

although the challenge posed by them was smaller. Voluntarism and localism continued to be the response of choice to urban poverty and disease, an outcome Gallman finds less appropriate than the English model. His sympathies clearly lie with more aggressive styles of government and interventionist solutions.

In Gallman's view, trans-Atlantic distinctions emerge as ones of degree rather than kind. But small distinctions can produce large results. Gallman acknowledges but underplays social and economic differences between the two cities. The racial and ethnic diversity of Philadelphia combined with its low level of policing allowed a violent street culture to flourish. Protestant nativists had greater license and nastier habits on this side of the Atlantic. On the other hand, Catholics were freer in the USA than in Britain during the 1840s and 1850s to organize congregations and schools, as well as societies which aided the emigrants. The higher US wages and more benign demography gave emigrants themselves greater resources. More systematic social and economic comparisons might well have recast in significant ways the dimensions of the comparative problem posed by the famine Irish. In any case, the voluntarist social welfare solution chosen by Philadelphians lasted, for the most part, until the New Deal and has recently reemerged as the policy of choice for many in the Congress. It was scarcely a short term response soon to be abandoned. Without a more detailed examination of who was aided and what they received, its impact during the famine period cannot be measured accurately against that of the Liverpool Poor Law, which worked actively to deport Irish migrants and to give applicants as little as possible. Judgements on the relative effectiveness of public and private welfare initiatives in a period when benefits and entitlement were individually negotiated are notoriously difficult to make in large part because they require detailed analyses of need as well as of aid. Gender and age differences in populations shape policies and impacts in significant ways also. While I share Gallman's preference for state mandated welfare payments, its relative effectiveness in meeting the challenge of the famine Irish cannot be conclusively demonstrated without reference to other sorts of sources. While he demonstrates the benefits of a well-designed comparison, his strong focus on public policy does not supply all the materials needed to assess its impact.

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Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans. By Joyce Appleby (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 2000. viii plus 322 pp.).

The Unvarnished Truth: Personal Narratives in Nineteenth-Century America. By Ann Fabian (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. xiii plus 255 pp.).

Both of these books feature published autobiographical writings as their central source of historical evidence, but they do so to rather different ends. Joyce Appleby employs autobiographies of successful white men as a starting point to

fashion a synthetic narrative of the Early American Republic. Ann Fabian, on the other hand, uses autobiographies of marginalized men (white and black) to investigate standards of credibility in nineteenth-century American print culture. Fabian contributes more directly to the recent burgeoning of scholarship on the autobiography form in America and Europe,¹ whereas Appleby's ambition reaches beyond the monographic to highlight the "human touch" that autobiographical evidence can bring to the writing of grand historical narrative.

Joyce Appleby focuses on what she identifies as the "first generation" (p. 5) of Americans born in the fateful years between 1776 and 1800, the generation which inherited the many opportunities and many burdens created by the American Revolution. The cultural flexibility already apparent in the colonial period would magnify so dramatically in this post-revolutionary world that the colonial past rapidly became obsolete as a point of cultural reference for a rising generation faced with the open-ended task of building a new nation. If the Revolution witnessed a wrenching disruption of society and a radical transformation of governance in America, it was the Early Republic which would see the abstract political principles of the Revolution turned into concrete social realities and enduring cultural myths. The Early Republic, according to Appleby, resulted in the ascendancy of versions of individualism and nationalism whose positive and negative legacies still confront Americans in the present day.

The introductory chapter seeks to contextualize a fundamental bias in Appleby's primary source base, so that she can pinpoint which social groups generated these myths of individualism and nationalism, and which did not. The core of her evidence comes from a sample of over 200 published autobiographies, but the preponderance of these were written by "white Northern clergymen" (p. 23). Hence, Appleby also gathered data on "thousands of other active members of the first generation" (p. 24) who did not happen to publish autobiographies. Conceding that such a cohort still did not directly cover "those who declined to become pathbreakers or in fact were categorically excluded" (p. 24), Appleby rounds out a complete image of American social diversity via secondary literature that highlights the experiences of women, enslaved and free blacks, Native Americans, and other marginalized social groups. Even so, these groups remain positioned somewhere outside the "first generation" of Americans; they serve largely as surrounding context for the "successful white men" (p. 5) who provide the ideological thrust of Appleby's narrative. Appleby scrupulously includes both history's winners and losers in that narrative, yet her source base does not afford equal access to the countervailing subjectivities and alternative ideologies of the losers—those who likely viewed the triumph of individualism and nationalism rather differently.

