

A BIOGRAPHY IS A SPECIALIZED FORM OF HISTORY AND BASIC TYPES OF BIOGRAPHIES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyse the development of the biographical novel and its history. The biographical novel is a genre of novel which provides a fictional account of a contemporary or historical person's life. Like other forms of biographical fiction, details are often trimmed or reimagined to meet the artistic needs of the fictional genre, the novel.

Keywords: *A biography, biographical novel, biographical fiction, genre, historical fiction, historical writings, background information, chronicles.*

ANNOTATSIYA

Ushbu tadqiqotning maqsadi biografik romanning rivojlanishi va uning tarixini tahlil qilishdir. Biografik roman - bu zamonaviy yoki tarixiy shaxsning hayotini badiiy tarzda tasvirlaydigan roman janri. Biografik fantastikaning boshqa shakllari singari, tafsilotlar ham ko'pincha badiiy janr, romanning badiiy ehtiyojlarini qondirish uchun qisqartiriladi yoki qayta tasavvur qilinadi.

Kalit so'zlar: *Biografiya, biografik roman, biografik fantastika, janr, tarixiy fantastika, tarixiy yozuvlar, asosiy ma'lumotlar, xronikalar.*

АННОТАЦИЯ

Целью данного исследования является анализ развития биографического романа и его истории. Биографический роман — это жанр романа, который представляет собой вымышленный рассказ о жизни современного или исторического человека. Как и в других формах биографической фантастики, детали часто обрезаются или переосмысливаются, чтобы удовлетворить художественные потребности художественного жанра, романа.

Ключевые слова: *Биография, биографический роман, биографический роман, жанр, исторический роман, исторические сочинения, справочная информация, хроника.*

INTRODUCTION

A biography is a written account of one person's life authored by another person. A biography includes all pertinent details from the subject's life, typically

arranged in a chronological order. Since the advent of the written word, historical writings have offered information about real people, but it wasn't until the 18th century that biographies evolved into a separate literary genre. Autobiographies and memoirs fall under the broader biography genre, but they are distinct literary forms due to one key factor: the subjects themselves write these works. Biographies are popular source materials for documentaries, television shows, and motion pictures.

Most people assume that the subject of a biography must be a person who is famous in some way. However, that's not always the case. In general, biographical subjects tend to be interesting people who have pioneered something in their field of expertise or done something extraordinary for humanity. In addition, biographical subjects can be people who have experienced something unusual or heartbreaking, committed terrible acts, or who are especially gifted and/or talented.

As a literary device, biography is important because it allows readers to learn about someone's story and history. This can be enlightening, inspiring, and meaningful in creating connections. Famous Examples of Biographical Works

The readership for biography tends to be those who enjoy learning about a certain person's life or overall field related to the person. In addition, some readers enjoy the literary form of biography independent of the subject. Some biographical works become well-known due to either the person's story or the way the work is written, gaining a readership of people who may not otherwise choose to read biography or are unfamiliar with its form.

LITRATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Here are some famous examples of biographical works that are familiar to many readers outside of biography fans: Alexander Hamilton (Ron Chernow), Prairie Fires: The American Dreams of Laura Ingalls Wilder (Caroline Fraser), Steve Jobs (Walter Isaacson), Churchill: A Life (Martin Gilbert), The Professor and the Madman: A Tale of Murder, Insanity, and the Making of the Oxford English Dictionary (Simon Winchester), A Beautiful Mind (Sylvia Nasar), The Black Rose (Tananarive Due), John Adams (David McCullough), Into the Wild (Jon Krakauer), John Brown (W.E.B. Du Bois), Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo (Hayden Herrera), The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks (Rebecca Skloot), Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln (Doris Kearns Goodwin), Shirley Jackson: A Rather Haunted Life (Ruth Franklin), the stranger in the Woods: The Extraordinary Story of the Last True Hermit (Michael Finkel).

The biographical novel is a genre of novel which provides a fictional account of a contemporary or historical person's life. Like other forms of biographical fiction, details are often trimmed or reimagined to meet the artistic needs of the fictional genre, the novel. These reimagined biographies are sometimes called semi-biographical novels, to distinguish the relative historicity of the work from other biographical novels. The genre rose to prominence in the 1930s with best-selling works by authors such as Robert Graves, Thomas Mann, Irving Stone and Lion Feuchtwanger. These books became best-sellers, but the genre was dismissed by literary critics. In later years it became more accepted and has become both a popular and critically accepted genre.^[1] Some biographical novels bearing only superficial resemblance to the historical novels or introducing elements of other genres that supersede the retelling of the historical narrative, for example Abraham Lincoln, Vampire Hunter follows the plot devices of a vampire fiction closely. Biographical fiction often also falls within the genres of historical fiction or alternative history.

