

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL GENRE AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS A FORM OF REVEALING THE THEME OF CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

RUZAN GHAZARYAN* 
Yerevan State University

This article explores the principle of autobiographical writing in Russian literature during the transition from Romanticism to Realism, focusing on key works by Alexander Pushkin and Mikhail Lermontov, as well as later examples from Charles Dickens, Leo Tolstoy, Mark Twain, and J.D. Salinger. It argues that the construction of autobiographical narratives not only reflects the authors' personal experiences but also serves as a lens through which broader societal attitudes—particularly regarding childhood—are examined and critiqued. The novelty of this study lies in its comparative analysis of how different literary traditions grapple with the theme of childhood as both a source of innocence and a site of conflict. By investigating the evolution of autobiographical elements, the article highlights the complexities of character construction and narrative form across cultures. Key problems addressed include the persistent societal attitudes towards children and the moral implications of these views as reflected in literature. The study aims to elucidate how the autobiographical genre serves as a vehicle for exploring identity, innocence, and the tensions between individual experience and societal norms. Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to the understanding of the interplay between autobiographical writing and thematic development in literature, revealing how the personal is intricately linked to the collective consciousness of a given era.

Key words: *autobiographical writing, Russian literature, romanticism, realism, childhood, character construction, societal norms, identity, moral development*

Introduction

Among the diverse literary genres and forms examined in this study, the autobiographical genre stands out as particularly intriguing and analytical, as it best unveils the theme of childhood. Within this genre, childhood is understood not only as an ‘inner’ process of self-awareness (‘act’), as seen in lyric poetry, but also within a broader existential framework, examined from multiple perspectives. However, the relationship between the theme and the genre does not emerge instantaneously. It is the

* **Ruzan Ghazaryan** – PhD, Associate Professor, Chairperson of YSU Department of Translation Studies
Ռուզան Դազարյան – փ.գ.թ., դոցենտ, ԵՊՀ թարգմանության տեսության և պրակտիկայի ամբիոնի վարիչ

Рузан Газарян – к.ф.н., доцент, заведующая кафедрой теории и практики перевода ЕГУ
Էլ. փոստ՝ ghazaryanruzan@ysu.am <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3929-9612>



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result of a lengthy historical process. The themes of childhood and autobiography develop and manifest separately over time. One could argue that their connection was solidified to a significant degree in the 18th century. In the following century, it became an important tool for realist writers to illustrate the moral positions of their adolescent protagonists. By the 20th century, when ‘autobiographical writing’ emerged as a prominent trend in literature, the relationship between the theme of childhood and the autobiographical narrative (or novel, or short story) grew increasingly complex. The established ‘genre-thematic’ structure became an ideal means for expressing the stark conflicts of an individual in formation and a society in profound crisis. Given that this genre occupies a crucial place in the artistic framework of 20th-century literature, it is worth looking into the history of ‘autobiography’ as both a literary principle and genre while also elucidating its approach to the theme of childhood.

The Evolution of the Autobiographical Genre

First and foremost, it is essential to clarify the concept of ‘autobiography’. The term ‘autobiography’ (from the Greek ‘autos’ meaning self, ‘bios’ meaning life, and ‘grapho’ meaning I write) indicates a form of biography wherein the primary protagonist is the author themselves. However, regarding narrative form, the author does not always directly present their perspective. Indeed, it can be said that classical literature is significantly characterized by the third-person expression of the authorial ‘I’ (as seen in the works of Dickens, Tolstoy, and others), which is explicable by the authors’ artistic intentions. Typically, when discussing documentary autobiography (or works written with a documentary purpose), it is generally composed in the first person and encompasses the greater part of the author’s life, often focusing on childhood and adolescence.

If we consider the autobiographical genre and the desire to depict one’s own life from a historical perspective, it is important to note that, despite the Greek origins of the term, the phenomenon of autobiography fully developed only relatively recently. It is worth noting that the ancient period has provided us with several works of autobiographical nature, among which one must mention the *Commentaries* of Gaius Julius Caesar.

The autobiographical genre is founded on the combination of descriptive narration and the quest for self-analysis. The second component (self-analysis) can be traced in the epistolary heritage of certain ancient authors, in the prophetic books of the Old Testament, and more prominently in the letters of New Testament apostles (especially Paul). However, it must be noted that autobiography encompasses more than mere self-analysis. As a literary creation, it must possess a narrative structure.

