Course Description

American Autobiography traces the evolving sense of self, community, and nationhood in a nation characterized by convergences and encounters, including geographical, cultural, psychological, and philosophical.

About the Professor

Robert F. Sayre is a professor emeritus of University of Iowa. An acknowledged and distinguished scholar, Dr. Sayre is widely published in the field of autobiography and memoirs, and his essays, articles, and anthologies have received positive reviews.

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Students will write critical analysis papers (1000 words) for each of the seven topics listed below.

Unit 1

Religious Autobiography: Please read Anne Bradstreet's poems. After you have completed the readings, conduct research on the topic of religious autobiography. Identify other religious autobiographies in this study guide. Then, read them closely, with a view to comparing and contrasting them. As you do so, explain their similarities and dissimilarities with respect to themes, content, worldview, underlying beliefs and values, and writing style.

Unit 2

Self-made and businessmen's Autobiography: Please read Benjamin Franklin's autobiography. After you have completed the readings, conduct research on the topic of businessmen and self-made men. Identify similar autobiographies in the writing guide. Then, read them closely, with a view to comparing and contrasting them. As you do so, explain their similarities and dissimilarities with respect to themes, content, worldview, underlying beliefs and values, and writing style.

Unit 3

Transcendentalist Autobiography: Please read David Thoreau's *Walden*. After you have completed the readings, conduct research on the topic of Transcendentalism and autobiographies that express Transcendentalist beliefs or worldviews. Identify similar autobiographies in the writing guide. Then, read them closely, with a view to comparing and contrasting them. As you do so, explain their similarities and dissimilarities with respect to themes, content, worldview, underlying beliefs and values, and writing style.

War Autobiography: Please read Mary Boykin Chestnut's autobiography. Conduct research on the topic of war autobiographies. Then, read them closely, with a view to comparing and contrasting them. As you do so, explain their similarities and dissimilarities with respect to themes, content, worldview, underlying beliefs and values, and writing style.

Unit 4

Immigrant Autobiography: Please read Mary Antin's autobiography. Conduct research on the topic of Immigrant autobiographies. Then, read them closely, with a view to comparing and contrasting them. As you do so, explain their similarities and dissimilarities with respect to themes, content, worldview, underlying beliefs and values, and writing style.

Minority Autobiography : Please read Richard Wright's autobiography. Conduct research on the topic of Afro-American autobiographies. Then, read them closely, with a view to comparing and contrasting them. As you do so, explain their similarities and dissimilarities with respect to themes, content, worldview, underlying beliefs and values, and writing style.

Modern Autobiography: The modernist period was a time of radical change in politics and the arts. Please read Henry Adams' autobiography. Do a research on the topic of modern autobiography. Look for other similar autobiographies in this study guide? Compare and contrast them. Explain the similarities and dissimilarities amongst them.

Final Paper

Students will write a final paper (5000 words) on one of the topics listed above.

Optional Reading

General

Sayre, Robert F. ed., *American Lives: An Anthology of Autobiographical Writing.*(Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994).

Eakin, Paul John, ed., (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press,1991 *American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect*).

17th Century:Explorers, Governors, Pilgrims and Captives(1607-1700)

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

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

Rowlandson, Mary

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

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

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

Ashbridge, Elizabeth
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

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

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

Woodmason, Charles
"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 (1776-1837)

Allen, Ethan

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

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

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

Osborn, Sarah and Jennings, Nathan B.
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

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

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

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

Early 19th Century : Self-Liberators (1836-1865)

Lee, Jarena
Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee
http://digilib.nypl.org/dynaweb/digs/wwm9716/@Generic__BookView

Emerson, Ralph Waldo
Essays and Poems Online
http://www.emersoncentral.com/texts.htm

Clarke, Lewis
Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis Clarke,During a Captivity of More Than Twenty-Five Years, Among the Algerines of Kentucky, One of the So Called Christian States of America. Dictated by Himself
http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/clarke/clarke.html

Fuller, Margaret
Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli. v.1 1852. Fuller, Margaret, 1810-1850.
http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044009687435;page=root;view=image;size=100;seq=6;num=v

Fern, Fanny
Ruth Hall: A Domestic Tale of the Present Time
http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433076060734

Barnum, P. T.
The Life of P.T. Barnum
http://archive.org/details/lifeofptbarnum00barn

Lincoln, Abraham
Speeches & Letters of Abraham Lincoln, 1832-1865
http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/14721

Sigourney, Lydia
Letters to Young Ladies
http://www.librarycompany.org/women/portraits/sigourney.htmn

Late 19th Century: Survivors and Self-Teachers (1965-1915)

Goss, Warren *The Soldier's Story of His Captivity at Andersonvile, Belle Isle* Lee
http://archive.org/details/soldiersstoryhi02gossgoog

Whitman, Walt
Complete Prose Works
http://www.gutenberg.org/catalog/world/readfile?fk_files=1472160

Chesnut, Mary Boykin
A Diary from Dixie, as Written by Mary Boykin Chesnut
http://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/chesnut/menu.html

Grant, Ulysses S.
Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant
http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4367

Douglass, Frederick
Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave
http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Literature/Douglass/Autobiography/

Larcom, Lucy
A New England Girlhood: Outline from Memory
http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2293/2293-h/2293-h.htm

Carnegie, Andrew
Autobiography of Andrew Carnegie
http://www.freeinfosociety.com/media/pdf/4501.pdf

Early 20th Century: Lives in Progress (1900-1935)

London, Jack
The Road
http://london.sonoma.edu/Writings/TheRoad/

Bourne, Randolph
Trans-National America
http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/rbannis1/AIH19th/Bourne.html

Antin, Mary
The Promised Land
http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/antin/land/land.html

Muir, John
Life and Letters of John Muir
http://www.yosemite.ca.us/john_muir_writings/the_life_and_letters_of_john_muir/

Du Bois, W.E.B.
The Souls of Black Folks
http://www.bartleby.com/114/

Seidenberg, Roderick
War Resistance
http://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/8w9h3k

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins
Our Androcentric Culture
http://digital.library.upenn.edu/webbin/gutbook/lookup?num=3015

Mid 20th Century: Experimental Lives (1920-1960)

Fitzgerald, F Scott
The Crack-Up
http://www.esquire.com/features/the-crack-up

Stein, Gertrude
Three Lives
http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/15408

Agee, James
Let Us Now Praise Famous Men
http://memory.loc.gov/master/gdc/scdser01/200401/telework/Let%20Us%20now%20Praise%20FamMen.pdf

Wright, Richard
Black Boy
http://memory.loc.gov/master/gdc/scdser01/200401/telework/Let%20Us%20now%20Praise%20FamMen.pdf

Day, Dorothy
Memoirs
http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/deliberative-topics/religion-morality-in-public-life/dorothy-day-union-square-speech-6-november-1965/

Nin, Anais
Winter of Artifice
http://archive.org/details/winterofartifice00nina

Introduction: On Reading and Writing Autobiography

"Autobiography is easy like it or not it is easy for anyone can write." So wrote Gertrude Stein in 1937 in *Everybody's Autobiography,* provocatively mimicking a common opinion about autobiography. The author by the *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and various other experiments in autobiography, she was clearly being ironic, and her omission of punctuation makes us read the sentence in different ways. Autobiography is and is not easy, whether you like it (or that) or not; anyone/not anyone/and maybe no one can write it. Yet many a one, almost everyone, has at one time or another tried it.

It is also easy, or not easy, to define autobiography. How long must it be? How many years of a person's life must it cover? How much fictionalizing is permitted, and is an autobiographical novel really an autobiography or not? These and other questions have vexed many past and present readers and writers of autobiography and will no doubt continue to, for the answers are not easy. Another reason for confusion is that the word *autobiography* is only about 200 years old, *(1)* although we now apply it to works written long before the word was coined, works with older names like "confession," "apology, " "memoir," "diary," "letters," "journal," or "narrative." Still in ordinary speech and writing we use the word with reasonable confidence that we and others know what it means: a kind of writing in which the author tells something about his or her own life. Not "biographical writing," which is written about some one else, but "autobiographical writing"-- written by one's self.

Moreover, confused or not, modern American readers increasingly turn to autobiographies and autobiographical writing with many interests and expectations, hopeful that it will reveal things to them that they might not find elsewhere. We can find autobiographies by everyone from the anthropologists to zoologists, by the young and the elderly, by the rich and poor, and by people from nearly every ethnic and religious group, political position, sexual preference, and part of the United States. This kind of writing, which many readers and writers once scorned because they thought it was "easy"-- or dull or egotistical or too historical and not imaginative, or vice-versa--has included some of the best and most varied and exciting literature of the last twenty-five years: books like *The Autobiography of Malcolm X, The Armies of the Night, The Woman Warrior, and Speak, Memory.* We also can see (if we had not seen before) that many of the American classics are autobiographies: *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, Walden, Song of Myself,* and *The Education of Henry Adams.* Additional classics of autobiography have recently been rediscovered, like *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant,* and *Black Elk Speaks.*

Therefore, rather than try right off to define autobiography or further pursue Stein's questions about whether it is easy and who can write it, we might be wiser to think some more about what autobiographies *reveal*--what they tell us that other kinds of literature may not. Of course, they do not reveal the same things to all people. Readers read for different reasons, and what they expect to find revealed is not always what is revealed. Likewise, writers often reveal more or less than they promise or intend. Writers write and readers read for pleasure, too, not only to inform and be informed. Nevertheless,

autobiographies are a very revealing kind of writing in many different ways, including the following.

1. Many people's first answer to what autobiographies reveal is that they reveal secrets: they tell things that the author has never told before, at least in print or to a wide, general audience. "Now! For the First Time!" "Hitler's Mistress tells all!" These are the advertising headlines and jacket blurbs that address (and engender) this expectation about autobiographies and what they "reveal." The *National Enquirer* and other magazines assault us weekly with stories of celebrities or victims or criminals supposedly confessing secrets of all kinds.

The classics of confessional autobiography also depend on this basic situation of the writer's having exclusive knowledge of his or her own experience. Thus the first confession it literary history, St. Augustine's (345 - 430), tells the story of his conversion to Christianity, a story which had to be told from the inside. Rousseau's promise in his *Confessions* (published after his death in 1778) that he is going to reveal what has never been revealed before, "man in all the truth of nature," can be fulfilled only by him because, he alleges, no one else has yet tried to live so strictly according to nature as he has and still dared to tell the truth.

Writers of confessions can further reveal how their lives now appear, after the changes and conversions they recount. Indeed, it is the conversion that gives them a new perspective on their lives. It helps them to organize their stories. It has made life meaningful--and made it over into something they wish to tell other people.

But even where autobiographers do not confess in the sensational or religious senses, their books may be read simply for what they reveal about their author's lives and experience. "Although every one cannot be a Gargantua Napoleon-Bismarck and walk off with the great bells of Notre Dame," "Henry Adams said, referring to the interest we have in the lives of the great, "every one must bear his own universe, and the most persons are moderately interested in learning how their neighbors have managed to carry theirs." (2) We are not only interested in "neighbors"--people presumably like ourselves--we are also interested in people unlike ourselves. We want to read stories of adventure, hardship, and travel; and we want to read stories by people of different race, religion, wealth, and class. In America, where there are so many differences, this is all the more important. One of the greatest reasons for the growth of interest in autobiography in the last twenty-five years may be the need to learn about other Americans of different cultures, by finding autobiographers both like and unlike ourselves.

2. Not all revelation comes from confession, however. Nor is confession the only kind of autobiography, even though it is one of the most important. Another kind of autobiography reveals the author's defenses and justifications. It gives "my side of the story." It is a carefully considered explanation and defense. If the author is a general who has lost a battle, then this autobiography explains what went wrong, answers the accusations of his critics, and reassures the readers that he is still wise and loyal. If the author has been an unpopular radical or reformer, an anarchist like Alexander Berkman or an anarchist and feminist like Emma Goldman, it reveals the misunderstood motives. Berkman's *Prison*

Memoirs of an Anarchist (1912) are his account of why he attempted to kill Henry Clay Frick and his story of his behavior in prison, including how he has changed. Goldman's *Living My Life* (1931) seeks to defend her sexual experiments and political dissent.

The archetype of his kind of autobiography is the apology, or *apologia.* The Latin word is sometimes preferred because it suggests something other than an "apology" in the more common sense, an "I'm sorry." Indeed, it can be the very opposite. The self-apologist may have some regrets and may admit to some mistakes, but his or her ultimate message is "I was right."

The apology, therefore, usually tries to reveal those deeper motives or lines of argument that have not been known to the public or to the writer's accusers.

3. In both confessions and apologies there may also be kinds of revelation of which the authors were unaware. Autobiographers, like everybody else, sometimes lie. Sometimes these lies may be only exaggeration, irony or understatement. Sometimes they are conscious, sometimes unconscious. Memory itself is a very tricky faculty. We know that it often erases or blocks out unpleasant experiences; but we also know that in the form of a sense of shame or a guilty conscience, it may dwell on and magnify the unpleasant. Vindictively, we may also magnify our unpleasant memories of other people. We brood. Or we can by means of conscious and concerted mind control, work and talk and write our way free of obsessions, just as we sometimes undermine our pleasures.

The critical reader of autobiography has many ways of seeking out these further kinds of revelation. Facts can be checked. The reader can go to biographies of the famous autobiographers like Franklin or Whitman and see what the biographer's version is. With less famous writers, this is not so easy, but there are still many other records--newspapers, city directories, high school yearbooks, other peoples diaries and memories and letters--that enable the serious or skeptical reader to do what Albert Stone (echoing Sigmund Freud) called "reality testing." (3) In these ways, the reader can look for forms of self deception and inconsistency that the writer was unaware of and that even make up patterns of the writer's character.

All writing, as all speech and discourse, it can be argued, reveals more than the writer or speaker knows. The choice of words, the attitudes towards the audience, the tomes--all the components of style can tell as much about the speaker-writer as the actual substance. And the unique feature of autobiography is that its writers are exposing or displaying their styles about themselves. "Styles is crucial interpretive evidence about any autobiography. [It magnifies] character so that we can study it close up." (4)

To put this another way, anyone can write a person's biography; only one person can write that person's autobiography. The matter of dictated, ghost-written, and re-written autobiographies we will take up later.) Only one person can speak about herself or himself I her or his own words, whether the words be kind or cruel, accurate or inaccurate, insightful or deceived.

4. But what autobiography reveals about the author is only the beginning of it's interest, and to become too absorbed in the life and character of the autobiographer can be a

limitation. “Man knows himself only in history, never through introspection,” said Wilhelm Dilthey, the nineteenth-century German historian who saw autobiography as the primary historical document. (5) Dilthey may have exaggerated. He was an historian, not a psychiatrist. But his emphases on autobiographies as elemental historical writing, as written in the flow of time, and as the means by which the writer developed relations to the rest of human life, are all intrusive. The autobiographer writes history; the readers of autobiography finds history revealed.

But there are many kinds of history. Therefore, we need to reflect on the particular kinds revealed in autobiographies.

The first is what we might call scrapbook history, since autobiography is, in a way, a kind of scrapbook, someone’s personal scrapbook, and the possibilities for its contents are just as rich and heterogeneous. Lucy Larcom’s *New England Girlhood* tells of her experiences working in the Lowell, Massachusetts, mills from 1835 to 1845, an experience shared by hundreds of other young New England women. Her descriptions of that time and place illustrate a vital episode in American industrial and social history. The report she gives of her excitement in meeting girls from other towns and farms, of the lecturers and classes they attended, and the magazines they wrote for and edited also shows that Lowell was not then the grim, satanic mill-town we might have thought. Walt Whitman’s *Specimen Days* (a title that virtually announces that the books is a scrapbook) records the sights and sounds and sufferings, the amputations, diseases, and deaths, in civil war hospitals better than any official history. Similarly, the hundreds of American slave narratives contain facts about slavery that, until the last thirty years, were not told in textbooks. Nor do magazines and television programs, focused as they are on the lives of celebrities, reveal the experiences of working people and ordinary members of the middle class. American autobiography as a whole, then, is a kind of vast national scrapbook preserving people’s pain and joy and perhaps otherwise-forgotten experiences.

To some historians, of course, scrapbooks are not history. They are too random, accidental, and disorganized. They are more like the junk in an attic or in the bottom of a purse. They are not continuous narratives, which many people would further argue is a necessary feature of respectable history--and autobiography. But respectable autobiography, like respectable history, omit’s a lot of the things only scrapbooks seem able to preserve. It is only in thumbing through a scrapbook that we come across the other things that someone, fortunately, saved. Then, in some way or another, these unassimilated or ignored bits of information may fit in for us, contradicting some orthodoxy or stereotype, making a time and place more vivid, telling us something we never knew and could not have learned anywhere else.

Of course, what may have been an accidental discovery for one reader may have long been familiar to another. Similarly, what seems scrapbook history to the reader may not have been thought of in that way by the autobiographer who wrote it down. Roderick Seindenberg, the World War I conscientious objector who wrote of the great Leavenworth strike of 1919, was writing about an event which had been headlined at the time and was still remembered in 1932. It was personally important to Seidenberg, In a history of the development of nonviolent protest in America, it might also be important. Since such

histories are not very common, or widely known, the event of the strike might seem isolated; at some point, however the interested reader might learn enough to overcome that isolation (which is not just the event's but the reader's too) and re-integrate the event with American history. At that point, the scrapbook will have performed a service. It will have recalled something from near oblivion and awakened someone to a new perception of American history. It may also no longer be a scrapbook.

What seems a scrapbook to one person was once someone else's treasure, their keepsake, and this takes us to a second level of historical revelation in autobiography: what it reveals about the cultural values of the person who wrote it and the audience it was written for.

What people choose to preserve in an autobiography is not accidental. It is chosen over other experiences and then written down in a particular way. These choices of content, form, an style, therefore reveal a great deal about the values of the autobiographers and their cultures. *A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* was published in 1682, about an experience that began in February, 1675/76. Before the great Puritan-Indian war of 1675-76, King Philip's War, there had been few if any Puritans captured by the Indians. Afterwards, narratives of such experiences became a common kind of literature. They told a story which people wanted to read or to hear told first-hand by the captive, or second-or third-hand by ministers in sermons or by neighbors gathered around the fire. The story had suspense, violence, and a dangerous, exotic setting. For the Puritan, it could be made an allegory of trial and redemption, as it was also a medium of anti-Indian propaganda, at a time when Indians, French, and British were contending for control of North America. Stories of Indian captivity were written and preserved, making this form of autobiography a convention that expressed the terror and faith within the Puritan community.

For this reason, the kind of autobiography which different generations of Americans have chosen to write, to publish, and to read can tell us a great deal about the peculiar experiences, the hopes and fears, and the values and ideals of those generations. To write an autobiography about Indian captivity, the author needed, obviously, to have been captured, held, and then released (or to have escaped). But what made this a story someone *would* write arose from the culture's having recognized and sanctioned it as a significant story, while also establishing how the story was to be told and interpreted. John Smith treated his capture by Powhattan's people as just a short incident. Daniel Boone's brief account of his captivity, as given to/retold by John Filson, is also markedly different from Mary Rowlandson's. By Boone's time, captivities were still exciting material, but the Puritan readers were gone, and with them the Puritan kinds of sanction for the story; the idea of the captivity as a test of faith, the sense that God ordained it, and thus the whole drama of earthly trial and redemption. These themes may have remained latent in Boone's story, but they were no longer primary. With the Revolution, new captivity stories were available, such as Ethan Allen's, were the focus was the prisoner's brash and resourceful American patriotism. This was the new "religion" that was tested and that sustained him against the new enemy, the cruel and haughty British.

What this brief history of captivity stories is meant to illustrate is that over time autobiographies change in more than just content. They also change in form, emphasis, and sense of audience. They change with the changing values and concepts of character and society. Formulae and conventions change, reflecting changes in society and the society's most basic goals and standards. With these changes come changes in what autobiography is thought to be, which is a very good reason for approaching definitions of autobiography very cautiously. They too, are historically determined. A rigid definition from one time may not fit another. A reader who expected that autobiography must tell a long story of religious conversion, such as St. Augustine's, would entirely miss the intense, foreshortened test of religious faith that is given in Mary Rowlandson's story. Yet certain other features or functions of autobiography may remain the same. A reader who saw that from the very beginnings of American autobiography, with John Smith and Mary Rowlandson, stories of captivity were stories of a trial of someone's faith would more easily grasp the underlying religious significance of Ethan Allen's and Daniel Boone's stories--or of the stories of American hostages in Iran and Lebanon.

5. In appealing to the hopes and fears, goals, and common experiences of their time and culture, autobiographers also develop and reveal their concepts of self, that particular revelation of autobiography that philosopher-historian Karl Weintraub (6) has called its most interesting and significant.

Today, as Weintraub and many other people have observed, Americans like to think of themselves as having great respect for the uniqueness of the individual. Each individual has special gifts, a personality of his or her own, and thus something peculiarly his or her own to offer to the wider society. So we believe that education, from earliest childhood to colleges and graduate schools, should nurture and develop each individual, allowing him or her to reach a greater self-fulfillment. In marriage, work, recreation, and the other institutions of our society we further encourage everyone to make their own contributions and be as independent and free as they can. At lease, this is our ideal, and, in truth, we often judge or institutions by how much freedom they give us for creativity and self development. A good job is one that allows a person to be creative. A bad marriage is one that is oppressive and confining. To some degree, we realize that these goals are utopian; not all jobs are challenging and creative all the time to all people. We also realize that there are dangers in saying to everyone, "do your own thing," and that total individual freedom can lead to "rampant individualism," gross selfishness, and social and economic anarchy. But on the whole, Americans would rather risk the disappointments of falling short of their utopian goals than limit the rights and potential of the individual.

and wonderful, and as therefore deserving the greatest possible freedom, is one which has developed historically. It has not always existed. It has grown up out of many earlier conceptions of self which were related to their historical and cultural contexts.

It is interesting to note how the very word "individual," which is so important to modern Americans (and indirectly to the history of autobiography), has changed its meanings over the course of the last five hundred years or so. According to Raymond Williams in *Keywords*,(7) the word was first an adjective describing something indivisible, as In "the hye and indyvyduall Trynyte" (1425) or the individuall Catholicke Church" (John

Milton, 1641). Until the late seventeenth century, this was its most common meaning. But in the eighteenth century, logic and biology began to speak of "an individual" that was separate from others, while still representative of others like it. Plants and animals could be classified in different categories such as class, genus, and species, with the "individual" as a particular representative of a species. Not until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries did usage of "the individual" become common (and favorable) to denote a person uniquely different from all others. The "individual" of these periods was also more readily understood to be a man normally a white man of some education, wealth, and talent. It was property-holding white men who could vote and participate in politics and whose *individual interests* therefore had to recognized by leaders and reconciled with other men's interests.

Concepts of self have changed, too. The self to the Puritans was "the great snare,' 'the false Christ,' a spider's 'webbe [spun] out of our bowels,' the very 'figure or type of hell.'" (8) It was the origin of vanity, greed, and disregard for others. Thus John Calvin wrote that we must "rid our selves of all self-trust." Trusting the self would not give Christians adequate guidance on earth or gain them salvation. But opposed to such a wicked, sinful self was the *soul*, which was the spirit of God within each person. "The way of the soul…starts 'with a holy despair in ourselves' and proceeds 'with a holy kind of violence' back to Christ; it means acknowledging the primacy of that which is Another's and *receiving* the ability to respond." (9) The presence of such opposites within each person led to the intense inner conflict which is to be seen in Puritan autobiography. Indeed, Puritan conversion narratives, of which there are hundreds, were the chosen medium of Puritan culture for expressing and attempting to resolve this conflict.

To Ralph Waldo Emerson and his fellow Transcendentalists, "self-trust" was the antithesis of what it had been to John Calvin. "Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string," is the theme of Emerson's essay "Self Reliance," and the contrast between Calvin's words and Emerson's epitomizes the changes between seventeenth - and early eighteenth-century American Puritanism and nineteenth-century American romanticism. Yet Emerson was also appropriating to the *self* some of the divine spirituality which Puritans identified with the *soul*, and he was not expecting expressions of the self to be highly particular, eccentric, or unique. On the contrary, he and his contemporaries in general, not just other Transcendentalists, expected autobiography to express universals and to be uplifting, refined, and almost impersonal. They could still recognize, like their Puritan ancestors, that an impure self could be vain, divisive, greedy, and undeserving of celebration. Even Whitman, celebrate the self though he did, still tried to distinguish between the trivial particulars of his life ("My dinner, dress, associates, looks, compliments, dues…") and the essence, "the Me myself" that "Stands amused, complacent, compassionate, idle, unitary" ("Song of Myself," section 4). Ironically, early reviewers of *Leaves of Grass* thought that it contained too much of Whitman the man and was too autobiographical, when, as some modern critics have observed, the first edition of 1855 was almost an anonymous poem. (10) Whitman's name did not appear on the title page, and the famous engraving opposite it was of a sort of American "everyman." Whitman and his early critics may have been in greater agreement on their concepts of self than we have realized.

Further commentary on how autobiographies reveal the author's and a culture's concepts of self will be found in the introductions to the eight general periods of American autobiography into which this book is divided. Those periods cover roughly thirty to ninety years each, and within each there is always a variety of people and stories, of *lives*. No reader should expect to find all the lives within each period illustrating one specific concept of self. Some periods also overlap, because a person who lived in one period sometimes did not write his or her autobiography until well into the next period, and because generations do overlap. At any given point in time, there are three to five generations alive at once--children, youths, the early middle-aged, the older middle-aged, and elders. Each experiences any given event, like a war, for example, in very different ways. Thus each also develops its sense of the nation and of other people in different ways. In the 1930s, for example, the elder generation of autobiographers, containing people such as Lincoln Steffens and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, were writing about their childhood and careers in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. They had been relatively unaffected by the Great War of 1914-18, and still thought of themselves as progressives, holding, in some way, to a sense of progress and believing in the feasibility of a rationally organized society. Simultaneously, however, younger writers like Gertrude Stein and F. Scott Fitzgerald, whose generation felt both devastated and liberated by the Great War, wee living without those progressive values, living "experimental lives" in which they faced their despair and sought new values.

6. Given these variations between generations, as well as differences between individuals, we have to refine the broad idea, concepts of self, into more subtle and specific parts. An autobiography not only reveals an author's broad concepts o the self as, say, a Transcendental universal or as a participant in the progress of American civilization; it also reveals those quirkier or more specific modes of behavior, styles, tastes, educations, and vocations which might be called "forms of identity." Thoreau, Whitman, and Emerson, as literary historians have long noted, held similar concepts of self. Their forms of identity, however, were very different, with Thoreau liking (and writing about) solitude and walks in the fields around the village of Concord, Emerson liking to putter in his orchard and have the company of other members of the Boston and Concord gentry, and Whitman writing about his walks in busy Manhattan and Brooklyn and his ferryboat rides. Their favorite literary forms are different as well: Thoreau preferred the essay and the extended personal journal; Emerson also wrote essays and journals, but without Thoreau's kind of topographic details; and Whitman worked from random notes and jottings, which he built up into poems or newspaper articles.

Concepts of self seem more historically determined than forms of identity. The concept of progress, as we have suggested, affected several generations of Americans giving them a faith that their lives might acquire meaning within a culture or civilization that was expanding in power, growing in refinement and education, and able to accommodate ever larger numbers of other people.

To stand outside that late Victorian and early modern concept of self took the heroic independence and ironic skepticism of a rare individual, such as Henry Adams. With respect to forms of identity, however, people may be more psychologically than historically determined, exercising their freedom to respond to the needs of their own character.

Dorothy Day, in *The Long Loneliness,* chooses to become a Catholic and also chooses to have her baby and raise it herself. Catholicism and single motherhood were radical choices for a woman of her background, but she was able to justify them to herself and to use her autobiography as a way of justifying them to her readers, beginning with the already large circle of readers of her newspaper, *The Catholic Worker.*

Are forms of identity determined or chosen? The question is answered differently, of course, by each autobiographer, and the student of narrative theory might add that this is a question which *generates* autobiographical narrative. Why did I do what I did? How did I become what I became? Narratives are written to give people and institutions legitimacy, and autobiographies are written to give their authors their legitimacy, their author-ity. Some authors, therefore, stress their freedom, others the necessities which drove them to the course of life and form of identity they took. Both can be convincing accounts, depending on the circumstances of the writer and the reader.

7. Autobiographies, therefore, may reveal as much about the author's assumed audience as they do about him or her, and this is a further reason why they need to be read as *cultural documents,* not just as personal ones.

An intrusive way of realizing how an autobiography is a revealing cultural document is to undertake the experiment of writing a brief chapter of one's own history.

What shall it be? From the start, with the question, "What shall I write about?" the autobiographer is implicitly asking, "What are people interested in? What has happened to me that I can tell them, that I want them to know, and that they want to know? Will it make them respect me or hate me? What have I done that is different…or that is similar to what others have done?"

