

Von der dargestellten Person zum erinnerten Ich

Europäische Selbstzeugnisse
als historische Quellen (1500–1850)

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Was it Enjoyable?

Attitudes towards Pleasure of English and German Early Modern Autobiographers

For anyone familiar with the more prominent autobiographical authors of early modern England the catchwords "pleasure" and "autobiography" almost automatically bring to mind Samuel Pepys and his unusual record of his very many pleasurable experiences. Pepys, of course, was not an autobiographer in the strict sense of the term. He was a diarist. This is to say that I will use the notion of autobiography rather loosely and include the occasional diary, although the main focus of what follows is on autobiographers from the late sixteenth to the early eighteenth century.

Samuel Pepys is well known for the detailed account he provides of his extensive theatre-going, his devotion to music and especially to singing, his sexual experiences and adventures, his reading and, not least, his worldly and financial success, not to mention his love of sociability, of drinking and good food. For this author pleasure had an almost limitless variety of connotations. What is perhaps less well known or frequently overlooked is that there were also a number of occasions in the years covered by his voluminous diary, in which Pepys repeatedly tried to channel and curtail pleasure, notably his theatre-going and drinking, by way of taking solemn resolutions, "in the presence of Almighty God to observe upon the respective penalties thereto annexed." He presumably entered such resolutions in a small booklet now lost and read them to himself on Sundays.¹ The largely Puritan origins of such a practice become evident when we turn to Nehemiah Wallington's use notably during the 1620's and 1630's of resolutions "for the reformation of my life in all things that are disagreeable to the holy law of God", or to the Yorkshire yeoman Adam Eyre's liberating decision in January 1648 "never hereafter to make any vowes, but to set myselfe at liberty to walke according to the direction, and in the power of that Spirit which God Almighty shall infuse into mee."² Like Pepys was to

1 Pepys, Samuel, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Latham, Robert and Matthews, William, 11 vols., London 1970–1983, vol. IV, p. 16f (citation) and Pepys, *Diary*, vol. II, p. 242, note I.

2 Seaver, Paul, *Wallington's World. A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London*, London 1985, p. 31f.; Eyre, Adam, *A Dyurnall, or catalogue of all my accions and expences from the 1st of January 1646 [recte: 1647]*, in: Jackson, Charles (ed.), *Yorkshire Diaries and Autobiographies in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 2 vols. (= Publications of the Surtees Society, vols. lxxv and lxxvii), np. 1877 and 1866, vol. lxxv, p. 1–118, here p. 87f.

do a few decades later, Wallington fined himself for breaches of his resolutions and the fines went to a special private "poor box".³

To be sure, Pepys was certainly not a Puritan. His unlimited curiosity focused above all on secular, rather than spiritual, matters. On the whole, he was an only lukewarm Anglican. However, we would certainly underestimate the complexity of his character, were we to overlook or downgrade the Puritan elements or remnants in his attitude towards pleasure. This complexity or ambiguity is illustrated by an entry he made in his diary on 6 January 1663: "And I do find my mind so apt to run its old wont of pleasures, that it is high time to betake myself to my late vows, which I will tomorrow. God willing, perfect and bind myself to, that so I may for a great while do my duty, as I have well begun, and encrease my good name and esteem in all things and whereof I have much need."⁴

This brings me to what I will devote the main part of this paper to: An analysis of Calvinist, or rather Reformed, attitudes towards pleasure as reflected by autobiographical documents from the late sixteenth to the early eighteenth century.

I would never presume, of course, that diaries and autobiographies provide us with a mirror image of such attitudes. I am conscious of the fact that autobiographies are as much literary texts as they are historical sources. However, in the case in point we should not overlook the extent to which the material in question clearly was conditioned by the respective historical background in which it took shape. I am convinced that, if this were otherwise, it would be difficult to explain the remarkable differences in the emergence of a tradition of autobiographical writing in England and Germany.

A *complete* historical explanation of these differences surely is open to speculation. Yet, there are nonetheless certain causal factors which are unmistakable in the present context. One of them is the existence of a thriving urban culture in Germany during the late middle ages, which gave a boost to autobiographical writing at a comparatively early stage, while in England with its low degree of urbanization the take-off of autobiographical writing on a broader scale took place as late as the last third of the sixteenth century. Another unmistakable factor is the contribution of Puritanism and Pietism to the shaping of an introspective, spiritual kind of autobiographical tradition. It helps to explain the comparative delay in the emergence of such a tradition in Germany, where the broader impact of Pietism dates from the last quarter of the seventeenth century. It likewise helps to explain why this sort of tradition is lacking in French Protestantism. Philip Benedict has argued very convincingly that this is to a considerable extent due to the fact that French Huguenots, unlike English Puritans, had no need personally to compensate for the lack of out-

3 Cf. Pepys, *Diary*, vol. III, p. 229f.; *ibid.*, vol. V, p. 55, 192f. and 248.

4 *Ibid.*, vol. IV, p. 6f.

ward, external forms of enforcement of spiritual discipline, while their communal consistory courts functioned as well as they did.⁵

To cut my introduction short: The material on which the following is based is very heterogeneous, not least in respect of the question of gender. Autobiographical sources in German from the period in question and available in print are almost exclusively written by men.⁶ What is more, research on German or rather, German-speaking material (as I will also refer to some Swiss accounts), is still in its early stages.

However, I should add right away that I will not look in more detail at collective discipline enforcement, although I am aware of the fact that this is an important aspect of an assessment of the political and socio-cultural impact of English seventeenth-century Puritanism.

