

"A PEN IN HIS HAND": A PEN IN HER HAND  
AUTOBIOGRAPHIES BY FEMALE ITINERANT EVANGELISTS  
IN 19TH-CENTURY AMERICA

Elizabeth Elkin Grammer  
Lancaster, Kentucky

B.A., Davidson College, 1985  
M.A., University of Virginia, 1989

A Dissertation Presented to the Graduate  
Faculty of the University of Virginia  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

University of Virginia  
May 1995

David Levin  
A. R. H.  
Susan F.  
Cindy G.  
\_\_\_\_\_

© Copyright by  
Elizabeth Elkin Grammer  
All rights reserved  
May, 1995

## Abstract

This study concerns the autobiographies of seven American women whose lives were profoundly altered by nineteenth-century evangelicalism. Called by God, the itinerant preachers Nancy Towle, Jarena Lee, Zilpha Elaw, Lydia Sexton, Laura Haviland, Julia Foote and Amanda Smith embraced a life of homelessness and thus wandered outside the ideology of domesticity which defined the lives of most women. Defying categories of gender and race which called them to stay in their places, they became objects of suspicion to others and strangers even to themselves. Literally, psychologically, and ideologically, they were "out of place"; it was in the hope of "placing" themselves that they set about writing their autobiographies.

Thus, these narratives offer a revealing view of the autobiographical process, of the tension between self-creation and the cultural construction of identity. Though they desired to be true to their unprecedented experiences, they needed cultural precedents to make sense of their lives and to identify themselves to their critical audiences. They solved this problem by situating themselves within many of the century's prominent discourses. They borrowed and revised the language of home and family to assure readers--and reassure themselves--of their "place" within domestic ideology; they drew upon the language of competitive individualism, quantifying their life work to prove their worth in the

marketplace of salvation; they located themselves within the biblical paradigm of the suffering servant to demonstrate their status within Judeo-Christian history.

Narratives about place and placelessness, these autobiographies remind us that the desire for freedom does not cancel the need to belong. Wandering their culture in search of a map that would show them where they were--and thus who they were--these women write "itinerant" autobiographies, stories of departures but seldom of arrivals, stories in search of their endings and their meanings. Ultimately, these autobiographies serve not so much to explain the lives they describe as to summon up the interpretive communities capable of understanding them. Theirs are, then, stories about gender and genre, about the particular predicament of woman negotiating her identity with a reader and, more broadly, with a culture.



### Acknowledgements

I want to express my gratitude to the many people who have had a "hand" in my own writing. William Andrews read my prospectus and kindly reassured me of the project's scholarly merit. The Bridwell Library of the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University permitted me on several occasions to read a rare copy of Nancy Towle's autobiography. Sue Armentrout at the University of the South was of great help securing interlibrary loans for use in my research. My colleague Woody Register suggested I read the works of Susan Strasser and Robert Wiebe, which proved to be invaluable resources for understanding the quantitative ethic found in these spiritual autobiographies. The late Ted Stirling, also at the University of the South, inspirited me with his sense of humor and thoughtfulness; for his support of my teaching and research, I am eternally grateful.

Randy Nelson and Max Polley at Davidson College are no doubt responsible, indirectly at least, for this interdisciplinary study: stellar professors of literature and religious studies, respectively, they initiated what now appears to be a life-long effort to avoid choosing between the two disciplines. At the University of Virginia, Deborah McDowell has been similarly inspiring; besides reading these chapters with remarkable care, she gave me the liberating knowledge that all I needed to begin this project were questions, not answers. Alan Howard, Susan Fraiman, and Cindy

Aron also read the dissertation and made invaluable suggestions. My director, David Levin, generously offered to read these pages even after it appeared that I wasn't even going to begin writing them before his retirement. He is, as so many of his former students have remarked, an "exemplary elder." For his close readings of these chapters (the matter and manner), for his inexhaustible reserves of patience, for his words of encouragement, and for his many kindnesses over the last eight years--not the least of which was going 75 miles out of his way to visit me and my husband-to-be two days before our wedding--for all these and much more I thank him. He has been a dear friend and mentor.

Lastly, this dissertation would not have been possible were it not for the love and support of my family. My parents encouraged my childhood love of reading and sacrificed much to send me to three remarkable institutions where that love blossomed into my life's work. My husband, John, generously shared his knowledge of American literature as I prepared for my oral exams and as I wrote this dissertation; he spent many a lunch and dinner listening to and commenting on the ideas that eventually found their way into these pages; he read and reread drafts of each chapter, saving me from countless logical and stylistic embarrassments. For his willingness to sacrifice his own work, his leisure time--even his sleep--I am forever indebted. His involvement in this project was never, however, solely of an academic nature. His constant and

abiding love sustained me, as always, during the writing of this dissertation. He is, and forever will be, my best friend and soul-mate. He has blessed my life and for that I thank God.

And last, but not least, I thank Porgy and Bess, my Welsh Corgis; their generous lickings, frequent interruptions, and vociferous barking kept me sane these last three years. Perhaps now they will get the walks they deserve.

## Contents

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| An Introduction:  | 1   |
| "Some Wild Visions": The Spiritual Autobiographies<br>of 19th-Century Women Preachers   |     |
| Chapter 1:  | 40  |
| "Breaking up Housekeeping":<br>Evangelical Women Autobiographers and Domesticity  |     |
| Chapter 2:  | 97  |
| "Feverish restlessness and mighty movement":<br>Female Evangelists in the Marketplace of Salvation                              |     |
| Chapter 3:  | 147 |
| Singularity and the Uses of Opposition  |     |
| Chapter 4:  | 214 |
| "Strangers in a Strange Land":<br>Evangelical Women Writers and the Form of Autobiography                                       |     |
| An Afterword:   | 262 |
| The Call of the Preachers: The Cry of the Faithful<br>Evangelical Women Writers and the Search for an<br>Interpretive Community |     |
| Notes:  | 283 |
| Bibliography:   | 329 |

For my father, Daniel Collier Elkin, Jr.

And to the memory of my grandmother,  
Jessie Louise Guthrie Rich

Filled with their boundless love and support,  
moved by their remarkable faith in me,  
inspired by their exemplary lives,  
I am, without a doubt, a pen in their hands.

## An Introduction

### Some Wild Visions: Spiritual Autobiographies of 19th-Century Women Preachers

"Say, female stranger, who art thou?  
That thus, art wandering through our land.  
Thy youth, thy sex, thy modest brow;  
Thy lonely state, may all demand.  
Why is it, thou has left thy home,  
With strangers only to sojourn?  
No friend attending,--but alone,  
Thou wing'st thy way, both night and morn?  
Has some wild vision, struck thy brain;  
To wander forth, from door to door?  
Whilst friends, afar, in grief remain,  
By restless, wayward fancy, bore?"

Poem by Judge\_\_\_ to Miss M.\_\_\_, and  
afterwards presented to Nancy Towle

Nobody has been able to learn who "Miss M.\_\_\_" was, or how exactly she inspired Judge\_\_\_'s foray into verse. But the Judge was right later to present it to Nancy Towle, one of the seven American women whose evangelical careers and spiritual autobiographies I analyze in the present study. It describes her life rather well, and very much in the terms Towle herself chose when she came to write her autobiography: she, like the others, led just the lonely, wandering, visionary existence described in the poem. But it probably describes even better the puzzlement which women like Towle provoked in those they met. Of the poem's six sentences, five--including the last--are questions. None of them are answered; the identity and motives of the "female stranger" named in the first line are, at the end, as mysterious as at the beginning. Towle's decision to include the poem in her autobiography might be

taken as her promise to answer the questions it raises: Who am I? What have been my motives? What "wild vision" has impelled me into the lonely, footloose, and highly unconventional life of a female itinerant minister?

The answer Towle and her sister itinerants insist upon is that God called them, often against their wills, often by way of "wild visions," to leave their homes, their husbands, their families and friends, to wander the earth preaching the gospel. Another answer might be that evangelical religion "awakened" these and other nineteenth-century American women to the possibility of moving outside the limited and limiting sphere of the home, their own or, in the cases of the black female itinerants, Jarena Lee, Zilpha Elaw and Amanda Smith, those of the white families for whom they worked as domestic servants. The nineteenth century in America, in fact, ended as it began, with an awakening: one religious, one secular; one beginning in Connecticut and spreading throughout the nation, one in the fiction of Kate Chopin. The Second Great Awakening in America, now generally recognized to have occurred between the 1790s and the 1840s (or 1850s if one includes the revival of 1857-58), affected an untold number of women, who were thought to be more "naturally" religious than men. Kate Chopin's Awakening concerns that of one woman, not to the power of the Holy Spirit, but to her own will to resist the patriarchal Creole culture in which she lived. In between these two poles lay the spiritual awakenings of Nancy

Towle, Jarena Lee, Zilpha Elaw, Julia Foote, Lydia Sexton, Laura Haviland, and Amanda Smith, whose "conversion" and "call" awakened them both to the saving power of the Lord Jesus and to the "cross" of being a public woman in a patriarchal culture that called them, in very different accents, toward private, domestic existence.

The nineteenth century has been described by Perry Miller and countless others as the age of evangelical religion and its agent, revivalism. As the dominant expression of Protestantism, and among the most powerful social and religious movements in that century, evangelicalism and revivalism might have been, in the words of Miller, "the defining factor" of nineteenth-century American life:

We can hardly understand Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Melville, unless we comprehend that for them this was the one clearly given truth of their society....[F]or the mass of the American democracy, the decades after 1800 were a continuing, even though intermittent, revival. (7)

Evangelical faith, Miller famously asserted, was "a poor man's Transcendentalism."

Comprehending this "dominant theme" also provides the necessary context for understanding these evangelical women autobiographers, who entered the literary marketplace between



1832, when Nancy Towle published her Vicissitudes Illustrated in the Experience of Nancy Towle, in Europe and America, and 1893, when the itinerant preacher and missionary Amanda Berry Smith published An Autobiography: The Story of the Lord's Dealings with Mrs. Amanda Smith, The Colored Evangelist. With the exception of Amanda Smith whose itinerant ministry began in 1870, each of these women left her home to preach the gospel in the first half of the nineteenth century. The careers of Towle, Lee and Elaw began in the 1820s and ended, so far as we know, before the Civil War; Foote, Sexton, and Haviland began preaching in the 1840s and continued to do so in post-bellum America. While these lives cover much of the century and thus may appear arbitrarily linked in an historical/literary study, their spiritual lives, as messengers of the Word, fall within the Age of Revivalism as defined by Timothy Smith in Revivalism and Social Reform. As Smith argues, the religious awakenings of the nineteenth century did not end in 1858, but extended into the 1870s--and even beyond--with the flowering of the perfect love, perfectionist, or Higher Life movements involving not only Methodists, but also New School Presbyterians, Quakers, Congregationalists, and Baptists.

Religion, central to the lives of many prominent men in the nineteenth century (we immediately think of Charles Grandison Finney and Lyman Beecher), was, perhaps, even more important for women. Recent studies have shown that women

comprised about two-thirds of those joining New Jersey Presbyterian, New England Congregationalist, and Southern evangelical churches during the Second Great Awakening. These statistics would not have surprised nineteenth-century Americans who assumed that women, more emotional and passive than men, were "naturally" more religious as well: their submissiveness, in other words, made it easier for them to assume the posture necessary to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Religion belonged, moreover, to the private sphere, which was considered by many men and women the proper one for women. Not surprisingly, then, it has often been argued that Christianity was the opiate by which women were comforted and encouraged to accept their subordinate position in society; an otherworldly experience of God, so the argument goes, made it easier for women to submit to conventional relationships on earth, knowing that a greater reward awaited them in heaven. Religion was, more than anything else, an outlet, a retreat from the inequalities of this world, which prepared women to cope with subordination; it was an escape valve for a woman's discontent, a tool in the service of the dominant culture, for while it may have altered women's interior lives within their own sphere, it did not affect their exterior lives. These autobiographies--as well as those by religious men and women of all centuries--do glory in the solace that their knowledge of the love of God brings. And of course there are examples, as in Zilpha Elaw's autobiography, of learning Christ-like

meekness and humility in the face of opposition.

My own sense of it, having spent some time with the spiritual autobiographies written by women deeply committed to evangelical religion, is a different one. I am led to the conclusion that Christianity significantly marked their lives in ways that led them to reject their subordinate lot in the world, and "to live deep," in Thoreau's phrase, "and suck out all the marrow of life" (66). Evangelical faith, in other words, may have been a poor woman's transcendentalism as well.

These books are neither as dull nor predictable as Estelle Jelinek implies when she dismisses them from her study The Tradition of Women's Autobiography, focusing instead on autobiographies that were "[f]ortunately...more secular than religious in content" (94-95).

According to Nancy Towle, Zilpha Elaw and the rest, an experience of God offered them far more than mere compensation for their subordinate lot; rather, it enabled them to brave public scrutiny and engage in unconventional relationships and nontraditional lifework. As Lydia Maria Child once remarked, "the sects called evangelical were the first agitators of the woman question." Indeed, the Methodist preacher Jennie Fowler Willing commented in The Guide to Holiness that Pentecost was "Woman's Emancipation Day," and Phoebe Palmer regarded her famous Tuesday meetings, which began in the 1830s and included men and women, ordained ministers and lay persons, as an "equalizing process": reading these spiritual autobiographies

one is inclined to believe them. Rather than simply keeping subordination from becoming oppressive, religion became the means by which women could measure the oppressiveness of their domestic lives and at times overcome it. Even Zilpha Elaw, who "believed" women should be submissive to a husband's domination, implied something very different by writing an autobiography in which her husband is granted little textual space and her intense lifework expands to fill up the pages of her life story. Though clearly conflicted over their decision to combat their culture's definitions of womanhood, none of these evangelical itinerants construct themselves in their autobiographies as a "self in hiding."<sup>1</sup>

Here a useful contrast may be drawn between these women and their more radical and secular feminist sister, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who creates a false picture of domesticity in her autobiography, calling attention to her "normal" life as a wife and mother, rather than to her exceptional career as a leader of the women's rights movement. Authorized by God, these evangelical preachers no doubt found it easier to eschew marriage and domesticity in favor of an itinerant life which lay outside the safety, certainty, and closure--as well as the drudgery--that domesticity and, for several of them, domestic servitude promised women in the nineteenth century. And unlike Stanton's activities, theirs were largely in a field considered appropriate for women: they felt no compunction, then, to hide their accomplishments in their autobiographies.

Their experience of God, they believed, empowered them to explore life beyond prevailing gender hierarchies, to experience an adventurous life in the public sphere. "The shore is safer," they might have said with Emily Dickinson, "but I love the buffett of the sea."

None of this should be surprising. Historians like Nancy Cott, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Rosemary Ruether, Janet James, and Nancy Hardesty have been arguing, for a decade or more, that evangelical religion opened up a whole new world in the public sphere for women discontented with their roles as wives, mothers, sisters, daughters.<sup>2</sup> Evangelical churches, with their emphasis on lay participation and leadership, offered women an allegiance beyond the home, a new field in which they could become active, assertive, and relatively free agents responsible for nothing short of the redemption of the world. Moreover, the postmillennialism of antebellum America made the once public and secular street a private and religious domain in which women could promote the cause of reform.<sup>3</sup> Evangelicalism, with its vast network of benevolent organizations, publishing concerns, and missionary societies, invited women to undertake new roles as social workers, teachers, managers, missionaries and even writers. The tenets of evangelicalism encouraged women to promote revivals through home meetings--such as Phoebe Palmer's Tuesday meetings--prayer groups, and voluntary and mission work; they encouraged women to apply their skills and voices as exhorters within the

church and as writers in such religious journals as Women's Work for Women, Heathen Woman's Friend, and The Guide to Holiness.

My own interest in evangelical religion is a bit different from that of Cott, Smith-Rosenberg, and the rest. They focus, quite usefully, on evangelicalism as a social movement of great importance. But as Nathan Hatch reminds us, "the distinctive feature of American Christianity was not the surge of an impersonal force called revivalism, descending like manna from heaven, but a remarkable set of popular leaders" (Democratization 56). The popular leaders in whom Hatch is interested are all reasonably well-known: Lorenzo Dow, Billy Hibbard, Lyman Beecher, Peter Cartwright, Charles Finney. But few of us have encountered Nancy Towle, Jarena Lee, Zilpha Elaw, Lydia Sexton, Laura Haviland, Julia Foote, or Amanda Smith, the women whose lives and writings will be the focus of this study. They were prominent in the evangelical and revivalist circles of the nineteenth century, sufficiently so that they could expect wide readerships for their autobiographies; but they are virtually unknown in our own day. Charismatic preachers all of them, these women, like women in all periods of Christianity, entered the ministry by claiming an immediate experience of the divine, by demonstrating their "spiritual gifts." Given the degree to which evangelical denominations in the nineteenth century such as the Methodists, Baptists, and "Christians" conceived of the

ministry as inspired rather than learned, it is not surprising that talented women like Nancy Towle, who had once moved large crowds with her school-girl theatrical performances, would suddenly find themselves baptized by the spirit and "dreaming"--having visions--of testifying before the world.'

For these seven women the dream of wandering the world and leading others to an experience of Christ did come true, though not immediately. Their careers follow almost ritualistically similar patterns: after the visionary experiences in which they feel themselves called to preach, nearly all attempt to deny the claims of that experience. They find their calls, naturally enough, quite alarming: they have been commanded to deny both their own culture's assumptions about a woman's place and St. Paul's proscriptions, in his letter to Timothy, against women's preaching. Ultimately, however, the authority of God outweighs that of their parents, husbands, and friends, even that of their own consciences, which in many cases seem to assert quite forcefully their culture's prescriptive definitions of womanhood. Many of them are able to make sense of their unwilling enlistment in God's service by invoking the Biblical story of Jonah. Often they are afflicted with serious illnesses, which they interpret as chastening reminders from God of their unfulfilled obligations; they recover from these illnesses determined to resist no longer. Remarkably often this resolution is abetted by the timely

death of a husband who has forcefully personified the cultural suspicion of female preaching. Finally, unable to resist God's call, they begin to preach the gospel at camp meetings, public assemblies, and churches, either as independent itinerants (Nancy Towle and Zilpha Elaw) or under the aegis of a particular denomination, in most cases a Methodist or African Methodist Episcopal denomination (Jarena Lee, Julia Foote, Lydia Sexton, Laura Haviland and Amanda Smith), which would occasionally "license"--though never ordain--them to preach. Having convinced local authorities of their divine sanction, they are pronounced "exceptions" to biblical and denominational sanctions against women preachers. Thus did evangelical religion, against its own instincts and even against theirs, encourage these women to remake the world with their voices, to become preachers and "pen[s] in God's hand."

## II

Because the women whom I study are not well-known, some introductions are in order.

Jarena Lee, the oldest woman in this study, was born on February 11, 1783, in Cape May, New Jersey; her parents were free, but extremely poor, blacks, who were forced to hire her out as a domestic servant at age 7 to a family who lived sixty miles from their home. In 1804, she moved to Philadelphia where she supported herself by working as domestic servant.



Though converted at the age of 21, she continued to experience doubts about her salvation for four years, until a black man named William Scott informed her of a second blessing, that of complete sanctification,<sup>6</sup> which she subsequently attained, feeling at the time "as if [she] were in an ocean of light and bliss" (10).<sup>7</sup>

"[F]our or five years after [her] sanctification," or around 1811, Jarena Lee heard the voice of God calling her to preach the gospel. She applied for permission to Rev. Richard Allen, founder of the first independent black congregation and later the first independent black denomination in America (the African Methodist Episcopal Church); he denied her request.<sup>8</sup> That same year she married Rev. Joseph Lee and moved with him, against her will, to Snow Hill, about six miles from Philadelphia, where she found herself so lonely and upset that she became ill. She recovered, knowing she had yet to obey the Lord's will that she preach. The next six years brought only tragedy: Lee's husband and four of her six children died. In 1818, Lee returned to Philadelphia with her surviving children and requested Allen's permission simply to hold prayer meetings in her home, which he willingly granted. The following year, having heard her spontaneously exhort a congregation at Bethel, Allen supported her request to preach. Thus began an itinerant ministry to both white and black audiences in the Mid-Atlantic region, the Northeast, and as far west as Ohio. In 1833, she hired an anonymous ghost

writer to help her compose an autobiography from the voluminous journal she had kept of her ministries. In 1836, and again in 1839, she printed for sale 1,000 copies of The Life and Religious Experience of Mrs. Jarena Lee, a Coloured Lady, which is now considered to be the first extant personal narrative by an African-American woman. In 1849, without the support of the African Methodist Church, she published an expanded version of her life story, entitled The Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee. Lee's movements after 1849 are unknown, as are the time and place of her death; she was, it seems, her own best and only historian.

Zilpha Elaw was born around 1790 outside the city of Philadelphia to free black parents. Her mother having died when she was 12, Elaw was, like Lee, hired out as a domestic servant to a Quaker family until she reached the age of 18. During her teens, she was converted by Methodists, and in 1808 she joined a Methodist society. At age 20 she married, regrettably she came to feel, Joseph Elaw, a non-believer. With her husband she moved to Burlington, New Jersey, in 1811, and the following year gave birth to a daughter. At a camp meeting in 1817, she "became so overpowered with the presence of God, that [she] sank down upon the ground," feeling at the same time her spirit souring to the sun and hearing a voice telling her, "'Now thou art sanctified'" (66). Upon her death bed, Elaw's sister informed her that an angel has assured her that Zilpha Elaw "must preach the gospel" (73). Elaw,

however, disregarded these instructions for several years, until she became seriously ill around 1819. Following her recovery, she felt divinely inspired to exhort at a camp meeting in the presence of a formidable group of ministers, an event which marked the beginning of her career as a preacher. Though she was supported by the Methodist Society in Burlington, she was shunned by many black friends who found her too self-assertive, and was opposed by a husband who was embarrassed by her public displays. When Joseph Elaw died four years later, Elaw and her daughter were forced into domestic service. For two years she also attempted running a school for black children who where not allowed to attend Burlington's segregated schools. Ultimately, however, she was overwhelmed by guilt at having denied God's call; she left her daughter and began life as an itinerant evangelist. Though she was associated with Methodists throughout her career, she preached independently without denominational support, financial or otherwise, traveling from here to there, from slave states to free states, the itinerary being determined by "impressions" received from above. In 1840, having been "impressed" for years that the Lord called her to England, she sailed to London, where in 1845 she wrote and printed her Memoirs of the Life, Religious Experience, Ministerial Travels, and Labours of Mrs. Elaw as a token of her esteem, a souvenir of sorts, for her friends and followers there. After this point, her movements, like Lee's, are unknown.

Nancy Towle began her "Journey of Life" on February 13, 1796, in Hampton, New Hampshire. Though she participated in a revival at age 12 and began to reflect on the state of her soul, she pursued a life of mirth until age 22, when she was converted by Christian evangelist Clarissa H. Danforth and baptized by Christian Elder Moses Howe. Impressed with the words "Hearken, O daughters, and consider, and incline thine ear, forget also thine own people, and thy father's house," she realized she had been called to preach, a summons which both excited and distressed her for two years. Though she had always believed there was nothing unscriptural about a woman's preaching, particularly "in these last days" (when patriarchal restrictions can and should be abandoned), she was nonetheless reluctant to take up the cross, it being unseemly for a woman to wander the earth preaching. After a "visible decline in health," she finally left her father's home in 1821, took a teaching job to hide her real intentions, and began to preach as an independent itinerant, a task she continued for the next eleven years throughout America, Canada, England and Ireland. After 1832, when she printed her autobiography at her own expense, her activities are unknown.

Lydia Sexton was born April 12, 1799, in New Jersey. Her father, a Baptist minister, died the following year, leaving her mother, Abigail Casad, to care for nine children. In 1811, the mother remarried, this time to John Wintermoot, also a Baptist minister and the father of seven children. Despite

the protest of her own children, Abigail sent them away to make room for the "undisciplined" brood of her new husband. Lydia spent a year with her Aunt and Uncle Casad, who treated her so poorly she willingly went to live with their neighbor, a Mr. Hand, whom she calls both her "keeper" and her "master." In 1814, she left Mr. Hand and traveled with her brother Anthony to Ohio, boarding with him and other family members for the next few years and attending school. In 1820, she married the first of three husbands, who died two years later in an accident, leaving her with one son. In 1824, she married Moses Moore, a surveyor, with whom she has another son; the next year Moore died suddenly. In 1829, she married Joseph Sexton, with whom she lived for forty years and bore three more children. Sometime in the mid-1830s Sexton was convicted of her sins at a "New Light" meeting.<sup>10</sup> She was then baptized by the Campbellites in the Miami River in Dayton, Ohio, but became somewhat "sickened" by the sect--"the everlasting ding-dong about 'the Word,' 'the Word,' and a continual warfare against discipline, and professing to be the only true church" (196).<sup>11</sup> Eventually she left the Campbellites and joined the United Brethren Church, a German Methodist body. Shortly thereafter she received "a special call to the ministry" while attending a dance; she resisted the call for almost a decade, believing female preaching to be unscriptural and fearing scrutiny and ridicule (199). She suffered tremendous guilt for having denied her call, and at

the end of the ten years, her son having fallen seriously ill, she made a covenant with God: should the boy survive, she bargained, she would take up her cross. God spared the child, and Sexton began preaching sometime in 1843. Her itinerant ministry, primarily in the mid-West, continued until 1870, when she became Chaplain of the Kansas State Prison. In 1882, the United Brethren Publishing House considered her story central enough to their history to publish her autobiography. It is believed she died in 1892.

Laura Smith Haviland was born on December 20, 1808, in Leeds County, Ontario, Canada, the eldest child of eight in a family of dedicated Quakers. Her father was a minister and her mother an elder in the Society of Friends. In 1815 the family moved across the border to Niagara County, New York. Except for four months of public school in Canada, Haviland's early education took place at home; later she attended a Quaker school in Lockport, New York. At the age of 13, Haviland came under the influence of frontier revivalism that was then sweeping through western New York. Attending a Methodist prayer meeting, she was moved to contemplate the state of her soul; she was converted shortly thereafter, preferring the evangelistic and reformist tendencies of Methodism and heartfelt conversion of the revivalists to the formality of the Quakers. In 1825, she married Charles Haviland, a local Quaker farmer, with whom she had eight children. In 1829, she moved with him to a farm in the Michigan Territory, in the

township of Raisin. Along with Elizabeth M. Chandler, Haviland organized the first anti-slavery society in Michigan. When they discovered that conservative Quakers there opposed their anti-slavery activity, the Haviland family resigned from the Society of Friends, an act that marks the beginning of Laura's long career as an abolitionist and missionary. She and her husband opened a school on their farm for indigent children in 1837; in 1839, influenced by a brother who had attended Oberlin College, they turned it into a manual labor institution modeled on Oberlin principles, open to all regardless of race or sex; they called it the River Raisin Institute.

By 1844, at the age of 36, she was a minister in the holiness, abolitionist Wesleyan Methodist Church<sup>12</sup>; she rejoined the Quakers only in 1872, when they began to embrace a missionary spirit.<sup>13</sup> In 1845 an epidemic of "inflammatory erysipelas" (or St. Anthony's fire) swept through Michigan, claiming the lives of Haviland's husband, mother, father, sister, and youngest child. From then until the Civil War, Haviland committed herself to missionary work among blacks in the North and South. An avid abolitionist, she gave speeches, aided fugitive slaves, and even traveled in the South to promote the cause and help slaves escape. During the Civil War, Haviland considered it her mission to carry supplies to the Front, to nurse Union troops, to care for and give religious instruction to black children. In 1864 she became a

paid agent of the Freedman's Aid Commission. And from that time until 1881 when she published the first edition of her autobiography, A Woman's Life-Work: Labors and Experiences of Laura S. Haviland, she continued her missionary endeavors among the freed men and women, in schools, asylums, and orphanages, as well as endorsing the temperance crusade and woman's suffrage movement. She died in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1898.

Julia A. J. Foote was born in 1823 in Schenectady, New York, to fervent Christians and former slaves who had purchased their freedom. Banned from Schenectady's schools, Julia was put to service with an influential white family so that she might attend a school in the country. At age 12 she returned home to care for her four younger siblings while her mother worked. At age 15 she was converted and joined the African Methodist Church; at age 16 she was sanctified. In 1841 she married George Foote, a sailor, and moved to Boston, where she joined the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Here she felt moved to testify to the joys of sanctification, despite her husband's opposition. One thing leading to another, Foote found herself "called" to preach, but was opposed by her minister, Rev. Jehial Beman, who had misgivings about the congregation's desire to hear Foote preach from his pulpit. After considerable controversy, Behial tried to settle the matter by having her excommunicated. Foote, however, was not to be stopped. She began her ministry in



Philadelphia, where she and several other women rented a hall and preached the gospel. In 1845 she preached throughout upstate New York and later in New England, the Mid-Atlantic states, Ohio, Detroit and Canada. Her husband, rarely mentioned in her autobiography, passed away sometime in the late 1840s or early 1850s. In 1851, she settled down in Cleveland owing to a "throat difficulty," not preaching again until 1869 as part of the Holiness Revival that swept through the mid-West in the early 1870s (224).<sup>14</sup> For the next 25 years her activities are unknown. She died in 1900, having been ordained as a deacon and later an elder in the A.M.E. Zion Church.

Amanda Berry Smith was born into slavery on January 23, 1837, in Long Green, Maryland; her parents lived on adjoining farms, owned by different but apparently "kind" masters, who allowed them to purchase their freedom as well as that of their five children. Despite his freedom, Smith's father was harassed by a group of white farmers who were disturbed by his traveling out of state to visit a friend: "'If nothing was said to Insor's Sam about going out of the state and staying over ten days, why all the niggers in the county would be doing the same thing!'" (25).<sup>15</sup> Thus her parents moved the family to York County, Pennsylvania, where they eventually became active abolitionists and conductors on the Underground Railroad. Smith received some schooling when she was 8 and later when 13 years of age. At age 13 she was put to service

with the Latimers, the first of many white families for whom she would work as a domestic servant. She was converted in a Methodist Church, but--unable to keep up her religious exercises on Sundays because of her strenuous duties in the Latimer household--she promptly "lost all the grace [she] had, if [she] really had any at all" (29). In 1854, at the age of 17, Smith married her first husband, an irreligious man prone, she later discovered, to drinking. In 1855, near death probably after childbirth, she had a vision of herself preaching before a large crowd and was re-converted sometime thereafter. Her first husband was killed during the Civil War, leaving her with a daughter, Mazie, her only child--out of five--to survive infancy. In 1865 she joined the Bethel A. M. E. Church in Philadelphia, the church which had been home to Jarena Lee half a century earlier. That same year she married her second husband, James Smith, a local preacher and ordained deacon at the Bethel A.M.E., and moved with him to New York to find work. This marriage was disastrous from the start: his profession of religion had been a lie.

In 1868, a year before both James and her youngest child would die, Smith learned of the blessing of sanctification, perhaps at one of Phoebe Palmer's Tuesday meetings; and at a sermon by John Inskip, the founder of the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness, she received this "enduring grace," which she would later promote in holiness camp meetings and revivals around the country. In

1870 at the Fleet Street A.M.E. Church in Brooklyn, Smith was called to preach, specifically to the people of Salem, New Jersey, and the Mt. Pisgah A.M.E. Church. By 1871 she had reportedly converted 156 people there. In 1872 she attended the A.M.E. Church General Conference in Nashville, where she was rudely treated by many men who believed she was there to lobby for the ordination of women. From 1878 to 1890 she traveled abroad to England, Ireland, Scotland, India and Africa, this time aligned with the white Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1892 she moved to Chicago to work with her friend Frances Willard of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. At that time she also began composing her autobiography and publishing a monthly newspaper called The Helper. With the proceeds of the paper and her autobiography, along with contributions, she opened a school for black orphans in 1899, which remained open until 1918, when destroyed by fire. In 1912, Smith herself retired to a home in Sebring, Florida, owned by her wealthy friend George Sebring; she lived there until her death in 1915.

### III

These spiritual autobiographies by female itinerants all reveal something of the democratic spirit of these Protestant denominations which, theoretically at least, disavowed hierarchies, empowering every man and woman, educated or not,

to interpret scripture and to bring about his or her own conversion. Indeed, Nathan Hatch focuses on the leadership of early nineteenth-century evangelical movements because "the fundamental religious debates in the early republic were not merely a class of intellectual and theological differences but also a passionate social struggle with power and authority," which he convincingly uncovers (14). What Hatch fails to consider, however, and what these autobiographies by female evangelists stress, is the degree to which that "passionate social struggle with power and authority" was more than a battle between Charles Finney and Lyman Beecher, between the common man and the established clergy: it was a battle between the men of office and the women on the margins. While their "call" to the ministry liberated these female itinerants from the restrictive forms of womanhood within which most nineteenth-century women moved and by which they defined themselves, these spiritual autobiographies make clear that the authority conferred by "spiritual gifts" was never quite as secure, even among radical evangelicals, as was the authority derived from office: which meant inevitably that a hierarchy of sex prevailed even among the most democratic of Protestant sects, both before and after these sects began acquiring social respectability and thus finding "spiritual gifts" to be rather embarrassing relics of former times.

It is this gender hierarchy, and the response to it of the seven women under study here, which has most often held my

attention. This is to say that racial difference--despite the fact that four of the women were black, three white--has been of secondary importance in my analyses, which perhaps requires some explanation. Like all African-American women, Jarena Lee, Zilpha Elaw, Julia Foote and Amanda Smith were confronted, as Anna Julia Cooper observed in 1892, by "both a woman question and a race problem": unquestionably theirs was a "dual struggle" (qtd. in Foster 10, 68). Self-conscious about race, all four African-American women report repeated encounters with a racist culture which would deny them full citizenship and would regard them as "curiosities"--fetishizations--when they began to preach publicly." Amanda Smith's now famous rejoinder to those who considered hers an easy lot applies equally well to her black sister itinerants, all of whom found in sanctification the power "to define themselves not with respect to white power but to the divine":

'if you want to know and understand properly what Amanda Smith has to contend with, just turn black and go about as I do, and you will come to a different conclusion.' And I think some people would understand the quintessence of sanctifying grace if they could be black about twenty-four hours. (Mathews, "Evangelical" 30; Smith 116-17)<sup>17</sup>

And two of the three white women, Laura Haviland and Lydia

Sexton, were active abolitionists intensely conscious of white guilt in the crime of slavery.

More often than not, however, the politics of gender overshadow those of race in these spiritual autobiographies. For while black clergymen believed in and worked toward many reforms in this reformist age, a woman's right to ordination was not among them: the black church, no less than the white, was marked by sexism.<sup>18</sup> All of these women, black or white, principally conceive of themselves as women struggling against a predominantly male religious environment; all of them use their textual self-representations principally in defense of a woman's right to preach the gospel.<sup>19</sup> All of them to varying degrees participate in, rather than "divorce" themselves from, the dominant culture of white, middle-class America. The texts themselves, in other words, ask to be read through the lens of gender. In fact, it was the discovery of an extraordinary degree of thematic and formal similarity among works published over a seventy-year span, about preaching careers that began around 1818 and continued through the 1880s, that led me to group these women and their autobiographies together, that led me to the realization that what I had before me was a tradition of women's writing. This tradition, I was soon convinced, originated in the common experiences of these preachers as nineteenth-century women writing within a "web of significance" (in Clifford Geertz's useful phrase) with which they interacted on a complex level,

borrowing, manipulating, revising. "The dominant culture," as Elizabeth Fox-Genovese has written, "challenged women and members of other excluded groups to frame their own experience at least in part according to its norms" ("Between Individualism and Fragmentation" 12). By recognizing and emphasizing the commonplaces of women's self-writing here, I do not mean to suggest that the differences of race, class, and historical moment among these women are unimportant; it is not my intention to "universalize" or "homogenize" womanhood. An application of these categories of analysis could usefully complicate the tradition I believe I make out in the following pages. But that is necessarily a secondary labor, following from the work of identifying the literary tradition in the first place. A sense of that tradition forms the necessary basis by which these relatively unknown literary works can someday be considered in terms of difference, differences which include class and religious affiliation as well as race.

To frame this tradition in terms of gender also risks obscuring the similarities between female evangelical itinerants and their male counterparts. To point out that these seven women had many of the same experiences, and shared many of the same ways of writing about them, is not to deny that male spiritual autobiographers have shared some of them as well. But to study the writings of these women in relation to one another has its own utility. Doing so has enabled me to see how a specific group of evangelical women organized

their stories; how they negotiated cultural codes in the construction of their identity and place in American culture; how they used their autobiographies to protect, promote, and understand themselves; how, in other words, they wrote the self and sought author(ity), or, as Nancy Miller has said in another context, how these autobiographers "perform[ed] on the stage of [their] text[s]" (Subject 49).

This is, then, primarily a literary study, about poetics as much as about politics or history. In each chapter I consider how these women--all of them what James Cox would call "naive autobiographers"<sup>20</sup>--use language, images, metaphors, and literary conventions in their attempts to justify and advertise themselves and in the complex task of understanding the self and representing it in autobiography. I do not, however, dismiss the possibility of learning something factual about the lives of these women, and of nineteenth-century women in general, from these autobiographies. There is usually no way to check the "facts" they report: though nineteenth-century evangelicalism was in general well-chronicled, these women were so marginal in status that they seldom found their way into the records. But whether the autobiographies are factually reliable or not, they inevitably tell us a kind of truth about the "lives and times" they describe. To read "autographically" with an emphasis on auto (self) and graphe (writing) is not to exclude bio (life), but to consider how these texts reveal their



authors and their lives.<sup>21</sup> "Autobiography," said Mark Twain, "is the truest of all books";

for while it inevitably consists mainly of extinctions of the truth, shirkings of the truth, partial revealments of the truth, with hardly an instance of plain straight truth, the remorseless truth is there, between the lines, where the author-cat is raking dust upon it which hides from the disinterested spectator neither it nor its smell...the result being that the reader knows the author in spite of his wily diligences. (qtd. in Abbott 610)

Indeed, despite their many difficulties in converting the unorthodox "life" into a completed "Life," these women succeed in presenting to us--or perhaps they fail in concealing from us--a revealing picture of their complex situation.

Their literal situation was that of being "unsettled." They were, in the first place, itinerant ministers, preachers who had no fixed congregation or pulpit but instead traveled, over sometimes very extensive geographic areas, delivering their gospel message wherever they could. Unlike the main group of itinerant ministers in the nineteenth century, the (exclusively male) Methodist circuit riders, these women were assigned no territories or itineraries; like eighteenth-

century itinerants, they followed their own instincts, or the leadings of the Spirit, in plotting their travels. For long periods of their lives, they were literally homeless and were alone much of the time. Most of them were also "unsettled" in a metaphoric sense which was familiar to the nineteenth century: they were unmarried, having outlived troublesome husbands and not troubled to locate successors for them. In their autobiographies these evangelists seem for the most part proud of their "unsettled" condition, offering it as evidence of their devotion to God and their adventurous spirits.

But they are unsettled in another sense, one which is revealed in their autobiographies more or less in the way Mark Twain has in mind in the passage I quoted a moment ago--revealed, that is, in spite of the authors' efforts to conceal it. The hope of any autobiography, of course, is to tell a unified story which somehow represents the unified self behind it. And by now most of us understand that the autobiographer does not so much discover these unities of self and story as she creates them, by the act of writing. The autobiographer, no less than the novelist, writes in search of both the story and the meaning. The search is an easy one for the autobiographer whose life (or whose sense of the life) accords fairly closely with some established biographical paradigm. If your story is one of "Conversion," of "Education," of secular success (or for that matter failure), of triumph or disgrace, then your culture provides you with an abundance of

precedent by which you may be guided in laying out the plot and meaning of your experience. But what if your life is one for which no single precedent fits exactly? What if your life exists on the margins, neither inside nor outside the dominant culture? By what will you be guided in tracing a plot, and discerning a meaning, in the welter of remembered facts which are the raw materials of autobiography? How, indeed, will you undertake the "pre-autobiographical" task of conceiving a single, coherent self whose story is to be told?

This, of course, was the particular predicament of these women, and it was one which none of them really solved. Therein lies the deception, the concealment, in their autobiographies. For they write their books, sometimes at considerable length. They give them titles which promise not only the facts about the "Ministerial Travels," "Labors and Experiences," "Vicissitudes"--and in nearly every case, the "Life"--of the author, but the moral meanings of those as well. They claim to offer texts which are, as James Cox has phrased it, "equal" to the selves behind them. But all of them found it difficult, and ultimately impossible, as I believe, to fulfill these promises.

They did, of course, make a valiant effort to find precedents and paradigms with which to communicate their stories. Much as they wandered the earth in search of a pulpit, these women wander around their culture in search of a paradigm or story that might lend pattern and meaning to

their lives. They wander--to borrow the spatial metaphor so often used by feminist theorists--from the margins to the center of the culture, where they find popular stories of marriage, domesticity and closure for women, stories of competition and individualism for men, as well as the familiar Bible stories outlining and valorizing victimization, suffering, and prophecy. And what they find, they make good use of: in their efforts to articulate a new woman's story and promote themselves within their culture's male and female "spheres," these evangelical autobiographers not surprisingly appropriate all these old, meaning-ful stories with which their nineteenth-century readers were familiar. That is not to say, however, that these marginal women were simply passive instruments being "spoken"--written upon--by the central languages of their culture. Though these autobiographies illustrate the degree to which we are all constructed by history, culture and language, they also demonstrate the degree to which a self-conscious architect can guide this "construction." "The other side of the unsettling notion that the self depends necessarily and helplessly on language for its creation," says Thomas Couser, "is that the vast repertoire of the language gives the self a high degree of freedom and flexibility..." (250). By combining the "female" paradigms of domesticity, "male" discourses of individual assertion and competitiveness, and biblical paradigms of the reluctant prophet and suffering savior, these writers

question, resist, and at times subvert their culture's many assumptions about gender and race which confined women in nineteenth-century America. As Sidonie Smith argues in A Poetics of Women's Autobiography,

Fashioning her own voice within and against the voices of others, [the female autobiographer] performs a selective appropriation of stories told by and about men and women. Subversively, she rearranges the dominant discourse and the dominant ideology of gender, seizing the language and its powers to turn cultural fictions into her very own story. (175)

In doing so, these evangelical autobiographers force us to recognize the powerful tension found in all autobiographical narratives: the tension, that is, between self-creation and the social construction of identity. These evangelical writers hoped that borrowing from the prominent discourses of their day, they would make familiar what seemed "strange" to their readers; that they would satisfy critics and justify the unorthodox lives which they had been "impressed" to lead; and that they would give definition--pattern and meaning--to an itinerant existence that defied the popular stories of white and black womanhood.

That their readers were satisfied, we cannot be sure, though certain it is that until the twentieth century women

made no significant gains in the "official" structures of institutional religion. Of more concern here, however, is whether or not the autobiographers themselves were satisfied with their textual self-constructions. Could they make sense of their unorthodox lives by weaving an identity out of borrowed threads? Ultimately, I believe, the "remorseless truth" these autobiographies reveal is that they could not. There is, of course, a certain freedom in not having a particular story to live out, a certain liberation in escaping plot. The stories these women construct remind us, however, how much the loss of--or the inability to discover--a representative "life-story" is the loss of a useful fiction, the loss of a totalizing self-knowledge which enables men and women to give order, deceptive though it may be, to the chaos of existence. Unable to make sense of their stories, these women paid a price: not far beneath the surface of these confident spiritual autobiographies can be heard the anxious voices of female itinerant preachers who wandered the margins of their culture seeking, but never finding, a way back into the center.

To hear those voices is to recognize that all of these women in fact did possess an organizing "metaphor of self" by which to unify their autobiographies. Though we may doubt how much comfort it afforded them, we at least can recognize itinerancy, the literal subject of these autobiographies almost throughout, as their controlling metaphor as well. All

Christians, of course, are supposed to be itinerants, pilgrims and strangers wandering this weary land. The journey motif so popular among Puritans living in an age of exploration and emigration was no less popular among nineteenth-century Christians. Indeed The Pilgrim's Progress, John Bunyan's classic seventeenth-century allegorical narrative of the Christian journey, was among the nineteenth century's best-sellers, common enough, for example, to be placed beside the Grangerfords' family Bible in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.

As any reader of Bunyan knows, however, that story has a definitive ending. Christian doesn't just march around the Slough of Despond and the Delectable Mountains: he marches through them on his way to the Celestial City. A journey, while it may take the form of a promiscuous odyssey, leading one to places not on a proposed itinerary, ultimately has an end, or at least all pilgrims have an end in mind when they pack their bags and set out.

These evangelical women had several goals in mind when, following their conversion and call, they packed their bags and left home. As one may infer from their accounts of unhappy marriages and domestic drudgery, leaving home may well have been an end in itself. Certainly it afforded them a life of literal mobility, independence, and public engagement virtually unparalleled in the experience of other American women of the nineteenth century.

Too, as Christians deeply committed to their faith, they,

like their male counterparts, would no doubt have identified the City of God as their ultimate destination. Their bodily peregrinations were a figure for their souls' journeys to heaven. They were, moreover, a figure for the "business" of America--a "Redeemer Nation"--and Americans ushering in a millennial age. The evangelical journey would end, they all thought, if only they could complete the work of converting and reforming the democratic nation and the world. But for narrative purposes these "ends" are nearly useless for an autobiographer. Their books cannot, of course, end with death and resurrection; the telos of an autobiography is necessarily the moment of its composition, not the end of the author's life. And as for the millennium and the kingdom of God on earth--like all their predecessors and successors in the continuing labor of Christian reform, these evangelists failed to bring it about, though not for lack of trying. They end their stories, as they may well have ended their lives, still pilgrims and strangers, pursuing an ending which kept receding before them as they moved.

As women traveling outside the known "way" of the private, domestic sphere, itinerancy stands as well for their journey toward self-understanding and self-definition. Though the "way of the cross" gave them the inspiration--literally and figuratively--to challenge their culture's restrictive definitions of white women as "domestic," as "reticent," as "submissive," of black women as "lascivious," as "servile," as



"Mammy," the way of Christ could not ultimately define their whole being. They were disciples of Christ, but what did that mean for a woman in nineteenth-century America, where most public disciples were men? Strangers in a strange patriarchal land, these itinerant autobiographers wander about their culture's many paradigms in search of the meaning of their identity. These were rootless women, having left behind not only their geographical and familial roots but their cultural roots as well. Itinerancy thus serves as a metaphor for the condition of women "liberated" from the home only to find themselves adrift in uncharted waters desperately seeking a compass by which to guide their way.

Though these women routinely deny having any aspirations for ordination, their life-writings make clear that they do think of theirs as a journey toward distinction. Though Julia Foote would claim that "Man's opinion weighed nothing with [her]," her text and those of her sister itinerants tell another story, that of women seeking recognition, particularly from the male opponents who sought to thwart their evangelistic ministries. Their mobility, then, was more than a literalization of their journey to God; it was also a figure for their ambitions.<sup>22</sup> They wanted not only to move in the same circles as men, but to move up with them as well.<sup>23</sup>

Not surprisingly, their movements across spatial boundaries, for their opponents at least, were a symbol for the disorder they wrought in their culture's carefully

constructed gender and racial hierarchies. Traveling across counties and states, even across the Atlantic Ocean, these women were also traveling across social and cultural boundaries. Just as they sought to unite the world under the leadership of Christ, so too did they struggle to break down the false boundaries separating blacks and whites, men and women. As Donald Mathews has argued, in giving its adherents "a common language that acknowledged a common experience and a common obligation," evangelicalism fostered communication among the races and sexes ("Evangelical" 29). Told by God to "deliver a gospel message" to the richest white man in Burlington, Zilpha Elaw bravely entered the unfamiliar territory and ultimately led the family to conversion (68). Stepping into--often struggling for--a pulpit, itinerant women challenged traditional authority and served as a model of change, as a new model of American womanhood, black and white: this one confident, adventurous, capable, ambitious, and wonderfully mobile.

Itinerant evangelism, then, was a historical reality which had larger and more symbolic implications for women. Itinerancy offered Zilpha Elaw and her sister evangelists an "acceptable" means to do what few other women in the century could do, certainly what few blacks could do, as Amanda Smith's "free" father discovered. Authorized by God to wander the earth, these women were active agents who could shun their heritage and free themselves from the chains of the kitchen

and the nursery. They could cross gender boundaries and experience new social roles; indeed they could experience adventurous, public lives normally reserved for men. They could consult their own whims--or "impressions" sent from God--in planning everything from their day to their destiny. Itinerant evangelism was to these women what the "North" was to Frederick Douglass in his 1845 Narrative: it was freedom and gloriously was it embraced.

But just as Douglass was to discover that Mason and Dixon's line did not mark the end of the color line, these women would also realize that theirs was a quest whose completion was forever deferred. Ultimately, these books tell a painful story of women anxiously trying to make sense of--and write about--the strange, rootless life to which they had been converted and called, of women ambitiously seeking a comfortable position of authority both in the evangelical landscape through which they traveled and in their writings. Wandering outside woman's sphere and never fully accepted in man's, however, they were "out of place." Neither a comfortable sense of self nor a comfortable position in the evangelical landscape was forthcoming for these itinerants, who, like the energizer bunny, found themselves forced to keep going and going. Itinerancy thus serves as a metaphor for their inability to find a place in nineteenth-century America, for their marginalization and homelessness in a culture in which women's "mobility" was not, either in 1832 when Nancy

Towle took up her pen or in 1893 when Amanda Smith took up hers, considered normative. Though itinerancy represents the very freedom of these novel women's lives, it also reminds us of their very imprisonment in a culture that aggressively resisted the changes their mobility represented.

Nancy Towle's decision to include the Judge's interrogatory poem near the end, rather than the beginning, of her autobiography was, thus, an appropriate one. Her autobiography had succeeded in exploring the "wild visions" which initiated her restless journey far from home; indeed it had succeeded in reproducing some sense of her identity to her readers: she was an utterly unique and yet representative disciple of Christ, a woman characterized by a combination of motherliness, victimization, independence, competitiveness, and courage. A woman of this nature, however, would have remained an enigma for this Judge and for the many nineteenth-century judges who were "grieved" and disturbed by the itinerant women in their midst and who demanded to know, "Say, female stranger, who art thou?"

## Chapter 1

### "Breaking Up Housekeeping": Evangelical Women and Domestic Ideology

"In my very Infancy, I had an awful regard for religion & a great love for religious people, particularly the Ministers, and sometimes wept with Sorrow, that I was not a boy that I might have been one...." Elizabeth Ashbridge, Some Account of the Fore Part of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge

"'Tain't Logan Killicks Ah wants you to have baby, it's protection.... Ah was born back due in slavery so it wasn't for me to fulfill my dreams of whut a woman oughta be and to do. Ah didn't want to be used for a work-ox and a brood-sow and Ah didn't want mah daughter used dat way neither.... Ah wanted to preach a great sermon about colored women sittin' on high, but they wasn't no pulpit for me.'" Zora Neale Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God

"For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last...for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.... Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place."  
I Corinthians 4: 9-11

"Men and women of faith know they are strangers and exiles on the earth because somehow and somewhere along the line they have been given a glimpse of home."  
Frederick Buechner, The Clown in the Belfry

In 1855, having joined the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Amanda Berry experienced a remarkable vision: she saw herself, preaching the gospel before a large crowd. It seemed an unlikely notion, and not only because female preachers were

quite rare in the United States. She was, for one thing, a backslidden Methodist who felt she had lost most of the grace she received upon conversion; she was also the wife of an irreligious man and the mother of his child--indeed the vision came to her as she recovered from childbirth. Her responsibilities to her family would seem to have had a prior claim over any desire of hers to go forth and preach. God, it seems, could hardly have chosen a less likely candidate.

But when her first husband died in the Civil War, Berry saw the chance to effect a kind of compromise with God: instead of becoming a preacher, she would marry one--James Smith of the Bethel A.M.E. Church--thus achieving what many Christian women in the nineteenth century thought of as their best opportunity to do God's work. "Marrying a minister," Leonard Sweet has written,

was more than a blessed alternative to domestic humdrum and the humbug of social formulas, and more than the right to pick up the crumbs and bones of religious opportunity that dropped from the table of a husband's ministry. It was a passport to influence, deference, and power. (The Minister's Wife 8)<sup>1</sup>

But Amanda Smith found this life unsatisfying, and found her husband demanding, unsympathetic, and self-centered. He was devoted neither to God--his religious profession, she

discovered, was entirely fraudulent--nor to his family: on several occasions he deliberately declined to provide even basic support for Amanda and their children. He had nothing but scorn for Amanda's own lingering desire to preach.<sup>2</sup>

Then, as is so often the way in the lives of these female evangelists, destiny took a hand. Thus does Smith usher her second husband out of her life and autobiography:

My husband, James Smith, was formerly of Baltimore, Md. He was for many years a leader of the choir of Bethel A.M.E. Church, in that city. Afterward he moved to Philadelphia, and was ordained deacon in the A.M.E. Church. He died in November, 1869, at New Utrecht, N.Y. (96)

Smith's mastery of tone here is perfect and devastating; writing in an age that loved nothing more than a lachrymose death-bed scene, she sends her husband of five years' to his reward with all the passion of an overworked obituary writer. His inadequacy as a husband and a religious leader is underlined by Smith's dry irony. The passage continues:

Since then I have been a widow, and have traveled half way round the world, and God has ever been faithful. He has never left me a moment; but in all these years I have proved the word true, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end." (96)

The contrast between her "faithful" God and her faithless husband is clear enough. By choosing at last to heed the call God issued years before, Smith had in effect married a third time, and successfully at last. She found in her life as an itinerant evangelist the best of both worlds: the freedom of a single woman, able to travel the world with perfect autonomy, following only the promptings of the Spirit; but also the security of a married woman, blessed with the most dependable of protectors and providers, a supporter rather than an enemy of her secular and spiritual ambitions.

Smith's brief account of her two unhappy marriages, and of her final acceptance of God as her provider and protector, repeats a pattern which may be found in all the autobiographies under study here; indeed Smith's book, coming late in the tradition, reads almost like a synoptic version of the autobiographies that came before. Many of them involve a husband who is either irrelevant to the major narrative, like Smith's first one, or important only as an impediment to her ministry, like Smith's second. And nearly all of them dispose of these husbands through the expedient of untimely death: a death which leaves the widow free to pursue her call to preach. Nearly all of them, that is to say, create and then dissolve an apparent conflict between domestic obligations and God's uncompromising call.



To recognize this pattern in these autobiographies is to see the close connection between them and the enormously powerful nineteenth-century ideology of domesticity. Most white middle-class women of the century defined themselves as their culture defined them, according to the dictates of the cult of domesticity and the concomitant ideology of True Womanhood, which have been ably described by the historians Barbara Welter, Nancy Cott and Glenna Matthews. Let me briefly summarize their findings.

In the eighteenth century, production in America was largely centered in the home, with most Americans living and working on farms rather than in cities. Husbands and wives found themselves working together, producing food and clothing sufficient for the families' use. This situation--while it did not foster equality between the sexes; the jobs performed by men and women at home were highly differentiated--meant that women shared in the economic functioning of the household. The onslaught of industrial revolution and market capitalism, however, brought vast economic change to the new nation. Between 1780 and 1835 New England moved away from an agriculturally-based economy to a more commercial and industrial one. Families moved to urban areas in greater numbers. Goods such as candles and cloth that were once produced by women in the home could now be easily and cheaply purchased in the market. Job opportunities lured men--and young, single women--away from the home, but women, though

they were now freed from the responsibility of producing essential household goods, still found themselves tied to the home as housekeepers and mothers. Middle-class wives and husbands, mothers and sons, daughters and fathers, were now--with few exceptions--separated geographically into what became known in the literature of the day as the domestic sphere and the public sphere, the home versus the world.

And an ideology quickly arose to explain these overwhelming economic changes to the new nation: the cult of domesticity and the related one of True Womanhood. "The canon of domesticity," Cott argues, "encouraged people to assimilate such change by linking it to a specific set of sex-roles. In the canon of domesticity, the home contrasted to the restless and competitive world because its 'presiding spirit' was woman, who was 'removed from the arena of pecuniary excitement and ambitious competition'" (Bonds 67). Matthews adds that "turmoil and instability in the Jacksonian Age of the 1830s penetrated into a wide range of institutions and created great concern about social cohesion.... Not surprisingly, the home came to be seen as an especially potent symbol of integration at this time, valuable because it seemed to represent a haven of stability" (10). The home was the place to which men could return for solace after a hard day in the "competitive countinghouse" that America had become; it was the place from which America's socialized citizenry would emerge, young children having been nurtured and educated there by their

"Republican Mothers," who were practically and theoretically, if not legally, in charge of the home.<sup>4</sup> These women, unlike their eighteenth-century foremothers, though no longer producers in the household economy, now became highly valued members of the culture because as wives and mothers they preserved the future of the new nation in their new, politicized home. And although this domestic ideal, Donald Mathews argues, "eventually became a boundary to be maintained, rather than a quality to be prized," it "offered them honor and respect equal to that of men" (Religion 112). That respect was, however, purely relational: women were defined as daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers.

By 1850 the domestic sphere was thoroughly sentimentalized in literature as the locus of all that was good and moral and Christian about American culture. And just as the home became sentimentalized, so the women in charge of it became idealized in what Barbara Welter has aptly called the ideology of True Womanhood. Reading the popular literature of the day, one discovers that true women were above all else pious, pure, submissive and, of course, domestic. Piety associated with women was nothing new to the nineteenth century. As early as the mid-seventeenth century, New England clergymen had begun to notice that the majority of their members were women. In 1692 Cotton Mather, commenting on the phenomenon, proposed that women's participation in matters of religion stemmed from the pain they suffered as the

daughters of Eve; such suffering led them to God for comfort. He also speculated that women simply had more time than men of the world to devote to religion. By the eighteenth century, Enlightenment thought, with its separation of reason and emotion, the former highly valued and associated with men, the latter devalued and associated with women, asserted that women were more "naturally"--because more emotional--religious than men. And nineteenth-century thinkers adopted this view. "Christianity," argued Annie Wittenmyer in her popular Women's Work for Jesus, "comes to women with stronger claims than to men, because they are more spiritual, and have larger ability to apprehend its deep meaning and respond to its demands" (108). Women's faith is "quick, spontaneous, sincere, complete"; "little disturbed by theological controversy, not unsettled by varying theories, not startled by novel discoveries, she believes and enters into rest" (75-6). Women, so the argument goes, were by nature weak, passive vessels, who necessarily found it easier to submit to a higher power, to let God's Spirit fill their souls. Analyzing the language of nineteenth-century hymns and revivals of religion, Welter found that "whether in the divine or human order, woman was constantly urged to be swept away by a torrent of energy, not to rely on her own strength which was useless, to sink into the arms of Jesus, to become absorbed and assimilated by the Divine Will" (Dimity 93). And as historians of American religion have discovered, women in the nineteenth century did

become so absorbed, if not in the Divine Will, then at least in religion. Religion, it is argued, became "feminized."

