

MOTIVES IN WOMEN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHIES MOTIVE ÎN AUTOBIOGRAFIA FEMEILOR

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Summary

The article explores women autobiographies as a special category of life-writing. The first part is about traditions of women autobiographies. This section aims to understand how women authors construct an authentic identity in life writings. The second part is about explanation of motives in literature and sociology and about the motives in women autobiographies as combination of ontological (sociology, life) and epistemological (literature, presentation of life) aspects. In this paper, women autobiographies are classified in accordance with Jungian hero motives. The paper concentrates on the second type of autobiographies which are common among women authors and coincide with Jungian archetypes of hero in initiation.

Cuvinte cheie: autobiografie, C. Jung, motive de eroi arhetipali, scrieri de viață ale femeilor, identitate autentică

Abstract

Articolul explorează autobiografiile femeilor ca o categorie specială de prezentare a istoriei vieții. Prima parte a lucrării este despre reflectarea tradițiilor autobiografice a femeilor. Această secțiune își propune să înțeleagă modul în care analizează femeile autoare ce construiesc o identitate autentică în descrierea vieții. Cea de-a doua parte se referă la explicarea motivațiilor în literatură și sociologie și motivele autobiografiilor femeilor ca o combinație între aspectele ontologice (sociologie, viață) și epistemologică (literatură, prezentarea vieții). În această lucrare, femeile autobiografice sunt clasificate în conformitate cu motivele eroinelor jungiene. Lucrarea se concentrează asupra celui de-al doilea tip de autobiografie care este comună între autori și coincide cu arhetipurile jungiene ale eroului în inițiere.

Introduction Life-writing is either intrinsic or extrinsic. If autobiography is reader-oriented, the writer tries to build the image of the self, shaping it into a certain form. If it is author-oriented, the writer tries to reveal hidden sides of the own personality in order to harmonize persona and personality. Beyond general motives of self-recognition and self-representation, there are specific aims in autobiographies which are not always expressed directly and even recognized by the authors. So-

called "unmotivated" nature, together with their fragmentariness and lack of uniting centre are the features of women's life-writings and they are often considered to be indicators of their unsuitability to "traditional forms" of autobiographies. I am arguing in this article that these qualities are essential for life-writings, because they are not compilation of sequential episodes around a particular idea, instead, they show their authors' lives in process and in their natural dynamics.

The purpose of research is to define specific peculiarities of women's autobiographies which reveal their authors' epistemological dynamics.

In certain meaning, autobiographies should be "unmotivated" if they claim to be the author's description of the own life. Otherwise, they can easily disappear and be melted into other genres such as political portrait, creativity picture, career description and other types of writing. However, life in retrospection can be roughly generalized into a certain motive, which is true for life-writings as well. The paper scrutinizes "unmotivated" autobiographies in order to find the authors' motives which they define looking back at the past through self-analysis.

Autobiography is life writing. Life is connected to different social institutions which are pervaded by gender roles. Female agency creates specific traditions in life writing, some of which can coincide with those of male autobiographies whereas some others can be strictly specific. Both coincidence and specificity are connected to gender roles and psychology. The approaches to women's autobiography tend to be based on experiential models that are vertical and foreground certain moments in the life cycle – childhood, adolescence, marriage/carrier, aging. "Such models oppose all women to all men and set up a structure of resistance and self-authorization through collective critique and political action based on assumed universal subordination"[13, p. 10].

Autobiography as a tool for increasing self-awareness is a sufficient feminist methodology, because the woman who writes about her life, isolates herself from binds of family, soci-

ety, and all the distractors which used to obscure her mind to see herself as a personality. She concentrates on individual aspects of the self, lifts the heavy rusted cover of silence from her authentic feelings, ideas, which she was suppressing in order to mold herself into shapes created for her by her family and different communities. The process of autobiography writing is a cumulative therapeutic method during which the author passes through different stages of individuation as the process of "self-realization", revelation, reassessment, building conscious relationships, sound connection between individuation and participation. Creating a specific balance between ontological and expressive levels of self-analysis, freeing the self from the conventions of surrounding institutions with their impositions, the female author uses deconstructive discursive methods to isolate, abstract herself in order to avoid distractors obscuring her view on the authentic self, and after having fulfilled this task, uses another discursive method which can be aggregation based on elective affinities. The author's participation after having passed through individuation is a different from her initial involvement level, because now those social institutions have lost their dogmatic power to control her choices, on the contrary, she has become empowered to consciously negotiate with them her status. 'Individuation means precisely the better and more complete fulfillment of the collective qualities of the human being, since adequate consideration of the peculiarity of the individual is more conducive to better social achievement than when the peculiarity is neglected or suppressed' [7].