How has autobiography evolved as a literary genre? In its historical trajectory, three phases can be distinguished, which are not necessarily interconnected or sequential. These phases correspond to periods of significant historical development, particularly times of notable social upheaval and revolutions. In such contexts, individuals, particularly certain prominent figures, feel a powerful need for self-expression, compelling them to create genuinely significant works.

The first phase of the development of autobiography (considering the two components characteristic of the genre—narration and self-analysis) coincides with the transition from the ancient world to the Middle Ages. The inception of the

autobiographical genre's first phase is associated with the name of Augustine of Hippo. His unique work, *Confessions*, composed of thirteen books, forms the foundation of the psychological autobiography genre, although it does not fully fit within the boundaries of the established genre. Initially conceived as an autobiography, *Confessions* incorporates many other narrative traditions, including the tradition of public penance, which was prevalent among the early Christians.

The next significant figure in the history of the autobiographical genre is Pierre Abélard (1079-1142), marking the end of the previously mentioned period. His renowned work *The Story of My Misfortunes*, along with the famous correspondence with his lover and nun Héloïse, had a profound impact on many writers of the Renaissance and modern era. *The Story of My Misfortunes*, written between 1132 and 1135, takes the form of a 'letter' directed to a friend (a genre known from the correspondence of Seneca and Cicero). It could also be said that *The Story of My Misfortunes* is akin to the 'tragic' elegies of Ovid, incorporating various elements of treatise, sermon and confession. The essential difference is that, unlike Augustine, the author of *The Story of My Misfortunes* does not aim for repentance but rather seeks to portray the dual nature of his life—on one hand, as an exemplary figure of a persecuted and pursued Christian, almost a saint (notably, the author compares himself to the contemporary persecuted saint Jerome), and on the other hand, as an expression of God's righteous punishment for pride and desire.

The Renaissance can be regarded as the second phase in the evolution of autobiography, during which the genre reached a qualitatively new level. This advancement was facilitated by the works of Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571, *The Life of Benvenuto*) and Giovanni Battista Cardano (1501-1576, *My Life*), as well as those of Michel de Montaigne, Erasmus of Rotterdam and John Bunyan, all of which feature rich autobiographical elements. Each of these authors' autobiographies possesses distinctive traits. For instance, while Augustine of Hippo originally focused on the inner life, Cellini emphasized and highlighted his surrounding environment, as well as his own artistic endeavors, reflecting the spirit of Renaissance self-centeredness.

Cardano and Montaigne excel in creating psychological self-portraits in their autobiographies, although their narratives do not particularly stand out in terms of intrigue. For example, Cardano emphasizes the classification of essential human qualities and their reflection on character. In his works, Montaigne presents excellent character sketches, albeit without a clearly articulated system.

The Age of Enlightenment represents the third phase, during which autobiography as a literary genre flourished. A quintessential representative of the autobiographical genre from this era is Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose literary legacy is particularly rich in this respect. His autobiographical works include *Confessions* (1782-1789) and *The Reveries of a Solitary Walker* (1802). In these texts, Rousseau candidly describes himself and all aspects of his life, portraying reality without embellishment. The factuality of events and the reflective spirit in these works led to their public readings being halted, and a ban was placed on the publication of *Confessions* (Vertsman 1961).

What accounts for the still-controversial nature of this factuality? The author provides the answer: "I am not made like any one I have been acquainted with, perhaps like no one in existence" (Rousseau 2017). Here, there is no trace of Augustine's humility. However, this also contrasts with Abélard's self-description, who, despite his

emphasis on self-assertion, does not consider himself unique and instead asserts the opposite: he is a 'typical' Christian saint.

Thus, in the new era, the individual becomes more personalized than in the Renaissance (it is important to note that Rousseau belongs not only to the Enlightenment but also to the sentimentalism that preceded Romanticism). This singular individual represents terra incognita, the exploration of which requires the authenticity of events and narratives, including those that do not conform to the moralistic viewpoints of the time.

The most notable autobiographies from the Enlightenment and subsequent periods belong to figures such as Benjamin Franklin, Giacomo Casanova, Edward Gibbon, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, François-René de Chateaubriand, Sir Walter Scott, Stendhal, Li Hanting, Thomas de Quincey, John Henry Newman, George Berkeley, George Sand, John Stuart Mill, Charles Darwin, Leo Tolstoy, Friedrich Nietzsche, and many others. We will not delve deeply into their works, especially since almost all belong to the documentary genre rather than the artistic autobiographies we are particularly interested in.

