



Article

Autobiography and Autobiographical Work: Comparison and Analysis

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Abstract: The study of autobiography as a literary genre has long held significance in both world and Uzbek literary scholarship due to its dual function as an artistic and documentary form. In literary tradition, autobiography serves as a self-narrative in which the author not only records personal experiences but also interprets them through the lens of reflection, imagination, and moral evaluation. Historically, autobiography evolved from religious confessions and philosophical reflections into an independent genre that unites factual precision with artistic creativity. Despite extensive global research on the autobiographical genre, the distinction between autobiography as a literary form and as a documentary record has not been sufficiently analyzed in the context of Uzbek literature. This study aims to explore the theoretical essence, historical development, and artistic functions of autobiography, clarifying its boundaries with biography and works of autobiographical character. The analysis reveals that autobiography transforms factual life events into aesthetic and philosophical narratives, serving as a medium through which the author's inner world and external reality converge. It reflects moral growth, self-analysis, and the author's creative individuality, linking personal memory with cultural and historical consciousness. The study establishes autobiography as an autonomous literary genre grounded in realism, psychological introspection, and self-awareness, rather than mere documentary narration. The findings contribute to literary theory by demonstrating that autobiographical and semi-autobiographical works expand realism, enrich character psychology, and reinforce personal experience as a foundation of artistic creativity and humanistic expression.

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1. Introduction

In both world and Uzbek literary studies, the issue of literary types and genres has never lost its relevance in any historical period. These categories have been repeatedly examined and analyzed throughout the ages. In addressing this matter, we often turn to Aristotle's Poetics or Belinsky's The Division of Poetry into Kinds and Types, since the analyses in these works regarding the theory of literary type and genre are comparatively more complete and systematic. Subsequent studies on poetics, to a greater or lesser extent, have relied upon, referred to, and built upon these works. However, in these sources we find no fully developed definitions or descriptions of what we intend to discuss here – autobiography[1].

Although its historical roots can be traced back to antiquity, the concept of autobiography re-emerged on the historical stage in a modern form during the 14th–15th

centuries, began to be widely used as a literary term in the 18th–19th centuries, and by the 20th century had reached the peak of its generic development. In Western literary studies, considerable discussion and research have been devoted to this notion. There, autobiography is generally defined as “a documentary and literary genre of prose in which a person depicts his or her own life, that is, one’s own biography”, or as “a person’s depiction of his or her life in chronological order”. Professor P. V. Baldetsin of Moscow State University named after M. V. Lomonosov also remarks that “the word autobiography means a person’s depiction of his or her own life”. It should be noted that these definitions approach autobiography as a literary work. This is certainly a justified perspective. However, distinctions must be made between autobiography as a literary work and autobiography as a document of scholarly record – i.e., the biography[2].

2. Methods

Autobiography as information – that is, biography – is a narrative or memoir written by an individual about his or her own life. In other words, the official or scholarly form of autobiography is a compilation of structured information about a person and his or her life. It records the author’s entire life or its significant periods on the basis of factual evidence. Such a text typically includes the individual’s date of birth, family background, education, work experience, achievements, and other life events. Autobiography in this sense is generally used for purposes of self-introduction or providing background information. Autobiography is considered a form of self-representation in which an individual narrates his or her own life. It is generally written in the first person and may encompass different stages of life, significant events, achievements, and hardships. Autobiographies are often composed by well-known figures toward the end of their lives, yet in principle they can be written by anyone. Typically, autobiographies bear a distinctive style and perspective, as they reflect the author’s worldview and life experience. This notion is mainly associated with the domain of official and scholarly usage. However, autobiography is not always defined in the same way. Some regard it as a biographical document – an object of record – while others recognize it as a literary concept. Russian literary scholar G. Romanova interprets autobiography as one of the literary categories, employing it in both narrow and broad senses. In the narrow sense, autobiography is understood as “a document in which the writer records the most important stages of his or her life”; in the broad sense, it is regarded as “a work that depicts the process of the author’s spiritual and moral development, the central content of which is based on comprehending the past from the perspective of an experienced, mature, and wise individual”. From this definition it becomes clear that the literary autobiography is very close to, and even seems to be based upon, the documentary form of autobiography – that is, the biography. This is not a mistaken assumption, since autobiography entered literature precisely in the form of an artistic transformation of biography. However, it is necessary to distinguish between the literary biography and the informative biography. The latter is related to the author’s presentation of life events in the concise manner of a questionnaire or survey[3].

3. Results and Discussion

As a literary concept, autobiography entered literary studies at the end of antiquity, emerging in connection with the notion of the individual and arising from the recognition of personal identity. This perspective, however, was of a religious character[4].

For early medieval authors, autobiography – a narrative of one’s life path – served as a depiction of the spiritual and moral journey of the soul toward God. By the 11th–12th centuries, however, the emphasis shifted, and writers increasingly focused on recounting their own life paths and personal experiences. Autobiographical works produced during the Renaissance were often written in the form of letters to future generations, narrating events from the author’s life while also providing detailed portrayals of his spiritual life,

moral development, and inner struggles with the self. The proliferation of autobiographical works in this period is characterized by the elevation of the individual and his inner world to the status of an absolute value[5].

The French literary scholar Philippe Lejeune emphasizes that the autobiographical genre possesses such characteristic features as “a narrative about the author’s personal life, prose form, retrospective depiction, and predominantly chronological sequence of presentation”. V. Markovich, in turn, advances the view that “the author is extremely close to the protagonist, as though they can even exchange places”. There is considerable truth in Markovich’s observation, since in an autobiographical work it is essential that one of the characters – most often the main protagonist – be the author himself. In certain works, the boundary between the protagonist and the author’s image seems to dissolve, as if disappearing altogether. This, too, is one of the defining features of the autobiographical work[6].

