Research Article

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Fact and Fiction in Autoconfession: A Theoretical Confrontation

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Abstract

The formulation of the topic fact and fiction in auto-confession is a result of earlier research in which the greatest theoretical confrontation takes place in the area of autobiographical prose. This paper investigates and explores issues with which contemporary poetics is faced regarding the concepts in question, especially when they coexist within a work concerned either with genre codification or with undefined status (i.e. hybrid genre). Such discussions are often accompanied by great dilemmas on whether auto-confessional texts such as autobiography or autobiographical prose should be considered fact or fiction. Being a fierce confrontation, especially for a genre that is considered a compromising genre in which the facts are weaved according to the fictional practice, this paper proposes that a double reading (fact-fiction) will highlight issues that are essential to interpret and decode a text of autoconfessional premises and, beyond that, a codification of the genre when dilemmas grow and become even larger: in fiction, nonfiction, novel, autobiographical novel, autobiography, etc.

Keywords: fact; fiction; autofiction; fiction and nonfiction; phantasmatic and autobiographical pact; autobiographical prose

1. Introduction

The universe is a novel. God is a novelist! John Barth used to say due to the inability of discerning fact from fiction, while Littre, finding himself in such a situation, used to say that the novel is a *made-up story, written in prose* (Arai 2014).

–Is this it? Camus asked in his “The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt” (1951), only to refer to yet another critic who, having the mimetic theory in mind, had said that “art always defies God unlawfully regardless of its purpose” (Camus 1994: 249).

According to Camus, when fiction is the subject of contemplation, it is more appropriate to talk about *competition with God than with civil society* (idem).

Being the author of an autobiographical novel such as “The First Man” (1994), Camus agreed with the idea that literature *can* be created on the theme of living, as *everyone tries to make his life a work of art*. Although he considered realism in art as an unclear notion that lacks a proper definition, he was convinced that the world pertaining to the novel does not aim at a pure and simple representation of reality, but rather its arbitrary stylization. He illustrated this (hypo)thesis by taking

Proust as an example, the work of whom he considered to have attempted *to create upon facts*, by calling him and his literary works *worlds of memories* as opposed to American novels, which he considered *worlds of people without memories*.

2. Literature Review

The Nobelist Mario V. Llosa, on the other hand, had to start from a concrete fact, which he called *the trampoline of reality* in order to create a deeper fictional world. He even used to visit and do research on the places in which the action would take place not for the purpose of *reproducing an exact reality*, as this was impossible, but to create the foundation on which the beginning of the narrative would be settled. While Llosa admits that regardless of the author's will, it is impossible to avoid *an illusion of reality*, Hemingway assumes that it is in the reader's hands whether he chooses to see this illusion as fact or as fiction.

The undefined status of a particular work brings us closer to a bigger debate on the relationship between *fact* and *fiction* or between fiction and autoconfession. Such discussions have oftentimes been concerned with the question of whether autoconfession must be considered fact or fiction.

In this context, the eminent theoretician Timothy D. Adams considers traditional autoconfessional writing to be a *non-fictional genre*. Such categorization has been motivated and supported by the argument that "*autobiography is not an invention of its author, but rather a documented report on his/her life*" (Flohr 1988:20). Such a statement has been opposed by Paul de Man, while the researcher Ann Jefferson emphasizes the differences between *the novella* and *the autobiography*. However, literary prose is considered here only as autobiography, even if regarded merely as an effect that comes out of the reading process. Therefore, the difference between fiction and autoconfession, i.e. autobiography, does not have clearly set boundaries, thus making way for their distinction based on two elements which we find in Wordsworth's phrase: *of these are neither, and are both at once*. (Marek 2002:51).

Furthermore, Alan Collet emphasizes the aspect of the documented report, which means that the reader supposes that the reported answers in an (auto)biography have *a value of truth* or, in other words, they relate to a reality existing outside the text, this being a connection that can be verified or be counterfeited. According to Collet, the reader hopes that all that the author writes about his life will correspond to the way in which things truly were, so that that information was real. In fact, the beauty of reading an autobiography originates in the reader's wish to learn something more about the real life of the author that exists outside his oeuvre and to see the real author as being separate from the fiction that he creates. If seen from this perspective, autobiography becomes a *subgenre of biography*. It is the biography the one in which the narrator is identical to the subject he treats, which more or less corresponds to the term autobiography, which indicates *a life written by oneself*. That is why Collet illustrates the analysis of an autobiographical novel in which the autobiographic aspect becomes evident. The text makes a clear reference to a reality that exists outside its world. This type of reference towards an external reality is extremely motivated by the tendency to be narrated in the first person (Flohr, idem).