The reason we have so many familiar species and sub-species of autobiography--the high school student's story of "what I did last summer"; the stories of the big game, the big date, and the big trip; the stories of the first day at college; stories of joining a church, stories of jobs, of arguments, arrests, sickness, accidents, and so on--is that all of these are implicitly recognized autobiographical conventions. We have heard or read them before, from friends and family, or watched them played out in movies and on television. In this respect, they are not peculiar to autobiography, but when we select stories from our experience which fit into these forms, we demonstrably make them autobiography. And the same goes for many other kinds of stories which are the stuff of longer, published autobiographies: rags-to-riches stories, stories of athletes and their careers, movie stars; memoirs, the trials of immigrants, discoveries of one's new identity, prisoners' stories or protest stories. The person who casts his or her life history into one of these forms is acknowledging the power of these literary-cultural conventions.

Sometimes we say, derogatorily, that these conventions are clichés and that fitting our stories into one

or another of them turns us from individuals into types, even stereotypes; that the full variety and complexity of a life is lost, even killed, when it is simplified into just one conventional kind of story; and that such stories, in a way, write themselves, needing no

creative or original author. The so-called “death of the author,” which theorists of the novel wrote about a few years ago, happened to autobiographers long ago. But there is another sense in which all autobiography is a form of suicide (and biography a homicide), as Henry Adams said when he referred to the writing of his *education* as a way of “taking” his life.(11) For most writers, once the story is written down, it is *finished*. It is over; it has been told that way, to the exclusion of other ways; it has been polished and improved; and it would be hard to deconstruct and put together another way.

Nevertheless, there are also great advantages, great powers, to having a story that is formed and defined. In being “simplified,” it is clarified--made more recognizable to others and so more convincing and efficient. Invisibly, without everyone quite knowing this, it takes on the authority of all the previous tellings of similar stories. The latest rags-to-riches story, like Lee Iacocca’s is quickly accepted, because the type is familiar and already widely acknowledged. The latest story confirms all the earlier ones, and they sanction it, imparting to it their collective momentum. The new heroes of such stories are readily acclaimed. They are cultural types, leaders, symbols of their times. For this reason, a great deal of recent study of American autobiography has been directed at this process of identity formation, self-advertisement, and self-mythologizing. (12)

As the autobiographer writes, whether writing just a short essay or a whole book, she or he also turns to kinds of rhetoric--arguments, images, tones, references, and illusions--which further strengthen and justify the story. Should persons be writing an apologia, especially one written in response to a conflict with someone, such rhetorical development is all the more inevitable. They try to express sentiments or positions that will gain the most sympathy. They appeal to the audience’s standards of justice, propriety, and morality, in so doing trying to represent themselves as adhering to these values and their opponents as having infringes on them. Even in other kinds of autobiography, these same tendencies are present. Confessional autobiographers convert *from* a kind of life that is unsatisfactory *to* a kind of life which is ultimately more acceptable not only to the writer but to some present or future audience. Or, if they do not make it acceptable to all, they at least show readers why it is the right choice for them. Once again, therefore, the autobiographer is not writing just his or her own story, but a story that derives from and refers back to the materials, traditions, and values of a culture.

Of course, not everyone can easily find the narrative forms and rhetorical strategies which are most appropriate to them and which make the strongest appeal to their audience. This is most obviously true in the case of people who need translators, editors, and ghost-writers. In America, historically, these people have most often been Indians, escaped slaves, and new immigrants. Some did not know English, or could not write. Others still did not know the customs and conventions of other Americans and the kinds of stories which people did and did not want to read. Thus, beginning with Black Hawk’s *Autobiography* (1833), if not before, Indian autobiographies have been “bicultural, composite composition [s], the product of a collaboration between the Native American subjects of the autobiography, who provide its “content,” and its Euro-American editor, who ultimately provides its “form” by fixing the text in writing.” (13) This kind of bicultural, composite, immigrant autobiography in America is harder to date exactly. But one beginning of it, surely, was the study *The Polish Peasant,* done by Thomas and Znaniecki in

Chicago between 1918 and 1920. The dominant English-speaking population of Chicago felt anxious about the presence of large numbers of immigrants and wanted to know more about their political opinions, education, and character. Thomas and Znaniecki collected dictated autobiographies as sociological data. These underlying interests in social control illustrate how in dictated autobiography motives of the editor can be very different from the motives of the subject. In colonial New England, it was very common for ministers to publish the confessions they received from condemned prisoners as lessons to other men and women. (14) Even without motives such as these, editors still shape stories to conform to *their* concepts of self and identity rather than the subjects' concepts. Therefore, some readers prefer to call such stories "life histories" rather than true autobiographies.

To see how different autobiographies and "life histories" can be, follow the writing of a chapter of autobiography by narrating some events of your life to someone else and having him or her "ghost write" them. For variety, the ghost can pretend to be an anthropologist, journalist, gossip writer, or social worker. Other ground rules should specify the audience addressed and whether the story is to be made sympathetic or unsympathetic. The results will invariably be very instructive. To the "subject," it will be like having someone redo your wardrobe. To the "ghost writer," it will be like trying to wear someone else's clothes. The greater the differences between the styles of the writer and the subject, the more one learns. Yet however much this exercise may reveal the faults and distortions of dictated autobiography, it does not necessarily prove that dictated autobiographies should not be done. They still help to tell and defend the life stories of people who might never have told their own--people like Black Elk or Malcolm X--and the more interested we are in getting other people's stories, the more these will be written. Moreover, the situation of editor to subject is simply the extreme of the normal autobiographical situation of writer to subject. For the person who writes is never exactly the same as the person who lived. Every autobiographers is in a way, a "ghost."

Thus both reading and writing autobiographies can be very revealing experiences. One learns more about other people, about the cultures they lived in, and about the relationships between cultures and concepts of self. But one also learns about autobiography itself--about the kinds of autobiography which have been written and about the power and authority which they have had at different times and in different parts of American society.

Perhaps one should also be prepared to realize that "American autobiography" is not independent from other kinds of writing, such as novels, histories, and biographies, or independent from other autobiographical traditions in other cultures. Indeed, "concept of self" show up in all forms of writing and in other arts, from painting to architecture. In this anthology therefore, we will sometimes refer to other arts and even include excerpts from biographies and other writings. We will also continue to refer to other, non-American autobiographers, because their influence has been significant. Sophisticated writers like Henry Adams and Gertrude Stein may have been more consciously aware of their predecessors, but unsophisticated writers were also influenced by them. How one speaks or writes about one's self is almost constantly affected, positively or negatively, by how other people have spoken and written about themselves. We, as Americans, may value the individual, but we are still not so individual as we think!

A sense of how pervasive and subtle and complex these relationships among all kinds of autobiographies are should be sufficient justification for this anthology's combining of well-recognized "literacy" writers like Emerson, Fitzgerald, and James Agree with unknowns like Stephen Burroughs and Warren Goss, with political and historical figures like John and Abigail Adams and Frederick Douglass, and with naturalists, businessmen, agitators, and so on. They may not normally "talk" to each other, but they are more or less aware of each other and aware of each other's ways of living and writing. This is to say people write as they do not only to sound like someone they admire; they also wish to avoid sounding like someone they do not admire--who is "old-fashioned" or of an alien class, race or political stance. Perhaps a similar phenomenon affects other genres, as when high-brow male novelists of the late nineteenth century both imitated and avoided the female sentimentalists and local colorists. But in autobiography this seems especially true. "The true history of American autobiography and the culture in which it is produced and consumed," Paul John Eakin has speculated, "may turn out to be the history of identifiable groups within the culture and of the network of relations among them." (15)

This anthology is not a history. But it is historically organized, for the reasons given above, and it does try to suggest how intricate and fascinating the "network" of autobiographical writers has been.

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.*

<u>Reading</u>

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).

<u>Reading</u>

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 Ioways" 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.

Reading

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

Unit III – 19th Century Autobiographies

Early 19th Century : Self-Liberators (1836-1865)

Although the autobiographical writers of the Revolution and years following had achieved (and helped the nation to achieve) national identities, they had not necessarily achieved or helped others to achieve personal and cultural independence. Approximately one-ninth of the population was, in fact, enslaved, and the native Indian population was not regarded as a part of the nation at all. They were not citizens and could not vote. Women could not vote either, and their rights to property were in most cases tightly restricted even white males frequently chafed against the nation's psychic bondage to English and European traditions and its lack of a literature and culture of its own. When Emerson said in his now famous Phi Beta Kappa address at Harvard in 1837, "We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe" and lamented that "The spirit of the American freeman is already suspected to be timid, imitative, tame," he was only saying what scores of American commencement speakers had said before. The United States were no longer colonies, but many people still had a colonial mentality.

What was new and liberating in Emerson's message to the Harvard graduates of 1837, however, was the linkage of a cultural independence for the nation with individual freedom from social conventions. He lined up Europe, tradition, the past, oppression, conformity, and society on one side, and America, innovation, the future, the individual, and freedom on the other. "Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members," he later said in "Self-Reliance." Whoso would be a man, must be a nonconformist," He also said, and, "Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your won mind." Such sentences were intentionally short. Emerson, that "winged Franklin" (as one of his contemporaries called him), replaced Poor Richard's prudential maxims with a whole new almanac of inspirational sayings that for his generation (and after) were to become personal mottoes, icons of the ego.

In the Emersonian vision, autobiography occupied a very large and lofty place, as the short selections on it that are given here indicate. Emerson saw the new age, the nineteenth century, as an age of introspection. Kant, Goethe, and Coleridge appealed most to him for their individualism, as expressed in their journals and conversations and "aids to reflection," and he valued his own journal accordingly. He also advised journal-keeping to friends, as a means of discipline and self-discovery. From his journals would later come his lectures and essays, which were unified more by their inspirational tone than by sequential logic. Indeed, one often feels that he wrote first of all to inspire people to freedom-starting with himself. Thus, his whole literary production seems an ongoing experiment in inspirational autobiography. Yet his lectures and essays inspired his audiences, took, from associations of young mechanics in Boston to farmers and lawyers in Illinois. His private reflections expressed the aspirations of pre-Civil War America, or at least the northern half of it. Thus he himself realized the comparison to Dante (or Dante as he saw him) that he made in the essay "The Poet": 'he dared to write his autobiography in colossal cipher, or into universality."

The apposition “into universality” indicates, however, the paradox in Emerson’s concepts of autobiography, as in his concepts of self. The Emersonian or Transcendental “self” was not a mean or selfish ego. It was more like the Christian soul. It was “part or parcel of God,” as Emerson wrote in the beginning of his first book, *Nature*. It was “a transparent eyeball,” and when he suddenly transcended his ordinary being and reached this state, he said he felt “the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me” True autobiography should be the expression of this more noble, purer, universal self-a restriction that almost idealized it into thin air. Once can read all day in Emerson’s essays and never learn who his parents were, where he went to college, or how he earned his living.

Thoreau and Whitman and Margaret Fuller were equally concerned about universals and transcendence but much more inclusive of particulars in their definitions of self. The self had to have a location, like a house and a pond (and a book), a *Walden.* It could not just stand “ on a bare common.” Indeed, Thoreau was unlikely to see *bare* commons, or *bare* woods; he described their history, their botany and zoology, and he appropriated all these details as parts or mirrors of the self. For Whitman, the self thrived on its relations to other selves, the great democratic multitudes which he celebrated and appropriated in his poetry. For Margaret Fuller, the self had to be a woman and had to be revolutionary. It was what drove her to be different, to seek greater fulfillment, and to contend with the status quo.

In their own ways, then, all of these decidedly autobiographical writers continue to reflect some of the prejudices against autobiography which ruled during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. None wrote autobiographies in the manner of Franklin, Goethe, or Rousseau, and all had reservations about the specific egotism those autobiographies reflected. The New Englanders, in the tradition of their Federalist ancestors, also had reservations about rowdy democratic individualism, including manifestations of it in autobiography. And thus we have the curious paradox of American Transcendentalism that, as Lawrence Buell put it, “The most egoistic movement in American literary history produced no first-rate autobiography, unless one counts *Walden* as such.” (1) One answer, of course, is that the kinds of autobiographies Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman and Margaret Fuller (as well as Hawthorne, Melville, and Dickinson) *did* write are decidedly better and more characteristic of them than if they had written imitations of Franklin, Rousseau, and Goethe. But the fact remains that autobiography of this more lengthy and directly individualistic and particular sort continued in disrepute, at least among the class of Americans who where well educated and became writers, artists, and leaders in political or professional life.

In this respect, it is interesting to note that none of the eleven U.S. presidents between Jefferson and James Buchanan wrote an autobiography (see Louis Kaplan’s *Bibliography of American Autobiographies),* and Buchanan’s was only a thirty-page reminiscence of his early years. Lincoln, his successor, was the first president to write what might be called campaign autobiographies, and those, one of which is included here, were primarily sketches for use by newspapermen preparing biographies of him. The first literary autobiography Lawrence Buell believes, in the sense of an autobiography written by

someone whose major work was writing poetry or fiction, was Lydia Sigourney's *Letters of Life* of 1866, an excerpt of which is included below.

But stories of religious experience and stories of adventure, like travel books and narratives of enslavement, captivity, and escape, did continue to be written, and it was out of these traditions that the new kinds of popular autobiography grew. The religious autobiographies, by and large, were "a gentry-class product," (2) such as Orestes Brownson's *The Convert* (1857). Brownson told of his spiritual odyssey from Presbyterian to Roman Catholic, passing through Universalism, Unitarianism, Transcendentalism, and various reformist and utopian programs like Saint-Simonianism. The adventure narratives were mainly lower-class, coming from sailors, escaped slaves, and victims of Indian captivity. These lines were not rigid, however, and one of the most interesting of the full-length religious autobiographies of the period is Peter Cartwright's *Autobiography* (1856). Cartwright (1785-1872) was backwoods preacher who joined the Methodist Episcopal Church in Kentucky at age sixteen and soon began speaking at camp meetings, one-room schoolhouses, and new churches all through the Ohio Valley. Such men faced the same kinds of physical obstacles that Charles Woodmason had, as well as resistance and rivalry from atheists, agnostics, other churchmen, drunks, and frontier bullies. Thus, autobiographies of frontier preachers like Cartwright combine religion and uproarious adventure. Cartwright was no intellectual like Jonathan Edwards, and his sectarian prejudices are narrow and dated, but such autobiographies are extremely revealing documents of frontier life and culture. It was the frontier that gave American Protestant churches the room to expand and to develop a more democratic liturgy and governance, and the autobiographies of their ministers are one of their most characteristic forms of history and expression.

The frontier also provided the setting for a lot of the travel narratives of the period. Men and women traveling the overland trails to California and Oregon in the 1840's and '50s very often kept diaries in which they recorded the number of miles traveled each day, encounters with Indians, the hardships of the journey, and the deaths of their friends and family members from diseases like cholera. A recent annotated bibliography of the diaries and memoirs of just the Platte River route contains hundreds of entries. *Women's Diaries of the Overland Trail,* edited by Lillian Schlissel, comments on the differences between the men's and women's experiences and the ways of writing about them. At the same time, upperclass easterners undertook journeys to the West as a way of breaking free from social conventions, recuperating from illness, and learning (and writing) about the new country. Washington Irving helped establish this convention with a *Tour on the Prairies* (1835) about his journey into present-day Oklahoma in 1832, after seventeen years of living in Europe. Margaret Fuller went to Illinois, via the Great Lakes, in 1843 and published her *Summer on the Lakes* in 1844. Francis Parkman followed with *The Oregon Trail* in 1849. Richard Henry Dana, meanwhile, had been one of the most daring of these eastern adventurers when he sailed for California as a seaman in 1834 and spent over a year loading hides off the beaches, before returning to Boston and graduating from Harvard Law School. His *Two Years Before the Mast* (1840) encouraged Herman Melville to write about his seafaring adventures and helped arouse public sympathy for the plight of sailors.

What these many kinds of first-person accounts of travel and adventure illustrate is that by the 1840's and '50s Americans of many backgrounds did, in fact, have the freedom and the opportunity to go to many backgrounds did, in fact, have the freedom and the opportunity to go to many new places and engage in a much more expansive life. Their autobiographical writings became more diverse and extensive because their lives were. Meanwhile, P.T. Barnum, as impresario and entrepreneur, capitalized on such adventurers, and the curiosities they discovered by setting up his American Museum in New York in 1842. His *Life of P.T. Barnum*, which in turn capitalized on the curiosity millions of Americans had about his own tricks and adventures, was published in 1855, just in time for a reviewer in the *Knickerbocker Magazine* to write about it and *Walden* in the same column, under the title "Town and Rural Humbugs"! The contrast between Barnum and Thoreau is stunning.

But in radically different ways they had shown the range of personal freedom and freedom of enterprise in the mid-century United States.

The black and the women autobiographers of this period, however, did not have such freedoms, or had to earn them in even more daring and subversive ways. Yet, as some commentators like William L. Andrews and Jean Fagan Yellin have noticed, this makes the slave narrators and the feminist writers the period's most representative lives, in the full Emersonian sense of people who experienced in the greatest intensity and wrote most movingly about what all men and women knew. They spoke for more than just themselves.

Jarena Lee appears first in this group because her *Life and Religious Experience* was published in 1836, and because she was one of those who made religious autobiography a means of both religious witness and personal liberation. Like Peter Cartwright, she was of the Methodist Episcopal Church, but she belonged to the African-American branch of it founded in 1794 by Richard Allen, a former slave who had been born in Philadelphia in 1760 and who purchased his own freedom in 1777. Lee had not been born a slave, but, even so, "at the age of seven years I was parted from my parents and went to live as a servant maid…" At age twenty-one, she began her emancipation fro his work when she became aware of, or "convicted" of, her sins. Gradually but relentlessly, she gained the rights to exhort and then to preach, finally becoming a traveling revivalist like Cartwright, operating mainly in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, also helping "to set the world on fire" for Methodism (Cartwright's words). Even more than Cartwright's *Autobiography*, her *Life* was an important part of her liberation. She sold it to help support herself; it was proof of her conversion and an example to her followers; and the fact that she had written it and published it was further evidence of her mastery of the written language-what had previously been the master's language.

Mastery of the master's language, his "script," so to speak, is also a very important theme in the writing of ex-slaves, as readers of Frederick Douglass's *Narrative* or Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of Slave Girl* know. Just to write one's autobiography was "to tell a free story"-to tell a story of (relative) freedom, in (relative) freedom. Yet there were still some things which the ex-slave could not relate, and one frequently was the specific story of how he or she had escaped. Frederick Douglass censors himself at this point in both his *Narrative* (1845) and *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), though he does

tell the story in his *Life and Times*… (1881), the last of his three autobiographies. An excerpt from this work appears in the next section of this anthology.

Another representative life from this period of the American Renaissance, as F.O. Matthiessen called it over fifty years ago, was the life of Fanny Fern. Matthiessen and his contemporary discoverers of the "great" American literature would never have called her so significant. They dismissed her as just a tearful newspaper columnist. But her fight to support herself and her children, as told in her autobiographical novel *Ruth Hall*, is a story of the trials and prejudices a woman faced. Writing newspaper columns was her way up from poverty. The columns were also autobiographical, and they were so moving and so satirical and sassy that they made her "the first woman columnist in the United States" and also one of the best-paid writers in the United States. (3) Just as for ex-slaves, therefore, autobiography for Fanny Fern was a means of protest. Within her columns and her novels, she could attach the men who had struck the poses of sentimental regard for women without delivering the substance. She could also expose their demeaning condescension and misinformed notions of women's experience and sensibility, while boldly writing about her own true feelings.

For those who like to collect telling historical trivia, there is an unexpected coincidence in the lives of Fanny Fern and Harriet Jacobs. Nathaniel P. Willis, Fanny Fern's selfish brother, who would not help support her when she was destitute, who printed her columns without paying her, and whom she satirized as "Apollo Hyacinth," was Harriet Jacobs' employer. Willis and his wife had hired Jacobs as a children's nurse, shortly after her escape from North Carolina. When his first wife died, Willis took her to England with his children, and she continued working for him after he remarried. But all this time Jacobs sensed that he was pro-slavery, so she hid her manuscript of *Incidents* and only worked on it in secret.(4) Thus, for both Fanny Fern and Harriet Jacobs (or "Linda Brent," to use her pseudonym), autobiography was not only a means of protest but something written under circumstances of secrecy or subversion, also something that had to be written under a "nom de plume," as book reviewers elegantly said.

Lydia Sigourney did not face such immediate physical and familial obstacles. As her autobiography makes abundantly clear, she led a highly privileged, financially secure life, and her parents and husband did not oppose her literary activity. Still, she had anxieties about writing her own life history, just as forty years before, in 1815, she says she had compunctions about publishing her first book. That book, *Moral Pieces in Prose and Verse,* had been published at the urging of Daniel Wadsworth, the backer of the school she ran in Hartford, Connecticut, and Wadsworth "took upon himself the whole responsibility of contracting with publishers, gathering subscriptions, and even correcting the proof-sheets." (5) Publishing a book was then "a novel enterprise for a female," as she puts it, and Wadsworth, whom she calls "my kind patron" and the book's "disinterested prompter," shielded her form these sordid details (325). Such were the restrictions of gender and gentility in 1815!

By 1865, when she wrote *Letters of Life,* many of those restrictions had fallen. The descriptive catalogue of her own books which she gives in the last chapter of *Letters of Life* lists fifty-five titles. She had also edited religious journals and children's magazines, until

what she delicately calls “the financial feature…which at first supplied only my indulgences, my journeying, or my charities, became eventually a form of subsistence” (378). But she still had hesitations about writing an autobiography. “You request of me, my dear friend, a particular account of my own life,” she begins, thus adopting the formula of a series of letters written to oblige someone else. She is also cautious to be modest and to insist that as in all writing “two principles” are “ever kept in view.” The writing will not “interfere with the discharge of womanly duty” and will “aim at being an instrument of good” (324). In addition, as the record of her “earthly pilgrimage,” this book “might impart some instruction to the future traveler, and set forth His praise, whose mercies are ‘new every morning, and fresh every moment’”(5)

Lydia Sigourney thereby made domesticity, beneficence, and piety the ends of the first American literary autobiography-a woman’s equivalent of Benjamin Franklin’s promotion of industry, doing good, and modestly instructing his “son” (or sons) in the ways of Providence. But where Franklin repeatedly stressed his active roles of going into business, promoting good causes, and seizing one opportunity after another, there is a heavy passivity in the life and style of Lydia Sigourney.(6) She accepts responsibilities because she is asked; she writes because she was a lonely child; and she publishes to oblige Wadsworth, as she later wrote many obituary poems because someone asked her. Indeed, at the end of her list of her fifty-five books, she adds nearly ten pages listing some of the requests she has had from readers asking for odes, elegies, epitaphs, book dedications, and hymns for them, their families, and charities! No other kind of laborer, she protests, gets asked for such donations. And yet her sense of woman’s literature, like women’s work, as a service to others inflicted these obligations on her.

Nevertheless, Lydia Sigourney’s *Letter of Life* also projects her solid satisfaction with her domestic and literary accomplishments. There is a difference, after all, between just being passive-serving others, being genteel, and living a life of self control-and successfully writing books commending the woman’s passive role. The writing is active, and the success leads to a greater pride, to financial independence, and to a sense of individual fulfillment. As Jarena Lee had gone into the pulpit and preached, and as prominent early feminists like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton had stepped onto the platforms and begun to lecture, so had Sigourney walked into the literary marketplace (however hesitantly at first), using her own name and becoming famous. Moreover, unlike most women of her time, she had written histories and biographies on public events and figures, and not merely on women’s matters. As Nina Baym has pointed out, Lydia Sigourney became a major voice in the interpretation and celebration of the American Revolution, providing her readers with images of patriotism, dedication, and sacrifice. Thus, despite her modesty and caution, she was a public figure’s right to tell her own story, in her own words, from childhood to old age. It was a new freedom, both for women and for American authors.

Jarena Lee (1783-1849?) *The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee, a Coloured Lady*

The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee, A Coloured Lady, Giving an Account of Her Call to Preach the Gospel, was first printed in Philadelphia in 1836, Lee paying thirty-eight dollars for a thousand copies which she could distribute at camp meetings and other places where she preached. A second edition, published in 1849, added her record of these places, with the scriptural texts she preached from, miles travelled, and number of converts. But otherwise very little is known of her. She was one of hundreds of itinerant preachers and "exhorters" who roamed the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century. They held revivals, established new congregations and also helped to establish social order on the frontier and in urban areas unrepresented by other churches.

One of these churches was the African Methodist Episcopal church, which had been founded by Richard Allen, the man who converted Lee in 1804. Allen was also glad to accept her as someone who could hold prayer meetings and "exhort," that is, encourage congregations to heed the sermons and the scriptures; but like other clergymen of the time, he resisted accepting women preachers.

Lee's autobiography, therefore, is both a spiritual autobiography, with powerful accounts of her visions and her promptings to speak and pray, and also an account of her progress in attaining greater social autonomy, until she becomes one of the first non-Quaker woman preachers in America. Indeed, the two stories come together at many points. The visions call her out of a life of submissiveness, and once they are answered and described, they give her power. Religion liberates her from a life of sin (and the status of a "servant maid"). Religion provides her with a way of supporting herself after her minister-husband dies and of having a very active, eventful life. In 1827, for example, she gave 178 sermons, travelling 2325 miles. The religious autobiography allows her to repeat this story—and make her plea for women preachers.

The text is from Sisters of the Spirit: Three Black Women's Autobiographies of the Nineteenth Century, ed. William L. Andrews (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1986). For discussion of Lee in the context of other black autobiographers, see Andrews's To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865 (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1986).

<u>Reading</u>

Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee
http://digilib.nypl.org/dynaweb/digs/wwm9716/@Generic__BookView

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) From *The American Scholar, The Poet, and History*

On the surface, Emerson was the least revolutionary of men. One of eight children of a Unitarian minister, who died when Emerson was still a boy, he was raised by his mother and his father's sister, went to Harvard, and became a Unitarian minister, too. In September, 1832, however, he announced to his congregation that he could no longer in good conscience serve communion, or the "Lord's Supper." He had decided that it was a form which Christ did not intend should be continued for century after century, and resigning from his post, left in December for Europe.

Such "independent judgment," as Alexis de Tocqueville might have called it, was highly characteristic of Emerson and can be seen in most of his early writing. He was impatient with tradition, formalism, and orthodoxy; and he sought inspiration and individual freedom. The "duties" of the American scholar, he told the students at Harvard in 1837, consciously turning the words of John Calvin and his own Puritan ancestor's downside up "may all be comprised in self-trust."

A faith in "self-trust" and "self-reliance," as he later called it made Emerson a predestined journal-keeper. The first edition of his own Journal, published 1909-14, filled ten volumes, and the modern, scholarly edition fills over twice as many. Equally important, from the perspective of American autobiography, was his role as a sort of propagandist for all kinds of personal writing. It was he who urged Thoreau to keep a journal, which he started in 1837 and kept till 1861 (1st ed. 1906, 14 volumes). And Emerson's enthusiastic endorsements of transcendental individualism and autobiographical poetry (see below) helped inspire the young Walt Whitman.

The paradox of Emersonian individualism is that he and his fellow Transcendentalists expected the fully developed individual to be universal. The individual would become a part and an expression of a transcendent mind or soul or spirit that ran through all individuals, present and past. "There is one mind common to all individual men," he said in "History." How one can be one's self and also be like all others is a problem. Nevertheless, the underlying self-confidence and optimism are very clear.

There are many biographies of Emerson. For a searching discussion of Emerson and other Transcendentalists' relation to the autobiographical tradition, see Lawrence Buell, Literary Transcendentalism: Style and Vision in the American Renaissance (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1973).

Reading

Essays and Poems Online
http://www.emersoncentral.com/texts.htm

Lewis Clarke (dates unknown) From *Leaves from a Slave's Journal of Life*

One of the most stirring moments at anti-slavery meetings was when recently escaped slaves told their own stories. Their testimony was specific and fresh, and anti-slavery writers often reported it in abolitionist papers. As a result, there are actually far more of these shorter, oral or dictated autobiographies than there are book-length slave narratives, making them an important source of information about slavery. They also provide insight into the interests and attitudes of abolitionists.

This speech has all these values. First, it was written by Lydia Maria Child, a long-time white abolitionist who was later the editor of Harriet Jacob's Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Her opening description of Lewis Tappan, a founder of the American Anti-Slavery Society, reveals some of his mannerisms as well as her differences from him. Yet both she and Tappan are directly concerned with the credibility of Clarke, which builds up to Clarke's still more emphatic points about slavery, manhood, and truth. "A SLAVE CAN'T BE A MAN!"—because "He daren't tell what's in him," because "slavery's the father of lies." In turn, these points not only justify Clarke's testimony, they underscore the great importance of testimony to Clarke in establishing his freedom and manhood.