At the beginning of the 20th century, significant discoveries in psychology led to increased attention toward the individual, particularly regarding the theory of unconscious mental mechanisms. This set the stage for the emergence of the fourth wave of autobiographies. It is during this phase that a considerable number of autobiographical works were written, remarkably exceeding the total output of all previous periods combined. The two world wars and numerous other socio-political upheavals prompted unprecedented interest in the exploration of human traits from an autobiographical perspective.

A defining characteristic of the fourth phase of autobiographies is the difficulty in isolating a specific type that exemplifies the self-narration typical of the time. Without elaboration, we can simply list some of the most characteristic autobiographers of the 20th century: Gertrude Adams, G. K. Chesterton, Theodore Dreiser, Havelock Ellis, André Gide, Maxim Gorky, Henry James, Mark Twain, H.G. Wells, James Joyce, Jean-Paul Sartre, and others. Most autobiographies from this period are written in the form of documentary reviews or analytical diaries.

It is important to add that the development of the documentary autobiographical genre and its diverse forms in the previous two centuries of artistic literature contributed significantly to the formulation of autobiographical principles. Since modern times, the boundaries between documentary autobiography and artistic autobiographical creation have begun to gradually dissolve. Documentary writing became a favored style in the artistic autobiographical prose of the Romantic period. The artistic principles of narration simultaneously influenced documentary autobiography, leading to a greater prevalence of generalization and typification in character portrayal.

The examination of the developmental stages of documentary autobiography illustrates how the genre of autobiographical artistic prose has formed. Until the 19th century, it essentially did not exist. Autobiography had not yet been recognized as a means of artistic typification. With the emergence of Romanticism in the 19th century, when the spiritual characteristics of the individual elevated him above society—viewed not in a social-mass context but in the uniqueness of the individual—the principle of

autobiography begins to be developed as a means of artistic representation, ultimately becoming one of the tools for constructing artistic images.

Autobiographical Narratives in Realism and Beyond

For a long time, remaining on the margins of the literary-artistic system, documentary autobiography transforms from a peripheral genre into a leading artistic genre. It should be noted that autobiographical writing, as an artistic principle of self-understanding, was initially much more effectively developed in poetry during the Romantic period than in prose. In English literature, it is enough to recall Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and A. Tennyson's *In Memoriam* in this context. The initial 'brew' in which the principle of artistic autobiography was simmering included the lyricism of European, Russian, and Armenian Romantic poets (elegies, epistolary and love poems, diary and reminiscence-type poems, lyrical confessions and farewells, even epigrams, etc.), where the biographical factor, being an inseparable component of Romanticism's artistic system, creates a parallel corresponding to the author's personal life, following the significant dictum of one of the founders of Russian Romanticism, K. Batyushkov: "Live as you write, and write as you live" (Batyushkov 1977).

Undoubtedly, the preceding periods' lyricism has always been considered a mirror of the author's soul (recalling Archilochus, Horace, Villon), but this quality reached its highest expression precisely during the Romantic era when the tragic consciousness of the romantic individual, deeply dramatizing the question of the meaning of personal life, found no more suitable form of self-expression than lyric poetry. A classical example of this is found in the lyricism of Byron, Poe, Baratynsky, Lermontov and Duryan.

It is known that the role of Romanticism was exceptional in preparing the ground for realistic prose. Thus, from the poetry of Romanticism, the issue of the individual shifted to a new level, where it began to be examined in a broader social context. Realist writers borrowed the principle of psychology from the philosophical lyricism of Romanticism, which was developed in realistic novels and novellas as the internal mechanism of the hero's 'self-development'. From the romantic elegy and lyrical confession, mature realistic prose adopted a reflective and autobiographical quality.

The principle of autobiographicality is brilliantly manifested during the transition from Romanticism to Realism. This is clearly evident in two works of Russian literature: Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* and Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time*. In both works, there is an Author's character with a specially constructed profile who enters into complex relationships with the main hero, who also has authorial traits, yet the latter, due to several emphasized differences in his main traits, seems to deliberately yield to the Author (Lotman 2003). The use of the principle of autobiography does not necessarily mean that credible events from the author's life are present in the work. For instance, in Pushkin's works, this principle often turns into 'deception' or mystification (*The Captain's Daughter*) or even in documentary references and travel writings (*Journey to Erzurum*). In some cases, this principle operates as a direct means of concealing authorship (the desire to be an author), while in other instances, it has sufficiently conventional manifestations, not because the author needed to hide himself. However, in both cases, autobiographicality is incorporated into the text's artistic fabric and continues to 'work' in various ways even when the author's 'deception' is revealed (ibid. 2014-227).

