

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Significance of the Term Autofiction in French Critical Studies and Its Reception among Arab Critics

Dr. Ghitri Karima

Abou Bekr Belkaid University – Tlemcen – Algeria

Email: rayhana.razane@yahoo.fr

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Abstract:

This article seeks to clarify and explain the concept of autofiction (Autofiction) in some French critical studies since its early emergence, as a new type of creative writing that meets ethical (Ethique) and aesthetic (Esthétique) needs. It also discusses the limited reception of this term in Arab criticism in general and Moroccan criticism in particular.

Key Words: Autofiction – French criticism – Arab criticism.

Introduction

The linguistic adventure among some ancient creators has revealed, and continues to reveal in contemporary creative movements in Arabic and non-Arabic literatures, a desire to stimulate what the creative imaginative consciousness produces in terms of images in which the freedom of imagination, the intuitions of creators, and their aspirations to explore new horizons are manifested. The study of creative imagination in poetry has been influenced by the results of philosophy, psychology, and aesthetics. Autofiction, for example, was among the outcomes of the cross-fertilization resulting from the union between creative imagination and psychology, through associative (free-flowing) writing, as will later become clear with stylistic autofiction in the works of Serge Doubrovsky.

As for the foreign word “fiction,” its equivalent in Arabic is imagination and fictionalization. Hence, some have translated “Autofiction” as self-fictionalization or self-imagination. For

example, the Moroccan researcher Al-Zahra Sidqi used the term self-fictionalization, while Habib Abdelrab Sarouri and Adnan Muhammad used the term self-imagination. This is not surprising, since the word “fiction” itself takes on several meanings in French. Among these is its use in legal language in the nineteenth century to mean representation of a thing, while its contemporary usage refers to the genre of “literary fiction” (Fiction Littéraire).

The French word “fiction” is closely associated with its intimate companion imagination, meaning imaginative faculty, and both are linked to another connotation meaning renewal, creativity, and innovation.

Laurent Jenny says that the word “Autofiction” belongs to what is called a portmanteau word (Les mots valises), suggesting a combination of autobiography and fiction, but the true nature of this combination has become subject to very diverse interpretations.

1- The emergence of the term autofiction:

The French critic Philippe Lejeune, through his multiple writings on the self “le je” and autobiography, questioned the possibility that the hero of a novel might bear the same name as the narrator. In other words, if the narrator’s name is the same as the character’s name in autobiography—this being the autobiographical pact, where reference is made to a real referent—can there be a coincidence between the name of the character and the hero in a novel, where

the pact is novelistic? Philippe Lejeune says:

“Le héros d’un roman déclaré tel peut-il avoir le même nom que l’auteur ? Rien n’empêcherait la chose d’exister, et c’est peut être une contradiction interne dont on pourrait tirer des effets intéressantes. Mais dans la pratique aucun exemple ne se présente à l’esprit d’une telle recherche...”

Serge Doubrovsky directly answers Lejeune’s question through his book *Fils* (“Son”), saying:

“j’ai inscrit ‘roman’ en sous-titre sur la couverture, fondant, simplement parce que je m’y suis trouvé contraint, malgré l’insistance inlassable de la référence historique et personnelle [...]. Non seulement auteur et personnage ont la même identité, mais le narrateur également : en bonne et scrupuleuse autobiographie, tous les faits et gestes du récit sont littéralement tirés de ma propre vie ; lieux et dates ont été maniaquement vérifiés.”

Thus, the contradiction that Lejeune saw between the novelistic pact and the hero bearing the narrator’s name (that is, the occurrence of identity in the absence of an autobiographical pact) was termed by Serge Doubrovsky “autofiction,” that is, self-fiction, in 1977, when he used it on the back cover of his book *Fils*. Since then, the term has enjoyed increasing success among writers and critics alike.

