

their fathers' daughters

the autobiographies

of jane addams

and florence kelley

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It was a snowy late-December morning when Jane Addams opened the door of Chicago's Hull-House social settlement to find Florence Kelley waiting on the front porch.¹ The year was 1891, and though the settlement was only several years old, it already had gained a national reputation as had its founders, Addams and Ellen Starr. Kelley was one of many talented, educated women attracted to Hull-House in the final decade of the nineteenth century. There she took up residence while designing a pioneering system for factory inspection in the state of Illinois. Eventually she returned to her New York home where she became the executive secretary of the National Consumers' League. Although separated, Addams and Kelley maintained a life-long friendship and partnership in a variety of early-twentieth century reform causes.

Both women described their careers in autobiographies. While Addams published her story in two volumes, Kelley undertook a serialized account of her life, but died before the project reached completion. She nonetheless left a graphic picture of her childhood. Though raised in the diverse settings of rural Illinois and industrial Pennsylvania, the women produced strikingly similar accounts of their early years. By their own assessment, they were born on the eve of the Civil War and raised in homes rich with traditions of public service and activism. Moreover they matured with unusually close attachments to their fathers. Such commonality, echoed in

the writing of many of the period's outstanding women, invites comparison and questions. Did the women write according to some sort of generational convention or for the historic record? Should their autobiographies be read as fact or artifact? Did they write to document the past, justify the present or shape the future? In other words, why did they write as they did, and more specifically, why did they devote so much of their literary effort to their fathers? The answers to such questions are important for what they reveal about Addams and Kelley, two of the Progressive Era's most prominent women. For the sake of this article, they are even more significant for what they disclose about the women as autobiographers.

Only in the decades since the conclusion of World War II has autobiography been treated as a distinctive literary genre separate from biography. For the most part, critics have focused on works written by men, and relatively little scrutiny has been given to women's stories. According to Estelle C. Jelinek, "Even when women's autobiographies are given some scant attention in studies, social bias against the condition or the delineation of their lives seems to predominate over critical objectivity."² She adds, "if we ignore the subjective biases of critics of autobiography, we find that most of their objective theories are not applicable to women's life studies."³ Thus a primary purpose of this article is to begin to redress the existing imbalance by exploring the narratives of Addams and Kelley, while also offering insight into the lives of the two women.

Jane Addams introduced her autobiography, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, with the observation that all of her early impressions were connected to her father, "the dominant influence" of her young life.⁴ She likened their relationship to a cord upon which were strung childhood memories. The linkage not only "held fast my supreme affection," but also "first drew me into the moral concerns of life and later afforded a clue there to which I wistfully clung in the intricacy of its mazes" (*TY*, 19). Such a metaphor is revealing. Once Addams relied upon her mother for sustenance, yet in retrospect it was her father who provided life's line. Though he was never her principal caretaker, John Addams emerged in his daughter's narrative as her primary figure of attachment. The bond between the two was not the product of physiological dependence, but of the quality and intensity of interaction. Lest her readers miss that point, Addams commented several pages later, "I centered upon him all that careful imitation which a little girl ordinarily gives to her mother's ways and habits" (*TY*, 25). She exchanged schooling at a woman's side for the opportunity to explore the male world of work, where status was earned and responsibility assigned according to ability, rather than ascribed as a simple function of gender.⁵ One's worth, she learned, was to be demonstrated and, once proven, rewarded with power and respect. Most young women of Jane Addams' day spent their formative years in preparation for marriage and motherhood. For them identity was assumed. By her own account, Addams' experience was different, and therein lay the origins of her adult career path.

Jane Addams documented her claims with examples and anecdotes. She wrote, for instance, of her desire to develop a flattened thumb and scarred hands like those of her miller father. When not hovering over the millstone, she placed herself in his library, poring through books in an effort to understand life as he did. At night she crept to his bedside with confessions of wrongdoing, questions about religion or an inquiry about the death of a family servant. Once, as the two rode through a nearby village, Addams reported seeing the “horrid little houses” of the poor and vowing to locate her home in their midst (*TY*, 21). The event is yet another indication of how critical a figure John Addams was in his daughter’s story.