For all these reasons this must be a rather tentative contribution. It is divided in three parts. I will first look at attitudes towards pleasure in English personal accounts, then, secondly, turn to German and Swiss autobiographical sources, and try to draw some rather provisional conclusions in the third and final section.

I

Among the approximately sixty early modern English autobiographies and diaries I am familiar with, I have chosen sixteen, which I have looked at more closely. They include six diaries and ten autobiographies, eleven of them by men and five of them by women. The two criteria of choice I have applied were, first, an unmistakably Reformed, although not necessarily Puritan, orientation of the author. Secondly, I have excluded, with one exception (George Trosse), autobiographical accounts written by clergymen, such as those, for example, of Samuel Ward, Richard Baxter, Adam Martindale, Oliver Heywood and others, because I want to concentrate on lay attitudes towards pleasure.

What struck me at first in analyzing my sample is the frequency of references to melancholy or, conversely, to the mental healing power of religion, which, in case of Dyonisia Fitzherbert and George Trosse, saved the authors from severe cases of depression and psychosis. The causes of their mental despair, as these authors unanimously state, were their indulgence in wordly pleasures as well as their atheistic thoughts. Likewise, in an unpublished diary written in the 1690's allegedly by a cousin of Oliver Cromwell's, the

5 Benedict, Philip, *Two Calvinisms*, in idem, *The Faith and Fortunes of a Religious Minority: The French Huguenots, 1600–1685* (= *St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History*), forthcoming. On the function of confession compared to the aspects of self-disciplining discussed here, cf. Hahn, Alois, *Zur Soziologie der Beichte und anderer Formen institutionalisierter Bekenntnisse: Selbstthematisierung und Zivilisationsprozess*, in: *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* (1982), p. 407–434.

6 But see note 29 below.

authoress blames “the temptations & Delusions of a sinfull & vaine world” for her backsliding into a great melancholy caused by the fear of the devil, of death and judgment.⁷ In August 1690, Elias Pledger, a nonconformist apothecary, wrote in his diary: “I have been of late much discomposed w[i]th melancholy. I went to Islington wel upon t[ha]t account but found little Comfort by it. Want of trade much discomposes me & makes me frequently distrust ye providence of god.”⁸ It has rightly been argued that in her autobiographical writing Dionysia Fitzherbert, daughter of a Wiltshire gentry family, aimed at establishing the spiritual, rather than organic, nature of the melancholy despair from which she had recovered, a difficult task considering the extent to which contemporary learned opinion saw single women as the most obvious prey of *melancholia*.⁹ However, as the above examples show, this attempt to establish the spiritual nature of specific forms of melancholy and even madness was by no means unique.

In her “Meditations” chiefly written during the 1660’s the staunch Anglican Elizabeth Delaval praises a confidante of younger years (with the unfortunate name of Mrs. Corny) on the grounds that “she has made it her constant care to draw me from the vanity’s of this world and to plant in my heart the love of God.”¹⁰ Elsewhere, she proposes with great conviction that “tis of much greater consequence then we easly beleive the seting of a strict watch over ourselves in the dayly actions of our lives [...]. Thus when I have set downe to eat (which is a nesessary and inocent action), has he [= the Devil] off by my in-advertency turn’d my meale into a sin, since I have many times consider’d the pleasing of my tast more than the preservation of my health, and have reap’d the miserable fruit’s of that folly quickly affter.”¹¹

These examples must suffice in demonstrating the fact that a stance of anti-pleasure or, more specifically, an opposition to wordly pleasures, can be frequently encountered in the material in question. This is highlighted in the method for family discipline on week-days recorded in his autobiography by the Presbyterian Gervase Disney. Disney’s list encompasses *inter alia* the servants’ morning prayer at six o’clock, morning and evening family prayers and worship at 9 a.m. and 6 p.m., the reading after supper of “some good life, or other good Book”, as well as the following entry:

7 Anon., “Cromwell’s Cousins’s Diary”, British Library [hereafter cited as BL], Add. Ms. 5858, fol. 215 r.

8 Pledger, Elias, *Autobiography and Diary*, Ms., Dr. Williams’s Library London, fol. 45 v.

9 Hodgkin, Katharine, *Dionys Fitzherbert and the Anatomy of Madness*, in: Chedgzoy, Kate et al. (eds.), *Voicing Women. Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern Writing*, Keele 1996, p. 69–92.

10 Delaval, Elizabeth, *Meditations written between 1662 and 1671*, ed. Greene, Douglas G. (= *Surtees Society Publications*, vol. cxc), Gateshead 1978, p. 34.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 83f.