The assumption that fiction can gradually become credible is also emphasized by the writer Julian Barnes, in a fragment of his autoconfessional work, in which he writes:

How often do we tell our own life story? How often do we adjust, embellish, make sly cuts? And the longer life goes on, the fewer are those around to challenge our account, to remind us that our life is not our life, merely the story we have told about our life. Told to others, but—mainly—to ourselves" (Barnes 2011:37).

Contrastingly, André Gide elaborates the issue of the factual on another aspect, attributing it more to typical fictional genres than to genres that aim at documenting. According to Gide, memoirs are always half true, and he goes on saying that perhaps we get closer to the truth in novels. While

Gide suggests that fiction is closer to truth than autobiography, François Mauriac further supports this claim by stating that:

Fiction alone does not lie; it shines a light into a writer's soul that reveals things that he does not even recognize in himself" (Allet, Jenny 2005:7).

In such perspective, fiction appears to be more reliable than autoconfession to the point that it explains natural aspects of the life of the author without the latter's inclusion in the credibility and authenticity of the work (Allet, Jenny 2005:8).

Adopting a similar attitude to Mauriac or Gide, Lejeune has termed this process "*the phantasmagorical pact*" (Lejeune 1996:41). The reader is invited to read novels by considering them not only as fiction but also as compatible to the truth and to *human nature* (Lejeune, idem).

He cleared the path for the general idea that fiction is unintentionally autobiographic. Thus, Lejeune eventually emphasized that the adherents of this *pact* do not focus exclusively on discrediting the autobiographical gesture, which they use themselves, but in fact they seek the opposite of it: they wish to expand it by creating *an autobiographical space* in which their works can be read (Lejeune 1996: 41).

In a more euphemistic expression, Alain Robbe-Grillet denoted the part of *the imaginary reconstruction*, which suffuses his autobiography titled "Recurring Mirror" (Grillet 1985). He began his statement according to Gide's or Mauriac's method, in a pact of its own style: "I have never spoken of anything but myself...", and later he adds: "And I'm still taking a risk in fiction" (Allet, Jenny 2005:8). Thus by using the narrative style of fiction, the autobiographic text stops being non-fictional. It even reaches the realm of autoconfession.

In fact, the categorization of autobiography as autoconfession (i.e. autonarration), as well as nonfiction is progressively becoming an even more contradictory topic. After many dilemmas, Adams finally concludes that regardless of what *researchers* say about the genre in the past years, *autoconfession is fictional* (Adams 2009).

Genieve Lloyd, however, claims that this development is influenced by previously mentioned notions of *the true value*, thus making it possible to argue that the very same concept that can lead to the categorization of autobiography as nonfiction can also lead to its categorization as fiction. Our ideas about *the true value*, counterfeiting, and verification are based on concepts of objective knowledge. Only objective knowledge can fit standards of the truth, and only objects can become part of objective knowledge (Lloyd 1986: 168-185).

Nevertheless, the self is neither a simple object nor an entirely objective object. Consequently, the self is also a subjective topic. Based on "the inheritance of the ideals of objective knowledge," subjectivity opposes objectivity and, thus, reality. Lloyd argues that in the line of this concept of knowledge, in order for things to be qualified as real, they must first be independent of particular perspectives. Objectivity requires avoidance of *internal* perspectives to see the world as it is/was. The self and subjective perceptions almost reach the sphere of the unreal, i.e., the sphere of fiction. This is in accordance with Paul John Eakin's view that:

...the self in the center of all autobiographic narration is necessarily a fictive structure and that all fiction and all fiction-writing is at constitutive center of the truth of every life as it is lived and of all arts dedicated to representing that life" (Eakin 1980).