Individuation (different from isolation), as the first stage of authentication, is very significant feature or motive for many autobiographies. If the writer who grew up within individualist culture can relevantly easier pass through this process in the life writing, the author who comes from a collectivist culture has to challenge the unconscious models in order to distinguish between personal preferences and those imposed from outside. Individuation means that a person can define the own self as standing out. 'Individuation means becoming a single, homogenous being, and, in so far as "individuality" embraces our innermost, last, and incomparable uniqueness, it also implies becoming one's own self' [p.7, 181]. This has strong resonances with the quest towards having a sense of one's 'authentic' self.

Life-writing is acceptance of dismissed or suppressed deviances from conventional norms imposed by communities, scrutinizing them and attempting to find implications. The general background aim of autobiographies is quest of authenticity through individuation with further participation, but it cannot be a sole purpose or the only ground on which life writings are built.

Because to choose being authentic consciously can result in "authenticity" which is allowed by "ego, as the sole architect of authenticity" and 'the ego can know only that part of our personality that is consciously accessible' [6, p. 493].

Individuation is a conscious attempt to understand the own unconscious and authentic motives. The written text including diverse aspects of life creates a medium for the author and

reader to reveal unconscious sides of the personality which can be a fertile source to understand conscious choices. Disclosing life motives in retrospect and hindsight, women writers justify their lives for themselves, and empowered by the sense that they had been brave enough to share personal stories with the world, continue their lives from a new page.

Motive in literature and sociology.

A motive in literature is a recurring idea which makes a story meaningful. In social sciences the notion of motives is much more complicated.

Giddens' attempt to combine psychoanalytic approach with sociological and phenomenological analyses is interesting. "Giddens sees conduct as revolving around the reflexive monitoring of conduct at two levels of consciousness. First, there is discursive consciousness or the capacity to give reasons for and to talk about what one does. Second, there is practical consciousness or the unarticulated stocks of implicit understandings about varying types of social situations. Thus, interaction involves (a) monitoring situations, (b) giving reasons for one's own acts and the acts of others, and (c) using as well as replenishing stocks of knowledge.) [15].

„Unmotivated” autobiographies

Beginning from the 18th century authors became less and less explicit in expression of their aims for writing autobiographies. These mere life-descriptions were called "unmotivated life-writings" and evoked questions about the reason why the authors do it. In the chapter entitled "Self-deception, Self-Knowledge and Autobiography" of

the book entitled “The Philosophy of Autobiography” SomogyVarga quotes Palmer’s words that the whole idea of writing an autobiography is unintelligible in the absence of motives on the author’s side [3, p.141]. Further S. Varga distinguishes between autobiographies with a particularly clear motive as apologetic or self-justifying, and life-writings without particular motive. The question of “unmotivated” autobiographies was widely discussed in the 18-th century with life-writings’ becoming a popular area especially for women.

Traditional women autobiographies are “unmotivated” because they do not concentrate solely on career, they are not creativity portraits, because they describe real life challenges in their dynamics, they show the life as a process, sometimes fragmentary as life can be seen, without gathering the events around a center which could keep them from falling apart.

People do not commence their lives with particular motives, but after having passed a certain distance they can summarize their lives under a certain motive.

The writer of an autobiography aims to show what her main motive in life was. In this paper I am trying to classify the motives which are defined by women authors in retrospect and become the main idea of their life-writings. ‘We must recall that people are invested in maintaining particular identities and forms of cohesion of ‘the self’, are caught in webs of structures that determine particular kinds of storytelling, and have the capacity for managing self-representation’.