Serge Doubrovsky says:

“Autobiographie ? Non, c’est un privilège réservé aux importants de ce monde, au soir de leur vie et dans un beau style. Fiction d’événements et de faits strictement réels ; si l’on veut autofiction d’avoir confié le langage d’une aventure à l’aventure du langage, hors sagesse et hors syntaxe du roman, du traditionnel ou nouveau.”

Serge Doubrovsky denied that his book was an autobiography, because autobiographical writing is confined to important and great figures who often embellish their writing with a beautiful style about themselves at the end of their lives. The book *Fils* is a fictionalization of true and real events, in a language different from the language

readers were accustomed to; it is the adventure of language or writing (*l’aventure du langage*), which requires linguistic play that does not observe the rules of grammar and structure known to the traditional or even the new novel.

This is not surprising, since literature (poetry and prose alike) is a linguistic game, whether necessary—imposed by the limited possibilities of language—or optional. This is what Michael Riffaterre pointed out when he said that literary discourse is, above all, a play on words, and that there is not a single sentence in a literary work that can, in itself, be a direct expression of the personal emotions of authors; rather, it is always construction and play.

Hassan Sarhan cited a phrase confirming what most critics have agreed upon when he said: “Fictional writing is a kind of play, and it is truly play...”

The reader is struck by Serge Doubrovsky’s phrase in the above text: “Fiction d’événements et de faits strictement réels.” If we search for the word “fiction” in the dictionary, we find it opposed to the word “real,” and the combination of opposites is a kind of irony (*L’ironie*). Autofiction combines these two opposites or this duality (truth and fiction).

The term autofiction applies to many contemporary novelistic writings. Novelists today strive to hide and conceal themselves through it, if not to disguise themselves, for purposes that differ from one writer to another. This has necessarily led to doubting the possibility of truthfulness or sincerity in autobiography. Instead of writing autobiographies with complete frankness, writers have written autofictions, through which they allude implicitly rather than explicitly to their personal experiences. The French critic Jacques Lecarme says:

“Le terme d’autofiction forgé par Doubrovsky pour présenter *Fils* peut s’appliquer à plusieurs ouvrages, tels : *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, *W ou le souvenir d’enfance* de Georges Perec, *Enfance* de Nathalie Sarraute, *Le miroir qui*

revient d'Alain Robbe-Grillet, *L'amant* de Marguerite Duras... etc."

Autofiction was used by these novelists in order to create illusion and evasion. Roland Barthes, for example, in the aforementioned work (*Barthes by Barthes*), which is in fact an autobiography, wrote it in a form different from the traditional autobiography. He says on the inner cover of the book (Paris, 1975): "All this must be considered as if spoken by a character in a novel."

"Tout ceci doit être considéré comme dit par un personnage du roman."

The Moroccan critic Ahmed Madini says: "...autofiction, this genre distorted from autobiography, hybridized, uses its tools and disguises them at the same time, for a purpose inherent to its author. Fiction can either be superfluous or ornamental, or it can be essential, in which case it is justified as a reclassification, considering that artistic play is not ornamentation or luxury as much as it is purpose."

2- The significance of the term stylistic autofiction in Serge Doubrovsky:

Serge Doubrovsky believes that autobiography is tainted by error due to its pursuit of beautiful form, to the extent that he deprives this genre of its own writing project. He sees himself compelled to create a new genre, namely autofiction, which is defined first and foremost by freedom of writing and rejects literary style. "When autobiographers write in a beautiful style, they lie while wanting to tell the truth." The self in autobiography seeks to place its speech and story under the control of consciousness, whereas autofiction is, in general, an autobiography of consciousness, where the ego relinquishes all will to control and lets the id (le ça) speak. Because of this absence of control, art is born. Consequently, Serge Doubrovsky's autofiction is presented as a low, almost sub-literary genre, accessible to the unconscious (L'inconscient). To write one's autofiction, one does not need an important life or literary talent; a little

spontaneity suffices. By abandoning the highlighting of an ideal historical value of life, autofiction removes autobiography from the myth of great figures and proclaims its democracy; in a sense, autofiction becomes the autobiography of everyone.