As it is evident that the autobiographical genre begins to form in artistic literature during the Romantic period (in previous phases, as mentioned, the documentary autobiography genre prevailed), it also seems clear that a qualitatively entirely new phase in the development of the theme of childhood begins with Romanticism. What explains this circumstance? Everything that appears evident in the aesthetic and moral realm regarding the perception and evaluation of the child's image and the theme of childhood can be confidently attributed to the notions that have been imposed on us since the Enlightenment and Romanticism. Until then, attitudes toward children (which also indicates the theme of childhood) were entirely different. Here is what pediatrician V. V. Arkhipov asserts in his essay *Children in Russian Literature or the Pediatrician's Reading*: "Adults' attitudes towards children have never experienced a 'golden age'. N. Karamzin (1818), in his work *History of the Russian State*, recounts the customs of Ancient Russia stating that there, every mother had the right to kill her newborn daughter if the family was already numerous. Centuries pass, yet the strictness of attitudes toward children persists. Let us refer to the memories of Englishwoman Elizabeth Jastis dated 1737: "On the ice... a structure rises around the ice floe, and people come and go from all sides, often to drown their children in that icy water. Although during this procedure some children drown, the Russians hardly pay attention to this and console themselves by saying, 'They went to the Almighty God.'" (Arkhipov).

Judging by literature, no less poignant examples of attitudes toward children can be found even today in lower and materially deprived social environments. Thus, the notion of orphanhood and the emotional attitude towards children and childhood are entirely new phenomena. The child becomes an object of focused attention in the 18th century with the intensification of issues related to personal development and education. During this time, the most prominent educational ideas stemmed from conceptions about the environment, which significantly influences the individual—whether positively or negatively. J. J. Rousseau's doctrine was built on two principles: natural (primitive, correct, organic) and social (a source of evil, artificiality). The child, in many ways, is still part of the kingdom of nature, and to develop the corresponding qualities within him, Rousseau believed he should be educated in the village, in the embrace of nature (*Emile, Or Treatise on Education*). Thus, the author himself, after childhood and adolescence, can better resist the corrupting temptations of urban life.

The dichotomy of 'natural-artificial', which often corresponds to 'village-city', also implies the 'children-adults' contrast within society. And these moral guidelines were adopted and reworked by many Romantics. The aforementioned dichotomies were carried to extremes within their moral framework. Thus, childhood began to be perceived as a time of happy ignorance and, in contrast to the analytical reasoning that exhausts adult humans, as a period of synthetic, figurative thinking. Moreover, the Romantics were already far removed from previous simplistic representations that viewed humans as a 'tabula rasa'. Their uniqueness and spiritual vocation were increasingly felt by the Romantic hero from early childhood. Therefore, in the literature of Romanticism, the image of the child began to be embedded within the semantic fields of concepts such as 'innocence', 'vulnerability', 'purity', 'divinity', 'truthfulness', 'sincerity' and so on. It is evident that it is precisely in Romanticism where the artistic genre of autobiography and the principles of autobiographicality intersect with the theme of childhood, acquiring

entirely new meanings. Here we should seek the foundations of numerous novels with autobiographical elements, in which the heroes are children during the Realism era.

In accordance with their artistic methodology, realist writers further invigorated the autobiographical genre. In their works, the principle of autobiographicality found appropriate expression within the novel genre. The formation of the hero, as a methodological principle of character construction, led to the theme of childhood and adolescence occupying a special place within the autobiographical genre. Let us pause briefly to characterize a few examples that hold foundational significance for us. First, it is necessary to briefly describe Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1850): "The story of the life of an individual"—David is the character most dear to Dickens. He 'transmits' many episodes from his own biography (particularly the story of his difficult childhood) to his hero. The struggle against the routine of life that exhausts David brings about a state of despair; however, in the end, it becomes an irreplaceable experience that shapes and nurtures his individuality. In the story of Copperfield, as Chesterton aptly notes, there are "dim half-holidays." There are pure heroes and villains there. Good enters into direct conflict with evil and life, gaining a melodramatic interpretation, rises to its 'magnificent representations' (Willson 1975: 68).

