



ISSN: 1999-5601 (Print) 2663-5836 (online)

Lark Journal

Available online at: <https://lark.uowasit.edu.iq>

\*Corresponding author:

**Asst. Lect. Alaa Radhi Makki**Ministry of Education / Wasit  
Education Directorate

Email:

**Keywords:**Autobiographical  
performance, Self-Rev,  
Father-Son relationship,  
Personal life, Memoir, Self-  
Referential, John Mortimer,  
A Voyage Round My father**ARTICLE INFO****Article history:**Received 1 Jun 2023  
Accepted 21 Sep 2023  
Available online 1 Oct 2023**Autobiographical Performance: Father-Son  
Relationship in John Mortimer's A Voyage  
Round My Father****A B S T R U C T**

Autobiographical performance is a form of drama where the playwright uses his own life story as a source for his work, and he/ she blends truth and fiction to form a personal catharsis or a political appeal. The aim of this paper is to examine the notion of Autobiographical Performance, especially in relation to the theme of father-son relationship. Many writers, throughout the history of literature, pay a significant attention to familial relationships, and some modern writers use their own life as a raw material for their writing to present this issue. This usage has different aims and modes which are either a therapeutic method or an art form. The English playwright, John Mortimer, is much influenced by his father, and in his play, A Voyage Round my Father, he uses the form of autobiographical performance. He writes a biography about his father and he focuses on his relationship with him. The present study tries to answer these questions: What is meant by Autobiographical Performance? What are the modes of this form? And What is the difference between these two modes (Autobiographical Performance and Self-Rev)? This study focuses on the Autobiographical Performance, and it also refers to Self-Rev to distinguish between the two modes.

© 2023 LARK, College of Art, Wasit University

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31185/>**اداء السيرة الذاتية: علاقة الاب بالابن في مسرحية جون مرتايمر رحلة حول ابي**م. م. الاء راضي مكي \ وزارة التربية\ مديرية تربية واسط  
الخلاصة:

اداء السيرة الذاتية هي شكل من اشكال العمل المسرحي حيث يستخدم فيه الكاتب قصة حياته كمصدر لعمله, و يمزج بين الحقيقة و الخيال لينتج عمل اما ان يكون تنفيس عن عواطفه او نداء سياسي. الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو تحري مفهوم اداء السيرة الذاتية خصوصاً فيما يتعلق بموضوع علاقة الاب بالابن. اعطى الكثير من الكتاب, على مر تاريخ الادب, اهمية كبيرة للعلاقات العائلية, و كتب كتاب العصر الحديث ايضا عن هذا الموضوع. حيث استخدم البعض منهم سيرة حياتهم كمصدر لكتاباتهم. لهذا الاستخدام اهداف و اساليب مختلفة اما ان تكون عمل فني او طريقة علاجية. تأثر الكاتب الانكليزي جون مورتايمر بأبيه كثيراً, واستخدم اداء

السيرة الذاتية في مسرحيته رحلة حول ابي. حيث كتب عن سيرة حياة ابيه وركز على علاقته به. تحاول الدراسة الحالية الاجابة عن هذه الاسئلة: ما هو اداء السيرة الذاتية؟ و ماهي اساليبه؟ و ما الفرق بين اساليب السيرة الذاتية (اداء السيرة الذاتية و الوحي الذاتي)؟ تركز هذه الدراسة على اداء السيرة الذاتية وتشير ايضا الى الوحي الذاتي للتمييز بين الاسلوبين. الكلمات المفتاحية: أداء السيرة الذاتية، المراجعة الذاتية، العلاقة بين الأب والابن، الحياة الشخصية، مذكرات، المرجعية الذاتية، جون مورتيمر، رحلة حول والدي

## Introduction

In this paper, the researcher chooses to examine *A Voyage Round my Father* (1963) because it differs from other autobiographical plays. Most of the playwrights focuses on psychological problems which are exist due to problematic familial relationships. They just present the negative side of these relation and how they suffer under such circumstances whose negative outcomes still affect their current life. They also reflect their inability to love or deal with their parents. Mortimer's play is different; however, he lived unhappy childhood and suffered in this period, but he was able to love his father. And he succeeds in his life by following his father's footsteps. His play does not show therapeutic ends, but conversely, it is a love tribute which reflects unbreakable relationship between a father and a son. The researcher also refers to autobiographical therapeutic performances with an example for this form to differentiate between the two modes.