Clarke's speech and Child's account also reveal many other features of slavery and the southern and northern white interests I it, such as the treatment of women and girls, the vicious "patter-rollers," the prurience of some anti-slavery "boys," and the misery of slave children.

Child's report of Clarke's speech was originally printed in two issues of the National Anti-Slavery Standard, October 20 and 27, 1842. We have cut most of the second part, except for Clarke's memories of his childhood experiences.

For a complete text of "Leaves from a Slave's Journal of Life," see John W. Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 151-64. Blassingame also supplies further information about general conditions and about the conventions of speeches by ex-slaves.

<u>Reading</u>

Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis Clarke,During a Captivity of More Than Twenty-Five Years, Among the Algerines of Kentucky, One of the So Called Christian States of America. Dictated by Himself
http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/clarke/clarke.html

Margaret Fuller (1810-1850) From *Mariana*

Like many other New England writers, Margaret Fuller kept diaries and wrote lengthy letters. She also wrote a very important book in the history of feminism, Woman in the Nineteenth Century (1845), and a very good travel book, Summer on the Lakes (1844), about a trip to the Middle West in 1843. But as autobiography none of these writings seems as original as the following romantic sketch, which she included in Summer on the Lakes, introducing it as about "an old schoolmate" back East. By using such a frame and such other fictional devices as the third-person narration and the Shakespearean name (Mariana was Angelo's rejected but forgiving betrothed in Measure for Measure), Fuller managed to talk about her adolescent anguish without seeming to be morbidly self-conscious or self-pitying.

Today the bildungsroman is a common form. Fuller, however, had only one example to follow, Goethe's Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, and upright Americans looked askance on it, just as they disapproved of Fuller's feminism and thought her interest in Goethe and German philosophy an affectation. So, "Marina" is in some ways primitive: a sketch rather than an intensely written short story or confessional essay. But the story of Mariana's misery at boarding school, arising from her ardor and her friends' conformity and cruelty, is archetypal. Nothing in "Mariana" is better drawn than the moment at dinner when she looks up and sees all the other girls wearing her rouge!

Fuller thus opened the way for countless later stories of adolescence, and in the process extended our very concept of individual uniqueness and the necessity for freedom of self-expression. The romantic individual is like (and partially derived from) the plight of a bright adolescent in a company of peers who are all boorish and mean.

The story is taken from Summer on the Lakes, in 1843 (Boston and New York, 1844), and omits the less autobiographical ending about Mariana's marriage. For more on Fuller, see Bell Gale Chevigny, the Woman and the Myth: Margaret Fuller's Life and Writings (Old Westbury, NY: Feminist Press, 1976).

<u>Reading</u>

Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli. v.1 1852. Fuller, Margaret, 1810-1850.
http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044009687435;page=root;view=image;size=100;seq=6;num=v

Fanny Fern (1811-1872) from *Fern Leaves from Fanny's Portfolio*

"Fanny Fern" was the pen name of Sara Payson Willis Eldredge Farrington Parton (to add the names of her first, second, and third husbands to her family and given names). Her father, Nathaniel Willis, was a Presbyterian deacon and the founder of The Recorder, the nation's first religious newspaper, and also of The Youth's Companion, the first children's paper. Her brother, N.P. Willis, became a very popular poet and journalist. But Sara did not start writing for money until left practically destitute by the death of her first husband, Charles Harrington Eldredge (in 1846) and her separation from her second, Samuel P. Farrington (in January, 1851). She could make no more than seventy-five cents a week as a seamstress and could obtain no post as a teacher. Her wealthy father had remarried, and he contributed very little to her. Nor did her first husband's parents help her much, despite their being grandparents to her children. But on June 18, 1851, she published her first sketch, anonymously, in a Boston paper called the Olive Branch, which paid her fifty cents. In September, she began using the pen name Fanny Fern, and her sketches were being pirated by other papers, including her brother N.P. Willis's Home Journal, which had turned them down when Sara had sent them to Willis under her own name! Moving to other papers, at increasingly better pay, she was soon one of the best-paid columnists in the country—and published, Fern Leaves from Fanny's Portfolio, and in the next year it earned her nearly ten thousand dollars.

As a columnist, she both wrote in the first person and told other stories that were often disguised autobiography. In the persona of Fanny Fern, she also developed the style of a woman who was vulnerable to sentiment and yet leery of it and, frequently, sharp-tongued and irreverent. At times she cried and brought tears to her readers; at other times she shocked. "A Widow's Trials" is tearful and obviously based on the cruel treatment she had received from her father. "Apollo Hyacinth," June 18, 1853, satirized her well-known brother N.P. Willis as a self-centered, dandified hypocrite. But while "Fanny Fern" acquired fame and notoriety, Sara's own identity was safely secret-until December, 1854, when one of the people satirized in Ruth Hall, the autobiographical novel she had just published, started a series of articles exposing her. Male journalists soon attacked her for being so vindictive towards the father, brother, and in-laws who had refused to support her when she was a poor widow, and though interest in Ruth Hall as a scandal grew and sales zoomed, the game was over…or the rules had changed. The hurt and sensitive Sara, who had once hidden behind the pseudonym, now used it as both shield and sword She also was a personage in it, Fanny Fern come to life.

This change shows up in later sketches like "A Law More Nice than just" (1858) and "How I look" (1870). In the first, James Parton, whom she had married in 1856, appears as "Mr. Fern," assisting in her experiment in wearing men's clothes. In that piece, incidentally, the man to whom she bears such a close resemblance is her brother. In the second, she enjoys the mistake a man makes in identifying her as another woman, dressed in diamonds and lace. (In other sketches, too she alludes to "Fanny Fern" as being dark and sinister, while she, the real Fanny, is blonde.) Thus, even though she increasingly called herself "Fanny Fern" (and this is the name now used in most library catalogues), the mystery over who this autobiographer really was continued. Indeed, until the recent rediscovery of nineteenth-century women's writing, literary historians cast her as just "sentimental," the "grandmother of all sob sisters." They seem to have judged her only by the flowery name,

without bothering to read her books. She and her writings are fascinating studies in the interactions of autobiography, fictions, and pseudonyms.

A further selection of sketches is in Ruth Hall and Other Writings, ed. Joyce W. Warren (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1986). For a biographical and critical study, see Nancy Walker, Fanny Fern (New York: Twayne, 1992).

Reading

Ruth Hall: A Domestic Tale of the Present Time
http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433076060734

P.T. Barnum (1810-1891) from *The Life of P.T. Barnum and Struggles and Triumphs*

P(hineas) T(aylor) Barnum is crucial to the history of American autobiography, both for what he wrote and for what he did to establish enduring popular attitudes towards truth and deception, self-advertisement and commerce, and other values surrounding it. One of the great national tricksters, he helped define appearance and reality in America.

On the simplest level, his life is a success story. Born in the little town of Bethel, Connecticut, in 1810, he rose from being a clerk in the country stores to being the owner of "Barnum's American Museum" in the New York City, to being the greatest impresario of his time (ushering Jenny Lind, the "Swedish Nightingale," on her famous 1850-52 tour), and to being co-owner of the Barnum and Bailey Circus. But where Benjamin Franklin somewhat deceptively attributed his success to virtue and industry, Barnum, in The Life of P.T. Barnum (1855) virtuously attributed his to deception. Half rogue that he was, he realized (as had Stephen Burroughs and as would later tricksters like Richard Nixon) that a rogue admitting his tricks is taken as a sinner repenting-he is believed. Or if he is not, he is still discussed, and as a great showman, Barnum watched the crowds come.

But there are still deeper levels to Barnum's understanding of the American psyche and the American public's responses to him. At a time when Americans were very eager to gain refinement and education, as expressed in appreciation of are and nature, Barnum still recognized their insecurities and their need for relaxation and fun. Thus he made his American Museum an attractive palace where wonders and curiosities of all kinds were assembled: in his words, "educated dogs, industrious fleas, automatons, jugglers, ventriloquists, living statuary, tableaux, gipsies, Albinos, fat boys, giants, dwarfs, rope-dancers, live "Yankees," pantomime…models of Niagara…fancy glass-blowing, knitting machines and other triumphs of the mechanical arts…" In such a collection, the popular issue, as Neil Harris has written, came to be "an aesthetic of the operational, a delight in observing process and examining for literal truch."[1] Visitors did not have to think about beauty or taste or spirituality, values with which they felt uncertain. Instead, they focused just on the facts and the problems of truth—where a freak came from, how a machine worked, whether something was fake or genuine.

The consequence in Barnum's autobiography is a similarly overwhelming flood of anecdotes, giving the story of each curiosity and wonder, and a confession of how it was found, authenticated (or not), and publicized. The Fejee Mermaid story is an example. But as the story of the great Hoboken Buffalo Hunt illustrates, audiences also came to like Barnum's tricks. Being able to shout that the hunt "was the biggest humbug you ever heard of!" was part of the pleasure. Barnum was likewise quite willing and proud to reveal several days later that he had made his money by chartering the ferry boats. It won him further respect (and publicity) and gave those who told the story the thrill of feeling in the know. All the while, as perhaps the first story of Ivy Island best demonstrates, there is an important moral lesson to be learned from having been deceived, or from having believed inflated promises, from having false hopes, and then seeing the modest truth. The boy-innocent finds he is not rich and privileged but like everyone else.

In 1869, Barnum published a second version of his autobiography, Struggles and Triumphs, which did not paint himself as quite such a confidence man- and interesting difference. Adding chapter after chapter, he republished it so many times that one scholar

has estimated that after the Bible, Barnum's autobiography was the most widely read book in America. Copies were given away free with circus tickets, as if the book was a part of, or the background to, the circus. Thus did Barnum further contribute to the popular expectation (a mainstay of autobiography) that behind every appearance is a reality in the form of yet another personal story.

Copies of the 1855 Life are rare. This text is taken from the reprint, Barnum's Own Story, edited by Waldo R. Browne (New York: Dover Publications, 1961). Which also contains the material from Struggles and Triumphs. For biography and criticism, see G Thomas Couser, Altered Egos: Authority in American Autobiography (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989), 52-69; and Neil Harris, Humbug: The Art of P.T. Barnum (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973). 1…Neil Harris, *Humbug: The Art of P.T. Barnum (*Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), p. 79.

Reading

The Life of P.T. Barnum
http://archive.org/details/lifeofptbarnum00barn

Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) *To Jesse W. Fell, Enclosing Autobiography*

Lincoln's humility and brevity are legendary, and at first glance this "little sketch" seems to confirm both. But we might also ask how this sketch illustrates the condition of autobiography in America in 1859.

According to Louis Kaplan's Bibliography of American Autobiographies, none of the eleven U.S. presidents between Jefferson and James Buchanan (Lincoln's immediate predecessor) wrote an autobiography. There are many possible reasons for this, but one is that autobiographies were often the objects of suspicion. Of the roughly eight hundred written between 1800 and 1870, approximately seventy per cent were written by either clergymen or people who had experienced some unusual adventure or distress.[1] Persons in the mainstream of American life, including political leaders, did not write their life stories. Lincoln's reticence, therefore, may be due more too social-literary conventions than to inherent modesty.

Jesse W. Fell was secretary of the Illinois Republican State Central Committee and a Lincoln backer. He asked for this biographical information for use by a newspaper in Pennsylvania. The article based on it was published February 11, 1860, and reprinted by other papers. As a man who had not held previous national office (except for one term in Congress, 1847-49) and who had not acquired a national reputation until his debates with Stephen Douglas in 1858, Lincoln needed to be better known. In June 1860, following his nomination for President (on May 18, 1860), he wrote a second sketch much like this one for a Chicago newspaperman, and it was used in preparing a campaign biography. Significantly, it was four times longer, but written in the third person. So Lincoln appears to have gladly cooperated with the publicists who were helping to advance his candidacy, but he also wanted to make sure that the publicity "must not appear to have been written by myself."

There are many other interesting features to this sketch, such as the emphasis on his humble education, his frontier background, and his pleasure in being elected captain by his fellow volunteers in the Black Hawk War. The sketch skillfully performs self-promotion by means of the self-irony and humor that are sympathetic to his audience.

There are many Lincoln biographies, For a documentary of his life, see Earl Schenck Miers, et al., Lincoln Day by Day: A Chronology, 3 vols. (Washington, D.C: Lincoln Sesquicentennial Commission, 1960).

Reading

Speeches & Letters of Abraham Lincoln, 1832-1865
http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/14721

Lydia Sigourney (1791-1865) From Letters of Life

Lydia Sigourney was born in Norwich, Connecticut, where her father, Ezekiel Huntley, was the head gardener for a wealthy widow who set the social and moral tone for the town. She published her first book in 1815, Moral Pieces in Prose and Verse, and went on to write over fifty-more histories, biography (many honoring Revolutionary War patriots), a long descriptive poem on American Indians, children's books, travel sketches, and religious verse. Nevertheless, what she later was known for was the writing of lugubrious funeral verses, in the manner of Huckleberry Finn's Emeline Grangerford, who was said to be modeled after her New research in women's literature is reassessing her work.

Letters of Life (1866) is especially important because it was "the first full-dress autobiography written by an American author of either sex whose primary vocation was creative writing."[1] Before Sigourney, American poets, novelists, and essayists-however autobiographical their work-did not write autobiographies at lease not in the sense of a full-length biography written about one's self. Letters of Life, therefore, is a landmark in the history of American autobiography and the remote forerunner of works like Henry James's A Small Boy ad Others or Lillian Hellman's Pentimento.

One justification of her project, which she notably refuses to make herself, is that she was in her time an extremely popular writer. Her meticulously correct grammar and diction and unassailable character were models for genteel women. In England, she was compared to the popular Mrs. Felicia Hemans: in America she deluged with fan mail, and an Iowa town was even named after her. (In response she donated fifty volumes to the town library and directed the planting of trees around the courthouse square.) So she could presume interest in her life. But her declared strategy in the autobiography was to write "letters" to a "dear friend" who had requested "A particular account of my own life." Her goal was to be instructive and, as in all her writing, "not to interfere with the discharge of womanly duty, and to aim at being an instrument of good."[2] In these ways, she nominally placed autobiography within a kind of personal writing which women had already published (letters and travel narratives) and also made it line up with the kinds of didactic literature she had already written.

The Letters is about evenly divided between a narrative of her childhood and education, leading up to her first experiments in writing (chapters 1-8) and (chapters 9-14), a record of her experiences as a teacher of young ladies, her marriage to Charles Sigourney (a Hartford, Connecticut, hardware merchant and banker) their happy life together till his death in 1854, and an account of her other books. Throughout, she presents herself as extremely cognizant of social proprieties, pious, frugal, hard-working, self-disciplined, and eager to educate and improve herself. In some ways she seems like a terrible prig, just as her language seems insufferably polished. But she also seems highly aware that all these virtues are expected of her and that, having acquired them, she has the authority to play.

In this chapter, "Letter V," subtitled "Removal—Household Employments," she describes the responsibilities she had at age fourteen when her parents moved from Mrs. Lathrop's mansion to their own "new abode." A confident young lady, she supervises the moving in of the furniture and then resumes her domestic occupations, the ultimate of

which is making clothes for her father. In addition to telling about being a dutiful, loving daughter, however, the author also has a little fun, as in her riddling description of the "quadruped member of our establishment…scarcely mentionable to ears polite." In this playfulness she might be compared to Franklin, Caroline Kirkland, or Fanny Fern. She is also very aware of her responsibility as a social historian: Letters of Life is a veritable time capsule of her culture.

The text of "Letter V," given here in its entirety, is from Letters of Life (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1866). An important critical essay is Nina Baym's "Reinventing Lydia Sigourney," American literature 62 (September 1990): 385-404.

1. Lawrence Buell, "Autobiography in the American Renaissance," in American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect, ed. Paul John Eakin (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1991), p. 60.
2. Lydia Sigourney, Letters of Life (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1866), pp. 5, 324.

Reading

Letters to Young Ladies
http://www.librarycompany.org/women/portraits/sigourney.htmn

B) Late 19th Century : Survivors and Self-Teachers (1965-1915)

When the Civil War ended in 1865, approximately two million men had served in the Union Army, out of a population of twenty-three million: 750,000 had served in the Army of the Confederacy, out of a population of nine million, which included 3,500,000 slaves. Northern casualties had been 640,000 dead and wounded; those of the South 450,000. In addition, 220,000 Confederates had been captured by the North and 200,000 Union soldiers had been captured by the South. Measured against the size and wealth of the country, it was the bloodiest and most expensive war in American history. (1)

It was also a war that was recorded and remembered in hundreds of memoirs, diaries, letters, and other kinds of autobiographical writing. The index to Louis Kaplan's *Bibliography of American Autobiographies* (1961) lists 542 autobiographies from the Civil War, roughly 8 ½ percent of all the 6377 books listed. That, of course, does not include shorter pieces or unpublished material, and a great many more Civil War diaries, letters, and autobiographies have been published since 1945, the cut-off year for the *Bibliography.*

The classic Civil War memoir has long been Grant's *Personal Memoirs.* Thanks to Mark Twain, whose American Book Company published it by subscription in 1885-86, its two volumes had an immense sale, and they became, in a sense, the Union veterans' official history. But the *Memoirs* also received critical praise from contemporaries like Matthew Arnold and Henry James; and many later readers have praised it, too, notably Gertrude Stein and Edmund Wilson. Its plain style, its unromantic view of the war, and Grant's own directness and lack of military pomp make it a very appropriate record of a war that was won by the endurance and sacrifices of common men. No novels written about the war, with the exception of John William DeForest's autobiographical novel *Miss Ravenel's Conversion,* and Stephen Crane's *Red Badge of Courage*, are nearly so sobering and realistic.

Nevertheless, a general's memoirs cannot possibly give the common soldier's or civilian's view of a war. He gave the orders: the soldiers and civilians had to carry them out and bear the suffering. It was they who were most likely to become casualties and prisoners, or to lose their homes and families. Writing their own stories was their way of insuring that these experiences would not be forgotten and that the parts which they played in the great epic struggle would be suitably recognized. Writing their own stories, which, thanks to increased literacy, a large portion of the population now could do, was also a way of helping themselves to remember and of leaving physical records for their children and other readers. Some diarists like Mary Boykin Chesnut and Cornelia Peake McDonald also went on to *rewrite* their stories, because parts of the original diary were lost and because they wanted to edit and polish them and make them more worthy of publication and thus celebration and preservation.

So much writing not only contributed to the total body of American autobiography, it also had a marked effect on concepts of the self and so on the history of autobiography.

Before the Civil War, as we have already noted, most Americans were reluctant to write their personal histories. It took the leadership of Transcendentalists, escaped slaves,

abolitionists, feminists, and other people of outstanding talent who had had unusual experiences to start the ante-bellum self-liberation movement. Americans may have been inclined, as Tocqueville observed, towards "independent judgment," towards thinking for themselves and judging the world from their own perspective, but they were equally inclined, he noted, to conformity and a fear of appearing different from or better than their neighbors. (2)

And their concepts of self corresponded to this fear. "The self stood as no accommodating channel to enhancement or perfection," Lewis O. Saum said in his study of *The Popular Mood of Pre-Civil War America*, "it stood rather as an endlessly frustrating, dark-hued impediment." (3) The shadow of Puritanism was long and dark, and the newer, more optimistic lights of religious and political liberalism did not fully penetrate its gloom, because liberalism taught that for the self to become generous, refined, and sincere it also had to be disciplined. These virtues might be natural; but they still required nurture.

Veterans of the Civil War, however, were likely to have a different view, if not of human nature, then at lease of themselves and their comrades. The very fact of disinterested sacrifice for a noble cause-for preservation of the Union and emancipation of slaves, or for the Right of Secession and love of country-was proof of some higher kind of benevolence. The war's polarization of opinion further encouraged each side to celebrate its own heroes in these terms, leaving the enemy as the embodiment of evil: of selfishness, ignorance, crudity, and the forces of darkness. One's own motives and character were generous, sincere, and noble; the enemy's were the opposite. In this way, in fact, it was even possible to maintain both the old Puritan and the new liberal views of human nature. From the northern perspective the northern self was selfless, enlightened, and modern, while the southern self was dark and sinister. Contrariwise, the Southerner saw himself as noble and free and the Northerner as a tricky, deceptive, money-grubbing Yankee.

Because testimonies about wars inevitably require a way of dealing with one's own pain and suffering, as well as the suffering and death of others, these views of self and non-self, or Self and Other, were deeply inscribed into Civil War autobiographies. They were an integral part of the whole elegiac strategy with which writers justified pain and death and tried to make sense of the war. Here is the way, for instance, that Warren Lee Goss, a Massachusetts sergeant and the author of *The Soldier's Story,* elegized a man in his company who died at Andersonville, the Georgia prison, where nearly 13,000 men died in 1864-65.

C.H.A. Moore was a drummer…the only son of a widowed mother…In him all her hopes were centered, and it was with great reluctance that she finally agreed to his enlistment. A soldier's life, to one thus reared, is at best hard; but to plunge one so young and unaccustomed even to the rudiments of hardships into the unparallel miseries of Andersonville, seemed cruelty inexpressible…The day previous to his death I saw and conversed with him, tried to encourage him; but a look of premature age had settled over his youthful face, which bore but little semblance to the bright, expressive look he wore when he enlisted…He spoke of home and his mother, but his words were all in the same key, monotonous and weary, with a stony, unmoved expression of countenance…It seems to me that God's everlasting curse must surely rest upon those who thus knowingly allowed

hundreds of innocent young lives to be blotted out of existence by cruelties unheard of before in the annals of civilized warfare. It seems to me that in the future the South, who abetted so great a crime against civilization and humanity, against Christianity and even decency, must stand condemned by the public opinion of the world…(4)

The drummer boy is thus eulogized for his youth, innocence and devotion to the cause. He was also a symbol of his mother's hopes and goodness, so that his suffering and death are all the worse because they are by extension violations of her, the person from whom he received his virtuous sentiments. The South, on the other hand, by "knowingly" allowing such "innocent young lives to be blotted out" has offended "civilization and humanity," "Christianity and even decency"-all the forces of good that Goss can list.

Conversely, here is the way Cornelia Peake McDonald described her home in Virginia in February, 1863, after it had been occupied by the invading Union army:

I sit every day and see this lovely place converted into a wagon yard. The smooth green turf has disappeared, and roads go over and across in every direction. Under the dining room windows runs one, and mules and horses continually pass, driven by men cursing and swearing, uttering oaths that make my blood curdle…

Under the parlor windows goes another road. Those windows used to look out on a sweet shrubbery of syringas, mock orange, white lilacs and purple…everything old fashioned and lovely that I delight in…[Now] all the long day through [pass] wagons, artillery horses,…soldiers and camp women, gay officers on foot and on horseback, and most sickening sight of all, Yankee "Ladies" in dainty riding habits, hats and plumes, pace by as if the ground they passed over was their own; and chatting with their beaux, glance around at us if they chance to see us as if we were intruders on their domain. (5)

"Yankees" are "cursing and swearing" mule drivers and disgusting, supercilious "camp women," and Mrs. McDonald is too angry to stop and qualify these images with any further reflection that this is war and that soldiers and their camp followers are not genteel. Rather, she excuses herself for her "resentful and revengeful" feelings towards them. She wishes that "our artillery could, from some near point, sweep them all away." (6)

The powerful emotions in these Civil War autobiographies helped to keep this war alive for generations after it was supposedly over, and this, in turn perpetuated the need for publishing more autobiographies, as apologists for North and South continued to build up the evidence for heroism or horror. In the ten years from 1862 through 1871, for example, seventy-four memoirs of Civil War prisoners were published. Interest apparently dropped off from 1872 to 1881, when only seventeen were published, but from 1882 through 1891, fifty-eight more appeared, followed by thirty-two in the decade 1892-1901, fifty-one in the period 1901-10, and twenty-seven between 1912 and 1921. (7) There were other reasons for this increase, too. Just as with the Revolution, there were controversies over pension legislation; elderly veterans wished to publish their stories before they died; and their descendants wished to honor them after they died. But ongoing rivalry of North and South continued to promote interest in the war and in the personal experiences of its participants.

Another significant difference between the prison story of Warren Goss and the narratives of Revolutionary prisoners, Indian captives, and others, is in Goss's interpretation of the meaning of his experience. Like other prisoners and captives, Goss saw it as a test of faith. He and his fellows had remained true to the cause and not accepted offers from the enemy to gain release by becoming turncoats. But the awful conditions of Andersonville-hunger, exposure, disease, and almost unimaginable overcrowding, with over twenty thousand men confined in an area of ten acres-pitted the prisoners against each other. Not all could survive, however strong their faith. Thus, as Goss shows, they fought among themselves, and "the strong often tyrannized over the weak" (104). To protect themselves, the prisoners developed ways of punishing offenders. To raise money for a little extra food, they developed simple kinds of businesses. The prison became a grotesque microcosm of nineteenth-century capitalist society, when "rough native force or talent showed itself by ingenious devices for making the most of little" (104). This was a world, as Goss describes it, where what later became known as social Darwinism definitely prevailed. Only the fittest survived, and Goss devoted great attention to explaining the techniques of his own survival, both physical and psychological. He needed a bucket in which to cook, wash, and carry water-and with which to trade such services to others, for their services to him. He needed to sustain his spirit, by humor and some pleasant thoughts, and by keeping up his hopes of escape, exchange, or parole, but without becoming unrealistic. Finally, he had to restrain his humanitarian impulses to help those who were weaker, sicker, and hungrier than himself, since, if he did not, he would die, too. With these lessons, Goss also justified his survival, overcoming the guilt arising from the fact that he had survived where others had not. Then he went on, directly and indirectly, to teach similar lessons to the post-war American society.

In the Civil War autobiographies, therefore, we see the emergence of a demonstrably different concept of self. The universalism of Transcendentalists, abolitionists, and revivalists has been eliminated or subdued. Not even Walt Whitman retains the optimism he had before the war. *Specimen Days* is a book of much more detail, of the speci-men and other specifics, rather than glorious universals. And when he celebrates himself, it is the tireless, gray-headed, middle-aged male nurse whom he celebrates, not the boisterous young democrat. This self, then, is a survivor and a teacher and a self historian more than a great liberator. Similarly, Frederick Douglass in his last volume of autobiography, the *Life and Times…*, devotes much more attention to the unique record of his own life as a public figure than to himself as a victim of slavery. To some extent, of course, these differences are due to the fact that by the 1880's and 1890's Whitman and Douglass were older, well-recognized public men, which they had not been before the war. Their individual stories now held significant interest for many readers. However, what gave them the license to tell these stories, and the forms I which tell them, were the developments in autobiography which had been introduced by books like Goss's *Story* and Grant's *Memoirs.* The mundane particulars what Whitman had referred to in "Song of Myself" as "dinner, dress, associates, looks, compliments, dues"-which had once *not* been the real self, the "Me myself," and supposedly could not be recounted-were now a very large part of this new self, and could be, even had to be, recounted. Goss, Grant, Douglass, and Whitman had all survived to tell their tales, their *own* tales, and they could tell them with the expectation that book-buyers would want to read about them. Even people who had not been famous but had witnessed

great events and survived could feel that their stories were important. Mary Boykin Chesnut, the wife of a Confederate leader, worked for years at revising and improving her diary and preparing it for publication, which it first received in 1905, nineteen years after her death. Other manuscripts were left with children and grandchildren or privately published and then placed in attics and state historical societies, preserved from a sense of patriotism and family piety. Cornelia Peake McDonald's story was first passed on just to her children. Her children then published a private edition of it for *their* children, but it was not printed in a public edition until 1992. Nevertheless, McDonald, like Chesnut and Goss, had felt that her story deserved being recorded and saved. Just having been a witness to the war and played a small part in it was reason enough.

The Self could become this more specific historical self because, as we noted before, these later autobiographers had less shame about it. The dark, evil self was no longer within but outside: in the shape, first, of the wartime enemy, and later in the shape simply of others different from "one's self" by virtue of race, sex religion, class, education, or status, Autobiography and the Self has become, or were about to become, more racial, ethnic, and status-conscious.

These cultural and political valences of the self, as we might call them, were not new. They can be seen, for instance, in Thoreau's distinctions between himself and John Field, the impoverished Irish bogger, as also between Harriet Jacobs-Linda Brent an Mr. Flint, her mean and insensitive white master. But starting in the late 1880's with Lucy Larcom's *New England Girlhood,* these valences also become associated with the past and with differences between the past of childhood and one's origins and the present, the time of composition, in a very different world. A wave of nostalgia was about to break on many Americans and with it a discovery or rediscovery of childhood. And much of this nostalgia identified childhood with an innocent time before the war and before the ethnic multiplicity that had come with late nineteenth-century immigration.