Purity was of course an essential virtue; no Charlotte Temple, the literature emphasized, could be a true woman. Only women as pure as Clarissa Harlowe could marry and only married women and mothers could enjoy the "privileges" of domesticity that were the hallmark of the nineteenth century. It was as wife and mother that woman could best be useful. But it was submissiveness--and by extension reticence, helplessness, and a complete lack of anger and ambition--that was the most important virtue of a true woman. "Men," Welter writes, "were supposed to be religious, although they rarely had time for it, and supposed to be pure, although it came awfully hard to them, but men were the movers, the doers, the actors. Women were the passive, submissive responders" (Dimity 27-28). Women, it was argued, were different from men; hence they belonged to a different sphere, one that would preserve their delicate nature, one that would best make use of their "difference." The ideologies of domesticity and True Womanhood, then, fully explained the century's need for and glorification of separate spheres--one public and gendered male, one private and gendered female--which "provided a secure, primary, social classification for a population who refused to admit ascribed statuses, for the most part, but required determinants of social order" (Cott, Bonds 98).

And for the many (middle-class) daughters of Eve who

found themselves not so very "different" from the sons of Adam in their culture--women with high aspirations for a life outside the home, women with anger, desire, ambition, with voice--the dominant culture offered a choice: lead quiet (desperate?) lives in the home, repress all aspirations for an existence beyond its walls, and keep all passions and frustrations in check, or risk alienation and marginalization from the only spatial and social "place" which lent status--security and definition--to nineteenth-century American women.

Now the ideology I have been describing was one of great explanatory and regulative power for many white women of the nineteenth century. But for the purposes of this study--half of whose protagonists are black women--it is essential to recognize its usually unstated racial dimension.<sup>6</sup> We need to recognize, that is, the complex and ironic relationship of black women to the social order defined by domesticity. Under the ideologies of domesticity and True Womanhood, all women were not created equal: severely circumscribed by economic exploitation in ante- and post-bellum America, both enslaved and free black women were the pedestal on which their pure, white sisters stood. "While free black people could marry, their participation in the institutions of parenthood and family," historians concur, "were severely compromised by their impaired civil states" (Tate 25).<sup>7</sup> Particularly problematic were the discrimination and exploitation they faced in the marketplace, "which made economic maintenance of

the black family extremely difficult even with the incomes from a working wife and husband as well as adolescent children" (Tate 25). The black women in this study, for example, were all four born into poor families who found it necessary to hire them out as domestic servants despite their tender ages, which made them prone, as Julia Foote's story illustrates, to physical and psychological abuse.<sup>8</sup> Two of them report how financial struggles as adults again forced them into service, Zilpha Elaw before her marriage and after the death of her husband, Amanda Smith while married to and following the demise of James Smith; and both Elaw and Smith were forced to put their daughters into service.<sup>9</sup> These women, then, like most black women of the century--slave and free--were not accustomed to the "radical split equating private with home and public with work": "Perceptions of motherhood and child care as an occupation in the home comparable to male occupations in the public sector popularized by the cult of domesticity never became," Patricia Collins reminds us, "widespread among the majority of African-American women" (47, 50).<sup>10</sup>

In addition to the crippling effect of poverty on the creation and maintenance of the "traditional" home and family presided over by a "politicized" mother, crude stereotypes of black womanhood further alienated black women from the cults of domesticity and True Womanhood. Unlike white women who were defined in the literature of the day as pious and pure,

black women were alternately characterized as immoral, lascivious, aggressive beings--a Jezebel, whose sexuality ensured that her body would be protected neither by law nor by an ideology which idealized motherhood--or, at the other extreme, as extraordinarily submissive and motherly--a Mammy, a mother figure who lavished attention on the white families by whom she was enslaved or with whom she was employed as a domestic servant.<sup>11</sup> Pejoratively defined by what Claudia Tate calls "antebellum black gender constructions"--images which originated in but were never contained within the geographical or temporal borders of slavery--black women were excluded from the gendered ideologies that gave meaning to the lives of middle-class white women.

That is not to say, however, that black women were not aware of the ideologies of domesticity and True Womanhood or that they rejected the dominant discourse out of hand. As Frantz Fanon persuasively demonstrated in Black Skin, White Masks,

Every colonized people...every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality--finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle



status in proportion to his adoption of  
the mother country's cultural standards.

(18)

Nineteenth-century black women, struggling to be acknowledged by the dominant culture--to be considered "human" by the colonizers--not surprisingly found bourgeois gender conventions particularly attractive, and particularly useful. Their relationship to the cult of domesticity was, then, one of desire.<sup>12</sup> Many black women hoped that by situating themselves within a cult that promised white women respect and power (albeit secondary) they could combat the dominant culture's enslaving stereotypes, protest racist injustice, and ultimately achieve full citizenship in the republic.<sup>13</sup> Both the slave Harriet Jacobs and Harriet Wilson, a Northern free black, for example, insist in their autobiographical narratives that the quest for freedom is a quest for a home, an ideal household, a sanctuary from violation, racial abuse, and economic exploitation, a place presided over by woman. Jacobs and Wilson were, moreover, hardly alone in their quest for the domestic situation idealized by the canons of domesticity. As Francis Foster has discovered, the personal writings of many free, nineteenth-century, African-American women, reveal a desire for domestic authority ("Neither" 128).<sup>14</sup>

And as Martin Delany's The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United

States, published in 1852, illustrates, black men similarly adopted the dominant culture's gendered discourse of domesticity as part of their emancipatory discourse, as part of their effort to uplift the race. Black women, Delany argued, should confine themselves in their own homes:

We do not say too much, when we say, as an evidence of the deep degradation of our race, in the United States, that there are those among us, the wives and daughters, some of the first ladies...whose husbands are industrious, able and willing to support them, who voluntarily leave home, and become chambermaids, and stewardesses.... We have nothing to say against those whom necessity compels to do these things, those who can do no better; we have only to do with those who can, and will not, or do not do better. (qtd. in Foster, "Neither Auction Block nor Pedestal" 130)

The necessity of combating the "black image in the white mind," of proving their humanity by proving their "whiteness," led black men to define and ultimately delimit black women according to the sexist ideology of their white middle-class brethren; their efforts to elevate or "uplift" the race seemed to mandate their obeisance to the dominant culture and its

ideologies of gender.<sup>15</sup> A black woman's movements beyond the private sphere of the home, then, began to be interpreted by black men as transgressions, as further evidence of the degradation of the entire race.

### III

Now it is clear enough that the evangelical women whose autobiographies we are considering lived their lives largely in defiance of the ideologies of domesticity and True Womanhood. Their careers read almost like deliberate renunciations, point by point, of those ideologies. Though most of them were at some point married, the circumstances of their lives eventually led them into experiences not contemplated by the marriage plot--abandonment, widowhood, unavoidable self-reliance. Many of them finally lived out a kind of anti-marriage plot: the major phases of their lives--their careers as preachers--begin where the marriage plot leaves off. Their "real" stories begin where they ought to end, with the protagonist married and securely ensconced in what looks like a happy home. God's call, and the failure of the husband to act his part in the domestic arrangement, pushes plot beyond the conventional ending and ultimately requires the protagonist to reverse the terms of the conventional story of courtship. Hers becomes a progress away from marriage, security, and institutionally sanctioned

purity, and toward the "unsettled" condition of a single woman, the insecurity of homelessness, and the "promiscuity" of a woman who regularly presents herself in public. And, having stepped outside the profile of True Womanhood, these heroines found themselves traducing its most sacred terms: they were not passive but active, seeking confrontations with both Satan and secular opponents; they exerted their moral influence not by the indirection of example and insinuation, but by direct exhortation of the wicked.<sup>16</sup> And, most obviously and most importantly, they were compelled by their circumstances to replace the central metaphor of home with the counter-metaphor of literal homelessness, or itinerancy, as their religious communities called it. So far as one can determine there was no particular system or method behind these inversions of domesticity, and--if the autobiographies these women wrote are at all reliable--many of them regarded their forcible ejections from the domestic ideology with considerable alarm and confusion. God's call, or circumstance, had thrust them into unmapped territory, a kind of ideological vacuum which provided few referents by which to make sense of their lives. Of the women under study here, Nancy Towle seems to have found this "vacuum" least uncomfortable. Printing her autobiography, Vicissitudes Illustrated in the Experience of Nancy Towle, in Europe and America, in 1832, Towle appears to have experienced no qualms while boasting of her extraordinarily unconventional,

marvelously unique life, a life far outside the "required determinants of social order" (Cott 98). In fact, reading her life story one would hardly be aware of her culture's idealization of "domesticity" and woman's place in the home, either as a personal experience or as a ruling ideology, for Towle is noticeably silent on the issue; though she admits an initial reluctance to preach, doubting her ability to promote "God's righteous cause," she never once questions whether public preaching is a justifiable pursuit for women, particularly "in these last days" (12, 15). But Towle was certainly aware of a conflict between her public calling and the domestic commitments of most women of her age--an age, after all, in which nine out of ten American women were married.<sup>17</sup> Late in the autobiography she mentions the case of Mrs. Elice Smith, according to Towle the most admired female preacher of her day: "[S]ince her confinement by marriage," Towle reports, Smith "had not that religious enjoyment which she formerly had known" (184, emphasis mine). Towle, whose divine call came in the form of a "longing desire" to preach, is obviously glad to have avoided Smith's fate, glad to have "forsake[n] [her] kindred and [her] home, and through the waste-howling desert of a sinful world, 'testify the' GLAD TIDINGS 'of the grace of God'" (11). But she makes relatively little of this escape, concentrating matter-of-factly on her ministerial labors and plainly expecting her readers to do the same.

But Towle was writing early in the century, when women were a prominent part of the evangelical landscape. Numerous sects battled for control of the nation's Christian population, availing themselves of any tools they could find, even women preachers. Towle, more than any other autobiographer in this study, frequently mentions the names of famous women preachers she meets in her travels--names she expects her readers to know: Clarissa Danforth, Martha Spaulding, Judith Mathers, Elice Smith. Such women met, of course, with frequent opposition, but in an age in which preaching was frequently authorized by prophetic gifts rather than education, in which millennial expectations led male leaders to see the nation and the century as exceptional and therefore not subject to the strictures of tradition, in which lay leadership was an important part of the sectarian movement,<sup>18</sup> women preachers with an authoritative call from God were unusual but not aberrant.<sup>19</sup> Their unconventional lives evidently required no special defense or apology.

Jarena Lee, though her autobiography appeared just four years after Nancy Towle's, seems almost to have inhabited a different age, one in which the claims of "spiritual gifts" were becoming enfeebled, and those of domestic confinement were gathering strength. Thus Lee's autobiography reveals a condition of cultural displacement which was unknown to Towle, but which was the common affliction of all the other women under study here.

Lee responds to this sense of disorientation by placing at the center of her narrative the conflict which created it. In both versions of the autobiography (The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee, printed in 1836 and 1839, and the Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee, printed in 1849) she personifies the authority of domestic ideology in two major characters, her husband and the Rev. (later Bishop) Richard Allen. Sometime around 1811, Lee reports, she heard a voice commanding her to "'Go preach the Gospel!'" This voice she takes to be Satan's, so she goes to a "secret place" and applies to God for advice, whereupon "there appeared to [her] view the form and figure of a pulpit, with a Bible lying thereon" (10). Though interpreting this vision was easy enough, mounting a pulpit and preaching the gospel would be far more difficult, for the path to the pulpit was first obstructed, at least as Lee tells it, by the imposing figure of Rev. Richard Allen, then minister of the Free African Society, soon-to-become the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. And Richard Allen, when asked if Lee could preach, said "no."

Meanwhile, Lee reports, she married the Rev. Joseph Lee, whereupon it became necessary for her to "remove" from her home in Philadelphia, where she had experienced "sweet fellowship" with a congenial band of fellow Methodists, to the nearby village of Snow Hill, where she knew no one but her husband. The suggestive verb "remove" might remind us of that

prototypical narrative of Indian captivity, A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, in which each stage of the heroine's forced journey from her Christian home into the godless wilderness is termed a "remove." For Lee's removal to Snow Hill serves in her autobiography as a figure for a general loss of control which necessarily attends her participation in the marriage plot: once married, she becomes an object, moved by her husband's needs and desires, rather than her own. And Lee's account of her sojourn in Snow Hill, of her marriage to Joseph Lee, and indeed of all her struggles against the ideology which prevented her following God's call, does essentially comprise one long story of "Captivity and Restoration." Of course it was not simply the coercive power of Joseph Lee and Richard Allen which enforced this captivity; Lee recognizes that she had herself internalized the domestic ideology which prevented her from answering God's call: she was, she claims, initially "glad to hear" that the Methodists disapproved of women's preaching (11). But as a narrative strategy, she personifies that ideology in those two patriarchs. The text of her autobiography becomes at last an instrument of her revenge on them: the seven years of her marriage to Lee, the birth of her six children, and her continued frustration by Richard Allen, are shrunk to fit a single chapter, entitled "My Marriage"; it sits, like a pause for breath, between two longer ones: "My Call to Preach the Gospel" and "The Subject



of My Call to Preach Renewed." Thus Lee invites us to recognize that the marriage plot and all that went with it caused her eight-year failure to obey God's call, and caused, moreover, the dissipation of her "holy energy." Like Mrs. Elice Smith, Jarena Lee found that domesticity and religious energy do not mix.

Lee's textual revenge is actually even more complete than it first appears, for only three of the ten paragraphs in "My Marriage" actually concern her life with Joseph Lee. The rest is devoted to "restoration," a process which begins when--as occurs over and over in these autobiographies--the frustrated female preacher falls into "a state of general debility...so much so that [she] could not sit up" (14). In all likelihood, as William Andrews speculates, Lee suffered a nervous breakdown, paralyzed by a domestic situation which frustrates her deepest desires; in any case it was a "sickness," Lee remembers, from which "I did not expect to recover, and there was but one thing which bound me to earth, and this was, that I had not as yet preached the gospel to the fallen sons and daughters of Adam's race, to the satisfaction of my mind" (14). The rest of "My Marriage" is strategically devoted not, as the chapter title would imply, to domestic matters, but to the completion of her "restoration"--that is, the timely deaths of her husband and four of their six children, which make it possible for Lee to follow God's injunction at last.

Free now to leave Snow Hill, Lee returns to Philadelphia, at which point in the autobiography she begins to narrate a powerful victory for herself. Moved by "a fire shut up in [her] bones," a holy energy which threatened to destroy her if it weren't released, Lee finally extracts from Richard Allen permission to hold prayer meetings and to "exhort" (15; Jeremiah 20: 9).<sup>20</sup> But a year later, dissatisfied with her home ministries and still anxious to try her hand at preaching, she stands up in the middle of a service at Bethel and spontaneously--at least that's how she puts it in her autobiography--exhorts the congregation. We can only wonder how much her exhortation was a "supernatural impulse" and how much was a deliberate calculation on the part of a woman long denied her goal of preaching (17). Certainly, the scene in the autobiography calls our attention to her resourcefulness, courage and independence, to her desire to interrupt, literally in this case, the dominant discourses that would deny her voice. Whatever the cause, the tactic works: Bishop Allen is so impressed by her "voice" that he finally grants her permission to preach the gospel. "I now began," Lee writes, "to think seriously of breaking up housekeeping, and forsaking all to preach the everlasting Gospel," which indeed she does from 1818 until at least 1849. Thus, with God's help and by her own willingness to confront her patriarchal captors, is Jarena Lee "restored," not, as in Rowlandson's case, to the "stillness" of domesticity from which she can

"'see the salvation of the Lord,'" but to the itinerant life which had been in her dreams long before her removal to the domestic fires of Snow Hill.

From this point on in the 1836 narrative and particularly in the 1849 edition, Lee insists on her status as an "untrue," undomestic woman. The second edition is five times longer than the first, but contains no more information about her personal or family life. The eighty-odd additional pages are all devoted to her evangelical labors. The meaning of her life, this structure suggests, inheres not in the domestic sphere, not even in her relationship to God, but solely in her successful career as an itinerant preacher, as a lone woman bearing the word of the Lord across the threshold of the home, across the racial and gender boundaries which warned her to keep quiet and keep still.

The "Lives" of Zilpha Elaw, Julia Foote, Lydia Sexton, Laura Haviland, and, as I pointed out earlier, Amanda Berry Smith, all follow a similar pattern of captivity and restoration. All but Lydia Sexton and Laura Haviland narrate their struggles with disagreeable husbands who oppose their ministries; Foote's husband even threatens to imprison her in a "crazy-house" (196). All save Towle (who never married) and Sexton structure their stories to show how the timely death of a spouse and God's persistent demand that they "break up housekeeping" facilitated their exit from the stifling drudgery and constraints of domesticity and their entry into

an adventuresome preaching career. At times in these narratives the relationship between the evangelist's frustrated will and the husband's untimely death starts to look like cause and effect: when Zilpha Elaw details her husband's opposition to her new role as "public speaker," we are not surprised to hear her immediately report, "My poor husband's health about this time began visibly to decline" (84). Elaw goes on to say that God rescued her from her work in domestic service and in teaching--indeed rescued her from debt--by forcing her to preach: "my captivity," Elaw joyously announces, "vanished" when she decided at last to take up the cross and preach the gospel. Awakened, then, to her inner resources, each of these women identifies herself as a forceful, independent, ambitious and assertive woman who knows how to succeed in the competitive (masculine) world of nineteenth-century evangelicalism. "Breaking up housekeeping" inevitably leads Jarena Lee, Nancy Towle and the rest of the women in this study to break up what Nancy Miller calls the cultural "plots and plausibilities"--the fictions, in this case of domesticity and true womanhood--which hold women captive.

Having effected that escape, these autobiographers are able to write identities for themselves that must have astonished adherents to the literature of True Womanhood. The women who appear in these autobiographies are not the loving, ever-cheerful, submissive, selfless, demure creatures

described in the sentimental novels of the day. In arguing this I take issue with Jean Humez, who, in her study of five black nineteenth-century women preachers, maintains that conversion led to a "conquest of angry, malicious, revengeful feelings, as well as fear, and replacement of those with 'love for God and all mankind'" ("My Spirit Eye" 134). Certainly these women, and their white colleagues as well, seem fearless, and as evangelicals, they certainly claim to feel only love for all mankind. But my reading of these autobiographies, including those studied by Humez--Jarena Lee, Julia Foote, and Amanda Smith--reveals a strain of anger that even the Holy Spirit is unable to erase from their life stories.

Lydia Sexton, for example, portrays her relationship with her mother as far from the ideal one described by the ideology of True Womanhood. Her widowed mother, at least as Sexton remembers her, hastily remarried and agreed to adopt her husband's children and "put out" her own. Lydia was sent to her uncle Jacob Casad's, where she was treated as a servant rather than as a family member. At this point in the narrative, Sexton reports that "I thought it very strange that mother should shove me off in this way" (64). But later in the text, concluding an account of her mother's death, she loses her struggle to keep resentment beneath the surface: "Fare thee well, mother dear," she writes; "rest in peace in thy deep, damp, dark grave." To be sure, she quickly recovers

her composure: "I trust," she continues, "thy released spirit is enjoying the society of the just made perfect, the glorified spirits, and best of all, our dear Redeemer" (174). But it is clear that Sexton viewed the autobiography as an opportunity to release her own spirit, and to settle a score or two as well. At one point she asks the reader to "imagine [her] feelings" when she is denied a license to preach by the United Brethren and another man takes credit for her work:

There stands the man who boasts before  
conference of having taken sixty members  
into the church, when God had made me the  
instrument in his hand of doing that same  
work. For my work, which was reported by  
him, he is honored; and the  
recommendations held by me, who did that  
work, are laid on the table. (401)

Piety, Sexton assures us, does not equal submissiveness.

Julia Foote, to cite one more example, seethes with anger and a desire for revenge years after her own confrontations with Rev. Beman and the men of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Threatened with excommunication from her church for her professions of holiness and desire to preach, she requests an "impartial hearing" from the Methodist Quarterly Conference: "in my simplicity I did think that a body of Christian ministers would understand my case and judge righteously" (207-8). . . She finds, however, that in the

Conference justice is reserved for men. Borrowing the language of the Dred Scott decision of 1857, a decision she expected her black brethren to remember, she insists on her rights and calls attention to the slavery of sex: "My letter was slightly noticed, and then thrown under the table. It was only the grievance of a woman, and there was no justice meted out to women in those days. Even ministers of Christ did not feel that women had any rights which they were bound to respect" (207). As a character in her story, Mr. Beman, moreover, has no rights Foote is bound to respect. Portraying him as a weak patriarch, fearfully clinging to his pulpit, Foote achieves, if not justice, then a textual revenge not only on Beman and the men of the A.M.E. Zion Church, but also on the ideologies of gender which would sever--excommunicate--woman from the communion of a wide world beyond the home.

Of course their most notable act of self-assertion, their most striking attack on the ideologies of domesticity and True Womanhood, was the publication of their autobiographies, stories which enable them once again to seize a pulpit, to re-interrupt the dominant discourses which would deny them a "place" and a voice outside domesticity. "To justify the unorthodox life by writing about it," Nancy Miller has suggested, "is to reinscribe the original violation, to reviolate masculine turf": "To build a narrative around a character whose behavior is deliberately idiopathic...is not merely to create a puzzling fiction but to fly in the face of

a certain ideology (of the text and its context)" (Subject 52, 26). These autobiographers would have understood that assertion; writing in the nineteenth century, they would have understood, moreover, "as would any literate woman, expressive restrictions so stringent and so ingrained that they amounted to a culturally endorsed and culturally monitored feminine community of expression" (Dobson xii). Women were welcome in the literary marketplace, but all traces of a woman's independence or "deviance" from gender norms--all passion, anger, ambition, and strength, in other words--must be studiously erased from their manuscripts. To do otherwise was to risk becoming, in the words of Nina Baym, "the occasion for a generalized gender terror" (Novels 266). This was, as we have seen, a risk they were willing to take. To Nancy Towle, autobiographical writing was more than a "useful" means by which to convert others; she speaks of her writing as a good evangelical might have spoken of the Bible: it "had been," she confesses, "a sort of life-buoy to me; both upon the land, and on the sea" (109).<sup>21</sup>

Though no doubt aware of the ways in which "private" journals such as their own were often considered "public"--publishable--documents in the nineteenth century, these women went on to organize their journals into what they considered autobiography proper, a genre they understood to be more self-assertive and more public (masculine) than the diary. For all but Sexton, Haviland, and Smith, however, the quest to



communicate with the world through the written word could not end there. Despite, for example, the fact that Jarena Lee's status as the first woman licensed to preach under the auspices of the African American Methodist Episcopal Church would seem to lend her "public" story historical, even institutional, significance, no publisher, evangelical or otherwise, offered to publish her autobiography; not surprisingly publishers were unwilling to support literary endeavors which would recreate and "fix" in print a woman's "original violations" of man's spatial and social turf. Undeterred by this absence of support, however, Lee, Towle, Elaw, and Foote issued their stories at their own expense, thereby demonstrating an extraordinary degree of confidence in themselves and in the value of their unorthodox experiences: experiences Nancy Towle, Jarena Lee, and Zilpha Elaw--like so many women and minority autobiographers--insist were "written by [them]selves"; experiences Julia Foote considers no less important and meaningful than the Word of God: "If anyone arise from the perusal of this book, scoffing at the word of truth which he has read, I charge him to prepare to answer for the profanation at the peril of his soul" (226).

#### IV

Breaking up housekeeping, then, these female evangelists also broke away from an ideology which had confined them

spatially, socially, culturally. They went on, as we have seen, to write autobiographies which not only suppress references to the domestic, but also call attention to behavior so unlike (so unbecoming) a "woman." Itinerant preachers, they were literally and figuratively "homeless," having taken seriously both the command of Christ--"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14: 26)--and the words of the Apostle Paul enjoining them to "be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1). "He that loseth his life"--with its familiar patterns and identifiable meaning--"for my sake," Christ promised his disciples, "shall find it" (Matthew 10: 39).

Ultimately, and inevitably, however, Nancy Towle, Jarena Lee and their sister itinerant evangelists were lost without some familiar referent that applied to women of the nineteenth century. They needed, for one thing, to justify themselves to an age that regarded them with considerable suspicion. No matter how courageous and independent these itinerant preachers were, they never quite ceased to see themselves through the gaze of a demanding, critical public, which found in women's "immodest" appearances on public stages cause for great alarm. These autobiographers are intensely aware of the

suspicion that they excite in their public: Knowing well how their appearance in the pulpit would be received, they routinely shrink--or at least claim to--from God's call because of their fear of public scrutiny or, as they so often put it, because of their "fear of man," their "man-fearing spirit" (Towle 22; Sexton 217).

Having rejected the plot for which many poor black women longed and by which most nineteenth-century white women were defined, these female itinerants were no doubt fearful that they were in a sort of no (wo)man's land, being neither male nor female. And they would face countless hecklers who would tell them just that: you are "not a woman," the A. M. E. preacher Jarena Lee was told, "'but a man dressed in female clothes'" (23). Or as an opponent of women's preaching put it to Lydia Sexton of the significantly denominated United Brethren, God made "'roosters to crow, not hens'" (396). Even to reply to these detractors involved the autobiographer in a kind of inevitable collaboration with them. "To the extent that the autobiographical text can be thought of as a mirror," Margo Culley has said, "it is a mirror gazed at in public" (Culley 9). Thus it must employ a publicly accessible and publicly valorized language, which in the case of nineteenth-century women, meant the language of domesticity and True Womanhood.

Nor was this collaboration with the culture of domesticity entirely unwitting or unwilling, for these women

were inescapably creatures of their own times and places. Although they claim to have no home in the world, to be "strangers in a strange land," they necessarily participated in a historically specific context. "Whatever else modern anthropology asserts," Clifford Geertz argues, "it is firm in the conviction that men unmodified by the customs of particular places do not in fact exist, have never existed, and most important, could not in the very nature of the case exist" (5). Or, as Elizabeth Fox-Genovese recently put it, "we know ourselves through the languages available to us and the languages that we know inescapably influence what we perceive ourselves to be" ("Between Individualism and Fragmentation" 25). The hectoring, critical voices of their enemies were sometimes echoed by inner voices, speaking in similar accents. "I thought," Sexton reports, "if I were only a man it would be no hardship to me, nor even a cross, to preach, but rather a pleasure. But for me, a woman, to preach, even if I could; to make myself a subject of ridicule and comment among my friends and kindred..." (213). Lydia Sexton refers here to a fear common among prophets of all ages, who quite naturally felt somewhat unprepared for a task that would render them socially marginal, but the phrase reminds us that women called to preach faced a challenge that Jonah and Charles Finney could hardly imagine. "Forsaking all to preach the everlasting Gospel" surely meant more to these women than leaving home and family; it meant--as Jarena Lee discovered

when she was accused of being a man in disguise--forsaking their very identities, particularly their sexual identity (18, emphasis mine). And for the African-American women in this study--Jarena Lee, Zilpha Elaw, Julia Foote and Amanda Smith--it meant, moreover, the loss of an identity which they had only begun to negotiate with the dominant culture, a culture that had long regarded black women as just the sort of "promiscuous" creatures who would immodestly expose themselves before a "promiscuous" assembly. Failing to conform to the standards of domesticity, black women risked confirming the racist stereotypes which they struggled to defeat.

Hence, while these daring women conceive of their autobiographies as an opportunity to "reviolate masculine turf," to voice a critique of the ideologies of domesticity and True Womanhood, their autobiographies also reveal how the culturally familiar, culturally validated language of domesticity could be put to subversive use; borrowing the language of domesticity, they not only made familiar their unfamiliar lives, they also justified their very rejection of the century's ideology of gender. Having embarked on a career which thrust them into a crisis of gender identity, these "crowing hens" naturally turned to the ideologies they long flouted as itinerant preachers. Thus domesticity, forcibly ejected from these women's lives, finds its way back into their "Lives," providing there an important element of narrative structure.

Zilpha Elaw's spiritual autobiography, Memoirs of the Life, Religious Experience, Ministerial Travels and Labours of Mrs. Zilpha Elaw, published in London in 1846, is a case in point. The bow which Elaw executes in the general direction of domesticity is a relatively simple maneuver, though an effective one. Rather than quarrel with her culture's expectations for women, Elaw freely embraces the ideology of domesticity and separation of spheres. Even after leading an exciting and independent life as an independent itinerant minister both in America and in England, Elaw maintains throughout her autobiography that women are by nature inferior to men and in need of their supervision." She lashes out with particular vigor against independent women: "the fancied independence and self-control in which they indulge," she insists, "has no foundation either in nature or Scripture"--those immemorial textual guides to God's will (61). And unlike many of her contemporaries, she makes no effort to reinterpret Paul's strictures against female preachers: "[I]n the ordinary course of Church arrangement and order," Paul's restrictions apply. However, she continues, "the Scriptures make it evident that this rule was not intended to limit the extraordinary directions of the Holy Ghost, in reference to female Evangelists, or oracular sisters..."--directions such as she herself had received (124). Thus can she accept her culture's rules about the subordination of women and claim for herself the status of exception. A true woman's place, Elaw

maintains, is in the home, where she is governed by men, defined by relations, and responsible for the socialization of America's children; but in her own highly unusual case, these restrictions do not apply. She frees herself from the restrictions against women posited by Paul and the ideology of domesticity, while simultaneously, by failing to critique Paul's restrictions, reinscribing herself within that ideology.

It is an Emersonian moment in the autobiography--and found in the autobiographies of many of her contemporaries and many of her medieval visionary foremothers, a moment no doubt common to visionaries of all ages. And, like Emerson's ideology of liberation, it is simultaneously conservative and radical. It does not challenge hegemonic conceptions of black women's role in nineteenth-century culture; most women, according to Elaw, should be guided by "nature and Scripture" to piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. And it is certainly elitist, for are not those elevated by the "spirit" an elite, a righteous remnant? And yet it is revolutionary; for who might not be called to that elite, and what changes might it not accomplish, on the authority of the "spirit"?

In fact, though Elaw tries hard to avoid treading on the general rule of women's confinement, she ends up doing exactly that. Her autobiography in many ways undermines the stance that she so persistently and forcefully maintains. Susan K. Harris, in her insightful study 19th-Century American Women's

Novels: Interpretive Strategies, gives us a way to consider the paradox of Elaw's narrative. Borrowing from the work of Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, and Gerald Prince, Harris persuasively argues that the oft-denigrated nineteenth-century "sentimental" novels can be and were read "in a multilayered, gender-specific mode" (30). In other words, these novels function for the reader on two levels. There is the "cover story" which presented to the public the hegemonic ideology of domesticity and True Womanhood; but there is also a subversive plot, in which this ideology is undermined. In Susan Warner's Queechy, for example, the cover story of a young orphaned heroine rescued from a life of hard work and poverty by marriage to a wealthy English gentleman, is at odds with the bulk of the novel, which emphasizes the girl's courage, strength, and competence in the face of seemingly countless difficulties.<sup>23</sup>

A similar montage of cover story and subversive story can be found in Elaw's spiritual autobiography. The cover story presents a woman no different from her readers in accepting her subordinate position in her household, even to the point of "meekly" and "silently" coping with her husband's challenges to her religious authority. But the narrative as a whole describes a powerful, courageous woman who traveled extensively, withstood excessive opposition and entered the public sphere through her preaching and her writing. She titles her work Memoirs of the Life, Religious Experience,



Ministerial Travels, and Labours of Mrs. Elaw and, as in all the autobiographies in this study, it is the travels and labours that dominate the text. Fully two-thirds of the autobiography is given over to mind-numbingly detailed accounts of her travels in America and England and of her tremendous success therein. Though she assures us that she had no part in choosing a career beyond the home, that she has never been other than a submissive, "true" woman at heart, the text in our hands, whose 110 pages are taken up mainly with the travels of a highly independent and adventuresome woman, betrays these assurances.<sup>24</sup> What she gave with one hand to her century's idealization of the domestic sphere--and women's submission within it--she took away with the other.

In the autobiography of Jarena Lee, we can see a slightly more sophisticated version of Elaw's approach. Lee too--though a much more radical woman than Elaw, fully capable of deconstructing the Pauline prohibitions against female preaching--at times claims to be simply an exception to generally valid restrictions on women's lives, as when she reminds skeptical readers that "as unseemly as it may appear now-a-days for a woman to preach...nothing is impossible with God" (11).

But explaining God's radical plots and plausibilities was, if not an impossible, then surely a daunting assignment. It could, for example, impose embarrassments to which the author can respond only with silence. Lee, for instance,

tells us at the end of "My Marriage" that two of her six children survived. One she never again mentions in either edition of the autobiography; we never even learn the sex of the child, let alone its name or what became of it. The other, a son, she left with her mother when she took to the road as an itinerant preacher. We hear of him twice more, once when he commences his education with Bishop Allen, and again when he is converted. These odd silences about her children and family life surely reveal Lee's defensiveness about her willed homelessness in a culture structured by the gendered division between work place and home place, about her decision to ignore the pleas of a Martin Delany and "voluntarily leave home." Perhaps Lee found that "while the culture tolerated and...even admired writers who were also mothers, it denied these women the possibility of recording their struggles as mothers. The myth of maternal love rendered such a record taboo" (Reimer 208)."

The one instance in which she violates this taboo is telling. Apologizing to her readers for abandoning her son once she is licensed to preach, she begins speaking from a rhetorical space securely within the cult of domesticity:

During that time I kept house with my little son, who was very sickly. About this time I had a call to preach at a place about thirty miles distant, among the Methodists, with whom I remained one

week, and during the whole time, not a thought of my little son came into my mind; it was hid from me, lest I should have been diverted from the work I had to do, to look after my son. (18, emphasis mine)

Lee carefully selects the passive voice here. Her audience must not think that she deliberately put aside thoughts of her ailing son. She is not an unnatural mother. Without compulsion from God, the ultimate patriarch, she would have been unable to forget her son and follow her career. What looks like independence on her part, she assures us, is really just the opposite; she is as submissive to her Master as any other true woman. This is the story, Lee insists, of The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee, a Coloured Lady. And indeed, as a "poor black woman" routinely denied the privileges associated with the status of True Womanhood, she--along with Zilpha Elaw, Julia Foote and Amanda Smith--faced the complicated task of, in the words of Hazel Carby, reconstructing womanhood: "no black woman, regardless of income, education, refinement, or character," Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham reminds us, "enjoyed the status of lady" ("African-American" 261). Living outside the cult of domesticity, whose dictates applied only to white women, Lee here lays claim to the dominant ideology's rhetoric and thus maneuvers, in the course of this apology, to a new space on

the margins of the domestic ideology: she reconstructs herself so that she occupies, for a time, a territory somehow between the gendered spheres.<sup>26</sup>

This was the territory Lydia Sexton searched for in her 1882 autobiography. This 655-page tome hides behind a subtitle forty-five words long, not one of them, oddly, a first-person pronoun: The Story of Her Life Through a Period of over Seventy-two Years, from 1799 to 1872. Her Early Privations, Adventures, & Reminiscences. Clouds and Sunshine, As Child, Wife, Mother, and Widow; As Minister of the Gospel; As Prison Chaplain. Her Missions of Help and Mercy. This onomastic overload certainly de-emphasizes the un-feminine self-assertion that autobiography necessarily entails. By virtually compelling us to think of her in terms of her relational roles, Sexton seeks to assure her readers that she occupies comparable positions in the private domestic sphere. Her careers as minister and prison chaplain were secondary, and even they, the title's final words suggest, were in woman's proper sphere of "helpmeet." But the length of the title reveals a certain defensiveness; it invites us, moreover, to consider her autobiography, like Elaw's, as multi-layered, to keep an eye peeled for the subversive plot beneath the "cover story" of Sexton's domesticity. And, in fact, the autobiography does finally emerge as the story of a woman who shed her relationships to make room for her lifework; Sexton deletes, as it were, her personal life to

make room in the text for her career. She writes so little, for example, about her husband Joseph Sexton that we are left to imagine him rather as Hawthorne imagined Ann Hutchinson's husband, "who is mentioned in history only as attending her footsteps, and whom we may conclude to have been (like most husbands of celebrated women) a mere insignificant appendage of his mightier wife" (23-4). Sexton's autobiography seems to imply what Margaret Fuller could say explicitly: "If any individual live too much in relations...he becomes a stranger to the resources of his own nature..." (119).

Still, Sexton dutifully and lengthily recounts for her readers her reluctance to obey God's command that she preach, because "that was not woman's place"--neither spatially nor socially (208). "Woman," Sexton argued to herself, "was made a helpmeet for man, and she ought to know she was not called on to help in the ministry" (208). Thus had she been taught to think, by the ideology of domesticity. But Sexton, extraordinarily, was able to recognize her imprisonment within that ideology, and was able to recognize the ideology itself as a cultural construct: "I was so fixed in my ideas and conceptions of my duties and sphere of action by my early training, that my prejudices yielded very stubbornly to my convictions--indeed little short of alarm at my very unpardonable neglect of Christian duty" (208-9).

To recognize one's prejudices as such is not necessarily to dismiss them, as Sexton appears to have realized; her

prejudices, like most, including those of her imagined readers, prove rather stubborn. But to recognize the "constructedness" of such prejudices is to open up the possibility of "reconstructing" them, which turns out to be the project of Sexton's long autobiography. Since neither "prejudices" nor "convictions" will give way entirely, Sexton's job--both in living her life and in writing it--was to manage some negotiation between them.

Torn between those two powerful motives, Sexton takes up her cross and enters the ministry only after suffering ten years of poverty and "despondency" and finally the illness of her son. "I surely felt," she reports, "this affliction to be a dispensation toward me, and that if I permitted the love of my family to intervene between me and the full performance of my duty one of the idols of my heart would be torn away from me" (223). God would spare her child, she recognized, only if she left her home and family to preach His word. And so she reluctantly agrees to accept her "duty" beyond the home, to embark upon a highly public life, for eminently domestic reasons. Thus she simultaneously endorses the domestic creed and justifies her own escape from it: indeed uses the very terms of the creed to effect that escape.

Having learned this useful maneuver, Sexton employs it repeatedly in the text. When her son Thomas dies, Sexton is absent on a speaking tour. And though she pours out her anguish for his loss, she must continue to preach. When

criticized by a Mrs. Hammond, who had "all the warm emotions of a mother's love but without the pressing call of the Spirit to the ministry," for being absent at his death, Sexton defends her actions (343). She does so, however, not as a radical feminist might, with protestations of her rights as woman, but with an appeal to a higher authority, an appeal which inventively invites her readers to consider domesticity as a metaphor, not a literal condition:

But if you were working for God, in a work that would tell to your advantage and the advantage of hundreds of others of the human family in time and eternity, or if thereby you were an instrument in the hands of God in waking them up to see their dangerous condition by nature and practice...if your motive-force was to promote the glory of God and the salvation of never-dying souls, you would then feel as I do. (343, emphasis mine)

Her command of domestic ideology thus makes it possible for her to order her life by an essentially new set of priorities. At another point in the text, she writes that she has heard news--false, as it turns out--of her son Zadok's death. Rather than wring her hands and head for his home, she "attend[s] to [her] Master's business," keeping the preaching appointment she had made, knowing that she would be accused of

being an "unnatural mother" (590). Sexton spoke fluently the language of that creed, but increasingly she was able to turn it to her own uses. She discovered a place for herself on the seemingly uninhabitable frontier between domestic and public realms, becoming both an outsider and insider. She has abandoned her family, but only to be a spiritual mother to all mankind in this millennial age. She employed the language of the domestic ideology that placed motherhood at the center of all that was good, even as she rejected the role that language would prescribe for herself: "Mother in Israel" was the highest compliment each of these women paid to another sister of the spirit.<sup>27</sup>

What Sexton was developing was not so much a rejection of domesticity as a radical re-definition of it: her "domestic" obligations continually push her outside the confines of her literal home. Julia Foote, in her autobiographical sketch A Brand Plucked from the Fire, published in 1879, developed this strategy fully. Like the others, Foote embodies the claims of domesticity in her husband, an unsanctified man who opposes both her claim to sanctification and her call to preach. Thus, again like the others, she finds herself torn between her religious beliefs and her domestic obligations, between God and her husband. Should she be a true woman, submissive to her husband, or a true Christian, obedient to her God? Should she meekly abandon her call to preach the gospel or boldly pursue it? "It was difficult for me," writes Foote of her



relation to her husband, "to mark the exact line between disapprobation and Christian forbearance and patient love" (197).

But God provides her with the verbal formula which dissolves this apparent conflict: "'For thy Maker," He tells her, "is thine husband'" (197; Isaiah 54: 5). With this phrase Foote stated the solution toward which all her predecessors had been groping. She has re-constructed the canon of domesticity, transporting it from the realm of literal social fact to that of metaphor.

Once this transformation is effected, literal domestic relations virtually disappear from Foote's narrative: George Foote, for example, reappears only once, when Julia--with her grief notably restrained--reports his death at sea. He is replaced by another demanding patriarchal authority, another master and husband, but one who provides for and protects his "wives" who are busy "mothering" "the human family in time and eternity." Long stretches of the autobiography are then devoted to elaborating this metaphoric brand of domesticity. Foote's God, for instance, is not only a husband but a lover whose attentions are described in surprisingly sensuous terms: "My hand was given to Christ, who led me into the water and stripped me of my clothing, which at once vanished from sight. Christ then appeared to wash me, the water feeling quite warm" (203).

"Thy maker is thy husband," God told Foote; therefore the

whole world was "home," and every converted soul was a son or a daughter. The elaboration of this metaphoric pattern is the work of many of the autobiographies under consideration here. Even the conservative Elaw, who never quite rejects the literal meaning of domesticity, is happy enough when circumstances lead her into the realm of metaphor:

I was now accounted a full member of the [Methodist] society, and privileged with the communion of the Lord's Supper. In this happy home I continued nearly seven years, and only parted from it when I left my situation. In the year 1810, I surrendered myself in marriage to Joseph Elaw.... (61, emphasis mine)"

This "home" was the fellowship of what Lydia Sexton calls the "human family in time and eternity" and in communion with God (343). Such a family, unlike a literal one, was infinitely capacious; each new convert was invited in. Having converted a young woman who had once opposed her, Elaw concludes: "thus one of my enemies became my child in the gospel, and my sister in the Lord" (106)." Elaw was forced out of this happy family temporarily, during her thirteen-year marriage to Joseph Elaw, but after her husband's death, God replaces him admirably. When she was baptized, not long after Joseph's demise, she found herself "so overwhelmed with the love of God, that self seemed annihilated: I was completely lost and

absorbed in the divine fascinations" (61). Indeed God is able to replace all other social connections for Elaw; her conversion even significantly alters her understanding of and relationship with the Mitchells, the white family to whom she was indentured from the age of 12 to 18, as a result of her own family's financial difficulties: "Knowing myself to be an adopted child of divine love," she remembers, "I claimed God as my Father, and his Son Jesus as my dear friend" (60).<sup>30</sup>

Amanda Smith may carry this strategy the furthest. Born a slave and forced into domestic service throughout much of her life, Amanda Smith had found her difficulties increased by her literal marriage to James Smith, who wouldn't provide for her--if we believe Amanda--or couldn't--as was often the case among free black laborers discriminated against and economically exploited in nineteenth-century America. The contrast between Smith's hapless spouse and her divine provider and protector is marked.<sup>31</sup> Early in her narrative, Smith tells us that she trusts God so much that despite her poverty she abandons her decision to accept a position as servant, when the Lord says to her, "'Go Preach,'" "for it was not the will of the Lord for me to confine myself as a servant in any family, but to go and work in His vineyard as the Spirit directed me" (148-9). Even stronger is the contrast between James Smith's stubborn will, which usually frustrates Amanda's, and God's benevolent will, which invariably coincides with that of His servant. At one point Smith badly

wishes to stay in a home which boasts a luxurious feather bed, but she dutifully submits the matter to God--who turns out precisely to share her taste in sleeping arrangements. "Oh, how wonderfully God provided for me," Smith exclaims (257).

God's extraordinary, husbandly solicitude for his evangelists is one of the commonest ideas in these autobiographies. Not only does He provide for them economically and ensure their comfort, but, at least as these autobiographers recall things, He is not at all backward about protecting them from their many enemies--an astonishing number of whom seem to have experienced extreme misfortune not long after offending a female evangelist. The God of these autobiographies is the God who addresses His righteous remnant in the 54th chapter of Isaiah, one of the most frequently quoted and paraphrased chapters in this tradition of women's evangelical autobiography: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn" (Isaiah 54: 17). When Lydia Sexton finds herself "abused" by a Brother S. and some other Copperheads, "on account of [her] Abolitionism," she simply trusts the Lord to "bring him down into the pit of destruction" (540). A bit later Brother S. quarrels with his church, and the members refer the dispute to God for disposition: "When they arose [Brother S.] was as pale as death. Within one week he was a corpse. Somehow or other many in that community thought it was a providential interposition"

(540-1). Merely to disagree with these women, it seems, was to risk serious trouble with their Divine protector.

Such a protector was a useful thing to have, for the world of itinerant ministry was a surprisingly violent and dangerous one, calling occasionally for decidedly "masculine" responses. Peter Cartwright, for instance--a thoroughly pious Methodist, to all appearances--recounts several instances when he found it necessary to wade into a crowd of listeners, locate the heckler who had disrupted his sermon, and beat the miscreant senseless.<sup>32</sup> Afterwards his sermons would proceed, usually without further disturbance. Cartwright's solution to the problem of opposition was usually unavailable to female evangelists, and the ideology of True Womanhood, with its demand of silent suffering and endless forgiveness, would have forbidden it in any case. But with their usual resourcefulness, they discovered when writing their lives other ways of punishing their opponents, ways which positioned them, as was so often the case, both inside and outside the dominant cultural paradigms of the day.

Lydia Sexton, for example, uses her autobiography to document a protracted conflict with a preacher who once supported her, but then entered a formal complaint against her at the quarterly Conference. She decides that she must confront him in person--"Either myself or somebody else must be condemned" (424)--but God directs her to Psalm 55:

For it was not an enemy that reproached

me; then I could have borne it.... But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance....As for me, I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me.... But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee.

Here she finds courage in typology. She can easily rely on God to "sustain the right and put down the wrong" and remain at the same time true to Catherine Beecher's strictures against woman as combatant (424). Rather than speak of their anger and frustrations directly, Sexton and her sisters displace those "un-feminine" emotions onto God, thus achieving outside the domestic sphere the gendered division of labor which prevailed inside it. They would have the reader believe that they are not angry at the hecklers who disrupt their worship services or at the male clergy who will not allow them use of their meeting houses or at husbands who refuse to support their calling or, as is more often the case, oppose them outright. The anger, though fully justified, is God's. Once again these autobiographers locate themselves on the margins, enjoying both the security of domestic conventions and the freedom to re-interpret them radically.

What these texts do, then, is reject the apparent, literal meaning of the "text" of domesticity, but then rescue

that text--and their own autobiographical texts as well--by re-casting it as metaphor. Rather than try to ignore the vast cultural consensus amid which they had lived all their lives, they attempt a radical re-interpretation of domesticity--a potentially subversive re-reading of a canon whose apparent meaning they could not accept, but whose authority they could not altogether reject.

To understand their project in these terms is to recognize perhaps surprising affinities between these American "Bible Christians" and the Biblical "Higher Critics" of Gottingen and elsewhere, whose radical challenges to the literal reliability of the Bible were among the scandals of the age. And in fact some of these evangelists--despite their exclusion from formal theological training--actually do attempt a bit of Higher Criticism--though they attempt it not to question Biblical authority, in the manner of Strauss and Renan, but to defend the Bible against male translators who had distorted its meaning. "Make sport and laugh as we may," Sexton righteously tells her opponents, "we cannot revoke God's decrees; for it is said that heaven and earth shall pass away, but the word of God shall endure forever" (254). These women knew, however, how easily the word of God could be misappropriated by men who would bring "disjointed passages out of Scripture to bear them out" (Foote 193). Thus Julia Foote, resentful of having "to prove [her] right to preach the Gospel" by "show[ing] credentials from heaven," searches the

Bible for precedents of women's prophesying and preaching, anticipating the revisionary acts of contemporary feminist theologians (209).<sup>33</sup> Struggling to maintain their positions as itinerant preachers, all the women in this study look to the prophet Joel: "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy," and, in fact, as these women so often remind their readers, Joel's prophecy did come to pass on the day of Pentecost (Joel 2: 28; Acts 2:16). Julia Foote, moreover, assures her readers that not all translations of the Bible can be trusted: "The same word, which, in our common translation, is now rendered a 'servant of the church,' in speaking of Phebe (Rom. xix. 1.), is rendered 'minister' when applied to Tychicus. Eph. vi. 21." (209).<sup>34</sup> Perhaps more interesting, however, is the cultural critique that follows: "When Paul said, 'Help those women who labor with me in the Gospel,' he certainly meant that they did more than to pour out tea" (209). Rather than reject the Bible in the manner of an Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Foote reinterprets it, at once challenging the hierarchy of the church which opposes her right to preach and critiquing her culture's ideology of domesticity which restricts women to a superficial life--by millennial Christian standards--of drawing-room rituals. Foote would certainly have agreed with the contemporary feminist theologian Letty Russell, who reminds us that Christian servanthood does not equal servility.

More commonly, though, these women undertake what might



be called a "Higher Criticism" of their own cultural paradigms, especially that of domesticity. It was, like the Bible, a canonical text which they could neither abandon nor take at face value. And so they attempt a kind of Bloomian "strong misreading" of that text--in their cases a misreading motivated by political rather than Oedipal anxiety. Their culture presented them with an ideology whose central symbol was the home, the locus of social and moral stability in a world otherwise characterized as "heartless." The central personage of this ideology was a wife and mother, situated securely in the home, dispensing hot food and moral education in equal measure. She was a "true woman," which is to say morally alert, powerful in her own way, but passive, conciliatory and above all private; she worked her will upon the world by indirection--by personal example and subtle insinuation. Considered as a narrative, her story was governed by the marriage plot: her arrival at the domestic scene was "the end," the "jumping-off place," "the ~~sumum~~ bonum,--the height of feminine ambition" (Fanny Fern, "The Tear of a Wife," qtd. in Dobson 112). The lives led by these women, considered as cultural texts, as well as the "Lives" written by them, undermine these conventions systematically. Yet rather than reject domestic ideology out of hand, they transform it into a metaphorical discourse, a language which speaks to their own needs to live a "strange," mobile existence beyond the four walls of home.

## V

Carolyn Heilbrun, in her pathbreaking feminist study Writing a Woman's Life, disparages women who merely "put God or Christ in the place of man," for, continues Heilbrun, "the results are the same: one's own desires and quests are always secondary" (21). No doubt she would find in these narratives ample justification for this judgment, for all of them--whatever radical intentions they attempt to disclose--end up doing so in profoundly conventional terms. Whatever "wild visions" these evangelists may have experienced, when they came to write about them they found available only a very old and very familiar language with which to do the job. Though their lives were highly independent, their life stories were quite the opposite, woven from those "webs of significance," those ideologies, which bound other nineteenth-century women.

They could hardly have been otherwise. As Clifford Geertz argues, "culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be casually attributed; it is a context..." (14). These women necessarily speak from that context; they speak, moreover, a language in which all words, as Bakhtin says, are necessarily "half someone else's" (293): "the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language...but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions..." (294). At times their stories

read like so many issues of Godey's Lady's Book, one of the preeminent texts of the cult of domesticity. God is a husband, lover, father, Master. They are mothers, converting the souls of men, mothers whose lives are far from being completely and sufficiently independent. They are pens in God's hand.

It is important, though, to recognize how emphatically these women themselves would have rejected Heilbrun's accusation. Although they acknowledge that their eccentric lives were thrust upon them by the "Pentecostal power" of a heavenly Father, they also want us to know that they have greatly benefitted from this imposition, that they have revelled in the adventurous lives He required of them. In fact, because His imperatives coincide so closely with their own, they need not--in Heilbrun's phrase--"erase all their own desires" from their autobiographies in order to write God in (48). Marriage to God, these texts insist, actually frees the heroine from what Heilbrun calls the "lifetime of marginality" which followed marriage to most nineteenth-century men (21): as Julia Foote explains in the midst of her struggles with the men of the A.M.E. Zion Church, "I saw, as never before, that the best men were liable to err, and that the only safe way was to fall on Christ..." (208). Or as Margaret Fuller put it in 1855, "I wish Woman to live, first, for God's sake. Then she will not make an imperfect man her god, and thus sink to idolatry" (176). God, that is to say, rewrites these women's

lives, but somehow His act of assertion does not preclude--indeed it is the condition of--their own similar acts. He encourages them to reject the plot written for them by their culture in favor of a radical one of his own design: yet God's plot somehow empowers each of these women to write her own story.

To be sure--God having failed to provide them a radical language in which to record their radical lives--they had to make do with the familiar old discourse of domesticity. Without it, in fact, they could hardly have made their stories intelligible, to their readers or even to themselves. But they used this inescapable network of meanings for their own personal and even selfish purposes. Though they speak in the language of their day, the ideas, the lives, the life stories that language reveals are revolutionary: they take the word, appropriate it for their own uses, and "populate it with [their] own intention[s]" (Bakhtin 293). Indeed, one of their first tasks as preachers had been to "repopulate" the Word of God, which had long been "half someone else's," had long "served other people's [read man's] intentions," had long been appropriated in arguments against women's preaching (Bakhtin 294).<sup>3</sup> Even Christ, Jarena Lee sarcastically remarks, had long been "half someone else's": "If the man may preach, because the Saviour died for him, why not the woman? seeing he died for her also. Is he not a whole Saviour, instead of half one?" (11).

By claiming this "whole Saviour"--indeed by marrying him and placing Him patriarchally at the center of their lives--these women make "the world their household," the pulpit their kitchen, and their readers their family." "I feel at home, thank God, in every place," Nancy Towle professes, "and nevermore, than when urging my flight with the utmost speed, from city to city--whether by land, or by sea" (Preface 11, Towle's emphasis). By "mis-reading" the dominant discourses of their day and generation, Nancy Towle and her sister autobiographers convert a gendered ideology into a vehicle of liberation. Their doing so can help us remember that a radical subjectivity need not be oppositional, that even a dissent fully involved in the "overpopulated" language of the dominant culture may articulate, powerfully, the desires of powerless people.

## Chapter 2

### "Feverish restlessness and mighty movement": Female Evangelists in the Marketplace of Salvation

"I labored with unutterable longing to enter into that rest that remaineth for the people of God." Phoebe Palmer, Life and Letters of Mrs. Phoebe Palmer

"What had I on earth to do  
With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly?"  
Robert Browning, Asolando

"You can never imagine what it is to have a man's force of genius in you, and yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl."  
George Eliot, Daniel Deronda

"Often when the radical voice speaks about domination we are speaking to those who dominate. Their presence changes the nature and direction of our words." bell hooks, Yearning

At the beginning of her Religious Experience, Jarena Lee describes her protracted conversion as a contest between action and passivity. Passivity, she tells her readers, is a condition of sinfulness. Paralyzed by "the weight of [her] sins" and "not knowing how to run immediately to the Lord for help, [she] was driven of Satan, in the course of a few days, and tempted to destroy [herself]" (4, my emphasis). Of course the passive voice can be found throughout traditional spiritual autobiographies in reference not only to one's response to Satan but also to the presence of God. And Lee is not unusual in claiming both active and passive roles in her conversion. But for her, passivity in the matter of salvation is dangerous business: it leaves one vulnerable to

the actions of Satan. "To run" is to take charge of her salvation, to educate herself about the new dispensation, to seek "a knowledge of the being and character of the Son of God" (8).

And having learned to run, she was reluctant ever to stop. Recounting her evangelical travels, Lee reminds us again and again how far her legs carried her during a particular day. She writes on one occasion, for example, "From this place I walked twenty-one miles, and preached with difficulty to a stiff-necked and rebellious people..." (23). Indeed, Lee was evidently fascinated by her mileage totals and had no doubt that her readers would be as well: "I have travelled, in four years, sixteen hundred miles and of that I walked two hundred and eleven miles, and preached the kingdom of god to the falling sons and daughters of Adam, counting it all joy for the sake of Jesus" (36, my emphasis). In 1835 alone, she reports, she "travelled 721 miles, and preached 692 sermons"; in 1836, 556 miles and 111 sermons (77). She kept up this relentless pace of travel and preaching because, she says, she "felt still more like wearing out in the service of God," or because, as she claims in the conclusion to her autobiography, she "felt it better to wear out than to rust out--and so expect to do until death ends the struggle" (77, 97).