In the Dickensian novel, a stable typological feature is the narrator's disconnection from his childhood and family, which comes from the tradition of Augustine's *Confessions*. Through moral explorations and the trauma of past wounds, the past is recreated through memories and recollections. Looking back at his adolescence, a character is born in the narrative of David Copperfield that is barely recognizable. The author seems to suggest that by altering individuality, time sanctifies and redefines the protagonist's narrative. This is one of the most significant discoveries of the author that foreshadows the artistic solutions of 20th-century writers, such as Proust and Woolf.

Copperfield's biography is created as an unyielding faith in the ultimate triumph of good against the backdrop of ever-growing disillusionment, as the hopes of his youth gradually fade away. The artistic talent, which does not reveal itself immediately, compels the hero to perceive both 'experience' and 'humiliation' with acute sensitivity—both the customs of slum neighborhoods and the established norms in legal offices, where he learns practical life lessons, as well as the skills of parliamentary orators. Finally overcoming the debilitating awkwardness, he becomes a journalist, writing argumentative articles for a morning publication.

The conclusion of the hero's story is idyllic (finding happiness in union with Agnes Wickfield). However, the spiritual conflicts born during the 'trial' period remain unresolved, especially those related to the search for justification in life, which so often forces one to confront injustice, cruelty, violence, and the derision of the weak by the immoral cynicism of the unpunished, etc. The memories of the days when David felt the shattering of his hopes and complete abandonment are indelible. The happy resolution is perceived as conditional.

Looking ahead a bit, let's note an interesting similarity between Dickensian autobiographical and Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. Salinger's hero, Holden Caulfield, begins his confession with a request that readers not search for "all that David Copperfield kind of crap" in him (Salinger 1991: 1). Yet he is destined to experience the same shock of disillusionment that Dickens's hero so painfully endures, thus indirectly confirming that Copperfield's narrative about hopes, wishes, failures, and successes

recreates not only his own life but also the spiritual struggles that recur from generation to generation.

A classic example of an analytical autobiographical novel can be found in Tolstoy's trilogy *Childhood* (1852), *Boyhood* (1852-1854) and *Youth* (1855-1857). Among the many similar works in Russian and European realistic literature, this work stands out precisely because it has served as a model for many writers of the 19th and 20th centuries. Regarding the moral issues addressed in Tolstoy's trilogy, let's discuss the main principles of character construction in Nikolenka Irtenev.

As in Dickens's novel, here the authorial 'I' is expressed through a mediating character. In both cases, this testifies to the fact that the authors sought to express something typical through their 'I'. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the following testimony related to the publication of Tolstoy's *Childhood*. Nekrasov notes in *Sovremennik* that the title *My Childhood Story* contradicts the idea of the work. In the notes of the first part of the trilogy, Tolstoy formulates the "main idea" of his work as follows: "To God and fellow beings, love is powerful in childhood. In adolescence, these feelings are drowned out by desire, self-assertion, and pride, while in youth, life transforms these feelings" (Tolstoy 1969: 433).

For Tolstoy, childhood plays an exceptional role in human development. He notes that in all times and for all people, a child represents an example of innocence, purity, goodness, truth, and beauty. Man is born perfect. This is a great truth articulated by Rousseau, and like a stone, it remains stable and true (Tolstoy 1969). Tolstoy values two qualities of a child's soul: the natural and sincere purity of moral feeling and the ability to restore harmony with the world lightly and unconstrained. Throughout life, one must preserve these qualities of childhood knowledge, for they encapsulate the limitless possibilities and resources for moral self-improvement. However, the mature world constantly tests that purity and sincerity, especially when they find themselves in Moscow and fall into the circles of high society, which is based on external, superficial glitter, false politeness, and conventions. In Nikolenka's early days, it seems to him that people do not live here but rather play some kind of false game. However, inevitably, he too becomes embroiled in that maelstrom, and his moral sense begins to betray him.