Lucy Larcom did not have as sheltered and idyllic a girlhood as Lydia Sigourney's or Catherine Sedgwick's (whose *Life and Letters* was published in 1871). She grew up in the declining sailing port of Beverly, Massachusetts. The old New England Calvinism was also dying, and she did not regret it, thought she fondly remembered the old hymns. The death of her father, a retired shipmaster, in 1835 when she was eleven, was a drastic blow to family status and security, and her mother moved to the Milltown of Lowell, where she became housekeeper in one of the boardinghouses for the girl mill workers. Lucy, for her part went to work in the mills.

Working in the mills of Lowell, Massachusetts, in the 1830's and '40's, before the arrival of thousands of immigrants, was a utopian experience, however. The girls came from farms and hill towns from all over New England, and, according to Larcom, they were glad to leave those confined places, where the only paying jobs had been as serving girls. In this new, relatively cosmopolitan world they made more friends, and, thanks to the benevolence of the factory owners, went to lecturers, night schools, and music classes. They also had a chance to write poems and edit their own magazines, which was Lucy's particular delight. In 1846, she had a chance to go to Illinois, where she completed her formal education, then returned to New England, where she later became a teacher at

Wheaton Seminary in Norton, Massachusetts, and an editor for Children's magazines. But the account given in *New England Girlhood* ends with 1852.

Although barely noticed, this is a significant date. Since the setting is nine years before the Civil War, Larcom could omit her later Unionist passions. It was also before the period of mass immigration that began in 1848 and became even greater in the 1880's. Larcom could, as it were, preserve, or recall the lost innocence of her "girlhood" of New England, just as Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1844) evoked the "boyhood" of the Mississippi Valley. Collectively, such autobiographies and autobiographical novels of childhood took their middle-class, Anglo-Saxon readers back to a seeming childhood of America, where there were no rumblings of war, immigrants, strikes, labor agitators, or tenements.

The next two or here decades saw the appearance of many of these nostalgic autobiographies of growing up: William Dean Howells's *My Year in a Log Cabin* (1893) and *Boy's Town*(1904), Edward Everett Hale's *New England Boyhood* (1893), Hamlin Garland's *Boy Life on the Prairie* (1899), Charles Eastman's *Indian Boyhood* (1902) and John Muir's *Story of My Boyhood and Youth* (1912). The early chapters of *The Education of Henry Adams* (written in 1906-7) and the whole of Henry James' *A Small Boy and Others* (1913) and *Notes of a Son and Brother* (1914) belong in this genre, too. The anti-Semitism of the *Education* and parts of James' *American Scene*, are, therefore, not unique to James and Adams and their upper-class cohorts, but aspects of ethnic linkage and prejudice which had begun to be widespread. Ethnicity was presumably a matter of parentage and was normally simplest or purest in childhood. Yet, for ethnicity to be an issue, there had to be an awareness or alter awareness of other ethnic heritages and types-valences to avoid as well as valences to bond to. Therefore, "native" ethnic pride, be it New England, small-town Ohio, Prairie, Indian, or Negro, was but one feature among others involving various forms of ethno-centrism, ethnic anxiety, and ethnic prejudice.

Ethnicity was by no means the only theme in these reminiscences of girlhood and boyhood. A much older tradition, the success story, still endured having been handed down from Franklin to Barnum to horatio Alger's novels about Ragged Dick (A series started in 1867), Luck and Pluck (started in 1869), and Tattered Tom (started in 1871). This was the tradition picked up by Andrew Carnegie, perhaps because as a Scottish immigrant he wasn't so prepared to write what reviewers liked to call a "delightful reminiscence" of a native-born childhood. The memory Carnegie begins with is one which was also a "lesson": his father, who was a hand-loom weaver in Dunfermline, Scotland, returning "to our little home greatly distressed because there was no more work for him to do." Then and thee, writes Carnegie the millionaire, "I resolved…that the wolf of poverty would be driven from our door someday, if I could do it." (8)

"How I Served my Apprenticeship" (1894) is thus not only a success story, but also a grim, bare-knuckled account of what Carnegie learned in the worlds of nineteenth-century capitalism and technological development. The story was archetypal: from bobbin boy to messenger boy to telegraph operator to assistant to the superintendent of the Pennsylvania Railroad. There is more t the story, however, because Carnegie's even greater pleasure was his investment in "ten shares in the Adams Express Company." This required his

parents' mortgaging their house, but it succeeded, and it taught "how money could make money"-the lesson of a real businessman, by Carnegie's lights. Thus his "apprenticeship" was not in an old-fashioned handicraft or trade in the traditional sense, but in capitalism, which was a success story of its own, at lease to its persuasive advocates and apologists.

Comparison of Carnegie's little autobiographical essay with these others and with the autobiographies of earlier generations could be lengthy. His autobiography does not celebrate America or virtue or religion or nature or benevolence and civic improvement so much as it celebrates business and capitalism. Carnegie's aim, as he notes in the closing passages of his story, is to be "working upon my own account…being my own master,…manufacturing something and giving employment to many men." This aim was apparently so socially accepted and easy to learn that he could direct his story even to children, for it appeared in *Youth's Companion.* Autobiography was again didactic, although, some people would say, no longer very moral. And any successful, surviving, self-teacher could write it.

Warren Lee Goss (1835-1925) From *The Soldier's Story*

The Soldier's Story was first published in 1866 and went through two more editions and fourteen additional printings, the last in 1876. Many editions included an appendix "containing the names of the Union soldiers who died at Andersonville," and some had a "presentation page," indicating that the book was used as a gift and memorial.

Goss was born in Brewster, Massachusetts, and educated at Pierce Academy in Middleboro. In 1860-61, he spent one year at Harvard Law School, after which he enlisted as a private in the engineer corps. The Soldier's Story, however, tells only of his military experience, beginning with his enlistment, his capture in 1862, and his first imprisonment at Libby Prison in Richmond, Virginia. Exchanged in the fall of 1862, he regained his health, and reenlisted in November, 1863, as a sergeant. In the spring of 1864, he was captured again and this time taken to Andersonville in Southern Georgia.

Andersonville prison was one of the worst atrocities of the Civil War. It was still being written about in the 1950s, in MacKinlay Kantor's best-selling novel Andersonville and in the Andersonville Trial, a play based upon the trial and execution of Colonel Wirz, the commander. Goss satisfied the great curiosity about it and appealed to post-war, pro-Union and anti-Confederate sentiments, while generally avoiding sensationalism.

He describes Andersonville as a bare compound surrounded by a stockade fence. Most of the prisoners had no more shelter than tattered blankets supported by sticks. They cooked on open fires, eating meager rations of dried corn, beans and sometimes a little meat. The barracks that once had been planned were built very late and in insufficient number (the South by that time being very short of men, funds, and supplies). The compound soon became massively overcrowded, and by August, 1864, held 31,000 men, nearly 3000 of whom died in that month alone. To escape, Goss and others dug tunnels, feigned death, and tried running off while outside on wood-gathering forays. Few succeeded, though Goss did once escape for a few days. In the fall he was among the "lucky ones" moved to a prison in Charleston, South Carolina, from which he was exchanged in December.

The chapter below, describing events near the beginning of his account of Andersonville, is typical in its emphasis on not just the conditions of the prison but also on the society and the survival strategies that grew up among the prisoners. As can be seen, he also attacks southern character and praises the prisoner's loyalty to the Union. But the overall message is that "Yankee ingenuity" and the New England and western character are what have been tested and have endured.

After the war, Goss became an editor and magazine writer and an author of children's novels and children's biographies of Grant and Sherman. He also held offices in veterans' organizations.

The selection here is Chapter 5 of The Soldier's Story (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1866). There is no biography of Goss, though he did write a second autobiography, Recollections of a Private (1890).

<u>Reading</u>

The Soldier's Story of His Captivity at Andersonvile, Belle Isle
http://archive.org/details/soldiersstoryhi02gossgoog

Walt Whitman (1819-1892) From *Specimen Days*

In 1865, Whitman was fired from a clerkship in the Department of the Interior because the Secretary had been shown a copy of his poems, Leaves of Grass, and decided it was an immoral book. In response, his friend William O'Connor wrote (with Whitman's direction) a short apologia, The Good Gray Poet (1866), which portrayed him as a stalwart democrat who had served quietly and heroically all through the Civil War comforting wounded soldiers.

With The Good Gray Poet, Whitman's public image began to change from the sensual, rowdy, egotistical "rough" of Leaves of Grass to the martyred democratic saint, an image which served him very well for the rest of his life. It comported better with his middle age and with the fact that in 1873 he suffered a paralytic stroke. For his convalescence, Whitman left Washington and moved near his brother George in Camden, New Jersey, where he was visited by a growing number of English and American admirers. In the late 1870s he recovered further from the stroke by spending many months at Timber Creek, outside Camden.

Specimen Days (1882) is the "good grey poets'" memoir. It preserves the memories and images for which he wanted to be known and omitted (by its "skips and jumps") the supposedly immoral and more cosmic, tormented Whitman. It also preserved his voice, for there is a striking correlation between the book's material and method and the narrator's persona. Thus, its artifices of carelessness, kindness, and healthy and loving impulsiveness reveal as well as conceal. Whitman's service in the hospitals was indeed heroic—and a socially acceptable expression of his male amativeness, as he called his homosexual love. Specimen Days is the work of someone who had survived war, paralysis, public attack, and the risks in his own nature, and had grown into an older, mellower, and even more complex and accomplished man. Whitman sketches the contents of Specimen Days, which vary considerably, in footnote I, concluded here but adjusted (in brackets) to indicate contents by sections rather than pages.

The standard biography of Whitman is Gay Wilson Allen's Solitary Singer (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1967). A scholarly edition of Specimen Days was prepared by Floyd Stovall for The Collected Writings of Walt Whitman and published by New York University Press in 1963.

<u>Reading</u>

Complete Prose Works
http://www.gutenberg.org/catalog/world/readfile?fk_files=1472160

Mary Boykin Chesnut (1823-1886) From *Diary during the War*

The wife of James Chesnut, who was a U.S. Senator from South Carolina and later an aide to Jefferson Davis and a brigadier general in the Confederate Army, Mary Boykin Chesnut was ideally situated to keep a diary of life among the leaders of the South. Moreover, she was well-educated, loved novels (especially Thackeray's Vanity Fair), loved society, and had a very independent mind.

She also liked to write, and she recognized the historical significance of her experience and its literary potential—traits which were, paradoxically, both advantages and disadvantages, both supportive and contradictory. As her modern editor C. Vann Woodward has shown, what earlier editors had assumed was a "diary" in the conventional sense of a notebook made up of daily, sequential rewriting having been done between 1881 and 1884. Yet the polished version still 1861, to July, 1865, except for a break from August, 1862, to October, 1863, with the whole comprising a total of over twenty-five hundred pages. The break was caused by her having destroyed the notes for that period because of a raid on Richmond in 1863, but the gap was filled in by a 200-page narrative, done from memory, which was presented as if done in October, 1863.

For a full discussion of this complex compositional history, readers should see Woodward's long introduction to Mary Chesnut's Civil War. Her diary/autobiography also deserves reading in its entirety, both for its record of the war and for its reflection of her alert and caustic personality. Fortunately, however, even short excerpts of her book are very rich and suggestive. Her stories are usually brief, her wit sharp. Good stories and well-turned phrases were the delight of society—they were what made life in Charleston or Richmond so much more pleasant than life on a plantation or in a small town, and they were also what made memories of 1861-65 so important to preserve and distill after defeat. Chesnut's husband's words at the end of the diary, "Camden for life," suggest what punishment it was for her to be away from society and its gossip.

For more on Chesnut's life, see Elizabeth Muhlenfeld, Mary Boykin CHesnut: A Biography (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1981). The excerpts below are from daily entries as these are given in C. Vann Woodward, ed., Mary Chesnut's Civil War (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1981). All footnotes and bracketed editorial material are from that edition.

Reading

A Diary from Dixie, as Written by Mary Boykin Chesnut
http://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/chesnut/menu.html

Ulysses S. Grant (1822-1885) From *Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*

Readers of The Education of Henry Adams know Adams's unflattering portrait of Grant: a "pre-intellectual, archaic" enigma who as president started the country on "a policy of drift," while also seemingly blind to enormous corruption in government.[1]

The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant, which conclude with the end of the Civil War in 1865, show a very different kind of man, although to many readers still a puzzling one. The two volumes, totaling over 1200 pages, begin with his ancestry and childhood and then proceed rapidly through his time at West Point to his service in the Mexican War. By 1854 he has resigned from the army. But in 1861, living in Galena, Illinois, he helps organize Illinois volunteers, and is made a colonel. Then, as the war progresses, he moves from battle to battle, gaining larger commands, besieging Vicksburg, taking it on July 4, 1863, and becoming lieutenant-general in March, 1864, with command of all the armies of the United States. As a result of Grant's ever-widening role, the reader gets an ever-expanding view of the magnitude of the war, while the Memoirs press on, as inevitable as fate. Yet, throughout, Grant's language remains modest and firm and without the exaggerated heroic tones, contentiousness, and self-justifications that without the exaggerated heroic tones, contentiousness, and self- justifications that became almost standard features in other autobiographies of Civil War officers.

Alexander Stephens, the vice-president of the Confederacy, said of Grant, "He is one of the most remarkable men I have ever met. He does not seem to be aware of his powers."[2] The comment is suggestive, and it is borne out by the famous story of Grant's first expecting to publish the Memoirs with the Century Company, which had promised only a ten percent royalty and predicted sales of only five to ten thousand copies. Grant had been swindled by business partners, was sick and in debt, and believed this was a good offer. But Mark Twain offered to publish them by subscription, and they soon sold 300,000 copies, earning $450,000 for Grant's family. (Grant died of cancer of the throat on July 23, 1885, a week after finishing the manuscript.

While home on vacation from West Point, Grant was teased for wearing a fancy military uniform, and he came to prefer utilitarian dress, as at Appomattox. This plain dress, in turn, fits with his plain language and his objection to misty legends like the "story of the apple tree" and how he supposedly returned Lee's sword. Yet Grant is still the stuff of legend, and he is often made a symbol of Union determination, the democratic values of the Union soldier, and the North's mastery of industrial warfare. Aspects of all these qualities show up here. So does the archetype with which the United States entered many other wars: that the country was a Sleeping Giant, peaceful and complacent until aroused to a just and mighty fury. Can a man have tapped into so many of the strongest legends, the latent narrative structures, in his culture and still been unaware of his power?

For further reflection, Grant can be compared to other military autobiographers like Black Hawk and Ethan Allen, to other writers about war like Chesnut Sarah Benjamin and Nathan B. Jennings, and to the pacifists Dorothy Day and Roderick Seidenberg.

The excerpt below, headed "Negotiations at the Appomattox—Interview with Lee at McLean's House—The terms of surrender—Lee's surrender—Interview with Lee after the

Surrender," is the whole of Chapter 67 of the first edition of Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant (New York: Charles L. Webster and Co., 1885). This is still the authoritative text, but the library of America provides a good, available reprint. Two excellent short studies of Grant and his Memoirs appear in Edmund Wilson's chapter "Northern Soldiers: Ulysses S. Grant," in Patriotic Gore (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1962), and James M. Cox's "U.S. Grant: The Man in the Memoirs," in his Recovering Literature's Lost Ground (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1989).

1. Henry Adams, The Education of Henry Adams (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1918), pp. 265, 267.
2. Edmund Wilson, Patriotic Gore (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1962, p. 142

Reading

Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant
http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4367

Frederick Douglass (1817? – 1895) From *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*

The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass (1881, rev. ed. 1892) is not nearly so well known as his first autobiography, The Narrative… (1845), or his second, My Bondage and My Freedom (1855). It is 752 pages long. Its description of slavery are not so direct and powerful. And the descriptions of the later years are often rambling, interrupted by long excerpts from letters and earlier writings. "What we have," one critic has written, "is a verbose and somewhat hackneyed story of a life, written, "is a verbose and somewhat hackneyed story of a life, written by a man of achievement."[1]

Such a judgment may be too harsh, however, For one thing, the Life and Times contains some details about Douglass's early life which he had to omit from his first two autobiographies. Most important is the story of his escape, which is given in the first of the two selections below. It may not be as long and as exciting as the escapes in some other slave autobiographies, but it is still tense, and it shows how easy it might have been for a fugitive slave to be stopped.

Harsh judgments of Life and Times also fail to acknowledge the nature of this kind of autobiography. It was written by "a man of achievement." Less famous men and women simply did not have the materials. Douglass had known John Brown and been one of the first to hear Brown's plans for starting a guerrilla liberation movement. He had known Harriet Beecher Stowe. He had recruited black troops for the Union Army. After the Civil War he had been the nation's symbolic black leader and a minister to Haiti. Life and Times is for these reasons an important historical record and a good example of this kind of autobiography. Finally, as the second selection here illustrates, Douglass was well aware of the ways he was being used by the American whites (or "Caucasians") at a time when race prejudice was once again growing and becoming, in some ways, more patronizing and demeaning. He himself had been attached during the late years of his life for marrying a white woman. In this justification for the last edition of his autobiography, he puts himself on the witness stand and relentlessly catalogues the ignorance and the prying "curiosity of my countrymen." He also has things to say about autobiography which every serious reader of it needs to consider.

1. Houston Baker, The Journey Back: Issues in Black Literature and Criticism (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 44-45

Reading

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave
http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Literature/Douglass/Autobiography/

Lucy Larcom (1824-1893) *Mountain Friends*

"To many, the word "autobiography" implies nothing but conceit and egotism," Larcom wrote in her preface to A New England Girlhood (1889). "But these are not necessarily its characteristics…For does not the whole world, seen and unseen, go into the making up of every human being?"

Such a theory of autobiography perfectly suits the story Larcom tells, which centers on her experiences in the Lowell, Massachusetts, cotton mills.

The mills had been started in 1822 by Francis Cabot Lowell and some associates, harnessing the water power of the Merrimack River and hiring farm girls as their workers. They wished to make the mills into a model of profitable and enlightened Christian enterprise. And for twenty or twenty-five years, until competition forced them to lower wages, the mills were. Anthony Trollope, one of the many foreign visitors, called Lowell an "industrial Utopia."

For Larcom, her Lowell years, approximately 1833-43, were an illustration of communal self-help and self-education. The girls all wanted to improve themselves and did it together. They attended classes and lectures, took music lessons, wrote poetry, and edited magazines. They also enjoyed the mill work, because it was preferable to housework, to which Larcom briefly returned to help her sister and to get relief from the factory's cotton dust. The hours were long, but strictly designated, the workers earned money, and they had more independence, companionship, and stimulation. Housework was respectable and important to Larcom, but Lowell broadened her horizons—among other things, it gave her "Mountain Friends."

"Mountain Friends," the whole of which is given below, is the ninth of the twelve chapters of a New England Girlhood. The beginning of this book tells of her childhood in Beverly, Massachusetts. The end tells of her going to pioneer in Illinois with her sister and brother-in-law and then studying at Monticello Seminary, from which she returned to the East in 1852 to teach at Wheaton Seminary. She later became a very popular poet and essayist.

The book was very well received, and, according to Daniel Dulany Addison, her first biographer, she intended to write a sequel covering her years of teaching, writing, and editing, and also her religious ideas. [1] But it is doubtful that another book could have been so good. The experience at Lowell united her ideals of "the mutual bonds of universal womanhood" and her ideals of autobiography. A later book might have contained more of the piety and Pollyannaish-ness that sometimes mars accounts of this kind, while at the same time laching its sense of close female bonding.

The text below is from A New England Girlhood (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1889). Shirley Marchalonis's The Worlds of Lucy Larcom, 1824-1893 (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1989) is a modern biography. For a stimulating critical article, see Carol Holly,

"Nineteenth-Century Autobiographies of Affiliation," in Paul John Eakin, ed., American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

1. Daniel Dulany Addison, *Lucy Larcom: Life, Letters, and Diary* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1895), p. iii

Reading

A New England Girlhood: Outline from Memory
http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2293/2293-h/2293-h.htm

Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) *How I Served My Apprenticeship*

Among the millionaires of the late nineteenth century, Andrew Carnegie is almost alone in having liked to think of himself as a literary man. He cultivated the company of Mark Twain, Matthew Arnold, and Herbert Spencer. He wrote essays for the North American Review and other magazines, and in 1886 he published a book, Triumphant Democracy, expounding his economic and political ideas. He also liked celebrating himself and the business ethic he lived by. "Attract attention," he advised young men. So, where many of his contemporaries avoided the public eye, Carnegie liked to show off. It might even be argued that his later beneficences endowing 2507 public libraries, financing the Carnegie Institute of Technology, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace—were not merely done out of his belief that great fortunes should be given away, his "gospel of wealth," but out of his love of attention.

In this piece, he gives his life the kind of legendary status that is so strong in autobiographies addressed to children, while also helping to justify his success to himself. For men may lie when they talk to children, but they prefer not to think they do. They tend rather to be all the more certain of what they have said.

Youth's Companion, where the piece appeared in April, 1896, was also a magazine read by adults, as well as by adults reading to their children. Founded in 1829 by Nathaniel Willis, father of Sara P. (Fanny Fern) Willis, it was bought in 1857 by Daniel Sharp Ford, who, by the 1890's, raised its circulation from 4000 to 500,000. Carnegie took the opportunity to proselytize widely and simply for the glory of capitalism, combating the populist and progressive sentiments that had been rising since the depression of 1893. For him, nostalgia about childhood was not enough. He made his childhood into an economics lesson.

For biography, see Joseph F. Wall, Andrew Carnegie (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970; 2d ed., Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), as well as Carnegie's complete Autobiography (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1920).

Reading

Autobiography of Andrew Carnegie
http://www.freeinfosociety.com/media/pdf/4501.pdf

Unit IV – 20th Century Autobiographies

Early 20th Century : Lives in Progress (1900-1935)

In February, 1904, William Dean Howells devoted his popular "Editor's Easy Chair" column in *Harper's Monthly Magazine* to an essay on autobiography, a kind of writing which he thought had been appearing very frequently just then. In October, 1909, and April, 1911, he wrote two more columns on it, each time reflecting more deeply on what it was and what he liked in it. It was, he said, one of the most entertaining kinds of literature-of universal interest and the least likely to be boring. It was the "most democratic province in the republic of letters," because it was open to everyone and a great story was potentially present in everyone's life. It was also a very modern form and, he wrote, "supremely the Christian contribution to the forms of literature," and he mentioned, in particular, Jonathan Edwards' "Personal Narrative" and Franklin's *Autobiography* as the first important American examples. He added, however, that, "Autobiography is a strange world, and there are many sorts of people in it whom the socially or morally sensitive would not like to consort with if they were to meet them in the flesh," (1) thus simultaneously recognizing its diversity and begrudging it a certain freedom from genteel morality. Howells liked autobiographies best when their authors concentrated on their own lives, instead of merely writing memoirs, and when they wrote most sincerely.

That autobiography should have received such attention from the most influential and most respected man of letters in American was a clear sign that it was now a fully recognized literary genre. Howells also wrote several volumes of autobiography himself, further acknowledging its value, as well as his opinion that one might write each time of different aspects of one's self. At almost the same time as he was writing these column pieces, his friends and contemporaries Henry James, Mark Twain, and Henry Adams were writing their great autobiographies, and, in 1909, Anna Robeson Burr published the first book on the subject, *Autobiography, a Critical and Comparative Study.* In 1913, Theodore Roosevelt would publish his *Autobiography,* the first full length autobiography by a president or ex-president since Thomas Jefferson's.

The first period beginning in the late nineteenth century and extending up to the First World War, what historians call the "Age of Reform" or "Progressive Era," would add even more to the richness and significance of American autobiography. The experience of reform-of changing government and society and of changing and being changed oneself-was an inevitable subject for a new kind of confession and conversion narrative. The experience of immigration to America, followed by the learning of new customs and the difficulties of acculturation of assimilation, was another vast subject. Between 1890 and 1910, over thirteen million immigrants arrived in the United States, raising the population to nearly ninety-two million by 1910. All the new technologies of the twentieth century-a comprehensive railroad network, printing presses that now turned out hundreds of thousands of copies of newspapers and magazines in the time once needed to print just thousands, and inventions like the electric streetcar, bicycle, automobile, telephone, and electric light-now visibly demonstrated the progressively increasing power of industrial civilization. There was no going back. The nostalgic autobiographers of Howells' generation could look back in memory to times of frontier piety and simplicity, but the future seemed

concerned only with civilization, technology, and progress. Thus, the men and women who came of age between 1895 and 1920 (and who wrote their autobiographies through the longer period of about 1900-1935) lived "lives in progress." They were lives in motion, lives in which the metaphors of progress and reform wee far more important than they had ever been before, and lives which, to a great degree, they tried to live according to the modern virtues of education, science, and efficiency.

This is not to say that they were all alike. Looking just a the better known autobiographers of this generation, one sees an incredibly diverse group. Jane Addams, Chicago social worker and peace activist. Edith Wharton, well-born New Yorker who became a best-selling novelist. Teddy Roosevelt. Lincoln Steffens and Ida Tarbell, journalists and muckrakers. Frederic C. Howe, reformer and public administrator. S.S. McClure, the founder of one of the major organs of journalistic muckraking, *McClure's Magazine*. Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright, Chicago architects. Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, anarchists. Clarence Darrow, trial lawyer. Helen Keller, educator and advocate of the rights of the blind. Hamlin Garland, prairie farmer and author. Charles Eastman, a Sioux who became a medical doctor and an advocate of Indian rights. Booker T. Washington, the founder of Tuskegee Institute. W.W.B. Du Bois, a founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. William Allen White, newspaper editor from Emporia, Kansas. Immigrants like Mary Antin, Edward Bok, Abraham Cahan, and Jacob Riis. And Indians like Geronimo and Sam Blowsnake, who did not voluntarily write their own stories but whose stories were solicited-Sam Blowsnake's by the young anthropologist Paul Radin and Geronimo's by the journalist S.M. Barrett.

Despite this diversity, these autobiographies had significant common features. All of their protagonists played out the latter part of their lives in the new industrial civilization that they celebrated or criticized. They wrote for newspapers, traveled on Pullman trains and ocean liners, lectured, organized clubs and associations, founded or went to new kinds of social institutions like settlement houses and graduate schools, and vacationed in summer cottages and cabins (to "get away" from these same new institutions). In such activities they were promoting causes and pursuing careers and professions, some of which wee brand new. Indeed one of the features of the new civilization is that it had so many new careers, such as anthropology, sociology, social work, and public administration, while the older professions and businesses like medicine, law, journalism, engineering, teaching, and banking became much more specialized. At the same time, there were hundreds of new problems on which critics and reformers could work, like monopolies, immigration, labor organizing, strikes, juvenile delinquency, "frenzied finance," "the shame of the cities," modern marriage, women's rights, race problems and "the color line," and the conservation of natural resources. Once in such a "career," one was then expected to "progress," a career being by definition a field for consecutive achievement and advancement, as opposed to just a "job" or an "occupation." Equally important, the career or profession usually required special training and a new special emphasis on being scientific. For it was science and the scientific method that underlay the new promise of social progress. Even Geronimo and Sam Blowsnake, who were the victims rather than the beneficiaries of this new civilization, can be located within this picture. The Apache chief Geronimo served his editor S.M. Barrett as a sort of baseline against which to measure the "progress" of other

Americans. Sam Blowsnake, as the unnamed author of the *Autobiography of a Winnebago,* served Paul Radin's anthropological study of the Winnebago tribe.

The selections given below illustrate these features of Progressive Era autobiography in a variety of ways. Jack London's "What Life Means to Me" was written in 1904, at a point when he was rededicating himself to socialism, after his early success as a writer and a period as a college student had given him a glimpse of bourgeois comfort and respectability. The experience of rising out of the working class and then associating with society women, capitalists, and professors has, he says, enabled him to survey civilization more thoroughly, so that he can now write as a disinterested investigator rather than an agitator or someone just jealous of the classes above him. This has also enabled him to see what all the classes have in common: "I saw the naked simplicities of the complicated civilization in which I lived." All men and women must sell themselves "to get food and shelter," he says, claiming to expose the hypocrisy of the upper-class men and women who pretend that they do not buy and sell. His illusions are gone, and he wants to shatter other illusions as well; indeed, he wants to work "shoulder to shoulder" with other socialists to "topple" the old order. But he still "look[s] forward to a time when man shall progress upon something worthier and higher than his stomach…" and he retains a "belief in the nobility and excellence of the human."

London's testimony aimed at reporting on his life as if it were a kind of experiment. His language was not only impassioned but also, in its way, clinical, stripping away deceptions, and he meant to persuade by giving empirical evidence (at least, as he thought of it), rather than by an appeal to higher morals and sentiments. This is another trait of the progressive as autobiographer, and, indeed, Randolph Bourne, another writer of this period, wrote an essay called "The Experimental Life," in which he wrote: "Life is not a campaign of battle, but a laboratory where its possibilities for the enhancement of happiness and the realization of ideals are to be tested and observed." (2) It was in this spirit that Bourne wrote of his own experience as "The Handicapped," not seeking sympathy bur recounting what he had learned as a consequence of growing up handicapped.