The self and the self-perception of life are quite deeply connected to fiction. One of those fictions that forms the personal idea of life, consequently, is autobiographic writing as a notion of life as "a journey taken to discover oneself", that is why Abbott reclaims that this "narrative form proposes a fictional norm as a descriptive standard", which has been retrieved from diverse autobiographic prose models from Saint Augustine and onwards.

Abbott considers it ironic that "when an autobiography has been read as factual, in certain aspects, it has been read more as conventional fiction" (Abbott 1988). For one to avoid the reading of

an autobiographic text as factual, it is not necessary to distinguish and isolate the text from its external reality. It is only necessary to see reality in another aspect which originates out of the text.

Hence, the concept suggested by Abbott regards facts as being part of fiction in all autobiographical texts. This means that regardless of the fact that it creates fiction, the autobiographical text presents a truth, which we claim to be the truth of the self, which unfolds itself out of the presentation of the fiction of a person's life. Another interesting element in Abbott's proposal is that "autobiography is neither categorized as fiction nor as nonfiction" (Abbott 1988:597).

In such theoretical play, it is best to return to *Autopoetics* (Gashi 2009), i.e. to our earlier research, which incorporates all of this complexity in the form of an open-ended conclusion. It suggests that fiction, at least 'legally', is not the essence of autobiography, while the latter is suffused in fiction. By narrating life, autoconfessional writing makes a myth out of personal history and is thus constantly searching for objectivity. Objectivity is questionable here as we're dealing with such a unique genre in which the primary reference is the author himself.

To Roy Pascal, the process of writing an autobiography opens up many discussions. Firstly, the memory *selects* out of all moments only those moments that can be more attractive and more creative, as it drives artistic fiction towards complying with the fictional form. Hence, even the literary creation is greater in functionality than arbitrary evidence (Pascal 1960:70).

Seeing that autoconfession turns out to be a genre that can be compromised or an agreement between listographic requirements and art, it does not simply reveal in us as readers the individuality of the narrator/empiric author, but it also unfolds other individualities and characters that are either known or unknown to us, which in themselves carry the stamp of description and fictive narration (Pascal 1860:71).

At times even *homodiegetic/heterodiegetic narration* can be used by the autobiographical text, which then would function as *intertext*, either as a 'dream' of the narrator, or as a literary form, or in the quality of a metanarrative as a category of fiction (Gashi 2009: 99). Does this mean that *the empiric author*, the one who declares the category of the genre at the title, is now betraying the model of the genre?

If we refer to Derrida's work once again, then this is a case of refusing formal rules; the author surpasses *the demarcation line*, thus experimenting with fiction out of a preference for creating literature.

After all, it is not only the distance between *the subject* and *the object* that invites the autobiographical or ideographic author to embark on such an adventure, as the temporal distance must also be taken into account: the time of recreation and the time of description of life give "the idea of autobiography as a fictional work" (Gashi 2009 : 100). In this context, autobiography is *factual* if we search for facts within it. Autobiography is also *fiction*, if we try to read it as literature. Hence, *fiction* created through *facts* offers the most specific model of autobiography as a genre, while *facts* provided through *fiction* result in autobiography *as essence*. If seen from such a point of view, an autobiography *in essence* becomes fictional autoreferential work: a genre that requires a *double reading* (Gashi 2009: 101).

3. Research Method

The applied method is theoretical analysis and focuses on the ground of immanent methods of studying and withholds literary theories in the spirit of school structure and poststructure, which is based on the text and textual strategies.

Also, this study, being a confrontation of theoretical concepts, appears as a synthesis of methods, assessments and theoretical concepts on which stand the conclusions of the most famous theorists treating an autofiction in autoconfession.

3.1 Autofiction in Autoconfession

All discourse is fiction, claimed Paul Claudel. Theoreticians of the 1970s considered the presence of fiction in a text that is essentially factual a great paradox, a phenomenon that needed further elaboration, especially within the genre of autobiography, and that is why they coined the term *autofiction*. It appears that this was the result of the work of the French researcher Serge Doubrovsky in the year 1977, whereas its theoretical proceedings were further developed by Roland Barthes and Gerard Genette.