By the time she wrote her autobiography *Hull-House* was a thriving social institution, thanks in large part to the skills of its founder and the generosity of its donors. Rather than take full credit for the settlement’s success, however, Addams chose to relate the development of the idea to her father. It was in his company that the first glimmerings of the idea appeared. Through him Addams heard the story of Italian democrat Joseph Mazzini and entered into the “great world of moral enterprise and serious undertakings.” In the process, she remembered later, she exchanged her own “meager notion of patriotism” for an awareness of the rapport among men of “large hopes and like desires.” She recalled exhilaration at that discovery and pride that her father “held converse with great minds” and cared about “happenings across the sea” (*TY*, 21).

The effect of Addams’ words creates the impression that she was raised in a mother-absent home with no choice but to follow her father’s example. In fact, she discussed her mother in a single cryptic sentence, noting only that the older woman died while she was a baby and that her father did not remarry for seven years. Though the circumstances surrounding Sarah Addams’ death were dramatic, even heroic, they were not mentioned in her daughter’s book. Sarah was in her mid-forties and pregnant with her ninth child when she answered a neighbor woman’s call for help. Several days later she died, leaving Jane to dream nightmares of abandonment.⁶ In omitting such details, Addams may have been masking feelings of ambivalence while also avoiding discussion of her painful relationship with stepmother Anna Haldeman Addams. Such a pattern of emphasis and exclusion is, of course, characteristic of autobiography and is significant not in its appearance, but in its intentionality. Jane Addams chose to focus on her father’s presence in her early life, to tie her memories to that single cord.

A number of Addams’ Progressive Era contemporaries did the same. National Consumers’ League executive secretary Florence Kelley began her story by assigning the leading role to her father. She wrote of the “companionship which has enriched my whole life” and credited him with encouraging her interest in public life.⁷ She too exhausted a paternal library and anticipated joint travel. William Kelley was a member of the United States House of Representatives and consequently made frequent tours of the western territories and the industries within his own district. Sometimes he went alone, but his daughter often provided company. It was

during a factory inspection, for instance, that Florence Kelley first saw young boys dodging cascading molten steel to carry water to thirsty workers. The scene was shocking and unforgettable. Later she would claim to have “divined the depths and breadths of human experience” on such outings (“MP,” 57). To a significant degree, she was correct, for with her father’s help she entered a sphere which otherwise would have remained unknown.

In contrast to Sarah Addams, Caroline Kelley lived a long time. Yet according to her daughter, her life was characterized by grief and a “permanent terror of impending loss.” She suffered from a “settled, gentle melancholy,” which was disguised only partially for the sake of her remaining sons and daughter (“MP,” 52). For one parent, adulthood was marked by adventure; for the other by bereavement.

In concentrating on their fathers’ influence, Addams and Kelley followed a pattern common to woman autobiographers, according to Mary G. Mason. In her study of the works of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, Dame Julian of Norwich, English author Margery Kempe and early American poet Anne Bradstreet, she found that all four women discovered their female identity by acknowledging “the real presence and recognition of another consciousness.” The disclosure of female self was “linked to the identification of some ‘other.’”⁸ Such a grounding of identity through relation to the chosen other, Mason concludes, seems to enable women to write openly about themselves; women know and reveal themselves by first knowing and revealing an “other.” As a result of her study, Mason argues that one element “that seems more or less constant in women’s life-writing—a this is not the case in men’s life-writing—is the sort of evolution and delineation of an identity by way of alterity.”⁹ Certainly the autobiographies of Addams and Kelley conform to the Mason paradigm. Both women focused early chapters of their narratives on their fathers as “other” and presented themselves accordingly. Kelley and Addams understood themselves not as individuals, but in relation to William Kelley and John Addams.

Thus the women produced variations on a single theme: they were, to paraphrase Kelley, their fathers’ daughters. There can be no doubt that such accounts are as crafted and shaped as any work of fiction. Late-nineteenth-century temperance leader Frances Willard acknowledged that fact in her own autobiography when she commented, “so I have put into black and white, not as I would, but as I could and here it is.”¹⁰ So it was with Addams, Kelley and the others. They composed, not in the interest of the historical record, but in order to achieve a predetermined end. “Nearly always,” as Northrop Frye observes in *Anatomy of Criticism*, “some theoretical and intellectual interest in religion, politics or art plays a leading role in the confession.” For Frye, it is the author’s “success in integrating his mind on such subjects” that makes him feel that “his life is worth writing about.”¹¹ Autobiography affords the author the opportunity to expound an idea through the creation of a literary *persona*; and that is precisely what the women did in their narratives. They cast themselves in

particular parts—as their fathers’ daughters—and used those rules to explain or justify their decisions to leave the world of the home for that of the public sphere. Moreover, they recounted their pasts in an effort to reveal the way for other women to follow.