This urge to quantify, to wear the reader out with statistics, is not peculiar to Jarena Lee; all the women in

this tradition of evangelical autobiography seem to feel a powerful imperative to quantify their lifework. Nancy Towle reports midway through her autobiography that she had traveled 15,000 miles and escaped countless dangers which she carefully chronicles for her readers (106 ff). Later in the autobiography, having concluded the text once and then returned to it after a printer's lengthy delay, she could not resist the urge to add another statistic: in that year alone she had traveled 5,000 miles as an itinerant preacher (227). Indeed, most of her autobiography is a report of her movement from place to place--from "Newbury, Haverhill, Bradford, and Portsmouth" in the winter of 1825, then on to Hampton, British America, England, and New York. As if this exhaustive account of her travels were not enough, near the end of the work, she once again calls our attention to her labors as a female itinerant:

During the space, that I have travelled,  
to and fro, in the earth; I have been in  
labours more abundant. Besides my  
travels, in much painfulness, cold,  
hunger, thirst, and nakedness: I have  
sometimes spoken, from six to eight times  
a week, for months in succession: and  
seldom, less, than one hour, upon the  
stretch. With much exhortation and  
prayer, for individuals; not unfrequently



till midnight, and in some instances, till the dawn of morning. I have also kept a diary; in which I have sometimes written, large portions, for every day: with hundreds of letters, in the course of a year. Moreover, I have been from first, to last, the orderer of my own apparel.... And, in addition to all this; I may add, in truth, and verity, 'these hands of mine have often ministered to the necessities of those that were with me; and to others....' (227-8, Towle's emphasis)

Towle protests here that hers has been a life well spent. Despite the passivity implied in the title Vicissitudes Illustrated in the Life of Nancy Towle--a book not about me but about what happened to me--Nancy Towle depicts herself at all times as active and assertive.

## II

In part this urge to depict themselves as overworked, underpaid, tirelessly active itinerants can be explained by the context in which these women worked and wrote, that of nineteenth-century evangelicalism. The Arminian tendencies of evangelicalism and the methodologies of revivalism spoke

forcefully of the need of individuals to be active agents in the conversion process, to participate fully in their salvation. Evangelicalism, moreover, despite its emphasis on the inner spiritual life, on experiential religion, did have a social component. As Timothy Smith long ago argued, nineteenth-century evangelicalism, with its millennial expectations, called its adherents to public action. Nineteenth-century evangelicals saw themselves as agents responsible for preparing America and the world for the Second Coming of Christ. Though disagreeing about just what "action" meant--was it witnessing for Christ Jesus, or campaigning against rum, Romanism and rebellion?--all evangelicals were sure that it was necessary.

And though historians of American religion often periodize this "Age of Reform" as an antebellum phenomenon, it in fact continued--as Edwin Gaustad has argued--throughout the century. Gaustad concedes that "changing the hearts of men" was the primary business of post-bellum evangelists. But, he continues, "Even those concerned primarily with private morality and personal sin agreed that group action against sin was occasionally desirable" (Religious History 228, 231). The temperance movement serves to remind us that the post-Civil War years did not signal a sudden end to social reform; and clearly these autobiographies indicate that the impulse to serve God and prepare for the Millennium by securing the salvation of countless sinners did not come to a complete halt

at the end of the Civil War.

Conversion--even for evangelist and missionary Amanda Smith whose conversion and call came after mid-century--brought peace of mind, not peace of body: conversion required one to embrace the evangelical ethic of "usefulness." "If filled with the Spirit," Charles Finney told his audiences, "you will be useful" (Lectures 118). Anyone who has read much evangelical literature will recognize the movement's favorite word; it appears in sermons, essays, autobiographies, and book titles. Sarah R. Ingraham, for example, seeking the title which would sum up the life of the evangelist Margaret Prior, could imagine nothing more evocative than Walks of Usefulness. In addition to its intrinsic merits, the ethic of usefulness also dovetailed nicely with the anti-Catholicism of most evangelicals, the congenital indolence of Catholics being an article of evangelical faith.<sup>1</sup> Recording her visit to Rome, for instance, Amanda Smith relishes the chance to denounce the numerous priests she encountered, who, she was certain, "had never done a day's work in their lives" (289). Or, as Nancy Towle exclaimed, "I could hardly see, how it was possible, Christians should be so idle!" (180). Like Margaret Prior, Amanda Smith, and Nancy Towle, evangelicals were called to enter with all the energy they could muster the race of voluntarism, benevolence, and reform that swept the nation. In the words of Ernest Lee Tuveson,

The incessant busyness of the people in

the millennium--engaged in 'industry,' in making inventions, in public service, and the like--constitutes one of the greatest contrasts between the holy utopia and the old idea of a 'world-sabbath' of rest and rich rewards. Carlyle's command 'Work!' looms over the Happy Time. (194)

Tuveson's comment reminds us that the ethic of usefulness was not, in fact, confined to Americans or evangelicals but was a feature of the Victorian world. Jarena Lee's intention to wear out rather than rust out, "until death ends the struggle," recalls Tennyson's Ulysses (who preferred to "shine in use" rather than "rust unburnished") or Browning's remarkable promise that, on reaching Heaven, he would "fight on there as here." Female itinerant preachers were not immune to this Victorian ethic, this injunction to "Produce! Produce!," believing with Carlyle that "Man is sent hither not to question, but to work." Their preoccupation with work for the kingdom, in other words, should come as no surprise; living and preaching in the context of such millennial energy, they were part and parcel of a busy age.<sup>2</sup>

Not that these women were likely to beguile their idle hours, even if they had any, with forays into the philosophy and poetry of their age. They were, as they so often profess, "Bible Christians."<sup>3</sup> For their injunction to constant labor they needed only look to Carlyle's source, to the New

Testament: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9: 4; see also Ecclesiastes 9: 10). Zilpha Elaw's Memoirs demonstrates how seriously, indeed how literally, nineteenth-century evangelicals took those words of St. John; the night looms over her autobiography, as it must have loomed over her life. The autobiography itself is one long paean to the day well spent:

During my sojourn in England, I have preached considerably more than a thousand sermons. I have expended all my means in travels of no little extent and duration; devoted my time, employed the energies of my spirit, spent my strength and exhausted my constitution in the cause of Jesus; and received of pecuniary supplies and temporal remunerations in comparison with my time and labours a mere pittance, altogether inadequate to shield me from a thousand privations, hardships, target fires, vexatious anxieties and deep afflictions, to which my previous life was an utter stranger.

(158)

Thus does Elaw conclude her Memoirs; thus does she summarize her 56 years, diminishing here the privations we know she

suffered in her "previous life" in order to accentuate the adverse conditions under which she so intensely labored as an itinerant preacher.

The reader who has got this far in the autobiography hardly needs such a summary, of course. Having made our way through nearly interminable catalogues of places visited and souls saved, we nod our heads in weary assent as she assures us that she "had not been an idle spectator in [her] Heavenly Master's cause" (158). I quote one segment of her twenty-page account of her ministry in England:

On the 27th, I went to Glossop to preach three anniversary sermons....: the anniversary was a delightful day; and numbers found it good to be in attendance. I preached again on the following evening, and the place was excessively crowded: on the day after, I returned to Manchester. On the 5th of December I went to Stockport to preach some charity sermons; and the crowd was so great, that it was with great difficulty I reached the pulpit; many hundreds of persons were forced to retire who could not gain admittance. I preached again on the 8th, and spent a very happy week there in visiting the brethren and

sisters, and returned again to Manchester. On the 10th, I went to Hollingsworth.... (150-51)

There is an odd sort of artfulness in these accounts. Strung together with colons and semi-colons, Elaw's complex sentences provide us--our own strength failing as we stumble across the endless expanses of rough prose--a direct experience of this "day of feverish restlessness and mighty movement" (51-2). The reader, propelled forward by the syntax, is granted no opportunity to pause; Elaw demands that we adhere to her own seemingly relentless pace. Thus hurried through her itinerary, only the most critical of readers would recognize her sly omission of the 6th, 7th, and 9th days of that month, presumably days in which she perhaps was "idle" in her Master's cause.

This strange autobiographical premise--that an author could represent her life by compiling her itineraries--seems to have suggested itself to female itinerants throughout the nineteenth century. Julia Foote, in a chapter entitled "Work in Various Places," for example, lists her preaching engagements with little or no accompanying detail:

On the 28th we went to Snow Hill, where we spent one Sunday. We visited Fethersville, Bordentown, Westchester, and Westtown, all to the glory of God.... July 20th we left for New York, stopping

at Burlington, Trenton, Princeton,  
Rahway, Brunswick and Newark. (219)

Foote writes as though the substance of these travels will little interest her readers; what they want to know, she believes, is how much and how far she traveled.

Lydia Sexton's 655-page autobiography, written in 1882, sometimes seems a mere collection of itineraries, held together with the bare minimum of narrative glue:

From there I went to Iroquois county, Illinois. I held a meeting in the Longshore neighborhood, and had a good time. I then went to the Kenoyer neighborhood--in Indiana--to make arrangements to go to Kansas. I sold our place in Jasper County, Indiana; then went to Milford, Warren County, and held meeting there; thence I returned to Kenoyers, Newton County, Indiana. I intended to start from there to Kansas.

(586)

Neither here nor elsewhere in the autobiography does Sexton pause to reflect on her spirituality; it would seem, from passages like the one above, that she rarely paused at all. She represents herself as the tireless itinerant whose life would be nothing at all were it not for her work and travel: her "travail," to borrow the original sense of the word.



To reinforce these tales of productivity--of travel and travail--Julia Foote and Laura Haviland make use of descriptive titles. Foote may well have been, as the title of her autobiography contends, "A Brand Plucked from the Fire," but the passivity implied in this biblical verse in no way characterizes the life work she details in her autobiography. The final third of the brief text is devoted to her work: "The Lord Leadeth--Labor in Philadelphia," "A Visit to my Parents--Further Labors," "Continued Labors--Death of my Husband and Father," "Work in Various Places," "Further Labors--A 'Threshing' Sermon," and "My Cleveland Home--Later Labors." Even inattentive readers could hardly fail to draw the moral of this story.

Laura Haviland entitled her narrative A Woman's Life-Work: Labors and Experiences of Laura S. Haviland, a title which impressed the Methodist pastor F. A. Hardin for its sheer appropriateness: "the title by which Mrs. Haviland is pleased to call her narrative is itself a most fitting introduction, for it heralds the contents of the coming volume." The title notifies us that the story we are about to encounter is not about being but doing. Indeed the text surveys one "laborious field of labor"--Haviland's revealingly redundant term--after another (210). She had led an extraordinarily active life--running her late husband's farm, founding a school, working on the Underground Railroad, and risking her life doing "Sanitary Work" during the Civil War--

and her chapter titles, like Foote's, drive the point home: "An Ohio School-Teacher," "The Underground Railway," "Fugitive Slaves Assisted," "Christian and Educational Work," "Hospital Work," "Sanitary Work," "Home Mission Work." She reminds us, moreover, in the Preface to the 3rd edition of the Life-Work that though she is in her 76th year, and though her volume now stretches to 554 pages, both are unfinished. There is more work to be done and duly recorded; her life, like that of Lydia Sexton, continues beyond the conclusion of her story. Only death or the appearance of Christ could really bring an end to the important work that lay before them. In fact, these tireless evangelicals claim that even death won't bring an end to their labors: As Zilpha Elaw remarks, "these humble memoirs will doubtless continue to be read long after I shall have ceased from my earthly labours and existence" (160).

Living--and even dying--are, it seems, synonymous with working. The "I" of these narratives, though capable of movement and achievement, has no inner life to speak of; at times these autobiographies read like so many tales written by the boot in Monopoly. Though these autobiographers listen to and obey the voice of God, they never, as in the great tradition of Protestant autobiography, plumb the depths of their experience for evidence of their salvation. Their life stories, in fact, are the mirror opposites of that famous autobiography in the Puritan tradition, Bunyan's Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners. Where Bunyan devoted two-

thirds of his story to detailing his agonizing self-scrutiny and protracted conversion, his nineteenth-century female successors pay only lip service to this once important part of any "spiritual" autobiography. The Puritan emphasis on the doctrine of predestination leads Bunyan into a torturous quest for evidence of his salvation, so much so that his modern reader must wonder how he ever survived the ordeal: "How can you tell you are Elected?," he asks like any good introspective Puritan, "and what if you should not? how then?" (21). "By these things," continues Bunyan,

I was driven to my wits end, not knowing what to say, or how to answer these temptations...for that the Elect only attained eternal life, that I without scruple did heartily close with all: but that my self was one of them, there lay all the question. (21)

That question dominates his autobiography, which, as the title suggests, is not about his work but the Lord's. And that work, consuming as it does most of the story, impresses the reader as having also consumed a considerable portion of the life itself. Bunyan, moreover, studiously avoids references to specific units of time, preferring instead the vague "in these days," or "all this while," or "a long while," or "for some years." Thus, his conversion gains a sort of timeless quality; this is the story of everyman's salvation through

faith.

For Nancy Towle, Jarena Lee, Laura Haviland and the rest, life's meaning does not inhere in commitment to God through faith. They are, of course, deeply committed to God--they heed his call to the ministry and suffer all for His sake. But what they present to their readers is not a narrative of salvation through faith, not even one of salvation through works, but a narrative in which salvation and work are synonymous. Both were, to begin with, endless processes, never to be finished this side of the grave. In both worldly and heavenly matters these women seem unacquainted with the idea of completion (one reason, no doubt, why they had so much trouble ending their autobiographies, indeed their sentences).<sup>4</sup> But the call to ceaseless labor, and the energy to perform it, seem for these women--like Weber's Puritans--to have been both the means of salvation and the surest signs of it. To have felt, at the advent of old age or simple exhaustion, that enough was enough, would have been troubling indeed. To quit "running" was to surrender all.<sup>5</sup>

This explains, I think, one of the oddest features of these autobiographies, their treatment of the experience of conversion. The reader who approaches these narratives expecting a detailed account of a protracted conversion will be startled by how quickly and summarily they cover what is usually the climax of such stories. Laura Haviland remembers her early religious experience--as a Quaker longing to be a

Methodist--and conversion on pages 15-20 of her nearly 600-page Life-Work. Lydia Sexton's conversion by the New Light Christians takes up a mere 5 pages of her 655-page narrative. Julia Foote gives over several pages to detailing her several false-starts toward conversion; the conversion itself--in which she falls to the floor unconscious, convicted of her sins, and awakes "with rapture too deep for words" (181)--is described in two pages. Zilpha Elaw's conversion account most resembles Bunyan's; she reports seasons of engaging in sin, seasons of reflection and weeping and contrition, seasons of backsliding, and a "gradual" work on her soul by the divine. Assurance follows this gradual work in the form of a vision of Jesus; then she obtains the "peace of God which passeth understanding" (54-57). Jarena Lee similarly constructs her conversion account around the prescribed feelings of guilt. Upon hearing a Presbyterian minister read the Psalms, Lee is struck by the weight of her sins; later, in the congregation of Rev. Richard Allen, Lee is moved by the scripture to "forgive every creature": "That instant, it appeared to me, as if a garment, which had entirely enveloped my whole person... was stripped away from me...when the glory of God seemed to cover me in its stead" (29). Though she continues to be buffeted by Satan until the moment of her sanctification, here ends, on the third page of her autobiography, the story of her conversion. Nancy Towle reports her conversion almost in passing; with stock religious language she tells her reader

that she was converted in the Inn at Northampton by Clarissa H. Danforth and was subsequently baptized by an elder in the Christian sect.<sup>6</sup> Then she, like all the evangelical autobiographers under study, moves on to what are evidently more important matters.

These women, like their male evangelical colleagues, were licensed to minimize the importance of conversion by nineteenth-century evangelical theology. While many Christians have accepted a complicated morphology of gradual conversion "marked by clearly defined stages" of preparation and self-scrutiny (Sharrock xxvii), accounts of nineteenth-century revivals are full of stories of men and women and children converted in an instant by God.<sup>7</sup> The so-called "new measures" of Charles Finney, which evangelistic itinerants gladly employed, were designed to promote what the Puritans would have disparagingly called "a faire and easy way to heaven."<sup>8</sup> The Methodist Phoebe Palmer, for example, used her Tuesday prayer meetings and numerous publications to convince her audiences that conversion was a matter of will. Her clearly Arminian "altar theology" declared that under the new dispensation one simply placed oneself, a whole, living sacrifice, on God's altar in the name of Christ. Her New Testament theology thus turns an Old Testament image into a metaphor--or, rather, a plan--for conversion, which while it might not be easy--faith never is--is a far cry from the torturous steps of Bunyan's conversion. Writes Palmer in The

Promise of the Father,

while I have thus kept my unworthy offering on the Christian's altar, presenting myself a living sacrifice to God, I have not dared to dishonor Christ, by doubting whether the offering is 'wholly acceptable unto God.' In view of the medium through which it is being continually presented, that is, through Christ, I dare not doubt. (204)

Whether by emotional crisis, act of will, or, in the manner of Horace Bushnell, by "Christian nurture," conversion in the nineteenth century need not be, evangelicals continually preached, the protracted affair of John Bunyan and most of his American contemporaries.

Thus conversion, no longer a mysterious process in need of careful delineation, could be dispensed with quickly and never referred to again. And these autobiographers are happy to do so; their real interests, like those of most evangelical Christians,<sup>10</sup> are in recording the post-conversion struggles of "working Christians."<sup>11</sup> Though Laura Haviland's story takes place within the context of her religious conversion, the conversion itself was important only because it taught her that she could not serve God "in a silent, quiet life" (30). And as we have seen, she took this discovery to heart, working and speaking daily on the behalf of poor, sick, illiterate,

disfranchised Americans. A Quaker-born Methodist, she led prayer meetings, preached, and organized church groups wherever she traveled, though usually under no particular denomination. But, unlike her sister itinerants, Haviland did not view evangelicalism as the sole answer to America's problems, particular those of slavery and race relations. For most evangelicals, William McLoughlin argues, "the road to the millennium lay through God's reformation of the human heart. All man-made efforts of social reform, as the French Revolution demonstrated so forcefully, were sheer folly" (Introduction 12-13). Perhaps because of her Quaker heritage, Haviland did not expect, like Harriet Beecher Stowe, Julia Foote, and countless other evangelical Americans, that "missionary endeavors" aimed at saving souls would rid the country of prejudice and poverty; she did not simply implore her audiences to pray and "to feel right" (McLoughlin, Introduction 13). Hence, in her ministry the gospel was at all times supplemented by food, clothing, and practical aid. It was, it seems, a gospel her readers understood and appreciated; the autobiography closes with an appendix of testimonials, the last of which from George Clark sums up her brand of Christianity: "I received a letter from John G. Whittier not long since, in which he...spoke of the thrilling interest with which he read your 'Woman's Life-work,' and added that 'the world sadly needed more such examples of practical Christianity.'"



Amanda Berry Smith's autobiography, written at the end of the century and documenting a career that began after the Civil War, is something of an exception to the pattern I have been describing. Not a defense of "practical Christianity," Smith's book is the record of a committed evangelist, zealous in her mission to convert the world to Christianity. But this autobiography, though penned sixty years after Nancy Towle's, is no less concerned to persuade us of her devotion to an active faith. Smith closes her autobiography with numerous testimonials to what one admirer called her "untiring labors," labors of which her readers would by that point in the text be well aware (467). In America, she tells us, she labored primarily at Camp Meetings, which necessarily involved intensive, exhausting work over a three- or four-day period. At one such meeting she was asked to go "to a little quiet meeting in a cottage"; that little meeting, Smith reports, turned into an evangelistic marathon in which "more than a score of souls were swept into the fountain of cleansing" (187). Smith gave herself up to the work for the entire afternoon. "The most of the time," she remembers, "I stood on my feet and exhorted, and sang, and talked, and prayed. When I got out and went to start home, I could scarcely walk. I was thoroughly exhausted. I had a cup of tea, and lay down a while, and was ready for another pitched battle. Glory to God!" (187). Smith, not unlike soldiers in battle, is both enervated and energized by her efforts. She is at pains to

depict herself as an overworked, exhausted evangelist in a cosmic drama; and at the same time she is unable to deny the intoxicating effect of such "battles." Here the mere contemplation of another battle for souls, despite her bodily weakness, sends her into a fever of excitement.<sup>12</sup>

As the above story attests, Smith does on occasion directly address the subject of her work and productivity as an evangelist; for the most part, however, she eschews the literary techniques that Towle, Elaw, and the rest employed in their quest to write the productive life. But she does not reject the quest. She too "plots" her story to call attention to her "activity" as an evangelist; she too exhausts her reader. Though Smith describes her autobiography as the "Simple story of God's dealings with a worm," An Autobiography is anything but simple (505-06). This is the story of an African-American woman engaged in endless warfare with her antagonist Satan and with temptation. By painstakingly detailing this warfare, Smith convinces her readers that she was far from idle; she resists, moreover, the racist stereotypes that would define her as "lazy," that would deplore a black woman's "loafing." To cite only one example: after receiving her call to preach the gospel, Smith hears a voice commanding her to go to Salem, New Jersey, to preach. Having contemplated the command for several weeks, Smith finally decides to go and is immediately "attacked" by Satan, who tells her that she goes only "to look for a husband" (134-

5). Clearly disturbed by this pronouncement, Smith cries to Satan that he lies. But her "Accuser" continues to "harass" her so much that she turns to the Lord in prayer. There follows a lengthy account of her discussion with God, who finally convinces her that He "would go with [her]" (135). Such three-way debates among Satan, God, and Amanda Smith occur repeatedly in the Autobiography and evidently took up a good part of Smith's life and energy. Between listening to and answering Satan's accusations and conveying her distress to God, the weary evangelist rarely had a free moment. With both the devil and the Lord demanding her undivided attention, making even the simplest decision required an exhausting ordeal. "Persons often ask me," she confides, "how I came to think of going to Africa"; these persons, one speculates, may have regretted their curiosity, for what follows is a lengthy and highly detailed account of Smith's debate with God on the subject. Similar accounts introduce her trips to England, India, and a great many camp meetings and revivals in America (215, see also 206, 243, 282). In these accounts Smith converts what most of us would call introspection--that idler's ploy to avoid work--into an objective struggle. By detailing her life--in the spirit of Bunyan--as one endless psychological drama, Smith both fills out her five-hundred-page autobiography and convinces her readers that mental struggles with Satan are at least as strenuous as the physical labors of her more decisive colleagues.<sup>13</sup>

## III

Because the Age of Reform in nineteenth-century America was so marked by nondenominational efforts to remake America and the world for the Second Coming, we often hear that evangelicalism and the revival were unifying forces in American religion. In part that is true. Evangelicals were united by their opposition to traditional Calvinist orthodoxies, their embrace of Arminianism, their appeal to the common people, and their millennialist vision of America as, in the words of Ernest Tuveson, the Redeemer Nation. Yet as Nathan Hatch convincingly argues in The Democratization of American Christianity, behind the Evangelical United Front lay a religious environment of intense sectarian competition and entrepreneurship. Herein lies another explanation for the choices these evangelical women preachers made when selecting material for their autobiographies. According to Hatch, American Protestantism in the first half of the nineteenth century embraced the "new democratic vocabularies and impulses that swept through American popular cultures"; the result, democratic dissent and its corollary, the "splintering of American Protestantism" (7, 64). Thus began an age of fervid competition among Baptist, Methodist, and Christian sects--the big winners in this war for converts--and also among Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians, who were, for a time at least, stunned at being no longer "the

center of the culture" (61).

Throughout his Autobiography, published in 1856, the Methodist itinerant Peter Cartwright recounts feats of remarkable preaching that enabled him to garner converts from other sects, thereby increasing both the size of his denomination and his reputation. Of his preaching at Bacon Creek to a Baptist congregation, for example, Cartwright, always a loyal Methodist, remembers: "A great many of their members gave up Calvinism, close communion, and immersion, and joined the Methodist Church; and we took possession of their meeting-house, and raised a large society there that flourishes to this day" (82, my emphasis). Cartwright's imperialistic language--"we took possession of their meeting house"--hints at the intense competitiveness which the evangelical wars fostered. And his use of the plural pronoun "we" suggests that he was always a team player, exerting himself for God no doubt, but also, and perhaps primarily, for the Methodists: "We," writes Cartwright on another occasion, "had a little Book Concern then in its infancy.... We had no Missionary Society.... We had no pewed churches....we had no instrumental music" (61, my emphasis). One senses that Cartwright would have enjoyed his triumphs less had there been no Baptists and Calvinists to discomfit by his efforts; the greater the competition, the greater the glory.

Female preachers, no less than their brethren, willingly and fervently took part in this culture of religious

competition. As we have seen, they too were caught up in the almost frantic pace of this age of evangelicalism and revivalism. Their autobiographies, though written over a sixty-year span, all convey the same sense of urgency: time was running out. I think, however, that the real fuel for their efforts lay elsewhere: in their battles not with rival sects but with male colleagues for the right to preach and in competition with men for conversions. Popular religious movements of the nineteenth century, striving to "make Christianity a liberating force," gave women a wedge with which to pry open a sphere long dominated by men. These movements, however, while certainly more liberating than the established Congregational, Presbyterian, and Episcopal churches, did not intend to consider women as equals within the church hierarchy. Because their work was rarely encouraged and never embraced by church officials, several women in this study refused to join a particular denomination, preferring the lives of independent itinerants. Nancy Towle speaks, for example, of her "wish to be free from party spirit, and to love Christians of every order..." (231). Those who were affiliated with a particular denomination were so only in the loosest of senses. Thus the competitive religious environment of the nineteenth century, not surprisingly, is refigured in their autobiographies in terms of gender. Denied positions of power and authority within the institutional church, these women rarely claim, in the manner

of Peter Cartwright, to have stolen converts from another sect. Their competitive instincts are most aroused at the prospect of converting difficult congregations, sinners who had proved too hard-hearted for male evangelists. We succeed, they tell us, where our brethren have failed.

On one occasion in Reading, Pennsylvania, Jarena Lee reports that she was opposed by "Rev. James Ward, a colored Presbyterian," who "was so prejudiced he would not let me in his pulpit to speak" (44). Finally, a "sister" interceded on her behalf, and though "the men of color...remained idle in the enterprize," Lee triumphantly records, "we got possession and we had a large concourse of people" (44). "We," in this case, being the black sisters of the congregation.

In Africa, Amanda Smith finds herself similarly opposed by a Brother Ware, who is suspicious of female preaching. Anger at this gendered opposition stirs her to divulge, subtly, her success in his absence: "Brother Ware did not get back for six weeks; so we had full swing, and God was with us. When he did come, how surprised he was. Every Sunday, prior to his coming, a number were taken in. The first Sunday after he came he took in nine or ten; I don't know what the number was exactly" (450). Even those nine or ten, we gather, were carried in by the momentum of Smith's efforts, not by Ware's inferior preaching.

Smith stops short of giving us the total number of souls saved through her ministry: "I never like to number Israel,"

she explains; "[t]he record is on high" (450). Her reticence on this matter was unique among the women under study here. The others show a considerable knack for numbering Israel; for the most part lost souls exist in these works to be claimed and counted, not understood. "Some thousands have I seen," proclaims Nancy Towle, "--made the sharers of redeeming grace; and many more of every nation, I expect to see added to that number, should I continue here below" (Preface 11, Towle's emphasis). The passive voice suggests the modesty one might expect of a mere instrument of God's redemptive power, a passive witness to a miraculous revival of religion. But the ambiguity of the passage bears further scrutiny. She might well be saying that she fully expects to see more conversions, should she live; if she doesn't live to see them, someone else might. Towle's optimism about further conversions might, however, be read as conditional: the revival will continue only "should I continue here below." Whose converts are these "thousands"? By the end of this passage, God seems to be sharing the credit with Nancy Towle, who is undeniably proud to report her accomplishments. Later in the autobiography, moreover, Towle unambiguously announces the success of her intense evangelistic efforts. In Lubec, Towle writes, "I labored incessantly for the space of ten weeks; and saw myself, in the end, 'from the joy of many,' abundantly crowned" (39, my emphasis). Jarena Lee finds herself similarly crowned: her ministry, she tells us, was marked by



"prosperous" times--times with which she punctuates her autobiography (23). A "wonderful shock of God's power was felt" here; "had considerable weeping and a profitable waiting upon the Lord" there (20, 27). "[M]elting, sin-killing, and soul-reviving time[s]" were the norm, not the exception, of her career (22). Even Zilpha Elaw, the most conservative woman in the group, finds space to evidence the power of her word. Though her sense of herself as a prophet, as God's mouthpiece on earth, moves her to proclaim that her "'sufficiency is of God,'" modesty does not prevent her from rejoicing in her continued success and subtly calling attention to the "numbers," the overflowing "crowds," the "hundreds of persons" who, due to her popularity, "could not gain admittance" to the over-crowded halls (150-51).

Lydia Sexton, even more self-asserting than her sister autobiographers, boldly and unambiguously declares her success as an itinerant minister. On one occasion she reports how a Bro. Wainscott, with whom she had numerous conflicts, claimed in Conference to have added sixty-two new members to the church. "The truth is," Sexton asserts, "that was about the number I had taken into the church; and I don't think he had taken in one." "What advantage it could be to him to dissemble in this way I could not understand," Sexton writes,

only by his report of work he improved  
his chances for preferment. At any rate,  
he came off with flying colors. I believe

there was a resolution passed in that annual conference year for every local to keep a strict account of how many members they should receive into the church during each year. I thought then, and think now, that the resolution passed; and I think that honor should rest where honor is due. (399-400)

A competitive individualist, Sexton lays claim to the honor due her for the work she has done, for her many accomplishments. She too wants to "come off with flying colors" and improve her chances for "preferment."

Identity for these female itinerants does not, as it does for Peter Cartwright, derive from their attachment to a particular sect. It does, however, depend upon an imagined reader eager to hear of their tireless, uncompensated, and successful efforts on behalf of God's kingdom. These women were not content to let their hard work and productivity speak for themselves at the gates of heaven; they did not write voluminous, exhaustive accounts of their endless evangelistic efforts for the sake of St. Peter. He, no doubt, already knew. They did so in an effort to negotiate their status within the evangelical marketplace. Having abandoned their homes and the sphere of domesticity that offered them the possibility of prestige and status based on relationships with fathers, husbands, and brothers, these women embraced what

David Potter has called the principle of mobility over the principle of status (97). The chance to prove themselves--to achieve their status in the evangelical world rather than receive it along with their female contemporaries--must have been compelling for women accustomed to having their status handed to them in accordance with their relational roles within a limited sphere. It must certainly have been compelling for the black women in this study, all of whom had been domestic servants at some point in their lives, all of whom were defined not only in relation to men, but also in accordance with the many racist stereotypes that permeated the culture.

Entering the competitive field of evangelical religion, these women entered a world that measured success by volume.<sup>14</sup> "He is the more wise," preached Charles Finney in his Lectures on Revivals of Religion in 1835,

by how much the greater is the number of sinners that he saves. A blockhead may indeed now and then stumble on such truth, or such a manner of exhibiting it, as to save a soul....But the amount of wisdom is to be decided, 'other things being equal,' by the number of cases in which he is successful in converting sinners. (183, Finney's emphasis)<sup>15</sup>

But, of course, all things were not equal for women in the itinerant ministry. As exciting as life in the competitive evangelical world no doubt was, they participated in the world of mobility with a handicap: though permitted to travel about the evangelical landscape, though permitted to preach on occasion inside an institutional church, these women were never more than what Patricia Collins would call "outsiders within," women occupying a paradoxical space both inside and outside the center of the dominant culture, in this case the institutional church.<sup>16</sup> A man like Peter Cartwright had no need in his autobiography to overemphasize conversions wrought and miles traveled in the service of the Lord; he need only gesture occasionally toward his rise to authority within the Methodist Episcopal Church--from itinerant, to Elder, to presiding Elder--to reassure himself and his readers of his worthiness. A committed Protestant, Cartwright would never complacently indulge himself with the notion that the great race for souls had finally been run; he could, however, look back over his career, his part of that race, and say, in effect, "I have arrived."

But these female itinerants had no such honors and promotions to point to. Lacking them, they resort to cataloguing their activities, to protesting their productivity, and suppressing any references to rest and relaxation, all to prove to themselves and to their male critics that they were "valuable assets" in the public

(masculine) world of evangelical religion. Though evangelical theology had made it possible for them to take their conversions for granted, institutional religion and an ideology of domesticity made it difficult for them to feel likewise about their new public roles as preachers. Thus they belabor accounts of their activities to compensate for their lack of official honors, to demonstrate to church officials the fallacy of denying women positions of authority, and also to prove to themselves that theirs has been a meaningful existence.

Not surprisingly, then, evangelical women's autobiographies, unlike those by clergymen, do not situate themselves within the prominent sectarian theological debates of the century, but rather within a much larger debate about power, authority, and the rights of women. While their male contemporaries were at war with Calvinist orthodoxy and battling numerous sects for control of the populace, these women were involved in a passionate social struggle over power and authority.

The difficulties became greater as the century wore on. At mid-century, when according to Nathan Hatch the age of competition among sects drew to a close, the struggle of female itinerants intensified. As the dissenting sects themselves began seeking respectability within the dominant culture, their former indifference to female preaching hardened into more or less official proscription. In the

words of Leonard Sweet, "evangelicals began to reflect the sociological maxim that the more social integration of a group, the less able it is to criticize the normative assumptions of the larger society" ("Nineteenth" 892). Evangelical churches felt compelled, as they moved into the social mainstream, to accept their culture's assumptions about the rights of women. Thus it should come as no surprise that Lydia Sexton, Laura Haviland and Amanda Berry Smith go to much greater lengths, literally, to depict themselves as zealous, tireless, and successful workers; they are under greater pressure than their predecessors were to prove their worth to the men who would deny them traditional, authoritative accolades. For female evangelists, the race continued and their "arrival" was forever deferred.

#### IV

Competition, of course, was not exclusively a sectarian phenomenon in nineteenth-century America: competitive individualism was the predominant philosophy of the marketplace. In fact, historians of American religion, following Weber, have long debated the relationship among nineteenth-century evangelicalism, revivalism and capitalist expansion. "The clergyman and theologian of evangelicalism," Martin Marty argues, "progressively identified himself with competitive individualism at the expense of community"

(Righteous Empire 110). William McLoughlin takes that argument a step further, seeing in evangelicalism the cornerstone of capitalism:

Both as motivation and as rationale evangelical religion lay behind the concept of rugged individualism in business enterprise, laissez faire in economic theory, constitutional democracy in political thought, the Protestant ethic in morality, and the millennial hope in the manifest destiny of white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant America to lead the world to its latter-day glory.

(Introduction 1)<sup>17</sup>

More recently the sociologist George Thomas has taken up the debate in Revivalism and Cultural Change: Christianity, Nation Building, and the Market in the Nineteenth-Century United States. Thomas regards both republicanism and revivalism as "isomorphic" with individualistic nationalism. They were, in other words, mutually influential. According to Thomas, revivalism "grounded and legitimated the identities and rational activity of the petty capitalist and citizen":

Rational evangelism defined the individual as one who autonomously makes decisions and acts according to rational laws within a mechanical universe. This

both supported and was supported by the impersonal rational calculation and authority of market and polity.... The revivalist message was cognitively compelling because it corresponded to their everyday experience as shaped by the dominant cultural myth of individualism. (82-3)

It is important to remember here Perry Miller's words of caution concerning this tendency to view "the revivals as only a device in the capitalistic expansion--as though revivals did no more than set Max Weber's 'Protestant Ethic' on fire in primitive America" (12). Still, even Miller would agree that revivalism was not "unrelated to national and economic concerns" (12).

Regardless of how one interprets the exact nature of this relationship between religious movements and capitalistic expansion, it is clear that the women in this study lived and worked in a new society. "The creation of this new society," writes Barbara Epstein of the first half of the nineteenth century, "was accompanied by the development of a new set of values: individual achievement was held to measure individual worth, and wealth, power, and fame were taken to be measures of achievement" (67). Nineteenth-century women were denied access to these measures of achievement: "These new values fit the aspirations of men of the professional, entrepreneurial,



and trading classes, but their women were being confined to domesticity and thus excluded from the concerns most valued in their milieus" (Epstein 67). Women in the itinerant ministry, however, necessarily stepped outside the confines of domesticity and entered the competitive marketplace, not on Wall Street, but, as we have seen, in an equally competitive religious economy. They had left behind a world which valued them as reproductive members of society and entered a world which demanded productivity and judged them accordingly. "In an increasingly competitive economy," Mary Poovey writes, "individual effort became the mark of past accomplishments and the guarantor of future success; this was the era of the 'self-made man,' when aristocratic privilege could finally be challenged on a wide scale by individuals with talent, opportunity, and the capacity for simple hard work" (124). These were self-made women who realized that "in spite of the oft-cited Victorian idealization of motherhood, reproduction--childbearing and childrearing--commanded little respect in a society dedicated to production" (Reimer 207).

Thus, their urge to emphasize the number of miles they traveled in the course of a day, a year or a career, to call attention to the hours they spent on their feet imploring the sinful, the hardships they suffered traveling from place to place and, of course, the number of converts they garnered along the way can also be explained by their entry into the larger marketplace of the public sphere. Nancy Towle, Jarena

Lee, Zilpha Elaw, Julia Foote, Lydia Sexton, and Laura Haviland, all of whom abandoned their homes for careers in the public sphere in the first half of the century, recognized and readily embraced the marketplace virtues so revered by their culture: competitive individualism, hard work, and efficiency. And all of them anticipate (and some of them survived into) the period Howard Mumford Jones aptly called the "Age of Energy."<sup>18</sup> According to Jones, new national markets together with countless inventions and industrial innovations in the period between the Civil War and World War I called for an intensification of mid-century virtues.<sup>19</sup> Entrepreneurship, individual activity, competitiveness, and industrial productivity were still predominant values in an epoch much engaged with Darwinian rhetoric; they were, however, judged on a wholly different scale. This was an age which worshipped energy, "the power by which anything or anybody acts effectively to move or change other things or persons" (Jones 104-5, my emphasis). It was an age characterized by vast increases in industrial output (industrial energy), the rise of yellow journalism (stylistic energy), the accelerated careers of successful Americans as diverse as Annie Oakley and John D. Rockefeller, Sr. (personal energy), the excessive and extravagant living of the wealthy (recreational energy). It was the age of the celebrated Corliss engine on display at the Philadelphia Centennial, and of the even more famous dynamo, that "symbol of infinity" encountered by Henry Adams at the

Great Exposition in 1900.<sup>20</sup> It was, I would add, the age of evangelical women preachers who greeted the world with all the energy, output, and excess of the new industries, the new journalism, the new careers, even the new engines.

The second half of the century was also marked, in the words of Robert Wiebe, by its "quantitative ethic": "It seemed that the age could only be comprehended in bulk. Men defined issues by how much, how many, how far. Greatness was determined by amount, with statistics invariably the triumphant proof that the United States stood first among nations" (40). The impulse to quantify, the exuberant desire to recount and celebrate the sheer unprecedented magnitude of industrial output was, as Susan Strasser argues in Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market, a common cultural reflex in the age of mass production and mass consumption. Indeed, the women in this study who wrote and preached during America's Gilded Age were witnesses to vast changes in the commercial economy. New products, even new kinds of products, demanded new habits. New habits necessarily required new marketing techniques. Americans had to be convinced that they needed and wanted the consumer goods that were now being produced on a massive scale. The National Biscuit company, for example, devoted itself to what we would call "product education" to sell its packaged cookies and crackers (Strasser 34-5). Others promoted their products by invoking the theme of modernity in their advertising. Try our

products, our new Gillette razor blades, they preached, and become a modern American. "Other companies," Strasser argues, put a strong emphasis on converting the population to the modern ways of mass production and factory-made goods, using images that ranged from fanciful to factual and inviting the public to observe mechanized processes. Some literally celebrated the 'mass' in 'mass production,' bragging about the size of their output and the enormities they distributed, and insinuating that everybody was buying their product. (112, my emphasis)

Quaker Oats advertised in 1895 that its goods were "'Shipped in Train Loads'" (qtd. in Strasser 112). Wrigley's, with an even surer instinct for the vivid image, told consumers that the Illinois Central line contained 60,000 boxes, or "'2,500 cubic feet of space, one solid mass of chewing gum'" (qtd. in Strasser 112). Waterman's campaign theme for the marketing of its fountain pens read "'A Million a Year'" (qtd. in Strasser 113). These companies sold products by selling productivity. Buy our products, they argued, because we make so many of them. The "primary goal" was not, as it might seem, simply "to promote mass production but to sell goods" (123). Their campaigns implied the insatiable demand that mass productivity

required.

Now evangelicalism and the revival were in most respects anti-modern, warning against materialism and selfishness, and--by their emphasis on individual responsibility in conversion--they pulled against the implicit corporate demand that one surrender individuality and become one of the vast faceless army of gum-chewing, fountain pen-using consumers. And yet by an odd cultural determinism these evangelists ended up imitating--some of them even anticipating--the techniques of modern mass marketing in those "advertisements for themselves," their autobiographies.<sup>21</sup>

Evangelical women itinerants throughout the century, when they heeded the call to leave their father's house and enter the father's marketplace, faced what we can now recognize as a marketing dilemma. Like the new inventions and new products of the age, they were in need of new marketing techniques.<sup>22</sup> For much of what these women were selling was not religion per se--about which the public was at least knowledgable if not well educated--but the right of women to preach religion and, more generally, to move freely in the public sphere. Female itinerants in the first half of the century were in effect marketing a new product, and their autobiographies were central to the marketing strategy. These advertisements were not only for themselves--some of them published their stories near the ends of their careers, too late to benefit from them personally--but for all women called to God's ministry.

Their strategies, therefore, demanded more than simple product education. Instructing their public about the rights of women to preach the gospel--rights derived from biblical precedent--could only be part of the campaign. In the spirit of Wrigley's, Quaker Oats or even the nation itself, they launched an attack on their competition by selling their own productivity. I walked farther, preached longer, endured more privations, and converted more sinners than my male competitors, they tell their readers again and again. The marketing technique of quantification enabled these women to protest the superiority of their ministries and to assert that theirs was a ministry "sealed" by God: who could question the power of numbers?. Even Foote, Sexton, Haviland, and Smith, though writing late in the century, would have to strike a similar promotional chord in their autobiographies; though precedents for women in the ministry were numerous by the 1880s, though female itinerants were no longer new products in the religious economy, the socialization of once radical sects and the resultant backlash against women in the ministry forced these evangelists to engage the competitive marketplace in defense of an old product, or, more precisely, a product which had never really caught on in the masculine world of religion.<sup>23</sup>

In The Search for Order 1877-1920, Robert Wiebe perceives this quantitative ethic in broader terms; he attributes the late nineteenth-century impulse to quantify--"the quest for

goodness in bigness"--to the half-century's "crisis in values" (40):

As the network of relations affecting men's lives each year became more tangled and more distended, Americans in a basic sense no longer knew who or where they were. The setting had altered beyond their power to understand it.... For lack of anything that made better sense of their world, people everywhere weighed, counted, and measured it. (43)

Female itinerants, stepping outside the sphere which told them who they were or at least who they might become, were also wading--at times drowning--in unfamiliar waters; they too were in danger of not knowing "who or where they were." In her autobiography, Julia Foote remembers meeting three such sisters who, though called to preach the gospel, "were very much distressed and shrank from their duty." Foote encourages them in their calling by offering to "procure a place and hold a series of meetings" of which she would "take charge" (210-211). She offers, in other words, to be their guide in this "alien context," this new, and often hostile, sphere, for which there were no guidebooks, not even any stories, which would help them make sense of and give meaning to their novel lives. Carolyn Heilbrun finds this need for stories a common phenomenon among women autobiographers. "[M]any moving lives

of women" have been written, lives which do not revolve around the marriage plot, but, according to Heilbrun, these lives "are painful, the price is high, the anxiety is intense, because there is no script to follow, no story portraying how one is to act, let alone any alternative stories" (39). These evangelists knew of few models, certainly they knew of no tradition--excepting, of course, the Bible--upon which to pattern their lives, by means of which to understand their world and draw their strength. Thus, like many late-nineteenth-century Americans, they resort to quantification, in a seemingly desperate attempt to measure, almost literally, the unorthodox life, the life of woman in the public sphere. Perhaps unsure of the quality, they revel in the quantity of their existence. No doubt totaling the number of miles traveled in a given year or counting the number of converts attributed to their preaching or simply recalling their untiring efforts for Christ's sake and recording it all in their autobiographies enabled them to make sense of their world. Quantity, then, as the measure of quality, gave meaning to their lives."

## v

"The grand theme of American autobiography, almost its fixation," Herbert Leibowitz argues, "is the quest for distinction, a quest that has shaped and deranged American



identity throughout our history" (xix). Although one could take issue with Leibowitz's monolithic approach to American autobiography, certain it is that the quest for distinction is a prominent theme in that literary tradition. And certainly the evangelical autobiographies in this study were "shaped and deranged" by the quest for distinction in the sphere of American religion; the selection of material for their autobiographies was governed at every turn by the desire for recognition. These evangelical itinerants were so bound by the quest that they write the genre not as self-presentation in the spirit of a Rousseau or even as self-interpretation in the spirit of Bunyan and countless other spiritual autobiographers<sup>25</sup>; they write autobiography as self-justification. This is an identifiable tradition of autobiography. Its participants include fugitive slaves, defeated generals, disgraced politicians, and convicted felons, all feeling themselves unjustly indicted by what one of them called "the court of public opinion," and all eager to vindicate themselves in that court if no other.<sup>26</sup> Georges Gusdorf contends that this urge to write what he calls a "revenge on history" is one of the "elementary motives" of almost all autobiographies: "No one can better do justice to himself than the interested party," reflects Gusdorf, "and it is precisely in order to do away with misunderstandings, to restore an incomplete or deformed truth, that the autobiographer himself takes up the telling of his story"

("Conditions" 36). That many autobiographers avail themselves of the opportunities offered by the genre to set the record straight, to create or preserve for posterity a particular image of the self, can hardly be questioned. But levels of defensiveness surely vary, depending on the autobiographer's status within his or her culture. Cardinal Newman could write an Apologia Pro Vita Sua in the confident expectation that his readers would recognize his importance and care about his quarrel with Charles Kingsley. American fugitive slaves, in contrast, felt an obligation not only to advance a cause but to claim the attention of a public whose interest and sympathy could not safely be assumed. The evangelists in this study--though their chances of a fair hearing were no doubt greater than those of escaped slaves--likewise could not write from a simple desire "to do away with misunderstanding," or "to restore an incomplete or deformed truth." Writing from positions of powerlessness, these women were never afforded the luxury of being mis-understood or having "truths" about themselves and their careers de-formed. Their appearances in the court of public opinion necessarily involved much more than simple restoration. Like fugitive slave narratives, autobiography serves them in their quest for, if not distinction, then simple recognition for their lives outside the domestic sphere. Their autobiographies were their last weapons--their last acts or actions, to borrow the words of Elizabeth Bruss and Porter Abbott--in this never-ending

quest.<sup>27</sup>

In delineating a "poetics" of women's autobiography, Sidonie Smith argues that the very task of writing autobiography places all women in a double bind. An androcentric genre, autobiography demands that she speak as a "representative man": "Repressing the mother in her, she turns away from the locus of all that is domesticated and disempowered culturally and erases the trace of sexual difference and desire" (Poetics 53). Thus, according to Smith, what they create is not so much a self-made woman, but a self-made man; they take their "place on stage, not as Eve, but as Adam" and thereby perpetuate woman's disempowerment "by accepting the fiction of man as the more valued ideal for which to strive" (Poetics 53). It is certainly true that these autobiographies tell the story of women who, having turned away from the disempowered domestic sphere, are struggling to make it in a man's world, in public spaces where neither a woman's body nor her voice was legitimate; they tell the story of women anxiously trying to prove themselves in an environment that would not reward them with traditional marks of distinction. Reading these autobiographies one is bombarded with protestations of worthiness, protestations relevant on Adam's stage: I am a hard-working entrepreneur, I value mobility, I exemplify the competitive American spirit, I uphold Victorian ethics of work and success.

Pleading with their audiences with tedious, perhaps

exaggerated, accounts of their laborious efforts to establish Christ's kingdom on earth, these autobiographers appropriate the values of the marketplace in a seemingly desperate attempt to assert themselves against cultural forces that would devalue them; they look, in other words, to the dominant culture for authentication, for the proof of their self-worth.<sup>28</sup> The act of protesting, or, in many passages, screaming, the value of the life necessarily reflects an almost unbearable sense of inferiority and insecurity.<sup>29</sup> The excessive activity and energy of the life itself, together with the exaggerated claims to hard work and success in the autobiography, tell a story of nervousness, nervousness that did not stem only from rapid urbanization and technology, as Dr. George Miller Beard argued in American Nervousness: Its Causes and Consequences in 1881, or from "the progress of civilization" as Josiah Strong, concurring with Beard, proposed in Our Country (118).<sup>30</sup> Their nervousness was more than particularly American; it was particularly female. The anxiety so readily apparent in these autobiographies resulted from their authors' engaging themselves in a sphere in which their limitations were repeatedly presumed; it resulted, moreover, from their inability to determine their legitimacy apart from the judgmental gaze of a culture in which they were labeled "other." Storing up tales of their productivity against the future, these women write stories marked by frustration: no matter how much they quantify or catalogue or

call attention to their work, their record really does count only "on high"; their writings presuppose the inevitable devaluation of their ministries by the church establishment."<sup>1</sup> One cannot help but read between the lines of these narratives a sad story of having waged war side by side with male colleagues who took home all the spoils. As female itinerants they were permitted to participate in the ideology of success, to engage the myth of competitive individualism, but for them, unlike their male counterparts, success had to be its own reward.

To interpret these stories solely as accounts of nervousness, as narratives about exceptional women struggling to become exceptional men, is, however, to miss half the point; for these feverishly restless autobiographies also articulate a story of women thrilled to experience the life of a pioneer, a story of female itinerants prepared to embrace both the danger and the excitement that traveling a continent unknown to women could bring. Unlike the lives of most of their female contemporaries, theirs were, like "the map of America" in the nineteenth century, "full of blank spaces that had to be filled" (Boorstin 223). As Nancy Towle put it, "I felt desirous to fly from pole to pole; and if I had a thousand tongues, I thought I would freely wear them out, in proclaiming to all the kindred of the earth, Jehovah's boundless love and grace!" (23). Surely Towle celebrates here the active, itinerant life that lay before her, the

opportunity to insert her voice in the evangelical wars of the day, and the chance to write her own life's script. Indeed, the philosophy of rugged individualism, regardless of its limitations, regardless of its being a "male-identified ideal," offered these women a chance to make use of their boundless energy, to define themselves in ways most women could not. One could argue, in fact, with Robert Nisbet that "the philosophy of individualism may be said to have had a kind of pragmatic value in an age when the traditional primary relationships were, if anything, too strong, too confining" (205). "How powerful," Towle reflects near the end of her autobiography, "must be that charm, to engage and to continue for a succession of years, a female, in such a warfare as this!" (228). "That charm" is surely her Lord Jesus Christ, but situated as it is in a lengthy paragraph detailing her competitive spirit, her endless labors, her self-sufficiency, this exclamation invites her readers to consider the possibility that she is charmed by the warfare itself. These women could exhaust themselves in the public sphere for the sake of their Lord, then, as Amanda Smith puts it, have "a cup of tea...lay down a while, and [be] ready for another pitched battle." Regardless of whether their participation in the myth of competitive individualism served to reinscribe these preachers and their female readers in a position of powerlessness, the myth also afforded them much that confinement in strong, traditional relationships could not.

While their opportunities for advancement were necessarily limited within the competitive marketplace of nineteenth-century American religion, these women remind us that they too were Americans who welcomed mobility--literal and figurative. They wanted to participate in the "advent of a social order of competition, self-expression, and free enterprise" (Hatch, Democratization 14). Together with the writing of autobiography, the religious economy gave them the opportunity to assert themselves in this new order, if not fully, at least in part. "Those were," Amanda Smith recalls, "wonderful days"; one is inclined to believe her (187).

### Chapter 3

#### Singularity and the Uses of Opposition

I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee. Jeremiah 1: 18-19

"This opposition that came so heavily upon us only gave wings to our speed." Virginia Broughton, Twenty Year's [sic] Experience of a Missionary (1907)

"Nothing succeeds like failure." G. K. Chesterton

For a short period in her career as an itinerant minister in the 1820s, having abandoned the comforts of home, family and community, Nancy Towle enjoyed the company of Elizabeth Venner. Venner was a young woman whom she had met and befriended in Canada and who subsequently became Towle's traveling companion. But after several years Venner, weary of the unpredictable life of travel led by her friend, tearfully parted with Towle and returned home with her brother. In the Vicissitudes Towle confesses that Venner's departure left her so lonely that she decided to overtake her old companion and even traveled with her for a time, unable to endure the pain of parting with the only friend mentioned in her autobiography. Ultimately, however, their paths did diverge and from then on, Towle reports, she traveled, with few



exceptions, alone. Indeed she concludes her narrative by announcing her intention to continue flying solo: "I can seldom find a female that has courage sufficient,--or, if she has that qualification, she has not grace proportionate" (239).

Towle's experience is in one respect unique: these female itinerant preachers rarely mention the lack of intimacy in their lives, rarely call attention to their loneliness.<sup>1</sup> We know that Lydia Sexton frequently traveled with her husband, Jarena Lee "enjoyed good seasons" with Zilpha Elaw, and Laura Haviland worked with other women, particularly during the Civil War, but companionship receives very little emphasis in their life stories (Lee 88). For the most part these autobiographies narrate the lives of loners, women too busy, too excited, and too caught up in the adventures of their lives to feel lonely, or, at least, to contemplate such loneliness in print. They do, however, make an issue of their aloneness. Though many women undoubtedly relished the social aspects of Christianity that had been "revived" in nineteenth-century America, these itinerants, once they embarked on their preaching careers, evidently had nothing to do with the intimacies afforded by praying bands, missionary societies, benevolent circles and the like.<sup>2</sup> They were, or so they want us to believe, "sisters" in "spirit" only; they played little part in that "female world of love and ritual" so well documented by Carroll Smith-Rosenberg.<sup>3</sup> They express

no regrets for undertaking a discipleship that required them to travel and work without the society of--the dependence on--close friends: "Let me admonish you," Emerson told the Harvard divinity graduates in 1838, "first of all, to go alone..." (113). None of these women could have heard the message--they were intensely aware of their exclusion from places like the Harvard Divinity School--but all of them mastered the doctrine and applied it consistently in their lives and writing.

They learned it, at least in part, in the same place Emerson did: in the long-standing Protestant tradition of spiritual individualism. Evangelical Christians all of them, these preachers participated in what historians of American religion have called the century's "most powerful social and religious movement" (Sweet, "Nineteenth" 875 ). "The dominant expression of Protestant faith in nineteenth-century America," Evangelicalism has long been viewed as an intensification of the individualistic ideology of Protestantism itself (Sweet, "Nineteenth" 875). Rejecting the church as mediator between mankind and God and between mankind and God's Word, the Reformation radically altered the way the western world viewed the individual. The individual had stepped outside the bounds--and the protection--of the catholic community into a reformed faith in which men and women were themselves responsible for ascertaining their spiritual condition through relentless self-scrutiny and introspection; salvation was a

matter for each individual and God. Still, though it fostered the belief in "a whole society mainly governed by the idea of every individual's intrinsic independence both from other individuals and from that multifarious allegiance to past modes of thought and action denoted by the word 'tradition,'" Protestantism did not relinquish, as Emerson later would, a sense of community in religious worship (Watt 60). "Calvinist 'individualism,'" as Robert Bellah reminds us, "only made sense within the collective context": "[C]onversion as a liberating experience was always balanced by the coordinate concept of covenant, which implied a definite set of obligations between God and man and between man and man" (18-19). As they sailed for America, the Puritans were urged to consider these communal obligations: John Winthrop, in his sermon "A Model of Christian Charity," asked that as "fellow members of Christ" they "account [themselves] knit together by this bond of love":

[F]or the work we have in hand, it is by mutual consent, through a special overruling providence and a more than an ordinary approbation of the churches of Christ, to seek out a place of cohabitation and consortship, under a due form of government both civil and ecclesiastical. (89)

By the turn of the nineteenth century, however, the old

equilibrium between conversion and covenant had been upset by the surge of revivalism that flowed through the nation. Orthodox Calvinism's deterministic logic--its insistence on the total depravity of mankind and subsequently on unconditional election and irresistible grace--gave way in the nineteenth century to an evangelistic theology with a decidedly Arminian cast. Individuals were no longer told--and perhaps no longer wanted to hear--that Original Sin rendered them unable to effect their own conversion; rather they were encouraged to become the agents of their own salvation. Charles Finney's theology, for example, much like the New Divinity theology taught at Yale, was "an attempt to modify Calvinism to fit a revivalist methodology," to make, in other words, individuals free agents in matters of faith and morals who could readily respond to the new measures created to assist in converting Americans (Hardesty, Witness 50). "Nothing," writes Charles Foster, "so frustrated a revivalist as to enter the anxious room only to find its occupants agreed in Augustinian piety that they were utterly unable to do anything about their own salvation and therefore had no responsibility in the matter" (262). Certainly the attempt to modify Calvinism parallels the unprecedented success of the Baptists and Methodists--both of whom stressed free will--in nineteenth-century Evangelicalism.<sup>4</sup> By placing the individual conversion experience at the heart of religion and reemphasizing both the individualization of conscience and the

reformed belief in unmediated interpretation of scripture, the new measures and new theology of revivalism, in effect, embraced an ideology of individualism. This is not to say that evangelicalism lacked a sense of community, any more than the New England Puritans lacked a sense of the individual. The communal and reformist fervor of nineteenth-century lay societies is well documented. But the emphasis had shifted from one to the other.<sup>5</sup>

Although these evangelists were sincere Protestants, their participation in the Protestant tradition of individualism served other purposes as well. For by deploying that American rhetoric of success which I discussed in the last chapter--by presenting themselves as fantastically productive spiritual capitalists, providing salvation in quantity--they had involved themselves in an extraordinary dilemma. They are the heirs of an intensely individualistic brand of Christianity. But by their constant resort to merely statistical measures of evangelical success, they inevitably obscure the individual aspect in the drama of salvation: if the only meaningful record of a revival is an accounting of the sheer number of sinners who stepped forward to be saved, then one saved soul is (as far as we readers are able to discern) more or less like another. None of these writers would have denied that each member of the vast crowds they attracted had a dramatic and meaningful spiritual autobiography to recount. And yet, as Joyce Warren and others

have argued, "The individual who is so intent on establishing his own persona cannot look outward" (13). The techniques of self-advertisement to which they felt driven required them to obscure the drama and meaning in those other stories, and to subsume them under a mere statistical summary. Thus one of the imperatives of these autobiographers becomes the paradoxical struggle against a logic they themselves have set in motion, straining to exempt themselves from a dispensation they themselves have helped create.<sup>6</sup> This imperative sometimes gives the autobiographies a disorienting double-vision: even while they stress the assembly-line routineness of the conversions they worked, they must somehow raise themselves and their own spiritual lives above the mass of lives around them.<sup>7</sup>

Their doing so in their autobiographies places these women in a rare position in the history of American literature--one, in fact, for which most of our theories of that literature make no place. For the literary figures whom they most resemble are the heroes of the "classic" American novels of their day: they are kindred spirits of Natty Bumppo and Huck Finn, self-reliant and independent loners. The stories of these isolatoes have often been taken as the quintessential American narratives: stories about fierce individualists, realizing themselves against the background of raw nature, in constant conflict with a society intent upon "adopting and sivilizing" them. Such legendary figures,

writes Constance Rourke, "appeared always as single figures, or merely doubled or multiplied, never as one of a natural group, never as part of a complex human situation, always nomadic" (qtd. in Warren 13).<sup>8</sup> These figures were, moreover, primarily white men: "Women, blacks, Indians, and other 'others' had no place in the drama of American individualism" (Warren 4).<sup>9</sup> As Nina Baym has instructed us in a well-known essay, because few women--and certainly few African-Americans, I would add--in the nineteenth century had the necessary freedom and mobility to pursue an individualistic quest, this "American" script was largely unavailable to female American authors.<sup>10</sup> Thus, Baym argues, have books by women been excluded from the American canon. But Nancy Towle, Jarena Lee, and the rest tell precisely this "masculine" story, though their doing so has not yet endeared them to the canon-makers. Their stories remind us that though they were looked upon as "other," as unworthy and perhaps even unreal, ultimately these women insist on their individuality: the autobiographies themselves become the means by which they refuse the role of "other," laying claim instead to the "masculine" tradition of American individualism.<sup>11</sup> Without exception these narratives follow a heroine who sheds her relationships and--without even the aid of a Chingachgook or a Queequeg--pursues an unquiet life of constant movement and not inconsiderable danger. If (as William Spengemann has suggested) the territory of American narrative is a

"dialogue"--even a "conflict"--between the Domestic Muse and the Adventurous Muse, then these autobiographers are wholehearted devotees of the latter daimon.<sup>12</sup> They represent themselves as independent heroines on an individualistic quest in an increasingly competitive and combative evangelical marketplace.