Autofiction is the text in which the fictionality of the persona is clearly emphasized, based on the claim that the textual persona is a *fictive being*. If classical autobiography is oriented towards the presentation of a real persona, autofiction concentrates on the process of textual creation, i.e. in the process of narrating, writing, and building the narrative. In the language of French linguistics, autobiography says: *I write my own life*, whereas autofiction says: *I live my own writing* (Violić 2009 : 5). The former deals with evidence and facts, the latter with the pleasure of narrating aesthetically. How can this happen without fictional constituents?!

One form deals with *the process*, the other deals with *the product* as well as *the state* of the subject. Such a distinction has already been noted on the difference between *text* and *discourse*: the former is seen as a product, the latter as a process.

Facts turn into fiction during the process, and, as such, as they are being written by the subject whose object is himself, the result is that they turn into autofiction. Moreover, this problem also belongs to the issue of language, as

“language has the ability to change the textual and contextual reality, which is the subject of textual grammar and discourse analysis” (Violić 2009).

Certain theoretical approaches, on the other hand, have contributed to this discussion by stating the fact that the problems of *fictionalizing oneself*, apart from their universal character, can also discover references in the structure of postmodernity.

It is pivotal to explain the concept of autofiction with its limitations and its applications, just as it is important to find the space in which the awareness of fictional signs in autobiographical prose first took place.

In this perspective, autofiction has been conceptualized in two types: as a *thematic type* and as a *semantic type*. Its specific meaning refers to the literary genre considered in a wider context as a mode of interpretation, which denotes the authorial drama as having *autobiographical conventions* (even including the parody and metacommentary) (Dolińska 2015).

However, literary theories have oftentimes confused autofiction (as a process) with genre (as a form and product), when in fact, we can discover it in the latter as a sign of discourse and modus of writing.

Apart from its curious character marked by its *expansion to* and *gliding into* other genres (Anderson), autobiographical prose has gained certain strength in the fact that autofiction appears as a construction that has a tendency to *wobble the law of genre* (Dolińska 2015).

Such a debate is present even in the studies that emphasize the need to normalize the phenomenon in question because autofiction *hasn't left any formal traces in its readers, and it has neither imposed its own code on them* (idem). This has occurred due to the fact that the reader's requirements of autobiographical prose are twice as great as the reader has the tendency to enjoy the duplicity of *fact* and *factual play*.

Regardless of this idea, fiction in autobiographical texts is more of a result of memory in the sense of how much it “imitates” and how much it “recalls.” The first is called *mimo*, the second *mnemo*, i.e. two categories of autobiographic texts, i.e. autofictional texts.

3.2 Mimo - Mnemo

The technique of moving backwards in fiction is termed by theoreticians a *flashback*, at times as *mnemo* (*mnoèmè - memoriae mandare*), (Barthes 2008 : 364), mnemotechnique, which according to Aristotle's view, means method that creates order and discipline in natural and pragmatic activities of human beings. Thus, *mnemo* is recalling, whereas mnemotechnique is typical of autodiegetic retrospective narration, which is an appropriate space for autofiction. *Mnemo* is the basis out of which autoconfessional texts arise, especially the type of texts that are written in the last years of one's life.

Hence, in this particular case *mnemo* is also *mimo*. Based on what is recognized by now, either coming from reading or coming from the declarations of various theoreticians, but also the very experience of writers themselves, *mnemo* is the essence of narrating lifewriting, whereas mnemotechnique is a process.

It is assumed that Bertrand Russell is the first philosopher that focused on the phenomenon of memory and evidence (Russell 2015). He even regarded evaluation of memory and evidence as *common sense*, i.e. as common and random evaluation of things that have happened, achieved whether in spoken or in written form.

Mnemos-memorie or memory is randomly used for a number of meanings. According to Russell, in its more specific meaning of *memory* it is only used to recall the memory of past events. This memory is considerably transformed in autofiction in autoconfessional writing. On the other hand, Bergson disputed *memory as a habit*; he did not conceptualize it as truth. Bergson claims that *mnemos* is defined as recalling a past event, which for Bergson cannot be a *habit*, while the recalled event may have happened only once (Russell 2015 : 130).