Autobiography is a literary genre that attempt to reconstruct a person's life course in terms of formation of an individual's unique personal self within a given social, historical, and cultural framework. It is a narrative account of someone's life or part of it that is written by him/herself. The term 'autobiography' is simply derived from autos. Which means self; bios., means life; and graphein which means write (Schwalm,2019). In fact, since the second part of the twentieth century, artistic expression and performance witnessed a significant turning point toward the personal or self with the embrace of the sociopolitical, solo performance, feminist visual art, literature, and autobiographical performance. And at the beginning of the twenty-first century, with the wide spread public interest in different technological devices such as TV, iPhone

selfies, and You Tube; the private has really turned to be public. As a sequence, the boundaries between the real and the dramatic, the truth and fiction, have never been so mysterious, so the self or the personal can be performed everywhere (Pendziket, et al, 2016).

Literary scholars have discussed autobiographical performances from the nineteenth century and they continued up to the present day; however, it is connected with literature from 1960s. In fact, before this time, it has been considered as a kind of historical writing, or a script which are regarded as true reports of a personal life. Additionally, autobiographical texts were read as a sort of authentic expressions of what had really occurred since they are composed by an individual who has really lived this life (Wagner-Egelhaaf,2019). Traditionally, drama and autobiography seem to be opposites. In fact, it is familiar to most of us to think about autobiographies as non-fictions (novels) not as plays or dramas due to many factors: The fundamental principle in structuring and writing a play is dialogue which seems to be incompatible with first-person narration; the relationship between the stage and the dramatic text is inherently dialogic; the writer of the performed text and the actor are usually not identical; and even a monologue which is addressed to an audience is influenced by the presence of that audience. Hence, all these obstacles make it hard to enter into the autobiographical performance. However, the barrier between writer and actor has been frequently dismantled and explicitly thematized in 1960s, after the appearance of art performance. Consequently, the actor becomes the performer of her/ his own story, and this leads the stage to innovative modes of autobiographical narration and a new performative range of the self (Fleig, 2019).

The use of personal theatre or self-referential theatre as a means for personal expression goes back centuries, and writers have been practiced this mode throughout the world. According to Walker (1994), “All civilizations, not just the Western, are attentive and have been attentive throughout their history to ... individual self-understanding” (p.207). And these cultures include Arabic, Indian, Japanese, Chinese besides other non-western cultures, in which both men and women cultivate aesthetic self-referential forms. Autobiographical performances are either an art form or a therapeutic method and the intersection between the two modes is both a place of departure and of meeting as well (Pendziket, et al, 2016). Nonetheless, this impulse of autobiographical modes has expressed itself in the field of theatre, with the appearance of what might be called personal or self-referential theatre, which means that the theatre or the performance of the content contains materials from the real lives of the performers. So, this work

can be categorized as an autobiographical form, which is related to the actor's personal life, or auto ethnographic forms which concerns the actor's gender, class, ethnicity, or social grouping. And within these two categories we can find two kinds: non-therapeutic forms whose purpose is educational, artistic, or advocacy; and therapeutic forms whose purpose is personal growth (Pendziket, et al, 2016).

We have to return back to the starting points of experimental theatre in America if we want to locate the emergence of referential or personal theatre. Spalding Gray (1941-2004) uses himself as a source of his work. This usage represents the turning point in the history of theatre and this innovation is no less important than that of Brecht and Stanislavski. It is important to differentiate between the two modes of personal theatre. However, the capacity of relating personal and private truths in front of an audience seems to be one of the most dynamic components of self-Rev (autobiographical Therapeutic Performance) and autobiographical performance as well (Snow,2016). Renee' Emunah, the founder of drama therapy, (1994-2015) develops and conceived autobiographical therapeutic performance and she terms it as self-revelatory performance (Self-Rev). This form of drama therapy and theatre has been predominantly used in America and Canada. According to her words, "Self-Revelatory performance is a form of drama therapy and theatre in which a performer creates an original theatrical piece out of the raw material of current life issues" (Emunah,2015, p.71). She also claims, "autobiographical performance...involves dramatic storytelling or dramatization of personal life material, but without a conscious aim of transforming or healing this material... autobiographical theatre most often revolves around stories or experiences from the past" ((qtd. in Dokter and Gersie, 2016,p.184). On the other hand, what she calls self-revelatory performance is considered to be both a therapeutic method and a form of theatre (Dokter and Gersie, 2016).