Thus, the style of autofiction is primarily spontaneous, as it sheds the artificial literary style adopted by most autobiographers. The spontaneity of autofictional style is perhaps closer to reality than the style of autobiography.

To further clarify Serge Doubrovsky's conception of autofiction, it is useful to take an excerpt from the book *Fils* through which we can infer the characteristics of the language he uses. Doubrovsky says:

"quatre chatons en une portée deux tigrés un noiraud un grisâtre accouplement d'infortune au-delà des murs du voisin moment mal choisi la mère les lisse les lèche quatre serrés pelotonnés sur le bout de tapis rouge dans la cuisine toujours froide humide."

We note that the writer does not begin the text with a capital letter (la majuscule), which constitutes a first violation of the rule.

The phrases are incomplete, with wide gaps between words.

The absence of punctuation marks (le texte non ponctué).

Such freedom in writing perhaps does not allow for grasping a specific meaning. Those gaps may be pauses—pauses akin to silence rather than freedom—and their meaning may belong to what is called the unsayable (l'indicible) or the unsaid (le non-dit). If writing in the familiar or conventional style—so to speak—leads the reader to understand multiple meanings (pluralité du sens) or signification (la signification), then the gap leads to the exact opposite (l'insignification). Such is autofiction in Doubrovsky's view: to start from your life and your reality in order to express what may not have a specific meaning if you relate it to yourself alone.

As mentioned earlier, Serge Doubrovsky rejected the beautiful, artificial style because it cannot express reality directly. It is as if beautiful style acts as a censor. Doubrovsky prefers to rid himself of this craft that impoverishes meaning and distances it. He called this type of writing “associative writing” (*l’écriture associative*), which he considered a great and rich source of vital meanings. He says: “Là où le beau style était appauvrissement du sens de l’existence, l’écriture associative apparaît au contraire comme une ressource infiniment riche de significations vitales.” Serge Doubrovsky used this type of writing especially when narrating his dreams and memories, which he considered part of autofiction. Doubrovsky believes in psychoanalysis (*la psychanalyse*), because the writer of autofiction starts his writing from the unconscious, without any censor. Psychoanalysis sees the relationship between the novelist and his fictional character as analogous to the relationship between the psychoanalyst and his patient, as noted by the psychiatrist Jean Delay, who said that a negative or positive transference relationship arises between the novelist and the hero, helping him to explore the depths of his self. The imaginary psychological relationship between them is like that of a psychiatric patient with his analyst, to whom he confides his drives and inner impulses in an intimate confessional disclosure.

It is self-evident that this concept of writing (associative writing) is strongly indebted to Freudian free association in psychotherapy. Sigmund Freud sought to demonstrate the possibility of interpreting the creative writer’s dreams in the same way as dreams of sleep or delirium, especially since the mechanisms of the unconscious are active during both dreaming and creative work. Just as images and dreams associate in a state of delirium for a psychiatric patient during psychoanalytic sessions, buried memories and hidden dreams associate for the creator during bold writing sessions of autofiction in Serge Doubrovsky’s work.

Association liberates the creator, since no one obliges the writer to speak about a particular subject. The writer is free to choose the topic, characters, verb forms, and tenses in his text; the past blends with the present. Yet once he chooses and begins practicing, he frames and conditions himself by the requirements of the genre and becomes captive to it.

Serge Doubrovsky experienced humiliation at the hands of a young woman who described him as an old man. He said: “My slogan is the dollar; with it I regain my strength. I renew myself from head to toe. Belted at the waist, knees taut, purse open, I have elephant legs instead of goose legs. I gird myself with a belt with thick loops on my belly. I repair myself and set off again. After having been withered, I bloom again. After having been wounded, I stitch myself anew. After having been threadbare at the elbows, and having been Julian, I put on Serge’s clothes. Change of name, change of story. I bend, but I do not break. A thinking reed, with a belly.”