## II

As a child, remembers Lydia Sexton in the early pages of her story (appropriately subtitled Her Early Privations, Adventures, and Reminiscences), she became convinced that she would "perform a great exploit" (66):

Immediately in the rear of [Mr. Hand's] house, there was a high mount, with almost a perpendicular face fronting the premises. No person had ever ascended it more than a few yards. I took a fancy I would climb that mountain in the steepest place. All laughed at me when I talked of such an adventure, telling me that no human foot had sealed that precipice, and they thought never would. (66)

Thus begins her account of what she came to view as the defining moment in her life, the moment in which she began to distinguish herself from her compatriots. In the tradition of



Petrarch's ascent of Mt. Ventoux in 1336, she climbs her mountain, "because it is there" (Asher 1050). Petrarch, however, hastily descended the peak after having opened his copy of Augustine's Confessions "to a passage of exacting relevance, reproaching those who would sooner admire landscapes than scrutinize their souls" (Asher 1050). Sexton, though, is not torn between the poles of "aesthetic gratification" and "contemplative inwardness" (Asher 1050). She climbed her mountain not to see, but to be seen, to stand out by doing what had not been done before.

The adventure was treacherous and at times the child feared for her safety, particularly when she came to a fifty-foot rock which stood between her and the mountain top (nothing, she wants us to know, protected her from the "abyss below") (67). Determined, however, to "go up or die in the attempt," she manages to climb the rock placing her toes in a "small seam" that runs its length. But then she discovers an even more formidable obstacle, for behind the scrub-oaks "was a lair which looked like the nest of some wild beast of the forest" (67). At this point, exhausted and alone, Sexton turns to God, "confessing [her] sins and pleading with him to have mercy on a poor orphan that had so presumptuously risked her life, and that, too, on his holy Sabbath" (67). Thus she is caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place, in this case between a duty to confess her unchristian presumption, self-reliance and pride, and a rather touching

desire to boast of her youthful triumph.

Of course the foolish youthful act is a commonplace in spiritual autobiography, and many of the classics in the genre make good use of it. In the Confessions St. Augustine remembers stealing a piece of fruit and thus demonstrating--to the satisfaction of the mature, Christian autobiographer--the fact of innate depravity; Benjamin Franklin stole a pile of building stones in order to construct a fishing pier, thus establishing early on his habit of performing useful works; Wordsworth stole a rowboat and saw Nature itself darken in response to this stain on his childish innocence. Sexton's account likewise anticipates something of her mature life and thought. In the next chapter Sexton addresses the queries of readers who might see only folly and childishness in this adventure on the mountain. Had she learned nothing from the feat, argues Sexton, her readers would be right in judging her thus. But, protests the autobiographer, "I learned from it the philosophy of success, trust, and perseverance" (69).

It was a philosophy of competitive individualism which would serve her well throughout her tumultuous career as an itinerant minister and prison chaplain. And it is a philosophy to which she repeatedly refers in her autobiography. Throughout the narrative she adverts to the metaphor of the mountain climb to describe her challenges and successes: "When I was notified of my election as chaplain of the state prison in Kansas, I said to myself, Is not the

mountain too high and steep for my ascent?.... Trusting in the providence of my heavenly Father, I undertook the perilous task" (69). Here, as with the literal mountain of her youth and with all the metaphoric ones that come later, God seems merely a helpful assistant, a kind of Sherpa guide, in adventures of which she is the unrivaled heroine. Not surprisingly, she revels in detailing stories of her triumphs despite overwhelming opposition and peril, only barely remembering, as if by force of habit, to thank God for His contributions to her success.

These obstacles play a large part in her narrative. Sexton would have us understand that her decision to undertake an evangelical career in the 1840s was fiercely resisted by her family. Her mother-in-law for a time "bitterly opposed" her mission; her family refused to attend her preaching engagements, thinking "it a disgrace for [her] to go about preaching" (234, 240). So often did she encounter opposition from the congregations to whom she would preach that she came to expect it and often traveled to meetings in a state of deep anxiety. On one such occasion, she was to assist at a protracted meeting in Piqua, Ohio, where "all were strangers" (290). The night before she was due to travel, she dreamed of a black snake blocking her path. "I thought there were a great many people around," dreamed Sexton,

but none of them appeared to show the  
least solicitude for my safety, not even

to warn me, but rather that it might strike me. I seemed to be going before the rest of the company which increased the danger to me. I took up a stone and threw it on the serpent. The serpent floundered and rolled and hissed and died....I dreamed still further that we went to another point, and there found a nest of them, all knotted together like *Caput Medusa*. With heads protruding, they were hissing and darting at me with their forked tongues, I picked up a ponderous rock; and letting it fall on them, it crushed them all. (290-291, my emphasis)<sup>13</sup>

Sexton, interpreting the dream according to "the old and familiar German rule," believes she will "triumph over the enemy," who indeed does turn up in Piqua in the form of a woman who "devoted her time in 'looking daggers at [Sexton]'" (291, 293). Of course, anyone familiar with this tradition of women's autobiography and with Sexton's youthful achievements can guess the outcome: the woman, affected by Sexton's preaching, repents and, concludes Sexton, "by the word of truth from the rock that was hewed out of the mountain the head of the adversary was crushed and victory obtained" (293). Sexton had climbed another mountain, had conquered yet another

of the "persecutor[s] of preaching women" who fill the pages of this autobiography (358). As I mentioned earlier in another context, many of these were men within the church establishment, who, as Sexton shows throughout her story, aggressively opposed her mission<sup>14</sup> and, particularly, her request for a permanent license to preach.<sup>15</sup> Undaunted by such sexist assumptions, Sexton continued to assert herself, demonstrating her capabilities, rising above her audience, as a child on a mountain, as an adult in print.

Indeed her mountaineering adventure should be read as a figure for the autobiography itself: she pens her life story--which at 655 pages is itself a mountainous affair--as she climbed that dangerous precipice, not only in Christian humility, but from an irrepressible desire to be noticed. Writing and publishing the life are clearly central episodes in the difficult project of asserting her right to individuality--and to individualism, or the free play of such individuality--in a culture in which individualism was predominantly a masculine prerogative. Sexton's successful--if somewhat foolhardy--mountain-climbing adventure invites us to recognize the author as an individual struggling to create and maintain a separate identity. It invites us, moreover, to read her story in terms of a poetics of space. Sexton was familiar, as we've seen, with the century's ever-pervasive cult of domesticity which consigned women to a particular "sphere," a particular "place" in which to exercise her

special "gifts," in which to fulfill her "destiny." She would, moreover, have "sigh[ed] over" the pervasive prescriptive literature that aimed, Margaret Fuller said, to "fit Woman for heaven" or "fit her to please, or, at least, not to disturb, a husband" (157-8). Climbing to the top of a dangerous precipice, and then foregrounding it in her autobiography, Sexton engages in what we might call a "ritual of reversal," in which proscriptions against women's participation in more "masculine" dramas are suspended, if not altogether overturned.<sup>16</sup> She reminds us here that she is "fit" for more than household dramas, for more than pouring tea, that indeed it is her place to "disturb" a husband, an outraged minister, a culture that would demand that she remain in her place at the bottom of the mountain, in Mr. Hand's house. Written into the early portion of her voluminous narrative, her youthful adventure serves as more than an introduction to a resourceful, spirited, self-reliant heroine. It serves to remind--or warn--her readers that this is a book about power struggles, about who will be on top and who will be in control; it is a book that will "fit" women to take their places outside the home, side by side with men in the drama of American individualism. Having witnessed her determination and competitive spirit in childhood, we know Sexton will not be deterred by the obstacles placed in her path by a patriarchal culture, in her quest for power in the evangelical marketplace.

In Lydia Sexton's autobiography we see at work a technique of self-definition common to this tradition of nineteenth-century women's autobiographies: that of defining the self in terms of the obstacles it overcomes. This is of course a novelistic technique, as old as Defoe and Richardson: render the character unique by consistently placing her in opposition--to individual antagonists and to her culture at large. And certainly it is a technique common in Protestant autobiography and hagiography. These preachers lay claim to the myth of individualism by depicting themselves, in a manner reminiscent of Mary Rowlandson, Elizabeth Ashbridge, Moll Flanders, Clarissa and countless other fictional and historical heroines and heroes, as unique in the face of substantial opposition. Of course, as we have seen in the previous chapters, these women--along with their male counterparts--often encountered resistance from opponents of evangelical religion or religion in general; it was not unusual for drunken hecklers to assail them, verbally and physically, at the pulpit. The women, however, typically describe this opposition in terms of gender. Willingly and openly challenging the gender norms of nineteenth-century America, these women found themselves in a unique and ultimately useful position, upon which they could then base their self-representation in their autobiographies. Clarissa stepped outside her family's wishes, withstanding their physical and emotional blackmail; Moll Flanders stepped

outside her country's code of laws, defying authorities to catch her; Robinson Crusoe stepped off a ship onto a nearly deserted island and Huck Finn stepped onto a raft and sailed away from civilization. These women stepped outside their homes and thus found it easy to define themselves as individuals apart from--figuratively and sometimes literally above--their contemporaries. These women achieve character by resisting cultural prescriptions for woman's behavior. They are heroines in a most dramatic plot: woman versus the male evangelical establishment and the dominant culture from which it emerges.

Nancy Towle, near the end of her autobiography, reflecting on a lifetime of antagonism and even mob violence, forcefully compares her lot to that of her male counterparts: "Neither, is such an host of the sons of Belial:--the Reverend Clergy, or the worldly-wise, of every description, to pitch battle against them, a thing for which they look" (228-9, my emphasis). Although the torturous punctuation--for which she apologizes in her preface--makes for difficult reading, her meaning is clear: male itinerants do not have to deal with opposition from the ranks of the clergy or from the worldly-wise. Female evangelists, on the other hand, expect it at every turn; it is part of their itinerant landscape. And perhaps it is this gnawing expectation, this "us against them" mentality with which female evangelists lived, that leads her to regard it as woman's special mission to be in turn the



thorn in the side of the established clergy: "I believe that females are sent into the harvest of the Lord Jesus, more especially to provoke the idle shepherds to more earnest endeavours for the good of souls, and the promotion of the 'word and kingdom of the Redeemer,' over the world" (81).

Early in her autobiography Towle declares that she ignored the Church's opposition to female preachers, forging ahead--if quietly at first--with her career in the itinerant ministry in the 1820s because she was "satisfied with [her]self" (15).<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless she repeatedly documents the "warfare" to which she was subjected as a female preacher (228).<sup>18</sup> That warfare began, she would have us understand, even before she renounced her father's house to preach the gospel: long before she faced her first heckler, her first dismissive male clergyman, she had to confront her own inner qualms about the unconventional life to which she felt called. Having internalized her culture's prescriptions for women's behavior, she entered the ministry somewhat surreptitiously by accepting a teaching position "as a sort of screen," to hide, as it were, her very challenge to such prescriptions (19). Nancy Towle was tortured by the phantom which Virginia Woolf--borrowing the title of Coventry Patmore's paean to married bliss--came to call "The Angel in the House," the phantom that Woolf said "bothered me and wasted my time and so tormented me that at last I killed her...in self-defence" (qtd. in Rigney 120). It would seem that Towle defended herself equally well.

On one occasion in Ithaca, New York, she outwitted a clergyman who, though he had agreed to let her speak, refused at the crucial moment to give over his pulpit to a woman. Alert to the relationship--literal and figurative--between space and power, Towle gleefully reports, "However, I disappointed him, for I stepped, without hesitation, into the pulpit--which very much diverted, the whole assembly!" (154-5); she went on, she tells us, to preach over an hour. Recent work on reactance theory among social psychologists teaches us that such a response is hardly out of the ordinary: "there is a human desire for freedom and autonomy that, when threatened by the use of force, leads to a reaction of opposition," or put more simply, in the words of Sharon and Jack Brehm, "'threatened choice alternatives tend to become more attractive'" (Scott, Domination 109).<sup>19</sup> The episode is, of course, the equivalent of Sexton's mountaineering adventure. In both cases the heroine raises herself--literally as well as figuratively--above the mass; in both she becomes, by her boldness and ability, the focus of everyone's attention. Both serve the heroines in the complex task of self-creation and self-preservation. And, moreover, both are clearly tenacious acts of insurgency by which the women actively resist gender oppression. Both women lay claim to a new "place" in their culture--on a mountain, in a pulpit--unwilling to be consumed by either the mass culture of American revivalism in which they participated or their culture's gendered expectations.

One might be reminded here of Peter Cartwright's forceful seizure of the Baptist meeting house; but Towle's brand of imperialism clearly serves her not in some sectarian rivalry but in her own "pitched battles" both to seize a place (and power) for herself in the public sphere and to create and maintain a separate identity.

In fact, Towle refuses to be a warrior for any particular sect: she remained an independent itinerant throughout her life, not wishing to be controlled by hierarchical church authorities: "I wish," proclaims Towle in her autobiography, "to be free from party spirit, and to love Christians of every order....I am therefore still, a citizen of this world; but bound to a better country; and accountable to no mortal, for my procedure--nor hath any human being, any control over me (232, my emphasis)."<sup>20</sup> She rejects religious hierarchies and forms, we must believe, for the same reason that many other Protestants have: because they threatened to obscure her vision of God. But they would also necessarily have obscured our vision of her. By categorically rejecting the domination that must certainly come with membership in a particular sect, she ensures, among other things, her own distinct identity. She is the champion of her own cause; rather than serve some large establishment, she becomes an establishment unto herself, serving only God. Indeed, she marks herself as an individualist of Emersonian scope by insisting throughout her autobiography that she also opposes a "systematical mode of

procedure, in the ministry":

Because, by a constant adherence, to a round of customary devotions, and a habitude of borrowing for a prop, the sentiments of other Authors... [the formalist] deprives himself of that spiritual light,--correspondent, with a lively exercise of faith in God,--which it is the exalted privilege of every believer to enjoy. (7-8)<sup>21</sup>

Emerson, of course, would make a similar claim five years later in "The American Scholar": "I had better never see a book than to be warped by its attraction clean out of my own orbit, and made a satellite instead of a system," and again in 1838 in his address to the Harvard Divinity School: "Whenever the pulpit is usurped by a formalist, then is the worshipper defrauded and disconsolate" (68, 109). Nancy Towle even anticipates that famous "Lady" portrayed by Henry James, who had "a certain instinct, not imperious, but persuasive, [that] told her to resist--murmured to her that virtually she had a system and an orbit of her own" (156). Towle herself renounces such "vain formularies and the customary devotions...to try, to listen to the voice of His spirit, in [her] own soul..." (26).<sup>22</sup> She, unlike many of the audiences to whom she preaches, is an independent agent neither "fettered by forms" nor defeated by enemies (188-9). With

specific accounts of opposition and general assessments of the itinerant landscape as it affected women, Towle creates herself for her readers. She was "willing," she tells us, "to have a place, upon a level with the rest," but rather than "seem to any, like a coward" she always "took the highest seat" (29, *emphasis mine*). By demonstrating her independence in the face of opposition, she stands out for her readers as she surely stood above her audiences, and she secures her place as an autonomous individual at one with the culture's favorite myth.

Like Nancy Towle, Jarena Lee recognized the literary opportunity afforded her by the opponents she faced in her three decades of preaching. She too gives these antagonists prominent roles in her autobiographies, published in 1836 and 1849. The first of these is a formidable opponent indeed: Satan, "the enemy of all righteousness," attempts to thwart her conversion, even to the point of tempting her to commit suicide (5). The psychological battle with Satan adds dramatic flare to her conversion story; it is a contest on par with that of Lovelace versus Clarissa: "No sooner was the intention [to kill myself] resolved on in my mind, than an awful dread came over me, when I ran into the house; still the tempter pursued me": "That night," continues Lee's vivid account,

I formed a resolution to pray; which,  
when resolved upon, there appeared,

sitting in one corner of the room, Satan, in the form of a monstrous dog, and in a rage, as if in pursuit, his tongue protruding from his mouth to a great length, and his eyes looked like two balls of fire.... (6)

Whether or not Lee actually had such an experience, and what sort of experience it was, we cannot know. We can know, however, that she clearly recognized the value of dramatizing it in her autobiography. Lee no doubt appreciated the incident as an invaluable tool in the literary task of characterizing herself, of defining herself for her readers. Though she never literally scaled a mountain in the manner of the young Lydia Sexton, she did "totter" at the "edge" of many a "precipice" (6). By demonstrating her equanimity in this confrontation with a seemingly rabid dog, she could prove herself a heroine of remarkable scope, an Odysseus battling horrific monsters. Scenes like this one, moreover, make vivid for her readers her experience of contending constantly against an amorphous, impersonal consensus that she had no business doing what she was doing. For "Satan" in this autobiography invariably speaks in behalf of the patriarchal religious establishment which viewed women like Jarena Lee with grave suspicion.

Not surprisingly, many women make extensive use of this device Jarena Lee stumbled upon, that of personifying a

hostile culture in the menacing figure of Satan. Amanda Berry Smith's devil seems to champion the hierarchies of race, class and gender that would delimit a poor, black woman in the second half of the nineteenth century. Satan tries, for instance, to prevent her from exhorting and distributing religious tracts to upper-class white men: "the Devil said, 'That is a white gentleman, and he will curse you'" (107). Smith, however, ever ready to challenge her culture's racial classifications, resists Satan's efforts to thwart her self-assertion and offers the man a tract anyway. Though "thoroughly astonished," the young man was "pleasant and courteous"; moreover, as Smith later learns, the tract helped him find "peace and joy in the Lord" (107). At least in this instance, Smith, empowered by the Spirit, defeats Satan, crosses racial boundaries and labors, she sincerely believes, to free white America from enslavement to racial prejudice, a task which she, like most nineteenth-century evangelicals, believed could only be accomplished through a heart-felt conversion.

I borrow here Smith's own figurative use of "slavery" and "freedom." Throughout her autobiography she defines her own spiritual struggle--and that of the people she seeks to convert--in dialectical terms, as an ongoing battle between slavery and freedom. The metaphor is, of course, as old as Christianity itself: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8: 32); or, in the words of

Peter, "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage" (II Peter 2:19). The metaphor was, moreover, as Albert Raboteau, Donald Mathews and other historians of black religion have argued, a psychologically and politically potent one for both southern and northern blacks, before and after the Civil War. Freed from bondage to sin, blacks were also freed to experience their "ultimate worth as one of the chosen of God" (Raboteau, "Black Experience" 193). Because blacks "made no distinction between sacred and secular," the metaphor was clearly political in its capacity "to support [both] slaves in the act of rebellion by flight" and freed men and women in their resistance to charges of biological inferiority and institutionalized discrimination (Religion 198; Slave Religion 305). Northern black evangelicals, both in their war against slavery and racism and in their promotion of moral reform, mobilized themselves with the rallying cry, "What shall we do to end slavery?"; or as Amanda Smith exclaims in her autobiography, "I longed for deliverance, but how to get free" (Raboteau, "Black Experience" 192; Smith 22).

As a black woman born into slavery in 1837 and only provisionally freed in white America, and as an evangelical Christian, Amanda Smith was intimately familiar with the sacred and secular meaning of the language of slavery and freedom: As Smith herself puts it, "I often say to people



that I have a right to shout more than some folks; I have been bought twice, and set free twice, and so I feel I have a good right to shout" (22). She, unlike her white contemporaries, can understand the nature of freedom because she has experienced the chains of bondage: "some people would understand the quintessence of sanctifying grace if they could be black about twenty-four hours" (116-17). Thus it should come as no surprise that Smith, aware of the metaphorical possibilities of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, depicts Satan as a cruel slave owner, relentlessly pursuing his slaves even as--or, rather, because--they cross over into a state of freedom. She opens her autobiography, in fact, with an anecdote about a slave owner--"a professed Christian, and a class leader in the Methodist Church"--who was "so blinded by selfishness and greed" that he risked his life to reenslave two boys "who sought only for freedom" (18). Though the political impact of the Fugitive Slave Law is not lost on Smith, she concludes the tale with a spiritual moral: "How selfishness, when allowed to rule us, will drive us on, and make us act in spirit like the great enemy of our soul, who ever seeks to recapture those who have escaped from the bondage of sin" (18). James Scott's work on the arts of resistance allows us to see, however, the political nature of Smith's use of Satan in her autobiographical narrative. Characterizing Satan as a white patriarchal oppressor offers black women like Jarena Lee and Amanda Smith a ritualistic

means by which to profess hostility toward the racist and sexist elements of their culture that repeatedly and cruelly deny them the right to be free. Confronting Satan in their writing is clearly a veiled means of dissent. Like greedy slave owners and racist Americans, Satan is an ever-present threat, against which they must "watch and pray, and on [their] God rely" (18). The devil ignores the "worldly-minded": "But spiritual Christians he understands very well, are doing him a vast injury, and therefore he sets himself against them" (Finney, Lectures 118). Giving over part of their autobiographical narratives to this enemy, these oppressed women forcibly, if indirectly, enter their voices in the political struggle against domination.<sup>23</sup> These spiritual narratives by black women are clearly situated, then, in the tradition of nineteenth-century African-American autobiography: in recounting both the heroine's flight from the bondage of sin to the freedom of salvation and, more significantly, her quest for independence and power in a racist, patriarchal--Satanic--culture, these spiritual autobiographies are, indeed, slave narratives.

Characterizing Satan is also a powerful means by which these women express the anxiety inherent in a life which certain identifiable opponents and an unrecognizable consensus consider a "vast injury." Like Virginia Woolf's phantom, Satan inevitably "sets himself against" Amanda Smith as the voice of her own inner qualms. No less than Nancy Towle,

though writing 61 years later, Smith suffers untold anxiety in her efforts to create and preserve an authentic existence outside the parameters known to most women. Her "struggle for individuality," as Sidonie Smith says of all women autobiographers, "is complicated by the power of those culturally prescribed norms of female identity" (Poetics 10). On one occasion, for example, the Lord having told Smith to preach the gospel in Salem, she is suddenly and "fiercely attacked" by Satan as she "stood ironing and praying earnestly to God" (134). Satan argues from the point of view of the century's definition of womanhood which Smith, despite her independence, has necessarily internalized. No doubt questioning the "propriety" of traveling alone, Smith is confronted by Satan, who accuses her of immodestly traveling about "to look for a husband" rather than spread the good news (135). Smith is able both to distance herself from this psychological struggle and to make it real for her readers by dramatizing the conflict as a battle between herself and the devil. Smith's Satan is also, it would seem, a master of language; he engages his opponent in an almost constant war of words, most of which she painstakingly transcribes in her autobiography. Distraught over a ruptured friendship, for example, Smith is assaulted on the street by her opponent, who gloats, "'You have got no joy now.'" "'No,'" responds Smith, "'it's all gone':"

Then in a tantalizing manner he said,

'Where is all your sanctification and holiness that you have been talking about?' And then for the first time I clearly realized that it was Satan himself that was accusing me, and I said, 'Ah! Ah! Mr. Satan, it is you, is it? Well, now look here, happiness or no happiness, joy or no joy, sanctification or no sanctification, I belong to Jesus!

(140)

The devil, Smith proudly and victoriously reports, took the "shape of a little black dog, with his tail between his legs" (140). That little black dog, however, simply crosses the street to lie in wait for his victim. Thus begins another verbal exchange, in this case seemingly a result of contention between her willingness to resist her culture's valorization of motherhood as the primary role of woman and her internalization of that very standard. Satan cagily baits her, "'You don't know how your child is coming on in Philadelphia'"; but Smith confidently responds, "'She is all right; I just had a letter.'" "'O," Satan continues, "the people tell you that, but you don't know if it is true!':

Then I recognized that old Accuser again, and I said, 'Well, it is none of your business, I belong to Jesus,' and I began to sing again...and away he went, my

adversary, and from that day to this I  
 seem to be able to know him when he  
 approaches.... (141)

Smith is able to challenge, if not always conquer, Satan in his many guises. And like Sexton's mountaineering or Towle's conflicts with vigilant guardians of the "male" pulpit, translating her battles with Satan into powerful drama enables Smith to be seen. She creates herself as an autonomous individual by constructing herself in opposition to the one she considered the greatest of all adversaries.

Zilpha Elaw similarly experienced, as Finney forewarned, "agonizing conflicts" with Satan, her "unwearied adversary" (83). And, like that of her human opponents, his was a voice of conservatism; he spoke with the many Christian Americans who were suspicious of the blessing of complete sanctification--it reeked of antinomianism and arrogance--and appalled by women preachers. Following her sanctification in 1817, Elaw felt called to speak to families about salvation, visit the sick, and engage in other such traditionally female ministries. "But," writes Elaw, "Satan at length succeeded in producing a cloud over my mind, and in damping the delightful ardours of my soul in these blessed labours, by suggesting, that I ought not to make so bold a profession of an entire sanctification and holiness of spirit..." (67). Not surprisingly then, it is Satan who instigates opposition to her call to preach the gospel. Though sanctioned by her

ministers, Elaw's ministry was undercut almost before it began, Satan having wrought jealousy among her class members, friends who subsequently abandoned her: "like Paul, none stood with me," Elaw remembers (83). Indeed she would stand alone most of her life, being opposed by "influential ministers" and hecklers throughout America and England (104). Her theology, however, absolved these people of blame: the ultimate source of all her trials was Satan, who "never fails to find a pretext by which to inspire his agents with opposition against the ministry which is of God" (155):

The principalities and powers of evil spirits, (Ephes. vi. 12) which Christians have to contend against, which Christ despoiled, (Colos. ii. 15) and which constitute the strength of the empire of darkness, the world of evil spirits, the right hand of the prince of the power of the air, (Ephes. ii. 2) who is the god or deity of this world, (2 Cor. iv. 4); these principalities occasionally obstructed me much; and, by binding and infatuating the sons of men, inspired them with a hostile zeal against me. (104, my emphasis)<sup>24</sup>

Though labeled as "other" in her career as an itinerant minister, Elaw seeks to make the most of her singularity and

the hostile zeal it provoked. She does so to such a degree that she stands before her readers as she stood before the Mitchells, the white Quaker family with whom she lived and worked for a time: a "speckled bird" (59). In its immediate context this biblical simile refers to her being without Christian companionship in that household, for, as Elaw reports, "the knowledge of God was possessed by none in that family with the exception of my master" (59; Jeremiah 12:9). According to Elaw this situation was not without its advantages: "the singularity with which I was treated," remembers Elaw, "drove me to God my refuge, and proved very congenial to increased intimacy of communion with Him" (59). This was not, however, the only advantage. Her "singular" status as a young servant in an irreligious home can be seen as a sort of initiation rite into the itinerant ministry: by the time she wrote her autobiography, she no doubt saw her singularity in the master's household as only the beginning. As a black woman evangelical preacher looking back in 1846 on her career, she could see that she had always been a "speckled bird" in a flock of plain, but vocal, warblers. Though she claims to have once been "so overwhelmed with the love of God, that self seemed annihilated," her autobiographical rendering of self proves otherwise (61).

Most often, of course, these evangelical women preachers contended with opponents more mundane, though no less "masterful," than the "Old Accuser" himself. Most of these

opponents were contemporary preachers ensconced in the church establishment, men who coveted the pulpit as a privilege of their gender; most, moreover, were never absolved of blame. In Jarena Lee's autobiography that opposition is first personified in Rev. Richard Allen, whom she petitioned for permission to preach within the folds of the Free African Society, and later within the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Allen's biographer reminds us that the Bishop "gave [women] the opportunity of exercising their talents and encouraged them to be useful in the service of the church," but Lee's purpose in portraying him is not to balance his defects with virtues; she presents him simply as an enemy seeking to thwart God's plan for her life (Wesley 195-6). Told to "'Go preach the Gospel!,'" Lee sought permission to move within the "sphere" of the Methodists, but was rebuffed by Allen, who informed her that his "Discipline knew nothing at all about [women preaching], that it did not call for women preachers" (11, emphasis mine).<sup>25</sup> Apparently the church, at least as it seemed to Lee, reserved the right to place its own needs and desires above those of God. And certainly above those of Lee, who felt "that holy energy which burned within [her], as a fire, beg[an] to be smothered" (11; Jeremiah 20: 9). The metaphor is well chosen, for it calls attention to the history of women in the church who were repeatedly denied a voice and told to "keep silent." Just recapturing this moment in her autobiography offends Lee so much that she



launches into a page-long energetic exhortation on the rights of women to preach: "O how careful ought we to be, lest through our by-laws of church government and discipline, we bring into disrepute even the word of life" (11). She would have us know that Allen was not entirely successful at smothering her voice. And eventually, she reports, he granted her permission to preach." The occasion of his change of heart forms one of the more remarkable episodes in the autobiography. The Rev. Richard Williams, she reports, "seemed to have lost the spirit" in mid-sermon. His text, ideally for Lee's purposes, was Jonah 2:9; among the congregation, even more ideally, was none other than her nemesis Bishop Allen. So, in the spirit of Nancy Towle, Lee rises from her seat, gains the attention of the crowd, and expounds upon her own Jonahesque failure to answer God's call, regardless of such worldly obstacles as the presumably discomfited Allen: "I told them I was like Jonah; for it had been then nearly eight years since the Lord had called me to preach his gospel...but that I had lingered like him, and delayed to go at the bidding of the Lord" (17). Allen responded to the incident--thus perhaps confirming his biographer's portrait of an essentially benevolent man--by giving Lee what she wanted.

The Bishop, however, is quickly succeeded by other opponents. Lee recounts, on practically every page, her conflicts with male adversaries who are, she never fails to

mention, later "turned out of the Church" or made "an example of" (44, 37). But she seems to be aware of the danger of giving over too much of her story to those who opposed her mission; this was her autobiography, not theirs. Thus, at times she prefers to acknowledge the opposition in passing. "On Wednesday night," she writes of an incident in 1823, "I spoke to the people at Trenton Bridge, and notwithstanding the opposition I had met with from brother Samuel R---, then on the circuit, the Lord supported the 'woman preacher' and my soul was cheered" (33). In these instances, she pays tribute, as it were, to her opponents, masterfully heightening the level of her success by showing her reader what she was up against. On another occasion, for example, she writes, "On my return [from Philadelphia], I met with such a severe trial of opposition, that I thought I never would preach again, but the Apostle says, 'ye are not your own but are bought with a price'" (43). Lee's more cowardly opponents, she reports, often failed to show their faces, preferring simply to lock her out of the appointed meeting house. So relentless was the opposition she faced even from within the Methodist fold that she considered leaving the Methodists, so she tells us (in perhaps an excess of pious martyrdom), "lest some might go into ruin by their persecutions of me..." (24). Despite gaining Bishop Allen's consent to preach, Lee portrays herself as a "Sheep among Wolves"--a female itinerant at odds with the irreligious and the racist and sexist elements of her culture

(59): "At times I was pressed down like a cart beneath its shafts--my life seemed as at the point of the sword--my heart was sore and pained me in my body" (24, my emphasis). Her choice of metaphor is apt, for the word "pressed" evokes its etymological offspring, "oppressed" and "depressed": "Something pressed," Marilyn Frye reminds us, "is something caught between or among forces and barriers which are so related to each other that jointly they restrain, restrict, or prevent the thing's motion or mobility" (2). And, indeed, as a black woman itinerant, constantly struggling against patriarchal barriers that sought to restrict her movement from town to town, from congregation to pulpit, from "poor black woman" to famous, powerful preacher, the oppressed Lee no doubt suffered from what today we would consider a severe depression. Nevertheless, she always reentered the battlefield: "Let the servants of Christ gird on the armor," Lee instructs her fellow itinerants, "and 'listen to the Captain's voice: Lo I am with you always, even unto the end'" (32)."

Drawing on particularly masculine metaphors, she dramatically presents herself as an individualist--a Christian soldier--doing battle with her culture's basic assumptions--in this case essentialist assumptions about race and gender. She creates herself in her autobiography as a kind of Huckleberry Finn, invariably outwitting those dominating figures--Bishop Allen, brother Samuel--who threaten to "sivilize" her, to deconstruct the autonomous selfhood she attained through the

itinerant ministry. It is one of the great ironies of her career, then, that Lee's opponents ultimately handed her the literary technique with which she could, as it were, guarantee that autonomy; she seized them in her literary self-representation as a means of individuation, to highlight her uniqueness, to maintain her individuality by setting it in print.

Julia Foote goes much further than Lee in detailing her major antagonist's "opposition to [her] lifework" (205). "The minister, Mr. Beman['s]" opposition eventually assumes such proportions in Foote's account that she professes, perhaps hyperbolically, to be an Ishmael, engaged in battle with all men: "It is no little thing to feel that every man's hand is against us, and ours against every man, as seemed to be the case with me at this time..." (208, Genesis 16: 12). No doubt Foote felt that she had no ally but God: some of her friends, like most of Elaw's, "said [she] was too forward"; and influential ministers in her Conference, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church,--men "who had been much blessed"--put her through "fiery trials" (200, 208). Her husband, finding in her newly-acquired independence cause for alarm, responds to her deviance from culturally prescribed modes of female behavior by labeling her "mad."<sup>8</sup> Threatened both by her desire to preach publicly about the blessing of complete sanctification and by the self-assurance such holiness gave her, he warns that he will commit her to a "crazy-house,"

where forced back into the role of dependent Other, she would be duly disciplined and excluded from further excursions into what he considered the territory of men (196). Julia Foote would hardly have been surprised by her husband's allegations and threats, for by mid-century revivalists like Charles Finney insisted that such charges were common in--perhaps even definitive of--the experience of spiritual Christians. Anticipating Michael Foucault's analysis of the cultural construction of sanity, Finney warned his audiences: "If you have much of the Spirit of God, it is not unlikely you will be thought deranged, by many. We judge men"--and particularly women, I would add--"to be deranged when they act differently from what we think to be prudent and according to common sense..." (Lectures 115-116). Perhaps that is why Foote, despite the opposition encountered, never questions her own sanity; rather, reading her husband's threat as a mere desire for social control and, moreover, as evidence of her own sanctification, she relishes her singularity and humbly but defiantly concludes, "Though opposed, I went forth laboring for God, and he owned and blessed my labors, and has done so wherever I have been until this day" (209). Like her sisters of the spirit, Foote dedicates herself to denouncing the hostility she encountered and bemoaning her singularity as a female itinerant; yet standing alone against severe opposition enabled her, again like her sister itinerants, to achieve an identity in print. Perhaps warring with her antagonists

throughout her career had made her feel special; certainly a document filled with such struggle makes her look special. These women knew how to make good use of their singular status, for by emphasizing it they authorized the publication of their life stories. Surely such unique, embattled selves were worthy of a reader's attention.

### III

Historians of religion have well documented the extent to which women like Julia Foote--and certainly secular feminists as well--participated in a kind of warfare in their efforts to cross the dominant culture's racial and gender boundaries. We know, in other words, that these evangelical preachers did not have to fabricate the conflicts which they so movingly outline in their autobiographies. And from their writings, we can infer that despite the forceful efforts of angry hecklers and stubborn clergy to create a disabling environment, these women were far from paralyzed by the challenges put before them. We can even speculate that such constant warfare was psychologically beneficial for women delimited by a culture that would literally and figuratively confine them in a narrow domestic space. Perhaps they fought their battles with the evangelical establishment for the same reason Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* fought his with "Monopolated Light & Power": "it allow[ed] [them] to feel [their] vital aliveness" (7).

Arrested in England for "obstructing the way and making a disturbance" as she preached the gospel, Nancy Towle could be anything but upset. She could, rather, "rejoice" for such an opportunity to show her strength, to play a part in a heroic struggle, and, moreover, to deconstruct the international image of American womanhood as frail and passive. Eventually acquitted in court, this female evangelist hastens back to the town center to pick up where she left off, to give them, as Towle gloatingly reports, "a sample for once, that 'American females, are not all of them, cowards'" (63). Climbing out of Mr. Hand's kitchen to the top of a dangerously steep mountain, Lydia Sexton could begin to conquer the imprisoning definitions of womanhood that would limit her quest for autonomous selfhood. Neither she nor her sister autobiographers preserve the "self," as Barbara Rigney has said of characters in many feminist novels, by withdrawing from threatening situations; they do so, rather, by actively seeking them out. Their world seems like Emerson's, in which the self survives only by conquering the world around it: alternative to climbing the mountain is being crushed by it. Indeed their quest for self-definition as preachers and autobiographers must itself be regarded as a form of resistance: by writing her own story, Lydia Sexton could take control of the power to define womanhood. Writing of their struggles, moreover, as William Andrews has argued in another context, could well be a "'w'rite of transition" from

nonpersonhood or otherness to an individuality typically reserved for nineteenth-century American men."

The constant warfare they detail enabled them also to summon the adventurous muse, to give a narrator--seemingly a centered, peaceful and loving human being--and a narrative--ostensibly about "enter[ing] into the rest of full salvation"--dramatic energy (Foote 213). For, as Frederick Buechner has said, "nothing is harder to make real than holiness. Certainly nothing is harder to make appealing or attractive" (18). One might add that nothing is harder to make interesting in narrative; like Milton, many of these women doubtless recognized the dramatic possibilities of writing Satan and other accusers into their spiritual scripts, of assigning them crucial roles in the plot of their lives. As William Spengemann has argued of the Domestic Romance, these autobiographies "proceed on a logic of action rather than on a logic of discursive ideas"; they must, therefore, "depict situations which are less than ideal. In a perfect domestic situation, no action would be necessary or even desirable; and without action the novel is tongue-tied" (73). The same can be said of religious autobiography. Spiritual writers of all ages have worried over the need to make real and active struggles which in their psychological and spiritual nature are seemingly unreal and inactive. The problem is not, of course, insurmountable. John Bunyan, like many spiritual autobiographers, solves this narrative dilemma by focusing



almost exclusively on the inner drama of his protracted conversion, in which temptations "from Satan, [his] own heart, and carnal acquaintance" engage him in "battel" (Grace Abounding 23, 43). But the brevity of the evangelical conversion experience and, more specifically, the second blessing of complete sanctification relieved these women of the sort of struggle Bunyan, Augustine and countless other spiritual autobiographers delineate, and thus deprived them of a useful model of plotting.<sup>30</sup> If, however, like Petrarch writing an account of and confession for his ascent of Mount Ventoux, these women could render both their psychological and their material opponents "as fierce as battlefield foes," then their spiritual autobiographies "could compete with [their] martial analogue in meriting historical commemoration" (Asher 1057). They could compete with the tales of adventure--the historical romances, the captivity narratives, the epic narratives--that were, along with domestic fiction, staples for the nineteenth-century American reader.

Still, I would argue, neither the historical reality of gendered conflict in the evangelical landscape nor the literary need for a crude method of individuation and plotting really explains the remarkable degree to which these narratives are driven by conflict. It could be argued, in fact, that these autobiographers actually court marginality as a strategy of self-dramatization. Of course, to say that these women valued marginality is not to say that they were

indifferent to, or failed to protest, the many inequities in the business of converting souls. They are "feminist" in the sense described by Elaine Showalter in A Literature of Their Own, both in "protesting" the social roles thrust upon them and in "advocating" the rights of women, "including a demand for autonomy" (13)." When these women recount lives of endless conflict, their implied critique of the patriarchal system that hinders them is clear enough; "Of the other sex," protests Nancy Towle in a long diatribe against an unequal system,

though three-fold the natural vigor,  
whereof to boast, it is seldom expected  
that they will go, without some suitable  
mode of conveyance, or without purse and  
scrip, at hand. Nor is it expected, that  
after their strength is quite exhausted,  
for the good of souls, that they then (to  
appear decent) must make, clean, or  
repair, some article of apparel, for  
themselves, before renewing again, the  
heavy struggle. (228)

Nancy Towle's autobiography must be read in part as a discourse of resistance against the marginal existence forced upon her by the evangelical establishment and the culture in which it is situated. And yet despite her angry critique of the discrimination she faces in the evangelical marketplace,

there is an obvious note of boasting here. She assumes a mask of victimization, wishing, it would seem, to impress us with the degree to which she is marginalized. And Julia Foote, writing almost fifty years later, even engages in what one might call competitive marginality. Comparing the trials of her ministry with those of women entering the ministry in 1879, when her autobiographical sketch was published, she writes: "Dear sisters, who are in the evangelistic work now, you may think you have hard times; but let me tell you, I feel that the lion and lamb are lying down together, as compared with the state of things twenty-five or thirty years ago" (214). She distinguishes herself from these late-nineteenth-century evangelists who, it seems, don't know how easy they've got it.

Amanda Smith, who began her ministry in 1870 and published her story in 1893, fourteen years after Foote, heartily disagrees with this assessment of the itinerant landscape through which she traveled: it hardly resembled, she wants us to know, the "Peaceable Kingdom" described in Isaiah (11: 6-9) and painted by the Quaker Edward Hicks. As a black female leaving the safe harbor of private life and attempting to navigate the unknown waters of a primarily white, primarily male evangelical sea, Smith at times felt lost. Sailing without a compass, she was often anxious. She tells us, for example, that for a long time she was distressed by the notoriety afforded her as she crossed racial and gender

boundaries. Even in revivalist circles she stood out as "the black woman" (280). At one particular revival, Smith could get no rest, despite her many attempts to "slip" away from the onlookers who followed her: "Sometimes I would slip into a tent away from them. Then I would see them peep in, and if they saw me they would say, 'Oh! here is the colored woman. Look!' Then the rush!" (183). She even resorts to hiding "out of sight" under a friend's bed, though even here she only narrowly escapes these would-be ferrets, who insist on uncovering "'the colored woman'" (183). Only when the coast is clear does Smith emerge from the tent and complain to Sister Clark: "'The people have followed me about all day, and have stared at me. Somehow I feel so bad and uncomfortable'" (183). Objectified--fetishized--in the white field of vision, Smith is "see[n] constantly" and "recognize[d] immediately"; like inmates of Bentham's Panopticon, Amanda Smith suffers the anxiety and discomfort of being in "a state of conscious and permanent visibility" (Foucault, Discipline 200-201).<sup>22</sup> Zilpha Elaw reports similar incidents of objectification, particularly, though not exclusively, in the American South: "the novelty," she writes of her preaching in a small, southern town, "had produced an immense excitement and the people were collecting from every quarter, to gaze at the unexampled prodigy of a coloured female preacher" (91):

There were some among the great folks  
whom curiosity induced to attend my

ministry; and this formed a topic of lively interest with many of the slave holders, who thought it surpassingly strange that a person (and a female) belonging to the same family stock with their poor debased, uneducated, coloured slaves, should come into their territories and teach the enlightened proprietors the knowledge of God. (92)

Throughout America and England, she was "the woman," "the dark coloured female stranger," who intrigued the curious who came in mass to hear her preach (112).

Indeed, rather than mold Zilpha Elaw, Amanda Smith and their sister itinerants into a "docile body," an object of disciplinary power, the panoptic nature of the itinerant landscape served them well in their quest for recognition. Each of these women was, in the words of Lydia Sexton, a "seeming curiosity" (251). Upon notification that "a woman was to preach," Sexton remembers, "the people would come running and walking and riding,--any way to get there,--just from pure curiosity to hear a woman preach..." (367). That curiosity, moreover, would often result in conversion: "'I am so glad I went to hear a woman preach!,'" shouts one such onlooker whom Sexton remembers (303). Again and again, these women tell us, their status as "curiosities"--their otherness --in the evangelical marketplace helped them achieve the

quantifiable success I described in Chapter 2."

More significantly, however, the panopticism or incessant surveillance which initially makes Amanda Smith "feel so bad and uncomfortable" and imprisons her in an odd game of hide-and-seek is made in these autobiographies to serve not the dominant culture, with its ever-vigilant guards, but the "transgressors," the "madwomen" in that culture's attic.<sup>34</sup> Sister Clark, to whom Smith turns in her distress, can even laugh off her friend's discomfort: "don't you know," Clark counsels her, "the Bible says, 'You are to be a gazing stock?'" (184). There is, Smith discovers, a story which can free her from her discomfort, a story which can, in the words of Carol Christ, "give shape to" the imprisoning experience of objectification (4-5). Biblical precedent empowers Smith to make sense of the gaze which would seek to control and discipline her. In the words of Hebrews she could read her own experience: she too was called to remember "days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions" (Hebrews 10: 32-33, emphasis added). Hebrews encourages her, moreover, to embrace her embattled existence, to persevere with assurance: "Cast not away therefore your confidence," the persecuted Hebrews were told, "which hath great recompence of reward" (Hebrews 10: 35). If she encountered ugly stares from curious onlookers at every revival and on every mission, she had the satisfaction

of knowing she was in good company: she was now a member of a prestigious club of individuals paradoxically marginal and powerful. "They shall," she well knew, "look on him"--or her--"whom they pierced" (John 19:37). Finding refuge in the Bible, she need no longer seek it under beds. Her confidence renewed, Smith embraces her marginal status and shouts, "'I have got the victory! Everybody come and look at me!'" (184, my emphasis). "The field of battle having been marked out," to borrow the words of Frantz Fanon, "[she] entered the lists" (114). Thus does she critique the politics of the gaze; thus does she dismantle its power to render her self-conscious about her bodily presence in public spaces, to make her a "docile object" of power. No longer questioning her position on stage--am I taking up too much space? is my place here legitimate?"--Smith and her sister autobiographers comment upon, ironize, and resist the power of the gaze to objectify them by appropriating it for their own usage; laying claim to the gaze of onlookers, they invert its power to dominate.

Smith could, then, with palpable pleasure recall her appearance at the A. M. E. Church Conference in Nashville:

I was quite a curiosity to most of the visitors, especially the Southern brethren, in my very plain Quaker dress: I was eyed with critical suspicion [sic] as being there to agitate the question of the ordination of women. All about, in

the little groups that would be gathered talking, could be heard, 'Who is she?' 'Preacher Woman.' 'What does she want here?' 'I mean to fight that thing.'

(200)

Overhearing these conversations, Smith must have wondered whether they were referring to the ordination of women or to the "preacher woman" herself when they announced their intentions "to fight that thing." On another occasion, Smith encountered polite but forceful opposition from a group of wealthy white women who "advised" her not to attend the evangelistic meetings being held by Hannah Whitall Smith, even though she had been invited by Hannah's husband, Robert Pearson Smith: "'there will be,'" she is warned, "'a great many very wealthy ladies in from Germantown and West Philadelphia, and Walnut Hills, and the meetings are especially for this class'" (197). But Smith, who usually avoids "going where she was not wanted," decides on this occasion to obey the promptings of the spirit rather than the warnings of the race-and class-conscious. She slips into the meeting, sensing it the Lord's will that she attend. "And now," reflects Smith of her efforts to blur the boundaries of race, class and gender,

instead of Amanda Smith, the colored washwoman's presence having a bad effect on a meeting where ladies of wealth and



rank are gathered to pray and sing His blessing, they think a failure more possible if the same Amanda Smith, the colored woman, cannot be present. (198, my emphasis)

Because of her status as a poor, black washwoman, she is "gazed" upon by middle and upper-class white men and women who would delimit--indeed "pierce"--her with their racist and classist assumptions. And because of her profession of holiness or complete sanctification, she, like Zilpha Elaw, finds herself "a speckled bird" even "among [her] own people" (108; see also 146, 204; Jeremiah 12: 9). Pierced on every side, Amanda Smith could take comfort that hers was an old story, that, ironically, far from standing alone, an Emersonian individualist, she was representative, a player in an age-old typological drama. She "belong[s]," she tells us, "to Royalty, and am well acquainted with the King of Kings" (198).

Appropriating biblical paradigms is similarly comforting and liberating for Lydia Sexton, who recognizes in each conflict, each hostile gaze, her own acquaintance with the King of Kings. In one particularly revealing chapter of her autobiography, she tells us how on the road to a preaching engagement in Crawfordsville, Indiana, she "stopped to take dinner with a family," who, it seems, couldn't take their eyes off her (251). Though she was certainly accustomed to such

usage, in this instance "[her] feelings were overcome while meditating on the many opposing elements that seemed to meet [her] on every hand" (251). "Although there was nothing in their treatment that would warrant such melancholy," Sexton remembers, "yet in this instance as in many others, I realized the cross that seemed to bear so heavily upon me, until I could in spirit and in truth sing:

Must Jesus bear the cross alone,  
And all the world go free;  
No, there's a cross for every one,  
And there's a cross for me. (251-2)"

Though the scrutiny, poverty, and seemingly endless opposition which she encountered occasionally overwhelmed her with a sense of isolation and exhaustion, she knew that such a heavy load warranted not lamentations, but joyful--and, in this case, rhythmically iambic--exclamations.

Indeed all of these women had a resource that secular autobiographers and secular rebels lacked: a way of making sense of their marginality, even, as we shall see, of making a virtue of it. Christians had, in the example of their creed's founder and the many prophets who preceded and disciples who followed him, an alternative geometry in which the margin was the center, in which difference was not deviance. Narrating the life as conflict was thus more than a means by which "invisible" women could create and preserve a certain individuality and force recognition from their

culture, but also an avenue into biblical typology, where they could gain a much-needed self-understanding. "Experience," writes Ursula King in Women and Spirituality, "includes social pressures, constraints, and opportunities" as well as "inner thoughts and feelings," and "at the deepest spiritual level we must enquire what meaning we can discern in the intricate web of our experience and whether we can find in it a pattern, a direction or an orientation which seem to make sense" (87). In leaving behind what Barbara Welter calls the "standardized" experience of domesticity, female evangelists turned to biblical precedents to discern the meaning of their "intricate" lives. Nineteenth-century American culture failed to provide these women with an adequate framework in which to understand those lives. Hence, as we saw in the last chapter, they resorted to quantification in an attempt to anchor their conduct in the century's most valorized myth of competitive individualism, to prove the quality of their work to any rational reader, and to measure their unorthodox careers. The Bible offered them another way of making sense of their singular voyages, another place outside themselves in which to drop anchor. They looked to the oldest prescribed roles available to them, standardized experiences that gave them both freedom from traditionally "female" roles and the comfort of knowing they "belonged." The Bible, in other words, became for these preachers what Patricia Collins calls in another context "a 'safe space' for self-definition" (95). Marginal

figures according to terms dictated by the dominant culture, these evangelical women ultimately "centered" themselves in biblical, rather than contemporary, Christianity. Looking to Old Testament prophets and New Testament disciples, these "rootless" itinerants discovered that they weren't really pioneers after all: they were deeply rooted in a powerful and empowering tradition. The mountains they crossed each day on their journey through enemy territory had in fact been mapped long ago. The topography was familiar: they need only retrace it in their autobiographies to impress themselves and their readers that they were far from lost.

Thus Zilpha Elaw, a pioneering African-American woman, finds her way in the Bible. On one particularly troubling occasion, for example, she locates herself in the Book of Ezekiel. Having been appointed to preach in the afternoon at a "union," or non-sectarian, chapel, Elaw is naturally upset when one of the chapel managers "advises [her] not to enter the pulpit." And though she is later asked by the deacons "to ascend the pulpit according to the recent arrangements," she is ultimately "shut out" by the other ministers in charge, a result, she believes, of "gospel rivalry" (108-9). The experience does not, however, shut her out, or up, completely: she has a place in the world of distinguished prophets:

the Lord said unto me, 'It is enough; I  
will take thee away from them, and I will  
put bands upon thee, and thou shalt not

go out amongst them; and I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of they mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be a reprover to them, for they are a rebellious house. But when I speak unto thee, I will open thy mouth....' (109; Ezekiel 3: 25-27)

That is, in fact, exactly what happens. Struck "with a very severe fit of illness," she is "dumb to them indeed"; and once recovered she returns to the chapel not at all surprised to find the people "extremely anxious" to hear her preach (109-110).

At times, in fact, biblical typology is so embedded in these texts that they resemble a palimpsest: the particular books of the Bible to which they naturally gravitate and which they trace in their autobiographical acts of self-construction are strikingly visible." In effect, these autobiographies are written over--both in the sense of writing on top of and in the sense of revising or updating--the Bible. In detailing her call to preach, Jarena Lee situates herself squarely in the tradition of Old Testament prophecy, specifically in that of Jeremiah and Isaiah. Direct echoes of the prophet Jeremiah can be heard in her account of her call to preach. Called by the Lord to prophesy, Jeremiah pleads, "I cannot speak: for I am a child." But the Lord commands Jeremiah to go forth, promising him deliverance from his enemies: "'Be not afraid of

their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee.... And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth'" (Jeremiah 1: 6-9). Jarena Lee, told by a voice to "Go preach the Gospel!," responds in the manner of Jeremiah with a nineteenth-century female twist: "'No one will believe me,'" she cries (10). But the voice returns, "'Preach the Gospel; I will put words in your mouth, and will turn your enemies to become your friends,'" which, it seems, he did (10). Still, as a black woman characterized in the public discourse as mammy or Jezebel and scrutinized accordingly, Lee necessarily approached her public duties with a certain amount of fear and trembling." Like the prophets with whom she identifies, and like many African Americans subordinated under slavery and institutionalized racism, Lee stammered, or so she implies, when required to speak in public, displaying that "fear-induced hesitation," which, James Scott argues, often characterizes efforts to both challenge and "anticipate the response of the dominant" (Domination 30)." Yet unlike many subordinate groups facing a dominant power, Lee was inspired--literally and figuratively--by a higher authority. "Aided from above" throughout her career, she concludes the first edition of her autobiography by joining Isaiah in proclaiming her linguistic freedom: "My tongue was cut loose, the stammerer spoke freely" (20; Isaiah 32:4)."

Even Laura Haviland, whose causes were mainly political and who rarely uses religious and biblical language in her

writing, is aware of the rhetorical possibilities of situating oneself within a particular biblical paradigm. Like many of the women in this study, she frequently refers to her Lord as the "God of Daniel"; given her confrontational experience in literal, and figurative, battlefields, she found in Daniel a figure for her own embattled existence (216). Undertaking a daring mission to deliver sanitary and medical supplies to Union troops during the Civil War, Haviland finds herself in danger as guerrillas threaten to capture the boat on which she is traveling. Approached by the colonel who was worried about his female passengers, Haviland fearlessly responds, "'The God of Daniel lives at this hour...and in him I trust'" (284). By depicting the Civil War and its aftermath as her lion's den, Haviland completes the paradigm, aligning herself with the heroic prophet himself. Remembering fondly her co-workers on the battlefields and in army hospitals, Haviland declares, "few can realize the strength of the tie that binds those who have labored together in the lion's den" (435-6). Recounting her missionary work among the freedmen following the war, Haviland again finds use for the Book of Daniel:

While pursuing this work our lives were daily threatened, and some had fears of another riot. One Union woman on our block told me that she had often spent sleepless nights on our account. She had heard such frequent threats that 'Nigger

teachers should be cleared out, as well as free niggers,' that she expected every day would be our last.... But I told her I did not believe we should have another riot; I believed the God of Daniel was able and willing to protect us, and that in him was my confidence. (437)

It is not surprising that Haviland and other women preachers of the nineteenth century should choose to identify themselves with Daniel. Looking back on their lives, they no doubt felt as though they had often been in the lion's den with Daniel or the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They must also have recognized in that prophetic book themes which they wished to emphasize in their own sacred texts. Like Daniel's, their lives were filled with visions and dreams which only they could rightly interpret. Like Daniel, they were part of a righteous remnant who knew the power of God to protect. Like Daniel, a pious Jew living under the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes (167-164 B. C.), they were unduly opposed.<sup>41</sup> But they too "saw the writing" on the wall and were obedient to their God and confident in his power to save (Foote 201).