“All unlawful Games, as Cards, Dice &c., all kind of Ribaldry, vain Songs, foolish Talking, and idle Jestings, Swearing, Lying &c., and all kind of sin whatsoever are here forbidden; no profane persons to abide in my House, no Liar to tarry in my sight.”¹²

Indulgence in the spiritual pleasure of what I would call providentialist speculation, on the other hand, was almost universally accepted by English autobiographical authors all the way from Richard Rogers and Lady Margaret Hoby to Ralph Thoresby writing in the early eighteenth century, although the critical voice in this regard of Roger North, likewise an autobiographical author of the early eighteenth century, should not be overlooked. A case in point in respect of such indulgence in providentialist speculation is Samuel Jeake’s diary entry for August 16, 1693:

“Coming by night out of the Butchery towards my own house; it being very dark; I was in great danger of falling over a Load of Wood which lay out in the Middlestreet, which being just in my way, I was within Two Steps of stumbling upon, not seeing it. But it pleased God to send a Flash of that Lightning which was very frequent that Evening; just at that very Instant: to shew me my danger & prevent it. Which wonderfull Providence I shall never decline to acknowledge. For had not the Air been inlightned at the Critical moment, that so I made a suddain stop; I had immediately stumbled against a great Log; & the inclination of my body which would consequently have ensued, had dasht my head against other great logs & sticks that lay endlong or athwart over the other, just at such a distance as they had probably run directly into my Eyes & Brain.”¹³

Naturally, such indulgence did not preclude changes over time in contemporary English providentialism. I have tried to trace these elsewhere and will not go into this issue here.¹⁴

However, had I thought that the report given so far of a tendency to curtail and avoid worldly pleasure was all there is to say about the attitude towards pleasure of English autobiographers and diarists from the period considered here, I doubt whether I would have ventured to make this contribution. The anti-pleasure stance, I am glad to say, was not without its limits and *lacunae*.

12 Disney, Gervase, *Some Remarkable Passages in the Holy Life and Death of Gervase Disney, Esq.*, to which are added several Letters and Poems, London 1692, p. 74f.

13 Jeake, Samuel, *An Astrological Diary of the Seventeenth Century: Samuel Jeake of Rye, 1652–1699*, ed. Hunter, Michael and Gregory, Annabel, Oxford 1988, p. 224.

14 von Greyerz, Kaspar, *Vorsehungsglaube und Kosmologie: Studien zu englischen Selbstzeugnissen des 17. Jahrhunderts* (= Veröffentlichungen des Deutschen Historischen Instituts London, vol. 25), Göttingen 1990. Cf. also von Greyerz, Kaspar, *Biographical Evidence on Predestination, Covenant and Special Providence*, in: Weber’s ‘Protestant Ethic’: Origins, Evidence, Contexts, ed. Lehmann, Hartmut and Roth, Guenther, Cambridge and New York 1993, p. 273–284.

Sociability, keeping good company, was widely practiced by the authors and author-esses under consideration, although for Puritans and their heirs later in the seventeenth century not just any company would do. Take the example of Margaret Hoby who recorded in her diary on 9 July, 1600, that she had taken a walk “with a stranger with whom I had little good talke, and therefore the time, as ill bestowed, I greeved for.”¹⁵ However, the imperative of keeping the *right* company, to be taken seriously by godly people, did not preclude the occasional or even frequent round of drinks, as illustrates in particular the diary from the 1660’s and 1670’s of the Presbyterian Roger Lowe, a Lancashire village shop assistant and apprentice.¹⁶ On one such occasion, which Roger Lowe relates, he even discussed with a neighbour the relative pros and cons of episcopacy and Presbyterianism over a beer at the alehouse.¹⁷ The Yorkshire yeoman Adam Eyre was likewise not opposed to visiting the alehouse, despite his striving after godliness. But in theory at least he knew his limits: “This day I went with my wife to Peniston to the church, and shee received the communion, and I went (God forgive mee) the afternoone in the alehouse, and spent in all 2 s. 6d.; and so we came home again and I had abused myself in drinking. God have mercy on me.”¹⁸

However, not all of our authors would have condescended to going to an alehouse, as such establishments primarily catered to the lower ranks of society. The experience of pleasure and the development of attitudes towards it was largely, if not entirely, filtered through a set of cultural values. Even sexual experience was to a large extent culturally conditioned if the admittedly extreme example of the autobiographer Goodwin Wharton, second son of the Puritan Lord Wharton, can be taken as a reliable example.¹⁹ Mary Parish, his magical muse and common-law-wife had him convinced that she grew pregnant every time she had an orgasm and, as a result, had him pay for every new alleged child she was forced to put out to board on account of the unofficial nature of their partnership. Her deceit was successful because the argument “that conception could only take place when both partners achieved orgasm” was common in the seventeenth-century.²⁰

15 Hoby, Margaret, *Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, 1599–1605*, ed. Meads, Dorothy M., London 1930, p. 131.

16 Lowe, Roger, *The Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield, Lancashire, 1663–1674*, ed. Sachse, William L., London, New York and Toronto 1938, p. 34.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 52

18 Eyre, A. Dyurnall, p. 104 (26 March 1648).

19 Wharton, Goodwin, *My Life*, Ms. in 2 vols., BL, Add. Ms. 20006 and 20007. There is a biography of Wharton, which in large parts consists of a paraphrase of the extensive autobiography but does not offer any consistent analysis of the author’s mental world.

20 De Welles, Theodore, *Sex and Sexual Attitudes in Seventeenth-Century England: The Evidence from Puritan Diaries*, in: *Renaissance and Reformation* 12 (1988), p. 45–64, here p. 55.

Attitudes towards pleasure were largely or even wholly conditioned by the cultural environment and this environment was socially stratified, as is made clear by the law student Simonds d'Ewes and the steward and historian Arthur Wilson regarding, respectively, the popular belief in the effect of planetary conjunctions and the nature of the belief in witches.²¹ These are salutary reminders that we are not looking here at contemporary society as a whole, but rather at the section of the middle and the upper classes who were able to write.

