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THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL WORKS IN THE WEST

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Autobiographical works are regarded in world literary studies as a genre of particular significance. Although the autobiographical genre dates back to ancient times, it was initially considered merely as a source and personal document for studying the life and creative work of an author. In other words, it was interpreted primarily as a means of understanding the writer's creative laboratory. Over time, however, perceptions of documentary works, including autobiographies, underwent significant changes. Documentary literature gradually became an important subject of literary scholarship and began to be analyzed with due consideration of the individual, as well as the historical and socio-cultural circumstances surrounding that individual.

The growing interest in human personality has contributed to the development of autobiography as an independent literary genre. It can be observed that authors increasingly seek to create artistic self-portraits intended for a broad readership. Thus, autobiography has evolved from a mere everyday document into a work of art, incorporating an increasing number of characteristics inherent in fiction.

Autobiography is distinguished by its distinctive dual nature: the present perspective of an author possessing rich life experience and a developed worldview becomes closely intertwined with events from the distant past. The past and the present permeate one another: the mature author seems to immerse themselves in the past and return to the years of childhood and adolescence, and then suddenly shifts back to the present reality. This is followed by a process of reconstructing past events from the perspective of the experience and understanding accumulated over time.

Autobiography is a narrative about life that focuses on a person's personal experiences, thoughts, and emotions. Unlike memoirs, which often describe historical events and other individuals, autobiography places the author themselves at the center of the narrative. The author speaks about how they perceive and understand their own life. Such a narrative may take various forms, including that of a diary. A diary is characterized by a sequence of records written relatively close to the time when events occurred and reflects the author's personal views.

Before examining the characteristics of autobiographical works, let us first consider their historical development in a systematic manner. This is because understanding the formation and development of any genre provides an important foundation for comprehending it fully. Autobiographical works are the product of an individual's desire to understand themselves, look back upon their past, and express their inner world through artistic means. The historical roots of this genre can be traced back to the literature of ancient civilizations. In order to conduct a more profound analysis, we have attempted to examine the stages of formation and development of the autobiographical genre separately within the frameworks of Western and Eastern literatures. This is because the genre developed differently within these two literary traditions, each of which was based on distinctive cultural, philosophical, and aesthetic foundations. Let us first turn our attention to Western literature.

Although the autobiographical genre did not exist as an independent form in the ancient world, early elements reflecting personal experience can be found in historical and philosophical writings. M. M. Bakhtin notes that ancient autobiographism emerged under specific conditions and that there was no clear distinction between biographical and autobiographical approaches.[1] For example, in Xenophon's *Anabasis*, the author describes himself in the third person; nevertheless, his position becomes

1 Бахтин М.М. Автор и герой в эстетической деятельности // Эстетика словесного творчества. М., 1986. С. 131.

apparent through his personal experiences, decisions, and participation in the events.[2] Researchers emphasize that Xenophon's approach is associated with the tradition of presenting personal experiences within a broader historical context.[3] In our view, Xenophon's use of the third-person perspective served to create a sense of credibility in the reader by presenting himself objectively, representing an important step in the early formation of the autobiographical genre.

In Hesiod's *Works and Days*, the author expresses his personal concerns and anxieties in the form of an address to his brother. This represents one of the earliest signs of the formation of an autobiographical outline in ancient literature.[4] Likewise, although Julius Caesar's *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* is a historical narrative, it incorporates autobiographical elements through the author's glorification of his own activities. Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*, in turn, reflects philosophical and autobiographical reflections, focusing on personal thought and the inner world.[5]

An important turning point in the history of the autobiographical genre was the development of the concept of the "inner self" in Christian thought. Augustine of Hippo's *Confessiones* (*Confessions*) is regarded in this regard as one of the earliest fully developed autobiographical texts. Augustine places sin, salvation, and communion with God at the center of his spiritual journey.[6] This work presents autobiography not merely as a chronological sequence of events, but as an account of inner suffering, reflection, and repentance. G. Misch describes this as "a natural form

2 Ксенофонт. Анабасис. Пер., статья, примеч. М.И. Максимовой. М., 1951. С.210.

3 Anderson, John. *The Emergence of Autobiographical Writing in Ancient Greece*. Cham: Springer, 2018. P. 127.

4 Гесиод – (УШ-У11 вв.), древнегреческий поэт, первая историческая личности в античной литературе, мастер дидактического эпоса, авто поэм «Теогония», «Труды и дни».

5 Аверинцев С.С. Плутарх и античная биография. – М.: Наука, 1973. С. 386.