To Bruce Mazlish autobiography is a literary genre produced by the romantics which offers a portrait originating out of the highest point of the present and that of the individual past, achieved through *mnemos* in which *I* appears as a being in progress (Mazlish 1970:28), which applies to autoconfessional texts. It is evident that autoconfessional texts, although abounding in facts, are really texts of memory. Being *memories of a past life*, they cannot be but a type of autofiction.

Thus retrospective narrative is a *condition* while temporal distance is *the criterion* that allows for the narrative of life, a criterion that can easily turn fact to fiction and autoconfession.

Hereon, the art of memory or *ars memorativa* is the general term used to define *mnemonic principles* and technical principles that are used to organize the perception of memory as well as to support the combination and "invention" of ideas.

Dr. Watson, Russell's favorite, used to state that memory recalls past events as *verbal expression* only to end up as something repetitive, which is nothing but fact. (Russell 2015 : 132).

Hence, *mnemos* is more essential than fiction, the latter being merely a collection of various memories in time. The essence of imagination, on the other hand, is "lack of trust merged with a new combination of familiar elements" (Russell 2015 : 228).

Focusing on memory, Russell recognizes a range of levels or progressions that the *homo narrans* goes through, *especially in autofictional texts* such as: *images*, qualified as mnemonic phenomena, vague memory which for us produces other people's discourse of evidence on us, *habit memory* – the memory of a *story* is precise, but the autoconfessional author (of which we will be speaking later) or the autodiegetic narrator forgets when and where the memory has happened, whereas *true recollection* is one of the forms of memory which asks for faithful reconstruction of the past (Russell 2015 : 309), which becomes purely autofiction.

The last element relates to the structural theory on genre in rapport with the reader in the context of a *pact* made between them. *Autofiction* is measured based on truthfulness, but research does not accept truthfulness as the entirety of what has been narrated by autofictional authors, but only in specific cases as individual memory that demonstrates subjectivity.

Evidently, when it comes to many autoconfessional texts, *mnemos* is the Achilles' heel. This has been widely accepted by researchers of this field of literature. Even Ernesto Sabato confirms this idea

in his autobiography, as a synthesis of Russell's three levels: image, *habit memory*, and *true recollection*, hence the statement:

I have never had a strong memory. I have always suffered from this deficiency; but it may just be a way of remembering only what is necessary, the most important part of our lives, that which has great significance, that which has been definite – in good and in bad- in this complex, contradictory and inexplicable journey towards death which is the life of us all (Sabato 2003:15).

In contrast, in St. Augustine's *Confessions*, not only created a text of memory, but also erected a practical and pragmatic monument of memory through his philosophical and autoconfessional contemplation:

And I enter the fields and spacious halls of memory, where are stored as treasures the countless images that have been brought into them from all manner of things by the senses. There, in the memory, is likewise stored what we cogitate, either by enlarging or reducing our perceptions or by altering one way or another those things which the senses have made contact with; and everything else that has been entrusted to it and stored up in it, which oblivion has not yet swallowed up and buried. When I go into this storehouse, I ask that what I want should be brought forth. Some things appear immediately, but others require to be searched for longer, and then dragged out, as it were, from some hidden recess. Other things hurry forth in crowds, on the other hand, and while something else is sought and inquired for, they leap into view as if to say, "Is it not we, perhaps?" These I brush away with the hand of my heart from the face of my memory, until finally the thing I want makes its appearance out of its secret cell. Some things suggest themselves without effort, and in continuous order, just as they are called for--the things that come first give place to those that follow, and in so doing are treasured up again to be forthcoming when I want them. All of this happens when I repeat a thing from memory (St. Augustine 1960 : 43).

According to Sabato, memory has been appreciated by grand human cultures as a form of resistance to the passing of time. He even illustrated the issue of memory and its importance through the experience of the culture of his birthplace, either as an individual autofictional memory or as a collective memory:

In the meadowy little place where I was born, before one went to bed, he would ask of others to wake him up by saying: "Remember me at six o'clock!" I have always been enthralled by the connection of memory and the continuation of existence (Sabato 2003 : 16).

Although autobiography is a text of memory, Sabato refused the title 'memoir' due to his view that the word resembles "a word play which is not suitable to this written testament of the saddest period of his life" (Sabato 2003 : 17).

