As a great number of recent scholarly publications discussing the given topic shows, the genre of autobiography provides a fruitful field for literary research and analysis. In part, this springs from the genre’s rather ambiguous nature and blurred boundaries. A lot of autobiographies are claimed to interweave elements of fact and fiction and to stand on the verge between literary works and cultural, or historiographical, documents. Since autobiographies are, for the most part, understood as accounts of real life and authentic experience, rather than imagination, they are thought to be particularly efficient in persuading the reader to believe the author/narrator, accept the author’s/narrator’s point of view and his/her perception of the world. This gives them, in addition to other things, a strong potential to serve as tools in the political struggles of various kinds.

This statement is especially true of the African American autobiography. Black autobiography, from its very first specimen, namely the slave narrative, has played a central role in the literary tradition of African Americans. It has played a crucial part in their attempt to survive and fight racism, sexism and “classism” frequently oriented against them in the American society. Being conscious of the social impact of the printed word, many African American authors have used the act of publishing their life stories in order to provide the public with a true picture of what it means to be black in the USA at a given point of this country’s history. Through their depiction of the first-hand minority experience, the authors’ aim was to win the reader for their struggle against the prejudice, racism and physical violence aimed at the black segment of the American population. ...