A pleasure accepted and encouraged by most authors and authoresses considered here was that of reading, although we should probably be careful not to impute to them our own view of reading: When did reading the Bible or the Book of Martyrs turn from a pleasure into a Christian duty, or vice versa? We do not know. As a result our equation between leisure and pleasure may not always apply in this instance. This is made clear, for example, by Lady Mildmay's reference to her mother's role in selecting the right kind of reading for her, when she was a child: „She [i.e. the author's mother – KvG] thought it ever dangerous to suffer young people to read or study books wherein was good and evil mingled together, for that by nature we are inclined rather to learn and retain the evil than the good. The Bible, Musculus's *Common Places*, *The Imitation of Christ*, Mr Foxe's *Books of Martyrs* were the only books she laid before me, which gave me the first taste of Christ Jesus and his truth whereby I have found myself the better established in the whole course of my life.”²²

What was being read other than the Bible and Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, which are frequently mentioned? Lady Margaret Hoby read religious tracts and treatises exclusively, such as books by Thomas Cartwright, William Perkins and Archbishop Bancroft amongst others.²³ Both she and Lady Anne Clifford, had much of their reading read to them by a servant. Unlike Margaret Hoby, Anne Clifford was not of a Puritan persuasion, a fact that is mirrored by the greater variety of her reading, which, other than the Bible, included Montaigne's *Essays*, a History of the Netherlands, Spencer's *Fairie Queen*, St. Augustin's *City of God*, as well as other titles.²⁴

The yeoman Adam Eyre likewise was a regular and avid reader and actually lent out books to friends and neighbours.²⁵ Despite his Puritan leanings his reading was wide and varied and included such authors as Paracelsus, tracts of the day on church government,

21 D'Ewes, Simonds, *The Diary of Sir Simonds d'Ewes (1622–1624)*, ed. Elisabeth Bourcier = Publications de la Sorbonne, Littératures, vol. 5), Paris, Brussels and Montreal 1974, p. 145 (9 July 1623); A. Wilson, *Observations*, p. 26.

22 Pollock, Linda, *With Faith and Physic. The Life of a Tudor Gentlewoman: Lady Grace Mildmay, 1552–1620*, London 1993, Ch.2 (Autobiography), p.28.

23 *Diary*, p. 67, 74f., 77, 87, 94, 97, 99.

24 Clifford, Ann, *The Diary of Lady Ann Clifford*, ed. Sackville-West, Victoria, London 1923, p. 41f., 57, 91, 97, 104.

25 Eyre, *Dyurnall*, p. 23f., 57, 63.

astrological prophecies by William Lily, a book on the Council of Basel, as well as Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World*.²⁶ He seems to have combined husbandry and reading in a harmonious way: "This morne I put Scue to grasse [= presumably his mare], and towards noon Abram Sanderson came to furnish my study with shelves", reads the entry in his diary for October 8, 1647.²⁷ Even the Lancashire apprentice Roger Lowe, who offers us glimpses at his role of scribe for illiterate neighbours, can be encountered in his diary reading Edward Gee's *Treatise of Prayer and Divine Providence*, a book by the minister Isaac Ambrose, as well as the very popular *Practice of Piety* by bishop Bayly, not to mention the *Book of Martyrs*.²⁸

I must stop here, although the list of readers and titles could easily be multiplied. The subject would certainly warrant an independent investigation. But even my rather cursory survey highlights, perhaps unsurprisingly, the important role of religious reading.

While Lady Anne Clifford with her relatively secular tastes felt no compunction on account of playing at Glecko and having the Bible read to her on the same day, the more pious Margaret Hoby, as far as we can trust her diary, confined her leisure activities to walks and to bowling, which she justified to herself on the grounds that it exercised her body.²⁹ Does the material in question reveal a specifically female attitude towards pleasure? We cannot glean as much relevant information as one might expect.

Female autobiographers' and diarists' social life was much more restricted in scope than men's and they probably never turned up at an alehouse as some of the male authors considered here did. Their range of activities was more restricted to the house and family including the duties as well as pleasures of child rearing, a subject well illustrated by Linda Pollock.³⁰ On the other hand, we learn something about the female perception of the *duties* of marriage³¹, but disappointingly little in the source material at hand about female attitudes towards the *pleasures* of marriage, other than such relatively unspecific entries as in the diary attributed to a cousin of Oliver Cromwell's written during the 1690's, which reads: "It pleased the Lord to provide a Husband for me, in every Respect a Blessing: & I desire to be truly humbled that I did not live to the Glory of God in the Injoyment of that Mercy as I should." However, I must add that a closer reading of the texts than I am able to provide here, may yet yield additional insights on the role of gender in shaping the perception of pleasure. In a letter from 1635 contained in her papers kept at the Bodleian Library, Dyonisia Fitzherbert, who apparently

26 *ibid.* p. 2, 57, 62f., 67, 78f.

27 *ibid.*, p. 67.

28 Lowe, *Diary*, 54, 98f., 101, 109.

29 Clifford, *Diary*, esp. p. 57; Hoby, *Diary*, p. 70, as well as p. 55 (ed's introduction).

30 Pollock, Linda, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500-1900*, Cambridge 1983.

31 Cf. also, for a male perspective, Adam Eyre's account of his altercations with his wife: Eyre, *Dyurnall*, p. 43, 46, 36, 51, 53, 64, 84.

decided as a young woman to stay single, claims that “true marriage is holy and modest verginity”.³² This spiritualized view of marriage is entirely in line with her attempt, discussed above, to portray a period of acute mental despair she had experienced as a spiritually (rather than physically) caused affliction.