Jane Addams introduced the first chapter of her life story with this comment: “On the theory that our genuine impulses may be connected with our childish experiences, that one’s bent may be tracked back to that ‘No-Man’s’ Land where character is formless but nevertheless settling into definite lines of future development, I begin this record with some impressions of my childhood” (*TY*, 19). The passage betrays its author’s awareness of the young science of personality theory. More importantly, it signals her determination to use the volume to justify her presence in the public sector. Addams and Kelley, after all, were children of mid-Victorian America, the offspring of a culture defined by rigid gender roles. However successfully they managed to blur those distinctions the women were forced nevertheless to adopt the appearance of convention or surrender access to the very society they sought to reform.

By emphasizing the unusually strong attachments to their fathers, the women worked to explain how they came to abandon the home for the world of work. Jane Addams, for example, justified her support of women’s suffrage by writing that she was “merely following my father’s conviction” (*TY*, 53). Kelley struck the same pose: “My father’s daughter could never from early childhood be long unaware of the developing struggle for women’s rights.”¹² Social work pioneer and administrator of the federal Children’s Bureau Grace Abbott echoed her friends when she claimed to have been “born believing in woman suffrage.”¹³ Thus, even suffragism, the women asserted, was a legacy, one of the many causes inherited from their fathers. In supporting the campaign for the ballot they were continuing their fathers’ work, not striking out on new and uncharted courses. To have refused those commitments would have been to deny their upbringing, to forfeit on the family promise. Though contemporaries might judge them unusual or forward, Addams, Kelley and Abbott saw themselves following the natural progressions begun at birth and culminating in adulthood.

In opting for public service, the women fulfilled a historic mandate too. According to their narratives they were raised in homes rich with tradition and matured, to borrow from Kelley, with imaginations populated by “Free-Soilers and Revolutionary ancestors, Quakers and Abolitionists and Non-Conformists,” all of whom had met the test “both of endurance and action” (“MP,” 57). Could their descendants do any less? Activism, the authors indicated, was a family tradition, perhaps even an obligation. The women needed only to look to their fathers for confirmation of that fact, for each was a public figure of considerable standing. John Addams returned to the Illinois General Assembly for eight consecutive terms and might have been elected governor had he not declined his party’s nomination. William Kelley represented his constituents in Washington for thirty years, where his tough-minded protectionism earned him the nickname “Pig

Iron Kelley” and his longevity the title “Father of the House.” Both men had assumed the family standard without faltering. It was only natural, their daughters argued, for them to do the same. Through their fathers, the women developed an awareness of the world beyond the home.

The two men were also participants in the antislavery movement and early supporters of the Republican party. Particularly important to their children, however, was the role each played in the Civil War. Kelley wrote proudly that her father abandoned his right to legislative immunity to join a Union artillery company shortly before the battle of Antietam. John Addams did not fight. Instead he organized and financed a unit bearing the family’s name. Ironically it was his daughter who devoted the most space in her autobiography discussing the war’s impact. In fact, Jane Addams frequently referred to herself as a child of the Civil War and claimed to have touched the “heroic of the world” during her early years.¹⁴ She recalled, for instance, that her attention had been riveted to the engraved roster of names of the Addams Guard which hung in the parlor. “As children,” she wrote, “we used to read this list of names again and again.” She and step-brother George Haldeman would stack the Bible on top of the dictionary and then strain on tiptoes to distinguish the names of the men who had fallen in battle from those who had returned home. Family outings were routed past soldier’s homesteads or graves and any guest who evinced the slightest interest was permitted to see a photo of the regiment’s brave one-armed leader (*TY*, 38).

Like many of those of her era, Addams’ memories crystallized around the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. She never forgot the black-draped flags which appeared suddenly on the gate posts or her father’s explanation that “the greatest man in the world” had died. In retrospect, she would liken the day to her baptism into the world beyond the front yard (*TY*, 38). For Florence Kelley, six years old at the time, the Lincoln murder was literally the first childhood recollection. She was visiting her grandparents when the news came. At breakfast, she remembered long afterward, her grandmother, unfailingly serene, seemed “shattered and was silent throughout the meal.” Finally the older woman turned to the young girl and said, “My child, President Lincoln is dead.” The words’ terrible impact became clear when they drove back into Philadelphia. Sidewalks were empty, doors draped in heavy black mourning cloth and shutters closed against the sunny spring morning. It was, Kelley thought later, as if “death had entered every home” (“MP,” 7).

