

ON LIFE-NARRATIVE

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Abstract

This essay takes issue with the assumption of autonomy current to the thinking on autobiography. It explores the approaches at looking into autobiography and asks how these approaches perpetuated the myth of an autonomous author. As an alternative, a sociological approach is presented as it undermines this liberal fiction. Although the paper does not provide an answer related to autonomy, it hopes that it can at least raise a question about the epistemological problem associated with libertarian concepts such as freedom and agency

In our time, life-narrative or autobiography production is a burgeoning genre in book industry. It occupies third or fourth place in best-sellers' list around the country after cookery, self-improvement and management, I think. Although not an avid reader of such genre, I am fascinated by the interest generated of it. The common assumption was that an autobiography gives us an exclusive access to the life, thought and feelings of the author. The author could be someone famous like a politician, a footballer, a master-chef, an actor, a war-survivor or could be someone infamous like a 'rebel', a mastermind-criminal and could also be a victim of various exploitations such as by family members or by Arab sheikhs. The interest does not stop with the public. Historians have used autobiography as a reference to our past. It may not necessarily be used as a sole evidence for asserting certain assumption, rather complimentary to the typical academic sources such as newspapers, public records and commissioned-reports. Nevertheless, this pointed to the importance attached to