



A Selected Bibliography: Contemporary Autobiography by American Women

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A number of excellent contemporary works of autobiography and memoir emphasize the multiple perspectives and belief systems from which a personal story unfolds. Contemporary autobiographers and memoirists increasingly feel the need to acknowledge and affirm the fluid (and sometimes contradictory) nature of "truth" in autobiography when writing about the question of referentiality in one's own life as well as in one's experiences with others. Many writers shape their narratives in specific ways to help readers understand the ways in which memory and imagination interact to reconstruct and recreate past locales, individuals, and events.

Beyond that, in many recently published works of creative nonfiction, the reader gets to "see" the author at work. This reflexivity is crucial to the reader's understanding of how the author views her subjects and, consequently, how their stories are told. When a writer steps out of the text to comment on what she has just written, this self-reflexivity sharpens her focus as a memoirist and leads readers to ponder not only her memories but also their own.

Issues of memory and imagination, reconstruction and reinvention of the past, implications of the past for the present and future,

privacy vs. telling of family secrets, the role of dreams and memories in memoir writing, real time vs. virtual time, versions of the truth, fluidity of identity, self-consciousness in narrative, the role of lies and confession in memoir writing, the influence of gender, race, class, and sexual orientation on genre in autobiography--all of these pertinent issues in theory of autobiography are interwoven into a number of the works cited in the bibliography that follows. This list is not intended to represent a comprehensive listing of works worth reading. Rather, it represents some of the most interesting works on my bookshelves as well as some of my recent choices as texts in undergraduate and graduate literature and creative writing: nonfiction courses that I have taught. I hope that it will prove useful to you.

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Suzanne Bunkers teaches English at Mankato State University. Her book-length work of creative nonfiction, In Search of Susanna (1996), was recently published in the University of Iowa Press's Series, "Singular Lives: American utobiography." She is now at work on a sequel.