Autobiographers are protagonists of their works, and protagonists can also be named as “heroes” in literary

terms. The perspective to be a hero of her own life involves empowerment, and the writer aims at least at this target: to be a hero of her own life, what can be considered by her as a compensation for previous sufferings, as justification of success, as an attempt to prove the own role and the most essential for women autobiographies, self-revelation. As the reference point for the classification of women autobiographies for their motives I chose Jungian classification of hero archetypes which are considered to be also the archetypes of transformation and redemption. [4, 190]. Transformation in the process of autobiography writing takes place in both ontological and epistemological levels which dynamically influence on each other and stimulate changes. Once, having reached a certain period of her life a woman can decide that it is crucial to talk about her life in order either to justify the gained power or to gain a power without which continuation of life seems impossible. Women authors who strive to reach authenticity, try to understand the innermost motives of their lives in retrospect which also become motives in their life-writings. This transcendental insight builds a bridge of harmony between past, present and future.

Guerin et al. define 3 types of archetypal heroes:

The quest: W. L. Guerin et al. (2005) explain Jungian heroes in quest undertaking some long journey during which must perform impossible tasks, solve unanswered riddles, and overcome insurmountable obstacles in order to save the kingdom. It is the group of autobiographies which can be illustrated as success stories.

a) Initiation: the hero undergoes a series of excruciating ordeals in passing from ignorance and immaturity to social and spiritual adulthood. The initiation most commonly consists of 1) separation, 2) transformation, 3) return. It is also interpreted as death and return archetype. (in autobiographies new life). This group of autobiographies is the most illuminating for women life-writings. The sacrificial scapegoat: the hero, with whom the welfare of the nation is identified, must die to atone for the people's sins and restore the land of fruitfulness" [4 p. 190]

b) The authors of this group of autobiographies are victims of arbitrary conditions and they cannot deal with them. After physical survival they decide to share their extremely painful experience in order to help themselves to get rid of the sense to be alone with their pains and also to help others' to deal with similar situations if they encounter them.

The reason why I consider this classification of archetypal motives to be suitable for grouping female autobiographies is coincidence, congruousness of the ideas included in these three categories and in female autobiographies. "Correcting the fear of women and the feminine, encased even within Jung's effort to validate the feminine, will be an essential step toward making Jung's the holistic psychology and spirituality women need it to be" [15]

The first group of women autobiographies can be classified as the quest autobiographies. These life writings are a kind of success stories, where their authors talk about the hardships, obstacles they have overcome to reach their recent and usually high status. This

type of autobiography is very popular among male authors and they also show socialized position of gender.

The tone of these autobiographies is monologic, because the author talks about her own life either to make it a paradigm for further generations to follow, or to remain in history. There is also an attempt to prove the importance of her recent status, but it is more confirmation than analysis, and the author is more concentrated on the result the quest brought about than the quest itself.

In *Encyclopedia of Women's Autobiography* this group of life-writings are called autobiographies which have a "self-help" element (Maya Angelou, Maxine Hong Kingston, Anne Lamott), demonstrating the move from difficulty to perseverance, thus providing a model for a number of women to do the same (Encyclopedia ed. Boynton, Malin) Discussing the autobiographies of well-known and publicly successful women, Patricia Meyer Spacks comments upon their self-deprecatory stance: "They use autobiography, paradoxically, partly as a mode of self-denial" [14, p. 132]. However, feminist critics Wendy Simonds and Elayne Rapping argue that self-help does aid women in making nascent feminist claims. [2, p. 505].

Maya Angelou writes about being sexually molested and raped by her mother's live-in partner who afterwards was violently murdered. She talks about her feelings when at her eight the perpetrator embraces her what makes her feel loved by a father figure, she tells about her approaching to him and sitting on his knees after some time which makes her feel guilty in the rape. In the

court she denies being molested prior to the rape, because is terrified with the idea that her brother Bailey, whom she considered to be her only friend and supporter, could hate her. The narrator's voice in this autobiography is firm, her life seems to have been understood, accepted by her, interpreted and introduced to readers as a story which is clear enough and does not need outside consciousness to interfere in life-analysis. There is no hesitation in attitudes and evaluations, no fragmentary episodes and gaps to be filled with different discourses. Her point of view is clear and authoritative, and there is not an attempt to analyze and find the authentic self.

