

Power and Representation in Female Autobiographies

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Abstract : The study discusses relativity of perception and interpretation of power, its interdependence with conformity level of an individual. It describes an autobiography as a form of epiphany. It is suggested that life-writing helps the author analyze the past and define the borders of his personal power and sources of empowerment. As all life-writings deal with behaviors, values, attitudes, relationships and emotions, their investigation requires qualitative methods to understand social norms, gender roles, religion, and their role in empowerment and disempowerment of the author. The study consists of two parts. The first part is theoretical and interrogates the notion of personal power and how writing the own life can bring to conscious empowerment. The second part presents two autobiographies by female authors from two different Muslim cultures who negotiate between the larger nationalist agenda and their own personal concerns. These autobiographies (Tehmina Durrani, Pakistani author 'My Feudal Lord', Banine, Azerbaijani writer 'Caucasian days' and 'Parisian days') are the end of their authors' long silence, their revolt against the conventional norms, their decision to have an agency to confess and protest. These autobiographies are the authors' attempts to break the established matrix of perceptions, imposed norms, and gain power to build the real picture of their identity. The study sums up with the conclusion that in spite of very similar motifs of female authors to get empowered through self-analysis, different cultures and time create specific subjectivities associated with particular historical events and geographical location.

Keywords : conformity level, empowerment, female autobiography, self-identity

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