Adolescence is an extremely painful period in a person's life. The adolescent's soul is shaken by collapse. He loses the immediacy and sincerity of moral feeling, which is followed by a yearning to restore the harmony and integrity that have been lost in his communication with others. Deprived of protective guardianship, the adolescent's inner world is exposed only to negative feelings, which amplify the tragedy of his mental experiences. The adolescent is painfully self-absorbed and excessively centered on his feelings, having lost trust in the world. In this reality, the worldly influence on his unprotected soul is especially devastating, draining the life-giving springs of love. Instead of kind, unforgettable Karl Ivanovich and Natalia Savishna, during adolescence Nikolenka is surrounded by people preoccupied with their own sorrows and ailments, such as his grandmother and father. The benevolent Karl Ivanovich is replaced by indifferent teachers—"pompous jerks"—who seem to have a particular intention to humiliate and harm the children. Nevertheless, the moral feeling does not diminish even in such unfavorable circumstances; adolescence gives way to youth. The first sign of this in Nikolenka is the awakening of friendship towards Dmitri Nekhlyudov, which brings the hero out of the darkness of his adolescent years.

Adolescence resembles a rebirth and the renewal of spring nature. It is a unique return to childhood, albeit more mature, having passed through the crucible of life's harsh realities, with new opportunities opening up for adolescence. During adolescence, a 'new perspective' on the world is born, whose essence is the conscious desire to restore the feeling of unity with people lost during adolescence. For Nikolenka Irtenev, this is the time for realizing the program of moral self-improvement, which he eagerly shares with Nekhlyudov. The friends dream of eliminating injustice and evil from people's lives through that program.

The discussed works are classic examples of the genre of artistic autobiography, revealing the themes of childhood and adolescence. They have greatly influenced the future fate of the genre. Since its establishment in the first half of the 19th century, the genre of artistic autobiography has been accepted as a device that could ardently create the 'autobiography' of the hero-narrator, rather than that of the author himself. Thus, Pushkin's Greven portrays his life in *Family Diary* (written by a fictional but genuine relative) and depicts the life of a young Russian nobleman in the 1870s. The framework of the autobiographical genre begins to spread to other narrative structures.

Salinger's novel, written in 1951 during the post-war crisis in American society regarding the relationships between generations, belongs to this kind of 'autobiographies' and despite the numerous unique characteristics of the main character's personality, it can nonetheless be considered a vivid example, akin to Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884).

The astonishing organic unity of *The Catcher in the Rye* is that the world here is presented through the lens of a child's perspective, a viewpoint that sharply distinguishes any falsity, no matter how it may be cloaked. The author even invented a term that was used for a long time among American youth—'phoniness'. In this sense, the main character, Holden Caulfield, is the direct descendant of Huck Finn. The difference is that while the 19th-century wanderer could gain the freedom he dreamed of in "Indian territories," that is, in places untouched by civilization, a century later, to break away from the deceptive world of adults, he must first overcome the barriers within his own soul, even though he dreams of escaping to a long-lost West.

Huck Finn is a homeless drifter, the son of a drunkard, "lazy, uneducated, useless" who, despite what all the mothers in the town think, is a significant figure for their children. He lives under a bridge, and in good weather, under the open sky. For him, the highest value is freedom. The main plot points of the narrative are as follows: fleeing from the widow Douglas who has taken him in, and later from his father, the young hero encounters Jim, a runaway slave, and they travel together by raft down the Mississippi. His story concludes with a meeting with his old friend, Tom Sawyer, and the news that Miss Watson has passed away, but in her will, she has freed Jim. As we see, both in terms of plot and character traits, there are significant differences between Twain's and Salinger's main characters, yet they are quite understandable in light of the different eras and moods.

Huck almost ignores the past in his narratives. He lives entirely by the principle of 'here and now' and his character is revealed to the extent of the events that unfold, whose rhythm is given a fable-like quality (here, traveling down the river becomes the fundamental device of the fable). This is how it differs from all autobiographical novels. Here, there is no nostalgia for childhood but rather a rejection of moral lessons. The text

appears as a direct account of experiences, quite different from what the adult consciousness creates through the prism of memory. In Salinger, on the other hand, memory works in an entirely different way. The reader can feel the search for answers that the main character, Holden, is experiencing, while the adolescent's memories create an almost chronologically smooth narrative flow, filled with character traits shaped in the school environment. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that Holden does not reveal the memory of his childhood as a 'past' for him, it is merely a gap, a collection of moments devoid of connections that bind them together into a coherent narrative.

There is also a common thread between Huckleberry Finn and Holden Caulfield: they stand out, sometimes even isolate themselves from their peers. Thus, the orphaned teenager Huck, who has never known childhood, cannot engage in play like his contemporaries, although he has preserved the childlike simplicity that contrasts with the cruel world of adults. However, unlike Holden, Twain's hero does not ponder whether the established social order is correct. Huck's refusal to accept, and often to comprehend, the necessity of going to church, living according to prescribed norms, and dressing neatly stems not from rebellious impulses—characteristic of Salinger's hero—but from his existential incongruence with the world of adults and its values. As a typical backwoods hero, he sees that societal barriers are not only unnecessary but also deeply alien to him.

