HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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AMERICAN AUTOBIOGRAPHY – Early Modern Period

Unit I -17th Century:Explorers, Governors, Pilgrims and Captives (607-1700)

Although it is becoming clear that native Americans had long possessed various traditions for oral and pictorial stories about themselves, (1) what is called autobiographical writing begins in America with the journals and histories of the explorers, who recorded their experiences for themselves and their supporters and critics back in Europe. The first extensive description of what is now the United States is *Adventurers in the Unknown Interior of America* by Cabeza de Vaca, one of four survivors of a disastrous expedition to Florida in 1527. His ten-year journey of exploration and flight took him along what is now the Gulf Coast, through Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, and down to Mexico City. Between the lines, his narrative also tells and implies so much about him that it can well be considered autobiography.

Beginning in the 1580's, many narratives of exploration were edited and published by the great Elizabethan geographer Richard Hakluyt (c. 1552-1616), who wished to promote more English exploration and settlement in things seen. The explorers had been sent to look for gold and precious gems, to seek a new route to the Indies, to convert the natives to Christianity, so to advance English power, which was in competition with the French, Spanish, and other European nations. These were the subjects of the backers of the expeditions wanted to hear about--not the life histories of the writers. By the same rule, the water-color paintings of Virginia which were done by John White to accompany Thomas Hariot's *Briefe and True Report of the New-Found Land of Virginia (1588, 1590)* were of the birds and fish, the animals and plants, and the native people and their dwellings, dress, and customs. The purpose of these expeditions was exploration of the "new-foundland," not self-exploration. "Autobiography" did not exist.

Yet in a larger sense these early writers and artists were expressing themselves and even exploring themselves. In their enthusiasm and curiosity about new places and people, they were expressing a new, expansive outward-looking spirit. Simultaneously, they were learning more about their capacities for suffering, endurance, and leadership.

Explorers began to write still more directly about themselves when it became necessary for them to defend their actions against rivals or to explain why they had not done some of the things their backers had directed them to do. No one demonstrates this more vividly than John Smith, member of the Jamestown Colony of 1607, and its eventual, then deposed, leader. Smith first wrote *A True Relation of Occurrences and Accidents in Virginia* (1608), a very short account (only forty pages in all) of the sea voyage and first year of the Jamestown settlement. That Smith, rather than someone else, reported on these "occurrences and accidents," was because other men died, became sick, or proved incompetent. The party originally contained 105 men, who sailed from England on New Year's Day, 1607, and arrived at the mouth of Chesapeake Bay at the end of April. By the time their ship started back to England in June, 1607, some had already been killed by Indians, and most of the original leaders were sick or dying or discredited, Smith says. By the end of December, only 30 men were left. (2)

Smith began to take command because he was successful in trading with the Indians for food. Without him, he implies, the whole settlement would have starved. Once in command, he insisted on building stronger defenses and on sterner discipline. He punished Indians who stole English tools and weapons, and he put down the quarrels among the English. He also discouraged the pursuit of gold and easy riches, which some colonists had expected, and instead made the men cut down trees and plant corn. In these ways he began to demonstrate-and advertise-the kind of character he thought was essential to

building a new, permanent, self sustaining colony. "Captain John Smith," as one recent admirer has written, noting his archetypal stature as a Euro-American male, is "Father of Us All." (3)

Returning to England and then making later journeys to New England, Smith published three more books about America: *A Map of Virginia, with a Description of its Commodities, People, Government, and Religion,* in 1612; *A Description of New England,* in 1616; and *The General Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles,* in 1624. Of these, *The General History* is the longest and the one that has had the greatest impact on later writing, if only because it includes the story of Smith's rescue by Pocahontas. But the Pocahontas story also has led to questions about Smith's reliability, because he never mentioned the rescue in *A True Relation,* even though it supposedly happened during the first year, the period of that narrative. More doubt has been cast on *The General History* because it is written in the third person singular and includes various testimonies by other men. The likeliest explanation is that Smith was using the *General History* not only to elaborate on his earlier accounts but also to further advertise his own exploits. The third person means of narration made such self-advertisement more rather than less feasible-as other autobiographers have realized.

The last book Smith wrote, *The True Travels, Adventurers, and Observations of Captain John Smith,* 1630, was also in the third person singular. It briefly describes his family background-he was the son of a Lincolnshire yeoman-and then narrates his almost unbelievable adventurers in Italy, Turkey, and Austria in the years before he set out for America. He had fought in great battles and sieges, been taken into slavery, acted as diplomat, and become a bold, swaggering soldier of fortune. It was these experiences which prepared him for the dangers and uncertainties of colonization in America. The telling of them was yet another way of continuing to promote himself and gain favor from his aristocratic patrons.

What Smith's *True Relation* and *General History* did was to establish an American tradition of the governor's narrative as a combination of personal history had history of the colony. The needs for such narratives were, as in Smith's case, for records, for justification, and for promotion of further colonies. Governors were the logical persons to write them because they knew the colonies; affairs, dealt with all the members and the European backers, and were often the best educated, most literate people in the communities. They directed their community's destiny, and that destiny was finally discerned and inscribed in the narrative.

Two of the most important later governor's narratives are William Bradford's of *Plymouth Plantation,* 1620-1647, about the Separatists from the Church of England who founded the Plymouth Colony, and John Winthrop's *Journal*, the record of his leadership of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. They were different men, and their books are equally different. Bradford, the more modest and self-effacing of the two, wrote *Of Plymouth Plantation,* a kind of meditative history which he began in 1630 and resumed in 1644. Winthrop, on the other hand, was a wealthy attorney, and he wrote the *Journal* in the form of daily entries. But both had a Christian-classical ideal of continuous dedication of the governor to the welfare of the community. The tribute which Bradford paid to John Robinson, an earlier leader of the Separatists, expresses this ideal well. Robinson led the people, "So…they grew in knowledge and other gifts and graces of the Spirit of God, and lived together in peace and love and holiness…And if at any time any differences arose, or offenses broke out (as it cannot be but some time there will, even amongst the best of men) they were ever so met with and nipped in the head be-times, or otherwise so well composed, as still love, peace, and communion was continued. Or else the church purged off those that were incurable and incorrigible, when, after much patience used, no other means would serve, which seldom came to pass. Yea, such was the mutual love and reciprocal respect that this worthy man had to his flock, and his flock to him, that it might be said of them as it once was of that famous Empero Marcus Aurelius, and the people of Rome, that is was hard to judge whether he delighted more in having such a people, or they in having such a pastor." Such men were also expected "to give directions in civil affairs and to foresee dangers and inconveniences, by which he was very helpful to their outward estates and so was every ways as a common father unto them." (4)

The Puritans viewed history as the working out of God's design. This made their venture in the New World a holy project, and all the more important to record and study. Leaders like Winthrop or Bradford were further revered as new embodiments of Biblical leaders. Thus Cotton Mather later wrote a

short biography of John Winthrop which he entitled *Nehemias Americanus,* or the American Nehemiah. Winthrop was like the leader of the Israelites who came after Moses and led them into Canaan. (5)

The governor's narrative was no place for highly personal reflection. Nor was it for the ordinary person to write. However, several other tenets of Puritan belief also made autobiographical writing extremely important to commoner people.

One such tenet was its radical Protestant emphasis on individual salvation and the need of the individual to experience divine blessing for himself or herself, without the intercession of priests or a church hierarchy. The greatest certainty of this salvation was the experience of conversion, coming after the recognition of sin and a sense of God's favor. It could come to any man or woman, and writing down the stages of the experience was both beneficial to the individual and instructive to friends, children, and other church members. *The Autobiography of Thomas Shepard* is one of the most famous illustrations of such a text. Shepard was an important early minister and therefore not a typical Puritan, and yet as a minister has influence was great, and he often served "as stenographer of his congregation's confessions." (6)

Anne Bradstreet's poems and her prose letter "To my Dear Children" illustrate the Puritan practice of careful self-scrutiny. Everything that happens is a potential sign of God's favor of disfavor-spiritual message. The fire that destroyed her house was the occasion for grief and also for meditation on the superiority of a heavenly "house on high erect, / Framed by that mighty Architect," as she wrote in "Some Verses upon the Burning of our House, July 10th, 1666" The works of God in the visible world are emblems of the invisible world. Sickness or despair or doubt were occasions for self examination, during which she found some sin she had not repented or duty she had neglected, and after such afflictions she had "abundance of sweetness and refreshment." Such experiences and the lessons learned from them were what she wished to pass on to her children.

The writers of Puritan diaries had roughly similar motives. The young Samuel Sewall could not even feed his chickens without being "convinced what need I stood in of spiritual food, and that I should not nauseate daily duties of Prayer, &c." (January 13, 1677). The diary was a place to preserve such reflections, meditate further on them, and observe in what directions his soul was tending. He kept notes on sermons he had heard. And he kept an account of deaths and disasters in his family and community which might have divine meaning. A modern reader might just say that Sewall was superstitious, and he did, in fact, believe in witches - that, for instance, demons could possess people's souls. But after a series of accidents and deaths which he took as signs of God's disfavor, he performed the extraordinary act of publicly asking the pardon of the people and of God for his decisions in the Salem witch trials, in which he had been a judge. He then duly copied the text of this formal request for pardon into his diary.

Sewall's lengthy diary also has some of the qualities of the governor's narrative. He was an important leader. His acts affected the life and well-being of the community, even when he was just called out at night to quiet rowdy drinkers in a tavern. Yet there is also a crusty, status-conscious streak in Sewall that makes a reader suspect that another reason he kept his diary was simple vanity. He liked writing down the names of all the Puritan dignitaries with whom he dined. He was sensitive to the ups and downs of his popularity. Late in life he became comically self-conscious in his attempt to marry a wealthy widow, Madam Winthrop. Spanning so many years, his diary documents the changes in Puritan society, from a harsh and dramatic sense of divine presence to a more relaxed and comfortable worldliness. Distress with this worldliness would help engender the so-called "Great Awakening" of the 1730's and '40's, when Jonathan Edwards revived the practice of recording conversion narratives and writing intense examinations of the state of the soul.

In the 1680's, meanwhile, another kind of story had been published which was the beginning point of what would become the most egalitarian and popular form of early American autobiography, the narrative of Indian captivity.

The Sovereignty and Goodness of God, …a Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson was published in Boston in 1682, with a second edition coming the same year from a press in Cambridge, "on authority of the General Court." No complete copy of the first edition has

survived (good evidence of how widely the book was read (7)), and another edition was printed in London, also in 1682. Since then, over thirty more editions have been printed. Mary Rowlandson's story of her eleven-week captivity with Indians in the late winter and spring of 1676 was the first great American autobiographical best-seller.

The basis for her interpretation of her experience was the same sense of providential design that empowered other Puritan and personal historians. Mary Rowlandson saw her captivity as God's will and as a lesson, therefore, to her and her readers. However, the story of a woman and her child being captured in a surprise attack during an all-out war, and then of the child's dying while the woman almost starves and is forced to walk, though injured for miles in the snow and to sleep on the ground, living among "savages," and of the woman finally being ransomed and rejoining her family was a lot more than just a pious lesson. It was a thriller-a scary, gruesome thriller, that still had a pious coating and a happy ending. Americans, or the Americans-to-be, had discovered their first original literary genre, and in the centuries to come they would develop it not only in autobiography but in fiction, drama, film, biography, and journalism.