#### IV

And yet though they recognized in Daniel a kindred



spirit, the story these autobiographers tell ultimately conflicts with the central message of Daniel. Many readers have been inspired by the book's prophecy, for Daniel tells its readers how faithful Jews triumphed over their enemies by relying on divine aid, and in an apocalyptic vision it predicts a consummation when the saints shall have victory. The book would therefore have resonated for embattled women looking to the day when they too would be victorious over the dominant culture of nineteenth-century America. Unlike Daniel and other oppressed prophets of the Old Testament, however, these women find a certain pleasure in suffering the fiery furnace and the lion's den; there appears in their writings an almost psychological dependence on persecution.<sup>42</sup> Like the female autobiographies discussed by Doris Sommer, these writers "tend to value marginality as a mark of personal distinctiveness rather than as a measure of political inequality" (130). Reading their lives in terms of biblical precedent enabled them, as we have seen, to make sense of a journey that seemed, if analyzed from the point of view of the dominant culture, heretical or at best unorthodox; looking to the prophetic roles of Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Daniel, Jarena Lee knew exactly where she fit in. She could take pride in the persecution she suffered as "a poor coloured woman" (18); for, explains Lee, "The ministers of Jesus must expect persecution, if they would be faithful witnesses against sin and sinners..." (32).

These women autobiographers do more than expect persecution, however; excluded from the halls of worldly power, denied institutional recognition for their achievements, they willingly suffer persecution--and privilege it in their narratives--for martyrdom or, rather, figurative martyrdom, had its own rewards. Had they lived in sixteenth-century Spain, they might have shared St. Teresa's dream of traveling with her brother "to the country of the Moors, begging our way for love of God that we might be there beheaded" (4). Traveling throughout England and America in the first half of the nineteenth century, however, Nancy Towle had no need to dream or beg for trouble. The "heavy struggle" she endured in England and elsewhere gave her a grand opportunity to suffer martyrdom for her convictions. She "rejoiced" in being arrested for her public preaching, for therein lay the "prospect of becoming a 'prisoner' for Christ Jesus sake, and the Gospel" (63).<sup>43</sup> "A prophet," Zilpha Elaw knows, "is not without honour, save in his own country" (83). Thus Julia Foote, rather than sink beneath the weight of suffering, could "rejoice in persecution" (189). She could recognize in her life story a thread of martyrdom which connected her to a long line of Christian heroines: "in the early ages of Christianity," Foote proudly announces, "many women were happy and glorious in martyrdom. How nobly, how heroically, too, in later ages, have women suffered persecution and death for the name of the Lord Jesus" (209).

Foote and the others are hinting here at a point made recently by Sidonie Smith: that, though martyrdom has never been an exclusively female pursuit, it may, by virtue of its "exaggeration of the quintessential model of the feminine," have held a special significance for women (Poetics 10). As Smith argues in her discussion of the poetics of women's autobiography, "self-abnegation" was rhetorically useful "for a woman who would dare to speak, even to instruct, in a church and culture that suspected and rigidly proscribed such individualistic and atypical activities in women" (Poetics 10). She refers here to the autobiography of Catholic pietist Jeanne Marie Bouvier de la Motte (Madame Guyon), whose work is marked by its many references to victimization and which was, significantly for our purposes, enormously popular among nineteenth-century evangelical women. "Not wholly exempted from those trials and persecutions, which are the common lot of the servants of Jesus," these evangelicals could feel assured that their careers were legitimate and valuable; hence they were empowered to go forth "laboring for God" and self (Elaw 104; Foote 209). Portraying themselves, moreover, in the words of Madame Guyon, as "victim[s] incessantly offered upon the altar to Him who first sacrificed himself for love," they could justify their individualistic, "masculine" behavior, keep censure at bay, and even, it would seem, gain approval from an evangelical audience who would recognize in such suffering the marks of a saint (qtd. in Weintraub 224).

Remembering a surprise visit from the Mitchel family with whom she was reared, Zilpha Elaw draws a deliberate parallel: "they came to me with presents, as did the wise men who came to the infant Jesus and his mother, and presented them with frankincense and myrrh" (80). Elaw and her sister itinerants knew that the crown of thorns was theirs; they knew as well how to claim it. Leaving behind the prescriptions for woman's behavior in nineteenth-century America, they accepted instead the prescriptive "consequences of having the Spirit" outlined for them in biblical typology, and, more recently, in Charles Finney's Lectures for Revivals of Religion. "If you have much of the Spirit of God," they well knew, "you must make up your mind to have much opposition, both in the church and the world. Very likely the leading men in the church will oppose you. There has always been opposition in the church. So it was when Christ was on earth" (Finney 117). Convinced of the paradoxical power of marginality, these "seeming curiosit[ies]" discovered in their singular--and obviously "different"--physical appearance and the opposition such "difference" provoked from audiences imbued with the dominant culture's many prescriptions and prejudices, an easy means of distinguishing themselves. Though their culture found in their gender and racial identities a most certain "biological inferiority" and cause for discrimination, familiarity with the Christian tradition of discipleship, prophecy, and martyrdom, encouraged these women engaged in the task of self-

construction to embrace the often humiliating and cruel discrimination that came their way. Foregrounding their marginal and oppressed status in their autobiographies, they could put "ostensibly selfless testimony to an exactly contrary purpose"; in other words, advertising themselves as martyrs they could achieve the much-desired, much-deserved prestige they had long been denied (Asher 1058).

All of this is to say that, though these autobiographers are sincere in resenting their exclusion from power, that resentment is complicated by their awareness of the advantages of martyrdom: it provided a safeguard against the moral dangers posed by success and power. Thus the ceiling on success which they repeatedly bemoan in their narratives was actually a safety net, preventing these productive people from slipping all the way into the competitive ethic of success, a guarantee that no matter how much they accomplish, how effectively they compete, in the end they will remain the martyrs and outsiders, the pilgrims and strangers, that Christian souls are called to be. Though they relish their minor triumphs over their oppressors, the final victory promised in Daniel must be, for their purposes, indefinitely postponed (130).

The Bible, in other words, was more than a safe haven for self-definition. It offered these autobiographers more than just a way to make sense of their marginality: its familiar topography afforded them obvious ways to make use of it.

Typologically speaking, their singularity was an asset; biblical roles lent them an authoritative status that would clearly be destroyed by the sort of recognition church officials could bestow. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that none of these itinerants ever actively sought ordination; certainly they never lay claim to such a pursuit in print.<sup>45</sup> "Satisfied with the ordination that the Lord [gave them]," Amanda Smith and the many preaching women who went before her were empowered to see their calls as incontestable: "before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jeremiah 1: 5). She could readily deny charges that her public desire to participate in the General Conference of the A. M. E. was based on some hidden agenda to press for women's ordination. Her voice, she proudly announces, was authorized by a more powerful, more prestigious conference:

He knew that the thought of ordination had never once entered my mind, for I had received my ordination from Him, Who said, 'Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you might go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit might remain.' (200; John 15: 16)

Institutional ordination could only be a hindrance to prophets

such as themselves: better to be free of official organizations, than be deprived of the satisfaction and psychological benefits of knowing that one's call is superior--even if ultimately derivative--that one's ordination is definitive while that of the male clergy might well be counterfeit."

In appropriating models of willing victimization in their construction of public female identities--in "cloth[ing] their resistance and defiance in ritualisms of subordination"--these women are in danger of losing even the "informal" power they had garnered in the evangelical marketplace (Scott, Domination 96). Though they could, as I argued in Chapter 2, easily prove that their power was more "effective"--quantitatively speaking--than that of their male counterparts, by failing to champion the cause of institutional ordination for women and mobilize themselves accordingly, in effect they "reaffirm men's official rule as powerholders" and perpetuate their own powerlessness (Scott 52).<sup>47</sup> James Scott's work on the politics of disguise invites us, however, to consider the possibility that the act of effacing self into a powerful and empowering tradition of biblical typology was a means--risky though it may have been--by which these evangelical preachers could begin the process of transforming their lives from "sites of domination" into "sites of resistance" (Collins 102). "Most of the political life of subordinate groups," Scott argues, "is to be found neither in overt collective

defiance of powerholders nor in complete hegemonic compliance, but in the vast territory between these two polar opposites" (136). Indeed, as we have seen, in their struggle to define and advertise a public female identity, these autobiographies do appeal to hegemonic values, specifically to hegemonic definitions of "masculine" and "feminine" behavior. Speaking the language of their culture, these autobiographers find themselves, perhaps inevitably, constructing their lives on paradoxical or competing terms. They are, they tell us, self-reliant competitive individualists, successful entrepreneurs in the marketplace. But they are also self-less prophets, chosen to be God's representatives on earth. They are tenacious, courageous women asserting self in history, but also spiritual autobiographers effacing self into a timeless pattern. They are singular in their own time and representative in sacred history." Renouncing their status as wives, mothers, daughters, mummies and Jezebels, they embrace that normally masculine prerogative which David Potter calls "the principle of mobility," seeking advancement in the marketplace of evangelicalism; and yet they also invoke a principle of status, slipping comfortably into the familiar and prestigious station of prophet and martyr. They are authorities and victims--though never defenseless--challenging their culture and at the same time situating themselves in its most treasured myths. They advance their cause by embracing seemingly paradoxical definitions of self, constantly choosing



among the many paradigms available to them as women, as Americans, as Christians. Constructing the self out of paradox, they are able to create and maintain a public female identity that gives them both the risk of challenging hegemonic values and the security of appealing to them. The latter stance, it is important to recognize, is not particularly a retreat from the former; in these autobiographies self-effacement and self-assertion always co-exist, side by side. Hence, no doubt, the sense of insecurity which all these autobiographies express: as if at any moment the careful equilibrium established between conflicting fictions of selfhood may collapse. Thus, indeed, one of the odder features in these spiritual autobiographies (a genre in which the development of the protagonist is usually the main point): the remarkably static quality of these women as protagonists of their own narratives. Once they have accepted their calls to preach, these characters travel great distances and accomplish many things, but they do not properly develop at all. But in an equilibrium, after all, change is inevitably destructive. Engaged in a tug-of-war with herself, any of these autobiographers could gain ground only by simultaneously losing it. Accordingly they must resist simple categorization, undertaking necessarily endless negotiations with the many patterns of selfhood to which their culture gave them access.

It would therefore be a mistake, I believe, to conceive

of these women as the passive objects of cultural power. All of them seem to have recognized the futility of seeking some Archimedean fulcrum, entirely outside their particular culture, from which to exert their influence. But they all learned the trick of moving very freely within the space which culture afforded them. Like their tireless and apparently aimless peregrinations across the American landscape, their ceaseless and random wandering among cultural paradigms was both the symbol and the means of their remarkable freedom.

## Chapter 4

### "Strangers in a Strange Land": Evangelical Women Writers and the Form of Autobiography

When, in her seventy-third year, Lydia Sexton came at last to publish her autobiography, she felt compelled to begin with an apology to her readers. The apology was for the relative brevity and incompleteness of her account; the full record of her life, it seems, was found "too lengthy" by her publisher, who insisted that the manuscript be cut back to a mere seven-hundred pages: enough, evidently, just to whet the appetites of the readers Sexton has in mind. Her faith in the interest, not to mention the stamina, of these readers is remarkable, though by no means inconsistent with the pattern established by the other autobiographers under study here. But even more striking is the method Sexton employed to make the required cuts. To another writer the publisher's harsh edict might have necessitated a laborious process of culling, but she was able to make the necessary reductions by the simple expedient of subtracting "ten years of history" from her life story, thus excising from it "much pleasure, much work and success," and also the death of Joseph Sexton, her "dear companion for nearly half a century along life's pilgrimage." There is nothing to indicate that she eliminated these pages because they seemed less important than others; indeed nothing to suggest that any particular editorial criteria were employed in making this emendation. She

evidently cut her manuscript like a deck of cards, shipped the larger portion off to the United Brethren Press, and saved the remainder for a better day.

That Sexton felt able to do this without disturbing the symmetry of her account certainly tells us something about her sense of the autobiographer's craft. Imagine the Confessions breaking off just as Augustine begins to doubt the teachings of the Manicheans, or the Education with Adams contemplating the dynamo, and the point is made: the autobiographies traditional theorists of the genre think of as "classic" have an apparent narrative shape, tending toward closure.<sup>1</sup> The disappearance of a concluding hundred pages would have been disastrous. But Sexton was right nonetheless: there is no reason to suppose that the missing ten years of her narrative would have lent anything more than volume to the whole document. Sexton's autobiography is not in the strict sense a story: it has a beginning, but nothing one could mark as the middle or the end.

In this respect, Sexton is at one with her "sisters of the spirit"; none of the autobiographers under study here attempts to impose even the most rudimentary sort of narrative order on the events she relates. We are familiar with the idea of parataxis, with what Northrop Frye in The Secular Scripture calls the "and then" narrative, as a feature of medieval and renaissance romance and of picaresque fiction. But few of us, I daresay, have read anything like these autobiographies, in

which the suppression of narrative markers (crises, turning points, beginnings, middles and ends) becomes a rigorously enforced aesthetic principle. I quote at random, for example, the opening sentences of several paragraphs in Jarena Lee's Religious Experience and Journal:

June 24, I left the city of Philadelphia to travel in Delaware State....In July I spoke in a School house to a large congregation, from Numbers xxix, 17.... The next place I visited was Newcastle.... From here I proceeded to Christine.... Another family gave me the invitation to attend a prayer meeting.... I left Mrs. Ford's and walked about three miles to St. George.... At Smyrna I met brother C. W. Cannon.... (25-6)

Or consider this from the Vicissitudes Illustrated in the Experience of Nancy Towle, published in 1832:

I went to Chepachet village, and on Sabbath day, I spoke at the different meetings, by exhortation, & c. which was agreeable to the most; but Universalists grumbled, and made quick-step homeward. I proceeded on to Burrelville, where I found many, that were brought to the Lord, by the instrumentality of J. Colby

and C. H. Danforth...there I made a second appointment to preach (as it is usually termed) and spake with a good degree of enlargement, to the satisfaction, I believe, of all that heard.... I was now greatly encouraged to hope, that if faithful to God, my labors would be crowned with abundant success, where ever I might go. I went in the next place to a village called Blackstone, and spoke in a steeple-house, to some hundreds, with a tolerable degree of freedom. I visited a female minister, of the Society of Friends, (M. Batty,) and was invited to speak with her, on a funeral occasion, which I did, I believe to her surprise. I then went to Pawtucket, and took for a companion in travels, Martha Spaulding, (of the F. Baptist order) who thought herself called to the work of the Ministry. We travelled for some weeks together, in Gloucester, Foster, Killingly, (Con.) Scituate, Johnston and Smithfield, in these places, severally, we had access to large auditories, alternately, every day. (23-

24)

No doubt the reader will take my word for it that similar passages could be supplied to demonstrate the same mannerism in Zilpha Elaw's Memoirs or Lydia Sexton's or Amanda Smith's autobiographies. This is parataxis with a vengeance, a nearly complete refusal of what we conventionally think of as the responsibility of a narrator. One is tempted to credit these writers with the invention of a new sort of narrator, the autobiographer alienated from her own life story, which is evidently left to tell itself without benefit of her ordering intelligence.

It all seems to demand some explanation, and the ones which leap immediately to mind do not suffice. Were these women simply incompetent story-tellers? It seems unlikely; though we know little of their reading, we can be sure of their familiarity with that great compendium of compelling narrative, the Bible. And it is clear, at various points in all these accounts, that they were familiar with the conventions of spiritual autobiography, which have given any number of inexperienced writers the wherewithal to make their lives read like stories. Why did these women not benefit similarly?

Some of it can be explained by the fact that these autobiographers relied heavily on their private ministerial journals in converting the "life" into the "Life," journals written, moreover, by evangelical preachers who were most often concerned with the spoken, rather than the written,

word.<sup>2</sup> Though journals and diaries, as Georges May reminds us, are themselves "autobiographical" and deserve to be considered as such, being at one end of a large spectrum which also includes autobiographical fiction and poetry, journals clearly differ from what we have been taught to think of as "formal" (i.e. retrospective) autobiography.<sup>3</sup> As a daily record of one's activities, less personal and introspective than the diary, the journal is of course necessarily serial, each new entry an "addition to" and only rarely a "revision of" the previous day's record, each entry a nearly immediate record of experience rather than a reflective analysis thereof, each entry a discrete unit forming ultimately a discontinuous rather than coherent narrative whole with a distinct pattern, a clear beginning, middle, and end. But to say that merely delays our asking the inevitable question: granting the usefulness of these journals as aids to memory, why did these writers decline to transform them, as countless other autobiographers have done, into shaped narratives?

Given the extent to which publishing--particularly an autobiography--involved an assertion of self in the public sphere, it is possible that their lack of strong editing is related to their discomfort, conscious or otherwise, with the authorial role itself. Though this was an age in which women authors were thriving in the literary marketplace--the century's three best-sellers were authored by women--it was also an age in which women entered the public literary world



at their own risk, forced to apologize for daring the public domain and constrained by any number of "expressive restrictions": "they did have voices," writes Joanne Dobson of nineteenth-century women writers, "yet as individuals they were expected to maintain a decorous silence within their texts, in essence, to become 'invisible ladies,' manifesting nothing that would reveal to the world the presence of any passion or aspiration beyond the ordained" (57).

And women of the Word had been "ordained" as passive vessels for God's word, filters for His voice, prophets directly inspired by God: they were, in other words, "pen[s] in God's hand," not authors in their own right.<sup>4</sup> They claim to feel "the unction from on high, while [they] hold [their] pen[s]": "For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" (Lee 79; Matthew 10: 20). Sharing the title page with God, however, is problematic for any author: there is much authority in this configuration, but it isn't theirs. These women find themselves clearly outranked by their collaborator, crowded out of their own books. And to the extent they do, they call attention to a theoretical issue at the heart of all autobiography: that is, the degree to which any autobiographer, male or female, religious or irreligious, "controls" or "pens" the content and form of his or her narrative.<sup>5</sup>

Recently, some feminist scholars have popularized the notion that women's autobiographical writing is, in fact,

necessarily fragmented, discontinuous, repetitive, formless. Living a formless existence, so the theory goes, women have no choice but to write formless autobiography: social experience determines literary expression. Many women have chosen the diary form, according to Norine Voss, because autobiography "poses the problem of welding both private and public experience"; women, however, "relegated to the private realm of home, personal relationships and emotion," enter the public domain of autobiography only at their own "peril" (226). "Diaries, letters, and journals" are, moreover, "accessible forms for women whose emotional, intellectual, and practical lives are fragmented by domestic responsibilities that leave them little leisure time to contemplate or integrate their experiences" (Jelinek, Tradition 104). Women's lives, that is, are in fact more formless than men's lives, and also afford less leisure for the imaginative discovery of form.

Certain it is, as I have tried to illustrate in the previous chapters, that these evangelical itinerant women, no less--and perhaps more--than the women who stayed at home rather than wander the earth preaching the gospel, led extraordinarily busy, genuinely fragmented lives. These formless autobiographies, then, do have much to tell us about the rootlessness of the lives which they detail. In this time of "feverish restlessness and mighty movement," these women were perhaps simply too busy ushering in the kingdom of heaven to be bothered with the immense editorial task of re-reading

and integrating the experiences recorded in their journals and then composing a more shapely narrative of their lives. As an outraged Nancy Towle so forcefully communicates to her readers, female itinerants in addition to their many engagements around the nation and abroad had to be their own domestic servants as well: they had no wives at home mending their stockings before another long journey. Such a peripatetic, chaotic life seems almost to necessitate a paratactic, chaotic autobiography: an untidy life necessitates an untidy "Life," unless, of course, the storyteller is willing to falsify the nature of her existence. No less than the Book of Margery Kempe about which Sidonie Smith has written so cogently, these narratives mirror "the jumbled rush of experience as it must have been lived and certainly as it is recollected" (Poetics 82).

But again, this account--in the case of these female autobiographers, at least--explains away more than it really explains. Most spiritual autobiographers, even most itinerant evangelists, have been able and willing to lend structure to their lives, to "make manageable and intelligible the sheer flux of events," or, in the words of John Sturrock, to "use time instead of giving in to it" (Starr 36; Sturrock 56). Most have been able to reduce their Christian pilgrimage to its bare essentials; with James Fraser of Brae, they could say, "I shall reduce what I have met with to these eight heads" (qtd. in Starr 39). We have, moreover, examples of

other itinerant ministers--Peter Cartwright, for instance, or Charles Grandison Finney--whose lives were very nearly as chaotic as Towle's or Sexton's or Smith's, but whose autobiographies are little like theirs. As both a literal and figurative pilgrim who found it necessary to keep track of his journey to Newcastle and Philadelphia no less than his own progress through the Slough of Despond and Vanity-Fair, Cartwright was nonetheless able to lend narrative shape to his repetitive, fragmented life.

And anyone who has taken up Lydia Sexton's 655-page tome, or Amanda Berry Smith's Autobiography (506 pp), or Nancy Towle's Vicissitudes (250) will doubt, prima facie, that these autobiographers lacked time or energy for writing. Though all of them were spectacularly busy, most of them tell us that they experienced periodic lulls in their evangelical careers, during which they composed and published their books. Nancy Towle, for example, reminds us on several occasions in Vicissitudes that she often took the opportunity provided by illnesses to devote herself to her writing: she had trouble keeping her "pen within due bounds," not finding time to write her story, a labor which she considered as important as her other evangelical endeavors. And to those who believe women are almost incapable of writing orderly narratives, we can cite the experience of Susan Waugh, who discovered the opposite when teaching women's autobiographical writing workshops: "Even those who had lived for many years the

fragmented lives of traditional women were not prisoners of a common subject, style, or form. The form of a life does not inevitably dictate the form of the autobiography" (151). Thus, it would seem, to "suppose that a form inevitably arises with the events themselves," to suppose that the serial form of these women's autobiographies emerged from the serial life, is too reductive (Britton 114). It simplifies what is most certainly a complex social and literary problem. The mere circumstance of a busy life does not fully explain the apparent formlessness of their books.

## II

What does? Perhaps this is the place to acknowledge that, for some critics of autobiography, the question should be disallowed or at least ruled out of generic bounds. There is a well-established argument to the effect that these "repetitive serial representations of particular moments held together by the narrative 'I'" (Felicity Nussbaum's phrase) are not autobiographies at all (Autobiographical Subject 18).

According to Jerome Buckley, for example, "The ideal autobiography....describes a voyage of self-discovery, a life-journey, confused by frequent misdirections and even crises of identity but reaching at last a sense of perspective and integration" (qtd. in Abbott 599). Georges Gusdorf similarly argues that "Autobiography...requires a man [and presumably a

woman] to take a distance with regard to himself in order to reconstitute himself in the focus of his special unity and identity across time" ("Conditions" 35). To fulfill the "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," a text must, in other words, be well made:

An autobiography cannot be a pure and simple record of existence, an account or a logbook: on such and such a day at such an hour, I went to such and such a place.... A record of this kind, no matter how minutely exact, would be no more than a caricature of real life; in such a case, rigorous precision would add up to the same thing as the subtlest deception. (42)

Flourishing his abstract ideal of autobiographical art, Gusdorf denies that formless narrative really deserves the name of autobiography. I myself find this exclusionary practice unhelpful and indeed likely to produce circular arguments about autobiographical form, ruling out of bounds narratives which might enrich our sense of the range of autobiographical expression.' These women certainly believed they were writing autobiographies; I find it more useful to take them at their word, place their works in comparison to the "well-wrought" specimens which conventionally define the genre, and try to understand the differences. Ignoring the

question whether a formless narrative deserves the name of autobiography, I prefer to consider empirically what these writers do, and to ponder what their motives might have been.

### III

How do we account for the oddity of these books? We might begin by comparing them to the books which--in aspiration, at least--they seem most closely to resemble: the autobiographies composed by male itinerants like Cartwright and Finney. Peter Cartwright, the pioneering Methodist itinerant whom I have quoted periodically in the previous chapters, did manage to organize his peripatetic existence into thirty-four somewhat discrete chapters, ranging in subject matter from his parentage and conversion to slavery in the church, the formation of circuits in the West and his continued success as itinerant evangelist and later as presiding elder. I say "somewhat" because Cartwright the storyteller does not allow the organizational mechanism of discrete chapters to obliterate completely the jumbled rush of his itinerant experiences. The chapter entitled "Sermon on Baptism at Camp-Meeting," for example, which begins with a humorous account of accepting--and winning--a bet with a "spunky Methodist widow," also includes other curious incidents from camp meetings of 1822, a digression on unsanctified wealth in the church, and concluding reflections

on the success of Methodism in the West. These digressions, however, are not far flung; Cartwright manages in almost every chapter to avoid the parataxis which dominates Jarena Lee's narrative by focusing on a particular time frame in each chapter, by culling only a few incidents from the period in question and enlarging them into shapely scenes. His ability to prioritize his experiences and, in his words, to "embody them here as well [he] can" enables him to recount a life that must at times have seemed as paratactic as that described by Jarena Lee. An itinerant evangelist, Charles Finney was similarly able to organize his life story into a linear narrative replete with a beginning (his birth, education, and conversion), a middle (his calling to be a missionary and his subsequent success as the prominent revivalist of the Second Great Awakening), and end (his fame and popularity as a revivalist, professor of theology and college president).

What was it that permitted Finney and Cartwright to do this? They had, it seems to me, at least two advantages which would be important for any autobiographer.

In the first place, they had what any autobiographer must have, a secure justification for writing at all. To write an autobiography is after all a remarkable assertion of one's own importance; any autobiographer is implicitly telling his readers that they should cease attending to their own lives for a time and instead contemplate his or hers--and that they will be improved for having done so. Cartwright and Finney



were, of course, important, well-known revivalists by the time they wrote their autobiographies; and that very eminence enabled them to justify their self-assertion and at the same time humbly to deny it. Peter Cartwright, for example, disclaims the intention of writing his own life, except as an incidental feature of a larger and less self-interested project. "[T]he history of my life," he assures us, "as one among the oldest Methodist traveling preachers west of the mountains" is "necessarily connect[ed]" to the "history of the rise and progress of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the great valley of the Mississippi" (11). I am not really an autobiographer at all, in other words, but merely a historian using, for convenience's sake, the form of autobiography. Even Cartwright's most recent editor introduces the book as "one of the outstanding historical records of a heroic era in the life of the United States and of the Christian Church" (9). His is not simply the story of a man; it is the story of an "authority," a man called upon to write the story of a significant movement within American religious history.<sup>7</sup>

Charles Finney, the other well-known evangelist of the age, adopts a similar strategy in authorizing the act of autobiography. His narrative bears the appropriate label of Memoirs, for it too is a "history" of "those revivals with which [his] name and labors have been connected": "it is thought that the truth of history," Finney apologizes, "demands a statement from myself of the doctrines that were

preached, so far as I was concerned, of the measures used, and of the results of preaching those doctrines and the use of those measures, as they have been manifest to myself and others for many years" (2). His mission is as much to defend one last time the New Measures of Revivalism as to shape a narrative of his life.

Charles Finney and Peter Cartwright justifiably saw themselves as figures of "authority" when they sat down to compose their autobiographical stories. And their readers, as they knew, saw them in the same way, so that both autobiographers are able to preface their stories with a humble disclaimer: they have been, in Cartwright's words, "unceasingly importuned" to make their "Lives" available to the public. Of course, it is a convention of autobiography to begin with an apology for undertaking such a self-assertive act. It was also, and perhaps significantly, a convention of electoral politics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: even the most naked office-seeker must treat his candidacy as a highly unwelcome burden, imposed by well-meaning "friends." By observing this convention the candidate assured the public of his freedom from dangerous ambition and egotism; more subtly, he also implied that his constituency was already in place, merely awaiting his reluctant arrival at the head of the parade. Cartwright and Finney took up their pens assured of their position at the head of just such a parade or, at the very least, of what the editor of Frederick Douglass's My

Bondage and My Freedom calls "the existence of a commendable curiosity, on the part of the public" (viii).

The second great asset which men like Cartwright and Finney possessed, and certainly their most important one, was the availability of distinguished literary models upon which their own narratives could be patterned. The importance of such models, is, I suppose, clear enough. The form of one's life never simply reveals itself to any of us, even to a spiritual autobiographer. The autobiographer, no less than the novelist, "draws out of the flux of events a coherent pattern," and then fits the details of the life into it (Olney, Metaphors 45).<sup>6</sup> Nor is the job of "drawing out" that pattern undertaken entirely by the author's private imagination; for most autobiographers, as for other writers of narrative, the facts must be fit, with more or less success, into plots whose broad outlines are largely determined in advance by cultural expectation.<sup>7</sup> To be recognizable as a "story" at all, an autobiographical narrative must assume a shape familiar to its readers. "To a wholly new sensational or emotional experience," James Olney writes, "one can give sufficient organization only by relating it to the already known, only by perceiving a relation between this experience and another experience already placed, ordered, and incorporated" (Metaphors 31). Thus the importance of models and precedents for autobiographers like Finney and Cartwright.

By the nineteenth century there were, of course, plenty

of models upon which a prospective autobiographer might draw. Without attempting a structuralist "anatomy" of all possible autobiographical forms, we can all think of some important ones which were familiar to both nineteenth-century American readers and writers. Two that are most relevant here are the conversion or education narrative and the record of accomplishment or success story.<sup>10</sup>

By the 1860s when Finney wrote his spiritual autobiography, the story of conversion had long been rehearsed in the tradition of spiritual autobiography that originated with the fourth-century Confessions of St. Augustine. In Augustine's narrative we find the Pauline paradigm of spiritual progress that will inform--to varying degrees--virtually all spiritual autobiographies: I was lost and now I'm found, conversion being the climactic experience of one's life and narrative. The Reformation brought with it a renewed interest in spiritual diaries and autobiographies; the reformed faith's emphasis on the individual's responsibility in ascertaining his or her own salvation through introspection having imbued the old form with increased significance. Recording the minute occurrences in one's life and relating those details to one's spiritual progress in particular would be of obvious use in understanding and evaluating the work of grace upon one's soul. Protestantism's belief, moreover, in the universal nature of the work of salvation, "that spiritual life varies little from man to man," further stimulated

interest in both the writing and, more particularly, in the private circulation or publication of spiritual autobiographies (Starr 17). And, of course, the widespread publication of such narratives in turn heightened the already conventional and formulaic nature of the genre. Thus the reformed practice of introspective spiritual autobiography began to acquire a particular shape: like Augustine, the narrator details his or her unregenerate life--John Bunyan's love of Sabbath sport paralleling Augustine's stealing of pears; the narrator experiences growing anxiety about his or her state of sinfulness and is ultimately convicted of sin; at the climax of the narrative, the repentant author is converted, prior to which he or she, overwhelmed by feelings of helplessness, often falls into a state of despondency, even physical illness; finally the justified narrator concludes by outlining the fruits of his or her personal religious experience, this being, in the case of ministers, their calling and resultant pastoral work. The basic pattern is, thus, one of crisis and closure.

With the rise of Evangelical religion in Britain and America in the late eighteenth century, the form of spiritual autobiography was revived, and also significantly transformed. The conventions and shape of the Puritan "life accounted for"--"the life examined, interpreted, justified, and shaped into a transmissible account"--remained largely unchanged: but a new emphasis had been added (Aldrich 18). No evangelical

autobiographer would be able to summarize his or her work as John Bunyan had on the title page of the first edition of Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners:

Wherein is particularly shewed, The manner of his Conversion, his sight and trouble for Sin, his Dreadful Temptations, also how he despaired of Gods mercy, and how the Lord at length thorow Christ did deliver him from all the guilt and terrour that lay upon him. Whereunto is added, A Brief Relation of his Call to the Work of the Ministry, of his Temptations therein, as also what he hath met with in Prison. (emphasis mine)

Bunyan devotes the bulk of his narrative to detailing his sinful life and protracted conversion, merely "adding" on a relation of his ministry. But most evangelical autobiographers reverse the proportions; conversion and sanctification tend to occur quite early on, and the bulk of the text is dedicated to a narrative of the successful evangelical labors which followed.<sup>11</sup>

When this transformation occurred, spiritual autobiographers found themselves involved in a second autobiographical pattern, and one for which American writers like Finney and Cartwright had strong precedents available. This was, of course, the narrative of success, of which The

Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin is the classic example. The plot of this narrative is a fairly simple upward trajectory: the protagonist begins poor, with few prospects, and ends up successful, having gained at least acclaim and perhaps wealth as well, but in any case is eminent enough to expect an interested readership for the autobiography. This may be the most common form for American autobiography; the classic examples, after Franklin's, would include Frederick Douglass's Narrative, P. T. Barnum's many autobiographies, Booker T. Washington's Up From Slavery (whose title summarizes the success plot succinctly), and many others. It is also, of course, the form of practically all the popular, often ghost-written autobiographies of sports heroes, movie stars, and tycoons. Even The Education of Henry Adams, that celebrated narrative of failure, depends on the standard success narrative for its ironic effect.

Now Cartwright and Finney, by the time they came to write their life stories, were undeniably successful men, well-known at least within the sizable Methodist community and--in Finney's case--well beyond it. And their successes were, so to speak, empirically verifiable; not only were they known to have converted many souls, but they had been rewarded for these conversions by an uninterrupted ascent through the hierarchy of the institutional church. Thus they each had at their fingertips both the confidence and a convenient means by which to give shape to their lives. Cartwright had no need to

impose a pattern on his life; out of his rootless existence there emerged an overarching pattern of yearly and quarterly attendance at regional and general conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, of participation within the important religious debates of his day, of institutional acknowledgements of his many successes. Charles Finney could similarly draw out of the flux of his experience a pattern of ascent from boyhood through conversion and calling to renowned revivalist and champion of the "New Measures" which would redeem the world. He could mark the success of these new measures by organizing "his-story" around the revivals he orchestrated: his table of contents reads, "Revival at Antwerp...Revival at Gouverneur...Revival at De Kalb...Revival at Western," and so on.

Finney and Cartwright could punctuate their narratives by reference to officially conferred certificates of achievement and worth. Both men could display a kind of trophy case which--if arranged chronologically--provided a kind of narrative skeleton on which an autobiography could be laid out. Their positions within an organized and hierarchical church structure gave them the coordinates by which to plot the "upward trajectory" which the success narrative requires. The progress of their lives, in other words, lent itself to the classic American success story. They could easily fit the details of their existence into a familiar, culturally validated story.



And, as James Olney astutely recognizes, "Our sense that there is a meaning in something...comes only when the elements that go to make up that thing take on a relation to one another; in other words, the meaning emerges with our perception of a pattern" (Metaphors 30-1). Out of a chaotic life of travel and preaching engagements, Cartwright could discover, in other words, the significance of his life: he wasn't simply moving around the West; he was moving up in the West, from lowly itinerant to presiding elder to historian. Finney's many travels around the "burned-over district" weren't evidence of his rootlessness--or lack of "place"--in his culture, but of his deep roots, his authoritative position in American religion.

The trajectory of their lives, then, had led to a position--the one the autobiographer occupies when writing--whose eminence is likewise verifiable. This too gives writers like Finney and Cartwright a valuable narrative tool. For it is an odd fact about autobiography that its narrative pull--on the writer as much as on the reader--is just the opposite of that exerted by other kinds of narratives.<sup>12</sup> The writer of such a narrative already knows the ending--knows where he is when he sets about writing, and knows why that position is one from which the egotistical act of autobiography may acceptably issue. Similarly, the reader of such a narrative already knows, or else he wouldn't be reading, why the autobiographer has a claim on his attention. Autobiographers

write, and their readers read, not in search of the already known ending, but in search of the beginning and the middle. How did the eminent figure whose life commands our attention achieve his eminence?

The autobiography of success, then, like the story of conversion, works by emphasizing the distance between the struggling protagonist--Franklin with his "puffy rolls" under his arms, wandering the streets of Philadelphia--and the secure autobiographer, writing from a vantage point of assured success. By the time Franklin began writing America's most famous autobiography of success, he knew exactly where he stood. He was the man whose face in Paris was "as well known as that of the moon"; he was the man who had audiences and dinner with kings; he was a man who had reached a "State of Affluence & some Degree of Reputation in the World." Booker T. Washington similarly found his subject easy to delineate. As successful founder and leader of Tuskegee University, as spokesperson for a race, as an authority who visited and dined with America's "kings" of government and business, Washington could compose a confident narrative of success. Knowing his "ultimate achievements," he could measure the distance he had traveled from his humble beginnings in Virginia to the platform of the Atlanta Exposition.<sup>33</sup> Or, to cite another classic example of the "success narrative," consider this from Frederick Douglass's Narrative:

I look upon my departure from Colonel

Lloyd's plantation as one of the most interesting events of my life. It is possible, and even quite probable, that but for the mere circumstance of being removed from that plantation to Baltimore, I should have to-day, instead of being here seated by my own table, in the enjoyment of freedom and the happiness of home, writing this Narrative, been confined in the galling chains of slavery. (273)

A clear sense of the distance between "then" and "now" affords the autobiographer a distinct advantage in plotting his life, in discovering the crises and turning points which have led him to his present eminence.

Composing a retrospective, "well-made" autobiography replete with closure--provisional though it may be--requires, in other words, that the autobiographer have knowledge of the ending or at least some sense of one--provisional though it must be given that all autobiography necessarily represents the "incomplete" life.<sup>14</sup> To quote James Cox, "the convention of autobiography...presupposes a complete life or the completing of a life. It involves the writer in some form of ending or envisioning an end to a narrative that he helplessly wants to be equal to his life" (128). That task could, of course, be doubly difficult for inheritors of the Judeo-

Christian tradition, (or, for that matter, of any religious tradition), for theoretically at least, they plotted their spiritual course on a theological, rather than temporal, grid. These spiritual autobiographies, like all spiritual autobiographies, reflect "eschatological coordinates, in relation to which it is possible for each individual to pinpoint his own position between a beginning and an end predestined by the Creator of the world" (Gusdorf, "Scripture" 120-21). Focusing, however, on one's position in the larger scheme of Christian revelation, could make difficult the task of pinpointing the beginning, middle, and end of the autobiographical "Life": For the Christian evangelist, to quote Georges Gusdorf, "Birth and death do not define the true beginning and end of the human journey; there does indeed exist a biological logic of growth and decline, a historical logic of events, but these are sequences that do not carry their own internal and final justification" (121). Or, in the words of C. S. Lewis, "The horror of the Christian universe was that it had no door marked Exit" (171). The Christian's pilgrimage was no easy thing to plot; writing from a perspective somewhere in the middle of one's own journey, which was itself only a tiny fragment of a much larger span of time, a spiritual autobiographer could hardly construct a textual pilgrimage as well made as the fictional Pilgrim's Progress.

And yet, as we have seen, many attempted to do so, and

many succeeded. Narrating the story of his conversion in Surprised by Joy, C. S. Lewis rigorously selects only those experiences which upon reflection seem to have been beckoning him on toward conversion. Knowing the end of the story, he is able, according to the subtitle, to perceive "The Shape of [His] Early Life." The ending he has in mind becomes the criterion for editing his many memories of his early life: "As the plot quickens and thickens toward its end," Lewis tells us, "I leave out more and more of such matters as would go into a full autobiography" (215). Even the millennially-minded Peter Cartwright had little difficulty imagining an end to his potentially endless affairs. As the "oldest presiding elder in all the Western country," he proudly concludes his autobiography with the following statistics: he had attended 53 conferences, delivered approximately 14,600 sermons, and, perhaps most importantly, outlived his father's entire family, most members of the Western Conference of 1804, most of the early bishops, "every presiding elder" for whom he worked on circuits, and "hundreds and thousands of my contemporary ministers and members, as well as juniors" (338-340). "Insofar as the narrative is equal to the life," Cox reminds us, "it cannot be finished without death, either actual or metaphorical" (128). Having lived a long and profitable life, Cartwright is ready to meet his metaphorical maker, ready to "conclude" his life-story.<sup>15</sup>

## IV

What Cartwright and Finney had, then, were two invaluable autobiographical assets: the authority to write in the first place, and the means to turn a life into a story. Both of these assets, it will have been noticed, are essentially based on the same fact: their institutionally certified eminence, securely in place by the time they began to write. What they had, in other words, was an ending: they knew how the story turned out, and--secure in that ending--could confidently search the long chronicle which preceded it in search of a narrative line. Now we have already noticed that the female autobiographers under study here had particular trouble with endings. Sexton, faced with a publisher's demand for cuts, could achieve them by simply subtracting the last ten years of her life, without fear that any sense of narrative closure would be lost in the transaction: there was evidently none to lose. Others could not resist adding on to the narratives which they had considered finished--again, evidently, without feeling that narrative closure was at risk.

Compiling her spiritual narrative, Vicissitudes Illustrated in the Experience of Nancy Towle, Nancy Towle, for example, began her autobiography with the story of her conversion. Though a revival in her home of Hampton, New Hampshire, at age 12 leads her to reflect on her salvation, she nonetheless pursues a life of mirth until age 22, when she

is converted at the Inn at Northampton by the female evangelist Clarissa H. Danforth. Baptized at a later date by Moses Howe, an elder in the sect called "Christians," she then begins to feel "a longing desire" to preach throughout the world. Experiencing "the Word of the Lord as fire shut up in [her] bones," she "longed to speak that [she] might be refreshed" (11, Towle's emphasis; Jeremiah 20: 9). Despite this urge to preach, however, she is tempted by Satan to question the legitimacy of her call and encouraged by friends to engage in more worldly pursuits. Finally, on April 20, 1821, three years after her conversion, she leaves her father's house and with lingering doubts begins to preach the gospel.

Thus begins, on page 19 of her almost 300-page narrative, her account--or, rather, her accounting--of her evangelical labors, and from this point on the narrative assumes the paratactic plot I quoted earlier: "I went....I proceeded....I visited....I then went." She composes her spiritual narrative as one might compose a list. To be sure there are places in the autobiography which seem to activate her narrative energy, where she interrupts this break-neck pace of reporting her engagements to tell a story and to reflect upon its meaning or significance. She develops, as we saw in Chapter 3, the incident of being arrested in England for disturbing the peace, drawing from the event two morals: all disciples must suffer for Christ's sake and she is no coward. The protracted

illness and death of her father receive much narrative attention; Towle no doubt recognized the value of a sentimental death-bed scene, replete with a mysterious "melodious voice," for any nineteenth-century spiritual narrative. And too she pauses to fume about the material conditions of England's poor, the "cruel oppression and distress," and to prophesy the inevitable fall of such tyranny, an event which shall precede the "REDEEMER'S Kingdom" (76-7, 75). Yet even in such episodes, where her passion is obviously fueled and she turns away from her travels to focus on a particular event or expound upon an issue of interest, even there she often winds up writing in a "serial" or "additive" fashion.<sup>16</sup> Near the end of her autobiography, for example, stopping to take a sort of general accounting of her evangelical labors, she is unable or unwilling to give a narrative shape to her lifetime of activity:

Besides my travels, in much painfulness,  
cold, hunger, thirst and nakedness: I  
have sometimes spoken, from six to eight  
times a week, for months in  
succession....I have also, kept a  
diary.... Moreover, I have been from  
first, to last, the orderer of my own  
apparel....And, in addition to all this;  
I may add, in truth and verity, 'these  
hands of mine have often ministered to



the necessities of those that were with me; and to others'.... (227-28, emphasis mine)

Indeed, Towle was virtually paralyzed by this habit of composing by "addition," so much so that she is unable to end her story. In the preface to Vicissitudes, Towle apologizes for the length of her story; she had meant to write a mere twenty-page pamphlet, "but," Towle confesses,

things have had such a termination, that I have been drawn,--or rather driven, quite beside my own designs, even to the lengths you here survey....The greatest difficulty with me, here has been, to keep my pen within due bounds;--having such an abundance, that I wished to reveal, and of which, the narrow limits first surveyed for this,--would not admit. (6)

Towle's paratactic method becomes particularly vivid as she tries to complete her story for publication. Traveling to Charleston, South Carolina, in 1832, to visit her brother's grave and being denied access to all public places in which to preach, she decides at last to publish her manuscript, having, it would seem, no immediate call to preach elsewhere. The previous year, Towle had been concerned during a prolonged illness that her "valuable writings" would not be published

"to the world"; she had concluded, however, that it would not be "consistent with Jehovah, to take [her] away in the integrity of my heart; ere that work had been completed" (109, emphasis mine). God would not, she ultimately concludes, "cut [her] off in the completion of it" (109, emphasis mine). And yet, though she devotes considerable time to doing just that, preparing and "completing" her writings for publication, she is reluctant to give them over to a printer, "not feeling," she confesses, "yet liberty, to put my writings to the press..." (116). One year and one hundred pages later, Towle again "completes" her writings and delivers her manuscript to James. L. Burges of Charleston for printing. Two months pass, however, and we find Towle still residing in Charleston because of the printer's many delays; apparently unable to resist such a glorious opportunity, she again takes up her pen and adds another 25-odd pages to the manuscript (75 pages if the appended verses, adulatory letters, reflections, and sermon were not included in the copy originally taken to Burges).<sup>17</sup>

Jarena Lee found herself similarly unable to edit her manuscript by assigning priority to the various engagements, happenings, and opinions with which her days were filled. She began her career as an itinerant minister around 1819, when Richard Allen, bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, finally recognized her spiritual gifts and granted her permission to preach. In 1836, she "felt under much exercise

to print a book" and was encouraged to do so by both Allen and the "Rev. R. R\_\_\_\_" (77). At her own expense she had one thousand copies of The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee printed in Philadelphia, and though she was initially reluctant to sell them, that being "too much like merchandize," she ultimately embraces the task, knowing that she "must pay for them, or it will do more harm to the Gospel than if [she] had not printed them" (77). Within four months she had distributed enough copies of the pamphlet to pay for her expenses; and, Lee proudly remembers, during the remainder of 1836, "I preached and sold my books, and paid my own way" (79). Three years later in Cincinnati, her "pamphlets went off as by a wind"; encouraged by an Elder she has another thousand copies printed for sale (85). Unlike Nancy Towle, whose twenty-page pamphlet quickly became a three-hundred-page book, Jarena Lee was "constrained to give over," the "smallness of this pamphlet" preventing her from "go[ing] through with the whole of [her] journal, as it would probably make a volume of two hundred pages" (Life 48).<sup>1</sup> Printing the book at her own expense, she no doubt could ill afford to let her pen out of "due bounds." She does convey the hope, however, that another volume "may at some future day be published" (Life 48). Jarena Lee's publishing history is, in this respect, much like that of Nancy Towle. Though Towle, for reasons unknown, never did publish another edition of her "Life," she clearly intended to do so. Believing it her

"duty" now to write, Towle tells her readers to expect more books from her, specifically a volume of her correspondence and another narrative drawn from her four-hundred-page journal: "This object," Towle professes in 1832, "I heartily desire to see accomplished, before my race is run..." (7).

Though Towle crossed the finish line with only the one version of her "Life," Jarena Lee did make it with another volume in hand." In fact, we learn about the publishing history of the first volume only because in 1849 Lee decided to issue another edition of her spiritual narrative, the "narrow limits" of the first, in the words of Nancy Towle, having been found inadequate to contain her "Life." Over five times the length of the first, the 1849 Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee covers the years 1783 to 1842, the 1836 edition having taken the reader only up to the second year (1821) of her ministry. Like Nancy Towle, who published her autobiography at age 36 after preaching for only 10 years, Lee printed her first narrative in mid-career at the age of 53, having been an itinerant for about sixteen years. Thus it is not surprising to find that both women feel the urge to update, if you will, their original stories.

In fact, given that autobiography--unlike biography--can never tell the story of a "completed" life, it is not surprising that many autobiographers have found themselves irrepressibly moved to take up their pens again to extend what they--and their readers--once may have considered a "fixed"

account of the life. Beginning in 1855 and continuing to his death in 1891, P. T. Barnum, for example, repeatedly "amended his Life," "tinkering" with the 1869 edition for years and issuing three major versions of his life story, each one more "inclusive" though not necessarily more "comprehensive" than the last (Couser 62, 61).<sup>20</sup> Frederick Douglass similarly published three versions of his life from 1845 to 1881, even revising the Life and Times of Frederick Douglass again in 1892 to include "his complete history to the present time."<sup>21</sup> Should he go on living, this subtitle suggests, booksellers might well have in hand yet another, "more complete" history. The list could, of course, go on and on: Franklin, Whitman, certainly Angelou, whose life has become nothing short of "an autobiographical project" (Fichtelberg 213). All of these writers and their proliferating texts remind us that "an autobiography--unlike, for example, a novel, which aspires to a timeless wholeness--can be periodically supplemented as long as one lives" (Couser 62). "Indeed," Thomas Couser writes, "an autobiography virtually demands to be serially composed because its authority--whether as an icon of its subject or an index of its author--begins to diminish the moment it is 'finished'" (62). De Quincey's addiction to opium made impossible the "completion" of his Confessions, but in truth this "incomplete" life is no different from all autobiography, which, in the words of William Spengemann, "is not a reflection of the life but something added to it, not a

picture, but an action, which can neither stand still long enough to see the life whole nor pursue its own movement to a point of certain rest" (Forms 109).

But rather than undertake an arduous process of revision--of publishing, in the manner of Barnum or Douglass, a "new" life as opposed to a sequel--Jarena Lee opts to compile her narrative by what would appear to be cutting and pasting. Rather than rewrite, in other words, the entire spiritual narrative in light of her experiences from 1821 to the present (1849), Lee basically removed the three concluding paragraphs of her first narrative and, picking up where she left off, added seventy-five pages of new material culled from her journal. She then tacked the original three concluding paragraphs to the new material and added a brief postscript. And, as William Andrews noted when selecting the shorter, 1836 edition for inclusion in Sisters of the Spirit, much of the interpolated material reads like a travel log.<sup>22</sup> Despite all this, Lee must conclude her narrative in 1842, seven years before the date of publication. Somehow her devotion to detail, her inability to edit and choose, left her once again unable to bring her life story up to date.

If we believe, however, that Lee was in control of this process of cutting and pasting, that she found the three concluding paragraphs of the earlier edition still adequate to convey her sentiments thirteen years later, then we have every right to expect Lee to produce yet another, more "complete"

narrative, for the claim made in the first edition still stands in the second: "I cannot go through with the whole of my journal, as it would probably make a volume of two hundred pages; which if the Lord be willing may at some future day be published" (97). The paratactic plot, moreover, primes her readers to expect more from the "life," to want more of the "Life." In each edition Lee leaves her readers hanging in mid-labor. Even in the earlier edition in which she more carefully balances the conventional stages of a conversion narrative--awakening, conversion, call, and ministry--the text, though it climaxes with her call and triumphant exhortation in the presence of the Bishop, has no real denouement. The paragraph that immediately precedes the "concluding paragraphs" invites the reader, who has been rhythmically propelled by her "additive" method of composition, to expect another "and I then." We leave Jarena Lee--or, rather, she leaves us--in the 1836 edition stopping off at Dennis Creek, where she "spoke to a large congregation of various and conflicting sentiments" and "a wonderful shock of God's power was felt" (48). "My health," she concludes in 1849, "being very much impaired, I knew not but that I should be the next one called away, but the Lord spared me for some other purpose, and upon my recovery I commenced travelling again, feeling it better to wear out than to rust out--and so expect to do until death ends the struggle..." (96-7). By now we are acquainted with Lee well enough to know that she will

be off again soon, but for the reader New Hope will be the final stop of an ongoing tour. We are left wondering if indeed the paratactic style which predominates on the sentence and paragraph level will apply as well to the narrative as a whole. Will Lee, in other words, update her incomplete, unfinished narrative for us once more?

## V

Writing a "finished" autobiographical narrative demands, as we have seen, the ability to edit the events and experiences that make up the life, to undertake the complex task of prioritizing these experiences, of ranking some as more important than others, of selecting only these "significant" mileposts for inclusion in the story. "Significant" experiences are those that serve the purposes of the plot: the ones that don't fit are thus the ones that don't count. And in order to know what counts a writer must be able to define his or her subject, which is precisely what Nancy Towle, Jarena Lee and their sister autobiographers were unable to do. They could define and delineate the subject of their conversion. They were converted and sanctified under a theological system that had made it easy for them to take their conversion and sanctification for granted. Unlike their Puritan ancestors who related the narratives of their conversions to a community of saints who would pass judgment



on the validity of their conversion accounts, these women could be confident that theirs was a legitimate conversion, that they were not going to be judged on its form. More importantly, knowing how that particular story turned out, they could easily perceive or imagine the significant signposts that got them there. And, given their familiarity with the archetype of conversion, they could readily adopt their private story of awakening to sin and conversion into a narrative familiar to their readers. The archetype of conversion was as congenial to their stories as to those of Peter Cartwright and Charles Finney.

Unfortunately, the classic American success story remained an elusive one for these American women, despite the fact that as these preachers tell it they had one "success" after another, each of which they meticulously "add" to their autobiographies. For while the story of conversion was historically a gender-neutral paradigm--Christiana's pilgrimage being much like Christian's--the Franklinesque story of success was not. It was, as we have seen, a story told from a confident position of "authority"; it was a story of evolution, of a man's linear progress from lowly itinerant to presiding elder; it was a story that called for a writer who had "arrived" at a state of self-knowledge sufficient to make easy the task of envisioning the pattern--the beginning, middle, and even the end--of the story.

Whether compiling her narrative in 1832 or 1893, none of

the women in this study had achieved the sort of "fixed" authoritative "end" within the public world of institutional religion that characterized the lives of Charles Finney and Peter Cartwright: they remained forever on the outside, charismatic preachers, yes, purveyors of history, never. The stress placed by evangelical religious movements upon the inner witness of the spirit--as opposed to education--in the formation of their ministry did open many doors for women like Nancy Towle and Zilpha Elaw, if they could claim just such extraordinary inspiration. Even then, however, these women were limited to positions variously labeled exhorter, local preacher, "approved" preacher. By the 1860s, renewal religions such as Methodism and the United Brethren had begun to move from the periphery to the center; and with their new status came institutionalization, respectability and a certain unwillingness to tolerate the "spiritual gifts" of women. Though women in the nineteenth century made enormous progress in their struggle for leadership positions within the hierarchy of the church, no woman had really "arrived" at an identifiable--though provisional--"end" in the way that Peter Cartwright had. Though a woman like Nancy Towle could truthfully claim to feel periodically "in delivering [her] message to the people, like one, possessed of great authority," the equality of spiritual gifts among God's prophets did not effectively diminish the hierarchy of the church and the sexism of evangelical religion in general

(24).<sup>23</sup> These women's lives, in other words, could not easily be made to fit the shape--the upward trajectory--of the "male" version of the American success story.

"Breaking up housekeeping," these women preachers began what was no doubt an enabling journey to Dennis Creek and Philadelphia and Newcastle, a journey that offered them adventurous lives remarkably free from the physical and social constraints with which most women of the nineteenth century lived. Leaving home and familial and (for all except Sexton) conjugal ties meant, however, losing the primary source of security--physical, institutional and psychological--available to women of the century, with little hope of realizing it--as Cartwright and Finney did--in the wide world through which they began to travel. It meant, in other words, alienating themselves from that other prominent narrative of success--this one gendered female. The marriage plot was the only story of success--the only "end"--available to them as writers of women's lives. There were no familiar stories that chronicled a woman's development or evolution, that would comprehend--the way men's stories did--the whole of their lives: birth, conversion, education, marriage, vocation, independent achievement and success. In fact, as Nina Baym's research indicates, unorthodox nineteenth-century women looking for a narrative model would uncover few stories in the fiction of the day which would treat the lives of adult women at all, either within or without marriage.<sup>24</sup> Thus, their situation

is the reverse of that of a man like P. T. Barnum, who knew too many stories by which to order his life. Where he had an embarrassment of riches, they were utterly impoverished, having none. In part, then, the endless travels which these autobiographers so scrupulously document serve as a figure for their ongoing quest for a plot, for a different kind of story for and about women.

Despite their active pursuit of a vocation of their own--or God's--choosing, these preachers were in many ways like their domestic counterparts who remained unmarried. "Unmarried women," Nancy Cott reminds us, "were 'unsettled,' in the language of the day, and had stronger motives for self-scrutiny--for the examination of their prospects--than did married women who had made their most significant life-choice" (Bonds 15). Though these preachers had made a significant life-choice, as long as they remained outside of power, as long as doors remained--literally at times--closed to them, as long as the pulpit was a contested site, they would remain forever "unsettled," literally as itinerants, but institutionally and, more important, psychologically as well. Having either rejected marriage altogether or "settled" in it for only a brief period, most of these women would have recognized the irony in Fanny Fern's harangue on marriage in "The Tear of a Wife": "'what have you to cry for? A-i-n-t y-o-u m-a-r-r-i-e-d? Isn't that the ~~sumum~~ bonum,--the height of feminine ambition? You can't get beyond that! It is the

jumping-off place! You've arriv!--got to the end of your journey!'" (qtd. in Dobson 112).