Hence, *mnemos* becomes important to individuals, communities, and civilizations only when it contains *the trace of the past* and a plan for the future, if it allows to be done that which needs to be done without being forgotten (Calvino 2013 : 21).

Thus, man turns into a *machina memorialis* that produces discourse, builds up images, recalls and recreates events, chooses *biographemes*, constructs stories, (re)stitches life events at times based on facts, at other times based on fictions. When on the classical model, the memory selects one element and oppresses another, as is the case with St. Augustine, the author does not act so by chance. Calvino calls this characteristic *the power of order on competence* and *the selection of its material*.

3.3 *Machina memorialis*

Being a *machina memorialis*, the author unveils his life, his subjectivity. He can, and he must invent a narrative. For this narrative to achieve an amount of objectivity, it must at least have a character that places the *I* at the center of the narrative, a character that is defined as the *egocentric character* in narrative theory.

Although defined as functioning at the center of the text as the backbone of the movement of selected biographemes, this type of character can move to the margin of the text when such biographemes aren't active, thus leaving sufficient space for *the other*, either for the sake of chronologic witnessing or for the sake of description that reinforces *prosopography*, i.e. description of other portraits (Barthes 2008 : 404).

With the exception of classical models up to Columbus' description of voyages, this technique has been interpreted to be the modus that solves the 'problems' of the author, who is considered to be at war with memories. Here *epidiegesis* (repetitive narrative) is also functionalized; through *epidiegesis* the author goes back to give a detailed account of something he has mentioned before in the form: "I'll describe to you in details what I mentioned before" (Todorov 1976:159-170).

But the greatest invention to occur within the characters of the narrative is *the personal character*. Being a *machina memorialis*, the author can now separate his narratives into those of the *diegetic narrator* and those of *the personal character*.

In a typical autobiographic text where the autobiographic narrative form has a *fixed structure*, as insisted upon by classic poetics as well as a *mixed structure* insisted upon by modern poetics (Todorov 1976: 170), the author and the character are one; narrative structuralist theory in fact declared as onesidedness, i.e. when the line between the *subject* and the *object* disappears.

However, the greatest dynamics occurs when the author identifies with his personal character, as is usual in the autobiographic novel, by creating the objective temporal distance by changing the position of the narrative, experimenting with verb tenses, pronouns, etc. This is best clarified by *the narrative grammar of autobiography* (Quigley 2000:105).

In such cases, facts are consistently regarded as fiction and *vice-versa*, even if there's no theoretical or logical *real indicator* to offer a way out, as the distinction between the referential subject and the autoreferential subject is clearly defined.

Examples abound in the cases of authors that decide to narrate in *past simple* while the retrospective narrative type turns into an introspective narrative of the personal character who narrates from the present simple tense as a *false present tense*, a narrative 'category' of autofiction.

On the other hand, texts that are also grounded on collective memory, apart from being grounded on personal memory as usually happens in autobiographic prose, commonly tend to keep the pact of reliability. Such texts are regarded as special forms or as integral forms within the autobiographic novel or temporal chronicles of an intertextual status.

This is why the identification of the author of autobiographic prose with a *machina memorialis* also occurs due to other additional reasons: when the author *states*, *narrates*, and *informs* during the writing process, *mnemos* takes various forms that are clearly defined by modern philosophy as an image, as I've discussed above, through *the mnemonic typology* of Bertrand Russell:

"Image memory: I've remembered this today, not as a sadistic entertainment for evil children.

Habit memory: I don't remember clearly", up to the greatest paradox, "I have no memory" (Russell 2015 : 33).

Lastly, as a *real recollection* by others: "Countless times I've listened to my mother as she told me this story" (Russell 2015). This does not suggest that the author cannot go *beyond* these formulations that are typical of texts in which fact and fiction coexist in autoconfession.

3.4 Beyond mnemos

Autoconfession *beyond mnemos*, as was stated of Marcel Proust in writing his great autobiographic project "In Search of Lost Time (À la recherche du temps perdu)," is the result of the pressure of memory as a *constant torture*, thus appearing as complete autofiction. This is not the case of what the author does not remember, but it is the case of the author stating what he did not see and did not have the chance of seeing or remembering, as is the case with classic autoconfessions in which the

fully-convicted author states as he also refers to others, as did St. Augustine:

Was it that which I spent within my mother's womb? for of that I have heard somewhat, and have myself seen women with child? (St. Augustine 1960: 44).