John Muir, though from the preceding generation, was also an experimenter, as he explains both in the chapter given here from *The Story of my Boyhood and youth* and in numerous parts of his books about conservation and the Sierra Nevada. As a boy, he was so overworked on his father's Wisconsin farm that he had to arise at 1:00 A.M. in order to have any time to read; so to get himself up he invented the alarm clock and tilting bed that he took to the state fair at Madison Wisconsin, just before starting his college education. Later he undertook every new climb in the Sierra as a challenge to discover more about himself and his beloved mountains. His scientific achievement was the discovery of the glacial origin of the mountain canyons and valleys. His progressive vision was his realization that without legal protection the Yosemite and other valleys would be destroyed by mining. Logging, and other commercial interests. His writing, which was almost all autobiographical, was a means of identifying himself with the wilderness and so promoting conservation.

From Muir's Wisconsin and California to Mary Antin's Boston may seem like a long way, but it is important to note that Muir, too, was an immigrant and that his collected

work, too, might be called *The Promised Land.* Thanks to education and to the eagerness with which they adopted American manners and aspirations, both became assimilated very quickly-though not exactly into the so-called "mainstream" of American society, because both also preserved their distinct kinds of independence. Muir was the solitary mountaineer. Antin upheld a special Emersonian universalism. But in writing autobiographies, in adopting this increasingly popular way of telling their stories and advocating their causes-conservation in Muir's case, racial and religious tolerance in Antin's-they clearly showed that they had become fully active and articulate members of the new civilization.

Writers such as W.E.B. DuBois, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Roderick Seidenberg remained nearer to the fringes of their America, but their lives and writing also show passionate commitment to the ideals of social reform and human progress.

In 1920 when he published *Darkwater,* Du Bois was in the minority of American black leaders, which placed him in the minority of a minority, so to speak, The ideas and programs of Booker T. Washington still dominated the genteel side of American race relations, and lynch mobs dominated the less genteel side. During the Civil War, black troops had been trained mostly as work battalions, and after the war hate groups grew powerful in the Midwest as well as the South. In such an atmosphere, Du Bois' tones of reason and irony and his assemblages of fact and personal testimony were not likely to get a large hearing, but he persisted anyway, just as he had once persisted in getting himself a college and graduate education and a fellowship for further study in Germany. His scholarly studies, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America,* 1638-1870 and *The Philadelphia Negro,* were ample evidence of his faith in reason. Autobiography and the autobiographical essay, furthermore, enabled him to reach beyond scholars to a middle-class audience of people of goodwill from both races. Indeed, American progressives and reformers were overwhelmingly middle-class, despite exceptions like Jack London, and the fact that all these men and women were writing their autobiographies was another sign that autobiography had now become solidly middle-class. But the Negro middle class and the sympathetic white middle class that Du Bois addressed were still small. Du Bois and his allies spoke of black Americans advancing behind the leadership of their "talented tenth," a term and a concept which were, in a way, to anticipate the reality. But for the idea to become reality, the people in it needed to become known, too, and autobiography was a means.

At the very moment in 1919 when Du Bois wrote his autobiographical introduction to *Darkwater,* Roderick Seindenberg was in an army prison, protesting not racial injustice but the war and the necessary agent of large scale war, military conscription. His supporters and future audience were even smaller than Du Bois'. But pacifism had been another expression of the broad progressive temper in the early 1900's, as perhaps best illustrated by William James' lecture-essay calling for "A Moral Equivalent of War." Pre-war pacifists, ranging from Andrew Carnegie to Jane Addams, looked upon war as a barbaric anachronism and thought that reason and progress, as implemented through international agencies like the Hague Court, would eliminate it. The American imperialists like Theodore Roosevelt were more powerful, winning the intense controversy over annexation of the Philippines, but even in 1916, as demonstrated by Woodrow Wilson's election slogan, "He Kept Us Out of

War," there was still strong anti-war sentiment. (3) In April, by only a small remnant of intellectuals, dedicated socialists, and members of little-understood religious sects like the Amish, Mennonites, and Quakers.

Roderick Seidenberg explains how these diverse men came together and led a highly successful work-stoppage at the Army Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. In smuggling out their letters, diaries, and newspaper articles protesting against their treatment, they had also begun using these different kinds of autobiographical writing as propaganda, just as earlier prisoners, slaves, and victims of oppression had done. Yet it was not until 1932 that Seidenberg published the story of his experience. By then, disillusionment with the war had begun to make pacifism socially and intellectually respectable again. The "War to End All Wars" had only produced inflation and economic depression in Europe, followed by depression in America-and disgust over stories of arms manufacturers who had sold weapons to both sides. So pacifists like Seidenberg could find people ready to listen to their experiences. Moreover, telling of the experiences was a way to reintegrate themselves into the larger American society, to break the veil of secrecy or shame or mystery that inevitably surrounded all those who had taken controversial or unpopular positions. No one else could really tell such experiences for them, either. Only prisoners could speak for prisoners, and, conscience being nothing if not individual, each Conscientious Objector had to speak for himself.

Even so, one of the remarkable features of Roderick Seidenberg's essay is the way he speaks for more men than just himself. He uses "we" as often as "I": "We were absolutists." "we were steeled to something beyond ourselves." "We had learned to became fighters, and to fight hard." He praises the variety of men "in our group," and the comradeship among them. Ironically, they are a little American melting pot, a group more diverse and egalitarian than the conscripted army they "refuse to serve." In this way, Seidenberg and his fellow CO's continued to affirm higher American values, even though once accused of cowardice and disloyalty. From the fringe-what some people might even have called a lunatic fringe-he attempted to restore American traditions of freedom, equality and individualism.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, in the two chapters "Love and Marriage" and "The Breakdown," from *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman,* tells a story which at the time seemed to isolated her from other men and women just as decisively as Du Bois and Seidenberg were isolated. Shortly after her marriage to a tender, devoted husband, she became unaccountably depressed. He stayed home and nursed her, yet she became worse. She spent sleepless nights and was feverish, nervous, and hysterical. The birth of a daughter briefly raised her spirits, but then she was depressed again. Finally, after attempts to cure herself by travel and after treatment by Dr. S.W. Mitchell, "the greatest nerve specialist in the country" and the expert on neurasthenia, the disease she supposedly had, she decided on a more radical measure: she decided to get a divorce. This was an almost unimaginable choice at that time (1887), and yet it was the decision that saved Gilman's life. It was also the decision that empowered her to undertake her studies of economics and to take up a life of agitation for fundamental changes in ideas of gender and work. She sought to rationalize and modernize domestic economy, applying progressives' thought to the home. In her short story "The Yellow Wallpaper," she wrote about the same

experience, but stopped short of the divorce and left her fictional character on the brink of madness. That was an effective ending for fiction, but the facts are actually more dramatic. Her decisive, positive, radical change "validated her own decision to write, validated women's intellectual labor in general, and helped, finally, to invalidate neurasthenia as a role option." (4)

"Neurasthenia" was the fashionable disease of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a disease that a great number of the cultural leaders of this period were diagnosed as having. It was, however, a disease with different, often contradictory symptoms-dyspepsia, depression, lack of energy, excitability, insomnia, skin rashes, asthma, and headaches, to name a few-and different cures. It was also attributed to many different forces in American society-industrialization, rapid social change, the influx of millions of immigrants, the decline of older values, urbanization, and the creation of new wealth and greater leisure. As Tom Lutz has shown in *American Nervousness,* it was therefore available to all its sufferers as a way of providing themselves with a crisis, an interlude, or a kind of psychic space in which "to re-explain the world to themselves" (23). It even provided a story, a line of discourse for "refashioning of one's relation to a changing world" (25). Autobiography, because of its traditional structures of conversion, of recording a person's progress from captivity to freedom, from sickness to health, from an old to a new self, was thus a favored form for representing the neurasthenic's experience. Indeed, the more internal and supposedly rare and private the experience, the more it needed the confessional format of autobiography in which to be described. But the socializing and historicizing functions of autobiography also helped the neurasthenic to publicize his or her experience and reconnect with the larger society. Autobiography, we can see, was the neurasthenic American's ideal literary form.

Whether the particular autobiographers of this period were or were not neurasthenic, their concepts of self were heavily influenced by ideas of change, progress, and reform. Words such as "genius," "talent," "virtue," "nature," and "character" were no longer so static, helping people to locate themselves within a finite world. Lives were in progress

Jack London (1876-1916) *What Life Means to Me*

London's conflicting ideals appear in vivid relief in this 1904 autobiographical essay—on one side a Nietzschean worship of individual strength as the agent of progress and on the other side a belief in progress through socialism and class struggle.

London grew up in and around Oakland, California, raiding oyster beds as an "oyster pirate" at age fifteen and in 1893 signing onto the sealer Sophie Sutherland as an able seamen and hunting seals in the Western pacific. Returning to California later that year, he did some newspaper writing, including a prize-winning account of a typhoon off Japan. For a time he roamed the United States as a hobo, and then attended a year of high school and one semester at the University of California at Berkeley, He left college to write professionally, but was unable to sell his work. In 1897, he joined the Klondike gold rush, until scurvy forced him to return home. In 1898 and 1899, he published stories about the Yukon in the Overland Monthly, then truck greater success in 1900 when the Atlantic Monthly published one of his stories and Houghton Mifflin brought out a collection, The Son of the Wolf. From then on, he produced writing of all kinds at an astonishing pace, in all some forty-three volumes.

In 1901, London ran for mayor of Oakland for the Socialist Labor party and began lecturing and propagandizing for socialism. This essay comes out of that effort. He celebrates the toughness of the working class and attacks the hypocrisy and corruption of the ruling class. He also tries to proclaim the oneness of all humanity, but more often in terms of its appetites and baseness than its virtue. Another problem with his approach is that his iconoclasm frequently leads to gross over-simplifications, as in the implicit feminizing of wealth and society and masculinizing of the poor and the workers. Even science and sociology, usually beacons of hope to members of his generation, get knocked down.

London's underlying problem may be that he is too dependent on his personal testimony, for he becomes entangled in the inconsistencies resulting from his celebration of the working class and his celebration, too, of his own rise out of it. Thus he must attack the poor, in giving his motives to become rich, and then emphasize his disillusionment with the rich, to preserve his bond with working men.

In later life, London was less conflicted. His writing provided him with a comfortable income, and in 1907 he set off in his forty-five-foot yacht the Snark to sail around the world. When the trip was cut short by illness, he returned to his magnificent California ranch.

For biographical studies of London, see Joan D. Hedrick, Solitary Comrade: Jack London and his work (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1982) and James Lundquist, Jack London: Adventures, Ideas, and Fiction (New York: Ungar, 1987).

<u>Reading</u>

The Road
http://london.sonoma.edu/Writings/TheRoad/

Randolph Bourne (1886-1918) *The Handicapped*

"Life will have little meaning for me," Bourne writes, "except as I am able to contribute toward some…ideal of social betterment…"So does he show his allegiance to the major intellectual and social movement of his time, Progressivism.

Yet Bourne is different from other progressives like Charlotte Perkins Gilman in having been handicapped. He had a hunchback which was the result of spinal tuberculosis when he was four, and a misshapen face and deformed left ear which were the result of a messy birth, as he called it. He could never participate in Theodore Roosevelt's "robust life" or assume a confident public role in reform movements, as Gilman and so many others did. He was also about a generation younger, and he died at only thirty-two, a victim of the 1918-19 flu epidemic.

In that short life he managed to write an amazing number of essays, letters, book reviews, and sociological studies—a large part of these from a very compelling autobiographical perspective. "Youth," an essay which appeared in the Atlantic Monthly in April, 1912, made him a spokesman for young intellectuals. After graduating from Columbia University in 1913, he spent a year in Europe on a travelling fellowship, and then became a contributing editor of the New Republic. In 1917, he moved to the Seven Arts, for which he wrote a series of powerful essays opposing American participation in the war.

This very early essay was unsigned. It was simply entitled "The Handicapped—By One of Them." Bourne apparently wanted to direct attention away from himself as an individual and towards the common experience of all persons similarly "in the world, but not of the world." Yet the way he gave that experience psychic reality was by talking intimately about him-self. He also, by daring to write it, fought against the lowered expectations and the silence which he says surround the handicapped. Also crucial is his emphases on friends as the keys that help him unlock himself. Readers are tacitly invited to become friends, too, whereupon he becomes more intimate, talking about his childhood, his ideals, and finally to others "who are situated as I am."

In its daring and in it's bursting of conventional genteel reticence, then, this essay does show a new kind of vigor and hope and a new concept of self. More-over, in taking on the paradoxes of how the handicapped are both similar and different from others, it looks forward to a lot of later American autobiography that took on the paradoxes of race, religion, class, and gender.

The text is from The Atlantic Monthly 108 (September1911): 320-29. Bruce Clayton, in Forgotten Prophet: The Life of Randolph Bourne (Baton Rouge: Louisiana Univ. Press, 1984), provides the definitive biography.

<u>Reading</u>

Trans-National America
http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/rbannis1/AIH19th/Bourne.html

Mary Antin (1881-1949) *Initiation*

The Promised Land, which was published in 1912, after being serialized in the Atlantic Monthly in 1911, tells the story of Maryashe Antin's emigration from Polotzk, Russia, to Boston, where she became an outstanding student and a promising American writer. The early chapters describe in detail the privations and injustices of the Pale of "Pale of Settlement" in eastern Russia where Jews were required to live. Men were subject to conscription into the czar's army. Merchants paid protection money to avoid raids by the police. Gentiles and Jews never trusted one another. Education was all but closed to Jewish children, except for the Hebrew lessons and training in the Law given to boys. "A girl was "finished" when she could read her prayers in Hebrew, following the meaning by the aid of the Yiddish translation especially prepared for women. If she could sign her name in Russian, do a little figuring, and write a letter in Yiddish to the parents of her betrothed, she was called wohl gelehrent—well-educated" (111).

The middle part of the book describes her quiet but passionate rebellion against these restrictions and traditions, her family's emigration to America in her early teens, and her rapid and joyful casting off of her early identity as "Mashke" of Polotzk to become "Mary Antin" of Boston. "With our despised immigrant clothing we shed also our impossible Hebrew names," she says, speaking for her parents, brother, and two sisters (187), just before she started school. School, as this chapter explains, was the most welcome part of her conversion. She was such a good student that she went on to the prestigious Girls' Latin School, where she met the daughters of Boston's social and intellectual elite, and made plans to go to Radcliffe. Instead, she married a biologist she had met through the Natural History Club at the Hale Settlement House in Boston and went with him to New York, where she continued her education at Barnard.

The Promised Land is therefore a monument to the immigrant's successful assimilation, willing and welcomed, and it makes a fascinating comparison to other immigrant autobiographies. The story, some readers will think is too happy to be true. They may also object to her smugness. Yet she was not ashamed of her past, and she even attached a Yiddish-English glossary to the end of the book so that American readers could better understand Jewish customs. In 1941, with Hitler invading Russia, she published an essay expressing both her universalism and her solidarity with "my people." "I can no more return to the Jewish fold than I can return to my mother's womb: neither can I decency continue to enjoy my accidental personal immunity from the penalties of being a Jew in a time of virulent anti-Semitism."[1] She had become a kind of latter-day Transcendentalist, and saw the universalism of all great religions as having their political fulfillment in democracy.

The whole of "Initiation," Chapter 10 in the Promised Land, is given below. There is no biography of Mary Antin, but there is a brief biographical introduction by Oscar Handlin in a reprint of The Promised Land (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969). Studies in American Jewish Literature 5 (1986): 29-53 has articles on Antin by Richard Tuerk, Steven J. Rubin, and Evelyn Avery.

“House of the One Father,” Common Ground 1, no. 3 (Spring 1941):41.

Reading

The Promised Land
http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/antin/land/land.html

John Muir (1838-1914) *The World and the University*

John Muir is best known as the naturalist whose writings on Yosemite and fiery advocacy of a national forest reserve policy ignited public support for the early conservation movement. But this chapter from his autobiography of his childhood is very far from polemic. We are not even aware of the Civil War, which was in progress when he was in college. Instead, the young Muir encounters only sunny optimism and unquestioning faith in the power of learning and invention to improve life, as typified by the open-hearted approval of the Pardeeville townsfolk: "I wish I had that fellow's head. I'd rather have it than the best farm in the State."

Muir was born in Dunbar, Scotland, the third of eight children, and was educated there until the age of eleven, when he, his father, and two other children immigrated to prepare a home for the rest of the family in the wilds of Wisconsin. Muir's father was a strict disciplinarian who required daily memorization of Bible verses and filled Muir's days with the hardest farm world. A voracious reader, Muir continued his own education without formal schooling by rising early each morning (using the bed-clock mechanism described here), and in 1860 entered the University of Wisconsin. He left without a degree in 1863, undertaking botanical walking tours from the central states as far south as the Gulf of Mexico before turning west where he studied Yosemite Valley, Alaska, Nevada, and the Pacific Northwest. Marrying in 1880, he purchased part of his father-in-law's California fruit ranch and ran it so successfully that after 1891 he could devote himself completely to naturalism and travel.

Throughout Muir's account of his education runs an infectious and childlike enthusiasm for invention and progress. Yet the childlikeness is rarely Muir's—rather, it comes from those whom he meets, who are willing to sweep practical considerations aside to accommodate his ingenuity and promise. A train conductor arrives for him to ride on the engine, a ticket-taker at the Wisconsin State Fair waives his admission fee, and then a "dignified gentleman" makes his inventions a central attraction of the fair. At the University of Wisconsin a student encourages him to enroll, assuring him that he can live on a dollar a week. Soon janitors and professors make his room into the stuff of legends. Now that he is free of his father's dark and terrible Calvinism, all is promise and progress. There is even no conflict between Muir's love of nature and his love of machines. He easily moves on, though without a diploma, from the University of Wisconsin to "the University of the Wilderness."

The selection here is from Muir's The Story of My Boyhood and Youth (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1916; reprint, Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1965). There have been several biographies of Muir, beginning with W.F. Bade, The Life and Letters of John Muir (1925).

<u>Reading</u>

Life and Letters of John Muir
http://www.yosemite.ca.us/john_muir_writings/the_life_and_letters_of_john_muir/

W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963) *The Shadow of Years*

W.E.B. Du Bois was a master at writing fierce, tough-minded, and yet visionary essays with an autobiographical perspective, a form of literature perfectly suited to his training as a sociologist and to his later work as editor of The Crisis, the journal of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. He helped to found the NAACP in 1909, so as to oppose Booker T. Washington's program of acceptance of menial labor and segregation, and he needed to write articles for The Crisis (and other journals) that combined sociological and historical data with the shocking and illustrative material of personal testimony. In that way he could both inform his biracial audiences and also give his readers a perspective they never got from white writers.

Darkwater (1920), subtitled Voices from Within the Veil, has many such essays, like "The Servant in the House," where he begins an attack on job discrimination by recalling his own refusal to accept service jobs, except for one summer at a hotel in Minnesota, and "Of Beauty and Death," where he gives his own experience of Jim Crow waiting rooms and railroad cars, as part of a build-up to attacking discrimination in the army in 1917-19. His anger, irony, and shifts of frame and context anticipate the essays of James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, and other writers.

"The Shadow of Years," which is the introduction to Darkwater, is the most autobiographical of these essays, being about his family, childhood, and education—and the least polemical. But he still jabs at his white readers and shares laughs with his black ones. Through the entire account, he remains both disgusted by America and hopeful, telling of "Days of Disillusion" and ages of "Miracles," His progressivism shows up in the facts that the miracles outnumber the disillusions, that he used his comparative good fortune in life in order to help others, and that he worked as a scientist and writer, not an evangelical preacher.

Du Bois published two more autobiographies, Dusk of Dawn (1940) and The Autobiography: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century (1968).Critical Essays on W. E. B. Du Bois, ed. William L. Andrews (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1985), contains analyses of Du Bois and his work.

Reprinted from Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920) by permission of David G. Du Bois.

Reading

The Souls of Black Folks
http://www.bartleby.com/114/

Roderick Seidenberg (1890?-1973) *I Refuse to Serve*

"I Refuse to Serve" (1932) is a personal testimony against military conscription by a World War I conscientious objector. It was published in H.L. Mencken's and George Jean Nathan's American Mercury at just the moment in the 1930's when deepening economic depression was creating widespread belief that the war had not "made the world safe for democracy" but mainly enriched arms makers. Pacifists, therefore, who had once been labeled traitors and been imprisoned and tortured, were now considered prophets. Meanwhile, Gandhi's massive demonstrations in India, such as the "Salt Satyagraha" of 1930, gave hopes that what William James had called "A moral equivalent of war" might indeed be found.

In 1917, the draft law required all men to register and be inducted into the army, after which they were to be given noncombatant service in the medical or supply corps, if their objections to war were considered sincere and based upon membership in recognized pacifist churches. But some, such as Roderick Seidenberg, who had been a friend of Randolph Bourne's at Columbia University, were political and philosophic objectors and also would not accept any form of noncombatant or alternative service. They, along with some religious objectors, became so-called "absolutists" and were all sent eventually to Fort Leavenworth. There, as Seidenberg describes, they pitted their wills against the army's, going on hunger strikes and refusing to work, organizing other prisoners, and secretly sending out reports on prison conditions. By January, 1919, outside journalists were also criticizing the army for continuing to enforce harsh wartime sentences. The result was that when the conscientious objectors turned a prison riot into a nonviolent work stoppage, the army negotiated. This was a major victory for the CO's and their methods, and it anticipated in some ways the nonviolent tactics of both the 1930's labor movement and the 1960's civil rights movement.

A sense of pride and a sense of comradeship thus qualify and even overpower Seidenberg's bitterness. He and his fellow CO's amply proved that they were not cowards and slackers. As autobiographer, he also wants to advertise the CO's' discipline, solidarity, and success in attracting support from the other prisoners. Methods that persuaded both them and the army might persuade readers, too. At the same time he does not want to make pacifists into saints.

After the war, Seidenberg became an architect, and in the 1930's he wrote the segments on architecture for the State Guides series that had been underwritten by Roosevelt's Work Projects Administration (W.P.A.). He also wrote books on social theory, Post historic Man, an Inquiry (1950) and Anatomy of the Future (1961).

The text of "I Refuse to Serve" Is taken from The American Mercury 25 (January 1932): 91-99. For a more extensive history of conscientious objectors in World War I, see Norman Thomas, The Conscientious Objector in America (New York: B. Huebsch, 1923), which was republished as Is Conscience a Crime? (New York: Vanguard, 1927). On CO autobiography, see Robert F. Sayre, "Rhetorical Defenses: the Autobiographies of World War I Conscientious Objectors," Auto/Biography Studies 7 (Spring 1992): 62-81. There is

no biography of Roderick Seidenberg. Some additional information can be found in his obituary in the New York Times, August 28, 1973, p. 38.

Reading

War Resistance
http://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/8w9h3k

Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935) *Love and Marriage and The Breakdown*

Rediscovered in the 1970's and '80s by the women's movement, Charlotte Perkins Gilman is now widely known, especially for the autobiographical short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" and the utopian novel Herland. But from the mid-1890's to World War I she was famous as a feminist and socialist, a popular lecturer, and the author of Women and Economics (1898) and many other books. After World War I, however, her progressive economic and political views went out of fashion, and she turned to writing her autobiography, completing all but the last chapter of it by 1925.

"Love and Marriage" and "The Breakdown" are chapters 7 and 8 of The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: An Autobiography. They appear near the end of the first third and constitute the crisis of the book…and of the life, as here told.

In the opening of The Living, Gilman proudly tells of her New England ancestors (including Lyman Beecher, father of Harriet Beecher Stowe, who was her father's grandfather) and their traditions of self-discipline, intellectual achievement, and service to others. Less enviable is the story of how, when her father learned that her mother could bear no more children, he left her and went to California. Mrs. Perkins, Charlotte, and an older brother Thomas were so poor they had to move nineteen times in eighteen years, mostly living with relatives. Stung by her husband's rejection, Mrs. Perkins determined to harden her daughter against a similar fate and so gave Charlotte no expressions of affection. From these combined inspirations and deprivations the adolescent daughter became a paragon of self-denial, hard work, physical health, and dedication to service. She also studied at the Rhode Island School for Design, and in May, 1884, married another artist, the handsome Charles Walter Stetson.

The experiences described below are first described in "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892), and the two accounts make a fascinating comparison between "fiction" and the "factual fiction" that is autobiography. For additional interest, they can be compared to Gilman's "Why I wrote "The Yellow Wallpaper"" (1913).

Neither the "fictional" version nor the account of its writing mention her divorce from Stetson, which was the solution chosen in "The Breakdown." For where "The Yellow Wallpaper" is a story of descent into insanity, of a woman driven mad by perverse kindness, "The Breakdown" is the story of her clinging to her sanity and independence and bravely disobeying her doctor (the famous S. Weir Mitchell). The reasons for these different versions—and the different kinds of truth they possess—could be discussed at length. Clearly, Charlotte Stetson in 1891-92 and Charlotte Gilman in the 1920's were very different women, who, conceived of themselves in very different ways. Another factor behind the different versions involves attitudes towards divorce, for fictional characters rarely had recourse to it. But a divorce like the Stetsons', with "no quarrel, no blame…never an unkind word between us, unbroken mutual affection," would have been unthinkable in both art and life. This rationally chosen, unconventional, and humane choice in a way epitomizes the progressive temper.

In April, 1894, the divorce was finally granted. (It was difficult to obtain because there were bi acceptable grounds for divorce as it was legally defined.) Within a year, Mr. Stetson married Grace Channing, Charlottes' life-long friend, and the three remained close friends, raising their daughter (Grace's stepdaughter) Katherine Beecher Stetson together. In 1900, Charlotte married George Houghton Gilman, her first cousin, and the close relationship continued; with the two couples sometimes living in the brief final chapter of The Living tells that in 1932 Mrs. Gilman learned that she had breast cancer. But ,not wanting to suffer a long period of mortal pain, uselessness to society, and trouble and expense to friends and family, she prepared to take her own life, which she did, an editorial note explains, on August 17, 1935. Rationalists and progressive, independent crusader against debilitating social conventions, she had thus come as close as any autobiographer can come to including in her story her own death.

This selection is taken from The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: An Autobiography (New York: Appleton-Century Co., 1935; reprint, Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1990). For additional reading, see Ann J Lane, to Herland and Beyond: The Life and Work of Charlotte Perkins Gilman (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990). For background on neurasthenia, see Tom Lutz, American Nervousness, 1903: An Anecdotal History (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991).

Reading

Our Androcentric Culture
http://digital.library.upenn.edu/webbin/gutbook/lookup?num=3015

Mid 20th Centur: Experimental Lives (1920-1960)

"One generation abandons the enterprises of another like stranded vessels." (1)

These words of Henry David Thoreau aptly express the way in which the generation of Americans that came of age during and after the First World War quickly gave up, at least for a time, their predecessor's work and faith and the concepts of self related to these. The millions of dead, the bungling and arrogance of he military, and the nightmare-world of muddy trenches and devastated no-man's lands made such "enterprises" as progress, reform, and social betterment seem like jokes. As Paul Fussell wrote in *The Great War and Modern Memory*, a study both of the literature of that war and its impact on the twentieth-century mind, World War I "was a hideous embarrassment to the prevailing Meliorist myth which had dominated the public consciousness for a century." (2) The heroism and romance, the sense of purpose, and the accompanying sense of a self in progress were swept away in the withering winds of irony and despair.

Fittingly, therefore, the most esteemed autobiography of the immediate post-war era was not another officer's memoir or a prisoner's story expressing faith and determination. It was *The Education of Henry Adams*. Adams had died in March, 1918, at the age of eighty. The *Education* was published in September, from a corrected copy of the private printing of 1907, and it shortly became a best-seller. It was also eagerly read and admired by Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Sherwood Anderson, and many other writers and intellectuals of the new generation. Adams' corrosive ironies, his cosmic despair, and his sense of personal and cultural failure were all appropriate to the moods of what was to become known as "the lost generation."

"You are all a lost generation." Hemingway used these words as one of the epigraphs to *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), attributing them to Gertrude Stein. In *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933), she in turn attributed the term to a French automobile mechanic, who had been talking of his poorly trained apprentices. But the term caught on, in any case, because it seemed to express the hedonistic (and also slightly romanticized) despair of post war youth. It also spread with the success of Hemingway's autobiographical novel, which described the prematurely world-weary American expatriates Hemingway had known in Europe. Five or six years before, in 1920, F. Scott Fitzgerald's autobiographical first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, had been an equal sensation. Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913), and Proust's multi-volume *Remembrance of Things Past* also came o be known to Americans of the 1920's as models of autobiographical fiction. Indeed, autobiographical fiction became the favored form of the "lost generation," and many of its practitioners strove for such a level of achievement in it that most of them strongly resented having their work thought of as autobiography. Even Thomas Wolfe, whose long novels, beginning with *Look Homeward, Angel* (1929), became notorious for their subjectivity and self-absorption, resented being called an autobiographical writer.