Besides being thrillers-and many later ones were much more sensational than Mary Rowlandson's-why were captivity narratives so popular? One reason, it has been suggested, was that Euro-Americans needed them to counter the demonstrable superiority of Indian life. As Benjamin Franklin, among others, pointed out, more captives stayed among the Indians than returned. When whites were raised among Indians, they preferred to stay; whereas when Indians were raised among whites, they preferred to go back to the forest. (8) A story which emphasized the cruelty and barbarism of Indians had a necessary propaganda value. Such a story also fitted into a basic ritualistic pattern of a person's "Separation, Transformation, and Return." (9) The captive was separated from the group, underwent a trial of faith while also being changed by contact with an alien society-or collection of little, heterogeneous, insecure societies, as they were in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Whatever American "civilization" was, it was the opposite of "savagery." An encounter with Indians therefore made an "American." The captive had encountered her or his "other," the creature who had preceded the Europeans and was the "original," the "primitive," the "barbaric," and come back. In coming back, the former captive endorsed his or her "old," new American society, This strengthened the Euro-American society's confidence in its superiority, and re-integrated the former captive, who might otherwise be suspected of being not really loyal, of having become a conjurer or witch.

For all these reasons, captivity narratives signified to Euro-Americans a new concept of self *as* both European and American: European in values, origin, and ultimately loyalty, American in experience and skills of survival. At the same time, they have perhaps contributed to a kind of enduring American paranoia-fear of the wilderness, fear of Indians and people of their races, and the sense of being endangered and embattled.

Mary Rowlandson's *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* affirmed that Americans were God's chosen people…but that they were also constantly at risk. It, and other early autobiographical writing, helped to make, to unite, and to frighten a people.

John Smith (1580-1631) From *A True Relation* and The General Historie of Virginia

A *True Relation* (1608) is a brief account of the Jamestown colony's first year, written from Smith's point of view and emphasizing and justifying his own actions. He bargains with different Indian nations and their leaders, describes their towns and houses, and disciplines other expedition members. Yet, simple as this seems, it is not an easy document for modern readers. Place names are strange, and the times and durations of different events are often unclear. It is also often unclear why these events are selected for description and how they fit together.

The names of the places, tribes, and chiefs were strange to Smith, too, however. In the first year he and the English had barely learned them. Smith also lacked a more comprehensive view of events because he was just becoming established as leader. Indeed, when the little party of 105 men arrived in Virginia, he was excluded from the governing council because he had led a mutiny during the ship's stop in the Caribbean (though he does not tell us this here). The True Relation therefore emphasizes his activities because they are what he knew best and because by making them into the settlement's history, he consolidated his power. He impressed his character on the settlement and on the "true" relation. He also needed to defend his actions, sometimes against criticisms the reader is scarcely aware of.

In the passage below he describes conditions in June, 1607, as he begins to take charge, describes his negotiations with the Indians for food, defends the execution of Captain Kendall, and then narrates his visit to and imprisonment by Powhatan. Later he narrates more diplomacy with Powhatan and other chiefs, justifies his sternness in dealing with them and their followers, and tells a little about an expedition to look for precious stones.

The passage from The General Historie (1624) describes Pocahontas's saving him from execution. The pages before it give a much longer account of his capture, the way he was led to Powhatan's town, and how he was treated. Comparing the two accounts, one can see many differences, the most important being that in the latter Smith was not just defending his actions, he was mythologizing them, turning himself from leader into legend.

The selection below is from A True Relation of Such Occurrences and Accidents of Noate as Hath Happened in Virginia and from The General Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles, both of which are included in Travels and Works of Captain John Smith, ed. Edward Arber (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1910). The information in brackets is from this same edition. The standard biography of Smith is Philip Barbour's The Three Worlds of Captain John Smith (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964).

Reading

A Description of New England (1616): An Online Electronic Text Edition
http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=etas

Anne Bradstreet (c. 1612-1672) *To my Dear Children* and *In reference to her Children*

Anne Bradstreet arrived in Massachusetts with her parents and husband in 1630, alarmed to find, as she says below, “a new world and new manners, at which my heart rose. But after I was convinced it was the way of God, I submitted to it.” She had enjoyed a privileged life and good education. Her father, Thomas Dudley, had been steward to the Earl of Lincoln, and he became deputy governor of the Massachusetts Bay Company. Her husband Simon later was governor.

Wealth and education did not fully protect her from the hazards of pioneer life: in particular, a harsh climate, illness, the birth of eight children, and the loss of a house in a fire. Out of these experiences she drew occasions for some of her family, without her knowledge or consent, in 1650. The Tenth Muse, as this collection was entitled, vividly evokes the feelings of a Puritan woman, especially the satisfactions she got from her children and family life, yet, in its ironies and exaggerated humility, it often protests against the restrictions of the woman’s role.

These two autobiographical letters to her children are not ironic in this way, but they do reveal her gentle mixtures of play and seriousness and her strict adherence to the Puritan world view. Every event, and especially every affliction, must be examined for its divine message. Sickness is an occasion for reviewing one’s spiritual life and can become a blessing. Thus, despite misery ad dependence, the individual life is also exalted. It is the site of cosmic contest between good and evil. God makes himself manifest to each and every soul.

These two pieces allow for interesting comparison and contrast: both are addressed to her children, but in different forms and different moods. Further, one can ask whether the primary audience is really the children or herself.

The best reader’s edition of Bradstreet, which has an excellent foreword by Adrienne Rich, is The Works of Anne Bradstreet, ed. Jeannine Hensley (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967). “To my Dear Children” was written in 1656. The actual date for “In reference to her Children…” is not 1656, as stated in its title, but 1659.

To my Dear Children

This Book by Any yet unread, I leave for you when I am dead,

That, being gone, here you may find What was your living mother’s mind.

Make use of what I leave in Love And God shall blesse you from above.

Reading

Poems
http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/bradstreet/bradstreet.html

Mary Rowlandson (c. 1635-1711) From *A True History of the Captivity And Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*

Beyond what she tells in this narrative, little is known of Mary Rowlandson. The wife of the Reverend Joseph Rowlandson of Lancaster, Massachusetts, she was captured in a raid on Lancaster in February, 1675/76, while her husband was on a journey to Boston to obtain aid for the town's defense. She was ransomed in Princeton, Massachusetts, May 2. The following year she and her husband moved to Wethersfield, Connecticut, where he returned to the ministry. He died in 1678, and she married Captain Samuel Talcott of Connecticut.

A careful and patient reader of this narrative, however, can learn a lot about her and about Puritanism. The full title of the first American edition, Boston, 1682, was The Sovereignty and Goodness of God, Together with the Faithfulness of his Promises Displayed; Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson-a title which assigns all credits to the deity. God willed all these events as punishments for her sin, tests of her faith, and signs of his mercy. These lessons are reinforced in her numerous quotations from scripture. Even the Indians are part of the plan: they are devils unknowingly serving as agents of God.

The full title of the English edition, also 1682, was A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, A Minister's Wife in New-England: Wherein is set forth, The Cruel and Inhumane Usage she underwent amongst the Heathens for Eleven Weeks' time: And her Deliverance from them. Written by her own Hand, for her Private Use: and now made Public at the earnest Desire of some Friends, for the Benefit of the Afflicted. This second title places more emphasis on Indian cruelty and her suffering.

The careful reader can also see that Mary Rowlandson was one tough lady, a woman who kept up her courage and did not just wilt in self-pity. In the course of her captivity and its "removes" from place to place, she learned to eat food she would once have scorned. She knitted and did other kinds of work, sometimes to please her captors and sometimes to be independent of them. She even began to take a certain interest in Indian manners, finding King Philip rather polite and appreciating the fact that no one physically molested her. Even her turning down of the chance to run away may be a sign of her fortitude and good sense, rather than meek passivity, as some people have thought. She "desired to wait God's time."

Thus Puritanism not only exalted God, it also exalted the individual and the individual's experience as the microcosm in which, as in Puritan society and Puritan history generally, and the workings of God could be examined. This gave Mary Rowlandson both the strength to endure her captivity and the reason to write about it.

The text, including bracketed editorial notes and preserving original punctuation, spelling, and italics, is from the selection edited by Amy Schrager Lang, in Journeys in New Worlds: Early American Women's Narratives, ed. William L. Andrews (Madison: Univ .of Wisconsin Press, 1990). For critical commentary, see Lang's introduction to the selection in that volume and Held Captive by Indians: Selected Narratives, 1642-1836, ed. Richard Vander Beets (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1973).

Samuel Sewall (1652-1730) From the *Diary*

Samuel Sewall was born in England and brought to America at age nine, although his father had first come to New England in 1634. He graduated from Harvard in 1671, and then decided not to go into the ministry. He married Hannah Hull, daughter of one of the wealthiest men in Massachusetts, and devoted himself to managing her property, to scholarly hobbies, and to public life. From 1692 to 1728 he was a judge on the highest court in the colony, serving for the last ten years as chief justice. In 1693 he was made a member of the special court that tried witchcraft cases, consenting to the hanging of nineteen people. But in 1697, as shown below, he publicly recanted before the congregation of Boston's Old South Church.

He started his diary on December 3, 1673, and continued it almost unbroken until October 13, 1729-nearly fifty-six years. Such a span puts his diary in a class and Anais Nin (see below, Part 7). It is an invaluable record of his own works and days and also of his culture, although it was not published until the late nineteenth century. Excerpts describing his "Courtship of Madam Winthrop," in 1720, were once in all American Literature anthologies.

The following excerpts, however, show the earnest, middle-aged Puritan leader rather than the somewhat comic, or pathetic, widower in his late sixties. Is he a sympathetic figure? As with other diaries, one can further ask whether he did or did not write for eventual publication, and for whom he wrote.

Sewell also wrote *The Selling of Joseph* (1700), the first American pamphlet against slavery.

The full text of the Diary is in Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 5th series, vols. 5-7 (1878-82). For a biography, see Ola Elizabeth Winslow, Samuel Sewall of Boston (New York: Macmillan, 1964).

Reading

Diary of Samuel Sewall
http://archive.org/stream/diaryofsamuelsew01sewaiala#page/n9/mode/2up

Unit II 18th Century Autobiographies

Early 18th Century: Great Awakening, New Individuals (1700-1775)

The seventy-five-year period from 1700 to the beginning of the Revolution is one which tends to be neglected in American history and American literature courses. The stories of exploration and discovery that came before seem more exciting, while what came after seems much more important to the actual development of the new nation.

In the development of American autobiography and the emergence of the concepts of self that are so essential to autobiographical, however, this country's major, full-length autobiographical classics: Benjamin Franklin (1706-90), John Woolman (1720-72), and J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur (1735-1813). Three short classics also come from this period:

The Journal of Sarah Kemble Knight, Johnathan Edwards's "Personal Narrative," and the more recently discovered *Some Account of the Fore Part of the Life of Elizabeth Ash bridge* (all included here). Adding further to the vitality of this period is the publication of *A Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings, and Surprizind Deliverance of Briton Hammon, A Negro man, - Servant to General Winslow of Marshfield, in New-England* (1760), "the first black autobiography in America." (1)

What was going is first three-quarters of eighteenth century which inspired these people to write these autobiographies? The best way of answering this question may be to look at the autobiographies themselves, at the events they describe and how and why they describe them.

Sarah Kemble Knight's *Journal* describes a journey she made from Boston to New Haven and New York and back, starting in October, 1704, and ending in January, 1705. At first glance, this does not seem to be a very significant event or one worth writing about. But the very fact that an educated, middle-class woman was traveling alone at that time, and traveling to handle some matter of family business, tells us remarkable things.