Having voluntarily abandoned a socially and psychologically "settled" existence within the home and having been denied access to the "settled" authoritative positions within institutional religion, these evangelical women wrote from a precarious, ill-defined position: marginalized from both the male and female paradigms of development, theirs was a story full of questions, not answers. No clear paradigms existed in their culture to tell them who they were, let alone where they were. Marginalized in their culture, uncertain of their identity, they lacked the self-knowledge that facilitates the mastery of narrative form, the transformation of the formless life into a "purposeful," patterned autobiography.<sup>25</sup> Charles Finney could easily select a purpose for his autobiography, as his editor informs us, and compose a unified "narrative which gives him chiefly in one line of his work, and one view of his character": knowing where he stood, he could select material with which to fashion a story out of a fragmented existence (636). His female counterparts, however, though they had a clear sense of the literal miles they had traveled as itinerant preachers, had no sense at all of the distance they had traveled on their journey--let alone the shape of that journey--from their own humble beginnings as sinful girls to successful, even, in limited circles, well-known preachers of the gospel. Indeed, while Cartwright and

his male associates traveled, as we know, along assigned "circuits," these female evangelists seem to have traveled in a circle.<sup>26</sup> A "circuit," we might say, is a kind of organized circle, one designed, paradoxically, to lead somewhere; and indeed the circular travels of these male itinerants did, in the end, resolve themselves into linear careers--success stories--leading ultimately to prestigious and responsible positions within the hierarchy of their ecclesiastical establishments. Where Peter Cartwright could form his journey as a climbing spiral--always moving around, but always moving up--Lydia Sexton and Zilpha Elaw could draw only a random game of connect the dots--heading everywhere but leading nowhere. Their daring ambitions had not brought them any closer to the "jumping-off place!" Thus, these women autobiographers end up writing in circles, like scouts lost in the woods, desperately searching for the narrative trail. Their circular journeys--literally and psychologically speaking--end in formless, serial narratives which beg to know when, when will we reach the end of our journey? When will we be "settled"?<sup>27</sup>

The answer seems to be never. Though these women were theoretically free to be "moved" by the spirit only, their autobiographies make clear that this very freedom made them ever vulnerable in the world of evangelical religion and in their culture at large. Though they didn't know exactly where they stood in the marketplace of salvation, they did seem to know they were on shaky ground. Though Nancy Towle would

forcefully declare her independence--"I am...accountable to no mortal, for my procedure--nor hath any human being, any control over me"--her autobiography and those of her sister itinerants tell another story (232).<sup>28</sup> Free stories, they were not. These women's autobiographies highlight their dependence on an evaluative system that measured and remeasured their worth according to the amount of work "added" to their resumes. There could be no rest for the weary worker who plied her trade outside the official network of support: "seals" to her ministry must be forever forthcoming for those whose authority was derived from God rather than a quarterly conference. Having entered the competitive sphere of evangelical religion, and having done so by laying claim to an inner witness of the Spirit, these women were told that theirs must be a story of success. "Exceptions" to the institutional church's restrictions against female preaching, they had to prove themselves exceptional--and exceptionally successful--preachers or risk losing what little "authority" they had derived from God and then granted by His more official servants. Where Cartwright and Finney could see themselves in mirrors, these women recognized their identity only through the gaze of onlookers, judges, critics of women's "exceptional" status. Thus, they compile their "Lives" as they no doubt lived them, anxious to appear busy and successful, for "busyness" was a paramount consideration, as I argued in Chapter 2, for all Christians living in a millennial age of

energy and usefulness, and, more particularly, for female evangelists competing in the marketplace of salvation. There is no end, these women seem to be saying, to what I can add to this text; there is, moreover, no easy way to "edit" my activities: they might all be important turning points in this evangelical countinghouse of success.

Yet marginalized from institutional power, exceptions--no matter how successful--could never "arrive" at the sort of comfortable authoritative position from which Peter Cartwright or Charles Finney penned their success stories. Hence, these women preachers found themselves in the unenviable position of having to compose a narrative of success while being denied the requisite ending. And, as these autobiographers make clear, if you are not traveling toward any particular end, then to stop is simply to quit, not to arrive. Stopping, in other words, is tantamount to failure. With no end in sight for the journey, there could be no end--at least no easily identifiable one--to the journal or autobiography. Though they could always hope for a rewarding end, theirs remained an unfinished business.

"Completing" their autobiographies was thus an anxiety-ridden task: who knows, these additive narratives ask, but that the next revival, the next preaching engagement, might well be the one that brings the sort of recognition and reward that would enable us to end our stories the way a Peter Cartwright could--as a respected authority and historian. At



the very least each new success brought with it the possibility that they might finally be able to clarify this elusive concept of Success, if not for themselves then at least for their readers. Participating in the narrative of success with a handicap--with no real end in sight--these women not surprisingly construct stories of departures. With each new sentence, each run-on paragraph, each seemingly unedited account of a particular mission, they are reluctant to give over, to put a period to the whole affair, to call a halt to what had become a psychological necessity: a never-ending quest for recognition, at the very least a desperate effort to maintain their "tentative" status as "exceptions." Their additive method of composition is thus a clear index of their anxiety and feelings of inadequacy as "unsettled" preachers, as "unsettled" women."

These autobiographies serve as a powerful reminder of how issues of literary authority are related to those of political and institutional authority; they call our attention to the gender of genre. None of these women had achieved a position that could facilitate the act of "authoring" one's own story. Marginalized from the nineteenth century's stories--and their endings--of both women and men, they were unable to attain a state of complete, god-like self-knowledge which had empowered men like Cartwright to give structure and closure to their stories. Nor had they, it would seem, the postmodern wherewithal to realize that such totalizing self-knowledge was

false to experience, to interrogate the sexual and textual politics of closure, to appreciate, in other words, that closure--signifying woman's imprisonment in patriarchal plots and ways of knowing--was "bad" and its absence--signifying her freedom from such plots and attitudes--was "good."<sup>30</sup> Rather these additive, inconclusive narratives forcefully demonstrate the anxiety that comes from the inability to resolve conflicts, to make sense of one's life, to give form to one's fragmented existence, false though it may be. These stories poignantly reveal the pain to which contemporary theorists are blind when they criticize male autobiographers like Henry Adams for closing over gaps in their experience, for choosing only one aspect of their identity to stand for the whole, for looking back over the life and perceiving or imposing there a pattern and thus a meaning. Indeed, the ability to unify one's personal experience into a meaningful whole is, in the words of James Olney, "the only way man has of making the universe stop pounding and washing away at his little light of consciousness" (Metaphors 16). Living in a century which made difficult, if not impossible, this task of finishing the life stories of unorthodox women, these autobiographers can only look to a future age when equality of faith would become equality of sex, when stories about adventurous women were the rule, not the "exception," when they too would have a god-like, psychologically empowering perspective from which to write their lives.

## An Afterword

### The Call of the Preachers: The Cry of the Faithful<sup>1</sup> Evangelical Women Writers and the Search for an Interpretive Community

"These fragments I have shored against my  
ruins...." T. S. Eliot, The Waste Land

"One confronts and accepts dispersal and  
fragmentation as part of the construction  
of a new world order that reveals more  
fully where we are, who we can  
become...." bell hooks, Yearning

"He that findeth his life shall lose it:  
and he that loseth his life for my sake  
shall find it." Matthew 10: 39

"'If this year your story is one of loss,  
and you are as an exile in a strange  
land, remember that even in such a place  
the Lord's song will yet be sung. In  
God's good time, even exiles at last come  
home.'" Dan Wakefield, Returning

All potential autobiographers, of course, have facts, and dates, and memories--reliable or not--with which to work as they construct a narrative of their lives; some of them even have diaries and journals upon which to draw. "But to organize events into stories," Patricia Spacks argues, "not merely sequences of happenings but sequences of meaning, requires 'making up,' of patterns if not of events. To understand one's life as a story demands that one perceive that life as making sense..." ("Selves" 131). When the preachers in this study began the process of exploring their lives by keeping journals and, later, by writing autobiographies, they faced a severe crisis of identity, a crisis that could not easily be

resolved, even under the aegis of a genre that critics have long understood as an educational, introspective tool, designed to help the struggling writer "impose order, form, and meaning on the facts of an existence" (Maynes 105). "The autobiography is, or can be," Robert Sayre maintains, "that second house into which we are reborn, carried by our own creative power. We make it ourselves, then remake it--make it new" ("Autobiography" 148). These women "wandering through our land," to quote Judge\_\_\_\_ once again, with their "wild visions" had, indeed, left their first homes, literally and psychologically. They wandered through their culture and then through their self-writings in search of a language that could adequately represent that "second house into which they were reborn." And, in part, they were successful. Their autobiographies tell a story of women who did make it themselves and then make it new. In appropriating the prominent languages of their day--domesticity, competitive individualism, evangelicalism--as well as a powerful tradition of biblical typology, they were able to deconstruct old forms of womanhood and reconstruct new ones. Working with the only materials at hand, they created wonderfully complex female characters. Reading the Vicissitudes of Nancy Towle, Judge\_\_\_\_ could begin to answer his own question: "Say, female stranger, who art thou?"

At times, however, these autobiographies read like one long and desperate struggle to order and find meaning in lives

for which there were few precedents, an almost overwhelming task of cutting and pasting one's textual identity with words and images that can only partially describe a "stranger" to her culture. I am thus left wondering how much their autobiographical writings ultimately served them in their quest to understand their novel lives, how much these narratives helped inquisitive judges understand them. I'm like you and you and you; I'm like everyone, male and female, in my culture, they tell us. I'm domestic and itinerant, nurturing and individualistic, motherly and competitive, confident and anxious, masculine and feminine, victor and victim--they assure us on every page. Though it is currently fashionable to valorize the "fluid," as opposed to the "fixed," identity, to praise texts in which "the fixed identity of woman" is replaced with "the improvised mobility of a modernist subjectivity," these autobiographies force us to consider what it might have been like to write such an easily changed or readily changing identity in nineteenth-century America, an identity, moreover, that tends, as fluids do, to take on the shape of its container (Miller, Subject 258). Though it may well be true, as Teresa de Lauretis argues, that "subjectivity is an ongoing construction, not a fixed point of departure or arrival from which one then interacts with the world," that these women, in other words, had no choice but to engage in an endless process of identity negotiations, it is also true, as these stories attest, that the process of trying on

identities, like so many hats in a millinery of culture, can be a daunting, enormously stressful task (159). Restlessly trying to negotiate a textual identity that would be acceptable to the audiences who watched and judged them, these itinerant preachers invite us to consider whether all their identities, drawn from the dominant culture, ever equal an identity. Do they "add up" or do they simply remain in flux, each one "added on" to, but never integrated with, the others, just as each journalistic fragment is carefully, but never flawlessly, added to their narratives? Do these women, in other words, ever realize a "Self" in their autobiographies? Like their quest for a plot, their quest for an identity remains, sadly I find, incomplete at the "end" of their textual self-representations.

These autobiographies serve to remind us, then, of what post-modern theorists have long contended: the autobiographical self is far from an essential, inviolable being: it is, rather, a fragmented, decentered construction of language, dependent on its readers either to fill in the gaps and paste over the holes or to deconstruct the fragile creation before them. These preachers, of course, would not--indeed could not--speak in these twentieth-century terms; if their autobiographies are any indication, however, I strongly suspect that they did feel that theirs was an almost impossible project, that no manner of shoring up the self with journalistic fragments would build them a "new house."

That would have to come, they realized, from their readers. Indeed, all of the texts in this sub-tradition of women's evangelical autobiography are clearly audience-centered, much in the same way that their sermons no doubt were. None of these women left behind collections of their sermons; they claim to have been inspired by God and to have spoken extemporaneously. But what we know about the evangelical climate in which they worked justifies an assumption that these women were fully as concerned as their male counterparts with "The Sovereign Audience." As Nathan Hatch convincingly argues in The Democratization of American Christianity, "Each [new sect] was wedded to the transforming power of the word, spoken, written, and sung...each was supremely confident that the vernacular and the colloquial were the most fitting channels for religious expression; and each was content to measure the success of individuals and movements by their ability to persuade" (127). Certainly, each of these women impresses us with her intense desire to "persuade," to convert her lay readers, by "testify[ing]," in the words of Julia Foote, "more extensively to the sufficiency of the blood of Jesus Christ to save from all sin," in this case, in a small volume designed primarily for African-Americans who might not be able to afford "expensive works on this important Bible theme" (163). Foote earnestly believes that the story of her conversion and evangelical labors can "promote the cause of holiness in the Church": "why not," she

asks her readers, "yield, believe, and be sanctified now--now while reading?" (234).

But these works are obviously audience-centered in another way. Like black autobiographers in the nineteenth century, these women realized that "theirs was a rhetorical situation" (Andrews, To Tell 17). As women challenged at almost every turn for their participation in a field dominated by men, these autobiographers were not simply motivated by an unselfish desire to spread the good news of the gospel. Evangelicalism, then as now, called them to testify as part of their spiritual journey, but their own need for validation called them to undertake another discursive pilgrimage as well, to open a discourse with a wide and critical world. What William Andrews has written about black autobiographers applies equally to these women, white and black: they "could not think of their task simply as the objective reconstruction of an individual's past or a public demonstration of the qualities of selfhood or a private meditation on the meaning of a life of struggle," or, I would add, simply an instructive guide to conversion (17). Estranged from a woman's "value scheme for ordering all life," and unable to understand, let alone evaluate, the quality of their "strange" lives in that "strange" male land of evangelical religion, these women invite the reader to become more than another convert in their ledgers: indirectly at least, these never-ending, additive narratives look to the reader for some sort of final



arbitration about a woman's rights to leave her father's or husband's home, to roam the country "immodestly" unescorted, to enter the pulpit with or without official sanction--indeed, to have "authority" as a preacher and as an autobiographer. Historically, spiritual narratives have often been books about judgement, about election and damnation, at least that's how it was for the Puritans--even secular ones like Franklin--who constructed their stories within and for a community of believers. The authority of itinerant preachers, moreover, was always tied to a community of listeners: "Only the response from the congregation reveals the presence of authority" (Mathews, "Evangelical America" 29). Will you, these narratives seem to ask their dear readers, lend validation and closure to these unfinished "Lives," these unfinished selves? Will you respond to our call and thereby lend us the authority we so desperately desire and deserve?

The "self," of course, has always been a problematic construct. It is, James Olney warns, "infinitely difficult to get at, to encompass, to know how to deal with: it bears no definition...it is not known except privately and intuitively; it is, for each of us, only itself, unlike anything else experienced or experienceable" (23). And yet, as we have seen, the self that bears little relation to the characters that abound in an autobiographer's culture cannot easily be known even "privately," let alone publicly by a reader. As I have argued, to be recognizable as a story, the plot must be

in some way standard: a private story is in some sense a contradiction in terms. That is why these women borrow terms most familiar to their culture when constructing their "identities." That is also why these story-less women settle for "opening" a discourse--a conversation, if you will--which might ultimately lead to some consensus about where, amid the facts of their existence, the narrative line in fact runs, to some consensus about "who art thou"--about, in other words, plot and character.

What these individualistic women are writing is, thus, (to borrow a feminist buzzword) "relational," not in the sense that they don't "oppose [themselves] to all others," or that they don't "feel [themselves] to exist outside of others, and still less against others," but in the sense that they invite a community of readers to partake of--to "collaborate" in--their efforts to rebuild their social, cultural and psychological homes, in Sayre's terms to "make them new" (Friedman 56).<sup>2</sup>

Making it new, I believe, is what these texts may ultimately be about. When these women decided to record their experiences for posterity, they necessarily engaged a tradition among nineteenth-century evangelical Protestant denominations of marketing one's life as a "model" of conversion and righteous living, a model even more effective than those provided by scriptural characters. The tradition did not, of course, originate in the Second Great Awakening.

In his "Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God," Jonathan Edwards observed, "There is no one thing that I know of, that God has made such a means of promoting his work amongst us, as the news of others' conversion" (176). This habit of preferring contemporary accounts of spiritual living to those of the Bible, did, however, become extremely popular in the nineteenth century: "Christian biography," the Rev. John Holmes Acornley wrote in 1892,

has often been blessed of God in the reclamation [sic] and salvation of those who have been living at variance with his will, and in violation of his law. Blasphemers and persecutors have been led, by the quiet perusal of the record of the inner lives of God's children, to change their sentiments and conduct, to open their hearts to the influence of the Divine Spirit, and to realize and experience that change we call conversion. (The Colored Lady Evangelist

7)

Though spiritual writers and autobiographers were anxious to remind their readers that they were "Bible Christians," that the Bible was the best guide for Christian living, they nonetheless produced and reproduced the nineteenth century's evangelical version of the self-help book.<sup>3</sup> Collections of

"Pious Lives," such as Samuel Burder's Memoirs of Eminently Pious Women, found their way into many religious homes in nineteenth-century America, readers believing, like writers and reviewers, in the remarkable power of the word to convert and to socialize. Even evangelical novels were considered powerful tools in the dissemination of "good." As one reviewer of Susan Warner's bestselling The Wide, Wide World argued, this book is "capable of doing more good than any other work, other than the Bible" (qtd. in Dobson 12). The reverse, of course, could also be true: "the nineteenth century knew," Barbara Welter writes, "that girls could be ruined by a book" (Dimity 34). As Zilpha Elaw remarks in her Memoirs, "Take heed what you read" (52).

And in an evangelical age when language--as opposed to the sacraments--was felt to be of tremendous importance and converts were the objects of fierce competition, it is not surprising that spiritual narratives, no less than evangelical novels and essays, would assume a large part in what Nathan Hatch aptly calls "an explosion of popular printed material" in the early nineteenth century (Democratization 125). Given the degree to which women were considered "naturally" more religious than men, it should also come as no surprise that Timothy Merritt, editor of The Guide to Christian Perfection, should specifically direct his attention to women in the journal's first issue, published in 1839:

A Word to the Female Members of the

Church.--Many of you have experienced the grace of sanctification. Should you not then, as a thank-offering to God, give an account of this gracious dealing with your souls, that others may be partakers of this grace also? Sisters in Christ, may we not expect that you will assist us both with your prayers and pens? (qtd. in Hardesty, "Women" 232)\*

And assist they did, not always, however, limiting their accounts to God's "gracious dealing" with their souls. For, as I have indicated in previous chapters, these particular women's evangelical autobiographies are as much about the "dealings" of these courageous authors as about the work of God's grace. One could argue, in fact, that these women wrote autobiographies that anticipate the narrative strategies of twentieth-century women writers who "write beyond the ending": they look beyond both the conventional understanding of the spiritual narrative as an aid in conversion and the "formerly conventional structures of fiction and consciousness about women" (DuPlessis x). Once their lives moved beyond the conventional ending--beyond their awakening to sin and salvation, beyond the social conventions or "patterns of learned behavior" prescribed for women--these evangelical women lacked the "script," which would have "suggest[ed] sequences of action and response, the meaning we give these,

and ways of organizing experience by choices, emphases, priorities" (DuPlessis 2). But they kept on writing nonetheless, disrupting formal and thematic patterns of women's stories, and, no doubt, disturbing many readers.

Indeed, when Jarena Lee decided to extend her autobiography in 1844, she initially sought permission from the A.M.E. Church's Book Committee, knowing that traveling preachers were required to seek approval before proceeding with publication. The Book Concern, however, which found the Religious Experience and Journal "written in such a manner that it is impossible to decipher much of the meaning contained in it," denied her request, though given their financial troubles, they might well have profited from a second edition which promised to be as popular as her first (qtd. in Foster, Written 74-5). "We shall have to apply to Sister Lee," the Book Concern further noted, "to favor us with an explanation of such portions of the manuscript as are not understood by us" (qtd. in Foster, Written 75). With Frances Foster I find little in Jarena Lee's second autobiography that cannot easily be understood--at least from the distance of 150 years. As she points out, it is likely that the Book Concern "had been tested for their ability to accept the testimony of an African American woman and been found wanting" (75). To this I would add, however, that the men of the Book Concern, no less than Lee herself, probably did have difficulty understanding her unprecedented, unorthodox narrative. This

woman's story was a private story: it did not assume a culturally familiar, certainly not a culturally validated, shape that would have made sense to the A.M.E. Book Concern.

Given, moreover, that the Concern had been established to "publish religious tracts and pamphlets as was deemed best for the interests of the Connection," we can only assume these men made the right decision: the second edition of Jarena Lee's "Life" clearly wasn't in the best interest of the "Connection," at least in the terms by which that, or any other, patriarchal religious institution understood and defined itself (qtd. in Foster, Written 74). Though Jarena Lee's second autobiography, like those of her sister itinerants, did, as Foster argues, follow the "established literary tradition for spiritual autobiography," it also deviated from that tradition in subtle, yet subversive ways, ways which the Book Concern probably recognized. For while the traditional form was established to guide the narrator to an understanding of her spiritual condition and the community of readers to Christian conversion, the form established by these female evangelists essentially guides the reader to a different sort of awakening, the sort with which Kate Chopin's Edna Pontellier might well have identified. By adding one conquest and success and journey to another, by aligning themselves with "male" myths of competitive individualism, by engaging biblical typology as a prophetic model, by interpreting scripture to prove a woman's right to preach, by

appealing to their readers with seemingly familiar characters and forms rendered unfamiliar by gender, these women autobiographers have radical "designs"--to borrow Jane Tompkin's word--on their readers. They work explicitly and implicitly to convert opponents of women's assumption of public roles such as "preacher"--opponents who though rarely addressed directly are nonetheless apparent on every page, with every defensive self-construction. Specifically, these autobiographers seek to "persuade" their opposition to recognize women's potential for success in the pulpit, and in Wollstonecraft fashion, to "seal [their] testimony, as with [their] blood, in 'vindication of the rights of woman!'" (Towle 241).

These women write, moreover, and more directly, to awaken their female readership to the possibilities of a new story with a new ending: theirs is, after all, a story of a woman's career as an evangelist, not of her conversion and spiritual introspection. Nancy Towle tells us, for example, that she writes "especially, for the encouragement of my own sex, that may succeed me in the Lord's Vineyard," for there are few women who have "courage sufficient" to chart the unknown waters of female evangelism (7). A full sixty years later, in 1893, Amanda Smith concludes her autobiography in the hope not only that her "own people will be led to a more full consecration," but also "that the Spirit of the Lord may come upon some of the younger women who have talent, and who have



had better opportunities than I have ever had...so that when I have fallen in battle, and can do no more, they may take up the standard and bear it on" (505-6). Directed toward their female audience these autobiographies testify to their authors' "awareness of the meaning of the cultural category woman for the patterns of women's individual destiny" (Friedman 40-1).

At present there is no easy way to assess the effect these texts actually had on their evangelically-oriented audience, no easy way to know how many women heard Towle or Foote or Smith "calling" them out of their homes, calling them to lose their domestic lives in the name of Christ. Borrowing from the work of critics engaged in analyzing women's reading habits in nineteenth-century America, however, we can speculate about the ways in which these autobiographies could alter a woman's "horizon of expectations," about the ways in which "[r]eading provided space--physical, temporal, and psychological--that permitted women to exempt themselves from traditional gender expectations, whether imposed by formal society or by family obligation" (Jauss 18; Sicherman 202). In her study of the reading habits of nineteenth-century women, Susan Harris found that women

shared an interest in, and admiration  
for, outstanding women, that they desired  
an education that would give them what  
they conceived of as power in the world

of ideas, and that they were intensely attracted to fictional heroines who determined to develop themselves professionally. (30)

She concluded, moreover, that women brought a "multi-leveled approach to their readings," that they were fully capable of "decoding" what she calls an "exploratory text," a book, in other words, that ended with the standard, culturally valorized romance plot, but covertly explored the possibilities of a woman's fulfillment outside that plot (18, 78). And, according to Harris, women readers did perceive and enjoy the more subversive, alternative--"private"--plot; they were able to imagine an alternative ending. As Janice Radway's research on romance reading reminds us, "people do not ingest mass culture whole but often remake it into something they can use" (26).

And what nineteenth-century women readers could use--in fact, what they wanted--were stories, factual and fictional, of heroic women. Women and young girls of the nineteenth century, for example, became keenly interested in biographies of and autobiographies by missionary women (Welter 91; Cott 140-1). Stories of such derring-do, moreover, as reader-response theorists have discovered, provided women with much more than a means of escape, more than a means of satisfying, even pacifying, desire. As Barbara Sicherman's analysis of the Hamilton family of Ft. Wayne, Indiana, reveals, reading

offered women "a world in which to formulate aspirations and try out different identities" (208). Reading "encouraged new self-definitions and, ultimately, the innovative behavior associated with the Progressive generation" (202). Indeed, the editors of Our Famous Women, a collection of biographical essays on famous American women published in 1886, claimed to be responding "to a perceived need on the part of many women for a sense of their peers' reactions to changes in their society" (Kelley 133). The collection was, they wrote in its preface, "'the simple story of what a few women have done,'" a story which could afford "'inspiration and incentive to the many women who long to do'" and thus "'kindle new hopes and ambitions in unknown hearts'" (qtd. in Kelley 133). In altering a woman's "horizon of expectations," therefore, reading might well bring about a "horizon change" (Jauss 18).

We read, some have said, to know we are not alone. So too do we write. By braving the opposition of all those male book concerns in order to present a unique woman's life, uniquely told, to the public, these autobiographers serve as models for change. As Frances Foster has written of the century's black women writers, these autobiographers "used the Word as both a tool and a weapon to correct, to create, and to confirm their visions of life as it was and as it could become" (Written 2). "When cultural definitions of the female life course are in dispute," as they were in nineteenth-century America,

activism is a critical mode women use to resolve felt dissonance between cultural codes and subjective experience. Narratives about individual transformations, cast as conversions in life stories, serve as models for envisioned change in the social and cultural order that accommodate female activists' self-understandings. (Ginsburg 60)

By focusing almost exclusively on their conversions to preaching, Nancy Towle and Jarena Lee and the rest begin the arduous process by which the "old plots" for women are delegitimized and new roles for women become attractive to female "converts," acceptable to their families and friends, and, ultimately, authorized in the culture at large.

Though they spent their days preaching the gospel, these autobiographers were ultimately more than mere passive vessels bearing God's Word. Though they inevitably borrowed a language and a genre that were, in Bakhtin's words, "half someone else's," these women insisted on writing their own stories--knowing well how their lives (as represented in their many letters and journals) could easily be misconstrued should God, in the words of Nancy Towle, "cut [them] off in the completion of it": "I had valuable writings by me, which I had believed, I should publish to the world....and none other,

than myself, was capable of doing this" (109). An independent itinerant, Towle found, moreover, that "[t]here was no publisher, to advocate the cause of one, not immediately with their pales,--and especially that travelled with the testimony of Jesus:--(unless it were the 'Christian Connexion;' and their work, was so circumscribed, that I preferred, rather, setting my letters on foot, in my own hand writing.)" (5). As Christine Krueger discovered when researching the lives of England's first generation of women preachers, the work of many publishers was "circumscribed" when it came to telling a woman's story: "Any manuscripts a woman preacher left behind were at the mercy of friends and relatives, of editors, biographers, and publishers. If any among this group were hostile to women's preaching, that aspect of her life simply disappeared" (75). And, indeed, in America one need only look to the "Life" of Methodist Hannah Reeves to grasp the literary and historical importance of a female evangelist's taking charge of her own story. The posthumous biography of Reeves, written by George Brown, is significantly titled The Lady Preacher: or, the Life and Labors of Mrs. Hannah Reeves, Late the Wife of the Rev. WM. Reeves, D.D. of the Methodist Church. She is, in this configuration, a mere appendage of her husband and the church. Once Brown begins reporting events that occurred after her marriage, he found it "impossible," he confesses, "to separate her life entirely from that of her husband" (100). Most of Brown's information, moreover, comes

from her husband's memories and journal, not her own. Thus, rather than present her opinions or feelings about a particular event or about her life in general, her biography gives us Mr. Reeves' conclusions. This is a book, in other words, about the subjectivity of Mr., not Mrs., Reeves.

None of the women in this study speak directly to this issue of control, or to their fears of losing it. We can speculate, however, that they were familiar with the problem, given the extent to which the "Lives" of pious women, written and published by her friends, relatives or editors, dominated the vast evangelical publishing industry. Their autobiographies bear witness, moreover, to their desire to emphasize their preaching career, even to write a "revenge on history," a history which until most recently had, in fact, denied them voice (Gusdorf, "Conditions" 36). They bear witness as well to a willingness to modify the form of the genre, to make room for new "forms" of womanhood, for the female reader seeking to explore such new forms of being, and, ultimately, for the creation of new opportunities for women. Though these women could not make sense of their own stories, they could summon a readership who would help create a world--help constitute an interpretive community, a community of believers (saints?)--in which their story would someday make sense. Just as they had appropriated the lives of eighteenth-century women preachers as models in their own quest for a new place in American culture, so too might their stories of

resistance to the dominant culture's gender norms strengthen other young women in their efforts to re-envision womanhood.' These are, then, stories with "moral consequences" (Jauss 38). Someday, these dialogic narratives dream, ours might be the exemplary--rather than anxiously experimental--"Life"; someday we might achieve a state of self-understanding and authority necessary to write the "complete" life; someday women autobiographers, like P. T. Barnum, might have too many stories to tell, rather than none at all; someday the wide world might regard us as friends, not "strangers"; perhaps someday "unorthodox" women readers and women writers might know they aren't alone. Someday, in other words, even exiled women might come home.

## Notes to the Introduction

1. The phrase is that of Patricia Meyer Spacks, who argues that the twentieth-century autobiographies of many accomplished, famous women reveal "selves in hiding": "Stories of unusual female achievement, these narratives convey singular absence of personal satisfaction in achievement" (132). "Selves in Hiding," Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism, ed. Estelle Jelinek (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1980) 12-132.

Throughout the dissertation the notes are meant to be suggestive; by no means are they exhaustive.

2. The appearance of women on the public stage of American evangelical religion was not wholly unprecedented. Quakers, of course, had long considered women important disciples and missionaries. And as Timothy Hall has recently argued, eighteenth-century itinerancy and revivalism persistently challenged not only spatial but also social boundaries, encouraging some women to step outside their "natural" station to lead praying societies and even in a few cases to exhort crowds. Sarah Townsend was a leader of the New Light meetings at Oyster Bay on Long Island in the 1770s; Martha Marshall accompanied her husband through Virginia in the 1760s and 1770s, where they exhorted crowds and established Separate Baptist congregations. The New Divinity minister Samuel Hopkins recognized the active role of Sarah Osborne in the Newport, Rhode Island revival of 1766-67. Women's public role in religion did, however, significantly increase in the Second Great Awakening.

3. According to historians of American religion, reform efforts began to ebb in the decades after the Civil War, when postmillennialism gave way to a more pessimistic premillennialism and many turned away from social issues to Fundamentalism and questions of theology. The Social Gospel movement was, of course, an important exception.

4. Nathan Hatch contends in The Democratization of American Christianity that indeed "the fundamental religious quarrel of the late eighteenth century was not between Calvinist and Arminian, orthodox and Unitarian, evangelical and freethinker but between radically different conceptions of the Christian ministry." Later in the century, however, even evangelical sects such as the Methodists and Christians would find themselves retreating from their radical support of a prophetic ministry in favor of the more respectable educated



ministry. This return to the status quo brought with it a reluctance to support women's petitions to preach. (New Haven: Yale UP, 1989) 44.

5. The phrase is that of Rebecca Cox Jackson, a Methodist turned Shaker Eldress, whose journal has recently been published for the first time under the title Gifts of Power: The Writings of Rebecca Jackson, Black Visionary, Shaker Eldress, ed. Jean McMahon Humez (n.p.: U of Massachusetts P, 1981).

6. Sanctification, alternately called holiness or perfection, is a second experience of grace in which the believer is empowered to meet the requirements of the new law. The belief in holiness stemmed from the teachings of Jesus as outlined in the Gospels, in which evidence can be found to prove that the early church believed an ideal life could be lived in this world (Matt. 5:48 and Luke 6:36). While the belief implied some moral cleansing, most advocates of holiness considered that perfection in this life was relative--it was a freedom from "intentional sin" only: final perfection came only after death. And just as the Gospels and Pauline letters differ in their depiction of the experience, it appears alternately an instantaneous emotional experience and a gradual process, so too have perfectionists differed in their description of how one obtains and maintains sanctification. The belief in sanctification gained prominence in the nineteenth century, particularly among the Methodists, who were anxious to revive Wesley's understanding of the experience he called "perfect love": according to Wesley, who seemed to believe both in an instantaneous experience of grace and in a growth toward holiness, the sanctified faces the same temptations as the rest of humankind, but their souls now turned toward God's will rather than away from it.

For our purposes, sanctification is important because it was the Holiness movement that maintained lay leadership by women once marginal sects such as the Methodists gained respectability and abandoned their more radical innovations. Given the degree to which "holiness" overcame "nature," many historians have found in the marginal movement a feminist impulse, and indeed the sanctified women in this study all believed that an experience of sanctification was a gift of inner peace as well as a gift of power that could lead to the dissolution of sex and race hierarchies. An experience of perfection was particularly important psychologically and socially for women who needed the self-confidence freedom from sin could bring and who could use the experience to justify an unorthodox life. As Jean Humez has pointed out in her study of black women's autobiographies, the Holiness movement "was from the outset a predominantly female affair, growing even more disproportionately attractive to women as the century

advanced," with a "particularly strong appeal for black women" like Amanda Smith who said, "I think some people would understand the quintessence of sanctifying grace if they could be black about twenty-four hours" (Humez 5; Smith 116-117). Indeed, all four black women in this study were promoters of holiness. As a member of the holiness Wesleyan Methodist Church, Laura Haviland was probably a believer in sanctification; her failure to emphasize the experience in her autobiography leads me to believe, however, that holiness had less to offer a white woman of her station.

Supporters of Holiness insisted that it could only be maintained by public professions; the literature is full of accounts of women who lost the experience by being too shy to speak publicly of it. To maintain the gift, women had to transcend their culture's proscriptions against women's public speaking. And as Timothy Smith has demonstrated, perfectionism, tied as it once was to the social action of postmillennialism, was not politically quiet.

Holiness or Higher Life movements continued throughout the century, reaching a peak from 1867 through the 1870s when the interdenominational National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness was founded in Vineland, New Jersey.

See Dorothy Bass, "In Christian Firmness and Christian Meekness": Feminism and Pacifism in Antebellum America," Immaculate and Powerful, eds. Clarissa Atkinson and Constance Buchanan and Margaret Mills (Boston: Beacon, 1985): 201-225; Melvin Dieter, The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow P, 1980); Charles Ferguson, Methodists and the Making of America (Austin: Eakin, 1983); R. Newton Flew, The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology (New York: Humanities P, 1968); Jean Humez, Introduction, Gifts of Power: The Writings of Rebecca Jackson, Black Visionary, Shaker Eldress (N.p: U of Massachusetts P, 1981); Charles Edwin Jones, A Guide to the Study of Holiness (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow P, 1974), and Perfectionist Persuasion: The Holiness Movement and American Methodism, 1867-1936 (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow P, 1974); John Leland Peters, Christian Perfection and American Methodism (New York: Abingdon P, 1956); Jean Miller Schmidt, "Reexamining the Public/Private Split: Reforming the Continent and Spreading Scriptural Holiness," Perspectives on American Methodism, ed. Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt (Nashville: Kingswood-Abingdon, 1993) 228-247; and Timothy Smith, Revivalism and Social Reform (1957; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins P, 1980).

7. Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee, Spiritual Narratives, ed. Susan Houchins (1849; New York: Oxford UP, 1988). All subsequent parenthetical references are to this edition unless otherwise noted.

8. In 1794 Richard Allen, then a licensed preacher of the Methodist Episcopal Church, organized an independent congregation in Philadelphia after being discriminated against at St. George's. In 1816, along with disgruntled blacks from Baltimore and other places, Allen formed the African Methodist Episcopal Church. At about the same time, in 1821, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was founded in New York City. See Richard Allen, The Life Experience and Gospel Labors of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen (Nashville: Abingdon P, 1960) and Daniel Payne, History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (Nashville: A.M.E. Sunday-School Union, 1891).

9. Memoirs of the Life, Religious Experience, and Ministerial Travels and Labours of Mrs. Zilpha Elaw, An American Female of Colour, Sisters of the Spirit, ed. William Andrews (1846; Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986) 51-160. All subsequent references are to this edition.

10. Sexton refers here to one of several sects called "Christians" that sprang up in the nineteenth century. Shortly after mentioning her attendance at this "New Light" meeting, Sexton writes that she traveled from Liberty, Ohio, to Dayton, from "the First Christian (New Light) Church, to attend the Second Christian (Campbellite) Church" (192). This second reference lets us assume that the "Christians" to whom she was first attracted were the "Stonites," or former New Light Presbyterians who, led by Barton Stone of Cane Ridge revival fame, spread throughout Kentucky and, according to Sydney Ahlstrom, "swept every Presbyterian church but two into their movement" in southeastern Ohio. They no doubt found their way to Liberty, Ohio, as well, a town in the southwestern portion of the state. Stone and other leaders of the Cane Ridge revival realized in 1803 that they no longer believed in the Reformed doctrine and Presbyterian polity. In June 1804, "they published the 'Last Will and Testament of the Presbytery of Springfield,' abandoned the 'traditions of men,' took the Bible as their only creed and law, and adopted for themselves the name 'Christians.'" A Religious History of the American People (New Haven: Yale UP, 1972) 446.

11. Autobiography of Lydia Sexton (1882; New York: Garland, 1987). All subsequent references are to this edition.

12. In 1843, the holiness-oriented Wesleyan Methodist Church became the first group to secede from the Methodist Episcopal Church when it became clear to Methodist abolitionists that the Church would not take a decisive stand against slavery.

13. According to Sydney Ahlstrom, a Holiness Revival swept through almost every denomination, including the Methodist Episcopal Church, during the Gilded Age. Though Charles Wesley himself had countenanced a belief in sanctification or holiness, Methodists in general were skeptical of the Pentecostal blessing, finding it "disruptive and unseemly." Not finding it so, the Wesleyan Methodist Church seceded from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1843; the Free Methodist Church would follow suit in 1859-60, after the great revival of 1858. A Religious History of the American People (New Haven: Yale UP, 1972) 817.

14. A Brand Plucked From the Fire: An Autobiographical Sketch by Mrs. Julia A. J. Foote, Sisters of the Spirit, ed. William Andrews (1846; Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986) 163-234. All subsequent references are to this edition.

15. An Autobiography: The Story of the Lord's Dealings with Mrs. Amanda Smith, the Colored Evangelist (1893; New York: Oxford UP, 1988). All subsequent references are to this edition.

16. Indeed, a recent article in The Chattanooga Times suggests that racism continues to be a prominent, if rarely discussed, feature of American Christianity. I quote the opening segment of an article by Michele Dula Baum entitled "The Saddest Division: Too Many Still See Segregated Heaven":

The Rev. Esther Graham, pastor of Grace Chapel Presbyterian Church, still winces when she remembers an elderly white employer from her days as a domestic on Lookout Mountain. "I had just fixed her breakfast, and I was humming a little hymn," said Ms. Graham. "And she said, 'Oh, Esther, I hope when we get to heaven, the Lord will let you sit on the lower deck to sing to me.'" (25 February 1995: A1)

17. As Donald Mathews argues, sanctification offered blacks a sense of self-worth: "The meaningful discipline was not white; the meaningful discipline was to answer to God for self, to act according to an inwardly developed sense of one's obligation and integrity." "Evangelical America--The Methodist Ideology," Perspectives on American Methodism, ed. Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt (Nashville: Kingswood-Abingdon, 1993) 30.

18.As Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham reminds us, "The [black] church, like the black community, cannot be viewed solely through the lens of race." Righteous Discontent: The Woman's Movement in the Black Baptist Church 1880-1920 (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993) 14.

19.The exception would be An Autobiography: The Story of the Lord's Dealings with Mrs. Amanda Smith the Colored Evangelist. Opening with an account of her birth in slavery, Smith's narrative invites her readers to consider race as a primary category of analysis. More than the other black spiritual autobiographers in this study, she frequently documents the social, economic, and psychological hardships of growing up black in nineteenth-century America. She calls attention to the hardships her family faced as free blacks, documents their participation in the underground railroad, records her life as a domestic servant for white families and her difficulty making ends meet as a single parent, defends herself against charges of being "a white folks' nigger," provides numerous examples of the racism she faced within evangelical circles, and draws on the language of slavery and race relations in her delineation of religious principles. Writing in 1892-3 Smith no doubt despaired over the state of race relations in America. Her evangelical efforts to convert and sanctify blacks and whites had not, as she hoped, led to a world in which there was neither black nor white. Neither had the Civil War and Reconstruction ushered in a millennial age of race relations: in 1883 the Supreme Court had upheld Jim Crow laws and effectively invalidated the Civil Rights Act of 1875. The year after her autobiography appeared, Congress made that decision official by repealing the Act altogether. The turn of the century was, as Raymond Logan argued in The Betrayal of the American Negro, "the nadir" of recent American history.

20.By this Cox means a "nonwriter," as opposed to Mark Twain and Henry James. See Recovering Literature's Lost Ground (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1989) 127.

21.For a discussion of reading "autographically," see Porter Abbott, "Autobiography, Autography, Fiction: Groundwork for a Taxonomy of Textual Categories," New Literary History 19.3 (1988): 597-615.

22.Indeed, St. Augustine long ago recognized that excessive travel is a metaphor for human ambition. As William Spengemann argues, in Books I through IV of the Confessions, travel and home stand for the opposites of secular ambition and "spiritual resignation to the eternal will of God." Interestingly, in these nineteenth-century women's spiritual autobiographies, travel stands for both secular ambitions and

resignation to the will of God; home, however, symbolizes resignation to the will of husbands, fathers, and clergymen, a sort of repose which these women thoroughly reject. The Forms of Autobiography: Episodes in the History of a Literary Genre (New Haven: Yale UP, 1980) 20.

23. Appropriating images of space to represent woman's powerlessness as well as her desires, these autobiographers anticipate the work of twentieth-century feminists whose theoretical explorations of the politics of gender and the politics of location involve the figurative use of space. Gillian Rose notes, for example, how often spatial images appear in the titles of critical and theoretical works by feminist scholars: Feminist Theory: from Margin to Center, by bell hooks; Charting the Journey, ed. by S. Grewal et al; In Other Worlds, by G. Spivak; Epistemology of the Closet, by E. Sedgwick; and, of course, A Room of One's Own, by V. Woolf. See Feminism and Geography (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993) 140. Indeed, as books about women and itinerancy, these autobiographies are particularly relevant for feminist theorists addressing women's issues at the turn of the twentieth century; for in their frequent peregrinations and preaching engagements, these women literalized the quest for a "place," for a "voice," for "change," with which feminists continue to be engaged.

For a discussion of the politics of location, see bell hooks, Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics (Boston: South End P, 1990); and Shirley Ardener, Introduction, Women and Space: Ground Rules and Social Maps (Oxford: Berg, 1993).

## Notes to Chapter 1

1. See also Julie Roy Jeffrey, "Ministry Through Marriage: Methodist Clergy Wives on the Trans-Mississippi Frontier," Women in New Worlds, ed. Hilah Thomas and Rosemary Skinner Keller (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981) 143-160; as well as Herrick Eaton's recently republished manual for wives of itinerants: The Itinerant's Wife: Her Qualifications, Duties, Trials, and Rewards, The Nineteenth-Century American Methodist Itinerant Preacher's Wife, ed. Carolyn De Swarte Gifford (1851; New York: Garland, 1987).

2. Focusing as they so often do on their difficult marriages, these spiritual autobiographies, particularly those by black women, are reminiscent of the "scandalous" sub-tradition of eighteenth-century women's autobiography which detail the bad marriages of women. See, for example, the works of Laetitia Pilkington, Teresia Constantia Phillips and Frances Vane. These evangelical autobiographies also, I would add, speak to the sub-tradition of American literature--of which Chopin's The Awakening is a seminal work--that critiques the constraints of marriage. See Estelle Jelinek, The Tradition of Women's Autobiography: From Antiquity to the Present (Boston: Twayne, 1986) 33-37.

3. This is an approximation based on the autobiography, which omits the exact date of her marriage.

4. Linda K. Kerber, Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America (1980; New York: Norton, 1986). This politicization of motherhood continued throughout most of the nineteenth century as republican motherhood gave way to an ideology of "true womanhood," in which, as Barbara Welter has argued, white women were not only the promoters of republican principles but also the source of moral virtue in the home. See also Sheila Rothman's study Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present (New York: Basic Books, 1978). Rothman argues that during the progressive era at the turn of the century an ideology of "educated motherhood" superseded notions of motherhood based on women's natural religiosity. For my purposes, however, it is important to recognize that regardless of the ideological base, the nation's reverence for motherhood and domesticity continued throughout the century.

5. For a complete analysis of this phenomenon, see Barbara Welter, Dimity Convictions (Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP, 1976); Ann Douglas, The Feminization of American Culture (New York: Knopf, 1977); and William McLoughlin, Introduction, The American Evangelicals, 1800-1900, An Anthology (1968;

Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1976). Both Welter and Douglas use the term "feminization" to refer to the growing female audience for religion and the softening of Calvinist theology. Douglas, however, severely critiques the phenomenon, which she regards (wrongly, I believe) as the spark which led to the flame of mass consumption in modern culture. For a look at the controversy surrounding Douglas's thesis, see David Schuyler, "Inventing a Feminine Past," New England Quarterly 51.3 (1978): 291-308; and David S. Reynolds, "The Feminization Controversy: Sexual Stereotypes and the Paradoxes of Piety in Nineteenth-Century America," New England Quarterly 53.1 (1980): 96-106.

6. It is important to remember as well its class dimension: this was an ideology for middle-class white women. But that is not to say that poor white women were unaware of the cult of domesticity and the ideology of True Womanhood. Poor white women, like black women, though excluded by economic circumstances from these gendered ideologies, nonetheless found them particularly attractive, something to which they might aspire in their efforts to elevate their status.

7. And as Jacqueline Jones has argued, after the Civil War "whites feared that black people's desire for family autonomy, as exemplified by the 'evil of female loaferism'--the preference among wives and mothers to eschew wage work in favor of attending to their own households--threatened to subvert the free labor experiment. Like the Irish and French-Canadian immigrant women who labored in New England textile mills to help support their families, freedwomen were considered exempt from the middle-class ideal of fulltime domesticity." Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow (New York: Basic Books, 1985) 45.

8. Julia Foote's situation with the Primes, though initially marked by "love," becomes physically and psychologically oppressive for Julia after she is falsely accused of stealing pound cakes from the family's cellar. Despite her vehement protestations of innocence, Mrs. Prime whips her "until she was tired, all the time insisting that [Julia] should confess that [she] took the cakes." Told she will be whipped again if she refuses to confess, Julia writes that "[she] carried the rawhide out to the wood pile, took the axe, and cut it up into small pieces, which [she] threw away, determined not to be whipped with that thing again" (175-6). Julia's strength and determination in this situation prepare the reader for her later power struggles with the men of her church. Compare Foote's account of indentured servitude to that of Frado, the young protagonist in Harriet Wilson's autobiographical novel Our Nig.



9. Dorothy Sterling's research on antebellum free blacks demonstrates that it was far from uncommon for black children to be placed in indentured service. See We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Norton, 1984).

10. Collins also argues that African Americans often considered "private" space to be that which was out of reach of whites; private space was not, therefore, necessarily domestic space, nor was it necessarily oppressive. These African-American women's spiritual autobiographies, however, do distinguish between a "private" domestic situation and the public world of preaching.

11. Deborah Gray White convincingly argues that these images, created in slavery, were essential to the justification of slavery and race relations: "The image of Jezebel excused miscegenation, the sexual exploitation of black women, and the mulatto population. It could not, however, calm Southern fears of moral slippage and 'mongrelization,' or man's fear of woman's emasculating sexual powers. But the Mammy image could. Mammy helped endorse the service of black women in Southern households, as well as the close contact between whites and blacks that such service demanded. Together Jezebel and Mammy did a lot of explaining and soothed many a troubled conscience." Black women were not, moreover, emancipated from these disabling myths after the Civil War. Throughout the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century, black women have been "perceived by white America as individuals who desired promiscuous relationships." Similarly, the image of Mammy, indeed the "mass packaging of Mammy"--on syrup bottles and pancake boxes--"as a national symbol of perfect domesticity" came about "at the very time that millions of black women were leaving the cotton fields of the South in search of employment in Northern urban areas." "Surely," White goes on to remark, "there is some connection between the idea of Mammy, the service and domestic jobs readily offered to black women, and their near-exclusion from other kinds of work." Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South (New York: Norton, 1985) 61, 164, 165.

12. For an informative discussion of the ways in which the political desires of nineteenth-century black women are encoded in works of fiction, see Claudia Tate, Domestic Allegories of Political Desire: The Black Heroine's Text at the Turn of the Century (New York: Oxford UP, 1992). Though she focuses primarily on the many sentimental novels published by black women at the end of the century, she situates these texts in the prominent domestic discourses of such antebellum protest fiction as Uncle Tom's Cabin, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, and Our Nig.

13. As historians have noted, another strategy employed by blacks in the war against racial injustice in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was to emphasize difference, to construct a "self-representation essentially antithetical to that of whites." See Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," Signs 17.2 (1992): 269.

14. This was true during the mid-nineteenth century and certainly in the 1890s when black women began to form national organizations, such as the National Federation of Afro-American Women, the National League of Colored Women, and the National Association of Colored Women.

15. Historians continue to debate the degree to which the households of slaves and free blacks in the nineteenth century were marked by a sexual equality not found in white households. Deborah Gray White, for example, has argued that slave women "learned that black women had to be the maidservants of whites, but not necessarily of men" (118). "The disenfranchisement and oppression of all blacks," in the words of Linda Perkins, "left little room for male chauvinism" (321). But as Susan A. Mann reminds us "the greater relative equality" experienced in the households of slaves and sharecroppers "should neither be exaggerated nor romanticized given the fact that it was premised on the poverty and deprivation of both sexes" (796). See Deborah Gray White, Ar'n't I a Woman? (New York: Oxford UP, 1985); Linda Perkins, "Black Women and Racial 'Uplift' Prior to Emancipation," The Black Woman Cross-Culturally, ed. Filomina Chioma Steady (Cambridge: Schenkman Books, 1981); and Susan A. Mann, "Slavery, Sharecropping, and Sexual Inequality," Signs 14.4 (1989): 774-798.

16. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg argues that "the revolutionary thrust of religion ebbed" at mid-century: "Deemphasizing the intense piety of revivalistic conversions, clergyman now argued that salvation blossomed within the Christian nursery as a result of loving, maternal discipline. Reinstating the time-honored boundaries encircling women's sphere, evangelical ministers shepherded their female adherents back towards the contained family and traditional femininity." While it is certainly true that theologians like Horace Bushnell had turned to what William McLoughlin calls "Romantic Evangelicalism," which emphasized the importance of Christian nurture in the home, the autobiographies in this study reveal a thriving remnant of evangelical women who continued to step outside the "contained family and traditional femininity" long after mid-century. "Women and Religious Revivals: Anti-Ritualism Liminality, and the Emergence of the American

Bourgeoisie," The Evangelical Tradition in America, ed. Leonard I. Sweet (Macon, GA: Mercer UP, 1984) 202-03.

17. Towle was clearly marginalized from her culture long before she left home to preach the gospel. As Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has argued, "To the new and universal female experience of economic and institutional marginality, certain bourgeois women added other forms of marginality. This was especially true of single women, who were institutionally marginal to the increasingly nuclear family of the bourgeoisie, and ideologically marginal to Victorian social beliefs, which stress the biologically determined female role of marriage and motherhood." Disorderly Conduct (New York: Knopf, 1985) 160.

18. This was, of course, particularly--though certainly not exclusively--true for Methodists. For more information on the history of Methodism in nineteenth-century America, see Sidney Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven: Yale UP, 1972); Emory Bucke, ed., The History of American Methodism 3 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1964); Charles Ferguson, Methodists and the Making of America (Austin: Eakin, 1983); Nancy Hardesty, Women Called to Witness: Evangelical Feminism in the 19th Century (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984); Donald Mathews, Religion in the Old South (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1977); Albert Raboteau, Slave Religion (New York: Oxford UP, 1978) and "The Black Experience in American Evangelicalism," The Evangelical Tradition in America, ed. Leonard I. Sweet (Macon, GA: Mercer UP, 1984) 181-198; Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt, eds., Perspectives on American Methodism (Nashville: Kingswood-Abingdon, 1993); Rosemary Ruether and Rosemary Skinner Keller, eds., Woman and Religion in America, vol. I (San Francisco: Harper, 1981); Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin, eds., Women of Spirit: Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979); William Warren Sweet, Methodism in American History (Nashville: Abingdon, 1961); and Hilah E. Thomas and Rosemary Skinner Keller, eds., Women in New Worlds: Historical Perspectives on the Wesleyan Tradition (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981).

19. These issues had, of course, been raised in the seventeenth century among Quakers, and again in the eighteenth century during and after the Great Awakening. As Timothy Hall and others have argued, the appearance of itinerant preachers, George Whitefield being the most famous, on the religious landscape of eighteenth-century America, was the cause of great debate and great despair among the established clergy, who feared that an emphasis on a prophetic, rather than

educated, ministry disrupted spatial and social boundaries, as lay preachers challenged parish boundaries and encouraged blacks, women, Indians and children to exhort their "betters." See Timothy Hall, Contested Boundaries: Itinerancy and the Reshaping of the Colonial Religious World (Durham: Duke UP, 1994).

20. "But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (Jeremiah 20: 9).

21. In this respect, Towle differs from the "literary domestics" who dominated the literary marketplace in the nineteenth-century and who assured their readers that were it not for extreme financial hardship--the need to be "useful" to their families--they would never have taken up the pen.

22. It might be tempting to explain away her lifelong acceptance of women's subordination, to argue, for example, that her stance ironically stems from her own unhappy marriage, which she blamed on the absence of a father figure to guide her choice of a mate: in a weak moment, lacking paternal supervision, she yoked herself to an unbeliever and consequently suffered tremendously in her marriage. The text would clearly support such speculation, but that would take us beyond the scope of the autobiography itself into the realm of psychoanalysis.

23. In the last decade feminist literary historians have begun the task of recuperating and reinterpreting the lost voices of nineteenth-century women writers who both borrowed and revised the dominant culture's admonitions that women remain on their pedestals in the home. It is now a critical commonplace to acknowledge the ways in which "women's fiction" (Nina Baym's term) or "exploratory fiction" (Susan Harris's term) pays homage to and subverts the tenets of domesticity. Gillian Brown and others have urged contemporary readers to consider the "politicization of domesticity" in such sentimental novels as Uncle Tom's Cabin, where the reader is forced to reckon with the power of women and their orderly households to reform a disorderly nation. For detailed readings of the fiction of nineteenth-century women writers, see Elizabeth Ammons, "Stowe's Dream of the Mother Savior: Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Women Writers Before the 1920s," New Essays on Uncle Tom's Cabin, ed. Eric Sundquist (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986); Nina Baym, Women's Fiction (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1978); Gillian Brown, Domestic Individualism: Imagining the Self in Nineteenth-Century America (Berkeley: U of California P, 1990); Susan K. Harris, 19th-Century American Women's Novels: Interpretive Strategies (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990); Mary

Kelley, Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Oxford UP, 1984); Claudia Tate, Domestic Allegories of Political Desire: The Black Heroine's Text at the Turn of the Century (New York: Oxford UP, 1992); and Jane Tompkins, Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860 (New York: Oxford UP, 1985).

24. In his study of Southern Evangelicalism, Donald Mathews argues, "the revolutionary quality of the early Evangelical movement was not its assault upon power, for it made none, but its weakening of the cultural, religious, and psychological constraints upon people of relatively low estate by elevating them in their own esteem and giving them the personal discipline to use their lives as best they could in Christian service." Religion in the Old South (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1977) 78-9. Zilpha Elaw's experience of religion, while it did not live up to its revolutionary potential to challenge the dominant culture from a position of choseness, did elevate her spirit to such a degree that she herself left the domestic sphere and found liberation in such Christian service.

25. Patricia Hill argues that women in the nineteenth century were assured that joining the foreign missions movement did not make them participants in the women's rights movement, the former being the duty of a mother and a Christian. Missionary work, they were told, would in fact make them better mothers.

The spiritual autobiographies of these evangelical women--who worked in both home and foreign "missions"--reveal quite the opposite. Their unwillingness to discuss their roles as mothers points to their recognition--and perhaps their fear--that motherhood and missionary work did not walk comfortably hand in hand. The World Their Household (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1985) 52. For more information on women and missionary work, see R. Pierce Beaver, American Protestant Women in World Mission: History of the First Feminist Movement in North America (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1980).

26. Recently feminist theorists have begun to examine the potential of the margin as a space from which women can better examine the "center" of the dominant culture, resist domination and remain open to radical possibilities of change. These critics also, in the words of bell hooks, make a "definite distinction between that marginality which is imposed by oppressive structures and that marginality one chooses as site of resistance--as location of radical openness and possibility." The nineteenth-century evangelical women in this study discovered the usefulness of the margin as a textual space which enabled them simultaneously to explain themselves and to critique the culture which excluded them from its center. See bell hooks, Yearning: Race, Gender and

Cultural Politics (Boston: South End P, 1990) 153.

27. This stance is of course nothing new. Women in the nineteenth century have much in common with their medieval sister Margery Kempe whose "silence about physical motherhood prepares the way for her story of spiritual motherhood," argues Sidonie Smith. "Imitating Christ and His symbolic motherhood, she presents herself loving, nurturing, chastising, caring for humanity itself as well as bearing, like the Virgin Mary did, the word of God." Kempe's nineteenth-century sisters of the spirit, however, while claiming the title "mother in Israel" place little or no emphasis on Christian nurturing; they are prophets, bearing God's word, not shepherds, watching their flocks. A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987) 74.

28. For a discussion of the significance of Methodist classes and societies in the lives of African Americans, see Donald Mathews, "Evangelical America--The Methodist Ideology," Perspectives on American Methodism, ed. Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt (Nashville: Kingswood-Abingdon, 1993) 17-30. Mathews contends that the Methodist society was a private space, a liminal place where blacks were encouraged to define themselves according to the divine rather than to the dictates of white America.

29. For a good summary of the relationship between the individual and the community in nineteenth-century evangelical religion, see Leonard I. Sweet, "Nineteenth-Century Evangelicalism," Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience, ed. Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams, 3 vols. (New York: Scribner's, 1988) 2: 875-899. According to Sweet, "Revivalism was a primary agent for creating a new sense of community based more on shared faith and feeling than on inherited social status. One of the most appealing features of evangelicalism was its offer of community, especially to persons who lived on the ground floor of a multistoried, hierarchical society" (887). Donald Mathews makes a similar argument in the first chapter of Religion of the Old South (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1977) 13-20.

30. Redefining "home," these preachers anticipate the work of contemporary feminist theorists, who have begun to interrogate popular definitions of home as well as to re-envision home and family from a feminist perspective. See, for example, bell hooks, Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics (Boston: South End P, 1990); Nelle Morton, The Journey is Home (Boston: Beacon, 1985); Gillian Rose, Feminism and Geography (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993); and Letty Russell, Household of Freedom: Authority in Feminist Theology

(Philadelphia: Westminster P, 1987).