Unfortunately, in respect of specific attitudes towards sexual pleasure, the autobiographies and diaries consulted remain relatively silent once we go beyond such unusual personal accounts as Simon Forman’s Elizabethan diary or Samuel Pepys’s diary or Godwin Wharton’s autobiography. While Roger Lowe provides us with an unusually direct and refreshing account of his youthful courtship, which ends in marriage to his Emme at Warrington in March 1668³³, most other authors are much more reticent in addressing questions relating to their sexuality.³⁴ Direct references are thus fairly rare such as George Trosse’s admission that, while living at Oporto in Portugal as a young man, “a lewd Fellow-Servant led me to practice a Sin, which too many *Young Men* are guilty of, and look upon it as harmless; tho’ God struck *Onan* dead in the Place for it.”³⁵

Looking back at the sins of his youth, as Presbyterians regularly did in their personal accounts in order to offset their virtues following conversion, Gervase Disney only confirms the rule when he writes: “I fear I too often broke the 7th Command: for tho never (blessed be God) guilty either of Adultery or Fornication; yet finde I have learn’d to know, that there’s more forbidden by that Command than is express’d, and that every unchaste Thought, Word and Action, is a breach of it, the review of such youthful Follies has been dreadful to me, since God touch’d my Heart, and gave me Grace to consider.”³⁶ Among the stricter sort of authors the price of sublimation frequently becomes visible in their religious language. A case in point are Arthur Wilson’s final observations: “I was assured in my own Soule, if I had breath’d no more, my last Breath would have bene in the Armes of an eternall Mercie”, or the comments made by the alleged cousin of Cromwell’s in her diary on the effect the almost simultaneous death of her father and grandfather had on her: “That was the stroake the Lord was pleased to make us of to whip me nearer to himselfe, & to awaken me out of the Letharge I was in: & blessed be his name: for his Rood, as well as his Stafe, they both comfort, when sanctified.”³⁷

32 Dyonisia Fitzherbert, Autobiographical notes, Ms., Bodleian Library, Oxford, e Musaeo 169, fol. ix.

33 Lowe, Diary, p. 45, 118f.

34 This confirms a similar impression related by De Welles, *Sex and Sexual Attitudes*, p. 45 and 59.

35 Trosse, George, *The Life of the Reverend Mr. George Trosse, Written by Himself, and Published Posthumously According to his Order in 1714*, ed. Brink, Andrew W., Montreal and London 1974, p. 62. The testimony of Richard Norwood is another example of an autobiographer discussing adolescent masturbation. This is discussed by De Welles, *Sex and Sexual Attitudes*, p. 51–53. Cf. also the contribution of Gudrun Piller to this volume.

36 Disney, *Some Remarkable Passages*, p. 34.

37 “Cromwell’s Cousin’s Diary”, fol. 214 recto.

On the other hand, the topic of sublimation should only be referred to in the present context for Puritan teaching – as early modern Reformed theology more generally – certainly did not condemn sexual pleasure, provided this was experienced in wedlock. De Welles was right, therefore, in concluding that „the silence of Puritan diarists on the subject of sex [...] is not necessarily the silence of shame, or guilt, or fear. Rather it is the silence of assurance” that harmonious sexual contact between man and spouse fulfilled God’s will.³⁸

III /II

The broader thematic framework within which I should like to place this paper, is an analysis of Calvinist, or rather Reformed, attitudes towards pleasure. I have perhaps rather foolishly chosen this specific focus, because it turns out that there is very little adequate source material on the German and Swiss side of the comparison to be made – at least as far as *published* material is concerned.³⁹ I have been able to come up with only eight autobiographies whose authors – all of them men – were of a Reformed persuasion.⁴⁰ Three of them I have excluded from any detailed analysis because they are accounts written by clergymen. One is by the Palatine theologian and churchman Abraham Scultetus, who was involved not only in the confessional polemics immediately preceding the Thirty Years War but also in the downfall of his master, the Palatine Winter King, who lost his land and dominion at the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620. The other clerical ac-

38 De Welles, *Sex and Sexual Attitudes*, p. 59.

39 I hope to be able to base this study on a broader basis notably concerning the Germanic material used at some future stage of research. New bibliographical instruments will facilitate this task, such as von Krusenstjern, *Benigna, Selbstzeugnisse der Zeit des Dreissigjährigen Krieges. Beschreibendes Verzeichnis (= Selbstzeugnisse der Neuzeit, Bd.6)*, Berlin 1997, Tersch, Harald, *Österreichische Selbstzeugnisse des Spätmittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit (1400–1650). Eine Darstellung in Einzelbeiträgen*, Wien, Cologne and Weimar 1998, and the data bank on Swiss early modern diaries and autobiographies currently compiled by Lorenz Heiligensetzer, Sebastian Leutert and Gudrun Piller. In respect of the latter, see the research reports by von Greyerz, Kaspar, *Deutschschweizerische Selbstzeugnisse (1500–1800) als Quellen der Mentalitätsgeschichte. Bericht über ein Forschungsprojekt*, in: Arnold, Klaus, Schmolinsky, Sabine and Zahnd, Urs-Martin (eds.), *Das dargestellte Ich. Studien zu Selbstzeugnissen des späteren Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit*, Bochum 2000; and now especially by Leutert, Sebastian, and Piller, Gudrun, *Deutschschweizerische Selbstzeugnisse (1500–1800) als Quellen der Mentalitätsgeschichte. Ein Forschungsbericht*, in: *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 49 (1999), p. 197–221.

