²

According to some philosophers, autobiographical works have a subjective nature, and the value of such works is determined by how skillfully the author portrays the details of their life.

J.A. Cuddon refers to autobiography as “a memoir written by a person with their own hand.” According to Harry Show: “The writer records important events from their life in order to preserve them in memory forever. By reflecting on the past, the writer seeks to draw the attention of readers.”³

The fact that events in an autobiographical work are presented in chronological order indicates its closeness to reality. One can observe the depiction of the author's life starting from birth, including childhood, youth, family, and creative life in autobiographical novels. Some authors portray their lives in books consisting of more than ten volumes. For example, Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote an autobiographical work consisting of 12 books. Regarding his purpose for writing *Confessions*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau expressed the following thought: “My main goal is to understand the person unique to myself and my nature – in simple terms, to comprehend the ‘self’ that can truly be me.”⁴

However, an autobiographical work must differ from a diary-style writing. A diary is somewhat similar to an autobiographical work, but in it, the author focuses on personal aspects of their life. Roy Pascal describes the diary as “*the daily autobiography of the author’s life.*”

In autobiographical works, events are presented in chronological order, but this principle is not applied when writing a diary. Roy Pascal emphasizes: “*In a diary, the author can also describe someone else's biography. One can find in a diary all the uncertainties, false starts, and momentariness, but the autobiography is a coherent shaping of the past.*”⁵

² R.Pascal. Design and Truth in Autobiography. – London:Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 2001.

³ O'sha manba. – P.6.

⁴ S. Manisha. Theory of Autobiography. 2008. – P.17.

⁵ R.Pascal. Design and Truth in Autobiography. – London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 2001. – P.3.

In autobiographical novels, the author does not include insignificant events from their life. Only the life events that the author considers important are reshaped in the autobiographical work. Autobiographical works are characterized by factual evidence drawn from life. Scholars point out that truth is the essence of an autobiographical work. [Roy Pascal]

According to Roy Pascal, the author may not reveal all the truths of their life; some writers do not wish to disclose the truths of their lives.

The author's memory serves as the foundation for autobiographical novels. Important aspects of autobiographical novels include: a) Milieu – depiction of the environment; b) Self – the manifestation of the "writer's self"; c) Subjectivity – one of the main factors, as the events of the autobiographical work are generally narrated in the first-person perspective that's to say, by the author's point of view.

Herald Nickolson stated: *"A writer shapes his artistic work not by showing his fame or achievements, but by providing evidence in autobiography. Writers let the readers draw conclusions about the shortcomings in their life."*⁶

Autobiographical works can have an educational significance. A writer attempts to teach life lessons to the reader by showing the mistakes he has made throughout his life in his autobiographical work.

Roy Pascal compares revealing personal information in an artistic work to the disclosure of the writer's inner world. The writer searches for their identity while writing the entire literary work.

H.G. Wells makes the following statement about autobiographical works: *"I write the story of my life to forget the shortcomings and problems sealed in my memory. The main task of autobiographical works for the writer is to reveal their "self" through words."*⁷

⁶ S. Manisha. Theory of Autobiography. 2008. – P.17.

⁷ S. Manisha. Theory of Autobiography. 2008. – P.20.

CONCLUSION.

An author may not appear as an independent character or figure in American autobiographical works. Instead, authors may reimagine and creatively depict their past life through a fictional character. Certain compositional and artistic characteristics of autobiographical works are noticeable in American literature:

1. The author uses a fictional character in his literary work. According to the writer's concept, his own self is reimaged as a fictional image. For example, Jack London chose Martin Eden as a character fighting against social vices in his novel *Martin Eden*.

2. In full autobiographical works – an author writes about the events he has experienced in his life. Of course, attention is given to the chronological order of these events. The events of the artistic work are narrated in the first-person "I" perspective. For instance, Jack London's novel *The Road* covers the events from the 1890s, in which the author recounts his experiences as a traveler during a time when the United States was undergoing a severe economic crisis. In *The Road*, Jack London describes his journeys and struggles as a homeless "hobo" (traveler); the writer reflects on the hardships and problems faced by people who experienced poverty during the Great Depression. In this work, London reveals the difficulties of his own life, which proves that *The Road* is an autobiographical work.

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