New England culture now permitted a woman to undertake such a journey, a journey we cannot imagine Anne Bradstreet or Mary Rowlandson would have taken. She had the freedom, and travel conditions, though bad, as she vividly tells us, were not impossible. She could also look upon this as a practical, secular journey, not a spiritual one with all kinds of religious allegory to be packed in (or unpacked) at every point. Freed of this religious baggage, Madam Knight had all kinds of other things to do, observe, and report. She could describe the crude places she slept, the bad food, the manners of her guides and innkeepers, her nervousness sitting in a canoe, and so on. This makes her story earthy and amusing. Chances are, as a recent editor has suggested, that she kept her notes on the trip and wrote them up in order to read or show to friends. Thus the trials of her patience, strength, and taste bring out her character, to have it confirmed with the laughter and approval of an audience. (2) Her *Journal* is, in this sense, even an early illustration of one of the most basic types of American humor, in which a cultivated outsider ridicules the grossness of country bumpkins. For a New England woman, perhaps for any New Englander, this is both a new self and a new way of expressing it. It is secular, partially comic, sophisticated, and dramatic.

For most Americans, however, religion remained the dominant issue in their personal and social lives. This is very evident in the religious revival called the Great Awakening, which began in the 1730's and lasted though the 1740's. Prosperity and the beginnings of a scientific rationalism had cooled the religious fervor of early American Puritanism, as illustrated in the *Journal* of Madam Knight. But poorer, less educated people, such as the members of Jonathans Edwards' congregation in Northampton, Massachusetts, remained attached to Puritanism and wanted more emotion in their religious faith and practice. They were also receptive to a more emotional style of preaching, that evoked their fears of God and made them anxious to renew their religious commitment.

But the Great Awakening was more than just a revival movement among latter-day Puritans. Although it can be said to have started in Jonathan Edwards' congregation in Northampton, Massachusetts, it soon spread to many other denominations, from New England to Georgia. Indeed,

there were concurrent expressions of emotional, popular piety in Germany, Switzerland, Holland, and France. The Wesleyan and Methodist movements were the major English expressions, and they had direct impact on the Awakening in the colonies. When George Whitefield, a follower of John and Charles Wesley, came to Philadelphia in 1739, he immediately drew such crowds, Benjamin Franklin recalled, that "the Multitudes of all Sects and Denominations that attended his Sermons were enormous." People "admired and respected him, notwithstanding his common Abuse of them, by assuring them they were naturally *half Beasts and half Devils.*" Suddenly "it seem'd as if all the World were growing Religious; so that one could not walk thro' the town in an Evening without Hearing Psalms sung in different Families of every Street." (3)

The Great Awakening crossed boundaries between "Sects and Denominations," spread throughout the diverse and separate colonies, and had a mass appeal. With people everywhere experiencing what Edwards called "surprising conversions," it also challenged the authority of the established churches. The clergy in Philadelphia soon resented Whitefield so much, wrote Franklin, that they "refus'd him their Pulpits and he was obliged to preach in the Fields." (4) The older, more conservative clergy in Boston also came to resent the uproar which Jonathan Edwards had started in the Connecticut Valley, as eventually did leaders of Edwards' own congregation, which dismissed him in 1750. But the disputes which the Great Awakening caused also led to the breakup of many denominations and the founding of new ones. The Presbyterians split briefly into the "Old Side Presbyterians," who opposed revivalism, and the "New Side Presbyterians," then later into the "Old Light" and "New Light." Methodist and Baptist churches grew. (5) The autobiography most directly related to the Great Awakening is Jonathan Edwards' "Personal Narrative," although circumstantially or metaphorically nearly all the autobiographical writing of this period can be related to it. Franklin, as we have just seen, wrote about it. Charles Woodmason, when he went to preach in the interior of the Carolinas in the 1760's, competed with different sects of Baptists and various forms of "New Lights" who vigorously carried on the emotional styles of the Awakening. In a broader way, the Awakening led to or stood for a discovery of the egalitarian individual.

As a leader of the Great Awakening, Edwards seems to have written the "Personal Narrative" as a way of studying in himself the religious affections which were exerting such a powerful influence in the members of his Northampton church. Many of them, by the late 1730's and early '40's, had told him the stories of their conversions-so many that he had come to question his own conversion and perhaps question the sincerity of theirs. He writes towards the end: "That my sins appear to me so great, don't seem to me to be, because I have so much more conviction of sin than other Christians, but because I am so much worse, and have so much more wickedness to be convinced of." The sentence urgently reflects the sense of sin that was so powerful in driving the revival and urging people to repent. Yet it also reflects the paradox that being convinced of one's "wickedness" was therefore beneficial. Caught in this paradox, Edwards alternated between confessions of his wickedness and confessions of his "dependence on God's grace," between weeping and rejoicing, and the "Narrative" breaks off unresolved. It has no true ending, and, without a resolution, none is possible.

Edwards' "Narrative" also has a brilliant, lyrical side, however, as in his descriptions of his innocent, early love of God and his delight in the physical world as God's creation. In this sense, it expresses another kind of "awakening" that is closer to the scientific revolutions of the eighteenth century and to his contemporaries like Franklin, Woolman, and even the dowdy humorist Sarah Kemble Knight. Indeed, some people have seen a much finer sensibility and true love of nature in Edwards and Woolman than in the practical Benjamin Franklin. Nature and the world, for Franklin, seem just stuff to experiment on and turn into instruments for human comfort and progress.

"The Spiritual Travels of Nathan Cole," written between 1740 and 1765, makes a very instructive contrast with Edwards' "Narrative." As a farmer and carpenter with no higher education and no degrees in divinity, Cole was the kind of person whom the Awakening empowered to think for himself and protest agains the pride and complacency he waw in the mid-century Congregational establishment. Once "born again," Cole became far more conscious of his sins and his precarious spiritual life. In this sense, the Awakening brought him some of the same inner insecurity it gave Edwards. But his new found piety also led him, as he says, "to see the Old Standing Churches wee not in a gospel order." So he and his friends

formed a separate fellowship on which they felt more comfortable and in which, inevitably, they had more control over church services and governance. At the same time, Cole's diary gave him a means of recording his "spiritual travels" and so examining himself and maintaining his resolution and purpose. He learned, he spoke, and he kept a record what he said and thought. The diary helped him to become the kind of Christian he believed he should become. In the process, it also contributed to his and his fellows' partial overthrow of those "Old Standing Churches" which were in many respects the most powerful governments in eighteenth-century America. Cole's diary is a record and an agent of the revolution the Awakening had set off. Yet, in being a revolution of diarists and autobiographers, it was also one that stressed piety, humility, and self-control.

Quakers such as John Woolman and Elizabeth Ashbridge were not directly involved in the Great Awakening. They had never subscribed to the Calvinist doctrines of election and predestination, and by the seventeenth century, the wealthier Quakers of Philadelphia had ceased to be enthusiasts. They did not believe in the "new lights" of sudden salvation but "the inner light"- the light of conscience which burned, brightly or obscurely, in all people. Their earthly pilgrimages were long, careful efforts to follow this light themselves and discern it in others, and they held aloof from the frenzies of revivalists like Whitefield. This is humorously illustrated by Benjamin Franklin's story of being at a service where Whitefield appealed for funds for an orphanage in Georgia. Franklin had been so moved that he contributed all the money he had wit him. A Quaker friend, who had anticipated such an appeal, had left his own money home. But this man, too, was moved and "apply'd" to a Neighbor who stood near him to borow some Money for the Purpose." But that man, also a Quaker, answered, "At any other time, Friend Hopkinson, I would lend to thee freely; but not now; for thee seems to be out thy right Senses." (6)

Quakers could avoid the frenzy of the Great Awakening because they had already had their own private awakening, or awakenings. They had already established more independence from church authority and doctrine than any of the other churches, and they already acknowledged the individual "inner light." Thus their concepts of self were already implicity egalitarian.

Readers of John Woolman's *Journal* (1774) can see this on almost every page. For Woolman thinks as independently as any man who ever lived. His very choice of words is independent: based on profound exacting consultation of the inner light. Yet he is respectful of other people's rights and scrupulously avoids being vain or inflammatory. As the *Journal* testifies, he campaigned calmly but effectively against the social injustices which most men of his time took for granted. He persuaded other Quakers to free their slaves, simplified his dress and diet so as to avoid exploiting laborers, called attention to the hardships of sailors, opposed military conscription, and defended the interests and actions of Indians. The Quaker concept of the "inner light" as a divine light within all persons led to the concept of all persons being equal in their political rights and human needs.

Woolman's attention to Indians grew not only from Quaker pacifism but also from the nearly constant conflict in this period between the British American colonists, the Indians, and the French. Following King William's War (1689-97), there was what Americans called Queen Anne's War, from 1702 to 1713, during which the French and Indians destroyed several towns in northern New England - and took more captives, some of whom wrote captivity narratives. King George's War, 1744-48, was not so long or so consequential, but the French and Indian War of 1755-63 definitely was. It was the war in which General Braddock was defeated in 1755 trying to capture Fort Duquesne (at the site of present-day Pittsburgh), demonstrating to Americans such as George Washington tha British power in America was invincible. There were other major battles in the north and in Canada - at Fort William Henry (on Lake George in 1757), Ticonderoga (on lake Champlain in 1759), and Montreal, in 1760. These battles brought about the ceding of Canada to England. They also led to greater unity among the American Colonies, while leaving he British government so much in debt that taxation of the colonies was increased - two additional factors leading to the American Revolution.

Warfare, therefore, was another major influence in the shaping of the American life of the period. We see Franklin finding a way to raise money for forts and gunpowder, serving in the Militia, and helping to supply Braddock's army. We also see Charles Woodmason's awareness of how frontier Carolinians were used by coastal Carolinians as a buffer against Indian attacks.

All through the period, in the midst of the Great Awakening and the recurrent border wars, the population of the American colonies continued to grow. In 1700 it had been a quarter of a million. By 1760 it was 1,600,000. In New England, new fortunes were made in shipbuilding, lumbering, and the slave trade. In Virginia, tobacco became the great cash crop, employing ever larger numbers of enslaved Africans. Much of the growth in the white population, too, was in the form of indentured English and Irish servants (who were in some ways like slaves until their indentures were paid), of prisoners sent to Georgia, and of Geman and Dutch immigrants. The colonies were growing in diversity as well as just numbers of people, and this is also illustrated in the autobiographies.

In addition to being a Quaker convert, Elizabeth Ashbridge was an indentured servant. She had run away from home, married, lost her husband, gone to Ireland, and then signed a contract to go to America. There she served three years with a cruel master and was on the verge of suicide. She "bought off the remainder of my Time," but soon afterwards lost her freedom again by marrying an oppressive, unreliable man she met while dancing in an alehouse. He was a restless schoolteacher and took her to Boston, then Long Island. He drank too much, abused her, and resented her attraction to the Quakers, especially because Quakers allowed women to preach. She does not go into all this in great detail, because her religious history is the primary subject of her narrative, yet we can imagine that there were many women and men in America in this peiod who were like Ashbridge and her husband. Even though only a comparatively small number joined the Quakers and an even smaller number became woman preachers, the pattern of finding one's fulfillment and also finding one's feeedom through a religious experience and commitment was very common. The dislocations of immigration, settling, and resettling encouraged many people to take up new religious faiths. Even where people did not change religions, the religions themselves changed, accommodating their members' new conditions. In that way, religious "awakenings" and the other awakenings of immigration, new cultures, and new ways of life were related.

The role of immigration in building up both the number and character of eighteenth-century Americans is most brilliantly developed in St. Jean de Crevecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer,* published in 1782. As a French military officer who had traveled around both French and British America, then finally bought land in Orange County, New York, in 1769, Crevecoeur had lived a life which may have been like a number of other people's of the period, which was not appropriate for an autobiography, as autobiography was then practiced.