40 German autobiographical accounts written by women of the sixteenth century are now dealt with in the (yet unpublished) Berlin dissertation of Gabriele Jancke, *Gruppenkultur, Beziehungen und Handeln in Kontexten. Autobiographische Schriften des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts im deutschen Sprachraum*. Eva Kormann (Karlsruhe) is working on a Habilitationsschrift covering Germanic female autobiographical writing of the seventeenth century.

count excluded here was likewise written by a court preacher. Its author was Friedrich Lucä, court preacher first in the Silesian Duchy of Brieg from the 1670's onwards and, later, in the Landgraviate of Hessen-Kassel.⁴¹ The third personal account, which will not be considered here is by Alexander Bösch, Reformed minister of Krummenau in the Toggenburg region of Eastern Switzerland.⁴² The five autobiographies I will draw on here are by the Prussian count Fabian zu Dohna who lived from 1550 to 1621, by the Swiss schoolteacher and house painter Hans Ardüser covering the years from 1557 to 1601, an account written in 1592 by the Basel cloth merchant Andreas Ryff, a report on his life between 1536 and 1567 written early in the seventeenth century by the Basel physician Felix Platter, and finally, the autobiography of the Alsatian pewterer Augustin Güntzer, who died in about 1654. Güntzer's autobiography is perhaps the most interesting from our present point-of-view.⁴³

However, here too, as in a number of English accounts, it is, at least at first sight, the theme of melancholy which predominates the story.⁴⁴ It surfaces right at the beginning when Güntzer informs his reader that he is of a melancholy nature, for which reason he prefers solitude to company.⁴⁵ He occasionally fell prey to bouts of melancholic despair as for example as a journeyman in Austria in about 1617⁴⁶, when he realized that seeking solitude was no remedy to his affliction and thus began to cultivate the company of other fellow journeymen. At the same time, he made it a point to avoid noisy gatherings and drunken brawls.

The other author with a modest social background included in our sample, Hans Ardüser from the Grisons in Eastern Switzerland, acquaints us with a crisis of melancholy and depression which he suffered in 1585/86, and during which he felt unable to read or write

41 Scultetus, Abraham, *Die Selbstbiographie des Heidelberger Theologen und Hofpredigers Abraham Scultetus (1566–1624)*, ed. Gustav A. Benrath (...), Karlsruhe 1966; *Der Chronist Friedrich Lucä. Ein Zeit- und Sittenbild aus der zweiten Hälfte des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts*, ed. Friedrich Lucä, Frankfurt a. M. 1854.

42 See now Heiligensetzer, Lorenz (Hg.), *Liber familiarium personalium, das ist, Verzeichnuß waß sich mit mir, und der meinigen in meiner haußhaltung, sonderliches begeben und zugetragen hatt (= Selbst-Konstruktion: Schweizerische und oberdeutsche Selbstzeugnisse 1500–1850, vol.1)*, Basel 2000.

43 Regarding the Swiss authors mentioned here cf. Fabian Brändle's contribution to this volume, as well as von Greyerz, Kaspar, and Brändle, Fabian, *Basler Selbstzeugnisse des 16./ 17. Jahrhunderts und die neuere historische Forschung* (forthcoming).

44 For comparison cf. Tersch, Harald, *Melancholie in österreichischen Selbstzeugnissen des Späthumanismus: Ein Beitrag zur Historischen Anthropologie*, in: *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 105 (1997), p. 130–155.

45 Güntzer, Augustin, „Ein kleines Biechlin [...] von meinem gantzen Leben“, *Universitätsbibliothek Basel, Handschriften*, Sign. H V 165, fol. 2 recto. To be published shortly by Braendle, Fabian and Sieber, Dominik (eds.), Cologne and Weimar 2000.

46 *Ibid.*, fol. 46 recto.

or paint.⁴⁷ However, in Ardüser's case this should not surprise us, for he failed not only in his attempt to become a minister, as the city of Zürich would not offer him the necessary financial support, he also failed in his first courtship shortly thereafter, possibly also for reasons of his lowly status, and his life thereafter as a schoolteacher during the winter months and a painter from the spring to the autumn season, was characterized by a relentless struggle for survival and punctuated by many losses both material as well as emotional. The worst year by far was 1603, in which Ardüser lost his wife, his father as well as no less than five of his brothers who died on account of illness, accidents, and wounds received as mercenaries on the battlefield.⁴⁸

On the other hand, as one reads Augustin Gütntzer's account of his youth and all the various illness he suffered during those years, it is impossible to avoid the impression that he got a certain pleasure out of returning to his erstwhile suffering, which his writing offered him. His occasional melancholy has nonetheless an unmistakable flavour of authenticity, while Count Dohna's initial claim in his autobiography that the death of his parents in 1552 and 1557, when he still was in his infant years, "was the beginning of the misfortune which has persecuted me all my life", is not borne out by his subsequent, memoir-like account of his service at the Palatine court.⁴⁹

Unlike Gütntzer, the physician Felix Platter, who admittedly grew up in a more comfortable environment, is willing to confess that while sick as a child he greatly enjoyed all the sweets (including "a pretty pear") he received from neighbours and friends and secretly wished he might stay ill a while longer.⁵⁰ This was of course much less extravagant than Fabian zu Dohna's cure from an illness while on the tour of Italy in 1571. A fellow traveller, likewise a German nobleman, cured him in one night with the help of a band of Italian fiddlers, delicious melons and plenty of wine, on the basis of the galenic principle that "*contraria contrariis curantur*."⁵¹

If any firm conclusions can be drawn from our small sample, they would have to include the observation that the theme of melancholy and antipleasure, and the account of the sins committed in youthful years, where such entries actually occur, do not in any way dominate the autobiographies in questions, – perhaps with the exception of Hans Ardüser's account.