After the introduction, the bulk of Appleby's book pulls the reader away from questions of subjectivity, and into the brisk flow of narrative. It is here that her use of autobiographies pays immense dividends, because in strikingly kinetic prose Appleby weaves a grand historical narrative not through abstract social aggregates, but through a succession of concrete individual stories. The effect is to render a decisive sweep of American history both vivid and dramatic, and to populate that history not with ordinary men (they are somewhat too successful to be ordinary), but with many unexceptional men who acted as "agents of change" (p. 3) in an extraordinary interval of American history. Chapters Two

and Three set the scene by outlining how the vast energies of these middling white men unleashed a democratic new political culture and an entrepreneurial new economic culture between the 1790s and the 1820s.

Appleby then devotes the next several chapters to surveying transformations of social relations within this overall political and economic panorama. Chapter Four examines the proliferation of new kinds of career opportunities in the burgeoning economy. Chapter Five sketches new forms of social distinction that emerged, ironically, in an increasingly egalitarian society, while Chapter Six scrutinizes family relations pressured by intensifying social and geographical mobility. Chapter Seven focuses on the growth of reform organizations striving to stabilize the effects of widening social fragmentation. In all of these chapters, Appleby draws on autobiographies to feature the contributions of the middling white men who propelled social and cultural change, yet she also judiciously contrasts their experiences of empowerment and success against those less fortunate. Even if a reliance on triumphant autobiographies does not enable Appleby to craft a multi-dimensional analysis of contrasting ideological outlooks, she nevertheless strives to account for experiences of social change at sharp variance from each other.

The final chapter brings Appleby to the central concern simmering beneath the surface of all the previous chapters—the question of “American nationalism” (p. 241). It is here that Appleby most forcefully argues that the dominance of successful white men over American life in the Early Republic resulted in an exclusionary rather than inclusive national ideology. Among the many troublesome legacies of this exclusionary ideology would be sectional tensions between the North and the South. Northerners “composed a powerful account of enterprise, success, and progress that dominated Americans’ self-evaluations for the rest of the century, leaving Southerners bereft of a national narrative that included them” (p. 242). Here, as throughout the book, Appleby’s primary source base of autobiographies privileges the perspective of history’s winners. What we gain in Appleby’s impressive synthesis, however, is a forceful sense of some of the intention and agency operating in history, and a careful sense of some of the context surrounding the ascendancy of any one social group.

Ann Fabian places front and center the very cohort of Americans whom Appleby cannot easily include—the unsuccessful and the marginalized, at least among men. While Appleby had access to few autobiographies by unsuccessful men during the span of the Early Republic, such men increasingly put their experiences into print over the course of the nineteenth century, providing the grist for Fabian’s analysis. Fabian devotes individual chapters to four categories of men—“beggars, convicts, slaves, and soldiers” (p. 4)—who sought to turn their personal afflictions into marketable “commodities” (p. 11). For white men who had been reduced to poverty by misfortune, selling their story might be a chance to recoup their financial losses. For black men who had managed to escape slavery, selling their story might help them improvise a new livelihood. In featuring the published autobiographies of these marginalized men, Fabian’s goal is to reconstruct an understudied segment of popular literature which circulated somewhere “beneath” the respectable genres of literature that have been amply described by other scholars (p. 3).

Fabian’s source base reaches further down the social spectrum than Joyce Ap-

pleby's, but it contains limitations of its own, especially of gender. The autobiographies reveal a decidedly man's world, where men who had suffered calamity strove to reclaim their embattled masculinity. Yet Fabian's marginalized men, akin to Appleby's successful men, nevertheless contributed their mite to the rise of an individualistic ethos in America. They did this not by dint of personal success, but by putting their personal struggles into print and thereby moving "the individual to the center of American culture" (p. 2).