Autobiographical performance involves storytelling or narration about past events, adventures, or issues which have already been resolved. Whether self-Rev presents current issues and it is always exposed on the emotional edge unlike autobiographical performance where the narrator is not highly or intensively intimate (Emunah,1994,p.31). The notion of therapeutic practice is associated with the telling of personal stories which have deep roots in Western thinking. Actually, telling a personal story has a liberating effect as it recounts the individual's misery and victimization (Pendziket, et al, 2016). The psychoanalyst Charles Rycroft (1983) has inquired the potentiality of autobiographical therapeutic writing that it just serves the aim of

“advertising the continued existence of ego.” (p.193). He shows his emphasis on the need for autobiographical therapy to involve a reflexive practice which intends at self-discovery (Pendziket, et al, 2016).

Autobiographical performance or self-referential theatre may have therapeutic aims, as critical self-referential and personal inquiry are pursued in relation to different topics such as agency, emancipatory or oppressive self-representations, identity, narrative, and memory (Langellier and Peterson, 2004). Renee’ Emunah (2015) claims that scholars from therapeutic drama and theatre have acknowledged the fact that self-referential performances can have therapeutic advantages. On the other hand, Heddon (2008) states that autobiographical performances “may equate with personal healing.” (p.54). She refers to the works of some artists as acts of recovery from traumatic life events such as the works of Linda Montana and Spalding Gray. Many different names may refer to self-referential forms, and according to Smith and Watson (2010), “the rich and diverse history of self-referential modes requires that we make some crucial distinctions among key terms \_ autobiography, memoir, life writing, life narrative \_ that may seem to imply the same thing.” (p.2).

Hence, according to this review we can infer that autobiographical performance takes different modes and has different aims. Autobiographical therapeutic performance, self-Rev, presents personal information about current issues whose impact is really present and reflected in the form of writing, and it focuses on the psychological problems. On the other hand, autobiographical performance tells past stories which may contain problems that have been overcome or resolved. Most of autobiographical performances illustrate the writer’s life chronologically from childhood to adulthood referring to the main situations and turning points that affect his life. These plays also contain a family reference where the playwrights refer to the members of his family besides his close friends referring to the main conversations and events with them. However, autobiographical therapeutic performances may illustrate the writer’s life story or part of it in a way that he/she can depict a current issue. As instance, Mortimer presents his story with his father from his early childhood until he becomes a man, and this story extends to thirty years. On the other hand, Robert Anderson, starts his story when he is at the age of forty and his father is in his eighty. He presents part of his life focusing on current events and throughout the play, the characters argue with each other about their past lives, so the audience can follow the psychological development of the character through these conversations. The

researcher refers to these two plays as examples to the autobiographical performance modes, as we can see in the ongoing discussion.

### ***A Voyage Round Father Through the Perspective of Autobiographical Performance***

Over the past century, the means by which parents treat their children have changed, since the society has imposed pressures on the average family in different ways; the relationship between parents and their children remains problematic in relation to many of them. So, modern playwrights tend to focus on the more problematic relationships, probably these topics make better drama. Sometimes, such dramatizations are written from the perspective of now-grown daughter or son, and this means celebration of this relation or purgation which reflects the fear of a daughter/son to grow up with such a father or mother. More often, this child gets better comprehension of his/her parents' behavior in the act of writing (Abboston, 2003).

John Mortimer (1923-2009) is a playwright, a short story writer, and a novelist. He is an English writer who was born in London. His father, a barrister, is Clifford Mortimer, and his mother is Khathleen Mary Smith. He is known in America for his stories and also for his work *Rumpole of the Baily* (1978), besides his novel *Bride Head Revisited*, which is an adaptation of a novel by Evelyn Waugh ii (Hager, 2009). He got his education at Hartow and Brasenose College, Oxford. For many years, he was a practicing barrister, and in 1966 he became a Queen's Counsel. Before turning to the theatre, he had wrote and published many novels before turning to theatre (Stringer and Sutherland, 1996).