6 Григорьева Н.И. Жанровый синтез на рубеже эпох: "Исповедь" Августина// Взаимосвязь и взаимовлияние жанров в развитии античной литературы. М.: Наука, 1989. С. 240.

of expression of personal human experience."[7] Some scholars emphasize that Augustine's approach laid the foundation for modern psychological autobiography.[8]

In Byzantine literature, autobiographical elements developed through hagiographic works, epistolary writings, and chronicles. For example, the chronicles of Michael Psellos combine personal and political events while paying particular attention to revealing the author's inner world.[9] Drawing upon ancient traditions, Christian literature increasingly focused on the representation of "spiritual life."[10]

During the Renaissance, the human being came to occupy a central position and was regarded not merely as a creature governed by divine forces, but also as a conscious and creative individual. Benvenuto Cellini's *The Life of Benvenuto Cellini* (*La Vita di Benvenuto Cellini*) is a remarkable example of autobiographical writing from this period. Cellini openly expresses his artistic activities, social relationships, and inner world.[11] The personal diaries and essays of such thinkers as Petrarch, Erasmus of Rotterdam, and Michel de Montaigne further strengthened the genre by portraying personal experiences from aesthetic and humanistic perspectives.[12] Montaigne's *Essays*, in particular, enhanced the philosophical depth of autobiographical writing through self-examination and personal reflection. In our view, autobiographical works of the Renaissance not only emphasized individual identity but also reflected social changes taking place within society, thereby playing an important role in the subsequent development of the genre.

7 Misch G. Geschichte der Autobiographie. Frankfiirta. M., 1949. T.l. S. 6.

8 Stock, Brian. *Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Reading*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996. P. 118.

9 Kaldellis, Anthony. *The Argument of Psellos' Chronographia*. Leiden: Brill, 2006. 3. 234.

10 Аверинцев С.С. Плутарх и античная биография. М.: Наука, 1973. С. 469.

11 Ауни, Дэвид. Новый завет и его литературное окружение. СПб., 2000. С.26

12 Burke, Peter. *The European Renaissance: Centres and Peripheries*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.

In the eighteenth century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* (*Les Confessions*) contributed significantly to the establishment of autobiography as an independent literary genre. Rousseau sought to present his personal life openly and honestly, revealing his mistakes, circumstances, and thoughts before society.[13] Philippe Lejeune defines autobiography as a form in which "the author, narrator, and protagonist are one and the same person," demonstrating the integration of personal experience and literary structure.[14]

Rousseau's autobiography made it possible to analyze personal experiences within a social context, corresponding to the Enlightenment ideals of reason and individuality. Researchers emphasize that Rousseau's approach laid the foundation for the emotional depth characteristic of modern autobiography.[15]

In the nineteenth century, the autobiographical genre penetrated deeply into psychological analysis. Authors such as Leo Tolstoy, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Virginia Woolf, Marcel Proust, and Jean-Paul Sartre artistically shaped inner experiences, memory, the stream of consciousness, psychological decline, and the search for identity in their works. Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* represents an outstanding example of reconstructing identity through memory.[16] In Woolf's *The Waves* and *Mrs Dalloway*, the inner world is portrayed through the stream-of-consciousness technique.

Jean Starobinski defines modern autobiography as "a language that bears witness against itself," in which the "self" appears simultaneously as both subject and

13 Misch G. Geschichte der Autobiographie. Frankfiirta. M., 1949. T.l. S. 6.

14 Lejeune, Philippe. *On Autobiography*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.

15 Smith, Sidonie, and Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001. P. 47.

16 Smith, Sidonie, and Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

object.[17] In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the autobiographical genre became not only a form of personal narrative but also a means of addressing social criticism and gender issues. In particular, Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* explores women's creative identity.

In postmodern literature, the autobiographical genre became more complex, enriched by play, irony, and constructed forms. As identity came to be regarded as a relative concept within society, writers began to critically reinterpret autobiography. Karl Ove Knausgård's *My Struggle* series, Paul Auster's *Winter Journal*, and J. M. Coetzee's autobiographical novels *Boyhood* represent examples of autofictional and meta-autobiographical forms.[18]

Paul John Eakin regards modern autobiography as "a form that brings together cultural identity, psychological identity, and literary identity." [19] Postmodern autobiographies question the boundary between fact and fiction, allowing readers to reinterpret the concept of identity. For example, Roland Barthes' *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* presents the self as a literary construction.[20]

In Western literature, the autobiographical genre gradually developed from antiquity to the present day and became an important artistic means of expressing the process of self-understanding and the individual's relationship with society. Studies indicate that cultural, philosophical, and social factors played a decisive role in this process of development.[21] Today, the autobiographical genre continues to maintain its

17 Starobinski, Jean. *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.

18 Eglinton, Bethany. *Autobiography and the Postmodern: Roland Barthes and Beyond*. London: Routledge, 2020.

19 Eakin, Paul John. *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008.

20 Eglinton, Bethany. *Autobiography and the Postmodern: Roland Barthes and Beyond*. London: Routledge, 2020.

21 Бахтин М.М. Автор и герой в эстетической деятельности // Эстетика словесного творчества. М., 1986. С. 131.

relevance as a universal form for expressing human psychology, culture, and the individual's place in society.

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