"The Literary Interview as Autobiography"

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Abstract

This article examines how interviews with writers and artists operate as forms of autobiography, especially when collected and published in books. It briefly traces the history of the interview in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, alongside precursors in the earlier forms of dialogues and table talk. It argues that books of collected interviews, with examples including Frédéric Lefèvre’s Une heure avec... series (1924–33) and the Paris Review “Writers at Work” volumes, offer colloquial portraits which have distinctive qualities compared to more ‘written’ autobiographies. Avant-garde writers and artists in particular have taken to the art of the interview from the 1950s onwards with the advent of the tape recorder, in an international tradition of volumes outlined here including Richard Burgin’s Conversations with Jorge Luis Borges (1969), Pierre Cabanne’s Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp (1971), David Sylvester’s Interviews with Francis Bacon (1975–1987), Marguerite Duras’s Practicalities (1987), and J.G. Ballard’s Extreme Metaphors (2012). Chance, improvisation, and edited spontaneity emerge as attributes of the interview as a form of autobiography. Interviews, it is suggested, not only create flexible, immediate autobiographies of their subjects, but offer a dynamic mode of criticism, a space for the free play of ideas.

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Jerome Boyd Maunsell is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in the Department of English and Creative Writing at Kingston University, London, and prior to that a Visiting Research Fellow at the Centre for Life-Writing Research, King’s College London. He is the author of the biography Susan Sontag (2014), published by Reaktion Books in the Critical Lives series. The main focus of his work is on Modern and Contemporary literature, especially the interactions between fiction and the forms of life writing.
Category: Literary autobiographies

This is a category for autobiographies or memoirs by literary figures (known for works other than the autobiography), or those in large part concerned with them, for example as partners. See also: Category: Works about writing.

Contents. Top. 0–9. A b C D e f g h I j k L M n o p q r s t u V w X y z. Pages in category "Literary autobiographies". The following 120 pages are in this category, out of 120 total. Autobiography defined and explained with examples. Autobiography is an account of the life story of the book’s author. In an autobiography, the author attempts to capture important elements of his life. He not only deals with his career, and growth as a person, he also uses emotions and facts related to family life, relationships, education, travels, sexuality, and any types of inner struggles. A memoir is a record of memories, and particular events that have taken place in the author’s life. In fact, it is the telling of a story or an event from his life; an account that does not tell the full record of a life. Autobiography samples will make it easy for the writer to organize thoughts. To get you started, learn first the following types of written works: Dramas or scripts Usually presented on stage or screen as the venue, this type is in script formats. Graphic novels This new genre of novels is unique in the sense that they use drawn panels to convey a true story. Simply said, it’s a novel in comic-strip format. Reflect on the content of your autobiography template You surely have learned many lessons during the course of your life. It would be nice to relay your desires, intentions, feelings of joy and loss, and more you’ve gained in your life. You can include these lessons intermittently throughout the story. Yet autobiography was not classified as a genre within itself until the late eighteenth century. Robert Southey coined the term in 1809 to describe the work of a Portuguese poet (Anderson 1, 7; Berryman 71). In his book, Inside Out, E. Stuart Bates offers a functional definition of autobiography as “a narrative of the past of a person by the person concerned” (Bates 2). That definition, however, is too broad for some literary critics. Many, such as Lejeune, a scholar on autobiography, wish to define the genre more narrowly.