For the analyst, a truth emerges in the apparent disorder of speech: slips of the tongue, omissions, sudden transitions of ideas, absurd encounters, words beginning with the same letters, and repetition of the same sounds. What initially appears as incomplete speech soon reveals itself as successful discourse. What seemed mere wordplay and foolish gratuitousness leads the person to the deepest of his fantasies. What appeared to be fabrication produced by chance encounters of speech ultimately emerges as correct discourse.

Writing in a direct style (unaffected and unadorned) may violate many of the commonly accepted rules of writing (what is called linguistic play): writing a text with no relation to punctuation marks (*non ponctué*), or, conversely, a text crowded with them (*sur ponctué*); the slipping in of fragments of dreams and buried memories while speaking about the self in the form of associative writing, without regard to the chronological aspect. This makes the text appear fragmented (*fragmenté*), marked by

much omission and distortion. These are the most important features that distinguish autofiction in Serge Doubrovsky.

3- The evolution of the term's significance: from stylistic autofiction to referential

autofiction:

After the term autofiction spread and Doubrovskian resonance echoed among Western critics and scholars, and after the dominance of its stylistic definition, various critical efforts and attempts emerged aiming to encompass it with sufficient study and thorough research, as is the case with any new term (néologisme). Naturally, this led to differing significations of autofiction from one critic to another, depending on their respective starting points, and the dominance of the referential definition of autofiction emerged.

Perhaps the most prominent concept of autofiction that has imposed itself in recent years differs, on the surface, from the concept proposed by Serge Doubrovsky. This is the concept of the French critic Vincent Colonna. While Serge Doubrovsky defined autofiction through linguistic and writing criteria, as shown earlier, Vincent Colonna presented it as a fictionalization of lived experience, without reference to stylistic or linguistic criteria (fictionnalisation de la substance même de l'expérience vécue).

This is perhaps the same idea advocated by Serge Doubrovsky when he said: "Fiction d'événements et de faits strictement réels," meaning that autofiction blends what is real and what is fictional. In other words, it is a fictionalization of lived real experience, as Vincent Colonna also argued.

The writer of autofiction, as Vincent Colonna says, resides within the novel as in autobiography, but he recreates his life in a way that is entirely unreal or fabricated, appearing real to the reader.

Vincent Colonna also says:

"Autofiction must not suggest that it is a confession; it must be the antithesis of the personal novel. This would therefore exclude all texts that contain autobiographical references."

Vincent Colonna believes that the concept of autofiction does not aim at confession; rather, it is opposed to autobiography, which leads to the exclusion of any text with an autobiographical reference. More precisely, it is a narrative with an autobiographical appearance, but in which the pact (the coincidence of the triad author–narrator–character) is falsified by referential distortions. These distortions concern the narrated life events, which inevitably affects the reality status of the character, the narrator, or the author.

Despite some similarities between the concept proposed by Serge Doubrovsky and that of Vincent Colonna, the latter criticized Doubrovsky's concept, considering it limited and nothing more than a distorted image of the concept of the autobiographical novel. Vincent Colonna's critique may stem from Doubrovsky's response to Philippe Lejeune, the latter having labeled all fictional writings as "the autobiographical novel."

"Colonna considers that the neologism 'autofiction,' as conceived by Doubrovsky, does not reach its full significance and is only a pale copy of the definition of the autobiographical novel."

This critique offered by Vincent Colonna of Doubrovsky may indicate the similarity between the autobiographical novel and autofiction and the difficulty of separating them.

Types of referential autofiction:

We can identify families of autofiction according to the poles of the autobiographical pact, as follows:

Fictionalization of the character–narrator's story:

In this type, the character–fiction distances itself from the author through certain aspects of its life story. An example is *The Divine Comedy*, where at the beginning Dante recounts that when he lost his way in a dark forest, he ended up meeting an old man (Virgil), who later became his guide through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. In this first case, one aspect of the autobiographical pact appears to be

respected, as there is a coincidence in Dante's person between author, narrator, and character; however, the narrated events, with their fabulous or mythical nature, cannot be received as literal truth. There is thus a fictionalization of the story. We can therefore conclude that any fictionalization of the story indeed leads to a fictionalization of the character; this is not the same Dante who holds the pen and learns from Virgil in the circles of Hell.