The autobiographical novel, for this generation, was a work of art rather than referential history. Names were changed (usually) and characters were meant to be representatives of types of individuals rather than being the specific individuals they were

modeled on. Incidents could be changed and invented, to be made more illustrative or dramatic. Dialogue could also be paraphrased or invented, and all language was expected to be more poetic and creative. It was heightened, polished, and made more economical, as had been done by Flaubert and Conrad, two admired predecessors. But perhaps the greatest difference between autobiography and the autobiographical novel was simply that the protagonist of the novel was more likely to be a young, unrecognized, non-heroic figure, such as Hemingway's Jake Barnes, than an older person who was famous and had played a recognized and active part in the world. The fictional protagonist was primarily a spectator, looking upon the world ironically and critically, like the artist. He even looked at himself that way, striving to be objective and without self-pity. Thus, though Jake Barnes once had been a soldier, he was now a wounded veteran who did not talk about the war or his wounds. Self-pity, sentimentality, and heroism were out. And even if the protagonist wanted to be the supreme artist, like Joyce's Stephen Daedalus, his ultimate goal was to stand outside his creation, "like the God of the creation, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his finger nails." (3)

"Autobiography," therefore, came to be regarded as a pathetically inferior kind of writing. On the one hand, it was childish, something "anyone can write," as Gertrude Stein said, and likely to be boring, self-indulgent, and formless. On the other hand, it was identified with older, famous people ex-presidents wives like Mrs. Taft and Mrs. Wilson (who published their autobiographies in 1914 and 1939), retired preachers and missionaries, avuncular old Benjamin Franklin (who was mercilessly ridiculed by D.H. Lawrence in *Studies in Classic American Literature*, 1923, and William Carlos Williams in *In the American Grain,* 1926). It was also identified with the very reformers and progressives the new generation had abandoned. Calling a book an autobiography or autobiographical was almost to patronize it, and, conversely, all good writing even autobiographies, had to be exempted from the category. For example, when Ezra Pound wrote an essay on Henry James and wished to praise *A Small Boy and Others,* he said it was not really autobiography.(4)

These attitudes of the young American modernists were not necessarily the attitudes of the public. In 1921, Hamlin Garland received the Pulitzer Prize for *A Daughter of the Middle Border,* the sequel to his popular *A Son of the Middle Border* (1917). In 1926, he published a children's edition of his earlier "novel" *Boy Life on the Prairie* (1899), now calling it an autobiography. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* was a regular title on school reading lists. College literature courses included Victorian classics like *The Autobiography of John Stuart Mill* and began to include "new" American classics like *Walden*. Lesser-known, earlier autobiographies continued to have their many readers, including really loyal readers who regarded the authors as true heroes and notable writers. Joshua Slocum, the first solitary circumnavigator and author of *Sailing Alone Around the World* (1900), remained a patron saint of sailing writers, and his name was eventually taken by the Slocum Society, the association of single-handed ocean sailors. Thoreau had dozens of imitators, including Henry Beston in *The Outermost House* (1949). But the young modernists scorn for autobiography meant that little original or experimental work would be done in it, or done in it and bear the name.

As we have been suggesting, however, the autobiographical novel must be seen historically as the genre of personal narrative I which the young modernists primarily chose to work. The very fact that they were young and were not famous prior to their writing made the writing of "fiction" more feasible and acceptable. It was less egotistical (at least on the surface). It was more representational, being about "typical" and "realistic" and "universal" experiences like growing up, going to war, or being in love, and so more intimate. The novel was a realistic genre. For this reason, some autobiographical novels and short stories definitely being in any broad history of autobiography and concepts of self.

Moreover, the very fact that so many young modernists experimented in life as well as fiction, doing unorthodox, independent, or rebellious things, insured that some of them would, sooner or later, turn to more explicit kinds of autobiography in order to tell new stories, and that they would, thus, alter the form itself.

One early example was E.E. Cummings, who, like a number of other Americans, had been a volunteer ambulance driver with the French army. His *The Enormous Room* (1922) tells the story of his and a friend's arrest and their confinement in filthy French prisons for supposedly writing treasonous letters. Refusing to pity himself, while also satirizing French and American officials, Cummings treats the experience as a modern Pilgrim's Progress. His fellow prisoners are "Delectable Mountains," a heterogenous and rebellious group who all refuse to submit to prison discipline and so represent the causes of freedom and individuality against the authoritarian state. Although few of his contemporaries were as anarchistic as Cummings, *The Enormous Room*, does illustrate their general questioning not only of the state but of civilization itself. In "the enormous room," one day is no different from another, and time stands still, a proposition that thoroughly undercuts the old Victorian possibilities of progress and progressivism, which must take place in time. The prisoners, even if all very different from each other, are alike in their basic human needs and their capacity to bore or inspire or amuse. This undercuts ideas of the superior man's duties regarding his inferiors and dependents, another important self-concept among the Progressives. Finally, in Cumming's prison, the comforts of life are no longer the gratifications of work and the luxuries of ocean liners and Pullman trains but the minimal pleasures of food, warmth, and a bath.

Another example of the explicitly autobiographical modernist was Anais Nin, who began writing her diaries at the age of eleven, and who continued because of her modernist awareness that "memory interfered and intercepted and distorted experience" and because she wanted to see her experience "in terms of a continuous evolution observing all its transformations." The diary also "helped me to make the separation between my real self and the role playing a woman is called upon to do." The diary "kept my other self alive." Another discovery she made was that the diary became "an incentive" to keep her life more interesting, opening herself to new friendships and encouraging her and her friends growth. When she moved back to America at the time of the Second World War, the diary helped her to stay in touch with her earlier self. In all these ways, then, the diary both grew out of her sense of her life as an experiment, as something new and different and to be minutely observed, and become an essential instrument and aid to it. She kept a diary because she experimented, and experimented more boldly because she kept a diary. (5)

Gertrude Stein also brought an extraordinary modern sensibility and modern experience to autobiography. As a student at Radcliffe in the 1890's, she studied with William James and shared his interest in the processes of consciousness. Early experiments with narrative and point of view made her see autobiography as a literary and psychological and social issue, not simply a historical one. She also liked reading autobiographies, especially those of military and colonial leaders, Grant's *Memoirs* being one of her favorites. Meanwhile, her unusual life as lesbian, art collector, and leader of a Paris salon that included many of the American expatriates as well as new European painters like Picasso and Matisse, gave her unique material. One result was *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933), in which she described her own life as if written by her close companion and secretary, Alice B. Toklas. The book was such a success that she went on a lecture tour in the United States, and later wrote *Everybody's Autobiography* (1937) partially as an account of that tour. Wishing, as she said, " to tell what each one is without telling stories," she experimented with doing autobiographies as "portraits" rather than narratives, and wished to go beyond the comparatively traditional techniques she used in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas.*

A rebel of a very different kind was Dorothy Day, author of *The Long Loneliness.* As she tells in its early chapters, her first ambition had been to become a novelist, and for a period in the 1920's she lived in Manhattan and on Staten Island with other young literary bohemians: Allen Tate, Kenneth Burke, Peggy and Malcolm Cowley, John Dos Passos, and an English biologist named Forster Batterham, who became, in effect, her common-law husband. Her first book was an autobiographical novel, *The Eleventh Virgin* (1924). She was also a political radical, having demonstrated for women's rights, and worked for *The Masses.* But as she grew happier in her independence, her love, and her enjoyment of the physical world, she also felt a need to express and share this happiness, which led, to her friends' amazement, to her joining the Catholic Church and to her founding, with the help of her new friend Peter Maurin, the Catholic Worker movement. Beginning with "hospitality houses" for the homeless and unemployed, and then launching the *Catholic Worker* newspaper (an ally and opposite of the Communist *Daily Worker),* the CW movement became a leader in nontraditional American Catholicism. Her second volume of autobiography, *From Union Square to Rome* (1938), describes this conversion. (6) Day and the Catholic Worker attracted other young Catholic intellectuals like Thomas Merton, and later inspired World War II pacifists and objectors to the Vietnam War. *The Long Loneliness* (1952) was a more traditional autobiography in the sense of being about her politics, her religious conversion, and her social activism. Indeed, it is in some respects very similar to Jane Addams' *Twenty Years at Hull House.* But the life-the greater independence, the Catholic radicalism, and her having and raising a baby "out of wedlock," as people of her generation said-was more experimental than Addams' Day and *The Long Loneliness* are of the "lost" generation, not the era of progress and optimism.

The most celebrated autobiographer of the Jazz Age (as he called it) was F. Scott Fitzgerald, whose series of three short confessional essays in *Esquire* in 1936 about his "Crack-Up" was a sobering conclusion to the high-life and extravagence of his life in the 1920's. Fitzgerald, who was also a Catholic, though a lapsed one, turned to the familiar conventions of the conversion narrative in order to tell a secular story with an underlying religious theme. The three essays, "Crack-Up," "Pasting It Together," and "Handle with

Care," use slangy phrases but describe a classic three-stage journey from sin and despair, to conversion, to renewed faith. Adding to the religious nature of the story is the fact that Fitzgerald was trying to speak not just for himself but for his friends, his gereration, and for the whole country. As he had previously been the hero of the Jazz Age, drinking bootleg cocktails and spending lavishly, he now sought to make himself at least a representative, if not the hero, of a sadder, wiser, more conscience-stricken era. "My recent experience parallels the wave of despair that swept the nation when the Boom was over," he says, still maintaining himself as a spokesman for the nation. Such a spokesman serves the underlying religious purpose of uniting people, pulling them back together in a period of doubt. Though hardly as proud and boastful as Ethan Allen, he was also fabricating for himself a new identity, a national identity composed by his expression of national feelings.

The readiness with which many of Fitzgerald's friends both condemned and yet believed his "Crack-Up" essays is further evidence of the low opinion his generation had of autobiography-and of their innocence in reading it. If it was autobiography, then it had to be inferior to the novel, but if it was autobiography, it also must be true. They failed to see his artfulness-his achievement in adapting religious autobiography to his own purposes, and how he was in some ways hiding behind the persona of the reformed, confessing prodigal.

Yet, as the generation matured and its members continued with their unofficial, shared concepts of themselves as pioneers of modernism, experimenting in every art form and experimenting in styles of life, politics, and technology, their autobiographical experimentation continued, too. This is particularly true of the lives and autobiographies of black Americans and other Americans living on the fringes of supposedly "normal" middle-class, white society. As we have already seen, autobiography had long appealed to these Americans because their lives *were* different, and because they wished to express their protest and dissent or seek a way of integrating themselves within the rest of American society. These traditions, or conflicting traditions, continued during this long period from the 1920's through the 1950's.

The great new experience and experiment for black Americans, as for many other Americans in this period was the move from small towns and farms to the city. In 1900, approximately sixty percent of the American population was still rural, a proportion that did not change very much until the First World War. But by 1960, seventy percent of the total American population was still rural, a proportion that did not change very much until the First World War. But by 1960, seventy percent of the total American population and seventy-two percent of black Americans lived in cities. The city that attracted the largest numbers of black Americans was New York, with the result that in the 1920's Harlem became predominantly a black neighborhood and the site of a cultural renaissance. Writers had also come to Harlem- James Weldon Johnson and Zora Neal Hurston from Florida, Claude McKay from the Island of Jamaica, Langston Hughes from Missouri and Pennsylvania-and they joined with musicians and other artists in making it as exciting as other centers of modernism like Paris and Greenwich Village. Beginning in the 1930's, these four writers (and others) also wrote autobiographies of their experiences, adding a new dimension to the traditions of the slave narrative. The emphasis now was less on the oppressions of rural life and more on the excitement (and new oppressions) of urban life, including the experience of migration and transition.

A writer who was somewhat younger than these leaders of the Harlem Rewnaissance and who did not immediately go to New York but to Chicago was Richard Wright. His well-known autobiography *Black Boy* (1945) tells the frightening and courageous story of his childhood in Jackson, Mississippi, his youth in Memphis, Tennessee, and his departure for Chicago. With this emphasis on southern oppression and escape to the North, *Black Boy* recalls the contents and structure of a slave narrative. It is also like some slave-narratives in the occasional exaggeration and borrowing from other men's experiences in order for the author to make his experience seem more dramatic and universal. In this way it also resembles the autobiographical novels of the writers of this generation.(7) A work of Richard Wright which is not so well known is *American Hunger* (1977), which tells the further story of his experiences in Chicago after leaving the South, including his membership in the Communist Party. Reading *American Hunger*, one realizes how Wright continued to try new political and artistic experiments-and became disillusioned by them and by America in general.

It should be added that Wright's adventures with the Communist Party were not at all unusual. Many writers, artists, actors, film makers, and other Americans of the 1930's and early 1940's were drawn to it. Lincoln Steffens, who had been one of the first to observe the results of the Communists Revolution, returned from the Soviet Union in 1919 with the exciting report, "I have seen the future and it works!" But with the Moscow trials and Hitler-Stalin pact of the late 1930's, communism became a fallen idol, and accounts of people's disillusionment with it became a prominent subgenre of autobiography, not only in America but in Europe as well. Parts of Lillian Hellman's autobiographies, such as *Pentimento* and *An Unfinished Woman,* offer late examples of the genre. The confessions of the ex-communist, some of which, like Whitaker Chambers' *Witness* (1952), were sensational and contributed to (or stemmed from) the furious anti-communism of the 1950's were a fairly traditional autobiographical genre with a new content.

A radical, experimental, angry autobiographer who did not turn to communism was James Agee, author of *Let us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941) and the autobiographical novels *The Morning Watch* (1951) and *A Death In The Family* (1957). Agee, a younger than Richard Wright, was also from the South, and his description of the poor white tenant farmers of Alabama in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* complements Wright's description of black life in Mississippi. Wright wrote about his own life; Agee tried to record other lives more effectively and authentically by probing himself and purging himself of condescension. He and his collaborator, the photographer Walker Evans, tried to preserve the dignity of the families they lived with. They did not want them debased into trite, expendable ammunition for political protest, as Agee felt the communists would do. For these reasons-Agee's lyricism, his angry subjectivity, and his collaboration with Walker Evans-*Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* is one of the most experimental instances of autobiographical writing in this (or any other) period. It set a standard in personal journalism that the so-called "new journalists" of the 1960's aspired to.

Even *Black Elk Speaks*, the story of a supposedly very traditional Sioux medicine man, shows some effects of the modernist passion for experiment with new concepts of self. John G. Neihardt, who received and edited Black Elk's story in 1931, was actively looking for a traditional Indian-a figure most earlier friends of Indians had scorned and wanted to

change. The ideal Indian of the Progressive Era had been Charles Eastman, who had become a medical doctor and the husband of the child-poet and missionary, Elaine Goodale. Black Elk's story appealed to the intellecual reaction against ideas of progress and to an interest in what was supposedly more authentic and primitive. Ironically, Black Elk himself, by the time he interviewed Neihardt, had already become a convert to Catholicism and served for many years as a leader among Indian Catholic laymen.(8) Black Elk, it might be said, had been leading an experimental life, too, both in the modernist sense of wanting to reject the past and in a still more profound sense of looking at life as in some way tentative and changeable. In his conversations with Neihardt, he did not disclose much about his Catholicism, and, it appears, by the 1930's he was again more attracted to his earlier Sioux visions and the recovery and preservation of traditional Sioux ceremonies. Also, very few people in the 1930's and 1940's read *Black Elk Speaks*. It was known mainly to anthropologists and to other, modernist defenders of Indian tradidion like John Collier.

What the selections below all have in common then, is their demonstration f how modernism and manifold forms of experiment, in life and in writing, changed concepts of self and definitions of autobiography.

F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940) *The Crack-Up*

When "The Crack-Up" first appeared in Esquire in February, 1936, many of F. Scott Fitzgerald's friends and fellow novelists were disgusted. The Great Depression had put millions of Americans I far more desperate straits than he was in, and he seemed to be whining. Such private confessions also seemed beneath the dignity of a novelist. To make matters worse, he was appearing in an expensive, upper-class men's magazine. "Christ, man, how do you find time in the middle of the general conflagration to worry about all that stuff?" John Dos Passos wrote him. "We're living in one of the damnedest tragic moments in history—if you want to go to pieces I think it's absolutely O.K. but I think you ought to write a first rate novel about it…instead of spilling It in little pieces for Arnold Gingrich (the Esquire publisher)."[1]

In the years since, however, beginning with the book of Fitzgerald's uncollected writings which Edmund Wilson edited and entitled The Crack-Up (1945), the version of his life which Fitzgerald gives here has become a basic part of his legend. It's simple, affecting pieces—early dreams, despair, and resolute stoicism—are classic, recalling hundreds of religious and secular conversion stories. Yet its language is fresh, lean, impudent, and colorful. Many phrases have become almost as familiar as passages In The Great Gatsby.

The assumption behind most readings of these three confessional essays, however-both the favorable and the critical-is the same: In them Fitzgerald was being unusually candid, artless, and personal. He was letting go with "self-revelation." He was writing from deep in "a real dark night of the soul." Liking it or rejecting it thus depends, supposedly, on how one feels about public confessions. "There are always those to whom all self-revelation is contemptible," says the author. But he brashly offends them in order to say what he has to say and reach other people who care.

A more cautious reading of these essays might begin by noting what they leave out. We know now from Fitzgerald biographers that at the point when he began them, in November, 1935, his wife Zelda had had several nervous breakdowns and been in a sequence of mental hospitals. His alcoholism was severe despite his saying that he had "not tasted as much as a glass of beer for six months." And his debts were very high. Yet none of these things is mentioned. Nor does he write about his delays in finishing Tender Is the Night (1934) or complain about his fallen literary popularity. He could, in other words, have written more "self-revelation" than he did.

Instead, with his talk of "not being big enough to play football in college," and "not getting overseas during the war," he seems to be confessing "regrets" and broken dreams that may many other men of his age and class may have had. This is true also of the "grave sentence" his doctor gave him. Even the metaphors, like the cracked plate, his "mortgaging" himself and "over-drawing at his bank," tend to touch many other people's experience and so universalize or disguise his own.

We might therefore ask whose autobiography this really is: his, his generations, or the nation's? We might also ask, as we study the differences between "fiction" and "autobiography," whether Fitzgerald was more self-revelatory here or in a short story like "Babylon Revisited," which was written at about the same time.

The source of the text below is The Crack-Up, edited by Edmund Wilson, and all ellipses are from that edition. There are numerous good Fitzgerald biographies. The fullest is Matthew J. Bruccoli, Some Sort of Epic Grandeur: The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald (New

York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981).

1. John Dos Passos, “A letter from John Dos Passos,” in The Crack-Up, ed. Edmund Wilson, p. 311.

Reading

The Crack-Up
http://www.esquire.com/features/the-crack-up

Gertrude Stein (1874-1946) From *The Gradual Making Of "The Making of Americans"*

The Making of Americans (1925) is Gertrude Stein's last read and most ambitious book, a 925-page novel based in part on the experiences of her and her family in evolving from immigrants into "Americans," It is repetitious, plotless, and chaotic—the consequence of some of Stein's conflicting or unperfected theories of modern fiction. It was written between 1902 and 1911, but waited many ears to be published.

Yet Stein thought so highly of the book as one of the ground-breaking experiments in modern fiction that she lectured about it on her trip to America in 1934-35. Hence this autobiographical lecture-essay about the writing of the book and what she was trying to do in it. Simply stated, her theory was that all human character is essentially expressible in a range of psychological types, types which are basically changeless except as the language in which they are "composed" changes. This language, "the composition in which we live," as she called it in another lecture,[1] comes out most forcibly in the unconscious patterns of ordinary speech—of repetitions, with shifting emphases and meanings, and without description and sequential narrative.

What she does in this essay, therefore, is express her character through her own patterns of speech: her way of asserting something and then repeating it with slight changes of words, word order, and emphasis. She tells how she arrived at her theory and how she attempted to use it, quoting passages from the book to illustrate it.

Such repetitions have made stein seem like an oracle or a jokester, or just made readers ignore her. But when one approaches her style in the right spirit and takes it at the right pace, it becomes subtle and insightful. The sentence in the middle of this selection, "Slowly everyone in continuous repeating, to their minutest variation, comes to be clearer to someone," applies to how the style works. The ensuing sentences about how people understand one another, about history, and about resemblances and differences and how people feel about them are brilliant. They could be seen as representing Stein's theory of autobiography.

The selection below is taken from Lectures in America (New York: Random House, 1935). Stein's source citations of the Making of Americans within the text have been retained as given there. The indispensable book on Stein is Richard Bridgman, Gertrude Stein in Pieces (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970).

1. Stein, "Portraits and Repetition," in Lectures in America, p. 165.

Reading

Three Lives
http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/15408

James Agee (1909-1955) From *Let us Now Praise Famous Men*

James Agee was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, the son of middle-class parents. When his father died in an automobile accident when Agee was six, his mother, who had artistic interests, took over his education, sending him at age ten to St. Andrew's, a boarding school near Sewanee, Tennessee, but moving to Sewanee to be near him. He later went to Phillips Exeter and Harvard College.

On graduating in 1932, during the depression, Agee got a job writing for Fortune magazine, the prosperous new business magazine which pioneered in documentary journalism. Two articles Agee did on the Tennessee Valley Authority, the government's experiment in land reclamation, hydroelectric power, and flood control, won praise from Henry Luce, Fortune's owner. In 1936, Agee and a documentary photographer, Walker Evans, were assigned to do a piece on southern tenant farmers, focusing on the daily life of a supposedly typical farmer and his family.

But Agee found it "curious, not to say obscene and thoroughly terrifying" that a magazine should "pry intimately into the lives of an undefended and appallingly damaged group of human beings." With profit its ultimate motive and neither its editors nor its readers equally exposed or at risk.[1] The article Agee wrote was ten times longer than assigned and was also "too persona;" and "too violent."[2] Agee then got a contract with Harper and Brothers to develop the article into a book to be titled Cotton Tenants: Three Families. But when this manuscript was submitted in 1939, it too was rejected. Agee said he would not make "certain required changes through which it might be less unpalatable to the general reader."[3] Finally, in September, 1941, it was published by Houghton Mifflin, with only the removal of "anglo-saxon monosyllables" that were "illegal in Massachusetts."[4]

What Agee had done was to break the rules of documentary journalism, which held that the author must be a rigorously objective spectator. He had introduced his own feelings—his anger, tenderness, and, as he called it, the full "individual, anti-authoritative human consciousness."[5] In so doing, he exposed himself and his life just as daringly as he exposed the lives of the three families he wrote about. At one point, thinking of himself alone in the Gudger house, he even recalled how as a boy left alone in his grandfather's house he had pryed into forbidden drawers and closets and masturbated on other people's beds. Such self-exposure some critics called distracting, egotistical, and motivated from guilt. But Agee's defense was that uncovering the vulnerable reality of other lives necessitated recognizing his own. He wrote to shock, but also with great respect for human dignity. Significantly, the title of the book is from the forty-fourth chapter of Ecclesiastics, in a song praising the heroes of Israel's past.

The short selection here, entitled "A Country Letter," does not go deeply into Agee's own past, but it describes the setting of the Gudger house with Agee himself as an on-site, introspective observer. He also towards the end imagines himself losing his own "shape and weight and self" and becoming each person in the house, a kind of universal, Whitmanian auto/biographer of every one.

For additional biographical information on Agee, see Victor A. Kramer, James Agee (Boston: Twayne, 1975). The selection here is from Let Us Now Praise Famous Men (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1941).

1. Agee, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, p. 7.
2. William Stott, Documentary Expression and Thirties America (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 262
3. Stott, Documentary Expression, p. 263.
4. Agee, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, pp. 456, xiv.
5. Agee, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, p. xiv.

Reading

Let Us Now Praise Famous Men
http://memory.loc.gov/master/gdc/scdser01/200401/telework/Let%20Us%20now%20Praise%20FamMen.pdf

Richard Wright (1908-1960) From *The God That Failed*

Richard Wright's most famous autobiography, Black Boy (1945), gives a tense and inspiring account of his early life, and yet it is incomplete and misleading in several ways. On one hand, it exaggerates some of the horrors of his southern childhood; on the other, it omits references to some white people who befriended him, to his own stature among groups of black youth, and to the educational advantages he had from people he knew and members of his own family who were school teachers.[1] Moreover, by ending as it does with his departure for the North (and being published just five years after his great literary success Native Son, in 1940). Black Boy conveys the over-simple message that once he had left the South he was less oppressed and his genius bloomed.[2]

A fuller picture of his life and sense of his range as an autobiographer comes from reading his accounts of the rest of his early years which were originally written for a volume called The Horror and the Glory, which was to be published with Black Boy, the two together to be entitled American Hunger or Black Hunger. When Black Boy was published separately, Wright went ahead and published many portions of The Horror and the Glory in magazines and other places.

The first three chapters, parts of which appeared in Mademoiselle, dealt with the early experiences in Chicago. His first job was in a delicatessen where he could not believe that the owner would trust him and that white waitresses would be friendly. Yet when he worked as a janitor in a hospital, the doctors refused to recognize his intelligence. The last three chapters describe his experiences with the Communist Party. These were first told in the August, 1944, Atlantic Monthly ("I Tried to Be a Communist"); then retold in a collection of essays by Wright and five other European and American ex-communists, The God That Failed, edited by Richard Crossman and published by Harper and Row (Wright's publisher) in 1949.

Today The God That Failed is almost forgotten, but in its time it was a corner-strone in the building of an anti-communist, intellectual left. Other contributors were Arthus Koestler, Ignazio Silone, Andre Gide, Louis Fisher, and Stephen Spender—men who were not turncoats or heroes of the right like Whitaker Chambers. The book was assigned in many college courses and promoted Wright as an intellectual as well as a novelist.

The selection here is the last quarter of Wright's essay in The God That Failes. He has already bristled under doctrinaire Party orders and had the humiliating experience of going to New York for a Party writers' conference but not being given a hotel reservation because he was a Negro. So he has announced his resignation, but he continues to be harassed, as represented here. His experience makes an interesting comparison with the chapters on "the Brotherhood" in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man.

Yet disillusionment with the Communist Party is not the only message in American Hunger. One may also sense Wright's despair with all America. Because of its fear, the nation, too, fails to recognize someone who wants to help it.

In 1947, Wright established permanent residence in Paris and went on to become a

leader in organizations of Third World, anti-colonial intellectuals, such as the Bandung, Indonesia, Conference of 1955. He died of a heart attack in Paris in 1960.

The selection below is taken from The God That Failed, ed. Richard Crossman (New York: Harper and Row, 1947). The two major biographies of Wright are Constance Webb, Richard Wright (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1968), and Michel Fabre, The Unfinished Quest of Richard Wright (New York: William Morrow, 1973).

1. For a summary of the exaggerations and omissions in Black Boy, see David L. Dudley, My Father's Shadow: Intergenerational Conflict in African American Men's Autobiography (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), pp. 113-14
2. Michel Fabre, "Afterword," to Richard Wright, American Hunger (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), pp. 139-40
3. "Comrades": Communist Party members. (R.F.S.)

Reading

Black Boy
http://memory.loc.gov/master/gdc/scdser01/200401/telework/Let%20Us%20now%20Praise%20FamMen.pdf

Dorothy Day (1897-1980) *Having a Baby* and *Love Overflows*

Although she has not been canonized by the Church, Dorothy Day has been called a saint by many of her admirers; and as with saints, her behavior was often puzzling to her friends. As the following two chapters from The Long Loneliness (1952) illustrate, her behavior was also not the kind traditional hagiographers celebrated for imitation by the young. Yet, as Day tells it, it has a profound consistency.

The early chapters of The Long Loneliness tell of her childhood in Berkeley and Oakland, California (her father was a sports editor of a San Francisco paper), ending with the great earthquake of 1905 and her memories of the compassion among the victims. After the quake the family moved to Chicago, where Day showed early promise as a writer. She worked her way through the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, and then wrote for socialist papers in New York. She supported numerous radical causes and was arrested in a women's rights demonstration in Washington, D.C. In the 1920's she divided her time between Greenwich Village and a beach house on Staten Island which she shared with Forster Batterham, a British biologist and anarchist who was her common-law husband. She was extremely happy, sexually fulfilled, and artistically productive.