Let's also highlight the linguistic peculiarities that connect the two heroes. The first-person narration allows Twain (as well as Salinger) to convey the hero's unique, colorful speech. The characters of Twain and Salinger, due to their strange idiosyncrasies and non-canonical personalities and worldviews, 'label' their time by identifying qualities such as social evil, falseness, and the foolishness of accepted laws.

We should also refer to Maxim Gorky's notable autobiographical trilogy: *Childhood* (1913-1914), *In the World* (1915-1916) and *My Universities* (1922). We have already noted that this specific subgenre of autobiography seems to diverge during its development: the 'Dickensian' prototype transforms into a 'Twainian' one, meaning that childhood, presented as the initial phase of a hero searching for their place in society, becomes a phenomenon fundamentally opposed to the adult world. It is no longer merely a 'phase' but a separate, self-contained world. Twain's novel has significantly influenced 20th-century American literature. "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called 'Huckleberry Finn'", noted Ernest Hemingway in 1935 (Zasurskiy 1987: 5). The 'Twainian' prototype has flourished in American literature due to the societal and spiritual crises of that era. This prototype (certainly traversed by different historical paths) has also worked somewhat in Western European literature. Alongside this, the 'Dickensian' prototype has similarly developed. Regarding Eastern Europe, particularly Russia and the literature of other nations in its political and cultural sphere (especially Armenian), the prevailing literary form was that which came from Dickens and Tolstoy. Gorky's autobiographical trilogy is located on this line.

Although the Dickensian and Twainian prototypes interpret the theme of childhood in various (even opposite) ways, they are connected by certain commonalities. This is explained not only by the shared roots of the theme but also by their interaction in the 20th century. For instance, if we compare the works of Twain and Salinger, we will see a significant difference: in Huck's value system, books as a source of knowledge hold no place, whereas for Holden, they are inherently tied to issues of sincerity and truth, the

challenge of understanding life. This aspect highlights the vital questions and the dramatic nature of the adolescent hero's condition in the 20th century.

Childhood is characterized in both prototypes in a similar way: positively, as an opposition to the external world. Essentially, 'the natural man' is contrasted with 'the anti-human society'. This 'natural man' is a child not yet engulfed by the societal 'machine' and the problem is to resist it. The Dickensian line is primarily characterized by a positive resolution: the difficulties of life allow for spiritual growth; one just needs to position themselves to understand life. The Twainian line features an 'illusory' positive resolution that leads the hero into another, exotic, imaginative world. The hero escapes from recognizing what is foreign to their inner world. In both prototypes, paradoxical moments exist: the demand to understand life does not compel the Dickensian hero to constantly change their environment, while the Twainian hero is forced to endlessly move in the external space instead of engaging in internal explorations. If the first is primarily characterized by a realistic approach, the second is inherently a romantic rebellion. The first is fundamentally alien to 'rebellion' (that is, the ambitions to change social life, to adapt it to one's own demands), while the second is about recognition (it is not accidental that the romantic hero typically appears as an 'omniscient' figure). These genre-specific characteristics allow us to situate the material not only within the mentioned 'prototypes' but also within different 'prototypes' across two countries. This creates an opportunity to reveal the transitional characteristics of the genre's subtypes that need to be resolved.

Conclusion

The evolution of the autobiographical genre reflects not only the personal narratives of individual authors but also broader literary and societal shifts. From its origins in historical and religious texts to its artistic transformation in the Romantic and Realist periods, autobiography has served as a powerful means of self-exploration and cultural critique. The theme of childhood, once overlooked or treated with indifference, gained prominence in the 18th and 19th centuries, becoming a focal point for authors seeking to explore the moral and psychological development of their characters. As demonstrated through the works of Dickens, Tolstoy, Twain, and Salinger, autobiographical narratives provide a lens through which the tensions between personal experience and societal expectations are examined. Whether through the structured moral journeys of Dickensian protagonists or the rebellious spirit of Twainian figures, these texts illustrate the complexities of identity formation in different cultural and historical contexts. The autobiographical genre, while deeply personal, ultimately serves as a mirror to collective consciousness, reflecting the ever-evolving relationship between the individual and society.