Fictionalization of the narrator's identity:

The French critic Gérard Genette classified autobiography in which the narrator's identity differs from the dual identity author–character under the category of heterodiegetic autobiography, yet it clearly relates to autofiction. This fictionalization does not focus on narrated events or on the character, but rather on the narrator's identity. An example is *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. In 1933, the American novelist Gertrude Stein published a book entitled *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. The text as a whole is sufficiently puzzling: the title presents the text as autobiographical, but the author's name (Gertrude Stein), different from that of the narrator and the character, clearly contradicts the autobiographical status of the text. Alice Toklas did exist in reality, as she was Gertrude Stein's secretary and companion; nevertheless, Gertrude's book actually centers on herself and her life memories in Paris among artists and poets before World War II, a life shared with Alice. Thus, Gertrude can be said to have written her autobiography under the guise of writing her friend's biography. This stance becomes clear in the final lines supposedly spoken by Alice Toklas, which clearly reveal the author: "About six weeks ago Gertrude Stein said to me: you will never decide to write this autobiography. Do you know what I will do? I will write it for you, simply as Defoe wrote the autobiography of Robinson Crusoe, and this is what I did." Thus, autofiction did not manipulate the narrated events, all of which

are true, but Gertrude Stein created a narrative behind which she hid, thereby fictionalizing her point of view rather than her story.

Fictionalization of the character's identity:

In this final case, the character's identity (not necessarily the story) is fictionally distinct from the dual identity author–narrator. An example is the following: in 1878, Jules Vallès published a book entitled *Jacques Vingtras*, which shortly afterward became *L'Enfant*. In another version, an altered autobiography of Jules Vallès's childhood appeared. The important point is that the book recounts real memories of Jules Vallès, while the changes mainly affected the names of places and characters. One may think that the fictional name given to the character served the primary purpose of softening the scandalous nature of this childhood story, where the violence of family and social relations erupts into the open. By giving it a non-realistic touch, he defused its documentary and subversive character. Nevertheless, Vallès chose for his character the same initials as his own name (J.V.), suggesting the very relative nature of this fictionalization.

These types of autofiction involve fictionalizing the referent to which the novel refers and have nothing to do with the writer's style as in Serge Doubrovsky. The writer may deceive the reader by fictionalizing the story and events, or by fictionalizing the narrator's identity, resorting by all means to misleading the reader and denying that he himself is the character, for example by claiming to recount a friend's story. Fictionalization may also occur at the level of the character's identity, where the author chooses another name and different features. The essential thing is that coincidence should not be achieved in one way or another.

Jacques Lecarme describes autofiction as a bad genre, considering it impure and tainted by falseness and pretense. This judgment likely constitutes a critique of this newly

emerged genre, as evidenced by his book *Un mauvais genre ? L'autofiction*.

As for Gérard Genette, he agrees with his student Vincent Colonna and follows his approach, yet he offers a more rigorous concept in his book *Fiction et diction*, where he says: “I speak here of true autofictions—whose narrative content is, so to speak, authentically fictional, like (I suppose) that of *The Divine Comedy*—and not of false autofictions, which are ‘fictions’ only for customs purposes; in other words, shameful autobiographies.”

Gérard Genette does not believe in the autofictions behind which autobiographers disguise themselves to hide certain critical or scandalous facts of their lives; rather, he calls for true autofictions, that is, those with purely fictional content, citing Dante’s *Divine Comedy* as an example whose content is fictional first and foremost.

The French researcher Marie Darrieussecq presented autofiction as an unserious genre and published her article *L'autofiction, un genre pas sérieux*.