47 Hans Ardüser's *Selbstbiographie*, ed. J. Bott, in: *Jahresbericht der Naturforschenden Gesellschaft Graubündens*, N.F., vol. XV, Chur 1870, Appendix, p. 1–41, here p. 10f. On Ardüser, cf. now especially Fabian Brändle's contribution to this volume.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 23f.

49 Fabian zu Dohna, *Die Selbstbiographie des Burggrafen Fabian zu Dohna (*1550 – †1621) nebst Aktenstücken [...]*, ed. C. Krollmann, Leipzig 1905, p. 1.

50 Platter, Felix, *Tagebuch (Lebensbeschreibung)*, 1536–1567, ed. Valentin Lötscher (= *Basler Chroniken*, vol. 10), Basel and Stuttgart 1976, p. 64.

51 Dohna, *Selbstbiographie*, p. 7f.

Looking at the five Germanic authors' attitude towards pleasure the most common denominator between them is their appreciation of good company. A good hundred years before Samuel Pepys did so, Felix Platter got great pleasure from the celebration of Epiphany and the nomination of a one-day king among his fellow students at Montpellier.⁵² Later, from 1561, as he was already firmly installed as a physician at Basel, he passed many a pleasurable day or evening together with his wife, on the invitation of a very merry abess, during carnival or on other festive occasions at the convent of Olsberg near Rheinfelden.⁵³ He thus demonstrated a degree of confessional independence, which one seeks in vain in diaries and autobiographies written by contemporary clergymen.

A very basic source of pleasure for this author was music, especially playing the lute, which he began in his youth. He must have reached a fair degree of proficiency, for while in Montpellier during the 1550's, people called him „l'Alemandt du lut" according to his recollection. What is more, he used his cherished lute to procure sugar-almonds from the journeymen working at the pharmacy of his patron.⁵⁴ He later accumulated a substantial collection of musical instruments and called a series of songbooks his own, which have become the object of a recent musicological analysis.⁵⁵ Almost exactly a hundred years later, Samuel Pepys followed in the footsteps of the Basel physician. Although his love for music was deep and lasting, as is made abundantly clear by a host of his diary entries, notably by those made during the plague of 1665, when music was for him an important source of consolation, he probably never reached the level of Felix Platter's proficiency. The picture we are able to gather from his diary is that "of a man of great natural aptitude, gifted with an excellent ear and possessed of a determined curiosity in musical matters, but deficient in formal training, immediately appreciative of melody but less responsive to or understanding of harmony."⁵⁶ Amongst other instruments he also played the lute and later, after the years covered by his diary, turned to playing the guitar. But, above all, he was a singer.

Neither Felix Platter nor Samuel Pepys were particularly pious authors. However, this does not mean at all that godly people were opposed on principle against the pleasure of hearing and/or performing music. If Reformed worship centred on the word to the detri-

52 Platter, *Tagebuch (Lebensbeschreibung)*, p. 192.

53 *Ibid.*, pp. 358 and 373.

54 Platter, *Tagebuch (Lebensbeschreibung)*, p. 71f and 75.

55 Kmetz, John, *The Sixteenth-Century Basel Songbooks*, Bern, Stuttgart and Vienna 1995. A short overview is provided by Staehelin, Martin, *Felix Platter und die Musik*, in: Tröhler, Ulrich (ed.), *Felix Platter (1536–1614) in seiner Zeit (= Basler Veröffentlichungen zur Geschichte der Medizin und der Biologie, N.F., Fasc.3)*, Basel 1991, p. 74–81.

56 Luckett, Richard, *Art. „Music"*, in: *Pepys, Diary*, vol. X [companion volume], p. 258–282, here p. 259.

ment of ecclesiastical music, this did not mean that music could not be an important source of private enjoyment or of inner strength. This last point is made clear by Lady Grace Mildmay who recalls that „every day I spent some time in playing on my lute and setting songs of five parts thereunto and practised my voice in singing of psalms and in making my prayers to God and confessing my sins, which were ever ready to meet me in every thought and to turn me away from God and from all goodnesses.”⁵⁷

But let us return to Felix Platter and to the confessionalist climate of the period considered here. When staying at the convent of Ohlsberg during carneval, the Basel physician was not transgressing previously internalized religious boundaries as the Alsatian pewterer Augustin Gütntzer was to do half a century later. His openness in confessional matters was genuine, a result of his upbringing as well as of the specific religious climate prevailing in Basel at that time, while Gütntzer got definite pleasure out of his illicit transgression of confessional boundaries on his travels as a journeyman.⁵⁸ He carried a fake rosary with him in order to ease his journey through Italy, in an Easter ceremony as a member of a handpicked group of poor travellers he had his feet washed by a Catholic bishop, and on his return from his second journey, which took him to the Baltic, to England and to France, it was the sign of the cross, however reluctantly given, which saved his life after he had fallen into the hands of marauding French soldiers.