In "Woman Warrior" Maxine Hong Kingston "launches into her narrative confidently and forthrightly, without feeling the need to mention sources or provenance or to seek aid in suspending disbelief by pointing to literary precedence"... "Kingston's narrative voice takes on the timbre of a secure and autonomous teller....It is the voice of a narrator independently empowering herself as an agent of mythopoesis who is revealing an enigma" (Sturm-Trigonakis, 118-119). She has been in quest in order to unpack the collective female memory and was able to find explanations to her ontological questions. She analyzes her relationships with her mother, cultural aspects in gender roles without emotions (or talking about past feelings without emotions) employing common sense. Her quest for identity seems to have finished and she seems to have an authoritative voice which talks about past events after having summarized consequences of past attitudes and decisions.

In this type of autobiographies metamorphosis, personal, emotional, existential transformations do not have central roles. The New York Times writes about activist Angela Davis's life writing: "Angela Davis: An Autobiography" is not so much revealing as "exemplary." Writing it was not an act of self-discovery; it was an act of political communication. (Langer, 1974). This quote can partly summarize the first group of life-writings, which are not concentrated on the authors' self-analysis but deal with the analysis of the outer world, political and social situations. The writers of these writings have authoritative voices and they do not strive to find authentic self, because their aim is not intrinsic analysis, but presentation of the own life, the personal endurance or success as a paradigm to be followed.

The second type autobiographies are more concentrated on processes, feelings, relationships, analysis of the own attitudes. These autobiographies are especially interesting for analysis, because their authors use diverse feminist methodologies in their life-writings. These authors' aim seems to be nothing else than to understand their own personality, reach the depth of authenticity. The authors seem to be discussing different aspects of their personality and their voice is dialogical and hesitating.

The second group of autobiographies coincide with Jungian heroes in initiation and the frequency of women authors is quite high in this type. This group of autobiographies seems to be a discursive process which creates a friendly medium for the author to repeatedly go through her past life

looking at the events, values and attitudes differently. The woman in her recent status enters into dialogue with the woman who lived her life, preferring to surpass her own voice, was unheard and unrecognized, and they create a dialogue. Having broken the silence of single consciousness the author gains transcendent perspective. Two consciousnesses communicate, and this communication is psychologically safe and friendly because not any of them has the ultimate word. This rebirth from discursive death or the process of self-revelation has different stages similar to those through which Jungian heroes pass towards maturity. Like the heroes in quest life-writings, initiation stories can deal with multiple identities and unlike to the former, the latter tends to be fragmented and conflicting narratives. As the second group of life-writings equally involve different aspects of life, the analysis is multilayered. Compared to quest autobiographies, the author's voice here is hesitating, the narrator seems to be searching for her true identity, offering suggestions and leaving spaces for diverse discourses to negotiate her role, status, personality. This narrative is full of emotions, shifts of assessments, descriptions of relationships. This voice polyphony, carnivalesque (M. Bakhtin's term for lack of dominant style and existence of chaos) creates an atmosphere of being in a process which does not end with a certain result even in the end of the work. The author lives the past events again, but not as an omniscient outsider, but as a participant who feels all pains and grieves of the past events once more.

The process of interviewing the

previous self by the recent self shapes the interpretation of the own life as a narrative of the other. As feminist research has such ultimate goal as achieving emancipation, change women's roles in society, conscious-raising, this self-interview aims to reveal concealed facts about the influences on women's identities and rebuild relationships with them. This interview aims to open the hidden side of the own personality which could not be revealed with the sole participation of one recent ego which is usually surrounded with distractors. The second, more experienced with years ego, which is able to analyze previous unconscious as well concentrates more on the inner happenings, individual reactions to particular events rather than on these events.

In the introduction to his autobiography C. G. Jung wrote: 'I can understand myself only in the light of inner happenings. It is these that make up the singularity of my life, and with these my autobiography deals' (In the end of introduction of Carl Gustav Jung's autobiography). "Life has always seemed to me like a plant that lives on its rhizome. Its true life is invisible, hidden in the rhizome. The part that appears above ground lasts only a single summer. Then it withers away--an ephemeral apparition. ...In the end the only events in my life worth telling are those when the imperishable world irrupted into this transitory one. That is why I speak chiefly of inner experiences" (Prologue to *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, by C. G. Jung. Recorded And Edited By Aniela Jaffé)