The term “unserious” conveys a specific meaning, referring to the particular nature of the speech act involved in autofiction—a speech act that contradicts autobiography. She believes that the autobiographical speech act simultaneously involves verification and a demand for belief and endorsement directed at the reader (I am not only saying it, but it must be believed). In the case of autofiction, the act is also doubled, but contradictory, as it sees itself as disguised and at the same time as serious. This causes all elements of the narrative to oscillate between factual and fictional value, without the reader being able to decide between them.

She opposes Genette’s notion of “shameful autobiographies,” arguing that they do not exist, and that one could instead call them disguised writings rather than scandalous autobiographical writings: “...There are no ‘shameful’ writings on the part of authors of autofictions, but rather

disguised, clandestine, and resistant writings.”

She defines autofiction as follows:

“I would say that autofiction is a first-person narrative presented as fictional (often marked as a novel on the cover), but in which the author appears homodiegetically under his own name, and where plausibility is an issue maintained through multiple ‘effects of life.’”

Darrieussecq sees autofiction as a first-person narrative oriented toward fiction, yet the author appears within the narrative under his own proper name, and plausibility becomes a stake supported by multiple traces of life—in other words, a fiction that refers to reality (the illusion of the real). An example is Nathalie Sarraute’s *Enfance*, where the protagonist bears the same name as the narrator (Natacha), uses the first-person pronoun “I,” and dialogues with “Natacha” the protagonist, the second imaginary character who appears sometimes conscious and sometimes unconscious. This character is also called “the double,” and this pair of selves (the real self and the imaginary self) dialogues about real, factual events.

Darrieussecq believes there are two reasons that lead writers to choose autofiction to write about themselves:

– To conceal the autobiographical nature of the author’s work in order to protect the self from exposure and downfall on the one hand, and to ensure the book’s circulation in the literary market on the other, since readers are more inclined to read novels than autobiographies.

– The writer’s awareness of the truth of human memory, which forgets many life events, and since the reader always longs to read the truth, the author resorts to autofiction as an acknowledgment of the inability to tell pure truth.

Thus, autofiction, to the extent that it distances itself from truth and reality, is also a sign of the writer’s credibility.

The function of autofiction:

The function of stylistic autofiction:

Paradoxically, stylistic autofiction, by shedding the affectations of beautiful style, appears to be more effective in conveying an excess of reality. Its frank spontaneity meets pure life reality. In any case, this is the authors' argument. Serge Doubrovsky wrote: "The movement of writing and its form are the only possible recording of the self."

The function of referential autofiction:

Autofiction in general seems to have a function opposite to that of stylistic autofiction; it softens the relationship with reality rather than emphasizing it. This softening may fulfill an ethical or aesthetic intention—or both together.

6 – Autofiction among Arab critics:

The pressing question is: has autofiction truly entered the arena of Arab criticism? Has its concept appeared among Arab critics?

In a dialogue between the French researcher Arnaud Génon, a specialist in autofiction and a member of the Autofiction Research Group, and the Moroccan critic Mohammed Dahy, the French researcher posed the same question. He answered that the first to disseminate this concept was Mohammed Berrada during the presentation of his book *A Summer That Will Never Be Repeated* at the Kalila wa Dimna Library in Rabat in 1996. In responding to audience interventions, he highlighted the hesitation he felt while searching for an appropriate genre capable of encompassing his experience, in which the autobiographical and the fictional intersect. This prompted him—while awaiting a settled decision on an appropriate genre—to inscribe the term “narratives” on the cover. He later considered the genre that suited him to be autofiction, which had become current in Western criticism. No Moroccan critic paid attention to this remark, which passed without sparking discussion of the new concept. By contrast, Abdelkader Chawi, by virtue of his specialization in the autobiographical field, inscribed this emerging concept on the front of his creative works, consciously considering it

the most capable of gathering the scattered threads of his experiences in which the real and the imaginary conflict. By doing so, he sought to encourage critics to read his works in new ways and forms, in order to grasp their aesthetic dimensions and understand their narrative identity (the absence of forced coincidence between narrator, author, and main character).