31. Nancy Hewitt, who concurs with Smith-Rosenberg's thesis that women retreated at mid-century from more radical positions to "bourgeois womanhood," concludes the following: "The experience of humiliation before God, which conformed to women's earlier socialization into subordinate and privatized roles, eased women's retreat into new forms of submission. It was apparently essential, however, that this ritual humiliation be complemented by economic security, since the few women who refused submission and instead pursued increasingly radical social critiques and wider roles for women are distinctive in their failure to achieve such security." Barring the disturbingly circular reasoning here, it is interesting to note that these evangelical preachers embraced what we would call economic insecurity, confident in their Lord's ability to provide the minimal security they needed. Their humiliation before God gave them both a wider social role and financial means. "The Perimeters of Women's Power in American Religion," The Evangelical Tradition in America, ed. Leonard I. Sweet (Macon, GA: Mercer UP, 1984) 248.

32. Cartwright, for example, describes in lurid detail his dispersal of a crowd of "rabble and rowdies" at a camp-meeting: "About the time I was half through my discourse, two very fine-dressed young men marched into the congregation with loaded whips, and hats on, and rose up and stood in the midst of the ladies, and began to laugh and talk.... I requested them to desist and get off the seats; but they cursed me.... I stopped trying to preach, and called for a magistrate. There were two at hand, but I saw they were both afraid.... They ordered me to stand off, but I advanced. One of them made a pass at my head with his whip, but I closed in with him, and jerked him off the seat. A regular scuffle ensued.... In the scuffle I threw my prisoner down, and held him fast; he tried his best to get loose; I told him to be quiet, or I would pound his chest well.... An old and drunken magistrate came up to me, and ordered me to let my prisoner go. I told him I should not.... Then one of my friends, at my request, took hold of my prisoner, and the drunken justice made a pass at me; but I parried the stroke, and seized him by the collar and the hair of the head, and fetching him a sudden jerk forward, brought him to the ground, and jumped on him.... Just at this moment the ringleader of the mob and I met.... It seemed at that moment I had not power to resist temptation, and I struck a sudden blow in the burr of the ear and dropped him to the earth.... Seeing we had fallen on evil times, my spirit was stirred within me. I said to the elder, 'I feel a clear conscience, for under the necessity of the circumstances we have done right, and now I ask to let me preach.'" Peter

Cartwright, Autobiography of Peter Cartwright (1856; New York: Abingdon, 1956) 71.

33. See, for example, Elaine Pagels, The Gnostic Gospels and Adam, Eve, and the Serpent; Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her; Phyllis Trible, Texts of Terror: Literary Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives; and Carol Meyers, Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context.

34. Nancy Towle makes a similar argument in defense of women's preaching. Angered by those who would have it that women in the Bible prayed and prophesied but never preached, Towle quotes a Dr. Clark's 'Commentary on Holy Scriptures': "'That no preacher can do more, every person must acknowledge; because to edify, exhort, and comfort, are the prime ends of the Gospel ministry, If women, thus prophesied; then women preached'" (Preface 9).

35. As Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin have long argued in their efforts to renew interest in religious women within orthodox traditions: "It is difficult in any period, but especially in an authoritarian culture, to remain sane and mature from a stance of radical rejection of and by the normative culture. Important women do appear as leaders of marginal movements, but they are not more important than women leaders who arise at the center. Orthodox theology is appropriated by such women with a radicality and depth of insight that transforms it into an expression of the full personhood of women." Introduction, Women of Spirit: Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979) 19.

36. The phrase is that of Patricia Hill. See The World Their Household: The American Women's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation 1879-1920 (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1985). Feminists critics have often noted how, in the words of Barbara Epstein, "domesticity promised women seclusion from the harsh and uncertain economic world and relative comfort. But it also involved exclusion from the exploration and adventures that were open to at least some men...." These autobiographies are important in part because they remind us that opportunity for adventure was open to some women in the nineteenth century, and indeed, for many of them, this adventure led to fame throughout America, Canada and England. The Politics of Domesticity (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan UP, 1981) 75.



## Notes to Chapter 2

1. "Revived" among evangelical Protestants, it was, of course, an article of Protestant faith in general. See Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Scribner's, 1930).

2. Historians of American religion have well documented these evangelical impulses toward voluntarism and reform in the first half of the century. See, for example, Timothy Smith, Revivalism and Social Reform (1957; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1980); Ernest Lee Tuveson, Redeemer Nation (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1968); William McLoughlin, Introduction, The American Evangelicals 1800-1900 (1968; Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1976); Nancy Hardesty, Women Called to Witness (Nashville: Abingdon P, 1984); Patricia Hill, The World Their Household (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1985).

3. For a discussion of the rise and popularity of the notion of "no creed but the Bible," see Nathan Hatch, "Sola Scriptura and Novus Ordo Seclorum," The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History, ed. Nathan Hatch and Mark A. Noll (New York: Oxford UP, 1982) 59-78.

4. I will take up this idea further in a Chapter 4.

5. For a discussion of the Puritan valorization of unceasing labor as the highest form of asceticism and as evidence of one's salvation, see Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Scribner's, 1930). Indeed, these nineteenth-century evangelical women, heirs to the Protestant renewal movements of the eighteenth century, would have agreed with Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), reorganizer of the Bohemian Brethren or Moravian Brethren, who wrote, "One does not work only that one may live, but one lives in order to work, and if one has no more work to do, then one either suffers or dies."

6. Virginia Lieson Brereton, in her study of women's conversion narratives, argues that "most nineteenth-century women writers expended fewer words and images in describing their actual conversions than upon the experience of conviction." She speculates that conversion received little emphasis because as "good Victorians" women could not make use of sexual metaphors and sensuous imagery that writers traditionally employed in describing the conversion experience. Although the women preachers I have studied may well have written under similar Victorian restraints, I would posit that their ambitious obsession with their work, rather than lack of metaphors,

influenced their decision to devote little space to either conviction or conversion. From Sin to Salvation: Stories of Women's Conversion, 1800 to the Present (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991) 21.

7. For more information on the "morphology of conversion" and preparationist theology, see Edmund S. Morgan, Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea (1963; Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1965). Revisionist historians are beginning now to deconstruct this monolithic model of Puritan preaching and conversions. See, for example, Janice Knight, Orthodoxies in Massachusetts (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1994).

8. For Finney's account of the controversy surrounding his use of "new measures" in the promotion of religious revivals, see Garth M. Rosell and Richard A. G. Dupuis, eds., The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Academie Books, 1989). For Lyman Beecher's and Asahel Nettleton's accounts, see Letters of the Rev. Dr. Beecher and Rev. Mr. Nettleton on the 'New Measures' In Conducting Revivals of Religion (New York, 1828).

9. See Christian Nature (1847). Here Bushnell proposes that conversion was a gradual process to be effected over the course of one's life by means of Christian education and growing awareness.

10. "It can be stated almost as a law of spiritual autobiographies," G. A. Starr points out, "that the greater the attention paid to events before conversion, the less emphasis given to what happens afterwards, and vice versa." Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography (New York: Gordian, 1971) 46. Evangelical Christians, focusing on the propagation of the gospel, tend to be among those who concentrate on "what happens afterwards." See, for example, the spiritual autobiographies of the eighteenth-century Quakers John Woolman and Elizabeth Ashbridge as well as those of nineteenth-century revivalists Charles Finney and Peter Cartwright.

11. The Methodist weekly Zion's Herald once lauded Phoebe Palmer's theology. "Her books," it was said, "make working Christians." See Leonard I. Sweet, "Nineteenth-Century Evangelicalism," Encyclopedia of American Religious Experience, ed. Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams (New York: Scribner's, 1988) 2: 877.

12. See Smith's autobiography, pp. 158-160, for another telling example of her revivalistic fervor.

13. Compare the Quaker John Woolman's endlessly questioning spiritual Journal, in which he details a seemingly endless search for the approved moral course. The Journal of John Woolman (1774; New York: Carol Publishing Group--Citadel Press Book, 1961).

14. Stephen Railton notes that a similar emphasis on volume can be found in the literary marketplace of nineteenth-century America, where it was believed that "the people could be counted on to determine literary achievement. Literally counted on, as numbers came to play an increasing role in assigning status and rank in the republic of letters." Authorship and Audience: Literary Performance in the American Renaissance (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991) 17.

15. Conversely, continues Finney, "Want of success in a minister (other things being equal) proves, (1.) either that he was never called to preach, and has taken it up out of his own head; or (2.) that he was badly educated, and was never taught the very things he wants most to know; or (3.) if he was called to preach, and knows how to do his duty, he is too indolent and too wicked to do it." Lectures on Revivals of Religion, ed. William G. McLoughlin (Cambridge: Belknap-Harvard, 1960) 186. Authority, Donald Mathews reminds us, "was not resident in the office of itinerant but in the action that he made possible. If the words he spoke or chanted did not elicit communal response and regeneration, his authority was diminished for the moment...." See "Evangelical America--The Methodist Ideology," Perspectives on American Methodism, ed. Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt (Nashville: Kingswood-Abingdon, 1993) 20.

16. Collins argues that black women who serve as domestic workers often occupy this paradoxical territory. On intimate terms with some members of the family, particularly the children, black women domestics also know that they aren't part of that family. For Collins, the "outsider-within stance" can be a useful tool in undermining the credibility of ideologies of race, class, and gender. Indeed, as I will argue in Chapter 3, though their paradoxical position both within and without evangelical religion caused them much pain and anxiety, these preachers used their position to critique their male colleagues and to claim the honors they had been denied. See Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990).

17. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg agrees, noting that though Charles Finney openly opposed "the unrestrained drive for material advancement...the two pillars of his revivalistic message would become the pillars of a new commercial order: optimism and self-help." Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in

Victorian America (New York: Oxford UP, 1985) 153.

18. Amanda Berry Smith is the exception. Born and reared in antebellum America--in an industrial age devoted to entrepreneurship, individualism, and competition--her career as a preacher is situated completely in the post-bellum period Mumford calls the "Age of Energy." Along with Foote, Sexton, and Haviland, Smith published her autobiography long after mid-century.

19. For a discussion of how new Darwinian rhetoric drew upon old village values, see Robert Wiebe, The Search for Order 1877-1920 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967) 136.

20. The Corliss Engine display was impressive in size and power. In the words of Howard Mumford Jones, "The monster was a double-acting, duplex vertical engine installed on a platform fifty-six feet in diameter, three and one-half feet above the floor of the hall. The cylinders were forty-four inches in diameter with a ten-foot stroke, and between the two engines revolved a flywheel weighing fifty-six tons, thirty feet in diameter, with a twenty-four-inch face. This made thirty-six stately revolutions every minute to govern 1400 horsepower of energy furnished from twenty tubular boilers outside the building." The Age of Energy (New York: Viking, 1971) 142.

21. Their use of such modern techniques in the context of religion was not without precedent. Charles Finney made much use of marketing and persuasion in his Lectures on Revivals of Religion (1835), which provides its readers with a detailed plan for mass-producing religious conversions. According to Tyler Owen Hendricks, "religious experience became one of the first products of American technology" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1993; qtd. in Leonard I. Sweet, "Nineteenth-Century Evangelicalism," Encyclopedia of American Religious Experience, ed. Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams (New York: Scribner's, 1988) 2: 876.

22. One is reminded here of advertising executive Bruce Barton's 1925 bestseller The Man Nobody Knows, which depicts Jesus Christ as one of the world's most remarkable businessmen.

23. As Ursula King and other sociologists of religion have noted, "The more institutionalised a religion becomes, the more it generally excludes women from positions of authority and power. Thus it is true on the whole that women hold higher positions in archaic, ancient, tribal and relatively non-institutionalised forms of religion (such as shamanism, possession rites, spiritualism or in non-hierarchical groups

such as the Society of Friends) than in the highly differentiated religious traditions with their complex structures." Women and Spirituality (New York: MacMillan Education, 1989) 38.

24. Autobiography is of course what Georges Gusdorf calls "a second reading of experience": "Autobiography appeases the more or less anguished uneasiness of an aging man who wonders if his life has not been lived in vain, frittered away haphazardly, ending now in simple failure." For these female evangelists, however, merely reading the life retrospectively through autobiography was not an adequate counter to "anguished uneasiness" about the value of their unorthodox lives. "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," trans. James Olney, Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical, ed. James Olney (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980) 38-9.

25. Linda Peterson distinguishes between these two sub-traditions of the genre in Victorian autobiography, which, she concludes, ultimately draws upon the mode of Bunyan rather than that of Rousseau. Victorian Autobiography: The Tradition of Self-Interpretation (New Haven: Yale UP, 1986).

26. See David Levin, "In the Court of Historical Criticism: Alger Hiss's Narrative," Virginia Quarterly Review 52 (1976): 41-78; rpt. in Forms of Uncertainty (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1992) 110-153.

27. See Elizabeth Bruss, Autobiographical Acts: The Changing Situation of a Literary Genre (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976); and H. Porter Abbott, "Autobiography, Autography, Fiction: Groundwork for a Taxonomy of Textual Categories," New Literary History 19.3 (1988): 597-615. Looking for a theory of autobiography that does not limit the nature of the genre with prescriptive definitions, Bruss contends that autobiography is an act, not a form, an act, moreover, which involves both author and reader in a shared understanding of the meaning of the genre. Abbott, drawing on the work of Bruss, argues for an understanding of autobiography as personal action. He reminds us that many readers of autobiography have always thought of it in this way: "The student who cannot STAND Benjamin Franklin or Carobeth Laird or Jean-Jacques Rousseau is usually reading their autobiographies as acts--acts of self-aggrandisement, acts of vindictiveness, acts of self-protection--carried out by the authorial subject. They are aware, in other words, of the author present in the text, pushing and shoving, in short, doing something for himself." Abbott calls for a theory of autobiographical reading--an appropriate "autobiographical response"--which is based on an "analytic awareness of the author in action" (601).

28. Sidonie Smith's reading of the Book of Margery Kempe reminds us that these female evangelists were not the first women to enter the public sphere with a handicap, nor were they the first to suffer the task of having to justify that entrance. "The Book," Smith argues, "simultaneously reveals the fragility and the marginality of her public position as it chronicles the increasing vulnerability of her apparently ubiquitous voice: The more she emerges as a public figure, the more she invites censure, even charges of heresy: and the more she invites censure, the more she must justify her words and her behavior.... In fact, the rather stable story of spiritual conversion is syncopated by the constant mobility, the unending quest to gain exoneration, blessing, and support and to avert condemnation and burning." A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987) 76-79.

29. An analogous situation might be that of African-American artists in the 1920s. In the words of Nathan Huggins, "Self-consciously on view, the Negro's sense of achievement--his manhood--depended ultimately on the white man's view of him....[Harlem] was a stage; the performers played for all they were worth to a white world. Dance as no one can; sing with the humor or pathos no one else has; make jokes about oneself...anything, everything but with style; turn to the audience and bow deeply and smile broadly and live in that rare luxury of applause, approval, love." Harlem Renaissance (New York: Oxford UP, 1971) 245. For a poignant discussion of the effects of colonization on the black psyche, see Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (1952; New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1967).

30. According to Strong "three great forces of civilization"--Christianity, the press and telegraph, and steam--all "co-operate in stimulating the nations to an activity ever more intense and exciting; so that the progress of civilization seems to involve an increasing strain on the nervous system....Such excitements, such restless energy, such continued stress of the nerves, must, in the course of a few generations, decidedly change the nervous organization of men....The American people are rapidly becoming the most nervous, the most highly organized, in the world, if, indeed, they are not already such." For Strong, American nervousness led directly to American intemperance. Our Country, ed. Jurgen Herbst (Cambridge: Belknap-Harvard, 1963) 118-121.

31. Insecurity could, of course, also affect men in America; it was, David Potter argues, characteristic of the American principle of mobility (rather than the European principle of status). "The myth of equality held that equality exists not merely as a potentiality in the nature of man but as a working

actuality in the operation of American society--that advantages or handicaps are not really decisive and that everyman is the architect of his own destiny." "Whereas the principle of status affirms that a minor position may be worthy," continues Potter, "the principle of mobility, as Americans have construed it, regards such a station both as the penalty for and the proof of personal failure....The individual, driven by the belief that he should never rest content in his existing station and knowing that society demands advancement by him as proof of his merit, often feels stress and insecurity and is left with no sense of belonging either in the station to which he advances or in the one from which he set out." People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1945) 97, 105.

## Notes to Chapter 3

1. Another exception would be Jarena Lee who mentions in passing her "feelings of loneliness in the world," no doubt occasioned by the death her husband and four children in the six-year period from 1811-1817 (33).

2. Julia Foote tells us that she "belonged to a band of sisters whom [she] loved dearly" (200); Jarena Lee, Zilpha Elaw and Amanda Smith, similarly report how praying bands and other spiritual groups afforded them much pleasure and support. Donald Mathews would attribute this devotion to Methodist classes to the fact that the black Methodist class or society was the "concrete place in which *communitas* was acknowledged," the liminal place "in which the ordinary rules of the world did not apply" ("Evangelical America" 30). Itinerancy, however, necessarily made their continued participation in such women's groups impossible. For more information on the ways in which Evangelical Christianity provided a framework for female homosocial bonding, see the following: Nancy Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood (New Haven: Yale UP, 1977); Nancy Hardesty, Women Called to Witness: Evangelical Feminism in the 19th Century (Nashville: Abingdon P, 1984); Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920 (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993); Patricia Hill, The World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan P, 1985); Donald Mathews, Religion in the Old South (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1977); Anne Firor Scott, The Southern Lady: from Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930 (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1970); Timothy Smith, Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War (1957; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980); and Hilah Thomas and Rosemary Skinner Keller, eds., Women in New Worlds (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981).

3. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," Signs 1.1-2 (1975): 1-29; rpt. in Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America (New York: Knopf, 1985) 53-76.

4. For more information on the phenomenal success of these sects, see John B. Boles, The Great Revival 1787-1805 (Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 1972); Nathan Hatch, The Democratization of American Christianity (New Haven: Yale UP, 1989); Martin Marty, Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America (New York: Dial, 1970); Donald G. Mathews, Religion in the Old South (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1977) and "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing



Process, 1780-1830: An Hypothesis," American Quarterly 21 (1969): 23-43.

5. As Edmund Morgan argues in Puritan Political Ideas, "Change in Christian thought, even so radical a change as the Reformation, has usually been a matter of emphasis, of giving certain ideas a greater weight than was previously accorded them or of carrying one idea to its logical conclusion at the expense of another. In this way one age slides into the next, and an intellectual revolution may be achieved by the expression of ideas that everyone had always professed to accept." (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965) xiii.

6. The dilemma these women faced can in some ways be seen as analogous to the one faced by capitalists such as Andrew Carnegie. Capitalistic success--which, in the age of mass production, could only be mass success--tended to undermine the individualism which industrialists claimed as their cardinal virtue. Andrew Carnegie, who rose from bobbin boy to telegraph operator to steel magnate by ceaselessly distinguishing himself from his colleagues, ended up ushering in an age of mass consumption (the necessary twin of mass production) in which each widget running off the assembly line was like every other widget and each customer was seemingly indistinguishable from his or her fellows. So too these evangelists, whose customers are a faceless mass, strive mightily to present themselves as individuals, speckled birds and gazing stocks, set apart by God's favor and their own remarkable energy.

7. To a certain degree, of course, all autobiography, even spiritual autobiography, insists on the uniqueness of the autobiographer. The dilemma faced by these women was only an extreme version of the problem faced by any spiritual autobiographer (or biographer), particularly of the Reformed variety: how to make a life story both singular (an accurate portrayal of individual experience) and representative of universal experience. In his Confessions, for example, St. Augustine clearly believes that his story is the "typical story of all Christians," and yet in its exclusive focus on the self, the Confessions necessarily stresses his uniqueness. Margery Kempe negotiates her singularity and representativeness by conveying her unique experience in conventional language, "so as to express a unique personality in the formulas of typical experience" (Fleishman 71). For more detailed accounts of this spiritual and autobiographical dilemma, see G. A. Starr, Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography (New York: Gordian P, 1971); David Levin, Cotton Mather: The Young Life of the Lord's Remembrancer, 1663-1703 (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1978); Sacvan Bercovitch, The Puritan Origins of

the American Self (New Haven: Yale UP, 1975); and Avrom Fleishman, Figures of Autobiography (Berkeley: U of California P, 1983).

8. Constance Rourke, American Humor: A Study of the National Character (New York: Harcourt, 1931).

9. There are, of course, important exceptions to this generalization. Consider, for example, the eighteenth-century spiritual autobiography of the Quaker Elizabeth Ashbridge, which is currently receiving long-overdue recognition in the canon of American literature. As the story of a reluctant itinerant--from England to Ireland to America--who eventually finds the Inner Light, accepts the Quaker faith, endures much opposition from her husband, and eventually becomes a "she preacher," Some Account of the Fore Part of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge serves to remind us that the individualistic, oppositional quests of nineteenth-century evangelical women preachers were not unprecedented.

10. Though, as Baym points out, late in the century Edith Wharton, Ellen Glasgow, and Willa Cather did participate in the myth but recast the central role of "individualist"; in their stories it is the woman who battles the domesticating and socializing influences of a man.

11. Again, it must be noted that all autobiography is to a certain extent an accounting of individuality, and, more important, as Sidonie Smith has argued, women writing the genre necessarily embark on a journey into masculine territory: "An androcentric genre, autobiography demands the public story of the public life.... Responding to the generic expectations of significance in life stories, [the female autobiographer] looks toward a narrative that will resonate with privileged cultural fictions of male selfhood.... She embraces, that is, the ideology of individualism...." A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987) 52.

Smith's understanding of the poetics of women's autobiographies could be applied as well to much ante- and post-bellum African-American autobiography. Frederick Douglass, for example, though denied participation in the drama of American individualism in his life, necessarily situates himself in that drama when he pens his 1845 Narrative, seeking the approval of his white audience and the recognition that might accrue to a black male so obviously "American." Indeed, African Americans often appropriated the values of the dominant culture--particularly bourgeois conventions of individualism (gendered male) and domesticity (gendered female)--as part of their emancipatory discourse.

And though I would agree with Patricia Hill Collins's

assertion in Black Feminist Thought that black women writers often focus on the "connectedness among individuals," the story these particular African-American spiritual autobiographies tell is a story in which self is defined "as the increased autonomy gained by separating oneself from others" (105). While my literary research has not uncovered the extent to which defining the "self in opposition to others" is a literary posture rather than a lived reality, it is important to recognize the ways in which these autobiographies differ from contemporary efforts by black women to conceptualize black womanhood. See Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990).

12. William Spengemann, The Adventurous Muse: The Poetics of American Fiction, 1789-1900 (New Haven: Yale UP, 1977).

13. Sexton's allusion to Medusa, a mythological figure often associated in literature with images of sexuality, reminds us once again of the ways in which preaching involved these women in a crisis of gender. In Sexton's interpretation of the dream, the snakes are associated with the enemies who no doubt find her public (masculine) performances threatening (castrating?); we might also speculate that the Medusa is a projection of Sexton herself, for as I noted in Chapter 1, she was often troubled by the the question of sexual definition once she began to think about "breaking up housekeeping." Note too how Sexton describes her conquest of the snakes in both active and passive terms: "I picked up a ponderous rock; and letting it fall on them, it crushed them all." See Freud's "Medusa's Head" for a brief discussion of the mythological figure and the castration complex. Freud on Women, ed. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl (New York: Norton, 1990) 272-73.

14. Sexton details many such conflicts in her autobiography. See, for example, pages 387-8, 392, 299, 419, 424, 540.

15. Lydia Sexton, having preached for seven years with a quarterly-conference license from the United Brethren, sought a permanent license in 1852; the quarterly license, having to be renewed on an annual basis, was "very inconvenient" for at times she "had to travel a hundred miles or more for that purpose" (400). "I felt," remembers Sexton, "that I would be glad to get a permit from the annual conference to travel at large and preach where I could seemingly do the most good, as it would save me the trouble of traveling to quarterly conference every year" (400). It would also save her the obeisance and forced humility necessarily involved in having to "request" a license year after year despite her obvious

qualification. Sexton's requests were, however, rebuffed by Bishop David Edwards, who, though he didn't object to women preaching, did oppose "licensing them" (401). He preferred, it would seem, to control her by forcing her appearance at each conference. She would have to wait another seven years before being granted a permanent license from the annual conference of the United Brethren.

16. I am indebted here and throughout this chapter to the work of James C. Scott on the politics of resistance among the weak. See Domination and the Arts of Resistance (New Haven: Yale UP, 1990) and Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance (New Haven: Yale UP, 1985).

17. Emerson of course oft-remarked that "Self-trust is the first secret of success."

18. The figurative use of warfare is a common feature of spiritual autobiographies. For the evangelical women in this study, however, the language of war refers to their literal experience as pioneering women challenging the dominance of men in religious structures. As a figure of speech, then, warfare refers to their battles against the dominant culture's restrictive definitions of womanhood. As Nancy Towle put it in her autobiography, "May the Lord raise up a host of female warriors,--that shall provoke the opposite party, from their indolence;--and in too many instances, far--unlawful traffick, of the Word of God! Amen" (Preface 9, Towle's emphasis).

19. See Sharon S. Brehm and Jack W. Brehm, Psychological Reactance: A Theory of Freedom and Control (New York: Academic P, 1981).

20. Hannah Whitall Smith, a lay evangelist who along with her husband founded the Higher Life Movement in England, and whose spiritual volumes continue to be published and read by evangelical Christians, makes a similar claim in her spiritual autobiography The Unselfishness of God and How I Discovered It: A Spiritual Autobiography (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1903): "I have felt that to be endorsed was to be bound, and that it was better, for me at least, to be a free lance, with no hindrances to my absolute mental and spiritual freedom" (220-1).

21. As James Scott reminds us, Max Weber long ago noted in The Sociology of Religion the sociological and political marginalization which makes Towle's "critical distance from dominant values" possible: "Groups which are at the lower end or altogether outside of the social hierarchy stand to a certain extent on the point of Archimedes in relation to social conventions, both in respect to the external order and

in respect to common opinions. Since these groups are not bound by social conventions they are capable of an original attitude towards the meaning of the cosmos." Qtd. in James Scott, Domination and the Arts of Resistance (New Haven: Yale UP, 1990) 124. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg similarly concludes that some women in Jacksonian America "remain[ed] marginal to the established structure" of revivalism, which enabled them to "escape the impact of rituals of mediation and consensus" and to "maintain their assault on all structure." Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America (New York: Oxford UP, 1985) 158.

22. Indeed, unburdened by custom and by patriarchal office and its concomitant respectability, these women, not unlike their medieval spiritual sisters, always claim direct, unmediated access to God; their authority, like that of spiritual women of all ages denied the authority of office, was derived from inner spiritual experience and direct revelation. Theirs was an "inspired" ministry: to prove it, they fill their stories with tales of voices and visions. Such a vision assures Zilpha Elaw of her salvation: "one evening, whilst singing one of the songs of Zion, I distinctly saw the Lord Jesus approach me with open arms, and a most divine and heavenly smile upon his countenance.... From that day to the present I have never entertained a doubt of the manifestation of his love to my soul" (56). That love bursts forth again and again in Elaw's autobiography. Reading the Bible in her closet, she has no need to look outside herself for interpretation: "[W]hen I had been contemplating the wonderful works of creation, or revelation of the mind and truth of God to man, by the inspiration of his prophets," writes Elaw, "I have been lost in astonishment at the perception of a voice, which either externally or internally, has spoken to me, and revealed to my understanding many surprising and precious truths" (75). Even though these women knew that Satan "could transform himself into an angel of light for the purpose of deception"--that interpreting dreams, visions, and voices was dangerous business--they rely on themselves to interpret and make use of these messages from God (Lee 10). Julia Foote's call was literally a voice "crying in [her] ears," calling her to the ministry. "'You are lost unless you obey God's righteous commands,'" an angel tells her on one of many "heavenly visitations" designed to convince her to preach the gospel (180, 201). Had these women looked to the outside world to interpret these "internal prompting[s]," they would have been told--as many were told--to scorn such visions, that the voice they heard was that of the devil, certainly not the God of their patriarchal culture. Recognizing that their authority came from a higher power, these inspired, independent women proceeded to penetrate the predominantly masculine world of

itinerant ministry. For more information on women and Christianity in the Middle Ages, see Eleanor McLaughlin, "The Christian Past: Does It Hold a Future for Women?," Womanspirit Rising, eds. Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow (San Francisco: Harper, 1979) 93-106; and Eleanor McLaughlin, "Women, Power and the Pursuit of Holiness in Medieval Christianity," Women of Spirit, eds. Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979) 100-130.

23. These dialogues and confrontations with Satan can be readily compared to other forms of veiled dissent, such as spirit possession and "hysterical" illness, "in which personal responsibility may be disavowed." See James Scott, Domination and the Arts of Resistance (New Haven: Yale UP, 1990) 141; and I. M. Lewis, Ecstatic Religion: An Anthropological Study of Spirit Possession and Shamanism (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), upon which Scott's analysis is based.

24. All parenthetical references to the Bible are those of the editor, William Andrews.

25. Rev. Allen and the African Methodists here draw upon, of course, St. Paul's scriptural prohibition against women's speaking in the churches. See I Corinthians 14: 34.

26. The A. M. E. Church defeated petitions to make provisions for women in the ministry in 1844, 1848, and 1852. It wasn't until 1884 that A. M. E. women were granted licenses as local preachers, perhaps, as Jualynne Dodson suggests, only so that they might be better controlled. "Nineteenth-Century A.M.E. Preaching Women," Women in New Worlds, ed. Hilah Thomas and Rosemary Skinner Keller (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981).

27. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham notes that Black Baptist women similarly "expressed a dual gender consciousness--defining themselves as both homemakers and soldiers. Their multiple consciousness represented a shifting dialogic exchange in which both race and gender were ultimately destabilized and blurred in meaning.... Perceiving themselves to be joined in a struggle for the economic, educational, and moral advancement of their people, black Baptist men as well as women employed masculine symbols when characterizing black women's efforts to combat the legacy of slavery and the continued rise of racism at the turn of the twentieth century. By so doing, black women and men once again confounded interpretations of race and gender essentialism that had their origins in white discourses." Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920, (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993) 142-146.

28. Citing Dr. Frances Cheek's 1964 study of male and female schizophrenics vs. males and females from the general population, Phyllis Chesler notes how "female schizophrenics were perceived by both their parents as the 'least conforming' of all groups. Their parents remembered them as unusually 'active' (for girls?) during childhood." Chesler goes on to speculate that "this reference to 'activeness' may not refer as much to physical or aggressive behavior as to perceptual, intellectual, or verbal behavior. Perhaps it was this rather specific rejection of one aspect of the female role that caused family conflict and ultimately led to psychiatric labeling and incarceration." Behavior, in other words, which is considered "normal" in men is labeled "neurotic" in women. Women and Madness (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972) 52.

Julia Foote's (1823-1900) case bears a remarkable resemblance to that of Elizabeth Packard (1816-c.1890), who was imprisoned in a psychiatric facility in 1860 by her husband, forbidden to receive visits from her children, deprived of inherited income, and prohibited from reading or writing. All of this was a result of her unwillingness to keep silent about her own theological opinions. Elizabeth Packard, Modern Persecution or Insane Asylums Unveiled and The Liabilities of the Married Woman (New York: Pelletreau and Raynor, 1873).

See also Michel Foucault, Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Random House, 1965); Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979); and Barbara Hill Rigney, Madness and Sexual Politics in the Feminist Novel (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1978).

29. I am indebted throughout the following discussion of the "uses of marginality" to William Andrews's readings of African-American autobiography from 1850-1865, specifically Frederick Douglass's My Bondage and My Freedom and Harriet Jacobs' Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. "Events like the Fugitive Slave Act and the Dred Scott decision," Andrews argues, "made it increasingly problematic for black autobiographers of the 1850s to talk about escaping the marginality of southern slavery and fulfilling themselves within the structure of perverted northern democracy." Thus we find certain "black autobiographers increasingly depicting their fugitive careers as a lingering limbo of dreams deferred, not as a linear quest leading to a new world." To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865 (Urbana: University of Illinois P, 1986) 179.

30. As Karl Weintraub writes of St. Augustine's Confessions, "Inward and outward harmony was the ultimate objective, but the self-presentation could depict only the process of personality formation, the step-by-step growth in gaining more and more understanding, in training the will, in learning to love, in struggling for the inward order, in trying to let the soul take over." The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978) 45.

31. Showalter argues that women writers, like literary subcultures, go through three phases, which she labels "feminine," "feminist," and "female." The feminine phase is "a prolonged phase of imitation of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition, and internalization of its standards of art and its views on social roles." The feminist phase, as we have seen, is marked by "protest against these standards and values, and advocacy of minority rights and values." The female phase "is a phase of self-discovery, a turning inward freed from some of the dependency on opposition, a search for identity." Of course, as Showalter points out these are not absolute categories and, moreover, the phases often overlap in the same writer. My reading of these spiritual texts reveals a world in which imitation, internalization, protest, and self-discovery co-exist, as they must have co-existed in the lives themselves. Struggling against a powerful consensus, they are at times unable to break out of a internalized patterns of behavior even as they move onward in their quest for autonomy and identity. A Literature of Their Own (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977) 13.

32. For a discussion of the objectification of blacks in the white field of vision, see Frantz Fanon's Black Skin, White Masks, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1967). Fanon describes the experience of objectification in much the same terms Amanda Smith employs in her autobiography: "And then the occasion arose when I had to meet the white man's eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me.... In the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema.... The body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty.... 'Look, a Negro!' It was an external stimulus that flicked over me as I passed by. I made a tight smile. 'Look, a Negro!' It was true. It amused me. 'Look, a Negro!' The circle was drawing a bit tighter.... On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object" (110-112).



33. It must be noted, however, that the degree to which these women were subjected to surveillance from above and the degree to which they were isolated from each other in their quest for distinction did ultimately serve as a measure of social control. Had these women not been watched so closely and atomized by an evangelical establishment with its many conferences for male leaders they might well, I would speculate, have propagated a more politically radical agenda. See James C. Scott, Domination and the Arts of Resistance (New Haven: Yale UP, 1990), for a detailed account of the ways in which social control from above frustrates the creation of a dissident subculture.

34. Higginbotham reports that black Baptist women at the turn of the century similarly "spoke as if ever-cognizant of the gaze of white America." That gaze, in rendering them objects rather than subjects, had the negative effect of increasing their anxiety--the pressure to measure up by Victorian America's standards--for "in panoptic fashion [it] focused upon each and every black person and recorded his or her transgressions in an overall accounting of black inferiority." Righteous Discontent (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993) 196.

35. For a discussion of the ways in which women are made to feel out of place in public spaces, see Gillian Rose, Feminism and Geography (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993).

36. Analyzing the letters and journals of the Methodist Mrs. Phoebe Palmer, Richard Wheatley finds her similarly overjoyed at the prospect of enduring the cross: "But to feel that the Lord had now so gloriously recognized her as his servant, by permitting her to enjoy the 'glorious shame, / The scandal of the cross.' O! this indeed seemed too much, and her soul was filled with unutterable ecstasies. From that hour, ever after, she gloried in the cross of Christ." Richard Wheatley, The Life and Letters of Mrs. Phoebe Palmer (1881; New York: Garland, 1984) 85.

37. Many of these women not surprisingly preface their works with passages from the Bible that call attention to the history of women's prophesying and leadership. See, for example, Jarena Lee's epigraph from Joel 2:28 and the epigraphs of Nancy Towle's Vicissitudes: "I sent before thee Moses, Aaron and Miriam"; "And [Deborah] said [to Barak] I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey thou takest, shall not be for thine honor; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman" (Micah 6: 4; Judges 4:9).

38. See Deborah Gray White for a discussion of the history of these stereotypes which continued to bind black women long after the Civil War and the thirteenth amendment had freed

them from slavery. Ar'n't I a Woman (New York: Norton, 1985).

39. In his discussion of the use of linguistic forms, James C. Scott draws on the following studies: Robin Lakoff, Language and Women's Place (New York: Harper Colophon, 1975); R. S. Khare, The Untouchable as Himself: Ideology, Identity, and Pragmatism among the Lucknow Chamars (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984); Pier Paolo Giglioli, ed. Language and Social Context (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972); and Peter Trudgill, Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974).

40. This is, of course, a biblical figure found throughout the Old Testament, in relation to Moses (Exodus 4:10 ff.) and to the Hebrew prophets. Hence, it not surprisingly reappears in the writings of religious figures of all ages, particularly among men and women who see themselves as prophets, who, like Moses and Isaiah, are reluctant to speak, but divinely inspired. Both Nancy Towle and Zilpha Elaw also find the figure of the stammerer a useful one in their "prophetic" writings. Towle refers to her "stammering tongue," while Elaw acknowledges how "inspiration" enabled her to overcome her fear of preaching in public: "my tongue was set at liberty, and my heart was enlarged; and I was enabled to preach with more fluency and copiousness than ever before" (Towle, Preface 11; Elaw 88).

41. In her journal, the Methodist Phoebe Palmer also aligns herself with the prophet Daniel. Immediately before being attacked in the Advocate for her views on complete sanctification, Palmer dreams of being in a lion's den: "seizing hold of the mouth of this huge lion, I," writes Palmer, "with a strength which I knew could only have been supernatural, kept his mouth closed." Indeed, she succeeds in doing the same thing to her more human opponent: "Thank the Lord, I think I kept his mouth shut, through the power of Daniel's God." Battling lions serves here as a figure for her resistance to conservative religious forces that were appalled by her promotion of holiness. The Life and Letters of Mrs. Phoebe Palmer, ed. Richard Wheatley (1881; New York: Garland, 1984) 93-4.

42. It is interesting to note in this regard the relationship these women bear to their Puritan ancestors, for certainly this habit of what one might call competitive suffering or competitive marginalization is not peculiar to nineteenth-century evangelical women. Indeed, as David Levin has observed in his reading of Cotton Mather, Jonathan Edwards, and Benjamin Franklin, it is a general problem in Christian piety, which calls one "to be at once proud and humble, distinct from counterfeit Christians and yet self-effacing" ("Edwards" 44).

American Puritans, Andrew Delbanco has argued, faced a particularly troublesome problem. Emigrating "out of"--rather than "into"--the wilderness of England, the migrating Puritans were acutely aware of their vulnerability to the charge that they were deserting their English brethren, abandoning the heroic struggle for a life of ease. Not surprisingly, then, the Puritans felt an intense need for self-justification. Hence, they began to make much use of "the language of heroic struggle" in their literature; they began as well to "seek opposition in America," to invent enemies--"Indians, 'Antinomians,' eventually Quakers and 'witches'"--who assured these anxious pilgrims that their decision to immigrate (flee?) to America had indeed been the right one (Delbanco 103, 14). According to Andrew Delbanco, "By recasting the New Englanders' sense of themselves into an exemplary martyrdom patterned on the history of the Jews, [Peter Bulkeley] was trying to find some dignity in their situation by calling up the militant idea that they had, in practice, abandoned" (95-96). Ultimately, however, the Puritans, "caught in a contradiction of their own making," could not, in the manner of John Knox, "savor" such persecution (113-14). As religious fervor dwindled, they had to mourn, in the words of Thomas Shepard, the lack of "enemies to hunt you to heaven" (14).

Of course, while their mutual interest in--dependence on--persecution makes for an interesting comparison of the New England Puritans and these 19th-century evangelical women preachers, it should not lead us to the simplistic claim that these women were the heirs of Peter Bulkeley and Thomas Shepard. Similarly motivated by a need for self-justification--for abandoning England, for abandoning the home--both groups defined themselves in opposition as heroic martyrs. Reading themselves in the Bible and subsequently "privileg[ing] a narrative of pain," both inevitably gained some reassurance that their bold decisions were good ones. But these powerless 19th-century women writers were not using persecution simply to understand and "explain" their situations, to find "dignity" in their unorthodox lives; already rendered powerless and marginalized by institutional religions' politics of gender, they borrowed the Bible's language of struggle to prove their strength and to garner praise and distinction from their audiences as well as to understand and explain their situation. They never, moreover, felt a need to "deconstruct" this "tale of woe and righteous struggle" (114). And like the Puritans before the Great Migration--or the brethren whom they left behind--these women had no need to invent enemies; they need only privilege them in their acts of self-construction. See David Levin, "Edwards, Franklin, and Cotton Mather: A Meditation on Character and Reputation," Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience, eds. Nathan Hatch and Harry Stout (New York: Oxford UP, 1988) 34-49; and

Andrew Delbanco, The Puritan Ordeal (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989).

43. Higginbotham, in her study of women in the black Baptist Church from 1880-1920, has discovered, particularly in the writings of Virginia Broughton, similar accounts of opposition--often followed by divine intervention. In her autobiography (1907), Broughton, for example, tells the story of a man who threatened his wife with death if she dared attend a Bible Band meeting. He, of course, "was not permitted to live long enough to prohibit that good woman a second time from going when her missionary sisters called a meeting." Twenty Year's Experience of a Missionary, Spiritual Narratives, ed. Sue E. Houchins (1907; New York: Oxford, 1988) 39. "His death," as Higginbotham observes, "served to reinforce perceptions of the divine sanction of their work and helped diminish further persecution in the area." "As rumors of male hostility spread," moreover, the women acquired the image of martyrs for their cause and began to gain a greater following among both men and women." Righteous Discontent (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993) 72.

44. For more information on the popularity of particular spiritual narratives in nineteenth-century American evangelical circles, see Virginia Lieson Brereton, From Sin to Salvation: Stories of Women's Conversions, 1800 to the Present (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991) 10-13.

45. Higginbotham notes that black Baptist women, though "determin[ed] to insert their voices boldly into the deliberative arena of the convention movement," did not demand "equal representation in conventions" nor "challenge the basis for male monopoly of the clergy." She does not, however, theorize why such motivated women so determinedly refuse to press for more institutional equality. Righteous Discontent (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993) 147.

46. Phoebe Palmer believed that all ordinations were unscriptural; hence her own unwillingness to seek it.

47. Susan Rogers, exploring gender relations in peasant communities in the Lorraine region of France, finds that tradition "confers authority and prestige on males, who hold virtually all formal positions." Women, however, often have a more "effective," though "informal," power. But, as James Scott reminds us, "To draw the conclusion...that the practical informal realities rendered men's power merely cosmetic and vaporous would be to forget that symbolic concessions are 'political concessions' as well." Domination and the Arts of Resistance (New Haven: Yale UP, 1990) 52.

48. Here we might recall the terms which Sacvan Bercovitch borrowed from Melville's Plotinus Plinlimmon: these preachers were "horologically" unique, but "chronometrically" typical. See The American Jeremiad (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1978) 28-29. On the paradoxical relationship between uniqueness and representativeness in Puritan spiritual biography, see Bercovitch's The Puritan Origins of the American Self (New Haven: Yale UP, 1975).

## Notes to Chapter 4

1. See, for example, Jerome Buckley, The Turning Key: Autobiography and the Subjective Impulse Since 1800 (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984); Roy Pascal, Design and Truth in Autobiography (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960); and Karl Weintraub, The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978).

2. The journals of circuit riders, Donald Mathews argues, are "often merely reports of places visited, texts preached, and appointments kept," undoubtedly because "[s]ubstance for early Methodists...was the spoken word, the event and act of preaching and responding, the fusing together of individuals who poured their interior life out into a sharing community through testimony, song, shout, and laughter." "Evangelical America--The Methodist Ideology," Perspectives on American Methodism, ed. Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt (Nashville: Kingswood-Abingdon, 1993) 17-30.

3. See Georges May, L'autobiographie (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1979).

4. The phrase is that of Rebecca Cox Jackson (1795-1871), a Methodist and later Shaker eldress, whose autobiographical writings have recently been published under the title Gifts of Power, ed. Jean McMahon Humez (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1981).

5. John Sturrock has written that an autobiography such as Nancy Towle's--"An autobiography written without hindsight--put together, that is, from notes written over many years and never afterwards revised--would be a curious document certainly, but also a perverse one." He hasn't, apparently, encountered the autobiographies of nineteenth-century evangelical women, women whose authority was considered "derivative" by institutional officials. Indeed, given the unofficial nature of their authority as women in a decidedly male environment, one might consider rigorously editing one's spiritual experience and evangelical labors in the manner of a C. S. Lewis a more perverse method of composition. "The New Model Autobiographer," New Literary History 9.1 (1977): 56.

6. Certainly I am not the first critic to take to task genre theorists whose inordinately prescriptive definitions of "good" or "ideal" autobiography have excluded women's life-writing. See, for example, Estelle Jelinek, The Tradition of Women's Autobiography (Boston: Twayne, 1986) and Introduction, Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1980); Felicity Nussbaum, The Autobiographical

Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989); Sidonie Smith, A Poetics of Women's Autobiography (Bloomington: U of Indiana P, 1987); and Norine Voss, "'Saying the Unsayable': An Introduction to Women's Autobiography," Gender Studies, ed. Judith Spector (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular P, 1987) 218-233.

7. The same is true of The Life Experience and Gospel Labors of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen, the autobiographical narrative of the founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The subtitle of Allen's memoir reads, "To Which is Annexed the Rise and Progress of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America." (Nashville: Abingdon P, 1960).

8. Indeed, it seems likely that even the prior act of examining and understanding one's life is essentially literary; that the process of deletion, enhancement, and plotting engages us even before we set pen to paper, and even if we never do. As Barbara Hardy contends, "In order really to live, we make up stories about ourselves and others, about the personal as well as the social past and future" (qtd. in Spacks, "Selves" 131).

9. Most spiritual autobiographers, however, regard God as the ultimate plotter in their lives. As contemporary writer Dan Wakefield puts it in his own spiritual autobiography, Returning, "Following the spiritual thread of one's life sometimes seems like the plot of a science-fiction novel...in which forces are at work moving people here and there in ways they don't themselves see and for purposes they don't yet even know about." For Wakefield, the life is a novel, which the autobiographer-to-be need only sit down and read. Whether the task of turning the life into a coherent narrative is ever that simple--even for a spiritual autobiographer--is a matter for debate. What isn't, however, is the fact that all story tellers must somehow go about the business of perceiving or imagining a plot out of the chaos of experience. (New York: Doubleday, 1988).

10. Jean Starobinski contends that all autobiography is a form of conversion narrative given that "it is the internal transformation of the individual...that furnishes a subject for a narrative discourse in which 'I' is both subject and object." "The Style of Autobiography," Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical, ed. James Olney (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980) 78.

11. For more information on Puritan and Evangelical spiritual autobiography, see William Haller, The Rise of Puritanism (1938; Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1984); G. S. Starr, Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography (New York: Gordian, 1971); Daniel Shea, Spiritual Autobiography in Early America (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1968); Edmund S. Morgan, Visible Saints (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1963); Elizabeth Kaspar Aldrich, "'The Children of these Fathers': The Origins of an Autobiographical Tradition in America," First Person Singular, ed. A. Robert Lee (New York: St. Martin's P, 1988) 15-36; Roger Sharrock, Introduction, Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners, ed. Roger Sharrock (Oxford: Clarendon-Oxford, 1962); Christine L. Krueger, The Reader's Repentance: Women Preachers, Women Writers, and Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992); and Virginia Lieson Brereton, From Sin to Salvation: Stories of Women's Conversions, 1800 to the Present (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991).

12. This point applies equally well, of course, to biography.

13. The phrase is that of John Sturrock, who seeks to remind us of the teleological nature of all biography and autobiography: "everything which the biographer records about his subject will be read as contributing to that subject's ultimate achievement; the sandcastles which the Great Commander builds on the beach at the age of five are built not by a child but by the embryonic Great Commander.... Instead of explaining how its subject grew up and came to do what everyone knows he did, autobiography explains how its subject grew up and came to do what he is doing...." "The New Model Autobiographer," New Literary History 9.1 (1977): 55-6.

14. The history of autobiography would suggest, moreover, that imagining an end to an ongoing story need not be the creative property of legendary figures alone. The recent autobiography by contemporary writer Willie Morris, for example, reminds us that almost anything in the life can be presented as the "subject's ultimate achievement": North Toward Home moves teleologically toward the ending in which the author simply finds himself more at home in the North than the South. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1967).

15. As good, onward Christian soldiers, both Cartwright and Finney do pay a kind of lip service to the future, but they are not paralyzed by their consciousness of futurity.

16. Karl Joachim Weintraub uses the term "additive autobiography" to refer to the works of medieval writers who, rather than write one definitive, distinct autobiography,



chose to include autobiographical material in numerous "writings devoted to wider objectives....thus producing a characteristic cumulative genre...." The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978) 49.

17.Nancy Towle fills these pages with reflections and opinions, with the summarized account of her labors quoted above, a comparative analysis of the labors of most male itinerants, an explanation for her unwillingness to join a particular "community" or sect, a gloating announcement that the pestilence she had long been predicting had indeed struck many of the places where she had witnessed "a pitch of wickedness," and a discussion of the important spiritual gifts of women and the sad state of education which encourages women to regard themselves as subordinate and unfit for ministerial labors.

18.Zilpha Elaw, similarly, informs her readers that the length of her autobiography was dictated by her material circumstances: "I am compelled to omit much interesting and important matter relative to my religious experience and life, and pass to the more strikingly eventful points, lest I should swell these pages beyond my present limited means for the press" (64).

19.A second edition of Vicissitudes was printed in 1833 in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, by John Caldwell.

20.According to G. Thomas Couser, "no scholar seems prepared to state exactly how many different editions of his autobiography Barnum published...because Barnum so frequently updated the 1869 edition with supplementary chapters." Altered Egos (New York: Oxford UP, 1989) 61.

21.Joseph Fichtelberg maintains that this tendency to revise and reissue one's life story is a peculiarly American phenomenon, related to American autobiographers' irrepressible desire to claim "the millennial identity"--to forge a unity between the individual and the community--along with their Puritan ancestors who argued "that New England was New Jerusalem, the site of the Millennium." And, as Fichtelberg points out, the obsessive revising of texts reminds us that such faith in the identity between the self and the nation, was necessarily a dream: used by Franklin, hopefully and desperately asserted by Whitman. The Complex Image: Faith and Method in American Autobiography (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1989) 50.

22.Though I agree with William Andrew's assertion that "contemporary readers...are likely to find the added pages of the 1849 edition often tedious reading," as I have argued in Chapter 2 and will argue here, these pages do have much to tell us about "the inner character of the woman who wrote them" and her life as a female evangelist (Introduction, Sisters 23).

23.At their 1880 General Conference, the Methodist Episcopal Church approved women for the subordinate positions of Sunday School Superintendents and teachers, but ceased licensing women as local preachers. Needless to say, they denied Anna Howard Shaw's request for ordination in the 1880s (she was later ordained by the Methodist Protestants); not until 1974 were women ordained in the M. E. Church. A similar reaction against women occurred in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The A.M.E. General Conference defeated a petition to provide for women's preaching in 1844, 1848 and 1852. In 1868 they sanctioned the positions of stewardess, exhorter, missionary, and evangelist, all of which were subordinate to the ordained positions held by men. When in 1884 the A.M.E. finally licensed women as local preachers, the gesture was (so Jualynne Dodson speculates) not so much a recognition of women's rights as a measure of control. Similarly, after the Civil War single women were finally granted permission to work as missionaries, a move according to Barbara Welter that signaled "less a victory than a strategic retreat by the opposition," who feared women's agitation in the women's movement more than her Christian work in a remote corner of the world. See Jualynne Dodson, "Nineteenth-Century A.M.E. Preaching Women: Cutting Edge of Women's Inclusion in Church Polity," Women in New Worlds, ed. Hilah Thomas and Rosemary Keller (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981) 278; and Barbara Welter, "She Hath Done What She Could: Protestant Women's Missionary Careers in Nineteenth-Century America," Women in American Religion, ed. Janet James (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1980) 111.

24.Joanne Dobson's reading has uncovered only two novels of the period which deal extensively and candidly with the life of a married woman: A. D. T. Whitney's Hitherto (1869) and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps' The Story of Avis (1877). Dickinson and the Strategies of Reticence: The Woman Writer in Nineteenth-Century America (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989).

25.This is, of course, the case with much women's autobiography. As Norine Voss argues, critics who valorize the artistic, finely wrought autobiography, assume "a state of full self-knowledge free from conflict, a condition that women's status in a patriarchal culture often prevents them from attaining (or that, if attained, their vulnerability to

attack makes them hesitant to reveal)." "'Saying the Unsayable': An Introduction to Women's Autobiography," Gender Studies, ed. Judith Spector (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987) 219.

26. Their experience thus resembles, interestingly, that of the transient Americans Daniel Boorstin has described in The Americans: The National Experience: "These were not men moving ever toward the west, but men ever moving in the west. The churning, casual, vagrant, circular motion around and around was as characteristic of the American experience as the movement in a single direction.... More than anything else, they valued the freedom to move.... Americans thus valued opportunity, or the chance to seek it, more than purpose." And as I have argued elsewhere, these women did relish the freedom to move and the opportunities available to them within evangelicalism and revivalism; at the same time, however, their autobiographies testify to their longing for the sort of "purpose" which characterizes the lives of their male counterparts. (New York: Random-Vintage, 1965) 95.

27. There are, of course, examples of autobiographies written by unconventional women, even unconventional itinerant women, which are not characterized by the sort of narrative uncertainty which I have been describing here. As I noted earlier, Susan Waugh found that most women in her 1980s workshops wrote structured, "finished" autobiographical narratives, not additive, fragmented ones. And even the eighteenth-century Quaker Elizabeth Ashbridge, who must certainly be a historical and literary foremother of these nineteenth-century evangelical women, was able to compose a short autobiographical narrative with a clear beginning, middle and end. Though her life and her textual self-representation are marked by her many travels in the Old and New World and by her sincere quest for self-definition in the face of opposition from her spouse and from hostile Puritans, she has no difficulty turning her itinerant life into a well-made narrative. But Ashbridge is telling a relatively simple story, and one for which she had ample precedent: though her Account describes a life which was wildly disordered in many respects, its main narrative line throughout is Ashbridge's own quest for the Inner Light and her parallel struggle to convert her dissolute husband. The resolution of these plots forms the ending of the Account; though Ashbridge later had a career as a kind of Quaker itinerant, this career barely comes into her autobiography. This is to say that Ashbridge was able to avoid the severest narrative frustrations of her nineteenth-century successors, all of whom felt compelled to

devote most of their autobiographies to their careers, which tended to resist being plotted in conventional terms.

28. Though some of these women were granted the "privilege" of preaching by powerful male officials such as Bishop Allen of the A.M.E. Church, they were not assigned a particular circuit, nor did they find much in the way of support from institutions like the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Nancy Towle writes that she did make several efforts to align herself with particular religious sects during her preaching career, specifically that she might then have someone to look to for "redress" in cases where she was wrongly and unduly opposed (231-32). She found, however, that neither the Free-Will Baptists nor the Christian Connexion would sufficiently advocate her cause; she must, she discovered, be her own champion, a mission which she willingly and enthusiastically undertook.

29. For Estelle Jelinek, the tradition of women's autobiography is marked by such anxiety: "In contrast to the self-confident, one-dimensional self-image that men usually project, women often depict a multidimensional, fragmented self-image colored by a sense of inadequacy and alienation, of being out-siders or 'other'; they feel the need for authentication, to prove their self-worth." The Tradition of Women's Autobiography (Boston: Twayne, 1986) xiii.

30. For a discussion of narrative line and closure in women's fiction, see Nancy Miller, Subject to Change: Reading Feminist Writing (New York: Columbia UP, 1988).

## Notes to the Afterword

1. I borrow here the terms of Charles Cohen, whose book, God's Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience, is subdivided into sections entitled "The Call of the Preachers" and "The Cry of the Faithful." (New York: Oxford UP, 1985).

2. Jane Marcus argues in "Invincible Mediocrity: The Private Selves of Public Women" that the "common thread running through women's autobiographies" is just this: this "collaboration" of the writer and her reader. The Private Self, ed. Shari Benstock (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1988) 137.

3. Nancy Towle, for example, introduces her autobiography with the proud claim that the "[Bible], and sometimes a Bible Dictionary, [had] been for the most part, my only Library" (Preface 11). Presumably, her own readers could add another volume to this short list of appropriate books.

4. Laura Haviland claims to have been "encouraged to return" to the Lord by reading a book about "the Christian experience of one whose exercises of mind traced through my own experience, even to my present despairing state" (31).

5. According to Nancy Hardesty, Lucille Sider Dayton, and Donald W. Dayton, the "Lives" of British women evangelists were popular among nineteenth-century women and did serve as models for American women searching for new roles in the benevolent empire. "Women in the Holiness Movement: Feminism in the Evangelical Tradition," Women of Spirit, eds. Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979) 226-254.

## Works Consulted

## Primary Sources:

- Acornley, Rev. John H. The Colored Lady Evangelist, Being the Life, Labors and Experiences of Mrs. Harriet A. Baker. Brooklyn, N. Y.: N.p., 1892. New York: Garland, 1987.
- Allen, Rev. Richard. The Life Experience and Gospel Labors of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen. 1833. Nashville: Abingdon, 1960.
- Ashbridge, Elizabeth. "Some Account of the Fore Part of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge." 1774. Journeys in New Worlds. Ed. William L. Andrews. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1990. 147-171.
- Augustinus, Aurelius. The Confessions. New York: Penquin, 1961.
- Beecher, Lyman. The Autobiography of Lyman Beecher. Ed. Introd. Barbara M. Cross. 2 Vols. Cambridge: Belknap-Harvard, 1961.
- Blassingame, John W., ed. Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1977.
- Booth, Catherine. Female Ministry; or, Woman's Right to Preach the Gospel. London: Morgan & Chase, N.d. Holiness Tracts Defending the Ministry of Women. Ed. Donald Dayton. New York: Garland, 1985.