Mortimer uses the form of autobiographical performance in his play *A Voyage Round My Father* which reflects the strong relationship between the father and his son, and it also shows the distance between them. Just like many other playwrights, he uses his own life as a source for this play. They look at their own families, past and present, in forming their works. Family life serves as the basis for some of the best dramas. They use a real incident as a source of a play, or use it as an inspiration for a drama or fiction. Mortimer's play, which has been a book, a stage play, and a television play, was inspired by his own childhood. This play is his journey into his father's mind. His father is a religious man and he comprehends the world and himself through the lens of his own beliefs. So, this play is about a son who is trying to understand his father. Mortimer relates the story of his father relaying on silent witnesses which have survived him

such as photographs, his books, press cutting, diaries, stories of family members, and remembered conversations (Russel-Jones, 2016). Actually, the loss of a parent may have a significant impact on an individual that provides impetus to his/her on going life. Probably, Mortimer illustrates this best in his play. As it can happen to most of us, death can deepen and sharpen an individual's personality. That the loss of a father can be a turning point or a defining moment in life. It seems very clear in Mortimer's play that he can succeed in life and in finding a profession and a vocation which suit both his personality and skills (Graves, 2021).

What makes Mortimer's play interesting and different is that it reflects the strong and unrevealed love between a son and his father. Unlike many other playwrights who tend to present victimized children. This can be seen clearly in the works of many playwrights, especially Americans, whose works are mixture of both their own imagination and autobiographical elements. These works presents either Oedipal or other psychological problems as we can see in Robert Anderson's *I Never Sang for My Father* (1968). In this play, the playwright presents a son who is haunted by his past and he relates his story with his parent where he lived uncomfortable relationship with him. This play is written as an act of psychological relieve and purgation (Abboston,2003). It is also an autobiographical memoir play and the son is also the narrator of the play who fails to love his father. The American playwright, Robert Anderson, also focuses on the relationship between him and his father which seems to be also cold, but it ends with abandoning him (Bryer and Harting, 2010). It illustrates the evolving relationship between the son and his father who is presented as an iron-willed, domineering man and his son wants and tries desperately to love his father. (Krafft and O'Doherty, 1991). *I Never Sang For My Father* relates an emotional story about a son, Gene, and his father Tom Garrison where the two attempt to love each other. Tom is a traumatized child who had lived miserable childhood because his alcoholic father had abandoned him when he was ten years old. So, he has to take care of his siblings. Furthermore, his mother's early death worsens the situation and results in making him grow up rapidly, and he becomes materialistic, self-centered and controlling. He lives with these bad memories which are passed down to his children where they cannot understand and love him. Gene cannot sacrifice his life for the sake of his father, Tom. He abandoned him to remarried and , finally, Tom died alone (Anderson,1995). It seems that Gene feels guilty toward his father and his inability to love him. Hence, this play is written as an act of healing and it is an autobiographical therapeutic performance. Anderson cannot bear this

relationship with a remarkable demanded father who used to control his children. He fails to get close to his father, but at the same time he blames himself for his inability to love him.

Anderson's play meets Mortimer's in some points: both of them are autobiographical and illustrate the relationship between a father and a son, the narrator of the story (the son) also strives to deal with his father, but in vain. Unlike Mortimer's, it presents a psychological progress of the son and the father as well who had faced harsh childhood that result in creating such a domineering character who reflects what he had faced in his childhood on his children and they continue to suffer its negative impact, so it presents the writer's current issue or problem. This play is categorized as self-Rev since it presents psychological problems which has no resolution. Whereas Mortimer's presents a son who can succeed in his life and can also love his father who never show any affection toward his son.

*A Voyage Round My Father* is an autobiographical one, and it also has fictionalized details. This memory play exhibits a chronological series of episodes which are unified by the narrator, and this narrator appears as a boy and man as well. The main characters in this play are not given names and the playwright refers to them as Father, Mother, and Son. Mortimer does not want to universalize them in this way as they are the Mortimers, but he intends to emphasize on the familial relationship that is really present beneath the surface, in spite of the lack of emotion (Abboston, 2003). This autobiographical play is about Mortimer's blind dictatorial father. It is not about a single incident, but rather it is about the developing and changing relationship between a father and a son over the course of perhaps thirty years. Mortimer wants to depict childhood while also telling a story about it; he wants to cover various passages of a lengthy narrative that spans both childhood and adulthood. Two actors play the role of the son. One of them is the son as a boy, and the other is the son as a man (George, 2006).

