

**AUTOBIOGRAPHIE ET ILLUSION DE LA VÉRITÉ
– RÉFLEXIONS À PARTIR DE L'ÉTREINTE DE PHILIPPE VILAIN
AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND THE ILLUSION OF TRUTH. REFLECTIONS ON
THE NOVEL L'ETREINTE BY PHILIPPE VILAIN**

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Abstract: *Autobiographical writing has a variety of aims, often illusory ones. Objectivity and exhaustiveness are just two of the most frequently pursued goals which are impossible to reach by their writers. The present article tackles the way Philippe Vilain re-enacts a love story in the novel L'Étreinte, in which his partner is the writer Annie Ernaux. The analysis is two-fold: on the one hand, we will review the author's efforts to render the experience in the most complete, honest and objective manner possible; on the other hand, we will point out the limitations that writing, as a structuring element of reality, imposes.*

Love tension is doubled by that of the literary critic, Philippe Vilain. The author wishes to do equal justice to the intense experience he has gone through as well as to the objectivity he values as a literary theorist. Since he considers that any kind of „economy” is a danger to the appropriate reception of the text by the reader, the writer recounts this autobiographical experience in a way that excludes any tinge of masculine or writerly vanity, revealing himself in circumstances that favour vulnerability, authenticity, care and love for the other and the act of writing.

Autobiographical writing, no matter how faithful to reality, cannot but eventually betray the latter. As an instance of inevitable autofiction, autobiography re-enacts the lived experience in a diffuse and approximate manner imposed by the subjectivity of memory and other psychical processes whose boundaries are impossible for us to cross. Closely observing the autobiographical pact as defined by Philippe Lejeune, Vilain firstly honours a pact that he seems to have made with himself and with his own consciousness: that of being honest with himself, with the others and with the act of writing. We cannot be completely faithful to reality given that any recapturing of the latter through writing brings about omissions, additions, re-interpretations which originate in the writer's subjectivity. Although aware of this phenomenon, especially from the theorist's perspective, Philippe Vilain seems to defy it with every page he writes. He understands that writing cannot aspire to capture reality or truth as they are, and that the latter often remain the prisoners and the trophy – a sad reward – of the lived experience with all the challenges it sets to us.

Key words: *autobiography, fiction, autofiction, autobiographical pact, reality, objectivity*