Indeed, Fabian is most interested in explaining how such marginalized men were suddenly, in the nineteenth century, able to infiltrate a print culture dominated by the respectable middle class. Given the disdain directed toward the impoverished, the enslaved, and the imprisoned, such marginalized men faced an extraordinary burden of proof to credential themselves for an audience of middle-class readers. Fabian's analysis centers on the various strategies they employed to establish credibility. One rhetorical strategy, for instance, was for marginalized men to emphasize some kind of common denominator, such as patriotism or religious affiliation, that might prompt middle-class readers to overlook otherwise unbridgeable differences of status, and to cast a sympathetic eye on their plight.

Because rhetorical strategies alone were insufficient to establish personal credibility, marginalized men were obliged to resort to "recognized" social authorities (p. 47) to vouch on their behalf. For this reason, Fabian's book is not only an analysis of the beggars, convicts, slaves, and soldiers who wrote autobiographies. It is also an analysis of the ministers, social reformers, abolitionists, and other authority figures who mediated between the lowly autobiographers and the middle-class audiences who might, or might not, purchase their books. Verification was necessary due to powerful middle-class anxieties about being able to distinguish between the deserving and the undeserving poor. In the end, the publishing of autobiographies by marginalized men served to reinforce rather than undermine the social hierarchy. Such a man might manage to establish his personal credibility with the help of middle-class mediators, but he was never able to gain any independent, broader social authority.

Fabian's analysis draws out the complex procedures by which various kinds of marginalized men published their autobiographies. Chapter Two focuses on beggars, men who had suffered some kind of misfortune for which they blamed external injustices rather than personal shortcomings. Chapter Three examines convicts, who did not deny their crimes but did seek to protect their reputations in the face of public notoriety they felt was premised on falsehoods. Fugitive slaves are the concern of Chapter Four, men who peddled autobiographies as they traveled on the lecture tours that sometimes became their livelihoods in freedom. Chapter Five focuses on Northern prisoners of war reclaiming their masculinity and their whiteness by differentiating themselves from the enslaved blacks usually associated with the brutal regime of the South. The Epilogue is considerably more than a summary of the book, and carries Fabian's analysis forward to the 1920s publication of a new magazine called *True Story*. At this point, it was working-class readers, not middle-class authorities, who ratified the authenticity of personal narratives appearing in print. Middle-class critics disparaged the authenticity of the personal narratives the magazine published, but that criticism did not diminish its popularity among working-class readers.

It is not entirely clear why such popularity did not happen earlier. Were

middle-class mediators the key barrier, or was it a dearth of working-class readers before the twentieth century? Fabian alludes to an increasing taste for "sensational stories" (p. 70) even among the respectable middle class, but does not fully compare the realms of autobiography and fiction to explain why, if an author hoped above all to make money, telling a true story was more imperative than telling an entertaining story. Why were middle-class audiences so anxious about the supposed veracity of the books they might choose to read, and why did this anxiety remain so high across the entire century? Marginalized men prudently employed a rhetoric of humility to flatter middle-class readers, though it is unclear to what degree these men either internalized or merely manipulated middle-class versions of veracity and morality.² In peddling their stories, did marginalized men manage to retain an independent set of ideological values based on something other than the triumphant individualism of the middle class? In other words, did they retain a subjectivity of their own?

The question of subjectivity has been the central preoccupation of the recent scholarship on the autobiography form, precisely with the aim of throwing bounds around male, middle-class myths of individualism which were long uncritically glorified by scholars as a timeless cultural norm. The objective of this new scholarship has been not only to demonstrate the exclusionary nature of such supposedly universal ideologies, but especially to appreciate the presence of alternative ideological outlooks existing before the heyday of individualism, and then alongside it. Without this revisionism, history can be falsely distorted into the inexorable democratization of individualism, as if individualism were not historically contingent, socially specific, and suffused with dialectics of power.