It is not surprising that the assassination remained vivid in the minds of Addams and Kelley. What is notable is the extent to which both paired memories of the fallen President with remembrances of their fathers. In *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, Addams underscored that connection by commenting, “I always tend to associate Lincoln with tenderest thoughts of my father” (38). And, in reality, the men’s careers were intertwined. They served together in the Illinois General Assembly, worked to establish the Republican party in the state and in the process maintained a modest correspondence. According to his daughter, John Addams kept those

letters in a secure corner of his desk. Then, Jane remembered, “I fairly held my breath in my desire that he should go on with the reminiscence of this wonderful man” (*TY*, 38). William Kelley, in the meantime, was a member of the Republican convention delegation which traveled from Chicago to Springfield to inform Lincoln of his nomination for the Presidency. After the election he became one of the Chief Executive’s closest Congressional allies. Both fathers, in short, had legitimate ties to Lincoln, bonds which undoubtedly made the horror of his death all the more horrible to their children. As had been the case with the war, the assassination became a personal trauma within the women’s homes, or so their autobiographies indicate.

Jane Addams insisted on emphasizing her father’s linkage with the murdered leader in other ways. For example, she borrowed a well-known theme from the Lincoln myth to dwell on John Addams’ reputation for honesty: “Bad men were instinctively afraid of him,” she wrote in 1910. And once when herself the recipient of a bribe offer, she reported wondering, “What had befallen the daughter of my father that such a thing could happen to her?” (*TY*, 39). Later she drew the connection between the two men even more boldly:

There was something in the admiration of Lincoln’s contemporaries, or at least of those men who had known him personally, which was quite unlike even the best of the devotion and reverent understanding which has developed since. In the first place, they had so large a fund of common experience; they too had pioneered in a western country and had urged the development of canals and railroads in order that the raw prairie crops might be transported to market; they too had realized that if this last tremendous experiment in self-government failed here, it would be the disappointment of the centuries and that upon their ability to organize self-government in state, county and town depended the verdict of history. (*TY*, 40)

John Addams, early settler, agricultural financier, railroad promoter, elected official, fit his daughter’s description almost exactly. Through him she claimed proximity to Lincoln and access to his insights and purpose. But how was she, a woman, to exercise that knowledge? By her own account, Jane Addams had been prepared for a life of public service in the Lincoln tradition. Her task as an autobiographer was to convince readers that she was capable of assuming that trust. In forging the link between her father and the martyred leader, she devised a strategy to accomplish her goal.

The passage quoted above was a hymn not only to Lincoln and his contemporaries, but to the goodness and promise of America, wherein the author confirmed her patriotic commitment to the ideals of the assassinated President. Those principles, Addams suggested, had been defended in the Civil War and extended through the ratification of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution. New challenges awaited the nation. Addams explained her perspective in an 1894

manuscript when she wrote, “Of the virtues received from our fathers, we can afford to lose none.” But merely to preserve the accomplishments of the past was not enough. “A task is laid upon each generation,” she contended, “to enlarge their application, to ennoble their conception and above all to apply and adapt them to the peculiar problems presented for its solution.”¹⁵ Throughout the early years of the republic, Addams argued, Americans conceived of democracy in purely political terms. They worked to clear and extend its title, to secure for all men the benefits of citizenship promised in the country’s charter. Thus John Addams carried republican ideals to rural Illinois and stood fast against slavery and for the Union. His daughter proposed to do the same on the frontiers of urban America. There she would work to “interpret democracy in social terms,” to “aid in the solution of the social and industrial problems” confronting her generation (TY, 98).

A number of Addams’ settlement house associates adopted the same goal. Edith Abbott, older sister of Grace and long-time dean of the University of Chicago’s School of Social Service Administration, recalled her early life and the “men and women of courage, ability and boundless energy who faced the difficulties of blizzards, droughts and other hardships of covered-wagon days” to plant themselves in the Nebraska soil. She noted, “We in the West believe in the strenuous life; we are not afraid of difficult tasks, we are not afraid of failure.” Then she added: “To some of us who are children of the western pioneers, turning the prairie’s sod is no more fascinating, and, I may add, no more difficult than hewing a path for a new and growing profession.”¹⁶ Although Florence Kelley’s Philadelphia childhood was substantially different, she too claimed an early and clear understanding of her social responsibility. In her autobiography, Kelley quoted her father’s observation that the duty of his generation was to “build up the great industries of America so that more wealth could be produced for the whole people.” The mission of her generation, William Kelley told his daughter, was to “see that the product is distributed justly” (“MP,” 8). As the above examples indicate, these women linked their life choices to those of their fathers, while distinguishing carefully between the challenges and issues confronting the two generations. They chose to emulate, rather than duplicate, the men’s accomplishments.