ՌՈՒԶԱՆ ՂԱԶԱՐՅԱՆ – Ինքնակենսագրական ժանրը և ինքնակենսագրությունը որպես մանկության և պատանեկության թեման բացահայտելու միջոց – Հոդվածում ուսումնասիրվում են համաշխարհային գրականության մեջ ռոմանտիզմից ռեալիզմի անցման ժամանակաշրջանում ինքնակենսագրական ժանրի սկզբունքները: Քննության են ենթարկվել Ալեքսանդր Պուշկինի, Միխայիլ Լերմոնտովի, Զարկ Դիքենսի, Լև Տոլստոյի, Մարկ Տվենի և Զ. Դ. Սելինջերի առանցքային աշխատություններից օրինակ-

ներ: Հատկանշական է, որ ինքնակենսագրական ժանրի պատումները ոչ միայն արտացոլում են հեղինակի անձնական փորձը, այլև միջոց են ցույց տալու մանուկների աշխարհի ունեցած հասարակության վերաբերմունքը: Հետազոտության նորույթը համեմատական վերլուծության միջոցով անդրադարձն է մանկության թեմային. փորձ է արվել ցույց տալու, թե գրական տարբեր ուղղություններում ինչպես է ներկայացվում մանկությունը, որտեղ և՛ անմեղության դրսևորում կա, և՛ ներքին բախումների տարածք է: Անդրադարձ է կատարվում ինքնակենսագրական ժանրի առանցքային տարրերի զարգացման օրինաչափություններին: Հոդվածում մատնանշվում են տարբեր մշակույթներում կերպարների կերտման, ինչպես նաև ինքնակենսագրական պատմի կառուցվածքային առանձնահատկությունները: Քննարկվում են մանուկների նկատմամբ հասարակության մեջ արմատացած վերաբերմունքը և գրականության մեջ այդ վերաբերմունքի բարոյական դրսևորումները: Հետազոտության նպատակն է պարզաբանել, թե ինչպես է ինքնակենսագրական ժանրը օգնում վեր հանելու ինքնության և անմեղության խնդիրները, անձնական փորձի ու հասարակական նորմերի միջև գոյություն ունեցող հակասությունը: Աշխատությունը կօժանդակի գրականության մեջ ինքնակենսագրական ժանրի և թեմայի փոխազդեցությունների ուսումնասիրությանը ցույց տալով, թե ինչպես է անձնականը անքակտելիորեն շաղկապված տվյալ դարաշրջանի հավաքական գիտակցականի հետ:

Բանալի բառեր – *ինքնակենսագրական ժանրի ստեղծագործություններ, ռուս գրականություն, ռոմանտիզմ, ռեալիզմ, մանկություն, կերպարի ստեղծում, հասարակական նորմեր, ինքնություն, բարոյական զարգացում*

РУЗАН КАЗАРЯН – *Автобиографический жанр и автобиография как форма раскрытия темы детства и юности.* – Статья посвящена анализу автобиографического письма в русской литературе периода перехода от романтизма к реализму. Основное внимание уделено ключевым произведениям Александра Пушкина и Михаила Лермонтова, а также более поздним примерам из творчества Чарльза Диккенса, Льва Толстого, Марка Твена и Дж.Д. Сэлинджера. Исследование показывает, что автобиографические нарративы не только отражают личный опыт авторов, но и служат инструментом для анализа и критики более широких общественных установок, особенно тех, которые касаются детства. Новизна работы заключается в сравнительном анализе того, как различные литературные традиции осмысливают детство как источник невинности и одновременно как арену конфликта. Исследуя эволюцию автобиографических элементов, статья подчеркивает сложность построения персонажей и повествовательной формы в разных культурах. Среди ключевых проблем, рассматриваемых в статье, выделяются устойчивые общественные установки по отношению к детям и моральные последствия этих взглядов, отражаемые в литературе. Целью исследования является выяснение того, как автобиографический жанр служит средством для исследования идентичности, невинности и напряженности между личным опытом и общественными нормами. В конечном итоге, работа направлена на расширение понимания взаимосвязи между автобиографическим письмом и тематическим развитием в литературе, демонстрируя, как личное тесно связано с коллективным сознанием конкретной эпохи.

Ключевые слова: *автобиографическое письмо, русская литература, романтизм, реализм, детство, построение персонажей, общественные нормы, идентичность, нравственное развитие.*

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