In brief, the play starts with an old blind father who asks his son to describe the garden to him. Then the action gets back to the past where the son retells and remembers his relationship with his father and different scenes from their lives. Through this recollection, we learn that the father becomes blind in a gardening accident, then the son was sent to a boarding school. His father is a barrister and the son has many conversations with him about nature, sex, law, and education (Abboston,2003). The son's bond with his blind father is revealed to the audience by the narrator. When he has to choose a profession, his father advices him to follow in his footsteps and to be a lawyer just like him because it will allow him to have free time for writing. Then, the

narrator travels back in time to the past at home and school. Instead of serving in the military, the young man works on a wartime propaganda film where he falls in love with a married woman. They are married after her divorce, but because his salary as a barrister is insufficient, he also writes plays while working part-time for a legal aid organization. After learning how to conduct cross examinations from his father, he ultimately prevails in a significant case and discovers that he has adopted his father's practice (Stivosky and Schrodinger,2020). This son tries to imitate his father's style as a barrister; however, comes off ridiculous, but at last wins a case and it was a major divorce case, in spite of the fact that he defends the half of the couple who is less deserving. He feels proud of this achievement; however, his wife blames him for being just like his father concerning his too 'casual attitude towards life'. This father loves his grandchildren and he spends times with them telling stories. Then, after his death his garden deteriorates, where the son mourns the loss of his father (Abboston, 2003).

As we can see through this short summary of the play, the audience follows the development of the son from his childhood to his adulthood where he can find two careers and get a wife. He becomes both a writer and a lawyer. As the play starts, only fifteen words are spoken before the flash backs start. The first fifteen lines depict a grown-up father and son strolling through a garden. Father is really blind. Plants and pests serve as the play's primary building blocks, and gardening serves as a subtle allegory for other concepts (such as growth in all forms and the threats to that growth (George, 2006). At the very beginning of the play, the father asks his son, "when you were a boy, we often bagged a hundred earwigs in a single foray! Do you remember?" and the son replies, "I remember" (Mortimer,2001, p.8). This means that the "I remember" is this 'Open, sesame', just as the stage direction informs the audience, "The father starts to tie up the plant, expertly and with neat finger. He can obviously see." (p.98). And the son then says to the audience, "My father wasn't always blind." ((Mortimer,2001,p.8). Then, like in so many stories, the stage turns back in time. The son continues to tell a past-tense story that sounds like the opening of a novel as the stage works it runs formative power, giving youth and sight to these individuals. The Son addresses the audience and tells them that he lives with his parents in a small house which is surrounded by a huge garden and it seems like a kind of protection for their house: "The three of us lived in a small house surrounded, as if for protection, by an enormous garden." ( Mortimer, 2001, p.8). The play is driven by the boy's sympathy for his father, his terror at the blindness and the barrier it creates between them. "My father was blind but we never mentioned it" (Mortimer, 2001, p.8). As it is mentioned in the

introduction, autobiographical performance contains storytelling and past events. Mortimer relates to the audience his past life with his parents, he goes back in time to different situations in his life.

As the play goes on, we learn that this father (in spite of losing his sight) keeps on working in his garden which he loves a lot and asks his son to help him in gardening and to be his eyes to describe everything to him. He also goes on working as a barrister and he just leaves his house when he goes to the court to try a case. His wife is always ready to accompany him to London and the Law Courts. Then the two get back home as soon as possible. He returns to his garden and the ritual of the evening earwig-hunt, and the safety of the dahlias. They rarely have visitors, and if anyone comes just like neighbors or friends, he leaves the place until the danger has vanished. We notice that the son describes his father's going out and meeting other people as a dangerous act. This father, after losing his sight starts to avoid making relationships with everyone. He spends the rest of his life lonely and relies on his wife and son, but at the same time his relation with them is cold, he tries to build a barrier that may make him seem strong in their eyes.

The father in this play is presented as a complicated human being to whom the son has devoted his entire life trying to get close. He is completely dependent on his adoring wife, yet he treats her like a servant. This is partly a legacy of a more constrictive social period when men were encouraged to hold themselves emotionally distant and a woman's place and duty were still widely believed to be in the home. She serves all of his needs and wants without expecting any gratitude or attention in return. The distance between this blind father and his son can be observed from the play's title, which only permits the narrator to voyage 'around' his father and never 'with' him or 'toward' him which would imply a closer connection, suggest that his relationship with his son is no less remote (Abboston, 2003).