“As a description of one’s own life, autobiography simultaneously reveals a number of constructive contradictions: the author’s ‘self’ functions at once as both the subject and the object of the work, and moreover, factual reality at times becomes intertwined with fiction or authorial invention”, observes Pavel Vyacheslavovich Baldetsin. Thus, an autobiographical work is a literary creation based on specific events, experiences, and life impressions drawn from the writer’s own life. In it, the author depicts his or her life – or significant events within it – in an artistic form[7].

Autobiography appears in the following forms: dialogues between individuals, anecdotes, memoirs, personal notes, recollections, as well as religious confessions and repentances[8].

It is necessary to distinguish between an autobiographical work and a work of autobiographical character. First of all, it should be noted that autobiographical elements are present in almost every literary work. The reason for this is that any work arises, in one way or another, from the author’s own autobiography. In other words, just as works based on real events, so too works of autobiographical character place the author at their center, and through him another protagonist comes into being. In this process, the author conveys his own experiences and episodes from his life through a character of his own creation, investing that figure with personal emotions, sorrows, and joys, and speaking through the character’s voice[9].

Works written in an autobiographical style are characterized by the depiction of a concrete individual and the specific time at which the narrated events take place. In autobiographical works, the author’s life path is recounted from the “first-person” perspective. The historical value of an autobiographical work can only be assessed after a certain passage of time. Over the years, the artistic dimension of an autobiographical text (its literariness) may overshadow its documentary nature, and vice versa. In a genuine autobiographical work, the author’s life is represented in its entirety in an artistic form. In a work of autobiographical character, however, the biography is not narrated in full. Instead, the author selects real events from his own life and subjects them to the logic of the narrative plot he is constructing. At the same time, the writer bases the story on a distinctive personality and character, creating an imaginary protagonist. This resembles a model of the author’s own life, but in the resulting artistic creation the imaginary—the invented plot and characters—takes precedence over actual lived experience. G’afur G’ulom’s *Shum bola* (The Mischievous Boy) serves as a typical example of a work of autobiographical character[10].

There are a number of features that characterize the literary autobiography. Works of autobiographical character are most often composed of documentary evidence and descriptions, where factual elements take precedence over the artistic component of the text[11]. All events are portrayed with precise dates, locations, and identifying details. The participants in these events are real people rather than fictional figures. An

autobiographical work is confined within a specific temporal frame, since the author writes it about himself. Accordingly, the events narrated in the text always conclude at the point where the author ceases to write about them. A biography, by contrast, continues to expand and be updated until the author's death. In the works of many writers, one can observe traces of autobiography[12]. This phenomenon is especially evident in the Russian literary figures such as S. A. Yesenin, M. Gorky, and M. A. Bulgakov. The author, in different circumstances and by employing various styles and techniques, may compose autobiographical texts, and over time may alter his convictions and values. Nevertheless, all of these shifts invariably find expression in the content of autobiographical works. A vivid example of such variability can be observed in the oeuvre of the Russian writer M. M. Zoshchenko[13]. In 1928, he wrote his "Autobiography" for the journal *Begemotik*, adopting a cheerful and ironic tone. However, the text of the 1953 publication of "Autobiography" was produced in a shallow and strictly formal style. In any case, autobiographical sources provide comprehensive insights not only into the writer's life path, but also into his creative pursuits and achievements.

In an autobiographical work, the author's position is of particular significance. In such texts, the writer does not merely recount the events of his life; rather, one can observe the process of self-analysis. While narrating the events that preceded the act of writing, the author seems to lift an entire "veil of secrecy" over his own life experiences. He presents to the reader his personal perspective on what he has seen and endured, appearing as an external critic of his own life and activity[14]. The historical value of an autobiographical work depends on the accuracy of the facts provided by the author. In this sense, the writer is expected to depict real-life events in their full scale and authentic form, without arbitrarily adding or omitting details. Through this, the author conveys the spirit and orientation of his time by means of precise descriptions. However, the documentary nature of autobiography does not always run parallel to this process. Writers often prefer to exaggerate certain episodes of their life, or, conversely, to remain silent about them[15].

4. Conclusion

Autobiographical works hold significant importance in revealing the author's personal life, worldview, and creative individuality. Such texts serve as both documentary and artistic representations of human experience, reflecting the synthesis of factual accuracy and imaginative interpretation. Through autobiography, the writer not only recounts the events of his or her life but also engages in self-reflection, analyzing moral, spiritual, and intellectual development. In this sense, autobiography becomes a literary space where the author's inner world and external reality intersect. The creative transformation of life experiences into artistic form allows autobiography to transcend its documentary nature and acquire aesthetic and philosophical depth. It is through this process that autobiography evolves into an autonomous literary genre closely linked to realism, psychological analysis, and self-consciousness in literature. Autobiographical works reveal the dynamics of personality formation, the influence of time and society on the individual, and the moral evaluation of life events from the author's mature perspective. As a genre, autobiography stands at the crossroads of literature and history, offering valuable insights into both personal and collective memory. Furthermore, the study of autobiography enriches our understanding of the author's creative method, worldview, and stylistic tendencies. Ultimately, autobiographical and semi-autobiographical works expand the boundaries of literary realism, enhance the psychological depth of character portrayal, and affirm the role of personal experience as a universal source of artistic inspiration and humanistic expression in the broader context of world literature.

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