In the process, the women fostered the notion that their fathers applauded, even prompted, such choices. John Addams and William Kelley appeared in their daughters’ autobiographies as parents and mentors. Yet at least one of the two, John Addams, apparently had more traditional expectations for his daughter. According to historian Allen F. Davis, author of the authoritative biography of Jane Addams, a major conflict erupted between the two over the summer following her completion of the certificate program at nearby Rockford Female Seminary.¹⁷ She proposed finishing her undergraduate degree with a year’s study at Smith College before touring Europe and returning to the United States to attend medical school, a plan her father vetoed. That opposition, Davis argues, sent Addams into a state of despondency. She was surprised and disap-

pointed at her father's refusal to endorse her post-seminary agenda. While she viewed the time at Rockford as preparation for additional work, he apparently did not. Undoubtedly mixed with her feelings was some sense of betrayal. She came, after all, from a family which appeared to support higher education for men and women. According to sociologist Lillian Rubin, Jane Addams' experience was not distinctive or even bound to her own time period. Rubin writes: "In some families, where education was highly valued even for a girl, the brakes came later—in the college years, usually at the first sign that she might have serious career plans in mind."¹⁸ By the time she completed her seminary certificate, Addams had exhausted her father's expectations if not her own. She could find no consolation in that fact that she already was more educated than the vast majority of her peers.

Addams' despair deepened several months later when her father suddenly collapsed and died, leaving no opportunity to resolve the dilemma which separated them. Neither the disagreement nor the death was discussed in *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, though at the time Addams wrote at length of her grief. "Prepare yourself so you won't be too disappointed in me when you come," she cautioned a friend. "The greatest sorrow that can ever come to me has passed and I hope it is only a question of time until I get my moral purposes straightened."¹⁹ Older sister Mary Addams Linn realized the magnitude of that task and wrote a long letter reminding Jane that "you need not think that because he is gone, your incentive has perished."²⁰ And still, two years later, Jane Addams continued to mourn the loss of her sense of purpose. "For many years," she confided to Rockford classmate Ellen Starr, "it was my ambition to reach my father's requirements and now when I am needing something more, I find myself approaching a crisis and look around rather wistfully for help." Like Matthew Arnold, one of her favorite authors, Addams concluded that "the good men and books I used to depend upon will no longer answer."²¹

By her own rendering it took Jane Addams from 1881, when she graduated from Rockford, to 1889, when she and Ellen Starr founded Hull-House, to "formulate my convictions even in the least satisfactory manner, much less reduce them to a plan of action" (*TY*, 59). During those years she entered and withdrew from medical school and was treated by S. Weir Mitchell, the famous practitioner of the rest cure. In addition, she traveled the Continent for two years, joined the local Cedarville Presbyterian congregation in search of an "outward symbol of fellowship" and continued her long, frank correspondence with Ellen Starr (*TY*, 68). In her autobiography Addams would write of having been caught in the "snare of preparation" and of the inability of her generation of college educated women to discern some socially useful and acceptable outlet for their energy and education. Over time, she reported concluding that she must "learn of life from life itself" and exchange her habits of study and introspection for activity (*TY*, 72). Those thoughts and a plan for their realization were shared with Starr one April afternoon in 1888 when the

two attended a bullfight in Madrid, Spain. Addams' description of her "awakening" at the fight has come under criticism and may, in fact, be fictionalized. What should not be dismissed, though, is the setting for the event. Addams' revelation came in a far-off land within the company of peers. In describing the scene, Addams literally put distance between herself and the world of her father. Years afterwards she recalled the incidents of that spring as marking the end of her period of "mere passive receptivity" (*TY*, 74).