Some novels that are known best for their fictional prowess, but include extensive biographical information that is less obvious to readers. A very good example of this kind is Goldsmith's "The Vicar of Wakefield", believed to be the biography of a person the author had known and observed very closely.

The biography form has its roots in Ancient Rome and Greece. In 44 BCE, Roman writer Cornelius Nepos published *Excellentium Imperatorum Vitae* (Lives of the Generals), one of the earliest recorded biographies. In 80 CE, Greek writer Plutarch released *Parallel Lives*, a sweeping work consisting of 48 biographies of famous men. In 121 CE, Roman historian Suetonius wrote *De vita Caesarum* (On the Lives of the Caesars), a series of 12 biographies detailing the lives of Julius Caesar and the first 11 emperors of the Roman Empire. These were among the most widely read biographies of their time, and at least portions of them have survived intact over the millennia.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

During the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church had a notable influence on biographies. Historical, political, and cultural biographies fell out of favor. Biographies of religious figures—including saints, popes, and church founders—replaced them. One notable exception was Italian painter/architect Giorgio Vasari's 1550 biography, *The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, which was immensely popular. In fact, it is one of the first examples of a bestselling book. Still, it wasn't until the 18th century that authors began to abandon multiple

subjects in a single work and instead focus their research and writing on one subject. Scholars consider James Boswell's 1791 *The Life of Samuel Johnson* to be the first modern biography. From here, biographies were established as a distinct literary genre, separate from more general historical writing.

As understanding of psychology and sociology grew in the 19th and early 20th centuries, biographies further evolved, offering up even more comprehensive pictures of their subjects. Authors who played major roles in this contemporary approach to biographing include Lytton Strachey, Gamaliel Bradford, and Robert Graves.

While all biographical works chronicle the lives of real people, writers can present the information in several different ways.

- **Popular** biographies are life histories written for a general readership. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot and *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer are two popular examples.

- **Critical** biographies discuss the relationship between the subject's life and the work they produced or were involved in; for example, *The Billionaire Who Wasn't: How Chuck Feeney Secretly Made and Gave Away a Fortune* by Conor O'Clery and *Unpresidented: A Biography of Donald Trump* by Martha Brockenbrough.

- **Historical** biographies put greater understanding on how the subject's life and contributions affected or were affected by the times in which they lived; see *John Adams* by David McCullough and *Catherine the Great* by Peter K. Massie.

- **Literary** biographies concentrate almost exclusively on writers and artists, blending a conventional narrative of the historical facts of the subject's life with an exploration of how these facts impacted their creative output. Some examples include *Savage Beauty: The Life of Edna St. Vincent Millay* by Nancy Milford and *Jackson Pollock: An American Saga* by Gregory White Smith and Steven Naifeh.

- **Reference** biographies are more scholarly writings, usually written by multiple authors and covering multiple lives around a single topic. They verify facts, provide background details, and contribute supplemental information resources, like bibliographies, glossaries, and historical documents; for example, *Black Americans in Congress, 1870-2007* and the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*.

- **Fictional** biographies, or biographical novels, like *The Other Boleyn Girl* by Philippa Gregory, incorporate creative license into the retelling of a real person's story by taking on the structure and freedoms of a novel. The term can also describe novels in which authors give an abundance of background information on their characters, to the extent that the novel reads more like a biography than fiction. An

example of this is George R.R. Martin's *Fire and Blood*, a novel detailing the history of a royal family from his popular *A Song of Ice and Fire*

Biographies inform readers about the life of a notable person. They are a way to introduce readers to the work's subject—the historical details, the subject's motivations and psychological underpinnings, and their environment and the impact they had, both in the short and long term. Because the author is somewhat removed from their subject, they can offer a more omniscient, third-person narrative account. This vantage point allows the author to put certain events into a larger context; compare and contrast events, people, and behaviors predominant in the subject's life; and delve into psychological and sociological themes of which the subject may not have been aware.

Also, a writer structures a biography to make the life of the subject interesting and readable. Most biographers want to entertain as well as inform, so they typically use a traditional plot structure—an introduction, conflict, rising of tension, a climax, a resolution, and an ending—to give the life story a narrative shape. While the ebb and flow of life is a normal day-to-day rhythm, it doesn't necessarily make for entertaining reading. The job of the writer, then, becomes one of shaping the life to fit the elements of a good plot.

