

Autofiction

Autofiction blurs the lines between an author's real-life experiences and invention.

Autofiction was first coined by the French writer Serge Doubrovsky in the 1977 to define his novel *Fils*.

Uses biographical elements in a process of fictionalization. It appropriates “documentary evidence” (photography, objects, drawings, oral testimonies, events) in different ways.

In literature: Autobiography, Doubrovsky wrote, was a privilege reserved for the important people in the world, at the end of their lives: romantic, even narcissistic?

In film: A tendency among some filmmakers to put themselves into their films, to construct narratives about themselves, and even fictionalize those narratives. It can use actors, alter-egos, or apply these techniques to other characters than the self.

Autofiction

It becomes a **commentary on selfhood, but also on memory and history**. It might question all these aspects.

Production of this kind also raises **ethical questions** due to its strange and unclear configurations of fiction and non-fiction.

Two processes at work: on the one hand the rise of the first person film (more latter). On the other hand, the questioning of history, memory and genres conventions characteristic of postmodernism.

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Example:

Novelist Lily Tuck: At the beginning of my autobiographical novel, *The Double Life of Liliane*, there is a scene that illustrates this kind of writing. On her way alone to visit her divorced father in Rome, nine-year-old Liliane steals a four-leaf clover keychain from a shop at Shannon Airport during the plane's layover. Now I don't remember whether this actually happened or whether I have made it up, but the point is that, at the time and due to circumstances— feeling abandoned and frightened—Liliane could easily have stolen the four-leaf clover keychain as an act of rebellion. In any case, the theft felt right to me, the writer.

Autofiction

The author of auto-fiction makes a pact with him or herself not to lie and not to invent for the sake of invention, but to be as honest as possible in his or her search for the truth.

Because auto-fiction does not abide by the autobiographical pact, it needs a new one that articulates to the reader that the author might not be honest, but is sincere; he will lie, but will attempt to reflect the world with justice.

Both the writers of autobiography and autobiographical fiction are after some kind of “truth” or, at best, a better understanding of their lives and of themselves.

Autofiction

Autofiction as autocritique: Autocritique and a sense of therapeutic use of the art is often perceived: the author and the critic seem to be the same figure.

Fractured subjectivity: Doubrovsky recognizes in autofiction the constitutive principle of the psychoanalytic cure: the truth of the subject is transferred unto the other (also the author?) who acts as therapist.

The death of the author: Auto-fiction and auto-critique constitutes a search for a narrative and artistic identity after the death of the author. The author is death, but it's remnants are somewhere..

So, autofiction replaces the subject's isolation (that Doubrovsky identifies in auto-biographical writing) by the subject's multiplication and, more importantly, by a multiplication of instances of auto-critique. Doubrovsky's autofictions present a conflation between therapeutic auto-analysis, aesthetic auto-critique, and theoretical auto-critique.

Autofiction

Alisa Lebow: “First Person Political”

Already inherent in the particular is some notion of the universal or what we might call ‘the collective’ wherein any appeal to individual identities always had to imply some belief or adherence to the collective.

In other words, **first person films should be neither reducible to narcissistic monologues, nor to authorial indulgences.**

In the best of cases, when a first person film-maker makes a film about his mother, her lover, her neighbourhood, his sexuality, s/he is at once speaking for and about him/herself, while speaking to and with much larger and indeed politically relevant and resonant collectivities.

Subjectivity, is always intersubjective. Seeing subjectivity as intersubjectivity to retain a notion of collectivity necessary for political action. It is the condition upon which we can make political claims: the first person plural. Not just I, but We.

Autofiction

Romina Paula on “Again Once Again”

As usual in my life, I write ideas that later on become true, and so I end up having an autobiographical work when in fact, it's life that insists on being literal and acting out what I had written.

I always ask myself how the first person works in cinema, because how does it work? The only way I could approach this first person was through fragmentation, and so I used different formats (slides with voice over, slideshows as set dressings, monologues and close to non-fiction but nevertheless fictional scenes) to translate this fragmentation into cinema language, which I'm not fluent in.

I like to think of this movie as a sort of essay on this, on how to portray one's self, and the idea of the first person. As in the novels I write, I don't think my life is particularly interesting nor heroic but that is also the exact reason why I like to portray it, because the lives of most people on earth are neither spectacular nor heroic, so I like to talk about everyday life matters.

Sources:

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Films:

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Nobody's Business (Alan Berliner, 1996) <https://aalto.kanopy.com/video/nobodys-business>

My Winnipeg (Guy Maddin, 2007) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UA0vh3SnYrU>

Tarnation (Jonathan Caouette, 2003)

Ivana the Terrible (Ivana Mladenovic, 2019)

This is Not a Film (Jafar Panahi, 2011)

Taxi Teheran (Jafar Panahi, 2015)

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Moi, Un Noir (Jean Rouch, 1958)