While Addams cast about for solutions to her dilemma, Kelley did much the same. She planned to augment her baccalaureate degree from Cornell University with a year's study at the University of Pennsylvania before beginning law training. When she was denied entrance into the graduate school despite her father's good offices, she began to organize evening classes for the city's working women. Kelley's participation in that project ended abruptly in the fall of 1882 when an older brother became ill and was ordered to the Riviera for convalescence. The two remained there for almost six months before joining the rest of the family in London for a holiday. Florence accompanied her father on a tour of the Black Country to observe the mining and smelting processes and investigate the cottage industries of the midland counties.²² By the fall of 1883 William Kelley had returned to Washington and his wife, son and daughter traveled to Switzerland, where Florence convinced reluctant University of Zurich officials to permit her to study for examinations. There Kelley discovered a new ideology, socialism, and a marriage partner, a young Polish Russian medical student, Lazare Wischnewetzky. The two were married several months after meeting with Caroline Kelley's full approval. Son Nicholas was born a year later, and the small family returned to New York, where they took a flat and Wischnewetzky opened a practice. Florence, in the meantime, continued her work against child labor and on behalf of factory legislation. The couple was also active in Socialist party politics.

Within several years, two more children, Margaret and John, were born. Meanwhile the doctor's practice floundered and his wife was forced to turn repeatedly to her family for loans. The situation worsened after 1888, when Wischnewetzky's health began to fail. Then Kelley found herself raising and supporting the family while caring also for her husband. After months of recuperation, the doctor rallied sufficiently to resume his practice, but many patients had made other provisions in his absence and the family never regained sound financial footing. The respect and appreciation between William and Florence Kelley deepened during this period, even as their political and economic views diverged. They became partners, for example, in caring for Caroline Kelley's mental and physical health. By the time Florence's husband's health began failing, her father was dying of cancer. Still he financed and oversaw his son-in-law's convalescence and continued to provide support to his family. William Kelley was a frequent visitor in New York and his stays always lifted his daughter's spirits. "His visit was lovely," she wrote her mother on one occasion. "I do not know any other words to use for it. It did me infinite

good.”²³ For her part, Florence was a devoted correspondent and a faithful attendant during her father’s final illness, often shuttling from New York to Philadelphia and back within the space of a few days. While Florence worked to balance her duties as mother, daughter and wife, she felt increasingly conflicted. Finally in 1891, she decided to separate and seek a divorce on grounds of non-support. Since New York state law did not permit such a dissolution a move was necessary. Kelley was familiar already with the work of the New York College Settlement and was intrigued by what she knew of Jane Addams and Hull-House. So she decided to relocate in Chicago, where she could obtain a divorce decree, retain custody of her children and join a growing number of women of like experience in the settlement’s programs. And this was the road which carried her to the front porch of Hull-House.

In composing accounts of their search for meaningful work, Addams and Kelley struck a theme common to the narrative of other women born and raised during the nineteenth century. According to Patricia Meyer Spacks, such prominent figures as suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst, anarchist Emma Goldman, Dorothy Day, a founder of *Catholic Worker*, Israeli leader Golda Meir and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt all penned autobiographies in which they described themselves as “gaining identity from their chosen work.”²⁴ Their sense of self was accomplished through their careers, or so the women indicated. “In these life stories one can see how public commitment may help solve personal problems . . . it enables the teller to find an acceptable definition of self almost without declaring individuality.”²⁵ For Addams, Kelley and the others, identity was defined through external factors. If their narratives are to be believed, as children Kelley and Addams defined themselves in relation to their fathers, while as adults they found a sense of purpose and self in their careers. At no point did they develop an independent understanding of self.

Thus from the beginning Hull-House served a variety of purposes. It was first and foremost a solution to the women’s struggle to create a public space where they might fulfill their ambition without violating society’s norms of acceptable behavior. Addams discussed that point in an essay titled “The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements.” Without detailing her own experience, she noted, “We have in America a fast-growing number of cultivated young people who have no recognized outlet for their active faculties” (*TY*, 94). She belied the settlement movement would allow such individuals the opportunity to put their “theory into action,” much as she herself had done.

Then too the settlement was seen as an educational institution. There Addams hoped to alleviate the suffering of immigrant neighbors, while extending to them the opportunities and privileges enjoyed by the rich (*TY*, 98). The settlement was viewed as a mediating agency and vehicle through which its residents might enter the world of public service. Men, Addams and the others seemed to concede, had been suited for democracy’s political tasks, but women were prepared uniquely for the work of translating those ideas and principles into social reality. Rather than

confront their culture's system of rigid gender-based distinctions, the women pressed for an expanded definition of the home and women's responsibilities. As a result, it was not uncommon for them to tout a reform as "enlarged" or "urban" housekeeping, the natural extension of the nurturing instinct into community life. Eventually the women would sound a call, not simply for shared participation, but for the transfer of leadership from men to women and the abandonment of rule by force in favor of government by arbitration.²⁶