He had not been an expedtion leader and had not experienced a religious conversion. In composing his *Letters*, however, he seized upon new conceptions of himself as *immigrant* and *farmer* which fitted in with the experiences of tens of thousands of other Americans and which both Europeans and Americans were glad to read about. Generalizing his experiences, he turned himself into a spokesman for the new American. The "American Farmer" was a figure from old-world literary pastoralism coming out of a new-world melting pot. The "American," said Crevecoeur, is a "strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country." He had also "[left] behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, [and received] new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds." (7) The "Farmer" received the best of these new influences. People living on the coasts, in Crevecoeur's vision of the country, "see and converse with a variety of people; their intercourse with mankind becomes extensive." They develop from "bold and enterprising" fishers and fish-eaters into traders and then into merchants. "Those who inhabit the middle settlements," he went on, "must be very different; the simple cultivation of the earth purifies them." They have just enough government and religion to shelter them and restrain them. They will be proud "freeholders" - sharp bergainers, litigious, informed, and critical of government. As farmers and tradesmen they will also be thrifty and independent. Finally, said Crevecoeur, as "we arrive near the great woods, near the last inhabited districts," we will find men who are "beyond the reach of government," left to themselves, and therefore idle, wasteful, quarrelsome, and wild. (8) In Making the "Farmer" from "the middle settlements" the ideal figure, Crevecoeur was appealing to the sentiments of most European-Americans of his time. He was also giving birth to a kind of geographic-historic account of American character which has been reshaped and extended by many later scholars, publicists, artists, and political leaders. The frontier thesis of Frederick Jackson Turner is latent in what we might call Crevecoeur's autobio-geography.

But the most influential new American concept of self to come from this period may be Benjamin Franklin's concept of the prudent, industrious, successful tradesman. His awakening may be the greatest of all. His life spans nearly the whole period. There is a legend, though undocumented, that Sarah Kemble Knight was one of his school teachers. He himself tells of visiting Cotton Mather, the heir to the early Puritan theocracy. As we have noted, he also knew George Whitefield and helped Pennsylvania Quakers build defenses against Indians. His business and other interests reached throughout the colonies. His *Autobiography* was begun in 1771, at a time when he was living in England but could also see the signs of an eventual break between the two countries. (9) The character of the benevolent but also shrewd self-made man that he celebrated in those "Memoirs," as he called them, was his own vision of the representative American and the vision enlarged upon by his followers. In the *Autobiography*, he also drew upon nearly all of the earlier traditions of American autobiography which we have noted. The religious conversion narrative, in his handling, became a secular one, "from the Poverty and Obscurity in which I was born and bred, to a State of Affluence and some Degree of Reputation in the World." (10) Nominally, at least, he wrote the *Autobiography* as a letter to his son, just as Anne Bradstreet had written to her children. Franklin's work included accounts of his own travel, beginning with his journey from Boston to Philadelphia, a journey necessitated by his running away from his apprenticeship to his older brother.

The importance of the autobiographies of this period, then, is enormous. Before them, autobiography was still bound to its early Christian past, going back to St. Augustine, and to its classical and early Renaissance traditions of governors' or travelers journals. In these early eighteenth-century autobiographies, women write about their travels while away from their husbands, and celebrate their independent immigration to America. They also celebrate religious experiences which are quite separate from their husbands' lives and demands. Men, at the same time, begin to describe and celebrate their lives as tradesmen and farmers, their work, and their careers. In Charles Woodmason's *Journal*, even religious autobiography takes a new turn, as he narrates not his conversion but his career as an itinerant, backwoods preacher. After these autobiographies, therefore, modern autobiography is possible. In them is the discovery of the modern individual life.

Sarah Kemble Knight (1666-1727) *The Journal of Madam Knight*

Sarah Kemble Knight's Journal was not published until 1825, when it was brought out by Theodore Dwight (1796-1866). Dwight was a New York teacher and journalist who wrote travel essays, histories, and biographies, and who wanted, like others of his generation, to contribute to building American literature. His father, Theodore Dwight, Sr. (1764-1846), and uncle, Timothy Dwight, were grandsons of Jonathan Edwards and members of the Connecticut Wits. Knight's Journal, he said elegantly, would "please those who have particularly studied the progressive history of our country."

In his brief introduction to the 1825 edition, Dwight described Knight as "a resident of Boston, and a lady of uncommon literary attainments, as well as great taste and strength of mind," and he noted that "she was called Madam Knight, out of respect to her character according to a custom once common in New England…" The Journal, he said, was "a faithful copy from a diary in the author's own hand-writing, compiled soon after her return home, as it appears, from notes recorded daily, while on the road."[1]

Unfortunately, the original text is now lost and little more is known about Knight. A modern editor, however, has learned that when she hastily began her journey, "she left behind a fifteen-year-old daughter, whose father was apparently travelling on business abroad, and an elderly mother….The road she took was the established one between Boston and New Haven; just three months earlier Connecticut's governor, Fitz-John Winthrop, and his son and daughter had taken the same road from Connecticut to Boston. But it must have been the rare woman who undertook the journey alone."[2]

The text is from The Journal of Madam Knight, ed. Sargent Bush, Jr., in Journeys in New Worlds: Early American Women's Narratives, ed William L. Andrews (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1990), Bush retained the footnotes of 1825, by Theodore Dwight, which have been modified for the present volume. Bush's own editorial commentary, however, which appears in brackets, has not been changed. In his introduction to the selection in Journeys in New Worlds, Bush summarizes what else is known of Knight, as well as other critical writing about her.

1. *Theodore Dwight, "Introduction to the Edition of 1825," in The Journal of Madam Knight, ed. Sargent Bush, Jr., in Journeys in New Worlds, ed. William L. Andrews, p. 85.*
2. *Bush, "Introduction" to the Journal of Madam Knight, p. 69.*

Reading

The private journal of a journey from Boston to New York in the year 1704
http://archive.org/stream/privatejournalof00knig#page/n5/mode/2up

Elizabeth Ashbridge (1713-1755) *Some Account of the Fore Part Of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge*

Though long known among Quaker readers, this fascinating autobiography did not acquire a larger readership until discussed by Daniel Shea in Spiritual Autobiography in Early America in 1968. Since then it has attracted further attention as a very sympathetic early woman's autobiography.

What makes the Account so sympathetic is Ashbridge's vitality and modernity. She in no way fits the stereotype of the Quaker woman, dressed in somber gray and speaking softly in "these" and "thous." She was wild. She eloped. She wanted to be an actress, and delighted her second husband with her spirited singing and dancing. What's more, she writes with spirit, using excited colloquial language. (Once one gets accustomed to the eighteenth-century syntax, her writing is also quite easy to follow.) Yet as a bright, energetic, high-spirited woman, she still had considerable trouble breaking out of gender stereotypes, and that is Ashbridge's modernity.

She becomes a little tamer once she becomes a Quaker. She loses the urge to dance, and eventually alters her dress. But the spirit remains, sublimated in the energy of her faith and her works. She even temporarily reforms her husband.

The Account ends in about 1741 or 1742, with the news of his death. Post scripts by her third husband (Aaron Ashbridge) and other people say that she paid off her second husband's debts, amounting to eighty pounds, and then supported herself by "School keeping" and "her Needle." Aaron was a Quaker, and they married "in the 9 mo. 1746" in Burlington, New Jersey. She also travelled as a visitor to other Meetings. In 1753, she went to visit Meetings in England and Ireland, where she became ill from her exhausting travels. Daniel Shea has discovered from an Ashbridge family genealogy that her name at the time of her last marriage was Elizabeth Sampson Sullivan. He also learned that Aaron Ashbridge's later life "reversed the pattern" of Mr. Sullivan's. "He was twice complained of in the Goshen (Pennsylvania) Meeting for drinking to excess,"[1] and in 1775 the Meeting disowned him.

The text is from Some Account of the Fore Part of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge…, ed. Daniel Shea, in Journeys in New Worlds: Early American Women's Narratives, ed. William L. Andrews (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1990). In his introduction, Shea provides biographical information as well as criticism. Shea's notes have been shortened to save space.

1. *Daniel Shea, "Introduction" to Some Account of the Fore Part of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge…, in Journeys in New Worlds: Early American Women's Narratives, ed. William L. Andrews, p. 141.*

Reading

Quaker Grey: Some Account of the Forepart of the life of Elizabeth Ashbridge, Written by her own hand many years ago
http://archive.org/stream/someaccountoffor00ashbuoft#page/n9/mode/2up

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) *Personal Narrative*

Although probably the most famous American Puritan autobiography, by one of the most famous American Puritans, Edwards's "Personal Narrative" does not follow the conventions of a Puritan confession. The established sequence of events, as summarized by Edmund S. Morgan, is "knowledge (of sin), conviction, faith combat, and true, imperfect assurance (of salvation)."[1] Edwards's path, extending from his childhood to the point where this narrative stops in January, 1739, is from piety to doubt and then to alternations between lyric adoration and a fear of corruption, ending in "a vastly greater sense of my own wickedness," though the latter is tempered by faith "that God reigned, and that his will was done." Yet this very difference from the norms is part of what makes Edwards's story so intriguing and, for some people, so lifelike. He is introspective to the point of gloom. He is also like a psalmist when describing the "delight" and "sweetness" and "glory" of God's world.

Further, more definite interpretation of the "Narrative" would be aided by our knowing more about the circumstances of its writing. For whom was it written, and when? It was not published until 1765 in his friend Samuel Hopkins's The Life and Character of the Late Rev. Mr. Jonathan Edwards, where it appeared in a chapter called "An account of his conversion, experiences, and religious exercises, given by himself."

The inwardness of the writing suggests that it was not meant for publication in Edwards's lifetime. Yet the comparisons of his experiences and "affections" with other people's suggests that he was definitely mindful of his neighbors and parishioners, including those swept up in the emotions of the Great Awakening of 1740-+50, which began with the revival at his church in Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1735-35. Was he testing their religious sincerity against his own? Was he, even somewhat pride fully, asserting his greater "wickedness"? Or was he trying to review his history and humble himself? Whatever the answers, such intensity was hard to bear (and have bared). By 1750 the residents of Northampton had had enough religious fervor, and they dismissed Edwards from his church. He went across the mountains to Stockbridge, where he was a missionary to the Indians until 1757, when he was invited to become President of the College of New Jersey (later Princeton) and where he died of smallpox in March 1758.

Edwards's "narrative" has long been contrasted with Franklin's Autobiography and John Woolman's Journal. The writings of Calvinist, Deist, and Quaker; of revivalist, of merchant-philanthropist-scientist, and of pacifist-reformer: the three allow for an illuminating range of comparisons. It is also instructive to compare Edwards and Charles Woodmason, noting, for example, how both are on "errands in the wilderness," but how Woodmason, despite his hardships, seems so much more psychologically settled and sure of himself. Woodmason, we might say, wrote his Journal in order to preserve his sense of himself and sense of propriety and control amid the misbehavior of others. He never questioned himself. Edwards constantly questioned himself, seeking salvation, not just social order. But these autobiographies also have some features in common. Each, we might say, espouses a particular virtue, and so aims, to use Franklin's term, at "the art of virtue." Piety, pragmatism, pacifisms, and Episcopalianism were different virtues, but eh autobiographies of these four individuals were used to explain and promote each.

The text is from The Works of President Edwards, ed. S. Austin, 8 vols. published in 1808, in which spelling and punctuation were much modernized, and from which the bracketed information of the present selection is derived. The classic biography of Edwards is Perry Miller, Jonathan Edwards, published in 1949. David Levin's Jonathan Edwards: A Profile (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969) reprints Hopkins's Life and Character.