For his part, the Moroccan writer and critic Mohammed Dahy devoted the final chapter of his book *The Ambiguous Truth* (2007) to autofiction. He studied and analyzed two works that, in his view, meet the criteria of autofiction: *Dalil al-'Unfuwan* by Abdelkader Chawi and *A Summer That Will Never Be Repeated* by Mohammed Berrada. In the first part of Chawi's book, the narrator retraces the path of childhood and youth in Tetouan and Rabat, but in the second part he revisits what he previously uttered, casting doubt on it and considering it mere loose associations and a lie unrelated to lived reality. This leaves the reader perplexed, as what was considered true gradually becomes, over time, a form of imagination and illusion. His hesitation (is it him or not) and his confusion (with motives of doubt, revision, and verbosity) drive him to rebel against strict autobiographical conventions and seek a new horizon that may help him understand the nature of the narrative identity distinguishing this work from others. In *A Summer That Will Never Be Repeated*, the author recounts his personal experiences under a pseudonym (Hammad), thereby disrupting the potential coincidence between author and narrator on the one hand, and between both and the main character on the other—what may be termed autofiction.

Mohammed Dahy states that he contributed through several conferences to shedding more light on the concept and expanding its corpus to include works previously considered either autobiographical novels or disguised autobiographies. He repeatedly attempted to encourage researchers and scholars to receive the concept and draw

clear boundaries between it and factual autobiography. Despite these efforts, the concept still provokes debate among scholars and has not yet gained any form of recognition.

Thus, the reception of this concept among Arab critics and scholars remains at an early stage, with no accumulation yet achieved in this field. The critics interested in autofiction can be counted on one hand, each carving out a particular path while awaiting the necessary accumulation that could generate a current specializing in the concept, expanding it, and innovating within it.

For example, Mohammed Berrada referred to the concept in more than one place without expanding on it as he usually does with newly introduced concepts. Abdelkader Chawi specialized in the autobiographical field, highlighting the existence of texts that deviate from strict autobiographical conventions and pose classification problems due to their attraction between the real and the fictional registers. Aware of this paradox, Chawi classified his creative works under autofiction.

Mahmoud Abdel Ghani devoted a chapter of his doctoral dissertation to clarifying the origins of the concept and its status among a group of French critics.

It is also worth noting the experience of the Moroccan novelist and critic Seddouk Nour Eddine through his creative work *The Patient of the Novel: Othman Reads the Novel of Novels*, where he invented a pseudonym, Othman, to replace Seddouk. His aim was to write an autofiction combining autobiography and the novel. The author transformed parts of his autobiography into narrative fiction by employing retrospective passages from his life, expressing the period he spent as a high school student and as a boarder, thereby confusing and provoking readers when he mixed two genres differing in definition and pact, and when he deviated from autobiographical writing by selecting passages and transforming them into

fictional practices, in addition to breaking chronological order through the use of retrospective narration.

The Patient of the Novel is an autobiography that rebelled against its genre through a misleading pact with the reader, who has the right to seek to uncover the components of the text through a diagnostic reading aimed at revealing blanks, gaps, and all that is left unsaid.

A group of critics—especially younger ones—became aware of this, such as the Moroccan Dr. Zohra Seddiki, who devoted her doctoral dissertation to the study of autofiction and published parts of it as articles on the Daroub electronic website, alongside other efforts on the same subject that attempt to address the concept with clear seriousness.

Mohammed Dahy also spoke about women's practice of this literary genre, stating that there is an actual female presence in its practice. Arab women writers sought refuge in personal writing to express their concerns, suffering, and aspirations, but always spoke in a subdued voice, barely audible, out of fear of violating taboos. Autofiction, however, grants women a space to write about themselves with reassurance.

An example is the novel *Akhadid al-Aswar* by Zahra Ramij, which the Moroccan critic Othmani El-Miloud classified under autofiction due to the dominance of the fictional program over the autobiographical program. Examples of this abound, but the article does not allow for mentioning them all.

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