No matter how carefully the women labored to present themselves as emulating or continuing their fathers' careers, a single fact remained: if they were to succeed as women in the world of public service, they must first escape their fathers' houses. A major purpose of the autobiographies, then, was to document or at least illustrate their passage from dependence to independence, while at the same time explaining their presence in the public sector. For Addams, the problem appears to have been literal, and it took her virtually a decade to resolve. It was not that she could not reach her father's "moral requirements," as she wrote Ellen Starr; it was that she could not accept the limitations of his culture. When read within this context, the autobiographical passages about Lincoln and the Civil War assume new meaning. For the heroes and victories of the past, the women professed admiration and respect. None questioned, for instance, that military action had been necessary to save the Union. Yet at the same time, the women suggested that the problems of the present demanded different solutions. Through their fathers the autobiographers verified their patriotism and exhibited impressive ancestries. But in identifying the men with the martyred President, they also signaled change and marked distance. They linked their fathers to a leader, who, however revered, was nonetheless dead and a way of life, which, though glorious, was obsolete. William Kelley and John Addams were, like Lincoln, symbols of a younger America and practitioners of a militarism their daughters could not condone. Even as they praised and acknowledged the men's accomplishments, the women rejected their methods and petitioned readers for authority to guide the nation into a new era.

At a deeper level, the passages betrayed the women's feelings of ambivalence toward their fathers. To write of patricide, albeit literary and once-removed, may seem dramatic. The life stories, after all, tell of beneficent parents and devoted children, of time spent together and shared commitments to public service. Still, as mentioned earlier, the autobiographies were purposeful accounts, designed to show their creators in particular lights and therefore characterized as much by omission as by inclusion. Addams used the first chapters of *Twenty Years at Hull-House* to perpetuate the notion that she was raised in a mother-absent home with no choice but to follow her father's example. Older sisters, the family nurse and step-mother Anna Haldeman Addams were ignored altogether as she focused exclusively on the development of her unusually intense relationship with her father. The autobiography of Florence Kelley reveals the same theme. It is not surprising that young children gravitated toward the

more vibrant parent, that given the opportunity to assess and select between role options, they chose the strong over the weak. In allying with their fathers, they also located a source of security. Both women were raised in homes that provided ample evidence of woman's vulnerability. Their mothers seemed trapped in an endless cycle of pregnancy, childbirth and mourning. The pages of the families' Bibles provided additional evidence, for they were lined with the names of deceased brothers and sisters. Not only was mother unable to control her own life, she was incapable of protecting young sons and daughters from harm. As children, then, the women took refuge with their fathers. Only as they neared child-bearing age and confronted their own sexuality did they fully understand the connection between one parent's transcendence and the other's powerlessness.

In short, it was not that Addams and Kelley knew too little of woman's role. They knew too much. They had learned that they could not select their mothers' options and attain their fathers' self-authority. Autonomy and achievement were contingent upon remaining single. Thus many of the women of the first generation to graduate from college did not marry.²⁷ In *The Second Twenty Years at Hull-House*, Addams argued that "men did not at first want to marry women of the new type."²⁸ And yet, according to Allen Davis, she rejected at least two serious marriage proposals, including one from step-brother George Haldeman.²⁹ Jane Addams chose to be single and live her adult years in the company of women. At the height of her popularity she would reign over the settlement movement as a sort of beatific saint. Contemporaries would applaud her and the other women for sacrificing their natural maternal instinct for the larger good. Only the women themselves would know that they were acting out of self-preservation, rather than self-denial.

By the time Kelley and Addams reached midlife and began to compose their life stories, they had begun to rethink their attitudes towards their parents. Father, once a hero and guarantor of safety and continuity, was transformed into a villain, while mother, originally experienced as uncaring and unavailable, became his victim. Neither author addressed such issues directly. They could not afford to separate themselves from their fathers and identify with their mothers, for it was through the men that the women sought access to the world beyond the home. But in tying their fathers so closely to Abraham Lincoln, himself the victim of violence, they manifested their hostility while managing also to preserve their lineage and present credentials necessary to claim leadership. In avoiding marriage, as Addams did, or in seeking a divorce, as did Kelley, the women paid silent tribute to their mothers, all the while rejecting society's concept of separate spheres and innate gender roles. And thus they framed their argument and requested the public's trust.