In another fragment, he firstly denies memory although he tries to create all his narrative out of his memory – even more so when we're dealing with an author and narrator who before speaking to his reader, he first speaks to *the supreme being*:

This age then, Lord, whereof I have no remembrance, which I take on others' word, and guess from other infants that I have passed, true though the guess be, I am yet loth to count in this life of mine which I live in this world. For no less than that which I spent in my mother's womb, is it hid from me in the shadows of forgetfulness...Afterwards I began to smile; first in sleep, then waking: for so it was told me of myself, and I believed it; for we see the like in other infants, though of myself I remember it not. (St. Augustine 1960 : 23).

The autodiegetic narrator reveals his character as he's attempting to be as reliable and sincere as possible; he is full of transparency. Such a characteristic can also be seen in Sabato's autobiographic prose, with the difference being that in his prose the narrative beyond *mnemos* is of another nature due to its temporal reference:

That name, that grave, has always enticed within me something grim, and it might just be that it has been the cause of my tormented existence for the very fact that we were ensnared by this tragedy ever since the time I was in my mother's womb" (Sabato 2003:18).

Thus the scale of reliability is at times measured by the way that events in life are articulated. If the narrator at first states, then informs, and later narrates and describes things that might be in discordance with various situations in relation to the self, to time, space, even focus, this might create a question as to the credibility of what is being narrated, thus calling *the pact of reliability* with the reader into question.

Nevertheless, as is quite common in autoconfessional writing, the author-narrator can profit in reliability by asking for forgiveness when it comes to circumstance. There are even cases in which the author, seeing that there's no way out, apart from apologizing, can also deem as necessary to add further clarification.

This does not happen in models of classical prose except for when autobiography or autobiographic prose is represented as *mea culpa*. Asking for 'forgiveness' and clarification is always part of the function of credibility of the author, whereas the narrator goes beyond his initial function in order to assume the role of the explainer and commentator. Therefore, autobiographic narration beyond memory, either intentional or unintentional, either "violent" or desirable, is a typical movement toward a *sui generis* autofiction. If the provided fact given through an autobiographeme is acceptable and credible, *the fiction of the self* is deemed plausible in the sense of what rhetoric named *verisimilitude*.

3.5 Verisimilitude

Verisimilitude is one of the capital notions of Aristotle's rhetorics. It is the aesthetics of the public *alias* the reader, but not the book. It is a dedication to the plausible pact of credibility through the test of truth, the objectivity of autobiographic writing since, according to Barthes this notion relates to *the rhetorics of evidence*, reasoning, and to *approximative syllogism (enthymeme)* (Barthes, 2008).

By referring to Aristotle's rhetorics, Barthes argues that verisimilitude is considered *plausible* by the audience. It is there for the *interpretative reader* and *the collaborative reader*, who is a necessary partner to the game on texts (Piegay-Gros, 2011 : 149).

Barthes claims that many genres would willingly adapt Aristototele's principle because *a credible impossibility is worthier than an incredible possibility*. Thus, verisimilitude claims to unfold to the reader that which is credible, regardless of how removed it is from reality.

Seen from this perspective, the formulation of sentences and phrases such as the ones below by the author-narrator are not rare in autobiographic prose, i.e. in memories and autobiography:

- It is hard to believe it, yet true.
- I do not wish to delve into detail as this can then be considered not true.

In fact, such formulations as these are at the border of a contract with the two types of readers mentioned above. Such formulations that aim at the possible being credible abound in contemporary Albanian prose, especially those works in which the character assumes the prefix *auto*.

Additionally, there are narrative models created through various biographemes that later expand and turn into bigger autobiographemes of the author-narrator, thus creating *the illusion of truth*. This is usually achieved through fictional elements and the declaration of the genre in the very title of the work. To researchers of autobiographic structure, the strategy of autoreferential narrative genres is often much more convincing if the fictional category is marked since the cover of the book. This is justified due to the fact that the reader has the tendency to create his/her opinion, evaluation, and the choice of the mode of reading, i.e. if they wish to read facts as fiction or vice-versa.