It is obvious that the relationship between the Father and Son is very strong, but at the same time it is never mentioned. They spend a lot of time together without showing any kind of affection. Son searches for this love, but Father keeps himself distant from showing any emotion. When Son has to go to school, it is clear that neither Son nor Father wants him to go on a boarder school, but it was Mother's choice to send him and this can imply the strong relation between Father and Son. Mother informs Father that their son will soon be going away to school. Father seems displeased, but he tries not to show any difference. She tells him that he

should not expect him to stay with them forever. After few days, as they are sitting and having breakfast, Father starts to talk about his son's going to school, but the mother tries to prevent him saying that Son does not like mentioning this. Father keeps pretending indifference saying that either he will go or not, he just wants to know because if his son is here this evening, he wants him to help him out with the earwigs. Additionally, Before Son's departure, Father tells him not to expect any advice from his father, and he adds that not all advice is perfectly useless. He also addresses his son saying remember that you are alone in this world and no one can tell you what to do. Of course, this makes Son crying. But immediately, Father comes out at last with some sound of advice. He tells his son to say the word "rats" when he is crying, because this word has something to do with the muscles of the face which prevents anyone from crying, that no one can cry if she/he utters this word. The Son follows his father's advice, he says the word "rats" trying to stop himself from crying.

Mortimer presents himself, in his childhood, as a son who cannot comprehend what is going on with his parents. He thinks that they are separated and the separation between Son and his parents and between the parents themselves is revealed in many situations throughout the play. For example, in one occasion while Son is talking with his friend, Iris, about his parents, he mentions that they are quarrelling, refusing to explain more about how and why they are quarrelling because he himself does not understand why. He thinks that it is possibly they are not his parents. But, at the same time, he does not want to accuse them for being unfaithful to each other because he tells Iris that they are very honest couple. Iris assures him that they are his parents and he should not be ignorant. Moreover, Son also has a Russian friend named Reigate who seems to know about Son's cold relationship with his parents and he also knows that they always quarrel. Once he comes with Son to his house and the two want to perform a play in front of the parents. Son has himself written this play which the parents do not know about their son's ability to write. They feel surprised about knowing this and they think that Reigate helps him in writing this play. Through this scene we can know that those parents do not know about their son's needs and interests. Furthermore, Son chooses to perform the role of two little clowns and refuses to play any role of parents. After they have finished this performance, the two leave the house and Reigate starts to talk about Son's parents. He tells him that his parents seemed to be quiet, but Son replies that they are not, they just pretend to be quiet for me. Then Reigate starts to talk about Father's blindness where Son does not respond to him:

“ REIGATE: You know? I’ll tell you something  
about your father...

SON: What?

REIGATE: He can’t see. He’s blind, isn’t he?

SON: (Grown up). It was a question our family never asked. Naturally I didn’t  
answer it.” (Mortimer, 2001, p. 35)

Ironically, it is not the father’s blindness that separates him from his son, but rather his refusal to see, as suggested by his complete disengagement from all other people. He withdraws into his home and garden, leaving only to go outside to try a case, which he continues to do with great success. His refusal to even acknowledge his own blindness causes him to live a solitary life. The father keeps his distance from everyone and everything by acting in a superior manner and avoiding being emotionally attached with anybody or anything. In addition, he rejects reality and the seriousness of life. He tends to stay away from difficult situations. Over the years, the father gives his son advice on issues like marriage, sex, work, and the law, but there is little chance for the son to connect with his father or learn from him. There may be some truth in the father’s assertions that education is pointless, sex is overrated, and the law is a simple game, but there are hardly the kinds of things a father would typically tell his children (Abboston , 2003).

The son keeps on endeavoring to copy and satisfy his father. Now and again he succeeds; however, neither achievement nor disappointment draw any unmistakable response from his father. The son ultimately chooses to practise law on the recommendation of his father, in spite of his failed attempt to be like his father in court. He works in his father’s office, but because he is payed so little, he has to take a second job at the Free Legal Center to supplement his income. Apart from warning him not to give up the law in favor of writing, his father never intervenes to offer help. It becomes apparent that the father has grown to adore his daughter-in-law and pays more attention to her than to his son, despite the fact that he had firstly disapproved the son’s decision to marry a divorcee with children because he thought it was financially imprudent. Even though he is unable to express open feelings of love, esteem, or even respect, we have the suspicion that he loves his grand kids because of the stories he tells to amuse them. In some ways, the father’s intelligence makes him a perfect barrister for clients because he does not have

to personally believe that they are guilty or innocent to make a strong argument. But the power comes at cost, it separates him from people who actively want to believe in something and suggests a lifeless interior. But Son seems to imply that his father has an inner existence that is just well-contained through the play's natural imagery (Abboston, 2003).