Subjectivity and its role in the imposition and maintenance of power are not the direct focus of either Fabian's or Appleby's analyses. They choose other routes to dramatize inequalities of power in American history. Ann Fabian advances our understanding of autobiographies by detailing the publishing procedures that permitted marginalized men to participate in print culture without posing any threat to the entrenched social hierarchies of nineteenth-century America. Joyce Appleby limns a panoramic view of the Early American Republic filtered through self-congratulatory myths of individualism and nationalism generated by successful white men often to the violent exclusion of other social groups. In both books, autobiographical writings are put to the service of cautionary tales of social dominance.

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ENDNOTES

1. For notable recent books, see Mary Jo Maynes, *Taking the Hard Road: Life Course in French and German Workers' Autobiographies in the Era of Industrialization* (Chapel Hill, 1995); Michael Mascuch, *Origins of the Individualist Self: Autobiography and Self-Identity in England, 1591-1791* (Stanford, 1996); James S. Amelang, *The Flight of Icarus: Artisan Autobiography in Early Modern Europe* (Stanford, 1998); Susan Clair Imbarrato, *Declarations of Independency in Eighteenth-Century American Autobiography* (Knoxville, 1998); Rodger M. Payne, *The Self and the Sacred: Conversion and Autobiography in Early American Protestantism* (Knoxville, 1998); Katherine Clay Bassard, *Spiritual Interrogations: Culture, Gender, and Community in Early African American Women's Writing* (Princeton, 1999).

2. On questions of subjectivity as well as editorial procedure, see, for example, John Sekora, "Black Message/White Envelope: Genre, Authenticity, and Authority in Antebellum Slave Narratives," *Callaloo* 10 (1987): 482–515; Linda H. Peterson, "Institutionalizing Women's Autobiography: Nineteenth-Century Editors and the Shaping of an Autobiographical Tradition," in *The Culture of Autobiography: Constructions of Self-Representation*, Robert Folkenflik, ed. (Stanford, 1993), 80–103.

One Quarter of Humanity: Malthusian Mythology and Chinese Realities. By James Z. Lee and Wang Feng (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999. xii plus 248 pp.).

In *One Quarter of Humanity* James Lee and Wang Feng present an overview of China's demographic history over the last three centuries that is both sweeping and revisionist. They challenge Malthus' characterization of the Chinese population as one of universal marriage and high fertility, held in check only by high mortality (the positive check), and replace it with a model that emphasizes instead the role of Chinese collectivities (the family and the state) in regulating both fertility and mortality, and maintaining the balance of population and resources. Their work builds on recent publications in Chinese economic and demographic history, including the authors' own important contributions to population history through studies of the Chinese imperial lineage and the banner populations of Northeast China.

Despite almost uninterrupted growth since the eighteenth century, the devastating subsistence crises predicted by the Malthusian model have not acted to limit the Chinese population. Lee and Wang argue not only that productivity and technological improvement have kept food supplies in pace with demand, but that institutional mechanisms have limited growth to maintain an overall balance between population and resources. Their argument that these institutional mechanisms constitute a preventive check that limited growth, in contrast to the Malthusian assumption of unrestrained fertility, is both innovative and controversial. In a series of chapters in the core of the book the authors lay out four key mechanisms that operated as a preventive check: female infanticide, male celibacy and minor marriage, marital restraint, and adoption. All of these reflect aspects of the culture of the Chinese family that contrast with that of the European family and marriage system, and shape Chinese demographic behavior in distinctive ways.

The first mechanism, female infanticide, reflects the son preference of the Chinese patrilineal family. High rates of female infanticide have two important demographic consequences. First, by reducing the size of the female population reaching reproductive age, they limit the population's growth potential. Secondly, by creating a shortage of brides, compared to the number of grooms reaching marriage age, they ensure that marriage for females is both early and universal while forcing many Chinese men to forego marriage. In addition to male celibacy, the shortage of brides induces Chinese parents to arrange marriages for their sons by adopting and raising young girls as daughters-in-law; this is important to the authors' model as these 'minor' marriages have been shown by Arthur Wolf to depress marital fertility.