Unlike many religious conversions, therefore, hers did not come about from misery and dissatisfaction. Nor did it lead to a rejection of her political past. She remained an anarchist, pacifist, and advocate of the homeless and oppressed. In fact, the Catholic Worker Houses of Hospitality which she founded in the 1930's with her new friend Peter Maurin (Forster Batterham left her when she joined the church) and which she wrote about in her last volume of autobiography, Loaves and Fishes (1963), became famous examples of direct action.

All these changes and continuities in her life seem epitomized in these two chapters, which tell her overwhelming joy in the birth of her daughter, her decision to have her baptized a Catholic, and her own baptism a year later (in the summer of 1928). Her autobiography is a unique combination of tradition and change, social commitment and religious piety.

Our source is The Long Loneliness (New York: Harper and Row, 1981). The definitive biography of Day is by William Miller, Dorothy Day: A Biography (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982). An excellent study of The Long Loneliness and her other Autobiographies is by June O'Connor, "Dorothy Day as Autobiographer, "Religion 20 (1990): 275-95.

Reading

Memoirs
http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/deliberative-topics/religion-morality-in-public-life/dorothy-day-union-square-speech-6-november-1965/

Anais Nin (1903-1977) From *The Diary of Anais Nin*

Anais Nin (pronounced "anna-ees neen") began her diary in 1914 on a ship from Barcelona to New York. Her mother was a classical singer of aristocratic French and Danish parentage; her father was a Spanish composer and musician. But he was frequently unfaithful and had sent his wife, Anais, and two sons to New York, saying he would join them later. Anais began the diary as a letter to her absent father, whom she loved and admired but feared. It was years before she would see him again.

The diary continued for the rest of her life, finally filling over two hundred manuscript notebooks. It covered her schooling in New York, where her mother turned to giving singing lessons. It chronicled her years in Paris after the First World War, where her husband Hugh Guiler was a banker; her break from him and friendship with Henry Miller; her other friendships and acquaintances with a great number of artists, writers, psychoanalysts, and film-makers; her travels; and her numerous other writings and difficulties in publishing them. For Nin clearly wished fame and success as a novelist and critic (her first book was D.H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study), and once turned to writing erotica in order to support herself and raise money to give to friends. She also had conflicting impulses about the diary, which some friends urged her at times to quit. She wrote of it as being like an appeal to her father, a mirror, a window, a drug addiction, an obsession, and a form of dream and revelation of the unconscious. During the Second World War, simply keeping it safe was a serious problem.

Finally, in 1966, she published the first volume of The Diary of Anais Nin, 1931 – 1934, based on the manuscript volumes 30 to 40. But it was not a word-for-word transcription. Working with an editor, Gunther Stuhlmann, who, she said late, helped her "with the balance" and "structure" of the narrative, so she did not "get lost in the detailed work,"[1] she had cut out approximately half of the material. She also occasionally moved pieces out of the original order of composition, which itself had sometimes been sporadic, revised more or less- heavily, and even wrote things anew. The original material also included letters to her, excerpts from fiction, excerpts from friends' diaries. And copies of book reviews; and these she selected, edited, and moved around as well. The result blurs simple distinctions between diary, autobiography, and fiction. Two critics call it "a journal-novel."[2] Another prefers to treat it as really an autobiography.[3]

Volumes 2-6, taking her from 1934 to 1966, appeared over the next ten years (1967-76), and they were edited along the same lines. Volume 7 (1966-74) appeared in 1980, after Nin's death from cancer in 1977. Between 1978 and 1985, The Early Diary of Anais Nin (1914-31), not edited by Nin, was published in four volumes, "essentially in the form in which it was written."[4] It makes a useful contrast with The Diary, a basic difference being that most entries in it are dated, whereas in the Diary specific dates are dropped and entries are loosely identified only by month and year. Still another version of the diary is in Henry and June: From the Unexpurgated Diary of Anais Nin (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986).

Representing such a massive work in just a few pages of excerpts is practically impossible. But the following passages give an idea of Nin's passions for experiment and

variety, for studying herself as a woman, and for friendships and social intercourse. The description of her costume for the masquerade "to which we would come dressed as our madness" is also stunning. It is a surrealist image of herself and her diary.

The excerpts below are from volumes 2, 3, and 5 of the six-volume Diary of Anais Nin (Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1967-74). Two useful studies of Nin and the diaries are Benjamin Franklin V and Duane Schneider, Anais Nin: An introduction (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1979), and Nancy Scholar, Anais Nin (Boston: Twayne, 1984). Claudia Roth Pierpont's "Sec, Lies, and Thirty-Five Thousand Pages" (The New Yorker 69 (March 1, 1993): 74-90), is a thoughtful attach on her work.

1. Duane Schneider, An Interview with Anais Nin (Athens, OH: Duane Schneider, 1970), p. 10; quoted in Benjamin Franklin V and Duane Schneider, Anais Nin: An Introduction (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1979), p. 170.
2. Franklin and Schneider, Anais Nin, p. 176.
3. Nancy Scholar, Anais Nin (Boston: Twayne, 1984), p. 15ff.
4. John Ferrone, "Editor's Note," in Linotte: The Early Diary of Anais Nin, 1914-1920 (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), p. ix.

Reading

Winter of Artifice
http://archive.org/details/winterofartifice00nina

Late 20th Century : Quests for Identity (1960-)

All autobiography involves a quest for identity: a re-seeing of the past, a reconstruction of the paths that led to the present, a definition of the self, or an attempt to defend the self. Each of these efforts entails, to some degree, a search for the self, in order to present a version of this self to an audience of one's self and others.

Only in the last generation, however, have autobiographers and their readers seemed to become truly aware of how autobiography creates the self. In the 1920's, in his attach on Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, D.H. Lawrence never considered that the *Autobiography* might have been a means Franklin used to examine or create a self. Instead, Lawrence took Franklin's character as something already complete when Franklin wrote. Yet, it is now quite common to regard the *Autobiography* as a means by which Franklin remade and even invented himself: his text is not just a statement of self, but a process of finding and inventing it.

That we have come to see autobiographies this way is reflected in the parallel development and popularization of the word *identity.* According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* the word is derived from *idem,* the Latin for *same,* and in early usage it meant sameness or likeness. It signified the opposite of diversity. In the seventeenth century, it also came to be applied to persons and to the "continuity of personality," "the sameness of a person at alltimes or in all circumstances." In this sense, it commonly referred to internal and essential qualities, and to consciousness, rather than to external features.

During the Second World War, a group of psychiatrists working at a veterans clinic began to use the term "identity crisis" to describe patients who had "lost a sense of personal sameness and historical continuity." Soon Erik Erikson and his associates "recognized the same central disturbance in young people whose sense of confusion is due, rather, to a war within themselves, and in confused rebels and destructive delinquents who war on their society." (1) When Erikson went on to develop his very influential concept of the life cycle, he focused on youth as the period of identity formation. The revolt of youth in the 1960's, Erikson speculated, was caused by changes within western society-changes in technology, culture, and human expectations-which had disrupted how youth (and other people) knew themselves and each other. The affinity between person and culture could be broken when one changed without the other.

Persons and cultures also need change,however; it is how they grow and learn to adapt. This seems particularly true in the United States of the 1960's, when it was finally waking up, or being awakened, to its long-festering racial injustice, its entrenched poverty, and the brutality of the war in Vietnam. In the summer of 1963, over 100,000 people took part in a "March on Washington" to demand the passage of a Civil Rights Act. From 1965 to 1967, there were massive riots I the black ghettos of the cities across the country. Demonstrations and sit-ins against the Vietnam War and in favor of new programs like Black studies occurred at nearly all the major universities. The publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, in 1962, also began to make people aware of the dangers of DDT and other chemicals that had once beenseen as benign and as scientific miracles. Meanwhile, television changed the way people learned about and experienced these changes in the

world. In November, 1963, following the Kennedy assassination, the whole country watched television day and night and saw Jack Ruby, a previously unknown, small nightclub owner, shoot Lee Harvey Oswald, the once unknown assassin. In July, 1969, it watched men land and walk on the moon. Television could almost instantly gain the attention of the whole country, and possibly even the whole world, momentarily uniting it or alarming it. In the process, television made great heroes or villains out of people once as unknown as any of the millions of people in the audience. The age of the instant celebrity had begun.

Spinoffs of the creation of the instant celebrity were the invention of the commissioned autobiography, the publishing of more ghost-written autobiographies, and the "unauthorized biography"- books about such men and women who could capitalize on their quick electronic stardom. In the 1970's for instance, there were autobiographies of the Watergate burglars and White House staff members who planned the burglary. By the 1980's, television (and radio) had also become a standard agency in the promotion of new books, including new, mass-market autobiographies. Authors routinely appeared on local and national talk-shows, morning, noon, and night, to give a quick resume of their books and to recount the emblematic events in their lives that would explain the writing of the book and relate it to the audience's interest and experience.

There are other reasons for this surge in the writing, reading, and talking about autobiographies than just the new media and the related changes in book marketing, however. In a culture that is changing fast and struggling to deal with the conflicts of permanence and change, people are inevitably interested in how other people are handling these conflicts and opportunities, how they are "coping." For this, the writer did not have to have been a Watergate burglar, a hostage in Iran, or an astronaut to have a significant story. Quite the opposite. People were more likely to be interested in things that wee also happening to them-divorce, a drug problem, a weight problem, teenage pregnancy, the loss of a job, a "midlife crisis," alcoholism, retirement, abortion, a change of religion, living with a serious disease, and so on. Autobiographies merged in such cases with self-help books (and were often read by groups of people discussing some common problem). They could also be inspirational and about success, two long-standing traditions in American autobiography. With the nation going through a "national identity crisis," as It was sometimes called, there was inevitable interest I individual identity crises and their endings, sad or happy.

The increasingly frequent use of the word *identity* also seems to have changed its meaning. For some people, the word no longer has its traditional association with sameness but connotes something which is the core or essence of a persons being. It is almost a synonym for self. It also seems, sometimes, to be nudging aside the traditional terms "character" and "personality." *Character* traditionally referred to someones moral worth, or lack of it, and to virtue, although it obviously carried other meanings as well. *Personality* applied more to what is entertaining, or even flashy and distracting. One "turns on the personality," but one does not "turn on character." *Identity* seems more serious than personality, less pretentious and moralistic than character, but still related to one's basic *integrity.* Identity can change and can or must be searched for. It is also something which is usually shared with other people of the same race, culture, or background, as in "black identity," "feminine identity," or "middle-class identity." And this should remind us that

identity, in being shard with others, does have to be more or less the same in all those people, something like a theme with many variations. (2)

These changes in the vocabulary of selfhood are vitally important to the American autobiographies of this current or most recent generation, the autobiographies written from approximately 1960 to 1990. Finding one's identity, in the sense of what is unique and also what is shared, what is permanent but also subject to change, and what is real and yet also in some ways an artifice (a product of culture and history), ad then expressing, explaining, and interpreting it has been the great goal of the best recent autobiographers.

Nobody Knows My Name, the title of James Baldwins book, virtually announces his need to make his name, the designator of his identity, known- known to those who would miss it or misinterpret it or mistake him for someone else. They might miss it because, from arrogance, they had habitually paid no attention to "Negroes" (Baldwins term). Or they might mistake him because when they looked at him they did not see *him* but one of the stereotypes of Negro character which they had acquired from the American past. The title of Ralph Ellisons great novel, *Invisible Man* (1952), announced almost exactly the same problem. The black man in America did not suffer from being "highly visible," as some experts said; he was invisible, operating always from behind a host of masks and shadows of himself. Thus one of the things the autobiographies and autobiographical essays of Baldwin, Ellison, and other black writers of the 1960's and '70's did was to analyze these maskes and try to show the authors in more complexity and depth. They also, on occasion, attempted to defend themselves against the false accusations and misrepresentations which white Americans made about them. As a part of this whole difficult, painful but also liberating process, we might note that the word "Negro" itself gave way to "black" or "Black" and "Afro-American."

A careful reader of Baldwin's "Discovery of What It Means to Be American" will see that his exposure of these stereotypes and misrepresentations generates the intense emotional power of his essay. A "Negro" was somehow not expected to discover what it means to be an American. He was expected to be "only" a Negro, an inferior American. Thus Baldwin aroused his while readers's secret prejudices and fears and kept all his readers uncertain of what role he would play next-the expatriate, the man of letters, the responsible citizen the angry prophet, or something else the reader had never seen before. As a man writing from Paris, he also appropriated some of the status, favorable an unfavorable, of the American expatriates of a generation before. He could talk in a worldly way of French waiters being better than American waiters. He could talk of his friends from different parts of the French capital.

Saying these things and, consequently, manipulating his readers emotional expectations, Baldwin was indeed "discovering what it means to be an American." He was carving out a new identity for himself as American, black American, writer, and prophet. He was using the autobiographical essay to discover his powers and to create who he was.

The autobiographies of Jewish-Americans of this period make an interesting comparision with those of Afro-Americans like Baldwin. Jews, too, faced discrimination by the white Christian majority, but had made much faster progress in overcoming it, as

measured by admissions to elite schools and colleges, access to the professions, good salaries, and houses in suburbs, though they were still barred from many private clubs. Jewish traditions, however, continued to hold great meaning to Jewish Americans. The irony of Abraham Cahan's autobiographical novel, *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917), was that as the hero succeeded in American business and "rose" to become a millionaire, he "fell" as a Jew. At the end of the book he realizes sadly, "My past and present do not comport well"-a lament that has been called "the tragedy of Jewish reconciliation with America." (3) Even Mary Antin's confident integration into American life as described in *The Promised Land*, was later qualified by her writing just at the beginning of World War II that she had to remember her Jewish past and try to preserve solidarity with the Jews still in Russia and Europe. After the war, the horrifying revelations of the Holocause and the establishment of Israel made Jews all the more aaware of their Jewish identity.

Thus, in post-war Jewish-American autobiographies, the conflicts of culture are intense, and the quest for identity is complicated by the recognitions of different interpretations of both "Jewish" and "American." In *A Walker in the City* (1951), the first of Alfred Kazin's three volumes of autobiography, the yound Kazin is just as eager to shed his immigrant past as Mary Antin was. In the next two volumes, *Starting Out in the Thirties* (1965) and *New York Jew* (1978), he is successful, like Levinsky. He also tries harder than Levinskly to make his past and present "comport well." *Starting Out in the Thirties* is full of excitement of becoming a writer and teacher and workin on *On Native Grounds*, his classic study of American literary realism. Kazin kept a certain Jewish sense of being an outsider to American culture, but by playing a leading role in the writing of American literary history, he was also discovering and possessing American culture, defining it for other Americans. This status as both the outsider and the authority seems confirmed in *New York Jew*, where Kazin seems almost to invite the antagonism of the old Gentile establishment. He is now proud of being what they detest. He also does not wish to drop hi ancestral past into the great American melting pot. He wishes to hang on to his particularity just as tenaciously as any descendants of the *Mayflower* who once dreaded a "New York Jew's" entry into "their" colleges or clubs.

"One of the longest journeys in the world," Norman Podhoretz began, in his autobiography *Making It* (1967), "is the journey from Brooklyn to Manhattan-or at least from certain neighborhoods in Brooklyn to certain parts of Manhattan." He added that "I have made that journey." But because of his smugness and brazenness about it, many readers have never felt quite comfortable with him and his story. They further resent his absorption in the literary circles of Columbia University and *Commentary* magazine. Still, Podhoretz seems to speak for a lot of Brooklynites and ex-Brooklynites when he says that as a child he did not think of himself as an American. "I came from Brooklyn, and in Brooklyn there were no Americans; there were Jews and Negroes and Italians and Poles and Irishmen. Americans lived in New England, in the South, in the Midwest: alien people in alien places." (4)

Where Kazin and Podhoretz clung to their ethnic heritage in order, finally, not to identify with those "alien people in alien places," Allen Ginsberg attempted both to celebrate his Jewish past and to universalize it as a piece of all human experience. It was a bold undertaking, but then "Kaddish" is an extraordinary autobiography. It is a poem, first of all,

and therefore a better medium than prose for Ginsbergs extended and seemingly spontaneous lyrical flights. Its models are not other autobiographies but works like Shelly's "Adonais," the Jewish Kaddish, the Buddhist Book of Answers, and Ray Charles' singing.

Nevertheless, his "Kaddish" is full of the particulars of the early twentieth-century Jewish-American immigrant experience. Naomi Ginsberg grew up in Newark, New Jersey, and it was as far from the tenements of Newark to the fashionable streets of Manhattan as it was from Podhoretz's Brooklyn. She was a communist union organizer, who sang hymns and workers' songs, went to union summer camps, and was full of "mad idealism." In this sense,as Ginsberg tells it, her story could have been the story of thousands of people in the early American labor movement. The sad difference is that in 1919 Naomi began to have nervous breakdowns. Later, with the approach of World War II, she saw Hitler, Mussolini, Roosevelt, and the FBI spying on her. Allen, we gather, became her caretaker-the person she would still trust, the person who at just twelve had the responsibility of taking her to a rest home in southern New Jersey, and the person she sometimes seductively flirted with. It was, in turn, Allen who inherited her idealism, her visionary fears and ecstasy, and also her tendencies to madness, as the world defines it. This identification with his mother contributes to the profound autobiographical nature of the poem. Different as they are, the poet and his mother are also so much alike that their stories are fitted together like lock and key. Her message that "The key is in the sunlight at the window" is the eternal mothers message: to come home, to let himself in, to cease being the prodigal ("Get married Allen don't take drugs"), and to know himself by knowing her.

Black and Jewish Americans were not the only ones to seek their identities by reclaiming their racial and cultural heritages in the process defining their relation to the rest of America. One of the most unusual was N. Scott Momaday's quest for Kiowa heritage, recreated in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969) and *The Names* (1976). As he explains in the latter, his father was Kiowa, but he himself had been raised mainly at Jemez Pueblo in New Mexico, where for twenty-five years his parents taught school Later he went to a military school and the University of New Mexico, then took a PH.D. in English at Stanford University in 1963. *The Way to Rainy Mountain* poetically records ajourney from the northern Rocky Mountains out onto the Great Plains and then down to Rainy Mountain in Oklahoma, a journey which follows the historic path of the Kiowa in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Along the way, as it were, Momaday juxtaposes Kiowa legends, as told by his father and his ancestors (and recovered from ethnographic works), with historical material and his own memories and observations. The combination is *original* autobiography in the fullest sense-a search for origins as well as a new and different kind of book. It also serves as a kind of abbreviated Kiowa tribal history and example of Plains Indian experience, thus giving the book an even greater historical interest than usual.

In *The Names*, Momaday told a more particular family history, including the story of his mother Natachee Scott, who was descended from white Tennesseeans. But her name, "Natachee," had come from a great-grandmother who was Cherokee, and this was the ancestor the teen-age girl chose to identify with. "She imagined who she was," wrote Momaday, adding that "this act of imagination was, I believe, among the most important events of my mother's early life, as later the same essential act was to be among the most important of my own." (5) Such a statement epitomizes the role of imagination in modern

ethnic identity quests. Identity, to such an autobiographer, is not given, fixe, and changeless. It is an act of passion, will, and vision working upon the diverse materials of history. These materials of history, moreover, are also viewed as created things, being as they are the results of earlier acts of passion (like sexual union), legal procedures (like marriage), and will or accident (like someones saving the stories, records, or photographs with which the autobiographer works).

Maxine Hong Kingston's "No Name Woman," from *The Woman Warrior,* and Richard Rodriguez's account of his experience with skin color and his definition of machismo, from *Hunger of Memory,* provide further illustrations of modern ethnic identity quests. Kingston's making a fascinating comparison fo Momaday's, because in it, too, identity is a fusion of ancient myth or legend, various kinds of history (some of which are on the verge of legend), and personal memory. Rodriguez's books is a good contrast to Baldwin's, because it deals more with race as a social and economic issue in America and with the more immediate experiences of prejudice. But Rodriguez takes a much more conservative porition than Baldwin did. In fact, before his book was even published, he had announced in various journalistic articles that he opposed bilingual education in schools because he thought it so important for children to be required to learn English as the "public" American language, the language which had enabled him to participate fully in American life. As a very well-educated Mexican-American, he had, in turn, won scholarships to prestigious universities and so did not consider himself as needing the assistance of affirmative action programs.

Rodriguez's articles against bilingual education and affirmative action made him widely sought as a conservative lecturer. His autobiography was in turn, sought as a further statement and explanation of his views, and it vecame hotly controversial. As such, it is a perfect example of the interplay among media, public issues, and autobiography. Yet there are precedents for *Hunger of Memory* as an apologia. Rodriguez insisted that he had been misunderstood and his message oversimplified. He argued that he really opposed affirmative action because it gave unfair advantages to people who did not need help, such as the educated middle class, and deflected attention from the poor and uneducated who needed more special programs like Headstart. His book should, therefore, be read in full, along with the well-reasoned replies that it provoked form other Mexican-Americans. (6)

The Woman Warrior has also been attached. Chinese-Americans have accused Kingston of misrepresenting Chinese-American experience, making her own life over into something exotically "oriental," and distorting Chinese legends. Frank Chin has raised the additional argument that *The Woman Warrior* is untrue to Chinese tradition because autobiography is a peculiarly Christian literary weapn." (7) Indeed, the debate raises questions not only about Chinese-American autobiography but about autobiography in general. (8)

Many other autobiographies have come out of the political controversies of the sixties, seventies, and the eighties. *The Autobiography of Malcom X* (1965) was solicited by publishers after Alex Haley's widely read interview with Malcolm X in *Playboy*. The difficulty with Malcolm X and Black Muslims had in obtaining sympathetic reports from white journalists made a partnership with Haley very valuable, even though Malcolm X at first distrusted him. Ron Kovic's *Born on the Fourth of July* was the account of his service in

Vietnam, his being wounded, and his conversion from a born patriot and believer in the war into an anti-war activist. Kat Millett's *Flying* (1974) was her account of her discovery of herself and her deeper sexuality in the process of becoming a feminist. In *Farewell to Manzanar* (1973), Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston told of her coming of age in an internment camp for Japanese-Americans during World War II. In her essay included here, "Beyond Manzanar," she describes her later conflicts between Japanese and American concepts of womanhood. Her conflicts will be understandable to many other women (and men) caught between cultures and between traditions.

At the same time, earlier American identiy quests which had been ignored or forgotten were rediscovered. *Black Elk Speaks* is now recognized as a classic Native-American autobiography. Yet, between its initial publication in 1932 and the late 1960's, when it began to be read by a few anthopologists, hippies, and young Indians, it had been virtually forgotten. Suddenly, Black Elk's account of his visions and his later finding his role I Oglala Sioux society as a medicine man and healer had enormous appeal. (9)

Some other classic autobiographies rediscovered in this last generation are Harriet E. Wilson's *Our Nig: or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* (1859), Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), Carlos Bulosan's *America is in the Heart* (1943), and Zora Neale Hurston's *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942). In the latter case, Alice Walker took the lead, having discovered Hurston in the course of trying to write a short story about voodoo. Until then, as she says in her autobiographical essay, "looking for Zora," (10) she had never heard of Hurston's work. Once found, her affinities with Hurston were so great that she identified with Hurston on many levels. Hurston became a role-model, a teacher, and an inspiration.

The universal need for such models is surely another reason for the continued and growing popularity of autobiography in the last generation. From its beginnings, autobiography has been written to be used as instruction. But the early religious autobiography was generally much narrower in focus and more inclined to leave out material that might show the subjects faults or have a detrimental effect on the reader. Such selectivity was even more pronounced in didactic, inspirational autobiographies like Lydia Sigourney's *Letters of Life* and Lucy Larcom's *A New England Girlhood.* A reader could turn to them for moral elevation, but not for much consolation or sympathy. Autobiographies such as Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1970) or Patricia Hampl's *A Romantic Education* (1981) represent more of the ups and downs, the disappointments and struggles, and the uncertainties of life. By telling their tales, Angelou and Hampl make the lives of other women in similar times and places easier to live and easier to tell about. Their identity quests help readers to find their own identities.

In the chapter from *Black is a Woman's Color,* bell hooks goes a step further by telling a series of stories which are not just representative or illustrative ones but ones which could be even more central to contemporary culture. The six stories in this provocative chapter have as their subjects the straigtening of hair, the discovering of jazz and poetry, memories of her father's attacks on her mother, her mother's leaving, and her own rebellion against her mother. The stories move from a relatively innocent initiation into black sisterhood to a very dangerous, passionate initiation into our society's conflicts of

authority: the socially accepted nut unjust authority of an abusive father, the inadequate authority. Clearly, this series of stories is more than just hooks own "life" or *bios*. It is what another black woman autobiographer, Audre Lord, called "bio-mythography," an extension of autobiography into a personal-cultural mythology. Autobiography has long had a certain mythic function-think of Franklin's *Autobiography*; primarily, however, an autobiography is *one* persons story, where a myth is *everybody's* story, a story which has either happened to everybody or which everybody shares in. Hooks stories qualify as muth in these senses. Without being a full cultural hero, someone, say, who in slaying a dragon has saved everyone in the village, she has made herself someone around whose story others can tell their stories and talk of their needs for liberation, and its pains and obstacles, thus helping these others to liberate or, as hooks says, "to recover" themselves.

Race and gender are not the only sources of modern identity, however. The true "guardian of identity," Erik Erikson thought, was "*ideology,"* and he italicized the term to give it the widest possible meaning, applying it to any social system that conveyed to its members a faith that "the best people will come to rule and rule will develop the best in people." (11) One of the reasons for identity confusion in modern America, therefore, may actually be that we have so many rival ideologies, yet such an oversimplified dominant public one. That is to say, the dominant modern American ideology of free enterprise, which represents the self-made man rising to "rule" simply by being "best," in the process showering himself and his family with consumer comforts, is one that nearly every American over the age of eighteen has at some time or another found to be a hollow lie or one offering goals that do not satisfy. "Sexist" and "racist" are only the latest epithets directed at it. Its older critics long ago found it selfish, deceitful, and spiritually lacking.

Thus we end this selection with two contemporary American autobiographies that represent yet two more American "ideologies." The first is Wendell Berry's story of his finding "all I need" in his "marginal farm" in Kentucky. It brings to mind Daniel Boone's autobiography, for the "great-great-great-grandfather" of berry's who first settled there in 1803 would have been a contemporary of Boone's. But where Boone was interested in settlements and was as restless and violent as many other Americans of 1800, Berry is interested in *re-settlement,* and there is an enormous difference. Berry tells in this essay (as in many of his other novels, poems, and essays) of the time, work, and thought he has given to correcting the abuses of the restless, violent exploiters of the land. Noo crops on hillsides, such as the early settlers tried to grow. A return to farming with horses, which the later farmers and devlopers had abandoned. And promotion of subsistence, "marginal" farming, even though acknowledging that he also depends on the income from his writing. But he does this not only necause he is ecologically conscious, he does it because he truly loves his land. The land and proper husbanding of it are his ideology, the truest guardian of his identity that he can imagine. His first Kentucky ancestor may have been a contemporary of Boone's, but Berry's ideological ancestors are Jefferson and Thoreau.

Modern autbiographers who are close to Berry are other nature writers and ecologists, even though their own physical turf may be as far away as Anne LaBastille's cabin in the Adirondacks or Edward Abbey's house trailer in Arches National Monument, celebrated in *Desert Solitaire*, or Gary Snyder's homes in the "back country." They all identify with nature and a place, which in turn means that the more they know that place

and the more eloquently they can describe and protect it, the better they can identify themselves.

Another person strongly identified with place is Annie Dillard, who in 1974 became famous almost overnight for *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek.* But unlike Berry, she has not chosen to stay in one place. In the years since *Tinker Creek*, she has lived in many other places, such as Middletown, Connecticut, and Bellingham, Washington. In *An American Childhood,* she celebrated Pittsburgh, a very unlikely place because it is so different from "Tinker Creek" in rural Virginia. But it was the town where she grew up, and it was, therefore, inextricably connected for her with all the awakenings, discoveries, and rebellions of childhood and youth. Her parents and grandparents houses, a friends house in the mountains outside Pittsburgh, the Allegheny, the Monogahela, and the Ohio rivers, the Pittsburgh Pirates, and the outstanding local libraries and museums all contributed to making her who she was.

Something else that Dillard said about writing *An American Childhood* is also very important to the issue of autobiography and identity, however. In a talk that she gave at the New York Public Library shortly before the book was published, she said,

My advice to memoir writers is to embark upon a memoir for the same reason that you would embark on any other book: to fashon a text. Don't hope in a memoir to preserve your memories. If you prize your memories as they are, by all means avoid-eschew-writing a memoir. Because it is in a certain way to lose them. You can't put together a memoir without cannibalizing your own life for parts. The work battens on your memories. And it replaces them. (12)

Not all writers of memoirs and autobiographies might agree with Dillard, but many critics and careful readers of autobiography today would. The text-the words on paper-are not the reality. They are a book, not a life. And they reshape the life- "cannibalizing" it, as Dillard says-until there may be very little of it left. The words on paper also ave an independent force because of the echoes and shades of meaning which they carry from elsewhere, from other books and from other texts of all kinds. Furthermore, traditions of autobiography shape the kinds of texts the author chooses to write, as we have pointed out before.