His father believes in nature that while he is still alive, the garden flourishes. But as his final illness worsens, it starts to wither. The son was as his father's eyes, he obediently spends countless hours with him, describing for him the garden and the scenery they pass on rural walks. Since, they are physically close to one another, they develop a bond without the necessity for open communication. As a result, when the father passes away, the son is left feeling alone rather than relieved, mature, or free (Abboston, 2003): The son closes the play with this narration: "I'd been told of all the things you're meant to feel. Sudden freedom, growing up, the end of dependence, the step into the sunlight when no one is taller than you're in no one else's shadow... I know what I felt Lonely" (Mortimer, 2001, p.86).

Many writers, not only Mortimer, use their fathers' characters as a resource for their works, but Mortimer goes further. In most of his conversations and interviews, he refers to his father as a major influence on his life. As an instance, in an interview which has been conducted for the *New York Times*, Auberon, the interviewer, tries all the time to steer Mortimer from talking about his father. He asks him about the characters that he has invented in his works just like Rumpole and others, but all his attempts are in vain and the conversation goes back to his father. Actually, he could dramatize his father's character very well in *A Voyage Round My Father*. But Mortimer himself wonders whether he has truthfully portrayed his father, or invented him. It seems that Clifford, his father, turns to be a sort of fictional character and he becomes a different character from what he was in his real life (Grove, 2007).

Mortimer is influenced by his father to the extent that most his opinions are those of his father. Furthermore, his father's faulty memory, atheism, fear of boredom, as well as his asthma and glaucoma are all passed to his son (John). Mortimer spends his life residing in the same house that his father built, refusing to even think about changing anything in it just like altering or adding to the size of this property. The garden becomes for him the source of his love for the English country side, a sign of stability and permanence, a haven, a place of solace, and a form of drug (Grove, 2007). This play is written by a son who is really understanding his father's past

behavior and has overcome all these past situations. So all his views now stem from his love and admiration for his father.

It is clear that Mortimer did not have a comfortable childhood. He did not live an ideal life with his parents. He had struggled in his childhood with his blind father who never showed his emotion to his son and that son spends almost his life to get close to him. But at the same time, he adores his father and tries all his best to satisfy him, he also tries to emulate his father's style in life and follows his advices and his footsteps to get a career. His relationship with his father is unbearable, but at the same time it is unbreakable. His father's death leaves a big hole in his life and he feels lonely instead of feeling free. But this does not mean that he was a miserable or victimized son. He feels responsible towards his father and was his eyes most of the time. This play can really show that Mortimer gets a clear comprehension of his father's character and behavior. He is no longer searching for his father's love because it really exists, he really loves him and his father's conducts reflect his love although he has never mentioned it. So, Mortimer's play is not written as a kind of healing or purgation, rather it written to reflect his love. His problem seems to be resolved when he gets better understanding of what he has faced in his childhood. It differs from other autobiographical therapeutic plays such as Anderson's play. In this plays, the writer presents his past live and problems which have never resolved and still have negative impact on him, so this play has therapeutic aims and are categorized as self-Rev.

## **Conclusion**

According to this discussion, we can deduce that autobiographical performance is used by modern writers where they use their own life as a source for their writings. There are many purposes behind using this genre and it has different names and modes. Many playwrights use this form as an act of healing where they present social or psychological problems which may exist due to uncomfortable familial relationship. In these plays we notice that the characters try and struggle to deal with their parent, but they fail. So, these plays reflect the characters' psychological progress due to this bad relationship. On the other hand, other playwrights use this form to reflect their love or admiration.