As children, according to the autobiographies, the women were raised in their fathers' houses, but as adults they escaped and built dwellings of their own. It was in the founding and maintenance of the social settlements that the women realized their maternal legacy. There they created an

independent women's culture beyond society's influence and interference, similar to the communities described by Carroll Smith Rosenberg in her classic article, "The Female World of Love and Ritual."³⁰ In that homosocial setting, they were free to develop an alternative to woman's traditional world of marriage and motherhood and to satisfy their own needs for companionship and love. Addams, for instance, devoted herself to intimate relationships with other women, while simultaneously selecting a career in which she built homes on a grand scale. She both continued and reversed the inheritance of her mother, who died answering another woman's call for help. More than once, Addams was called upon to act as midwife at a neighbor woman's bedside, much as her mother had done years earlier. Thus while fathers served the autobiographers as models for public achievement, mothers provided more private examples for women to emulate, modify or reject.

Although this study is confined to the writings of two women, its conclusions suggest a larger significance. Both Addams and Kelley had a sense of belonging to a new generation of reformers. They believed that the problems of their time differed dramatically from those faced by their fathers, and therefore demanded new methods and fresh solutions. As prominent leaders in the Progressive Era they were pioneers in the attempt to adapt to a rapidly changing culture. The women began their careers just as the liberalism of mid-century gave way to the pressures and demands of an urban, industrial America and the rise of monopoly capitalism. No longer was the individualism and competitive capitalism of the Jacksonian period sufficient to meet the needs of a nation in transformation. The world of their fathers was gone and in its place were new difficulties and challenges. According to their narratives, the women were prepared for that change and assumed leadership as a matter of course. Though still their fathers' daughters, they intended to move beyond the paternal example into the modern society of the twentieth century, thereby securing a place in the public sphere for themselves and the women who followed.

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notes

1. Florence Kelley, "I Go to Work," *The Survey Graphic*, 58 (1927), 271.
2. "Introduction: Women's Autobiography and the Male Tradition," in Estelle C. Jelinek, ed., *Women's Autobiography* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1980), 3.
3. *Ibid.*, 5.
4. (New York, 1910), 19. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text as TY.
5. Nancy Chodorow, "Family Structure and Feminine Personality," in Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, eds., *Women, Culture and Society* (Stanford, California, 1974), 43-66.
6. Mary Addams Linn, Letter to Jane Addams, 26 August 1881, Jane Addams Papers, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.
7. Florence Kelley, "My Philadelphia," *The Survey*, 57 (1926), 8-9. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text as "MP."
8. Mary G. Mason, "The Other Voice: Autobiographies of Women Writers" in James Olney, ed., *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1980), 210.
9. *Ibid.*, 231.
10. *Glimpses of Fifty Years* (Chicago, 1889), xi.
11. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1957), 308.

12. Florence Kelley, "My Novitiate," *The Survey*, 57 (1927), 31.
13. Edith Abbott, "Grace Abbott: A Sister's Memories," *The Social Service Review*, 13 (1939).
14. Jane Addams, Speech, "A Living Memorial to John A. Davis," 26 May 1907, Jane Addams Papers, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.
15. Jane Addams, "A Modern Tragedy," MS, Jane Addams Papers, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.
16. Helen Cody Baker, "The Abbotts of Nebraska," *Survey Graphic*, 25 (1936), 370.
17. Allen F. Davis, *American Heroine* (New York, 1973).
18. *Women of a Certain Age* (New York, 1979), 47.
19. Jane Addams, Letter to Ellen Gates Starr, 3 September 1881, Ellen Gates Starr Papers, The Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts.
20. Mary Adams Linn, Letter to Jane Addams, 26 September 1881, Jane Addams Papers, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.
21. Jane Addams, Letter to Ellen Gates Starr, 3 September 1881, Ellen Gates Starr Papers, The Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts.
22. Kelley, "My Novitiate," 32.
23. Kelley, "I Go to Work," 271.
24. Patricia Meyer Spacks, "Selves in Hiding," in Jelinek, *Women's Autobiography*, 113.
25. *Ibid.*, 121.
26. These ideas are discussed by Addams in a number of publications. For example, see her *Newer Ideals of Peace* (New York, 1907), 238.
27. See Adele Simmons, "Education and Ideology in Nineteenth Century America," in Berenice Carroll, ed., *Liberating Women's History* (Urbana, Illinois, 1976), 115-126.
28. (New York, 1930), 196.
29. Davis, *American Heroine*, 29.
30. "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth Century America," *Signs, Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 1 (1975), 1-30.