Do the modern identity quest in autobiography is a complex process. From one point of view, the words make the new life, even though the author chooses the words, being more or less conscious of what words he or she is using and exerting more or less freedom in choosing them. On the other hand, since autobiography is a referential art, the words must also refer to facts, and the facts, in turn have to do with the deeds and events and places that the author-as-actor performed or experienced. And yet these deeds and events and places and memories of them become cannibalized in the writing.

Adapting Dillards metaphor of cannibalism, we might compare the whole process to a kind of food chain. Words eat memoreis, which have grown fat on experience. Experience happens to and is caused by persons. Persons seek their identities and start to write words, which again start eating up memories, changing the identities. The process is also like a food chain in that it is not necessarily a perfect circle. The creatures in it may cross over: new experiences may arise and eat up memoreis before the words even get to them. And all this takes place in a forest we might call Culture, which both sustains and destroys all

the creatures-the words, memories, experiences, persons, and identities-as well as all the little micro-creatures within them. Moreover, the process never stops. We can imaginatively halt it and look at a part of it, but it is ever-moving, and all parts are necessary, all interdependent.

This, then, is the ecology of modern autobiography, in which Americans continue to seek their identities and express their latest concepts of self.

James Baldwin (1924-1990) *The Discovery of What It Means To Be an American*

Born in New York, James Baldwin attended public schools in Harlem and graduated from De Witt Clinton High School in 1942, where he co-edited the school newspaper with Richard Avedon, the future photographer. In his teens he was also a "boy preacher" for several years at the Fireside Pentecostal Assembly.

Moving to Greenwich Village in 1944, he was introduced to Richard Wright, who liked his writing and helped him to win two literary fellowships, and whom he followed, in 1948, to Paris. There he finished Go Tell It on the Mountain (1953); a novel based on the religious experiences of his boyhood, and began to publish a number of powerful personal essays about the race problem in America. Notes of a Native Son (1955) was his first collection of these, Nobody Knows My Name (1961) was his second, and a third, The Fire Next Time (1963), became a best-seller. The essay below was first published in the New York Times Book Review (January 25, 1959) and was later the opening essay in Nobody Knows My Name.

In his essays Bladwin spoke both intimately and analytically about his experiences as a black in America while at the same time insisting on his right and responsibility to speak as any other American and to attack the prejudices that would make him "merely a Negro." He made his personal identity quest a public issue, breaking out of the racial stereotypes that had made him "nameless." Thus in this essay he speaks as both white and black. He identifies with Henry James and the traditions of American artist-exiles and is also "as American as any Texas G.I." Yet he listens to Bessie Smith "to dig back to the way I myself must have spoken when I was a pickaninny."

Baldwin was later attacked by white and black writers. In Advertisements for Myself, Norman Mailer called him too introspective, saying he would never be a great writer till he "smashed the perfumed dome of his ego." Eldridge Cleaver's Soul on Ice attacked him as a homosexual who lacked black pride and was not sufficiently militant. Cleaver and later black writers wished to discover not what it means to be an American but what it means to be black. Both Baldwin and Cleaver had become public figures, however, largely because of brilliant autobiographical essays. The definitive biography is James Campbell, Talking at the Gates: A Life of James Baldwin (New York: Viking, 1991).

Allen Ginsberg (1926-) *Kaddish*

The Kaddish, which means "holy" in Aramaic, refers to any of five different prayers which have been recited in Jewish services for thousands of years. One of these, the Mourner's Kaddish, is a prayer for the bereaved to recite in honor of their loved ones. Two lines of it—"Yisborach, v'yistabach…b'rich hu"—are quoted in Section II of the poem and then translated in lines 1-2 of the "Hymmnn" section. Nevertheless, as this excerpt illustrates, the prayer does not speak of loss, mention the dead, or mention the feelings of the Mourner. It simply praises God as the supreme source of peace, the eternal power and eternal rest.

In the poen "Kaddish," Allen Ginsberg mixes this Jewish tradition with very intimate, painful memories of his mother Naomi Ginsberg's death after years of madness, suicide attempts, and confinements in mental hospitals. He also writes frankly and realistically and sometimes humorously about his own life—his homosexuality, his taking drugs, his rivalry with his brother, his restless travels, his visions, and his ambition to be a great visionary poet. It is possibly the most autobiographical poem Ginsberg has written, and all his work has been autobiographical, as a part of his aesthetic of spontaneity, expressiveness, and energy.

However with the exception of Part II, which, as said in the poem, was written in twenty straight hours, after a night without sleep, the poem was not written quickly. According to Ginsberg's account in "How "Kaddish" Happened," Part IV was written first; then a year later parts I and II; and still later Part V. (He does not mention Part III.)[1] He also waited a year before making a clean draft of the manuscript, fearful that the poem was too long, disorderly, and private—a rather startling thing for Ginsberg the supposedly wild man to admit. But it has since been recognized as a great poem: both ecstatic and controlled, funny and sad, personal and universal.

The text below is from Collected Poems 1947-1980 (New York: Harper and Row, 1984). Barry Miles, Ginsberg: A Biography (New York: Viking, 1989) is the latest biography. Jane Kramer's Allen Ginsberg in America (New York: Random House, 1969) is an invaluable study of the man and the myth. On the Poetry of Allen Ginsberg, ed. Lewis Hyde (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1984) has a rich collection of reviews, essays, and documents.

1. In The Poetics of the New American Poetry, ed. Donald Allen and Warren Tallman (New York: Grove, 1973), pp. 345-47.

N. Scott Momaday (1934-) From *The Way to Rainy Mountain AAnd The Names*

The Way to Rainy Mountain (1969) is a short book that poetically retraces the route of the Kiowa two hundred years ago from the northern Rocky Mountains onto the Great Plains and down to Oklahoma. It is in three parts, "The Setting Out," "The Going On," and "The Closing in," and is framed by a brief "Introduction" and "Epilogue." Within each of the parts the narrative proceeds through the representation of the three different kinds of material: myth, history, and personal memory, distinguished by three different type faces. There are also ink drawings and designs by Al Momaday, Momaday's father.

Thus The Way to Rainy Mountain is in a sense collaborative autobiography, a tradition in Native American personal narrative. Coup stories and hunting stories were often told by several people, with one supporting or adding to what another said, and the tribal histories such as "Winter Counts" were kept by one person, but when they were told, they could be filled out by other people's memories Momaday's collaborators are not only his father but also the old anonymous myth tellers and the other Kiowa he interviewed.

The selection below is the beginning of "Setting Out."

Momaday's The Names (1976) is more like a family scrapbook. It has old family portraits and snapshots with handwritten captions. The material is also more specific to Momaday himself and his family, especially his mother. Head Momaday not first published his novel House Made of Dawn (1968; Pulitzer Prize 1969), The Way to Rainy Mountain, and several other books, there probably would have been no occasion for publishing The Names; nevertheless, the comments on imagination and the reconstruction of his childhood definitions of "Indian" go well beyond the material of the celebrity autobiography.

The texts below are from The Way to Rainy Mountain (New York: Ballantine, 1969) and The Names (New York: Harper and Row, 1976). Matthias Schubnell, N. Scott Momaday: The Cultural and Literary Background (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1985), provides useful biographical information. Ancestral Voices: Conversations with N. Scott Momaday, by Charles L. Woodard (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1989), provides further information.

Maxine Hong Kingston (1940-) *No Name Woman*

Maxine Hong was born in Stockton California, and graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1962. Her father, who had been a poet and calligrapher in China, had immigrated to New York in the 1920's and become part-owner of a laundry. He sent money back to his wife, who used some of it to study medicine and midwifery. In the late 1930's he sent for her and they were finally reunited, after twelve years.

The Woman Warrior (1976) goes way beyond such biographical data as this, however, for it fuses ancient Chinese legends, family history, and personal memory into a new kind of autobiography of consciousness. It fuses these materials as closely together as the growing daughter felt them, until the reader, too, cannot be sure where they meet.

The selection below, the first and shortest of the book's five chapters, is a good example. This chapter is entitled "No Name Woman": it is, as Kingston tells it, a story her mother, Brave Orchid, told about the author's father's sister, who has no name and must never be referred to because she had an illegitimate child. Both internal and external evidence, however ,indicate that this is a proverbial story which Chinese mothers told to their daughters at puberty to warn them against having sex before or outside of marriage. So it isn't "true". Yet if the young Maxing thought it was true and believed in for so many years that it shaped her life, what are we to say?

The later chapters tell more combinations of myth and family memory, or "talk-stories," as the daughter heard them from her mother—stories of a legendary Chinese woman warrior, stories of Brave Orchid's encounters with ghosts while she was a medical student in China, stories of relatives, and stories of Maxine's childhood. In all, the over-arching theme is the power of speech itself—the power of the teller of the "talk-story" to create reality and so fashion an identity for herself.

Kingston's stories also make a fascinating comparison with other stories of first-and second-generation immigrants and all stories that question the nature of identity: whether identity is something immutable and transcendent, whether it is based on action and historical circumstance, or whether it is created in language, narrative, and "talk-story."

Kingston's second volume of autobiography, China Men, was published in 1980. For additional biographical information, see the entry in Contemporary Authors: New Revision Series, vol. 13 (1984), pp. 289-94. There is an excellent critical study of The Woman Warrior in Paul John Eakins's Fictions in Autobiography (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1985)

Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston (1934-) *Beyond Manzanar*

Manzanar, which means “apple orchard” in Spanish, was the name of a large internment camp which the U.S. government built for Japanese and Japanese Americans in World War II. It was in eastern California, in the Owens Valley, on the eastern side of the Sierras. Along with her mother, brothers, and sisters, Jeanne Wakatsuki was taken there in 1942, from their home in Long Beach. Her father, a commercial fisherman, had been arrested earlier and sent to a camp in North Dakota, having been falsely accused of communicating with Japanese submarines off the California coast. They were part of the 110,000 people of Japanese ancestry moved from homes on the West Coast by the War Relocation Authority.

In 1973, assisted by her husband, the writer James Houston, she published a powerful memoir of the experience, Farewell to Manzanar. It tells of the pain and humiliation of the internment, the consequences to her family, her father’s shattered pride and heavy drinking, the makeshift arrangements people made, and the difficulties the family had in starting over again after the war. It also tells of ballet classes, baton twirling, picnics, and other more normal childhood activities. A movie based on the book has been broadcast on television.

This autobiographical essay, which was written in 1978, is both a sequel to the book and an independent exploration of the ambivalences in being an American woman of Japanese descent. On one side is the example of her mother, who, though independent enough to have married for love, fully accepted Japanese ideals of wifely and motherly behavior. On the other side are the ideals of personal fulfillment, not through sacrifice and cooperation, but through self-assertion and competition. The conflict is further complicated because the two sides are internalized and felt in different ways at different ages and in different moods. Friends, brothers, sisters, and children also give conflicting advice and evoke different impulses.

The essay is reprinted from Beyond Manzanar: Views of Asian-American Womanhood (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1985), pp. 7-25. More information about Houston can be found both in Farewell to Manzana and in the essay she wrote for the Gale Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series, vol. 16.

Wendell Berry (1934-) *The Making of a Marginal Farm*

As this autobiographical essay perfectly illustrates, Wendell Berry is both a farmer and a writer, and he seems to allow neither a permanent priority.

He was, as he explains, born in Henry County, Kentucky, and now lives there. In between, he went to the University of Kentucky (A.B., 1956; M.A., 1957) and the writing program at Stanford University. He also taught at Stanford, Georgetown, and New York University, and held a Guggenheim Fellowship in Italy and France. But unlike many distinguished contemporary writers and professors he no longer moves.

Berry is an eloquent advocate of the eighteenth-century Jeffersonian farmer. For him, the small, self-supporting yeoman is independent and the backbone of democracy. He thinks and acts for himself and resists demagoguery. He in turn supports democratic government because it represents and supports him. He is also the best husbandman to the land because he wants it to continue to sustain him and his family.

With these virtues under great pressure from all sides—corporations, universities, city-dwellers, and larger farmers—meanwhile forgotten or turned into slogans and shibboleths, Berry has not only written about them but attempted to prove that a person can still live by them. He also used the standard of the Jeffersonian farmer-intellectual to write harsh and prophetic judgments of modern industrial capitalism, such as The Unsettling of America (1977).

To Berry, therefore, "marginal farming," is not something to eliminate but the very opposite: the wise, just, instructive, environmentally right and socially and aesthetically beneficial way to live. What's more, as he says, in "settling on his place, I began to live in my subject." He "pass(ed) through the surface." The farm became the expression of himself, as he was the caretaker, keeper, defender, and voice of the farm. Yet Berry might also say that this formulation is too fancy, or too neat. He says it better himself: "our reclamation project has been, for me, less a matter of idealism or morality than a kind of self-preservation."

The source of "Making of a Marginal Farm" is Recollected Essays, 1965-1980 (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1981). There is no biography of Berry. The article by Gary Tolliver in the Dictionary of Literary Biography, vol 5 (1980), is authoritative, however, Tolliver also having written his Ph.D. dissertation on Berry (Ohio Univ., 1978). A good critical article is William Merrill Decker's "The Wild, the Divine, and the Human World: Rereading Wendell Berry," North Dakota Quarterly 59 (Spring 1991): 242-58.

Richard Rodriguez (1944-) From *Complexion*

Published in 1982, Hunger of Memory has been a controversial book. Conservatives have liked it for its opposition to affirmative action and bilingual education; the left has objected that, as the exceptionally talented, well-educated young man, Rodriguez does not speak for all Mexican-Americans or member of minorities

In the book, Rodriguez acknowledges his good fortune. His parents aspired to the middle class and sent him and his brother and sisters to good Catholic schools in Sacramento, California. They did not live in a barrio. When Richard's teachers suggested to his parents that he would learn English faster if English were spoken at home, the family obliged. Later, he felt very grateful because "What I needed to learn in school was what I had the right—and the obligation—to speak the public language of los gringos" (19). He became an outstanding student, won a scholarship to Stanford, and did graduate work in English literature at Columbia University, the Warbug Institute in London, and the University of California, Berkeley. At Berkeley in 1975, he then had his pick of jobs at prestigious colleges. Not feeling like a member of a "disadvantaged minority," however, and not approving of affirmative action, which gave "benefits for the relative few because of the absence of the many" (164), he turned them down. Then he says, he retired to an apartment in San Francisco to write "this intellectual autobiography" (175)

As this selection from the chapter "Complexion" shows, Rodriguez was not spared insecurity about his skin color. With his Spanish and Mexican inheritance, he also held different values and different definitions of manhood. The latter part of this short selection is typical of his gentle insistence on explaining misunderstood cultural differences and establishing his individual relationships to them. As he says at the end of Hunger of Memory, reversing the stoicism and insularity of his parents, "I have come to think that there is a place for the deeply personal in public life" (185).

The selection is taken from Hunger of Memory (Boston: David R. Godine, 1982). For further biographical information about Richard Rodriguez, see Contemporary American Authors, vol. 110 (1984), pp. 429-30.

Annie Dillard (1945-) From *An American Childhood*

Annie Dillard's Pilgrim at Tinker Creek (1974) was a book of nature essays and personal meditations based on a year's residence, in 1972, in the Roanoke valley of rural Virginia. It won the Pulitzer Prize and was often compared to Thoreau's Walden.

More extensively autobiographical than Tinker Creek is her an American Childhood (1987), which is about her childhood and adolescence in upper-middle-class Pittsburgh in the prosperous, confident 1950's and early '60s. It is a story of her dawn of memory and consciousness, running on into a very privileged education and self-education. She collects butterflies and classifies rocks and minerals, studies drawing, practices the piano, reads omnivorously, and spends comfortable vacations with her wealthy paternal grandparents on Lake Erie and in Florida. She also rebels against her family's respectable Presbyterian church and the class traditions enshrined in country clubs and private schools. Like other young artists from other cities, she dreams of someday escaping. But Annie Dillard (Dillard was the name of her first husband) also seems grateful for the advantages she had as Annie Doak, eldest daughter of Pam and Frank Doak and big sister to Amy and Molly.

The following untitled chapter balances these joys and frustrations of being brilliant and spontaneous, and troubled and troublesome, in a town which is stuffy but also comforting and nurturing. It is also humorous. But was the humor felt at the time or only seen later?

The escape which Annie Doak did make was to Hollins College in Roanoke, Virginia, where she majored in English and graduated Phi Beta Kappa in 1967.

The selection below is from An American Childhood (New York: Harper and Row, 1988). There is no biography of Dillard. The sketch in the Dictionary of Literary Biography, Yearbook (1980) is informative, however, and the sketch in Contemporary Authors (New Revision Series, vol. 3) has a lengthy survey of reviews of her work.

Bell hooks (c. 1953-) From *Black Is a Woman's Color*

Ain't I A Woman (1981), bell hooks' first book, was a pioneering contribution to black feminism, and it launched her on a prominent career as teacher, author, and lecturer. But in it she said very little about herself, preferring, as she said later, to keep the narrative impersonal and not emphasize her own experiences. The name "bell hooks" (uncapitalized) was a pseudonym.

Since then, however, she was revealed more about herself and her reasons for writing. Her full name is Gloria Jean Watkins. She was born in rural Kentucky and attended segregated schools until her sophomore year of high school She went to Stanford University, worked with other black women at the Berkeley Telephone Office in 1973-74, and then went to graduate school in English at the University of Wisconsin and the University of Southern California, finishing her work at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She has taught English, African American Studies at Oberlin, Yale, and the City College of New York.

Her later work has also become more autobiographical. As a means of over-coming the effects of oppression of black women, she has worked privately and with other women on what she calls "self-recovery," a significant term which simultaneously suggests personal history and personal therapy. A thoughtful reader can see how the chapter below is an example of such an effort. Here, too, however, she writes not only as "I," but also as "we" and "she" and one of the daughters—all ways of generalizing her experiences. These experiences convey much of cultural portent, beginning with her account of hair-straightening, which invites comparisons with the "conk" story in The Autobiography of MLCOM x.

In a short essay called "Writing Autobiography," she has also written about the experience of writing. "I began to think of the work I was doing as both fiction and autobiography," she says, like what "Audre Lorde, in her autobiographically based work Zami, calls bio-mythography."[1] Another revealing comment is that the telling of these stories bough "both a sense of reunion (with the past) and a sense of release." In another essay, "To Gloria, Who Is She: On Using a Pseudonym," she tells of choosing the name "bell hooks" both to honor a great-grandmother on her mother's side and because it evoked a "much that I am not" and had "a strong sound…of a strong woman."[2] We can therefore ask to what degree "Black is a Woman's Color" brings "release," and whether it is be bell or Gloria.

The selection here is the excerpt from "Black Is a Woman's Color" published in Callaloo 12 (1989): 382-88.

1. Bell hooks, Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black (Boston: South End Press, 1989), pp. 157-58
2. Hooks, Talking Back, pp. 160-61

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Thomas Cooley, *Educated Lives: The Rise of Modern Autobiography in America* (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1976), p 3, locates the first appearance of the word *autobiography* in the British *Monthly Review* in 1797. This is earlier than the first usage given in the *Oxford English Dictionary,* which is 1809. Cooley also notes that the first use of the word in the title of an American book was *The Autobiography of Thomas Shepard, The Celebrated Minister of Cambridge, N.E.* (Boston, 1832)-- a title not used by Shepard himself when he wrote the short piece in the 1640's.

2. Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams, ed.* Earnest Samuels (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), pp. 4-5

3. Albert E. Stone, *Autobiographical Occasions and Original Acts* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), p. 12 and

Passim.

4. Herbert Leibowitz, *Fabricating Lives* (New York: Knopf, 1989), p. xxiv

5. Wilhelm Dilthey, *Pattern and Meaning in History*, ed. H.P. Rickman (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), p. 138

6. Karl J. Weintraub, "Autobiography and Historical Consciousness," Critical Inquiry I (1975): 821-48. Also see *The Value of the Individual* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1978).

7. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), pp.133-36.*

8. Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1975), p. 18.

9. Bercovitch, *Origins,*pp. 17-18.

10.Leslie Fiedler, "Images of Walt Whitman," in *Collected Essays of Leslie Fiedler,* vol. I (New York: Stein and Day, 1971), p. 152.

Also see Malcolm Cowley's introduction to *Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass: The First* (1855) *Edition* (New York: Viking,

(1959), p. vii.

11. Adams, *Education*, pp. 512-13.

12. See, for example, Mutlu Konuk Blasing, *The Art of Life: Studies in American Autobiographical Literature* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1977); G. Thomas Couser, *American Autobiography: The Prophetic Mode* (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1979); Albert E. Stone, *Autobiographical Occasions and Original Acts* (Philadelphia: Univ. of

Pennsylvania Press, 1982); Gordon O. Taylor, *Chapters of Experience* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983); William L. Andrews, *To Tell A Free Story: The first Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1986); Sidonie Smith, *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1987);* Ormond Seavey, *Becoming Benjamin Franklin: The Autobiography and the Life* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1988); Joseph Fichtelberg, *The Complex Image: Faith and Method in American Autobiography* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1989); Timothy Dow Adams, *Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1990)

13. Arnold Krupat, "Native American Autobiography," in *American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect,* ed. Paul John Eakin

(Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1991), p. 179. Krupat distinguishes between these "Indian autobiographies" and "autobiographies by Indians," which "are indeed self-written lives," through also with an "element of biculturalism."

14. See Ronald A. Bosco, "Early American Gallows Literature: An Annotated Checklist, "*Resources for American Literary Study 8* (1978): 81-107, and Daniel E. Williams, "Behold a Tragic Scene Strangely Changed into a Theater of Mercy*":* The Structure of Significance of Criminal Conversion Narratives in Early New England," *American Quarterly 38* (Winter 1986): 827-47.

15. Paul John Eakin, "Introduction," in *American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect,* ed. Eakin, p. 12.

PART ONE

1. See Hertha Wong, *Sending My Heart Back Across the Years: Traditions and Innovation in Native American Autobiography* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992), pp. 25-56.

2. *Travels and Works of Captain John Smith,* ed. Edward Arber, intro. By A.G. Bradley, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1910), p. xii.

3. John Seelye, *Prophetic Waters: The River in Early American Life and Literature* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), p. 57

4. William Bradford, *of Plymouth Plantation,* 1620-1647, ed. Francis Murphy (New York: Random House, 1981), p. 18.

5. For a brilliant, extended study of this biography, and the Puritan idea of typology, see Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1975).

6. Daniel B. Shea, "The Prehistory of American Autobiography, " In *American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect,* ed. Paul John Eakin (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1991), p. 32.

7. Richard VanDerBeets, ed., *Held Captive by Indians: Selected Narratives,* 1642-1836 (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1973), pp. xxv-xxvi, 42.

8. See letter from Benjamin Franklin to Peter Collinson, May 9, 1753, in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin,* vol. 4, ed. Leonard W. Labaree et al. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1961), pp. 481-82.

9. Richard VanDerBeets, "The Indian Captivity Narrative as Ritual, " *American Literature* 43 (January 1972): 548-62.

PART TWO

1. William L. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography,* 1760-1865 (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1988), p. 32.

2. Sargent Bush, Jr., "Introduction" to *The Journal of Madam Knight,* in *Journeys in New Worlds: Early American Women's Narratives,* ed. William L. Andrews (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1990), p. 75.

3. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin,* ed. Leonard W. Labaree et al. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 175-76.

4. Labaree et al., ed., *Autobiography of Franklin,* p. 175.

5. Alan Heimert and Perry Miller, *The Great Awakening: Documents Illustrating the Crisis and Its Consequences* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merril, 1967), pp. xxix-xxxv.

6. Labaree et al., ed., *Autobiography of Franklin, pp. 177-78.*

7. Letters from an American Farmer…, ed. Albert E. Stone (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), pp. 71-72.

8. Crevecoeur, *Letters, p. 72*

9. James Cox, *Recovering Literature's Lost Ground: Essays in American Autobiography* (baton Rouge: Louisiana State

Univ. Press, 1989), p.16

10. Labaree et al., *Autobiography of Franklin, p. 43.*

PART THREE

1. Quoted in James M. Cox, *Recovering Literature's Lost Ground* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1989), p. 18, from a letter written by Franklin to James Otis, Thomas Cushing, and Samuel Adams, July, 1771.

2. John C. Dann, ed., *The Revolution Remembered: Eyewitness Accounts of the War for Independence* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980), p. xvii.

3. On the use of familial metaphors in defenses of the Revolution, see Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution against Patriarchal Authority,* 1750-1800 (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982).

4. See especially Daniel Williams, "In Defense of Self: Author and Authority in the Memoirs of Stephen Burroughs, "*Early American Literature 25 (1900): 96-122.*

5. Paul M. Spurlin, *Rousseau in America, 1760-1809* (Tuscaloosa: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1969), p. 98

6. Spurlin, *Rousseau,* p. 99.

7. See Nathaniel Hawthorne, *True Stories from History and Biography* (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 273-74. Also see Herman Melville's amusing attack on Franklin in *Israel Potter.*

8. Annette Kolodny, *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers,* 1630-1860 (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1984), p. 73.

9. For a short history of the *Autobiography of Howard Hughes* affair, see G. Thomas Couser, *Altered Egos: Authority in American Autobiography* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989), pp.3-12. For a discussion of the issues in the *Little Tree* fabrication, see Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Authenticity," or the Lesson of Little Tree," *New York Times Book Review* (November 24, 1991), pp. 1, 26-30.

10.Mary Kelley, *Private Woman, Public Stage* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 111-37.

PART FOUR

1. Lawrence Buell, *Literary Transcendentalism: style and Vision in the American Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1973), p. 268

2. Lawrence Buell, "Autobiography in the American Renaissance," In *American Autobiography; Retrospect and Prospect,* ed. Paul John Eakin (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1991), p. 48.

3. Joyce W. Warren, "Introduction" to Fanny Fern, *Ruth Hall and Other Writings* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1986),

p. xv.

4. Harriet Jacobs, Letter to Amy Post, c. 1852, in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl,* ed. Jean Fagan Yellin (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1987), p.232.

5. Lydia Sigourney, *Letters of Life* (New York: D. Appleton, 1866), p. 325. Further references are given in text.

6. Buell, "Autobiography," p. 60.

PART FIVE

1. Shelby Foote, *The Civil War: A Narrative* (New York: Random House, 1974), p. 1040.

2. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Phillips Bradley (New York: Vintage, 1960), vol. 2, pp. 4, 11.

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8. See Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, “Autobiography as Guided Chinatown Tour? Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* and the Chinese-American Autobiographical Controversy,” in *Multicultural Autobiography,* ed. Payne, pp. 248-79.

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11. Erikson, *Identity,* pp. 133-34.

12. Annie Dillard, “To Fashion a Text,” in *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir,* ed. William Zinsser (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), p. 70.

Appendix : Authors

Adams 1838-1918
Adams, A&J 1744-1818, 1735-1826
Addams 1860-1935
Allen 1738-1789
Angelou 1928-
Antin 1881-1949
Ashbridge 1713-1755
Baldwin 1924-1990
Barnum 1810-1891
Black Elk 1863-1950
Boone/Filson 1734-1820
Bradstreet 1612-1672
Carnegie 1835-1919
Chestnut 1823-1886
Clarke ?-?
Cole 1711-1783
Day 1897-1980
Dillard 1945-
Douglass 1817-1895
Du Bois 1868-1963
Edwards 1703-1758
Emerson 1803-1882
Fern 1811-1872
Fitzgerald 1896-1940
Franklin 1706-1790
Fuller 1810-1850
Gilman 1860-1935
Ginsberg 1926-
Goldman 1869-1940
Goss 1835-1925
Grant 1822-1885
Hawk 1767-1838
Hellman 1905-1984
Hooks
Houston 1934-
Hughes 1902-1967
Hurston 1891-1960
Jacobs 1813-1897
James, H 1843-1916
Jefferson
Kinkaid 1949-
Kinston 1940-

Kirkland 1801-1864
Knight 1666-1727
Larcom 1824-1893
Lee 1783-1849
Lincoln 1809-1865
London 1876-1916
Lorde 1934-1997
Malcolm X 1925-1965
McCarty 1912-1989
Momaday 1934-
Nin 1903-1977
Rodriguez 1944-
Rowlandson 1635-1711
Seidenberg 1890-1973
Sewall 1652-1730
Sigourney 1791-1865
Smith 1580-1631
Stanton 1815-1902
Stein 1874-1946
Thoreau 1817-1862
Twain 1835-1910
Washington 1856-1915
Wharton 1862-1937
Whitman 1819-1892
Woodmason 1720-1776
Wright 1908-1960