This is a silent agreement between the reader and the text and, naturally, between the reader and the author. It is a fact that the author-narrator as the subject does not intervene when it comes to the object, but the life narrative in relation to the reader is in fact within the text. Adding to this the fact that every reading is a *subjective act*, regardless of the undertaking of the author in the narrator's stead, *verisimilitude* can turn into *the plausible*, i.e. in what the public might think; it is that which gives meaning to what Barthes recognized as *enthymeme* (Barthes 2008: 301).

Therefore, autobiographies are credible only when they reveal something that is not beautiful. One who knows how to only recount good things about his life is lying in most cases because each life, if seen from within, is nothing but a chain of loss, George Orwell once said. It must be clarified that this is not an issue of an author's work lacking *beauty* as an aesthetic category, but rather than being a narrative not of mirth but of suffering throughout life, *verisimilitude* becomes entirely *credible*. One must take into account another characteristic: genre. In contrast to other fiction, autobiographic texts are *referential* texts similar to scientific or historic speech that aims to give information on another "reality" outside the text and thus be subject to the test of verification. Their aim is not merely a possibility or probability, but similarity with the truth. The aim is not *the effect of truth*, but the representation of truth (Lejeune). Hereon, research focuses on two other concepts, *semantics* and *pragmatics*, both of which are directly related to *the possible* and *the credible*.

Semantics suggests the sign of the real-life out of the life of the author, which can also follow the path of identification of the author to the narrator-character, whereas pragmatics is the pure identification between the author-narrator, in which realm the truth is clearly separated from fiction as if cut by a blade. Seen in such a way, semantics is possible; pragmatics is credible. Both are related to the category of autoreferential genre: the first with reading and its many natures, the second with the illusion of credibility.

To Todorov, the first is subtler: it separates autobiography (as biography and memories) from the novel, although a novel may be full of elements originating from the author's life. Such an identification makes a distinction between "referential" or "historic" genres from "fictional" genres. The reality of the referential element is easily detectable due to the fact that the work deals with the author of the book itself, i.e. with an individual that has a civic status in his city.

Therefore, we're dealing with a speech act that codifies *semantic characteristics* (suggested by the narrator-character identification, who must speak to himself/herself) and *pragmatic characteristics* (based on the principle of the author-narrator identification, the emphasis is on that which is being said is true and not fiction). In such form, the act of speech expands beyond the world of fiction: it is practiced any time someone narrates *his/her story*.

It is interesting to note that in their claims of describing genres, Lejeune and Bruss, upon whose studies this article claims its propositions in this section, have in fact managed to construct the identity of the act of speech, which is the only foundation of their works.

This switch in object reveals the fact that the identity of genre arises out of the act of speech, which originates from the very beginnings with the narrative act of one's story to another listener. Such an initial contact, however, does not hinder the subjection towards a considerable transformation with the aim of forming a literary genre (Todorov, idem).

To simplify, *semantic and pragmatic characteristics help verisimilitude becomes possible and credible*, making way for *the autobiographic pact* which Lejeune had elaborated earlier. Such a *pact* not only accepted and included the author, but appreciated the author as one of the main factors in the creation of this correlation. This is the autobiographic author, also called *the autoconfessional author*, which will be the focus of the following section.

4. Conclusion

Autoconfessional models are the models that define the expansion of this construction in certain areas. Albanian autobiographical prose has produced sufficient examples in which autofiction is present even in the 'purest' documentary genres in which testimonial is a mission and not merely a passion.

Hence, if a fact provided in an autobiographeme is acceptable and verifiable, *the fiction of the self* becomes plausible in the sense of what rhetorics dubbed *verisimilitude*. Thus, the fact appears to be as natural in autoconfession as it is in fiction. This has been proved through the work of authors starting from Saint Augustine's *Confessions*, to Proust, Marquez, and even the novelist Aleksieviç.

To go back to the beginning of this paper: autoconfession is factual because the narration of life serves as evidence of life itself; autoconfession is fictional because facts are weaved according to the fictional practice in an autobiographical narrative which from the medieval times and onwards is nothing but a confession of the author to God and to Man.

One would ask John Barth, who is the novelist: God or Man?!

An analogous dilemma is to be found between fact and fiction.

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