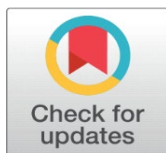


# EVOLUTION OF DIARIES INTO BLOGS: A NOVEL FORM OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE

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## ABSTRACT

The relentless pursuit of humans in documenting personal experiences to conceptualise self-identity or to preserve canonical events as collective memory through individual lenses has been acknowledged throughout history. In this endeavour, diaries have played a pivotal role as a medium of expression and aided in this journey of introspection as a rational species. To discuss diaries in the world of literature and brush off The Diary of Samuel Pepys and Anne Frank's memoir would be blasphemous. Not only have these two literary works helped in popularising the genre but also stands testament to the perennial strength of autobiographical writings. Over time, these historical autobiographical writings and memoirs have charted the course for what we now call blogs in the internet age. The internet in the digital era has transformed how we think, write and publish. It has provided new forms of expression in the form of blogs, and extended the reach and effect of personal accounts. This paper discusses the definition of blogs and how it uses narrative and content analysis of blog sites as prime methodology. It studies the impact blogs create in preserving narratives of the world. The paper also highlights the different types of blogs and how they decentralise the meta-narratives in existence today, foregrounding controversial talks on the aspect of information gate-keeping. Blogs have revolutionised literature by democratising and becoming a socially responsive and accountable medium of expression. Through blogging, the boundaries of literature have expanded, welcoming the plurality of voices contributing to the discourse in real time.

**Keywords:** Blogs, Social Network Theory, Digital Space, Threaded Narration, Self-Exploration, Gate-Watching

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. THE ROLE OF PRESERVING AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL EXPRESSION IN THE DIGITAL AGE:

The Jungian philosophy embedded in the quote, “The world will ask who you are, and if you do not know, the world will tell you.” is perhaps one of the emotions which drives human beings to document their experiences as a gateway to self-knowing which if well-written can lead to a shared memory of an age. The well-told folktales, oral poems and stories along with the artistic preservation on the canvas of a cave followed by the written memoirs and diaries, are substantive evidences to this yearning of keeping records of individual voices acting as a crucial component of human history. The diary has been one of the richest sources of reflective writing in the Victorian and Modern age. The intimate ideologies and thoughts of the author penned down over his or her lifetime captures the essence of their lives and helped countless historians and anthropologists to gather actual information otherwise lacking in official narratives. The literary works

of Samuel Pepys and Anne Frank are timeless examples of this genre, both of which reflect personal reality in the context of broader societal events.

With the advent of digital media and the internet, everything modern man has earlier come to know have been altered gradually but surely and this includes forms of writing like the diary which needless to say has undergone striking modification. A few decades ago, the idea of online diaries, presented as blogs, were unthinkable or even hard to conceptualise; however, in the current world order, blogs have become so common place and obnoxiously abundant in various genres and forms. Blogs serve the purpose which handwritten diaries once did. Blogs unlike personal diaries, are typically deliberate in figuring out who the work is being written for; it works on the intention for consumption by an audience. While both blogs and diaries have personally introspective takes on topics or issues concerning the writers themselves or the ongoing social events of the age, diaries are not often written with the target to be published while blogs assume its audience-consciousness. In the context of virtual space, blogging has become epochal means of self-discovery, where identity is negotiated and constructed in answer to an external audience of readers and commentators. This paper explores how blogs function as contemporary autobiographical spaces and considers the implications of such a development for literature, historiography, and cultural memory.

## 2. LITERATURE AND HISTORY EMBEDDED IN DIARY ENTRIES

Any form of writing precedes a thoughtful curation of serving certain purposes which may be educative or entertaining. Traditionally speaking, diaries have had the allure of being educative and confessional at the same time. The Diary of Samuel Pepys, for example, provides us with first-hand report of the Great Fire of London, the Restoration of England, and the Plague Year of 1665, and yet at the same time it provides us with a glimpse of Pepys's own fears, ambitions, and moral struggles. Similarly, Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* is a poignant account of a Jewish girl living in hiding throughout the Holocaust, revealing the emotional and psychological cost of persecution.

The reward for authenticity in writing is a collective acknowledgment and appreciation by readers of many kinds. The appeal of diaries and certain blogs has a lot to do with the sincere and immediate conveyance of their thoughts and the manner in which they've written the material. As stated earlier, diarist always writes in the present tense having no anticipation of outcomes or feedback from an audience which inscribes a unique temporal truthfulness. To cite another famed theorist who is often referred to as the 'father of autobiography studies', Philippe Lejeune had contended in his autobiographical pact theory, which states the author, narrator and self are one person and that unlike other literary works, it relays truthful narration of events. This is considered a relevant and determining trait in formation of private journals as well as public autobiographical works.