1. *Edmund S. Morgan, Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1963), p. 72.*

Reading

Selected Sermons of Jonathan Edwards
http://archive.org/stream/selectedsermons01edwagoog#page/n6/mode/2up

Nathan Cole (1711-1783) From *The Spiritual Travels of Nathan Cole*

A farmer and carpenter from Kensington in central Connecticut (now a part of the town of Berlin), Nathan Cole was among the thousands of people aroused by the Great Awakening. On October 23, 1740, he went to nearby Middletown to hear George Whitefield preach, and his life was never the same. Before, as he says, he had been an Arminian, a believer that people's own moral choices rather than God's grace determine their salvation. This belief, named for Jacobs Arminius (1560-1609), a Dutch theologian, was considered a heresy by orthodox Calvinists because it downplayed the ultimate power of God, but it had been a comfort to an economically prosperous and independent people.

Cole's description of the crowds rushing to hear Whitefield could be a description of the end of the world. For Cole it was, indeed, the end of his old complacency, for he immediately became tormented by his sense of sin and his dependence on God's omnipotence. He wept, sobbed, and was tempted by Satan to commit suicide. In 1748 his wife also went through a conversion crisis. Yet from these experiences he became sufficiently dissatisfied with what he thought was the continued looseness and hypocrisy of the Congregational establishment that he refused to pay his "rates," the tax that all citizens owed to the church. (The Congregational Church was then a state church.) He and his fellow Separatists set up their own fellowship that met in people's houses, until they joined other new churches. Meanwhile, their combined piety and disobedience troubled their neighbors.

Coles "Travels," which he wrote in 1765, thus illustrate a paradox of the Awakening: a fear and abasement before a harsh, omnipotent God, but a new independence from ecclesiastical and civil authority.

The text is from Michael J. Crawford, ed., "The Spiritual Travels of Nathan Cole," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d series, 33 (1976): 89-126. Crawford's short introduction and notes, edited here and sometimes transposed into brackets, supply additional information about Cole. Not included here are the source references Crawford supplied for Cole's many biblical citations and paraphrasing's. For a further interpretation of "Spiritual Travels," see the chapter on Cole in Daniel B. Shea, Spiritual Autobiography in Early America (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968; reprint, Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1988). The original manuscript is in the holdings of the Connecticut Historical Society.

I was born Feb 15th 1711 and born again octo 1741---

When I was young I had very early Convictions; but after I grew up I was an Arminian until I was *near* 30 years of age; I intended to be saved by my own works such as prayers and good deeds.

Reading

Royal Parks and Gardens of London
http://archive.org/stream/royalparksgarden00cole#page/n7/mode/2up

Charles Woodmason (c. 1720-1776?) From the *Journal of C.W., Clerk, Itinerant Minister in South Carolina*

Very little is known about Charles Woodmason, and his writings were not published until 1953, when Richard J. Hooker brought together his journal, letters, and sermons in The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution. Yet we know equally little of other early American autobiographers like Madam Knight and Elizabeth Ashbridge. Their autobiographies stand as their only biographies.

According to Richard Hooker, Woodmason was born in England about 1720 and grew up, probably in London, as a member of the gentry' class and the Anglican Church. In about 1752 he went to South Carolina, probably expecting his wife and family to join him later. A fall from a horse and "a kick received in the Scrotum" made him impotent, however, and his wife "refused coming over to America." But Woodmason stayed, and during the next seven or eight years he bought over 2100 acres of land and 18 slaves. He became a member of the wealthy class of planters and merchants who ruled the colony. In 1762 he returned briefly to England, probably because his wife had died, but then came back and moved to Charleston, and entered into its civic and political life.

In 1765, misjudging the depth of the popular opposition to the Stamp Act, Woodmason applied to be a distributor of stamps, and suddenly found himself treated as "a faithless fellow-one that is a betrayer of the Country, and of the Rights and Privileges of America." Perhaps as a result, he then gave up political life to become an itinerant Anglican minister. He had long regretted the lack of Anglican ministers in the backcountry and absence of support the backcountry got from the wealthy residents of the coast, who used its residents merely as a buffer against the Indians. But this was a radical change in life for an educated, upper-class South Carolinian. So he made a short trip to England to be ordained, and then started back in June, 1766, the point at which the Journal begins.

As the reader can see, Charles Woodmason's Journal makes a fascinating contrast to other, more familiar or canonical American religious autobiographies. It is not a conversion story; it is not very introspective; it does not even concern itself with God. It is a social document, a powerful, often humorous, moving description of frontier poverty, ignorance, and brutishness, told from the point of view of a cultivated gentleman. Christianity, to Woodmason, does not mean salvation; it means a minimum of physical comfort and social refinement—and an end to nakedness, drunkenness, brawling, lechery, dirt, and hunger. Yet different as Woodmason's Journal is from, say, Edwards's "Personal Narrative," its values are all the closer to the mainstream of the American middle class. Woodmason might almost have been an ancestor to Caroline Kirkland's Mary Clavers in A New Home. Though writing from an establishmentarian perspective, he also bears comparison with the great Methodist frontier preacher, Peter Cartwright.

But the first and last brilliance of Woodmason is the energy, frankness, and roughness of his language. He kept this journal as a record of his travels and sacrifices (counting up the miles travelled and people baptized), as a record to show to his friends, perhaps, and an account (which he somehow anticipated) of how his anger and outrage at the backcountry gave way to sympathy and support. But he must also have kept his journal as a way of keeping his own sanity. The long lists of debauchery and notes on frontier trickery, like drowning out sermons with dogfights, are a kind of mental defense. As the ruffians tried to drown him out with the dogfights, he drowned them in works.

The text, including all notes and editorial matter in brackets, edited slightly for the present selection is from Richard J. Hooker, ed., The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1953).

Reading

"It Will Require Much Time to Model the Manners and Morals of these Wild Peoples"
http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6386/

Late 18th Century : National Identities: Patriots, Promoters, and Pretenders (1776-1837)

In the sixty years or so from the Revolution to the 1830's, autobiography in the United States became closely identified with the new nation. It was used to defend and promote the goals of the Revolutionary War. It enabled Americans to invent (or reinvent) themselves as the citizens of the new nation, at once defining themselves and defining it. After the war, autobiography helped to promote the settlement of the frontier, describing the country and the people. In turn, it also helped Indians justify their opposition to settlement. At the same time, however, autobiography was criticized by many people as a vain and deceitful kind of writing that modest, respectable folks should shun.

The association of autobiography with the Revolution might be said to have begun with Benjamin Franklin. He started writing his *Autobiography* in England in 1771, having already foreseen "a total disunion of the two countries," (1) and foreseen his life as an anticipation of revolution and a preparation for it. The story of a young man's rise to wealth and fame by his own virtue and industry, combined with the mutual support of fellow tradesmen, was a new one- and potentially a very unsettling one for established orders. His pride in his achievement, while masked by a seemingly simple modesty, was even more unsettling. People had once been ashamed of humble origins, as John Adams noted in his *Discourses on Davila.* As Franklin went on to write in 1784 and 1788-90, that is just after the Revolution, he took pride in his success and advised later generations on how they, too, could become civic leaders by promoting useful improvements through voluntary associations.

An even more forthright identification with the Revolution occurs in Thomas Jefferson's *Autobiography*, written in 1821, when Jefferson was seventy-seven. Focusing on the writing of *The Declaration of Independence* and then on his efforts, early in the war years, while he was In the Virginia House of Burgesses, to abolish primogeniture and to separate church and state, his autobiography clearly reveals its author's sense that the Revolution was the great event of his life, and that these were the deeds for which he wanted and expected to be remembered. Without the Revolution, Jefferson might have been merely a scholarly and inventive Virginia gentleman. Because of it, however-because he helped to make it-he could conceive of himself in a much larger and loftier sense: as an American, a national leader, a spokesman for independence and liberty, and as therefore, a man whose biography and autobiography would be historically important.

Yet Franklin and Jefferson were by no means the only people of this time to achieve these "national identities," this sense of themselves as citizens and representatives of a new nation and as spokesman and spokeswomen for it, whether by their own or someone else's designation. Their friend, associate and occasional critic and rival John Adams showed a similar sense of history when, in Philadelphia in 1775 to attend the Continental Congress, he entered a stationery store and bought the letter book in which he would keep copies of all his future correspondence. Before, he had been simply a hard-working lawyer from Braintree and Boston, Massachusetts. On election to the Congress, he became a person with a historical destiny. He now needed to keep copies of his letters, for they performed official business and wee valuable historical documents. Meanwhile, from his and his wife Abigail's longstanding love of each other's letters, which were not just signs of their mutual affection but a means of refining and expressing their sensibilities, he and she went on saving their private correspondence, too. Her letters informed him of the sacrifices women were making in the war and taunted him that independence and freedom would be for women as well as men. Later, her letters from Paris to her family back home gave her explicitly American reactions to French houses, housekeeping, and manners. Sometimes offended, sometimes amused, she always stood up for her native land.

Soldiers and seamen also wrote autobiographical accounts of their war-time experiences. Men such as Ethan Allen, who had been British captives, had stories to tell of the atrocities they witnessed and of how their faith in the American cause sustained them during months of hunger and sickness. Allen's *Narrative* was particularly inspiring to other patriots because it also told of his astonishing victory at Fort Ticonderoga and his even more amazing boldness during his two and one half years in captivity. His *Narrative* mythologized him as a symbol of "Yankee" determination and courage. Its publication in 1779 was a critical move in the war for the hearts and minds of the American people that was being fought in newspapers and pamphlets.

Other autobiographies of the Revolution would not be published until many years later, for there was simply not the money, the place, or the time and interest to print every person's letters of diaries during the war itself. One account must have seemed more or less like another. But, retrospectively, their significance grew. The nation grew and prospered, and it honored its past and its heroes at Fourth of July celebrations, militia musters, and grand patriotic occasions like the anniversary visit of General Lafayette in the 1820's. Publication of an ancestor's diary, sometimes privately and sometimes in the proceedings of a newly founded state or local historical society, became a combined act of patriotism and family piety. The first editor of the *Letters of Mrs. Adams,* for example, was her grandson Charles Francis Adams, who published them in 1840. In doing so, he also corrected her spelling and grammar and standardized her punctuation. The autobiographies of ones revered ancestors were being not just preserved for posterity but polished for it.

A unique further expression of this retrospective honoring of the heroes of the Revolution was the collection of still more of their stories during the 1830's as a part of their pension applications. As John C. Dann wrote in his introduction to a small selection from the thousands of these applications, the 1832 pension act was the first in which the federal government undertook to provide for all the veterans, not just those of the Continental Army or those who were disabled or poor. However, records of these men's service were missing and incomplete, so the aged veterans had to go to their local courtrooms and present sworn testimony about the battles they had been in, their units, officers, and the times and places where they had served. This was in Dann's words, "one of the largest oral history projects ever undertaken." (2)

It literally paid men to tell their stories of their service to their country; in effect, it paid them for composing their national identities. The American concept of self now had governmental approval.