- Broughton, Virginia. Twenty Year's [sic] Experience of a Missionary. 1907. Spiritual Narratives. Ed. Introd. Susan Houchins. New York: Oxford UP, 1988.
- Brown, George. The Lady Preacher: or the Life and Labors of Mrs. Hannah Reeves, Late the Wife of the Rev. WM. Reeves, D.D., of the Methodist Church. Philadelphia: Daughaday & Becker; Springfield, Ohio: Methodist Publishing House, 1970. New York: Garland, 1987.
- Bunyan, John. Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners. Ed. Introd. Roger Sharrock. 1666. Oxford: Clarendon-Oxford, 1962.
- Carnegie, Andrew. The Autobiography of Andrew Carnegie. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1920.
- Cartwright, Peter. Autobiography of Peter Cartwright. 1856. Introd. Charles Wallis. New York: Abingdon, 1956.
- Conant, William C. Narratives of Remarkable Conversions and Revival Incidents. New York: Derby and Jackson, 1858.
- Cooper, Anna Julia. A Voice From the South. 1892. Introd. Mary Helen Washington. New York: Oxford, 1988.
- Dayton, Donald, ed. Holiness Tracts Defending the Ministry of Women. New York: Garland, 1985.
- Douglass, Frederick. My Bondage and My Freedom. 1855. Ed. Introd. Philip Foner. New York: Dover, 1969.
- Douglass, Frederick. Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass. 1845. The Classis Slave Narratives. Ed. Introd. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. New York: Mentor, 1987.

- Eaton, Herrick M. The Itinerant's Wife: Her Qualifications, Duties, Trials, and Rewards. New York: Lane & Scott, 1851. The Nineteenth-Century American Methodist Itinerant Preacher's Wife. Ed. Introd. Carolyn De Swarte Gifford. New York: Garland, 1987.
- Edwards, Jonathan. "A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God." The Great Awakening. Ed. C. C. Goen. New Haven: Yale UP, 1972. Vol. 4 of The Works of Jonathan Edwards. Ed. John Smith. 12 vols. 1957-1994.
- Elaw, Zilpha. Memoirs of the Life, Religious Experience, Ministerial Travels and Labors of Mrs. Zilpha Elaw. 1846. Sisters of the Spirit. Ed. Introd. William L. Andrews. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986. 49-160.
- Ellison, Ralph. Invisible Man. 1947. New York: Vintage, 1990.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson. Ed. Stephen Whicher. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957.
- Fletcher, Miriam. The Methodist: or, Incidents and Characters from Life in the Baltimore Conference. 2 vols. New York: Derby and Jackson, 1859.
- Finney, Charles G. Lectures to Professing Christians. 1837. New York: Garland, 1985.
- Finney, Charles G. Lectures on Revivals of Religion. 1835. Cambridge: Belknap-Harvard, 1960.
- Finney, Charles G. The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney. 1876. Ed. Introd. Garth M. Rosell and Richard A. G. Dupuis.



Grand Rapids, Michigan: Academie Books, 1989.

Foote, Julia. A Brand Plucked from the Fire: An Autobiographical Sketch by Mrs. Julia A. J. Foote.

1879. Sisters of the Spirit. Ed. Introd. William L. Andrews. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986. 161-234.

Forten, Charlotte L. The Journal of Charlotte L. Forten. 1853. Ed. Ray Allen Billington. New York: Collier Books, 1961.

Franklin, Benjamin. Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin. Autobiography and Other Writings. Ed. Introd. Kenneth Silverman. New York: Penquin, 1986.

Fuller, Margaret. Woman in the Nineteenth Century. 1855. New York: Norton, 1971.

Gilbert, Olive. Narrative of Sojourner Truth. 1850. Ed. Margaret Washington. New York: Vintage, 1993.

Grimke, Sarah M. Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and Other Essays. 1838. Ed. Introd. Elizabeth Ann Bartlett. New Haven: Yale UP, 1988.

Guyon, Madame. Autobiography of Madame Guyon. 1708. Trans. Thomas Taylor Allen. 2 Vols. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1898.

Haviland, Laura Smith. A Woman's Life-Work. 1881. Salem, NH: AYER, 1984.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. Tales and Sketches. Ed. Roy Harvey Pearce. New York: Library of America, 1982.

Henry, Rev. Thomas W. From Slavery to Salvation: The

Autobiography of Rev. Thomas W. Henry of the A.M.E. Church. 1872. Ed. Jean Libby. Jackson, Mississippi: U Press of Mississippi, 1994.

Hughes, Thomas. The Manliness of Christ. Boston: Houghton, Osgood and Co., 1880.

Hunter, Fannie McDowell. Women Preachers. Dallas: Berachah Printing Co., 1905. Holiness Tracts Defending the Ministry of Women. Ed. Donald Dayton. New York: Garland, 1985.

Ingraham, Sarah R., compiler. Walks of Usefulness or, Reminiscences of Mrs. Margaret Prior. New York: American Female Moral Reform Society, 1843. New York: Garland, 1987.

Jackson, Rebecca. Gifts of Power: The Writings of Rebecca Jackson, Black Visionary, Shaker Eldress. Ed. Introd. Jean McMahon Humez. N.p.: U of Massachusetts P, 1981.

James, Henry. The Portrait of a Lady. 1882. New York: Penguin, 1984.

Lee, Jarena. The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee. 1836. Sisters of the Spirit. Ed. Introd. William L. Andrews. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986. 25-48.

Lee, Jarena. Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee. 1849. Spiritual Narratives. Ed. Introd. Susan Houchins. New York: Oxford UP, 1988.

Lee, Luther. Woman's Right to Preach the Gospel. A Sermon, Preached at the Ordination of the Rev. Miss Antoinette

L. Brown. Syracuse, N. Y.: by the author. Holiness Tracts Defending the Ministry of Women. Ed. Donald Dayton. New York: Garland, 1985.

Lewis, C. S. Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life. New York: Harcourt, 1955.

Livermore, Mary A. The Story of My Life. Hartford: A. D. Worthington & Co., 1897.

North, Elizabeth Mason. Consecrated Talents: or, the Life of Mrs. Mary W. Mason. New York: Carlton & Lanahan, 1870.  
New York: Garland, 1987.

Osborne, Lucy Drake. Heavenly Pearls Set in a Life: A Record of Experiences and Labors in America, India, and Australia. New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1893.

Palmer, Phoebe. Faith and Its Effects. 1867. The Devotional Writings of Phoebe Palmer. New York: Garland, 1985.

Palmer, Phoebe, ed. Pioneer Experiences; or, The Gift of Power Received by Faith. 1868. New York: Garland, 1984.

Palmer, Phoebe. The Promise of the Father. 1859. New York: Garland, 1985.

Palmer, Phoebe. The Way of Holiness. 1867. The Devotional Writings of Phoebe Palmer. New York: Garland, 1985.

Payne, Daniel Alexander. Recollections of Seventy Years. 1888. New York: Arno, 1968.

Prentiss, George L. The Life and Letters of Elizabeth Prentiss. New York: Anson D. F. Randolph & Co., 1882.  
New York: Garland, 1987.

- Prior, Margaret. Walks of Usefulness or, Reminiscences of Mrs. Margaret Prior. Compiled by Sarah R. Ingraham. New York: American Female Moral Reform Society, 1843. New York: Garland, 1987.
- St. Teresa. The Life of St. Teresa of Jesus. 1568. Trans. David Lewis. 1870. London: Thomas Baker, 1916.
- Sexton, Lydia. Autobiography of Lydia Sexton: The Story of Her Life Through a Period of over Seventy-two Years, from 1799-1872. 1882. New York: Garland, 1987.
- Shaw, Anna Howard. The Story of a Pioneer. New York: Harper, 1915.
- Sheldon, Charles M. In His Steps: What Jesus Would Do. 1896. Philadelphia: Henry Altemus Co., 1899.
- Smith, Elizabeth Oakes Prince. Selections from the Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith. Lewiston, ME: Lewiston Journal Co., 1924.
- Smith, Hannah Whitall. The Christian's Secret of A Happy Life. 1870. The Devotional Writings of Robert Pearsall Smith and Hannah Whitall Smith. New York: Garland, 1984.
- Smith, Hannah Whitall. The Unselfishness of God and How I Discovered It: A Spiritual Autobiography. New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1903.
- Smith, Logan Pearsall. Philadelphia Quaker: The Letters of Hannah Whitall Smith. New York: Harcourt, 1950.
- Stanton, Elizabeth Cady. Eighty Years and More. London: T.

Fisher Unwin, 1898.

Stanton, Elizabeth Cady, et al. The Woman's Bible. 2 vols.

New York: European Publishing Co., 1895-98.

Stevens, Abel. The Women of Methodism: Its Three Foundresses, Susanna Wesley, The Countess of Huntingdon, and Barbara Heck; with sketches of their female associates and successors in the early history of the denomination. New York: Carlton & Lanahan. Cincinnati: Hitchcock & Walden, 1869. New York: Garland, 1987.

Strong, Josiah. Our Country. 1886. Ed. Jurgen Herbst. Cambridge: Belknap-Harvard UP, 1963.

Towle, Nancy. Vicissitudes Illustrated in the Experience of Nancy Towle. Charleston, S. C.: James Burges, 1832.

Tucker, Mary Orne. Itinerant Preaching in the Early Days of Methodism. By a Pioneer Preacher's Wife. Ed. Thomas W. Tucker. Boston: B. B Russell, 1872. The Nineteenth-Century American Methodist Itinerant Preacher's Wife. Ed. Introd. Carolyn De Swarte Gifford. New York: Garland, 1987.

Wakefield, Dan. Returning: A Spiritual Journey. New York: Doubleday, 1988.

Washington, Booker T. Up From Slavery. 1901. New York: Penguin, 1986.

Wheatley, Richard. The Life and Letters of Mrs. Phoebe Palmer. 1881. New York: Garland, 1984.

Willard, Frances E. Do Everything: A Handbook for the World's

White Ribboners. Chicago: The Woman's Temperance Publishing Association, N. d. The Ideal of 'The New Woman' According to the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Ed. Introd. Carolyn De Swarte Gifford. New York: Garland, 1987.

Willard, Frances E. Glimpses of Fifty Years. Chicago: H. J. Smith & Co., 1889.

Willard, Frances E. Home Protection Manual: Containing an Argument for the Temperance Ballot for Woman and How to Obtain It as a Means of Home Protection. 1817. The Ideal of 'The New Woman' According to the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Ed. Introd. Carolyn De Swarte Gifford. New York: Garland, 1987.

Willard, Frances E. How to Win: A Book for Girls. New York: Funk & Wagnalis, 1886. The Ideal of The New Woman' According to the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Ed. Introd. Carolyn De Swarte Gifford. New York: Garland, 1987.

Willard, Frances E. Women in the Pulpit. Chicago: Woman's Temperance Publication Association, 1889. The Defense of Women's Rights to Ordination in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Ed. Introd. Carolyn De Swarte Gifford. New York: Garland, 1987.

Winthrop, John. "A Model of Christian Charity." The Puritans in America: A Narrative Anthology. Ed. Alan Heimert and Andrew Delbanco. Cambridge: Harvard UP.

1985. 81-92.

Wise, Daniel. Bridal Greetings: A Marriage Gift in Which the Mutual Duties of Husband and Wife are Familiarly Illustrated and Enforced. New York: Carlton & Phillips, 1854. The American Ideal of the 'True Woman' as Reflected in Advice Books to Young Women. Ed. Introd. Carolyn De Swarte Gifford. New York: Garland, 1987.

Wise, Daniel. The Young Lady's Counsellor: or, Outlines and Illustrations of the Sphere, the Duties, and the Dangers of Young Women. New York: Carlton & Porter, 1851. The American Ideal of the 'True Woman' as Reflected in Advice Books to Young Women. Ed. Introd. Carolyn De Swarte Gifford. New York: Garland, 1987.

Woolman, John. The Journal of John Woolman. 1774. New York: Carol Publishing Group--Citadel Press Book, 1961.

#### Secondary Sources:

Abbott, H. Porter. "Autobiography, Autography, Fiction: Groundwork for a Taxonomy of Textual Categories." New Literary History 19.3 (1988): 597-615.

Ackermann, Robert John. Religion as Critique. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1985.

Ahlstrom, Sidney. A Religious History of the American People. New Haven: Yale UP, 1972.

Aldrich, Elizabeth Kaspar. "'The Children of these Fathers': The Origins of an Autobiographical Tradition

- in America." First Person Singular: Studies in American Autobiography. Ed. A. Robert Lee. New York: St. Martin's, 1988. 15-36.
- Alter, Robert. The Art of Biblical Narrative. New York: Basic Books, 1981.
- Ammons, Elizabeth. Conflicting Stories. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991.
- Ammons, Elizabeth. "Stowe's Dream of the Mother-Savior: Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Women Writers Before the 1920's." New Essays on Uncle Tom's Cabin. Ed. Eric Sundquist. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986.
- Andrews, Doris. "The African Methodists of Philadelphia, 1794-1802." Perspectives on American Methodism. Ed. Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt. Nashville: Kingswood-Abingdon, 1993. 145-155.
- Andrews, William. "Dialogue in Antebellum Afro-American Autobiography." Studies in Autobiography. Ed. James Olney. New York: Oxford UP, 1988. 89-98.
- Andrews, William. Introduction. Sisters of the Spirit. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986. 1-22.
- Andrews, William. To Tell a Free Story. Chicago: U of Illinois Press, 1986.
- Aptheker, Bettina. Woman's Legacy: Essays on Race, Sex, and Class in American History. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1982.
- Ardener, Shirley. Introduction. Women and Space: Ground



Rules and Social Maps. Oxford: Berg, 1993.

Armstrong, Nancy. Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel. New York: Oxford UP, 1987.

Asher, Lyell. "Petrarch at the Peak of Fame." PMLA 108.5 (1993): 1050-1063.

Atkinson, Clarissa W. and Constance H. Buchanan and Margaret R. Miles, eds. Immaculate and Powerful: The Female in Sacred Image and Social Reality. Boston: Beacon P, 1985.

Bass, Dorothy C. "'In Christian Firmness and Christian Meekness': Feminism and Pacifism in Antebellum America." Immaculate and Powerful. Eds. Clarissa Atkinson, Constance Buchanan, and Margaret Miles. Boston: Beacon P, 1985. 201-225.

Baym, Nina. "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors." American Quarterly 33 (1981): 123-139.

Baym, Nina. Women's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1978.

Beaver, R. Pierce. American Protestant Women in World Mission: History of the First Feminist Movement in North America. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1980.

Behnke, Donna. Religious Issues in Nineteenth-Century Feminism. Troy, NY: The Whitson Publishing Co., 1982.

Bell, Susan Groag and Marilyn Valom, eds. Revealing Lives: Autobiography, Biography, and Gender. Albany: State U of

New York P, 1990.

Bellah, Robert N. The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial. New York: Seabury P, 1975.

Benstock, Shari, ed. Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987.

Benstock, Shari, ed. The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1988.

Bercovitch, Sacvan. The American Jeremiad. Madison, Wisconsin: U of Wisconsin P, 1978.

Bercovitch, Sacvan. The Puritan Origins of the American Self. New Haven: Yale UP, 1975.

Bloom, Harold. A Map of Misreading. New York: Oxford UP, 1975.

Boles, John B. The Great Revival, 1787-1805. Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 1972.

Boorstin, Daniel J. The Americans: The National Experience. New York: Vintage, 1965.

Boydston, Jeanne, and Mary Kelley and Anne Margolis. The Limits of Sisterhood: The Beecher Sisters on Women's Rights and Woman's Sphere. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1988.

Brauer, Jerald C. "Conversion: From Puritanism to Revivalism." The Journal of Religion 58.3 (1978): 227-243.

Brauer, Jerald C. Protestantism in America. Philadelphia:

Westminster Press, 1965.

Braxton, Joanne M. Black Women Writing Autobiography.

Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1989.

Bree, Germaine. "Autogynography." Studies in Autobiography.

Ed. James Olney. New York: Oxford UP, 1988. 171-179.

Brereton, Virginia Lieson and Christa Rasmeyer Klein.

"American Women in Ministry: A History of Protestant Beginning Points." Women of Spirit. Ed. Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979. 301-332.

Brereton, Virginia Lieson. From Sin to Salvation: Stories of Women's Conversions, 1800 to the Present. Bloomington:

Indiana UP, 1991.

Britton, James. Language and Learning. Coral Gables, FL: U of Miami P, 1970.

Brodzki, Bella and Celeste Schenck, eds. Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988.

Brown, Earl Kent. "Women of the Word: Selected Leadership Roles of Women in Mr. Wesley's Methodism." Women in New Worlds. Ed. Hilah Thomas and Rosemary Keller. Nashville: Abingdon, 1981. 69-87.

Brown, Gillian. Domestic Individualism: Imagining the Self in Nineteenth-Century America. Berkeley: U of California P, 1990.

Brown, Herbert Ross. The Sentimental Novel in America, 1789-

1860. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1940.
- Brumberg, Joan Jacobs. "Zenanas and Girless Villages: The Ethnology of American Evangelical Women, 1870-1910." Journal of American History 69.2 (1982): 347-371.
- Bruss, Elizabeth W. Autobiographical Acts. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976.
- Bucke, Emory, ed. The History of American Methodism. 3 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1964.
- Buckley, Jerome Hamilton. The Turning Key: Autobiography and the Subjective Impulse since 1800. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984.
- Buechner, Frederick. The Clown in the Belfry. New York: HarperCollins, 1992.
- Buell, Lawrence. New England Literary Culture. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986.
- Butler, Jon. "Enlarging the Body of Christ: Slavery, Evangelism, and the Christianization of the White South, 1690-1790." The Evangelical Tradition in America. Ed. Leonard Sweet. Macon, GA: Mercer UP, 1984.
- Butler, Judith. Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Butterfield, Stephen. Black Autobiography in America. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1974.
- Bynum, Caroline. Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages. Berkeley: U of California P, 1982.

- Chandler, Alfred D. The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business. Cambridge: Belknap-Harvard, 1977.
- Chatman, Seymour. Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1978.
- Chesler, Phyllis. Women and Madness. New York: Doubleday, 1972.
- Christ, Carol P. Diving Deep and Surfacing. Boston: Beacon Press, 1980.
- Christ, Carol P. and Charlene Spretnak. "Images of Spiritual Power in Women's Fiction." The Politics of Women's Spirituality. Ed. Charlene Spretnak. New York: Anchor-Doubleday, 1982. 327-343.
- Christ, Carol P. and Judith Plaskow. Introduction. Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion. Ed. Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow. San Francisco: Harper, 1979.
- Christ, Carol P. "Spiritual Quest and Women's Experience." Womanspirit Rising. Ed. Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow. San Francisco: Harper, 1979. 228-245.
- Clark, Elizabeth A., ed. Women and Religion: A Feminist Sourcebook of Christian Thought. New York: Harper, 1977.
- Clebsch, William A. From Sacred to Profane America: The Role of Religion in American History. New York: Harper, 1958.
- Cmiel, Kenneth. Democratic Eloquence: The Fight over Popular

- Speech in Nineteenth-Century America. New York: Morrow, 1990.
- Cohen, Charles. God's Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986.
- Cohen, Ralph, ed. New Directions in Literary History. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990.
- Coon, Lynda L. and Katherine J. Haldane, and Elisabeth W. Sommer. Introduction. That Gentle Strength: Historical Perspectives on Women in Christianity. Charlottesville, VA: U Press of Virginia, 1990.
- Cott, Nancy F. The Bonds of Womanhood. New Haven: Yale UP, 1977.
- Cott, Nancy F., ed. Root of Bitterness: Documents of the Social History of American Women. New York: Dutton, 1972.
- Cott, Nancy F. "Young Women in the Second Great Awakening in New England." Feminist Studies 3.1-2 (1975): 16-22.
- Coulter, Hope Norman. Introduction. Civil War Women. Ed. Frank McSherry, Jr., Charles G. Waugh, and Martin Greenberg. New York: Touchstone, 1988. 7-11.
- Coultrap-McQuin, Susan. Doing Literary Business: American Women Writers in the Nineteenth Century. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1990.

- Couser, G. Thomas. Altered Egos: Authority in American Autobiography. New York: Oxford UP, 1989.
- Cross, Whitney R. The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1950.
- Culley, Margo, ed. American Women's Autobiography: Fea(s)ts of Memory. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1992.
- Culley, Margo. "What a Piece of Works is 'Woman!': An Introduction." American Women's Autobiography. Ed. Margo Culley. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1992. 3-31.
- Curry, Leonard P. The Free Black in Urban America 1800-1850. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981.
- Daly, Mary. "After the Death of God the Father." Womanspirit Rising. Ed. Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow. San Francisco: Harper, 1979. 53-62.
- Daly, Mary. Beyond God the Father Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation. Boston: Beacon Press, 1973.
- Daly, Mary. "Why Speak about God?" Womanspirit Rising. Ed. Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow. San Francisco: Harper, 1979. 210-218.
- Danforth, Mildred E. A Quaker Pioneer: Laura Haviland Superintendent of the Underground. New York: Exposition Press, 1961.
- Davidson, Cathy N , ed. Reading in America: Literature and Social History. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989.
- Davidson, Cathy N. Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the

Novel in America. New York: Oxford UP, 1986.

Davis, Judy and Juanita Weaver. "Dimensions of Spirituality." The Politics of Women's Spirituality. Ed. Charlene Spretnak. New York: Anchor-Doubleday, 1982. 368-372.

Dayton, Donald W. "Evangelical Roots of Feminism." The Covenant Quarterly 34 (1976): 41-56.

Dayton, Donald W., and Lucille Sider Dayton. "Evangelical Feminism: Some Aspects of its Biblical Interpretation." Explor 2 (1976): 17-22.

Dayton, Lucille Sider, and Donald W. Dayton. "'Your Daughters Shall Prophesy': Feminism in the Holiness Movement." Methodist History 14 (1976): 67-92.

Dearborn, Mary V. Pocahontas's Daughters: Gender and Ethnicity in American Culture. New York: Oxford UP, 1986.

De Lauretis, Teresa. Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984.

Delbanco, Andrew. The Puritan Ordeal. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989.

Dickerson, Vanessa D. "A Spirit of her Own: Nineteenth-Century Feminine Explorations of Spirituality." That Gentle Strength. Ed. Lynda Coon, et al. Charlottesville, VA: U Press of Virginia, 1990. 243-258.

Dieter, Melvin E. The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow P, 1980.



- Diprose, Rosalyn and Robyn Ferrell, eds. Cartographies: Poststructuralism and the mapping of bodies and spaces. St. Leonards, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1991.
- Dobson, Joanne. Dickinson and the Strategies of Reticence: The Woman Writer in Nineteenth-Century America. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989.
- Dodson, Jualynne. "Nineteenth-Century A. M. E. Preaching Women: Cutting Edge of Women's Inclusion in Church Polity." Women in New Worlds. Ed. Hilah Thomas and Rosemary Keller. Nashville: Abingdon, 1981. 276-292.
- Douglas, Ann. The Feminization of American Culture. New York: Knopf, 1977.
- DuPlessis, Rachel Blau. Writing Beyond the Ending. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985.
- Eakin, Paul John. "The Referential Aesthetic of Autobiography." Studies in the Literary Imagination. 23.2 (Fall 1990): 129-144.
- Eliade, Mircea. The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion. Trans. Willard R. Trask. 1957. New York: Harper, 1959.
- Epstein, Barbara Leslie. The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan UP, 1981.
- Fanon, Frantz. Black Skin, White Masks. 1952. Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1967.
- Ferguson, Charles W. Methodists and the Making of America.

Austin: Eakin, 1983.

Fetterly, Judith. The Resisting Reader. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1978.

Fichtelberg, Joseph. The Complex Image: Faith and Method in American Autobiography. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1989.

Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schussler. In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins. New York: Crossroad, 1983.

Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schussler. "Word, Spirit and Power: Women in Early Christian Communities." Women of Spirit. Ed. Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979. 15-28.

Fisher, Philip. Hard Facts. New York: Oxford, 1985.

Flew, R. Newton. The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology. New York: Humanities P, 1968.

Flynn, Elizabeth and Patrocínio Schweickart, eds. Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986.

Foster, Charles I. An Errand of Mercy: The Evangelical United Front, 1790-1837. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1960.

Foster, Frances Smith. "Between the Sides: Afro-American Women Writers as Mediators." Nineteenth-Century Studies 3 (1989): 53-64.

Foster, Frances Smith. "Neither Auction Block nor Pedestal:

'The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee, A Coloured Lady.' The Female Autograph. Ed. Domna Stanton. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984. 126-130.

Foster, Frances Smith. Witnessing Slavery: The Development of Ante-bellum Slave Narratives. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1979.

Foster, Frances Smith. Written By Herself: Literary Production by African American Women, 1746-1892. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993.

Foucault, Michel. Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1979.

Foucault, Michel. The History of Sexuality. 3 vols. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1986.

Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth. "Between Individualism and Community: Autobiographies of Southern Women." Located Lives: Place and Idea in Southern Autobiography. Ed. J. Bill Berry. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1990. 20-38.

Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth. "Between Individualism and Fragmentation: American Culture and the New Literary Studies of Race and Gender." American Quarterly 42.1 (1990): 7-34.

Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth. "Culture and Consciousness in the Intellectual History of European Women." Signs 12.3 (1987): 529-547.

Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth. Feminism Without Illusions: A Critique of Individualism. Chapel Hill: U of North

Carolina P, 1991.

Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth, and Eugene Genovese. Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983.

Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth. "My Statue, My Self: Autobiographical Writings of Afro-American Women." The Private Self. Ed. Shari Benstock. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1988. 63-89.

Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth. "Religion in the Lives of Slaveholding Women of the Antebellum South." That Gentle Strength. Ed. Lynda Coon, et al. Charlottesville, VA: U Press of Virginia, 1990. 206-229.

Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth. "To Write My Self: The Autobiographies of Afro-American Women." Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship. Ed. Shari Benstock. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987.

Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth. Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1988.

Fredrickson, George. The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union. New York: Harper, 1965.

Frerichs, Ernest S., ed. The Bible and Bibles in America. The Bible in American Culture 1. Atlanta: Scholars Press,

1988.

Friedan, Sandra. "Transformative Subjectivity in the Writings of Christa Wolf." Interpreting Women's Lives. Ed. Personal Narratives Group. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989. 172-188.

Friedman, Susan Stanford. "Women's Autobiographical Selves: Theory and Practice." The Private Self. Ed. Shari Benstock. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1988. 34-62.

Frye, Marilyn. The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory. Freedom, CA: Crossing P, 1983.

Gallagher, Catherine. The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Discourse and Narrative Form 1832-1867. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1985.

Gaustad, Edwin Scott. The Great Awakening in New England. New York: Harper, 1957. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965.

Gaustad, Edwin Scott. A Religious History of America. New York: Harper, 1966.

Gaustad, Edwin Scott. Religious Issues in American History. New York: Harper, 1968.

Geertz, Clifford. The Interpretation of Cultures. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

George, Carol V. R. Segregated Sabbaths: Richard Allen and the Emergence of Independent Black Churches, 1760-1840. New York: Oxford UP, 1973.

- Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination. New Haven: Yale UP, 1979.
- Giles, Mary E. The Feminist Mystic and Other Essays on Women and Spirituality. New York: Crossroad, 1982.
- Gilmore, Leigh. Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994.
- Ginsburg, Faye. "Dissonance and Harmony: The Symbolic Function of Abortion in Activists' Life Stories." Interpreting Women's Lives. Ed. Personal Narratives Group. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989. 59-84.
- Goldenberg, Naomi R. "Dreams and Fantasies as Sources of Revelation: Feminist Appropriation of Jung." Womanspirit Rising. Ed. Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow. San Francisco: Harper, 1979. 219-227.
- Gravely, Will B. "African Methodism and the Rise of Black Denominationalism." Perspectives on American Methodism. Ed. Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt. Nashville: Kingswood-Abingdon, 1993. 108-126.
- Gunn, Giles, ed. The Bible and American Arts and Letters. The Bible in American Culture 3. Philadelphia: Fortress Press; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983.
- Gusdorf, Georges. "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography." Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical. Ed. James Olney. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980. 28-48.

- Gusdorf, Georges. "Scripture of the Self: 'Prologue in Heaven.'" Trans. Betsy Wing. Studies in Autobiography. Ed. James Olney. New York: Oxford UP, 1988. 112-127.
- Hall, Timothy D. Contested Boundaries: Itinerancy and the Reshaping of the Colonial American Religious World. Durham: Duke UP, 1994.
- Hambrick-Stowe, Charles E. The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1982.
- Hampsten, Elizabeth. "Considering More than a Single Reader." Interpreting Women's Lives. Ed. Personal Narratives Group. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989. 129-138.
- Hardesty, Nancy. "Minister as Prophet? or As Mother? Two Nineteenth-Century Models." Women in New Worlds. Ed. Hilah Thomas and Rosemary Keller. Nashville: Abingdon, 1981. 88-101.
- Hardesty, Nancy. Women Called to Witness: Evangelical Feminism in the 19th Century. Nashville: Abingdon, 1984.
- Hardesty, Nancy, and Lucille Sider Dayton and Donald W. Dayton. "Women in the Holiness Movement: Feminism in the Evangelical Tradition." Women of Spirit. Ed. Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979. 225-254.
- Harpham, Geoffrey Galt. "Conversion and the Language of Autobiography." Studies in Autobiography. Ed. James

Olney. New York: Oxford UP, 1988. 42-50.

Harris, Barbara J. and JoAnn K. McNamara, eds. Women and the Structure of Society: Selected Research from the Fifth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women. Durham, N. C.: Duke UP, 1984.

Harris, Joseph. "The Plural Text/The Plural Self: Roland Barthes and William Coles." College English 49.2 (1987): 158-170.

Harris, Susan K. "'But is it any Good?': Evaluating Nineteenth-Century Women's Fiction." American Literature 63.1 (1991): 43-61.

Harris, Susan K. 19th-Century American Women's Novels: Interpretive Strategies. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990.

Hart, Francis R. "Notes for an Anatomy of Modern Autobiography." New Directions in Literary History. Ed. Ralph Cohen. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974. 221-247.

Hartman, Mary S. and Lois Banner, eds. Clio's Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women. New York: Harper, 1974.

Hatch, Nathan O. The Democratization of American Christianity. New Haven: Yale UP, 1989.

Hatch, Nathan O. "Millennialism and Popular Religion in the Early Republic." The Evangelical Tradition in America. Ed. Leonard Sweet. Macon, GA: Mercer UP, 1984. 113-130.



- Hatch, Nathan O. "Sola Scriptura and Novus Ordo Seclorum." The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History. Ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll. New York: Oxford UP, 1982. 59-78.
- Hays, Samuel P. The Response to Industrialism: 1885-1914. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1957.
- Haytor, Mary. The New Eve in Christ: The Use and Abuse of the Bible in the Debate about Women in the Church. London: SPCK, 1987.
- Heidt, Edward R. Vision Voiced: Narrative Viewpoint in Autobiographical Writing. New York: Peter Lang, 1991.
- Heilbrun, Carolyn G. Writing a Woman's Life. New York: Norton, 1988.
- Hewitt, Nancy A. "The Perimeters of Women's Power in American Religion." The Evangelical Tradition in America. Ed. Leonard I. Sweet. Macon, GA: Mercer UP, 1984. 233-256.
- Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race." Signs 17.2 (1992): 251-274.
- Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. "The Problem of Race in Women's History." Coming to Terms: Feminism, Theory, Politics. Ed. Elizabeth Weed. New York: Routledge, 1989. 122-133.
- Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church 1880-1920. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993.

Hill, Patricia. The World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation 1879-1920. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1985.

Hoffmann, Leonore and Margo Culley, eds. Women's Personal Narratives: Essays in Criticism and Pedagogy. New York: MLA, 1985.

Hogeland, Ronald W. "'The Female Appendage': Feminine Life-Styles in America, 1820-1860." Civil War History 17.2 (1971): 101-114.

Holden, Pat, ed. Women's Religious Experience. Totowa, NJ: Barnes, 1983.

Holloway, Mark. Heavens on Earth: Utopian Communities in America 1680-1880. 1951. New York: Dover, 1966.

Homans, Margaret. Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986.

hooks, bell. Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics. Boston: South End P, 1990.

Horton, James Oliver. Free People of Color: Inside the African American Community. Washington: Smithsonian Institution P, 1993.

Houchins, Susan E. Introduction. Spiritual Narratives. New York: Oxford UP, 1988.

Hovet, Theodore. "Phoebe Palmer's 'Altar Phraseology' and the Spiritual Dimension of Woman's Sphere." The Journal

of Religion 63.3 (1983): 264-280.

- Howarth, William L. "Some Principles of Autobiography." Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical. Ed. James Olney. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980. 84-114.
- Huf, Linda. A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman: The Writer as Heroine in American Literature. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1983.
- Hull, Gloria and Patricia Bell Scott and Barbara Smith, eds. All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But Some of Us are Brave. Old Westbury, NY: The Feminist P, 1982.
- Humez, Jean McMahon. Introduction. Gifts of Power: The Writings of Rebecca Jackson, Black Visionary, Shaker Eldress. N.p.: U of Massachusetts Press, 1981.
- Humez, Jean McMahon. "'My Spirit Eye': Some Functions of Spiritual and Visionary Experience in the Lives of Five Black Women Preachers, 1810-1880." Women and the Structure of Society. Ed. Barbara J. Harris and JoAnn K. McNamara. Durham, N. C.: Duke UP, 1984. 129-143.
- Humez, Jean McMahon. "Visionary Experience and Power: The Career of Rebecca Cox Jackson." Black Apostles at Home and Abroad. Ed. David W. Wills and Richard Newman. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1982: 105-132.
- Iglehart, Hallie. "The Unnatural Divorce of Spirituality and Politics." The Politics of Women's Spirituality. Ed. Charlene Spretnak. New York: Anchor-Doubleday, 1982. 404-414.

- James, Edward and Janet Wilson James and Paul S. Boyer, eds. Notable American Women, 1607-1950. 3 vols. Cambridge: Belknap-Harvard UP, 1971.
- James, Janet, ed. Women in American Religion. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1980.
- James, William. The Varieties of Religious Experience. 1902. Ed. Introd. Martin Marty. New York: Penguin, 1982.
- Jauss, Hans Robert. "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory." New Directions in Literary History. Ed. Ralph Cohen. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974. 11-41.
- Jay, Paul. Being in the Text: Self-Representation from Wordsworth to Roland Barthes. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1984.
- Jeffrey, Julie Roy. "Ministry Through Marriage: Methodist Clergy Wives on the Trans-Mississippi Frontier." Women in New Worlds. Ed. Hilah Thomas and Rosemary Skinner Keller. Nashville: Abingdon, 1981: 143-160.
- Jelinek, Estelle C. The Tradition of Women's Autobiography: From Antiquity to the Present. Boston: Twayne, 1986.
- Jelinek, Estelle C., ed. Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1980.
- Jones, Charles Edwin. A Guide to the Study of the Holiness Movement. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1974.
- Jones, Charles Edwin. Perfectionist Persuasion: The Holiness Movement and American Methodism, 1867-1936.

- Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow P, 1974.
- Jones, Howard Mumford. The Age of Energy: Varieties of American Experience. New York: Viking, 1971.
- Jones, Jacqueline. Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present. New York: Basic, 1985.
- Kaplan, E. Ann. "Is the Gaze Male?" Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality. Ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson. New York: Monthly Review P, 1983. 309-327.
- Keller, John. The Second Great Awakening in Connecticut. Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 1942.
- Kelley, Mary. Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984.
- Kimball, Gayle. The Religious Ideas of Harriet Beecher Stowe. Studies in Women and Religion 8. New York: Edsin Mellen Press, 1982.
- King, Ursula. Women and Spirituality. London: MacMillan Education, 1989.
- Kissel, Susan S. "Writer Anxiety versus the Need for Community in the Botts Family Letters." Women's Personal Narratives. Eds. Leonore Hoffman and Margo Culley. New York: MLA, 1985. 48-56.
- Kolodny, "Dancing Through the Minefield: Some Observations on the Theory, Practice, and Politics of a Feminist Literary

- Criticism." The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory. Ed. Elaine Showalter. New York: Pantheon, 1985.
- Knight, Janice. Orthodoxies in Massachusetts. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1994.
- Krueger, Christine. The Reader's Repentance: Women Preachers, Women Writers, and Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992.
- Kuykendall, John W. Southern Enterprise: The Work of National Evangelical Societies in the Antebellum South. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1982.
- Lang, Amy Schrager. Prophetic Woman: Anne Hutchinson and the Problem of Dissent in the Literature of New England. Berkeley: U of California P, 1987.
- Lee, Susan Dye. "Evangelical Domesticity: The Woman's Temperance Crusade of 1873-1874." Women in New Worlds. Ed. Hilah Thomas and Rosemary Keller. Nashville: Abingdon, 1981. 293-309.
- Leibowitz, Herbert. Fabricating Lives: Explorations in American Autobiography. New York: Knopf, 1989.
- Lejeune, Philippe. On Autobiography. Trans. Katherine Leary. Ed. Paul John Eakin. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1989.
- Levin, David. Cotton Mather. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1978.
- Levin, David. "Edwards, Franklin, and Cotton Mather: A Meditation on Character and Reputation." Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience. Ed. Nathan O. Hatch

- and Harry S. Stout. New York: Oxford UP, 1988. 34-49.
- Levin, David. "In the Court of Historical Criticism: Alger Hiss's Narrative." Virginia Quarterly Review 52 (1976): 41-78. Rpt. in Forms of Uncertainty. Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1992. 110-153.
- Lewis, I. M. Ecstatic Religion: A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession. 1971. New York: Routledge, 1989.
- Lionnet, Francoise. Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1989.
- Lobody, Diane H. "'That Language Might Be Given Me': Women's Experience in Early Methodism." Perspectives on American Methodism. Ed. Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, Jean Miller Schmidt. Nashville: Kingswood-Abingdon, 1993. 127-144.
- Loewenberg, Bert James and Ruth Bogin, eds. Black Women in Nineteenth-Century American Life. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1976.
- Long, Elizabeth. "Women, Reading, and Cultural Authority: Some Implications of the Audience Perspective in Cultural Studies." American Quarterly 38 (1986): 591-612.
- Luker, Ralph E. "Religion and Social Control in the Nineteenth-Century American City." Journal of Urban History 2.3 (1976): 363-368.
- McKay, Nellie Y. "Nineteenth-Century Black Women's Spiritual Autobiographies: Religious Faith and Self-

- Empowerment." Interpreting Women's Lives. Ed. Personal Narratives Group. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989. 139-154.
- McLaughlin, Eleanor. "The Christian Past: Does it Hold a Future for Women?" Womanspirit Rising. Ed. Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow. San Francisco: Harper, 1979. 93-106.
- McLoughlin, William G., ed. The American Evangelicals, 1800-1900, An Anthology. New York: Harper, 1968. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1976.
- McLoughlin, William G. Introduction. The American Evangelicals, 1800-1900, An Anthology. New York: Harper, 1968. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1976.
- McLoughlin, William G. Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978.
- Mann, Susan A. "Slavery, Sharecropping, and Sexual Inequality." Signs 14.4 (1989): 774-798.
- Marcus, Jane. "Invincible Mediocrity: The Private Selves of Public Women." The Private Self. Ed. Shari Benstock. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1988. 114-146.
- Marsden, George M. "Everyone One's Own Interpreter? The Bible, Science, and Authority in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America." The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History. Ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll. New York: Oxford UP, 1982. 79-100.
- Marty, Martin E. Pilgrims in Their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America. Boston: Little, Brown, 1984.



- Marty, Martin E. Religion and Republic. Boston: Beacon P, 1987.
- Marty, Martin E. Righteous Empire: Protestantism in the United States. New York: Scribner's, 1970.
- Mason, Mary Grimley and Carol Hurd Green, eds. Journeys: Autobiographical Writings by Women. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1979.
- Mason, Mary G. "The Other Voice: Autobiographies of Women Writers." Life/Lines. Ed. Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988. 19-44.
- Mathews, Donald G. "Evangelical America--The Methodist Ideology." Perspectives on Methodism. Ed. Russell Richey, Kenneth Rowe and Jean Miller Schmidt. Nashville: Kingswood-Abingdon, 1993. 17-30.
- Mathews, Donald G. Religion in the Old South. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1977.
- Mathews, Donald G. "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830: An Hypothesis." American Quarterly 21 (1969): 23-43.
- Matthaei, Julie. An Economic History of Women in America: Women's Work, the Sexual Division of Labor, and the Development of Capitalism. New York: Schocken, 1982.
- Matthews, Glenna. 'Just a Housewife': The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America. New York: Oxford UP, 1987.
- May, Georges. L'autobiographie. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1979.

- Maynes, Mary Jo. "Gender and Narrative Form in French and German Working-Class Autobiographies." Interpreting Women's Lives. Ed. Personal Narratives Group. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989. 103-118.
- Mays, Benjamin. The Negro's God as Reflected in His Literature. Boston: Chapman and Grimes, 1938.
- Mehlman, Jeffrey. A Structural Study of Autobiography. 1971. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1974.
- Miller, Nancy. The Heroine's Text. New York: Columbia UP, 1980.
- Miller, Nancy, ed. The Poetics of Gender. New York: Columbia UP, 1986.
- Miller, Nancy. Subject to Change: Reading Feminist Writing. New York: Columbia UP, 1988.
- Miller, Perry. The Life of the Mind in America: From the Revolution to the Civil War. New York: Harcourt, 1965.
- Morgan, Bob. "Three Dreams of Language: Or, No Longer Immured in the Bastille of the Humanist Word." College English 49.4 (1987): 449-458.
- Morgan, Edmund S. Introduction. Puritan Political Ideas, 1558-1794. Ed. Edmund S. Morgan. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965.
- Morton, Nelle. The Journey is Home. Boston: Beacon, 1985.
- Nisbet, Robert. The Quest for Community: A Study in the Ethics of Order and Freedom. 1953. San Francisco: ICS Press, 1990.

- Noll, Mark A. "The Image of the United States as a Biblical Nation, 1776-1865." The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History. Ed. Nathan Hatch and Mark Noll. New York: Oxford UP, 1982. 39-58.
- Nussbaum, Felicity. The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989.
- Nussbaum, Felicity. "Eighteenth-Century Women's Autobiographical Commonplaces." The Private Self. Ed. Shari Benstock. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1988. 147-172.
- Nussbaum, Felicity. "Toward Conceptualizing Diary." Studies in Autobiography. Ed. James Olney. New York: Oxford UP, 1988. 128-140.
- Olney, James, ed. Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980.
- Olney, James. Metaphors of Self. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972.
- Olney, James, ed. Studies in Autobiography. New York: Oxford UP, 1988.
- Papashvily, Helen W. All the Happy Endings: A Study of the Domestic Novel in America, the Women Who Wrote It, the Women Who Read It, in the Nineteenth Century. New York: Harper, 1956.
- Pascal, Roy. Design and Truth in Autobiography. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960.

- Pattee, Fred Lewis. The Feminine Fifties. 1940. Port Washington, NY: Kennikat P, 1966.
- Perkins, Linda. "Black women and Racial 'Uplift' Prior to Emancipation." The Black Woman Cross-Culturally. Ed. Filomina Chioma Steady. Cambridge: Schenkman, 1981. 317- 334.
- Perkins, Linda. "The Impact of the 'Cult of True Womanhood' on the Education of Black Women." Journal of Social Issues 39.3 (1983): 17-28.
- Perry, Lewis. "'We Have Had Conversation in the World': The Abolitionists and Spontaneity." The Canadian Review of American Studies 6.1 (Spring 1975): 3-26.
- Personal Narratives Group, eds. Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989.
- Peters, John Leland. Christian Perfection and American Methodism. New York: Abingdon, 1956.
- Peterson, Linda. "Female Autobiographer, Narrative Duplicity." Studies in the Literary Imagination 23.2 (Fall 1990): 165-176.
- Peterson, Linda. "Gender and Autobiographical Form: The Case of the Spiritual Autobiography." Studies in Autobiography. Ed. James Olney. New York: Oxford UP, 1988. 211-222.
- Peterson, Linda. Victorian Autobiography: The Tradition of Self-Interpretation. New Haven: Yale UP, 1986.

- Phy, Allene Stuart, ed. The Bible and Popular Culture in America. The Bible in American Culture 2. Philadelphia: Fortress Press; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985.
- Pierard, Richard V. The Unequal Yoke: Evangelical Christianity and Political Conservatism. New York: Lippincott, 1970.
- Porterfield, Amanda. Female Piety in Puritan New England: The Emergence of Religious Humanism. New York: Oxford UP, 1992.
- Porterfield, Amanda. Feminine Spirituality in America: From Sarah Edwards to Martha Graham. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1980.
- Potter, David. People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1945.
- Pullin, Faith. "Enclosure/Disclosure: A Tradition of American Autobiography by Women." First Person Singular: Studies in American Autobiography. Ed. A. Robert Lee. New York: St. Martin's, 1988. 125-150.
- Rabinowitz, Richard. The Spiritual Self in Everyday Life: The Transformation of Personal Religious Experience in Nineteenth-Century New England. Boston: Northeastern UP, 1989.
- Raboteau, Albert. "Black Christianity in North America." Encyclopedia of American Religious Experience. Ed. Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams. Vol. 1. New York: Scribner's, 1988. 3 vols. 1988. 635-648.

- Raboteau, Albert. "The Black Experience in American Evangelicalism." The Evangelical Tradition in America. Ed. Leonard Sweet. Macon, GA: Mercer UP, 1984. 181-198.
- Raboteau, Albert. Slave Religion. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1978.
- Radway, Janice. "Reading is not Eating: Mass-Produced Literature and the Theoretical, Methodological, and Political Consequences of a Metaphor." Book Research Quarterly (1986): 7-29.
- Railton, Stephen. Authorship and Audience: Literary Performance in the American Renaissance. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991.
- Reimer, Gail Twersky. "Revisions of Labor in Margaret Oliphant's Autobiography." Life/Lines. Eds. Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988. 203-220.
- Relph, E. Place and Placelessness. London: Pion, 1976.
- Renza, Louis. "The Veto of the Imagination: A Theory of Autobiography." New Literary History 9.1 (1977): 1-26.
- Reynolds, David S. Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989.
- Reynolds, David S. "From Doctrine to Narrative: The Rise of Pulpit Storytelling in America." American Quarterly 32.5 (1980): 479-498.
- Reynolds, David S. "The Feminization Controversy: Sexual

Stereotypes and the Paradoxes of Piety in Nineteenth-Century America." The New England Quarterly 53.1 (1980): 96-106.

Richey, Russell E. Early American Methodism. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991.

Rigney, B. H. Madness and Sexual Politics in the Feminist Novel. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1978.

Romines, Ann. The Home Plot: Women, Writing and Domestic Ritual. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1992.

Rose, Gillian. Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993.

Rosell, Garth M. "Charles G. Finney: His Place in the Stream." The Evangelical Tradition in America. Ed. Leonard Sweet. Macon, GA: Mercer UP, 1984. 131-148.

Rosenblatt, Roger. "Black Autobiography: Life as the Death Weapon." Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical. Ed. James Olney. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980. 169-180.

Ross, Ellen and Rayna Rapp. "Sex and Society: A Research Note from Social History and Anthropology." Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality. Ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson. New York: Monthly Review P, 1983. 51-73.

Rossi, Alice S., ed. The Feminist Papers. New York: Columbia, 1973.

- Rothman, Sheila M. Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices 1870 to the Present. New York: Basic Books, 1978.
- Ruether, Rosemary, ed. Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974.
- Ruether, Rosemary and Rosemary Keller, eds. Women and Religion in America. Vol. 1. New York: Harper, 1981.
- Ruether, Rosemary and Eleanor McLaughlin, eds. Women of Spirit. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979.
- Russell, Letty, ed. Feminist Interpretation of the Bible. Philadelphia: Westminster P, 1985.
- Russell, Letty. Household of Freedom: Authority in Feminist Theology. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987.
- Ryan, Mary. "A Women's Awakening: Evangelical Religion and the Families of Utica, New York, 1800-1840." Women in American Religion. Ed. Janet James. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1980.
- Saiving, Valerie. "The Human Situation: A Feminine View." Womanspirit Rising. Ed. Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow. San Francisco: Harper, 1979. 25-42.
- Salem, Dorothy. To Better Our World: Black Women in Organized Reform, 1890-1920. Black Women in United States History. Ed. Darlene Clark Hine. Vol. 14. Brooklyn: Carlson, 1990.
- Sanchez-Eppler, Karen. "Bodily Bonds: The Intersecting



- Rhetorics of Feminism and Abolition." Representations 24 (1988): 28-59.
- Sandeep, Ernest R. The Bible and Social Reform. The Bible in American Culture 6. Philadelphia: Fortress Press; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982.
- Sasson, Diane. The Shaker Spiritual Narrative. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1983.
- Sayre, Robert. "Autobiography and the Making of America." Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical. Ed. James Olney. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980. 146-168.
- Sayre, Robert. The Examined Self: Benjamin Franklin, Henry Adams, Henry James. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1964.
- Schenck, Celeste. "All of a Piece: Women's Poetry and Autobiography." Life/Lines. Eds. Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988. 281-305.
- Schmidt, Jean Miller. "Reexamining the Public/Private Split: Reforming the Continent and Spreading Scriptural Holiness." Perspectives on American Methodism. Ed. Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt. Nashville: Kingswood-Abingdon, 1993. 228-247.
- Scholes, Robert and Robert Kellogg. The Nature of Narrative. New York: Oxford, 1966.
- Schor, Naomi. Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine. New York: Methuen, 1987.
- Schuyler, David. "Inventing a Feminine Past." New England Quarterly 51.3 (1978): 291-308.

- Scott, Anne Firor. "Women, Religion and Social Change in the South 1830-1930." Religion and the Solid South. Ed. Samuel S. Hill, Jr. Nashville: Abingdon, 1972. 92-121.
- Scott, James C. Domination and the Arts of Resistance. New Haven: Yale UP, 1990.
- Scott, James C. Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance. New Haven: Yale UP, 1985.
- Shapiro, Ann R. Unlikely Heroines: Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers and the Woman Question. New York: Greenwood, 1987.
- Shea, Daniel B., Jr. "Elizabeth Ashbridge and the Voice Within." Journeys in New Worlds. Ed. William Andrews. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1990. 119-146.
- Shea, Daniel B., Jr. Spiritual Autobiography in Early America. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1968.
- Showalter, Elaine. A Literature of Their Own: British Novelists from Bronte to Lessing. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977.
- Sicherman, Barbara. "Sense and Sensibility: A Case Study of Women's Reading in Late-Victorian America." Reading in America. Ed. Cathy Davidson. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989. 201-225.
- Simson, Rennie. "The Afro-American Female: The Historical Context of the Construction of Sexual Identity." Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality. Ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson. New York:

- Monthly Review P, 1983. 229-235.
- Sizer, Sandra S. Gospel Hymns and Social Religion: The Rhetoric of Nineteenth-Century Revivalism. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1978.
- Sklar, Kathryn Kish. Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity. 1973. New York: Norton, 1976.
- Sklar, Kathryn Kish. "The Last Fifteen Years: Historians' Changing Views of American Women in Religion and Society." Women in New Worlds. Ed. Hilah Thomas and Rosemary Keller. Nashville: Abingdon, 1981. 48-68.
- Smith, Sidonie. "Construing Truths in Lying Mouths: Truthtelling in Women's Autobiography." Studies in the Literary Imagination 23.2 (Fall 1990): 145-164.
- Smith, Sidonie. A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation. Bloomington: U of Indiana P, 1987.
- Smith, Sidonie. "Resisting the Gaze of Embodiment: Women's Autobiography in the Nineteenth Century." American Women's Autobiography. Ed. Margo Culley. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1992. 75-110.
- Smith, Timothy. Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War. New York: Abingdon, 1957. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins P, 1980.
- Smith, Timothy. "Righteousness and Hope: Christian Holiness and The Millennial Vision in America, 1800-1900." American Quarterly 31.1 (1979): 21-45.

- Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America. New York: Knopf, 1985.
- Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America." Signs 1.1-2 (1975): 1-29.
- Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. Religion and the Rise of the City. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1971.
- Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. "Women and Religious Revivals: Anti-Ritualism, Liminality, and the Emergence of the American Bourgeoisie." The Evangelical Tradition in America. Ed. Leonard I. Sweet. Macon, GA: Mercer UP, 1984. 199-232.
- Snitow, Ann, and Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson, eds. Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality. New York: Monthly Review P, 1983.
- Sommer, Doris. "'Not Just a Personal Story': Women's Testimonios and the Plural Self." Life/Lines. Ed. Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988. 107-130.
- Spacks, Patricia Meyer. "Female Rhetoric." The Private Self. Ed. Shari Benstock. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1988. 177-191.
- Spacks, Patricia Meyer. Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth-Century England. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1976.
- Spacks, Patricia Meyer. "Selves in Hiding." Women's

- Autobiography: Essays in Criticism. Ed. Estelle Jelinek. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1980. 112-132.
- Spector, Judith, ed. Gender Studies: New Directions in Feminist Criticism. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1986.
- Spengemann, William C. The Adventurous Muse: The Poetics of American Fiction, 1789-1900. New Haven: Yale UP, 1977.
- Spengemann, William C. The Forms of Autobiography: Episodes in the History of Literary Genre. New Haven: Yale UP, 1980.
- Spretnek, Charlene, ed. The Politics of Women's Spirituality. Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1982.
- Stanton, Domna C., ed. The Female Autograph. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984.
- Starobinski, Jean. "The Style of Autobiography." Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical. Ed. James Olney. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980. 73-83.
- Starr, G. A. Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography. New York: Gordian, 1971.
- Sterling, Dorothy. We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century. New York: Norton, 1984.
- Strasser, Susan. Never Done: A History of American Housework. New York: Pantheon, 1982.
- Strasser, Susan. Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market. New York: Pantheon-Random, 1989.
- Sturrock, John. "The New Model Autobiographer." New

Literary History 9.1 (1977): 51-63.

Suleiman, Susan R. and Inge Crosman, eds. The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980.

Sweet, Leonard I. Black Images of America, 1784-1870. New York: Norton, 1976.

Sweet, Leonard I., ed. The Evangelical Tradition in America. Macon, GA: Mercer UP, 1984.

Sweet, Leonard I. The Minister's Wife: Her Role in Nineteenth-Century American Evangelicalism. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1983.

Sweet, Leonard I. "Nineteenth-Century Evangelicalism." Encyclopedia of American Religious Experience. Ed. Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams. Vol. 2. New York: Scribner's, 1988. 3 vols. 1988. 875-899.

Sweet, William Warren. Methodism in American History. Nashville: Abingdon, 1961.

Tate, Claudia. Domestic Allegories of Political Desire: The Black Heroine's Text at the Turn of the Century. New York: Oxford, 1992.

Tavard, George H. Woman in Christian Tradition. Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame Press, 1973.

Thomas, George M. Revivalism and Cultural Change: Christianity, Nation Building, and the Market in the Nineteenth-Century United States. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1989.

- Thomas, Hilah E. and Rosemary Skinner Keller, eds. Women in New Worlds: Historical Perspectives on the Wesleyan Tradition. Nashville: Abingdon, 1981.
- Tompkins, Jane, ed. Reader-Response Criticism. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980.
- Tompkins, Jane. Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860. New York: Oxford UP, 1985.
- Trible, Phyllis. Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984.
- Tuveson, Ernest Lee. Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1968.
- Voss, Norine. "'Saying the Unsayable': An Introduction to Women's Autobiography." Gender Studies. Ed. Judith Spector. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987. 218-233.
- Wach, Joachim. Sociology of Religion. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1944.
- Walker, Nancy. "'Wider than the Sky': Public Presence and Private Self in Dickinson, James, and Woolf." The Private Self. Ed. Shari Benstock. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1988. 272-304.
- Walters, Ronald G. American Reformers, 1815-1860. New York: Hill and Wang, 1978.
- Warner, Marina. Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary. New York: Knopf, 1976.

- Warren, Joyce W. The American Narcissus: Individualism and Women in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1984.
- Washington, Joseph R. Race and Religion in Early Nineteenth Century America, 1800-1850: Constitution, Conscience, and Calvinist Compromise. Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1988.
- Watkins, Owen C. The Puritan Experience. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972.
- Watt, Ian. The Rise of the Novel. Berkeley: U of California P, 1957.
- Waugh, Susan. "Women's Shorter Autobiographical Writings: Expression, Identity, and Form." Women's Personal Narratives. Eds. Leonore Hoffmann and Margo Culley. New York: MLA, 1985. 144-152.
- Weber, Max. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. Trans. Talcott Parsons. New York: Scribner's, 1930.
- Weed, Elizabeth, ed. Coming to Terms: Feminism, Theory, Politics. New York: Routledge, 1989.
- Weintraub, Karl Joachim. The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978.
- Welter, Barbara. Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century. Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP, 1976.
- Welter, Barbara. "She Hath Done What She Could: Protestant



- Women's Missionary Careers in Nineteenth-Century America." American Quarterly 30 (1978): 624- 638. Rpt. in Women in American Religion. Ed. Janet James. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1980. 111-125.
- Wesley, Charles. Richard Allen: Apostle of Freedom. Washington, D. C.: The Associated Publishers, 1935.
- Wiebe, Robert H. The Search for Order 1877-1920. New York: Hill and Wang, 1967.
- Williams, Delores S. "Black Women's Literature and the Task of Feminist Theology." Immaculate and Powerful. Eds. Clarissa Atkinson, Constance Buchanan, and Margaret Miles. Boston: Beacon P, 1985. 88-110.
- Williams, Raymond. Marxism and Literature. New York: Oxford UP, 1977.
- Williams, Sherley Anne. "The Blues Roots of Contemporary Afro-American Poetry." Afro-American Literature: The Reconstruction of Instruction. Ed. Dexter Fisher and Robert B. Stepto. New York: MLA, 1979. 72-87.
- Wills, David W. "Womanhood and Domesticity in the A. M. E. Tradition: The Influence of Daniel Alexander Payne." Black Apostles at Home and Abroad. Ed. David W. Wills and Richard Newman. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1982. 133-146.
- Wilson, Katharina M. Introduction. Medieval Women Writers. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1984.
- Wolch, Jennifer, and Michael Dear, eds. The Power of Geography: How Territory Shapes Social Life. Boston:

Unwin Hyman, 1989.

Wood, Forrest G. The Arrogance of Faith: Christianity and Race in America from the Colonial Era to the Twentieth Century. New York: Knopf, 1990.

Yellin, Jean Fagan. Women and Sisters: The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture. New Haven: Yale UP, 1989.

Young-Bruehl, Elisabeth. Freud on Women: A Reader. New York: Norton, 1990.