### 2.1. PASSING THE BATON FROM DIARIES TO BLOGS

The journey from quill to pen is perhaps an analogy fit to describe the transformative journey of diaries to blogs. The material and intention remain sacrosanct; however, the medium is constantly evolving. With the technological advancement, the autobiographical forms of expression have changed. Today, there is dominance of blogs, vlogs, podcasts, and social media posts which are all viable forms of self-expression. Among these mediums, blogs are the closest to traditional diaries in structure and purpose. Blogs despite being hosted on the world wide web unlike diaries are more often than not, text-based with a chronological or sequential format centering on the writer's own experiences or perceptions about what he/she deems to hold concerning and of value. Nevertheless, diaries are not meant for feedback and frequent entries which is in complete opposition with the blogs which are deliberately performative in nature, sanctioned by a sense of the audience and the nature of digital platform. It requires audience engagement as well as frequent updates to keep the blog page running and acquire a status of professional writing.

While this concept may be intriguing to avant-gardist, not many traditional and conservative readership would find this agreeable as carrying the earlier stated essence of honesty in diary writings. This often raises pertinent questions about authenticity of the self or whether the 'self' which is presented through the blog entries are curated? Further, it questions the characteristics of blogs as some sort of manufactured personae solely written to be consumed by readers and not as an attempt to represent the blogger's own voice and opinions with sincerity. These arguments have been met with counter arguments that support blogging to be a nouveau style of writing that adds another level of self not entirely based on compromised as accused by traditional readers. The blogger or writer here, has carved a unique balance that

has reconciled between personal truths and public views evolving a dynamic and dialogic form of autobiography format which uses the comment sections as a means to explain and interact the work in articulation.

Another interesting characteristic of blogs is the use of threaded narration. Threaded narrations are the multi-layered narratives that occur throughout multiple entries and locations. They are web-based form of storytelling method that studies and highlights the fractured, non-linear nature of online discourse. Threaded narrations are used in travel blogs or blogs about cooking which conveys different narratives by the author in a single blog, episodes or pages of which are often directed through hyperlinks in the blog page. These are groundbreaking forms of narratives which have represented the post-modern ethos of decentralisation, non-linearity as well as participatory authorship in narration.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs qualitative, text-based approach with keen content analysis to examine a sample of individual blogs from different genres like education, travel, mental health awareness and parenting. The blogs were selected on the basis of their frequency of posting, level of personal reflection, and responses from readers in addition to the similarity of these blogs to traditional form of diaries. The content analysis of the mentioned blogs identifies recurring themes, diction and frequency of posts along with reader interaction through comments. The blogs selected for travel and education is 'Frankly Speaking' by Sidney Atkins that dive into the world of travelogues with a reflective tone and a shared journey of self-discovery. Another blog called 'In the midst of madness' introduces readers to mental health advocacy which is sometimes raw but informative and healing. The third blog is on parenting and its issues called the 'Scary Mommy' that has expanded into a community hub.

The close reading of the blogs and data collected has findings that blogs are more continual in narration based on emerging life events where blog entries can be classified as chapters in an ongoing story when compared with a more traditional book format. Bloggers employ emotional words derived from personal experiences in order to relive what happened to them, and also elicit sympathetic response from readers who give advices or narrate their own experiences in the comment box. This interactive feature is one of the distinctive elements of blogs from traditional diaries, making them shared storytelling territory. Social psychologist Jacob Moreno (1934), who perfected the social network theory formulated over time by various theorist, disclosed that social networks are online networks or communities that allow users to share information and communicate with each other. Bloggers are embedded in rich networks of readers, other bloggers, and online communities that facilitate new relational identity and collective memory.

#### 3.1. BLOGS AS A POST-MODERN TOOL FOR DECENTRALISATION OF META-NARRATIVES:

The function of blog much like diary is to record personal narratives; however, these two genres function as a means to challenge the hegemonic cultural and historical meta-narratives. In historiography, major conundrums and bifurcated discourse occurs over the fact that the voices of the marginalised are either represented in fragmented forms that suit the taste of the dominant group or it is completely wiped out from narration altogether. Blogging and other social platforms have democratised the story-telling process in recent years by creating an open and accessible platform for individuals from various backgrounds to voice their experiences. This cannot be merely treated as a trend or popular movement that will die out. In fact, the recent movements that are visible are those of activist blogs covering experiences against controversial and uncomfortable topics like racism, gender discrimination, mental health, and situations unique to differently-abled individuals. This allows everyone to understand differing perspectives as well as chime in with opinions of their own that adds to the larger discourse.