Not all the post-Revolutionary autobiographers were so honorable, however. Another, less desirable effect of the Revolution-from official or respectable standpoints-was a change in manners that diminished respect for authority and encouraged some men to cloak their own unruliness in patriotic colors, while also celebrating their private deeds as they might not have done before. Thus rogue narratives like Stephen Burrough's *Memoirs* (1798) and *A Narrative of the Life, Adventurers, Travels, and Sufferings of Henry Tufts* (1807), which once would never have been published or would only have been published after re-writing by a minister or another member of the colonial establishment, were now written in the first person and became popular books. Burroughs had rebelled against his strict father, a Presbyterian minister, as the colonies had revolted against Great Britain-or so he claimed, using the same familial metaphors that had been used by defenders of the Revolution. (3) When he engaged in counterfeiting, he argued (like Benjamin Franklin promoting the printing of paper currency) that he was actually serving the public good by increasing the money supply. When he was sent to jail, he complained that he was being enslaved and held against his will. The more society punished an ingenious rationalizer like Burroughs, the more he could bend the rhetoric of the Revolution to make himself a hero and a martyr. (4)

Such men thus took to autobiography as their organ of self-justification and self-advertisement almost as readily as they took to crime! Autobiography was simply an extension of the same posturing and imposturing they were already engaged in. And the guardians of the new American republic did not like it, any more than they liked the crimes.

A vivid sense of this conservative reaction against revolution and, by implication, against autobiography can be had from reading John Adams' extensive digressions on emulation his *Discourses on Davila.* Written in 1789-90, the first year of the new American federal government, in which Adams was Washington's vice-president (and also the first year of the French Revolution), the *Discourses* were Adams' warning to Americans against the dangers of excessive liberty and egalitarianism. Specifically, he saw the French abandonment of inherited titles and aristocratic rank as unleashing, instead of productively channeling, the powerful human instinct "to be observed, considered, esteemed, praised, beloved, and admired." A well-ordered state channeled this "instinct of emulation," as Adams called it, following Aristotle and other philosophers of government, so that men could gain fame and receive honors in accordance with their service in war or statecraft. Inherited titles, while not necessary or desirable in the United States, had been the French way of perpetuating the memory of its great men and

so preserving social order. Without them, Adams feared, people would rush to gain fame by any means at hand-through crime, great wealth, usurpation of power, flattery, and deceit. The implicit immorality in autobiography, Adams might have gone one, was that it too, might encourage men towards boasting, lying, and an emphasis on sensation and scandal. True achievement should be recognized and rewarded by other men and by the state and those one served. Praising one's self led to chaos.

The further importance of the *Discourses* to autobiography is that, paradoxically, they illustrate the very satisfaction and pride which Adams and other founding fathers took in the public recognition they received. The councils, town meetings, and congresses of the revolution and early republic, as Hannah Arendt argued in *On Revolution,* were the American equivalent of the Athenian *polis.* The right and glory of a free man was participation in the government of his town or state and then being recognized for what he had said and done. Thus, early American autobiography, as we have been saying, emphasized one's service to various public bodies: Franklin's Philadelphia., the army, Jefferson's Virginia, the new nation. The intensity with which the Adams family valued this civic service and the emulation given and gained from it underlies a lot of the ironies and despair in *The Education of Henry Adams,* with Henry's portrait of himself as a "failure."

The early American dislike of boastful and scandalous autobiography also shows up in the very low opinion Americans had of Rousseau's *Confessions.* The first American edition of this landmark in the history of autobiography was published in New York in 1796, and it was almost universally condemned. The book demonstrated, wrote Samuel Miller, a Presbyterian minister and member of the American Philosophical Society, that Rousseau's life was "an unnatural compound of vanity, meanness, and contemptible self-love, a suspicious, restless temper, bordering on insanity, and a prostration of every principle of duty, to his own aggrandizement and gratification." (5) Before 1789, Americans had admired Rousseau. His ideas and sentiments helped justify their revolution. But after the French Revolution and the reign of terror, the larger number of Americans "accounted [him] erratic and intolerant, foolish and indiscreet." (6) His character was seen to be symptomatic of French excesses, and, as this character was most visible in the *Confessions*, this text (as well as Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther)* seems to represent the dangers of egotism and sentimentalism. Some Americans, like Nathaniel Hawthorne and the families he addressed in his early children's stories, even had reservations about Benjamin Franklin's autobiography. Franklin was a great man and his book an exemplary tale, but did he have to be so cunning-and so smugly satisfied with himself? (7) Federalist Americans remained wary of the ego.

The conservative reaction against autobiographical vanity did not affect the writing of narratives of captivity, travel, and life on the frontier. The first two were already well established, and the third kind would become immensely important to the post-war opening of the West and the new national identities that would develop around the West and its settlement.

John Filson's life of Daniel Boone, told in the first person as if it were Boone's autobiography, was the earliest and most influential of these new frontier narratives. Yet it is also part captivity narrative and part war memoir. In it, Boone tells of repeated battles with Indians and being held captive from January to June, 1778. He is taken on "an uncomfortable journey, in very severe weather" all the way to Detroit and then held in Chillicothe (Chillicothe, Ohio) for several months. But unlike the Puritan captives, Boone becomes quite well adjusted to Indian life. They "entertained me well," he says, and soon adopted him "according to their custom, into a family where I became a son, and had a great share in the affection of my new parents, brothers, sisters, and friends." Boone quickly reassures his readers of his greater loyalty to white Kentuckians: he escapes and goes to warn Boonsborough of an impending Indian attack. But his temporary adoption by the Indians has made him a still better scout and woodsman. He is not just a frontier adventurer; he straddles the frontier, as a spokesman for both sides of it and as someone who can put Indian skills into the service of the new settlers.

This willingness to learn from the Indians and even to respect them at times, while still keeping bright a vision of the eventual triumph of "civilization," made Boone an archetype for many later autobiographers, biographers, and novelists. James Fennimore Cooper's Leatherstocking is derived from Boone (along with a hunter from near Cooperstown whom Cooper had known as a boy), and spurious "autobiographies" of frontier heroes like Davy Crockett filled the newspapers and sporting magazines of the 1830's. The reading public was strongly attracted to the frontier type (in its proliferating

manifestations), and resourceful writers searched for more people who might embody it. In the Genesee Valley of New York, James Everett Seaver, a school teacher, interviewed Mary Jemison, who had lived among the Seneca for forty years, and in 1824 he published the *Narrative* of her life. Seaver wanted to make her sort of female Boone and an example of how the refinements of white womanhood endured I spite of long exposure to savage life. But Jemison had her own agenda too, and at moments her praise of the Seneca and what she learned from them also come through. As Annette Kolodny has said, *The Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison* is a "fascinating store of historical information" and also "an inconsistent, often perplexing document." (8) It is not nearly so well know as the other autobiographies mentioned here, but it is an important one, just the same, and a good one to read alongside these others.

Beyond the frontier lay the Indians themselves, and as they ceased to be a threat to white expansion (or could be absorbed symbolically by a border figure like Boone), they became all the more interesting and useful as symbols and historical relics. In 1832, Samuel Gardner Drake, a Boston antiquarian, published a *Biography and History of the Indians of North America,* which in the next twenty-five years went through ten revisions and re-publications. Benjamin Thatcher, another Bostonian, published a similar collection, *Indian Biography*, which was nearly as popular. Such encyclopedias contained brief biographies of scores of famous chiefs, as well as captivity narratives, speeches, anecdotes, and histories of Indian wars. The form of the life of a famous chief was very conventionalized. His tribe had once been a "powerful, warlike nation"; it was met and corrupted by white men; its land was purchased or lost in war; the chief rallied the people to resist; but he failed and now the tribe was almost extinct. Although repetitious, such stories had tragic grandeur, and the focus on the life of the chief gave them more immediacy and drama. His life embodied tribal experience and customs, which were difficult to understand and interpret, in a seemingly verifiable individual account. The individual noble Indian was also more appealing than a confusing heterogeneous group of people. Meanwhile, the very repetition of the stories made them confirm one another; collectively, they all accounted for "the vanishing Indian."

Some editions of Thatcher's and Drake's books even used the word *autobiography* alongside biography. Calling a story an "autobiography" was a way of claiming greater authenticity for it (the same strategy used with the spurious "autobiographies" of Davy Crockett). The less true a "life" was, the more the necessity to call it an autobiography, as a way of claiming authenticity. (The same continues to happen with spurious works like *The Autobiography of Howard Hughes,* which might better have been called an unauthorized biography by Clifford Irving, and *The Education of Little Tree,* which was purported to be by a Cherokee named Forrest Carter but was actually by a white Southerner named Asa Earl Carter.(9))

There were authentic Indian autobiographies in this period, however, and we can now see that they anticipated later Indian autobiography. In 1831, William Apess, a man of mixed Pequot and white ancestry, published *A Son of the Forest,* in which he told of being raised by foster parents, serving in the War of 1812, and eventually coming to prize his Indian heritage. In 1833, Black Hawk, the Sac leader who had become the sentimental hero of the Black Hawk War, even though the enemy and loser, dictated his autobiography, through an interpreter, to a frontier journalist, using the opportunity to defend himself and tell his side of the story. Thus, at the very moment that white Americans were using autobiography to define their national identities, Apess and Black Hawk were using it to define a revived or preserved tribal identity-or ethnic identity, as we might call it today.

At nearly the same time, Carolyn Kirkland, using the pseudonym of Mary Clavers, published an autobiography about her and her husband's pioneering experiences in Michigan. It was considered improper for a lady to write and even more so for her to use her own name, just as some aristocratic gentlemen had once thought it beneath their dignity to attach their own names to their books and pamphlets. (10)

Controversy was demeaning, especially with social inferiors. It was also more gentlemanly to appear not to have to write, to be a dabbler and amateur, with the result that, following Washington Irving, the sketch had become a favorite upper-class (or pseudo-upper-class) literary form. The sketch mixed fact and whimsy, observation and fantasy, while the author's persona (or even more evasively, the pseudo-author's persona) was supposedly someone too light and frivolous to take seriously. The pseudonym also was a way of escaping the onus of vanity that was attached to autobiographical writing.

All of these conditions make it very difficult with respect to some of the writings of this period to distinguish between autobiography and fiction and between biography and autobiography, and to impose other later definitions. The American novel was new, and it often imitated autobiographies as a way of making the story seem more real and of making it (or pretending to make it) less sensational and scandalous. Novelists then as now drew on personal experience, but they went much further than novelists today in saying that they were writing to warn and advise their young readers-another way of passing the personal and societal censors who felt that novels misrepresented reality and wasted time. With one hand, therefore, "Mary Clavers" apologized for her "straggling and cloudy crayon sketches," acting modest and self-effacing, while, with the other, she wrote that these sketches "of life and manners in the remoter parts of Michigan" had "the merit of general truth of outline." The apology and the claim for truth appear in the same sentence, as if the "crayon" had been passed from one hand to the other.

Yet whether she was a novelist or autobiographer is finally secondary to the fact that in writing of her frontier experience she, too, had adopted a new national identity. For her generation, the frontier was now the main locus of personhood and nationhood, as the Revolution had been for most members of the generation before And her confidence that her generation before. And her confidence that her generation wanted to hear about it from a woman's standpoint demonstrates that it wanted not just to settle the frontier but to domesticate it, to make it refined and a place for people with education and manners. Autobiography had taken Americans through revolution, had endured conservative reactions against it, and had gone on to help populate and refine the frontier, even while providing the dispossessed victims of the frontier with a place to publish their apologias and defenses.

Ethan Allen (1738-1789) From *The Narrative of Colonel Ethan Allen's Captivity*

The Narrative of Colonel Ethan Allen's Captivity was published first in 1779, in a Philadelphia newspaper, and it made such good anti-British propaganda that George Washington gave orders to his officers to read it to their troops. By 1780, it had gone through seven more printings and reprinting's, all "in the shabby dress of a large and ragged pamphlet," as an 1807 editor described them. The Narrative remained popular until outdated by Civil War prison stories of the 1860s.