Many modern writers have dedicated much of their careers to biographies, such as:

- Kitty Kelley, author of *Jackie Oh! An Intimate Biography*; *His Way: The Unauthorized Biography of Frank Sinatra*; and *The Family: The Real Story of the Bush Dynasty*
- Antonia Fraser, author of *Mary Queen of Scots*; *Cromwell*; *Our Chief of Men*; and *The Gunpowder Plot: Terror and Faith in 1605*
- David McCullough, author of *The Path Between the Seas*; *Truman*; and *John Adams*
- Andrew Morton, author of *Diana: Her True Story in Her Own Words*; *Madonna*; and *Tom Cruise: An Unauthorized Biography*
- Alison Weir, author of *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*; *Eleanor of Aquitaine: By the Wrath of God; Queen of England*; and *Katherine Swynford: The Story of John of Gaunt and His Scandalous Duchess*

The biography that ushered in the modern era of true-life writing, *The Life of Samuel Johnson* covered the entirety of its subject's life, from his birth to his status as England's preeminent writer to his death. Boswell was a personal acquaintance of Johnson, so he was able to draw on voluminous amounts of personal conversations

the two shared. What also sets this biography apart is, because Boswell was a contemporary of Johnson, readers see Johnson in the context of his own time. He wasn't some fabled figure that a biographer was writing about centuries later; he was someone to whom the author had access, and Boswell could see the real-world influence his subject had on life in the here and now.

A Beautiful Mind, by **Sylvia Nasar**, 1998 Pulitzer Prize-nominated biography of mathematician John Nash introduced legions of readers to Nash's remarkable life and genius. The book opens with Nash's childhood and follows him through his education, career, personal life, and struggles with schizophrenia. It ends with his acceptance of the 1994 Nobel Prize for Economics. In addition to a Pulitzer nomination, *A Beautiful Mind* won the National Book Critics Circle Award for Biography, was a *New York Times* bestseller, and provided the basis for the Academy Award-winning 2001 film of the same name.

Catherine Clinton's *Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom* biography of the abolitionist icon is a large-scale epic that chronicles Tubman's singular life. It starts at her birth in the 1820s as the slave Araminta Ross, continuing through her journey to freedom; her pivotal role in the Underground Railroad; her Moses-like persona; and her death in 1913. Because Tubman could not read or write, she left behind no letters, diaries, or other personal papers in her own hand and voice. Clinton reconstructed Tubman's history entirely through other source material, and historians often cite this work as the quintessential biography of Tubman's life.

Almost Famous Women by **Megan Mayhew Bergman** is not a biography in the strictest sense of the word; it is a fictional interpretation of real-life women. Each short story revolves around a woman from history with close ties to fame, such as movie star Marlene Dietrich, Standard Oil heiress Marion "Joe" Carstairs, aviatrix Beryl Markham, Oscar Wilde's niece Dolly, and Lord Byron's daughter Allegra. Mayhew Bergman imagines these colorful women in equally colorful episodes that put them in a new light—a light that perhaps offers them the honor and homage that history denied them.

A literary biography is the biographical exploration of the lives of writers and artists. Biographies about artists and writers are sometimes some of the most complicated forms of biography.^[1] Not only does the author of the biography have to write about the subject of the biography but also must incorporate discussion of the individual's literary works into the biography itself.^{[1][2]} Literary biographers must balance the weight of commentary on the individual works against the biographical content to create a coherent narrative.^[1] This balance is affected by the degree of

biographical elements in an author's literary works. The close relationship between writers and their work relies on ideas that connect human psychology and literature and can be examined through psychoanalytic theory.^[2]

Literary biography tends to have a plethora of autobiographical sources. Elizabeth Longford, a biographer of Wilfrid Blunt, noted, "Writers are articulate and tend to leave eloquent source material which the biographer will be eager to use."^[3] However, some authors and artists go out of their way to discourage the writing of their biographies, as was the case with Kafka, Eliot, Orwell and Auden. Auden said, "Biographies of writers whether written by others or themselves are always superfluous and usually in bad taste.... His private life is, or should be, of no concern to anybody except himself, his family and his friends."^[4]

Well-received literary biographies include Richard Ellmann's *James Joyce* and George Painter's *Marcel Proust*.^{[1][4]}

Biographical fiction is a type of historical fiction that takes a historical individual and recreates elements of his or her life, while telling a fictional narrative, usually in the genres of film or the novel. The relationship between the biographical and the fictional may vary within different pieces of biographical fiction. It frequently includes selective information and self-censoring of the past. The characters are often real people or based on real people, but the need for "truthful" representation is less strict than in biography.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The various philosophies behind biographical fiction lead to different types of content. Some asserts itself as a factual narrative about the historical individual, like Gore Vidal's *Lincoln*. Other biographical fiction creates two parallel strands of narrative, one in the contemporary world and one focusing on the biographical history, such as Malcolm Bradbury's *To the Hermitage* and Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*. No matter what style of biographical fiction is used, the novelist usually starts the writing process with historical research.^[6]

Biographical fiction has its roots in late 19th and early 20th-century novels based loosely on the lives of famous people, but without direct reference to them, such as George Meredith's *Diana of the Crossways* (1885) and Somerset Maugham's *The Moon and Sixpence* (1919). During the early part of the 20th century this became a distinct genre, with novels that were explicitly about individuals' lives.^[6]

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