This breakthrough where plurality of voices is given impetus has disrupted the institutional monopoly over narratives and discourse. Blogs are empowering and act as a stabilising rather than destabilising entity to the whole playing field of narratives. There are concerns over the consequences elicited of having this profound liberty of decentralised expressions which may give rise to issues of credibility, disinformation, and responsibility, but after careful analysis, the overall impact can be seen to have a positive bent in the narrative curve as it only creates an inclusive, expansive literary and cultural domain. By making room for multiplicity of voices, blogs have shattered the grand narratives that grants popularism to certain voices and downplays another.

### 3.2. THE POLITICS OF GATE-WATCHING

The traditional means of publishing goes through different levels like the editors, reviewers, and publishers to determine which works are publishable. Blogging, on the other hand, circumvents those filters, with anyone who has internet access now being able to be a published author. This absence of gate-keeping makes content creation democratic but also leads to concerns over quality control as well as the dissemination of false information and it is this very development of blogging that has also highlighted the politics of literary and media gate-keeping.

As a response to these worries, the practice of gate-watching becomes more important. In contrast to gate-keeping, through which access to publication is regulated, gate-watching describes the manner in which electronic audiences come to watch over and promote content that shares their interests or values. The decision of which blogs become visible and influential now fall on these gates watching process which affects how online discussion pans out. Now the grave concern here is whether the narration is truly decentralised or manipulated in order to appear decentralised? In spite of this problematic conjecture, the open-access model of blogs and internet has allowed variety of literary voices and forms to emerge. Most of the famed authors today started out as bloggers, making use of the platform to build an audience following and hone their writing skills. These successful bloggers turned authors indicate that literary merit does not always have to be measured in terms of institutional validation which can take years but through reader reception and cultural responsiveness.

### 3.3. READER RESPONSE THEORY IN ACTION:

Iser, in his implied reader concept, states that texts have gaps within them which requires the readers to fill those gaps with interpretation of their own, thereby completing the narrative. One of the greatest strengths of blogging lies in the immediacy of its reader or audience responses. Bloggers write about current happenings that may have its roots in a crisis or important social movements, and this placement of contemporary writing leads to creation of a different kind of literature deeply rooted in the 'now'. Such writing generally informs readers or audiences of the blogs into responding while actively generating a series of threaded opinion. These features established blogs as a catalyst for creating a wave of historically significant moments.

To cite an example of the infamous COVID-19 pandemic, where many people suffered not only heavy losses of life but also had bouts with mental health issues, and during these trying times people resorted to blogging and chronicled their experiences of isolation, anxiety, and resilience. This documentation not only gave them the strength required to go on with life but also led to a sense of belonging in the online community closely knitted through blogs. These electronic diaries in the form of blogs are a precious record of human emotion and adaptation, giving future scholars and historians first-person accounts of daily life amidst a global pandemic. In this way, blogs extend the tradition of the diary but modernise it for the demands and technologies of modern life.

### 4. LITERARY SPACE AND ITS EXPANSION:

Canons of literature have been well defined yet constantly undergoing progressive changes and within the philosophy, blogs have emerged as one of the evolving genres of literature despite its disturbance to the well-defined conventions of literature. The quality of blogs has been viewed through its narrative sophistication, thematic richness, and experimental style by experts and it has come to a deeper analysis of blogs being warranted serious critique.

The common fiction that people have generally grown over the years to love and enjoy have been contested by blogs as they bring in fresh narrative styles, like fragmented storytelling, hyperlinking, and multimedia incorporation. These interconnected, and non-linear quality of cyberspace is a defining trait in development of futuristic forms of writing especially fiction. It challenges traditional literary forms to adapt with technology and create newer forms that enrich the literary world. Through this small yet influential traits, blogs have helped in not merely documenting individual histories but determining the shape of literary writing to come in the post-postmodern era.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Blogs constitute a significant innovation in autobiographical writing, which bridges the reflective heritage of the diary with the active capability of new media. They preserve personal narratives, decentralise dominant ideologies, and democratise literary production. Though challenges such as veracity, disinformation, and literary quality remain, blogging's impact on individual narrative and cultural memory cannot be ignored. As society continues to navigate the digital age, it is essential to recognise and study blogs as true and influential autobiographical texts. Not only do they provide proof of human diversity, but they also create space for debate for ongoing discussion of identity, memory, and the power of storytelling in an age of globalisation.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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