On first reading it may seem like the most egotistical autobiography ever written, and some people are put off by Allan's swaggering. He also seems inconsistent, at one moment acting rough and egalitarian and at another insisting upon his status as a gentleman—even serving as a British officer's "faithful second" in a duel. But there was strategy to Allen's boasting. As he notes, many of the British treated the Americans with contempt, especially early in the war, and many Americans were in awe of British power. By not showing fear, Allen attempted to "set an example of virtue and fortitude to our little commonwealth." Likewise, taking pride in being an officer and gentleman was a way of irritating the enemy and inspiring his countrymen. So he demanded all the rights of an officer as dictated by eighteenth-century military customs (which, however, were not based on wars of revolution or ideological conflict). Demanding his rights might not only bring better treatment; it might also bring greater respect for him and the American cause.

The selections below all come from the beginning of his Narrative, when he showed himself as generally at his boldest. Later, following the imprisonment in Falmouth, England, he was sent back to American and spent over a year and a half in New York, part of the time on parole and part in jail. Conditions there, especially among the enlisted men starving and dying of disease in abandoned churches, were too severe and pathetic for Allen to change by any tough-talk. But he did cry out against such atrocities, while continuing to show himself as unsubdued by them. He was released in an exchange of prisoners in May, 1778.

The standard biographies of Ethan Allen are John Pell, Ethan Allen (Boston; Houghton Mifflin, 1929) and Charles A. Jellison, Ethan Allen: Frontier Rebel (Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1969). A balanced, critical assessment of Allen is John McWilliams, "The Faces of Ethan Allen" (New England Quarterly 49 (1976): 257-82).

Reading

A Narrative of Col Ethan Allen's Captivity: 1775 – 1778
http://archive.org/stream/cihm_22019#page/n5/mode/2up

Abigail (1744-1818) and John Adams (1735-1826) *Selected Letters*

John Adams From *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams And Discourses on Davila*

Letters and diaries, it has been said, are "serial autobiography." The writers compose and recompose themselves at short intervals and, in the case of letters, to an audience of just one other person, whose interests and viewpoints help shape the letter. Moreover, as forms much older than autobiography per se, letters and diaries provided precedents for it.

In the eighteenth century, the familiar letter became an extremely important means of self-improvement, self- invention, and liberation from the restrictions of Puritanism. Young New Englanders like John Adams and his wife-to-be Abigail Smith wrote letters to entertain themselves, to improve their penmanship and writing, and to cultivate their sentiments. To add to the game, and to show off their learning, they often chose classical pen names, making a pretense of hiding or altering identity, while also giving themselves more license to tease or be frank. Thus Abigail Smith, a minister's daughter from Weymouth, Massachusetts, early chose the name Diana, while John Adams became Lysander. Later Abigail became Portia, and John simply became John or, to Abigail, "My dearest Friend," but some of the teasing and playfulness, and the gentleness and gentility, remained throughout a correspondence which, because of the revolution and John's subsequent diplomatic and governmental assignments, continued nearly all their lives.

The Revolution, along with their ambition and desire for recognition, also gave them both a profound sense of destiny. This sense underlies their correspondence and John Adams's diary/autobiography-even to the recording of his night with Benjamin Franklin and his reflections on colds. Their sense of destiny also intensified their identification with the creation of the American character. Their ideals were not just for themselves but for their children and the nation, as is clear in the remarkable exchange of letters, March 31 and April 14, 1776. These two letters are also known for Abigail's request that the declarers of "an independency" "remember the ladies," and for John's answer which notes "the Despotism of the Petticoat," a clash in which teasing may be present, too. But when John wrote "My dear Portia" in May, 1780, about how he "must study Politicks and War that my sons may have liberty to study Mathematics and Philosophy…in order to give their children a right to study Painting, Poetry, Musick,…and his war would be the last war. America was to be a new kind of nation. (One can ask how the autobiographies of Henry and Charles, his great-grandsons, reply to this prophecy.) Similarly, when Abigail objected to French manners and the dirt of her house in Auteuil, she wrote to her American sister, Mrs. Richard Cranch, in Abigail's experience, meanwhile, is that when she saw Madame Helvetius as the image of all French female depravity, Madame Helvetius's darling was at that moment Benjamin Franklin, the vastly popular image of new American worldly success.

Yet thanks to Charles Francis Adams's edition of his grandmother's letters in 1840, Abigail's style of letter-writing became a model for later American women. Her chattiness mixed with her acerbic wit and strong sense of self-worth is abundantly present in the letters of Marianne Hooper Adams, Henry Adam's wife. Her letters are also interesting to compare with Mary Boykin Chesnut's diary.

With Charles Francis Adams's publication of *Familiar Letters of John Adams and his Wife,* during the Revolution in 1876, as a tribute to the national Centennial, both writers were soon reprinted in anthologies. As the editors of The Book of Abigail and John wrote in their introduction: "their fortitude, their sacrifices, their public and private wisdom- and…their unexpected charm and humor: made them "the prototypical American couple"; "in the United States at its hundredth birthday, John and Abigail Adams were everybody's grandparents" (9).

No such popularity has ever fallen on John Adam's Discourses on Davila. They were written, as we noted above, in 1789-90, the first year of the French Revolution, and Adams wrote them to warn his fellow Americans of the dangers of an unchecked and unchanneled drive for fame. Wisdom in statecraft sublimated the instinct of emulation to the public good, Adams argued, and he believed that the American experiment had so far done this. But many of Adams's critics misread the Discourses as a plea for monarchy and inherited titles in America.

The Discourses thus illustrate the controversy in early Federalist America over the power of egotism and how to control it, whether by a stronger class system or through training in self-control and modesty. The work also illustrates the value which the Adams family placed on civic service and fame. John and Abigail Adams knew the power of the "instinct of emulation," because they felt it in themselves.

The selections below are from The Book of Abigail and John: Selected Letters of the Adams Family, 1762-1784, ed. L.H. Butterfield, Marc Friedlander, and Mary-Jo Kline (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1975): Letters of Mrs. Adams…, ed. Charles Francis Adams (Boston: Little and Brown, 1840); Diary and Autobiography of John Adams, ed. L.H. Butterfield, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1962); and Discourses on Davila, in the Works of John Adams…,ed. Charles Francis Adams, vol. 6 (Boston: Little and Brown, 1851). All editorial information in notes and brackets is given by the respective editors.

Reading

New Letters of Abigail Adams: 1788 – 1801
http://archive.org/stream/newlettersofabig002627mbp#page/n7/mode/2up

John Filson (1734-1820) *The Adventures of Col. Daniel Boon*

Although written by John Filson (c. 1747-88) and first published as an appendix to Filson's The Discovery, Settlement, and Present State of Kentucke (1784), "The Adventures of Col. Daniel boon" (sic) is an autobiography in that it is based on stories Boone told to Filson during Filson's two years in Kentucky as a surveyor and land speculator. Furthering the idea that it is Boone's own story, Filson has Boone narrate it in the first person. With the rest of his Kentucke being as Richard Slotkin has said, "an elaborate real-estate promotion brochure designed to sell farm lands…to easterners and Europeans, "Filson needed the direct testimony of an actual inhabitant. Even more important, Slotkin argues, Filson needed a heroic figure who would "portray the promise of the frontier" while also not "glossing over the obviously perilous realities of the pioneer's situation."[1] In 1784, tight after the Revolution's many Indian attacks there, Kentucky was known as "the Dark and Bloody Ground"—a name that discouraged prospective settlers.

Boone, therefore, emerges as the "instrument ordained to settle the wilderness." With his references to "Providence" and "our Creator," he does indeed imply that he is on a divine, historic mission. With his almost emotionless chronicle of his travels and Indian fights, he also seems more like an "instrument" than a man. And yet behind the few and formulaic descriptions of feeling ("sorrows and sufferings vanish," "a long and fatiguing March"), readers can sense a person with vision and human concern, not just cold discipline. He is very fond of elegant, poetic diction for describing landscape, and this plays into his vision of Kentucky as a future site of great cities and fertile farms. He also respects his Indian enemies, even though sometimes calling them "barbarous savages." At moments such as his long captivity, he shows them coming to like and respect him. What keeps him from being more responsive and friendly, what makes him tricky and cautious, is his always underlying purpose "to settle the wilderness."

These complexities and tensions in Boone's character which the "Adventures" are too short to work out and resolve almost begged later novelists, playwrights, biographers, and mythologizers to study him, not just celebrate him. And they did, giving us as many later images of Boone as there are images of the frontier. He is heroic, but he is cold-blooded; he is folksy and illiterate, or he is educated and ambitious. He is tragic, jolly; sincere, ironic; handsome, scarred; young, old; sociable, solitary. A longer, more self-scrutinizing kind of autobiography might not have left so many questions open, so much room for the imagination tow work and thus for myth-making. But one thing there is no doubt about is that be being published right at the end of the Revolution and the beginning of trans-Appalachian settlement, "The Adventures of Daniel Boone" made Boone the personification of American national expansion.

The modern edition of Filson's Kentucke is a facsimile edited, with notes, by W.R. Jillson (Louisville: Standard Printing Co., 1930). The most recent biography of Boone is by John Mack Faragher, Daniel Boone: The Life and Legend of an American Pioneer (New York: Holt, 1992).

1. *Richard Slotkin, Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860 (Middletown, CT: Weseyan Univ. Press, 1973), p. 268.*

Reading

John Filson: The First Historian of Kentucky – His Life and Writings
http://archive.org/stream/johnfilsonfirsth00durr#page/n7/mode/2up

Sarah Osborn (c. 1756-1854) and Nathan B. Jennings (1754-1841) *Narratives of the Revolution*

In 1832, Congress authorized pensions to all veterans of the Revolutionary War. Since this included people such as militia men and crewmen or privateers, for whom there were no official records, all applicants were asked to provide detailed information about "the time and place of service, the names of units and officers, and engagements in which (they) had participated," and to present this testimony in court, with at least two character witnesses.[1]

What this led to, as John C. Dann has explained, was the appearance, in towns and courthouses all over the United States, of several thousand veterans, by then in their late sixties and older, to tell their stories to clerks and court reporters, sometimes in open court with friends, family, and other townspeople listening. Whether or not Congress had foreseen this these pension applications thus became, in Dann's words, "one of the largest oral history projects ever undertaken."[2] But unlike more general oral history projects, this one privileged just a certain set of speakers and subject matters. The Revolutionary veteran and his story became a sort of sanctified national treasure.

The further result was that the government officially preserved the stories of all kinds of men (and, in one case) women. These were not just officers or decorated heroes. They were also privates, noncommissioned officers, sailors, and "coast guards," and this led inevitably, to a kind of democratizing of autobiographies.

The ones that follow, chosen from the seventy-nine stories which John C. Dann selected from National Archives microfilms, are by Nathan B. Jennings and Sarah Osborn. Such a pair, obviously, cannot be typical. Osborn's narrative, Dann says, "is first known account by a female who traveled with the army,"[3] and Jennings appears to have been exceptionally ingenious and successful. But the reader should focus not just on the action but on the concepts of self that are discovered in it. In the beginning, Jennings repeatedly identifies himself with Sag Harbor, the place on eastern Long Island near which he was born, from which he embarked to New York, and to which he returned in his daring raid in 1777. But as a result of the raid, he does not dare go back and even changes his name: his Revolutionary success has in effect rebaptized him.

Sarah Osborn identifies herself by telling how she met her husband, by how well she knew Captain Gregg, including having seen "the bare spot on his head where he had been scalped," and by her memories of General Washington and the surrender at Yorktown. But she also recalls her children and calmly recounts her discovery of her husband's bigamy. Other people and events before and after the war seem to loom larger to her than to Jennings. Yet for both the war is the event, designated as much after the fact as at the time, which shaped their identity.