The first phase of the initiation process is separation. A woman feels separated from her usual, native environ-

ment. The separation can be physical and psychological. Physical separation is always followed with psychological, which, however, is ubiquitous, can take place alone and is illuminating to reveal different aspects of the woman writer's personality. The reasons that brings to separation can be different, but they can be generalized under the condition of impossibility to continue the life in its previous way. The woman, who becomes conscious of the necessity of changes, stops, isolates today's self from the yesterday's, draws a line between them, tries to study the reasons and circumstances which created the yesterday's woman. The new woman interviews the previous self, investigates to find the authentic voice, tries to distinguish it from that authoritative dogmatic one unconsciously considered by the previous self as being authentic. The former self tries to be sincere, but the latter self strives to find contradictions between her personality and persona, define the reasons which cause a conflict between them. Psychological conflict caused by silence, suppressing of the own authentic voice, pretending that her life was happy or bearable, gets released into words, analysis, confessions, epiphanies, hindsight and creates mental comfort and harmony. The first part of initiation ends when the author is able to see her authentic past self.

The autobiography of Tehmina Durrani shows the stages of initiation very clearly. "My Feudal Lord" consists of three parts. The titles given to the parts by the author are highly allusive. The first part is titled as Lion of Punjab, the second part is called Law of Jungle and the last third part is named as

Lioness. This reminds of the hell, purgatory and paradise in "The Divine Comedy" and the content of the autobiography shows dynamic impulse from obedience, silence, feeling guilty to self-recognition, self-identity through self-analysis, self-revelation, breaking of silence and confessions. The first part is the description of violence and abuses towards the author from the side of her second husband Khar. He is powerful because Tehmina is "guilty" for getting married twice. His own six marriages are approved with the gender conventions in their society. After many years of humiliation she reaches a point that the separation from the previous self who accepted the existing rules which were consistently imposing the sense of guilt on gender basis, becomes inevitable. She tries to analyze her previous attitudes, reassess them separately and in relations with others. What used to seem her natural, for example, her mother's advices that to endure Khar's abuses and violence she had to consider him to be a child, seems to be an attitude encouraging the evil and empowering it to expand violence.

The next stage of the autobiographies with the motive of initiation is transformation. It is the internal transformation of the individual and the exemplary character of this transformation – that furnishes a subject for a narrative discourse in which "I" is both subject and object [1]. At this stage the separated selves attempt to unite. The past consciousness and the recent consciousness strive to find a neutral and suitable medium for both to feel comfortable. Transformation is a hard and painful process because the author has to go through alteration of habitual

life-style. The surrounding always revolts against the metamorphosis, especially if it is discernible and has an impact on their lives as well. In Durrani's autobiography this stage is called Law of Jungle. It describes her protests against the way she is being treated in her family and revolts against gender inequality in her society.

The third stage is return. The person goes back to her habitual environment as a new and more mature personality. After a huge amount of challenges with herself, the people surrounding her, the existing norms and conventions, she becomes empowered enough to find the ways to negotiate different roles she owns. Nussbaum writes that "a critical scrutiny of preference and desire that would reveal the many ways in which habit, fear, low expectations, and unjust background conditions deform people's choices and even their wishes for their own lives" [15]

When habits have been changed in the process of transformation, low expectations were considered to be unfair towards herself, unjust background has been analysed and accepted as a history not to be repeated, the author's wishes for her own life takes a more personalized character, which she ostentatiously enjoys in the end of her autobiography.

In Durrani's autobiography the last part is entitled as "Lioness". The author has been empowered enough to feel herself responsible for other oppressed females of her society. She is willing to participate in social life of her community and enjoys her altered status which was reached through individuation.

Conclusion:

Carl Jung wrote his autobiography. Describing his life, he simultaneously discussed genre peculiarities of life-writings. The paper discussed women self-narratives from the hero-archetype perspective of Mythological criticism. Analysis of a number of autobiographical writings revealed common features with hero archetypes and motives in women's life-writings. The second type of hero archetypes, initiation hero motives, was given a special attention as an illuminating model of self-analysis which frequently takes place in women's autobiographies. Jungian division of initiation hero motives into stages also open new perspectives in analysis of self-identity in autobiographies. The author goes through separation, transformation and return enabling her to look at self in retrospect and from outside. This perspective is analytical and revealing as it helps the author understand her own motives in life. This approach is illuminating for the readers as well, because the life motives which are transferred into the motives in autobiographies can be explicit pictures of women's identities in diverse societies, which cannot be found in any other writings of art or social sciences.

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