Mortimer's play presents a son who was able to love his father in spite of all what he has faced in his childhood and his emotionless relationship with his father. It is clear that he treats his

father in a way that matches all parents expectations and needs. Through this work we can find that most people, whether intentionally or unintentionally, follow the same steps as their parents, and *A Voyage Round My Father* and *I Never Sang For My Father* can depict this well. Both plays present controlling parents, but they face different destiny with their sons. In Anderson's play Tom Passes his hatred for his father to his son Gene. Although Gene tries to love him and hates the fact that he hates his father, but he fails to overcome this feeling and he leaves his father to start a new life. On the other hand, In Mortimer's play, the son succeeds to love his father and he cannot bear his departure. It seems that Mortimer wants to make his relationship with his father immortal by writing this autobiographical play. This play is written to reflect his love and admiration for his father, and it is unlike Anderson's play which has therapeutic advantages. We can also deduce that this cold father-son relationship is not only because this father's complicated character or his blindness, but it is also because the social norms at that time where parents have to behave as domineering characters. This father can offer love to his daughter-in-law and his grandsons. So, Mortimer can understand his father's inability to show his love but his conducts can reveal it.

## References

- Abboston, S. C. W. (2003). *Thematic guide to modern drama*. Greenwood Press.
- Anderson, R. (1995). *I Never Sang For My Father*. Dramatists play Service INC.
- Bown, L. and Gawthorpe, A. (2014). *Masterclass writing plays: How to create realistic and compelling drama and get your work performed*. Teach Yourself.
- Bryer, J. R. and Harting, M. C. (2010). *The facts on file companion to American drama*. University Press of America.
- Dokter, D. and Gerise, A. (2016). A retrospective study of autobiographical performance during dramatherapy training. In S. Pendzik, R. Emunah and D.R. Johnson (Eds.) *The self in performance: Autobiographical, self-revelatory, and auto ethnographic forms of therapeutic theatre*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Emunah, R. (1994). *Acting for real : Drama therapy process, technique, and performance*. New York:

Taylor & Francis.

Emunah, R. (2015). Self-revelatory performance. A form of drama therapy and theatre.

*Drama therapy review*, 1 (1), 71-85. <https://doi.org/10.1386/dtr.1.1.71-1>

Fleig, A. (2019). 3.8 Autobiography and drama / theatre. In M. Wagner-Egelhaaf (Ed.)

*Handbook of autobiography/autofiction*. Walter de Gruyter GmbH &

Co KG.

George, K. (2006). *Winter's tales: Reflections on the novelistic stage*. Newark: University of Delaware Press.

Grove, V. (2007). *A voyage round John Mortimer*. Penguin Books.

Hager, A., (2009). *Encyclopedia of British writers 18 century*. General Editor.

Heddon, D. (2008). *Autobiography and performance*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Hillier-Graves, T. (2021). *Pepper corn: His life & Locomotives*. Pen& Sword Transport.

Krafft, R. and O'Doherty, B. (Eds.). (1991). *The arts on television 1976-1990: Fifteen years of cultural programming. Media arts/ film, radio/ television program*. National Endowment for the Arts.

Mortimer, J. (2001). *A Voyage Round My Father*. Oberon Books Ltd.

Pendzik, S., Emunah, R. and Johnson, D. R. (2016). The self in performance: Context,

definition, directions. In S. Pendzik, R. Emunah and D. R. Johnson (Eds.). *The self in*

*performance: Autobiographical, self-revelatory, and auto ethnographic forms of*

*therapeutic theatre*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Russell-Jones, G., (2016). *Conchie: What my father didn't do in the war*. Lion Books.

Schwalm, H. (2019). 3.9 Autobiography. Autobiographical forms and genres. In M.

Wagner-Egelhaaf (Ed.) *Handbook of autobiography/autofiction*. Walter de

Gruyter GmbH & Co KG.

Snow, S. (2016). Influences of experimental theatre on the emergence of Self-revelatory performance. In S.

Pendzik, R. Emunah and D. R. Johnson (Ed.) *The self in performance: Autobiographical, self-*

*revelatory, and auto ethnographic forms of therapeutic theatre*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Stilovsky, F. and Schrodinger, P. (2020). *The power of words: Classics*. Author House.

Stringer, J. and Sutherland, J. (1996). *The Oxford companion to twentieth-century literature in English*. Oxford University Press.

Wagner-Egelhaaf, M. (Ed). (2019). *Handbook of autobiography/autofiction*. Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG.

Walker, J. (1994). Reading genres across cultures. The example of autobiography. In L.

Lawal (Ed.), *Reading world literature: Theory, history, practice*. University of Texas Press.