The texts, including all bracketed editorial material, are from John C. Dann, ed., The Revolution Remembered: Eyewitness Accounts of the War for Independence (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980). For additional background, see Dann's introduction.

1. Dann, Revolution, p. xvii
2. Dann Revolution, xvii.
3. Dann, Revolution, xviii

Reading

Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Sarah Osborn, August 1796, in the 83rd year of her age
http://archive.org/stream/memoirslifemrss01hopkgoog#page/n7/mode/2up

Stephen Burroughs (1765-1840) From *Memoirs of Stephen Burroughs*

In the early nineteenth century, Stephen Burroughs was a famous, or infamous, man. Fifteen different editions of his Memoirs came out between 1798 and 1861, plus eleven editions of a Sketch of the Life of the Notorious Stephen Burroughs and four pamphlet editions of the sermon he purportedly delivered from a hay-mow in Rutland, after being chased by the people of Pelham as in imposter. Who was he? Why was he so well known? And what interest does his autobiography have today?

His father, he says, was a clergyman in Hanover, New Hampshire, who raised him with a Presbyterian "rigor…which illy suited my volatile, impatient temper of mind." At age fourteen, he tried three times to enlist in the Continental Army, each time being withdrawn by his father. In 1781 his father enrolled him in Dartmouth College, but he was so undisciplined he had to quit. Next he went to Newburyport, Massachusetts, and sailed aboard a privateer, having picked up enough instruction from an elderly doctor to act as the ship's physician. But after a year at sea and in France, he was jailed for reportedly breaking open a chest of wine and distributing it to the crew.

Shortly afterwards comes the adventure he describes below, in which he successfully posed for a while as a preacher. To judge by the number of times he later refers to it, this was also the act he became most famous for, the legend even springing up that he started by stealing a real minister's watch and clothes. So perhaps one reason for Burrough's fame was this boldness in imitating, and thus in a way exposing and making fun of, the most revered of early American professions. None of his later tricks as counterfeiter, prison-escape artist, school teacher, and real estate shark were quite so brazen. Nor were they quite so ridiculous, which is another pleasure in reading Burroughs. He likes telling of his pranks, and defends them by sometimes confiding in the reader and sometimes acting very proper and offended (see the short second selection). Burroughs was a trickster who could both laugh and be laughed at. But we also wonder at how he deceived himself. Robert Frost, who wrote a short introduction to a twentieth-century printing of the Memoirs, called him not just a "knowing rascal" but a "naïve hypocrite"—nearly contradictory personalities.

A further reason for Burrough's fame may have been that the members of the early American republic were deeply worried by confidence men. As Karen Halttunen wrote in Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-class Culture in America, 1803-1870, the American emphasis on sincerity and benevolence mad people fear and try to exclude all those who were insincere and too boldly, or too covertly, selfish. A whole system of manners and rituals grew up around protecting and yet properly displaying the depth and the goodness of individual feeling. A culture cannot establish such codes without painful repression, however, which repression is released in fascination with those who break them, as appears to have happened with Burroughs and would later happen with P.T. Barnum. In addition, the autobiographies of the confidence man, trickster, and prince of the humbug are the books we read to try to learn the difference between sincerity and hypocrisy, the good man and the shyster, the true and the false.

Such autobiographies, however, also raise fundamental questions about autobiography. What credence can we place in Burroughs, when we know he lied? Autobiographies are written, we also believe, out of an impulse in the writers to know and examine themselves. But can hypocrites and, especially, naïve hypocrites ever do that? Or to ask a very specific question, how is Burrough's pretending to be a minister, a role he played reasonably well, different from Benjamin Franklin's game of pushing his goods in a wheelbarrow so as to convince his neighbors he was virtuous and industrious?

The text is adapted from the Memoirs of Stephen Burroughs (Albany, NY: B.D. Packard, 1811), chs. 7, 8, and 10. A new edition of the Memoirs has been edited by Philip Gura (Boston: Northeastern Univ. Press, 1988). For an informed and insightful critical article, see Daniel E. Williams, "In Defense of Self: Author and Authority in the Memoirs of Stephen Burroughs," Early American Literature 25 (1990): 96-122.

Reading

Memoirs of the Notorious Stephen Burroughs
http://archive.org/stream/memoirsofnotorio00burr#page/n7/mode/2up

Caroline Kirkland (1801-1864) From *A New Home-Who'll Follow?*

Caroline Kirkland's A New Home-Who'll Follow? (1839) is a work which straddles the fence between novel and autobiography. Though the book was written in the character of "Mary Clavers," the pseudonym that appeared on the title pate, and though it was long recognized as a pioneer work in American realism (and so written about in histories of the American novel), most early readers soon knew that Caroline Kirkland was the real author and that the book was based on her and her husband's experience building the frontier town of Pinckney, Michigan (about fifty miles west of Detroit). Thus the book also is accepted as an autobiography and appears in Louis Kaplan's Bibliography of American Autobiographies.

Such a mixed status derives from the fact that in the early nineteenth century the line between autobiography and the novel was not as clear as some readers would like to make it today. Both were praised if they were faithful to real life, and Edgar Allan Poe, who knew Kirkland was the author, praised the book highly, saying that "to Mrs. Kirkland alone we were indebted for our acquaintance with the home and home-life of the backwoodsman."[1] The disadvantage to autobiography as such was that it was thought to be vain; while the advantage to a little fictionalizing, as of names and places, was that the writer would not be held exactly accountable and might keep her identity unknown. So the fence A New Home straddled was a kind of pioneer split-rail fence, not straight, not high, and not very rigid. Indeed, after publication, the residents of Pinckney recognized themselves in the "Montacute" of the book, and their displeasure was one of the reasons Kirkland returned to New York.

And New Yorker she was, eldest child of Samuel Stansbury, a cultivated book-seller, and granddaughter of Joseph Stansbury, who during the Revolution had been a Loyalist poet and satirist. She received an excellent education and then taught in her aunt's school. In 1828, she married William Kirkland, an instructor at Hamilton College, in Clinton, New York, and for a time they ran a girls school in Geneva, New York. But in 1835 William became principal of the Detroit Female Seminary, and he began buying Michigan land until he and his father owned 1300 acres. He then took his wife and children to settle it and build the town, hoping to grow up (and grow rich) with the expanding West.

A New Home thus invites comparison with Boone's autobiography and other explorers' and settlers' narratives, with the difference that it is written by a very bright and critical woman, one who is often much more realistic than the men. She also has both a sense of humor and a standard of taste, two qualities that complement each other beautifully in her case. So she wants by turns to refine the frontier and to make the new settlers adapt to it. She warns them of the "mud-holes" and the crude cabins, where a fine cabinet is likely to end up as a corn-crib. She urges them to be tolerant of frontier customs, understanding their purpose, and she mostly approves of frontier democracy. In all this she uses her own mistakes and successes as lessons to others, making her book an "Emigrant's Guide" to easterners going west. Seeing herself as an "emigrant," she us identifies with this aspect of the nation's experience, as others had identified with the Revolution.

Perhaps the greatest irony in Kirkland's experience, however, is that the frontier did not in the end provide as much freedom and opportunity as the city. It was also not a good place to write, even though it was good material for a writer. So in 1842 she and her husband returned to New York, where she wrote more sketches about the West, as well as writing and editing travel letters, advice books, and literary anthologies.

The text below is from A New Home-Who'll Follow (1839), chapters 1 and 18. A recent edition is A New Home-Who'll Follow? ed. William S. Osborne (New Haven: College & Univ. Press, 1965). William Osborne is also the author of the brief biography, Caroline M. Kirkland (New York: Twayne, 1972). For critical study and comparison of Kirkland to other women's writing about the frontier, see Annette Kolodny, The Land before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860 (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1984), pp. 131-58

"The Literati of New York City," in Edgar Allan Poe, Essays and Reviews (New York: Library of America, 1984), p. 1181

Reading

A New Home, or, Life in the Clearings
http://archive.org/stream/newhomeorlifeint013464mbp#page/n5/mode/2up

Black Hawk (1767-1838) From *Life of* MA-KA-TAI-ME-SHE-KIA-KIAK

By the 1830's, for millions of white Americans, Indian Americans were sentimental heroes. Popular novels like Lydia Maria Child's Hobomok (1824) and Catharine Maria Sedgwick's Hope Leslie (1827) portrayed Indians as saintly and benevolent, and popular dramas like John Augustus Stone's Metamora, or, the Last of the Wampanoags (1828) had transformed feared and hated Indian leaders like King Philip into tragic heroes nobly defending their homelands. This sympathy in turn made Andrew Jackson's Indian removal policy highly controversial—supported by most frontier settlers but vigorously opposed by many easterners and religious groups.

Such was the context for the Black Hawk War (1832) and then the publication of Black Hawk's Life of MA-KA-TAI-ME-SHE-KIA-KIAK (1833), the first or nearly the first full-length Indian autobiography. Black Hawk, though defeated, captured, and imprisoned after the fifteen-week war, had later been taken east with other Sauk's, and huge crowds had turned out to see him and applaud his bravery. In August, 1833, following his return to the Sac and Fox Agency on Rock Island in the Mississippi, Black Hak therefore called upon Antoine LeClair, the U.S. Interpreter on the Agency, and "express(ed) a great desire to have a History of his Life written and published, in order…that the people of the United States…might know the causes that had impelled him to act as he has done, and the principles by which he was governed'" (3). Thus did LeClair "certify" in brief preface, swearing the book's accuracy, and similar accounts of the origin and purpose of the book are given in Black Hawk's dedication of it and the Advertisement of it by the editor, a newspaperman named John B. Patterson. Black Hawk was therefore not asked or paid to dictate his life history (as later happened with other Indian autobiographers). His story must have been heavily edited, for the translation is sometimes even embellished with phrases from English poetry, but the sixty-six-year-old Black Hawk did succeed I giving sympathetic white readers his motives and reasons for having fought and in "vindicate(ing) my character from misrepresentation" (7). David Brumble, in American Indian Autobiography, has recently argued that such "self-vindications" had long been a purpose of Indian autobiographical discourse. The medium and context were new, but the tradition of a defeated warrior justifying himself and his supporters was probably an old one.

The selections below are from near the middle of the book. Before it, Black Hawk tells of his ancestors, how the people came to live on Rock Island in the Mississippi River (near present-day Rock Island, Illinois), his early battles, and the injustice of an 1804 treaty which was an underlying cause of the war. In the remainder of the book he criticizes Keokuk, leader of the peace band, explains how the war began, and narrates its events. He also describes his journey east in 1833.

As the passage opens, it is 1816 on the U.S. calendar, and Black Hawk has just been forced to sign a treaty in St. Louis and then gone back to his village. The description of the cycles of village life, his sorrow over the deaths of his son and daughter, and the "difficulty with the loways" and how it was peacefully resolved all build respect for him and for the Sauk people. He is also eloquent in defending the Sauk attitude towards land. Therefore, in spite of the sentimental benevolence both sides attempted to express towards each other, the facts of white-Indian cultural differences cannot be ignored. This, and his emphasis on the difficulties of adjustment, place the text in the mainstream of what is now called ethnic autobiography. When other autobiographers of this period stressed their new national identity, Black Hawk stressed his tribal one, and his success in defending it makes this a compelling story.

Black Hawk died in Iowa, near the Des Moines River. The selection of his story below is from Life of MA-KA-TAI-ME-SHE-KIA-KIAK or Black Hawk, ed. J.B. Patterson (Boston, 1834). A modern edition, Black Hawk, and Autobiography, edited by Donald Jackson, was published by the University of Illinois Press in 1955.

<u>Reading</u>

Autobiography of Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak, or Black Hawk
http://archive.org/details/autobiographyofm07097gut