Before he settled and got married at Colmar⁵⁹ in June 1623, Gütntzer was clearly addicted to travelling, and despite great hardship he occasionally suffered en route, got considerable pleasure out of it. At Danzig, as he freely admits, he only stayed and worked during a fortnight, “for my thoughts were centred only on travelling, on seeing cities and countries.”⁶⁰ Similarly, the Basel merchant Andreas Ryff discovered an early love of trading, dealing, and travelling in himself.⁶¹ As well he might, for in later years, following his apprenticeship in Geneva, Porrentruy and Strasbourg, he was almost constantly on the road travelling from one fair to the next, building a network of steady clients and increasing his income, – almost a case in favour of reanimating the overworked Weber-thesis on the elective affinity between Calvinism and capitalism.

The same Andreas Ryff was also to learn that indulging in the pleasures of courtship could clearly turn out to be an ambivalent kind of experience. While it began promisingly at Strasbourg in 1569, it finally came to an abrupt stop, much to the chagrin of the lovers,

57 Pollock, *With Faith and Physic. The Life of a Tudor Gentlewoman: Lady Grace Mildmay, 1552–1620*, Ch.2 (Autobiography), p. 35.

58 Cf. also Sieber, Dominik, *Calvinistische Passionen, konfessionalisierte Körper. Zur Autobiographie des Zinngießers Augustin Gütntzer (1596–1657?)*, in: *Sozialwissenschaftliche Informationen* 24 (1995), p. 5–11.

59 Gütntzer, „Ein kleines Biechlin [...] von meinem gantzen Leben”, fol. 118 verso.

60 *Ibid.*, fol 93 verso: “...dan meine gedancken stunden nuhr zu reissen, stett und landes zu erfahren.”

61 Ryff, Andreas, *Selbstbiographie des Andreas Ryff (bis 1574)*, ed. Vischer, Wilhelm, in: *Beiträge zur vaterländischen Geschichte*, vol. 9, Basel 1870, p. 37–121, here p. 49.

when the parents of the bride insisted on Strasbourg as the residence of the future couple, while Ryff's father, who more than occasionally seems to have been a real tyrant, insisted, as he had always done, that his son take over the Basel family business.⁶² In 1574 Ryff finally married the widow of a *compagnon*.⁶³ As a schoolteacher at Maienfeld, Hans Ardüser, made similar experiences with an offer of marriage to one of his pupils, Barbla Falbi, whose fortune would have solved many of his worries.⁶⁴

While teaching regularly during the winter months, Ardüser had plenty of time left for reading, writing and drawing. The fruit of some of his reading was a small chronicle of historical events in the Grisons and the Swiss Confederacy, as well as a detailed list of his reading composed in 1593, the only such list found in the sample of German speaking authors used here. It begins with the Bible, touches on many different chronicles (including one on England), religious tracts, plenty of journals on travels to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, books on herbs, but no classical authors other than 15 books by Ovid, all in all 46 items.⁶⁵

I will skip over mentions of the pleasures of eating, of visits to spas, or of watching a religious play put on stage by burghers of Basel, or – last but not least – of the Sunday dances, which regularly took place in Catholic Porrentruy, anathema to any English Puritan, but not to Andreas Ryff.⁶⁶ It is time to turn to the risky task of trying to reach some conclusions.

IV / III

There are seven points I would like to make by way of a conclusion.

- 1) The concern with God's special providence in one's own life is not as prominent in German autobiographical accounts from the period considered than in the sample of English sources used here. In specifically Puritan accounts this concern with special providence went hand in hand with the imperative of keeping godly company. This collective aspect rarely surfaces or is alluded to in German autobiographies.
- 2) Beyond these differences, however, it was good company and sociability which most authors and authoresses whose writings have been considered here looked at as a source of pleasure.

⁶² Ibid., pp. 73–76, 79f and 82.

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 118–120.

⁶⁴ Ardüser, *Selbstbiographie*, p. 5.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 15f.

⁶⁶ Ryff, *Selbstbiographie*, p. 63; cf. also Platter, *Tagebuch (Lebensbeschreibung)*, p. 82f., and Dohna, *Selbstbiographie*, p. 20f.

- 3) Another pleasure easily singled out as a second common denominator of the personal accounts I have studied, was that of reading, with an unsurprising predominance of religious reading in the English material consulted.
- 4) It is tempting to conclude that it is typical that authors of such relatively secular texts as Felix Platter and Samuel Pepys make themselves the foremost champions of music. However, Lady Mildmay's notes remind us of the fact that music could likewise turn into a source of spiritual comfort and strength for the godly.
- 5) It is difficult to generalize about other sources of pleasures identified as such by the authors and authoresses we have looked at. These include eating, drinking, plays and spas, as well as the transgression of previously internalized religious boundaries. Their mention does indicate, however, that the anti-pleasure stance frequently encountered, especially in English personal accounts, was not without its obvious loopholes and *lacunae*.
- 6) As regards accounts of melancholy and suffering from physical illness it is difficult to avoid the overall impression that in many cases a certain smugness coloured the autobiographer's or diarist's narrative and that reporting on personal misfortune occasionally evoked a kind of personal satisfaction and even pleasure in the narrator.
- 7) Was it enjoyable? That is the question I have posed at the beginning of this contribution. Perhaps this is not the right question to address to autobiographical authors of the early modern period, for the fact that they wrote their personal accounts is sufficient proof that they considered their lives unusual enough to warrant their recording. Did they also find them enjoyable enough? We have seen that there are plenty of grey tones and zones in what is otherwise a fairly colourful picture. Yet, I have tried to show at the same time that even some of these grey zones could acquire a touch of gold in the retrospective assessment of the autobiographer.