

Notes for *The Century of Deception*

Chapter Four: 'I Had Rather Relate Your Stories Than Other Men's Truths', pp. 81-102.

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- 'I Had Rather Relate Your Stories Than Other Men's Truths' title: *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford, Volume X, 1816-26, New York: GP Putnam's Sons, 1899, p. 121.
- Harsh sentences : Phrase used was 'Discretion was not always mixed with the sentences'. *A Social History of the American Family: From Colonial Times to the Present*, Arthur W Calhoun, Vol. I, Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1917, p. 138.
- 'women were more sternly dealt with than men'. *Ibid*, p. 138.
- *The New England History: The New England History*, Charles W. Elliott, In Two Volumes, Vol. II, New York: Charles Scribner, 1857, p. 22: 'The Court discharged her without punishment for that time, the lawyers made her presents, and her seducer afterwards married her.' This was incorporated into *A Social History of the American Family*, p. 138, which quoted it verbatim.
- *Remarkable Female Characters: Eccentric Biography; Or, Memoirs of Remarkable Female Characters, Ancient and Modern*, Worcester, 1804, pp. 22-3: 'she was discharged without punishment, and a handsome collection made for her in court. The public became interested in her behalf, and her original seducer, either from compunction, or from the latent seeds of affection which had been suppressed but never eradicated, married her shortly after.' The first edition was published in London in 1803 with the section on Polly Baker pp. 11-16. The 1804 US edition, is in pp. 18-23. This was sourced from *The Edinburgh Magazine, Or Literary Miscellany*, April 1794, p. 290: 'She was discharged without punishment, and a handsome collection made for her in court. The public became interested in her behalf; and her original seducer, either from compunction, or from the latent seeds of an affection, which had been suppressed, but never eradicated, married her shortly after.'

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- Ben. Franklin: *The New England History*, p. 22.
- 'and induced one of the judiciary to marry her the next Day': *The General Advertiser*, 15 April 1747.
- Apart from *The General Advertiser: The Daily Advertiser* didn't publish the article, cited in *Benjamin Franklin & Polly Baker: The History of a Literary Deception*, Max Hall, The University of North Carolina Press, 1960, p. 16 [hereafter known as *Hall*]. The other daily papers, *The Daily Gazetteer* and the *London Courant* have inadequate files to check.
- Picking up the story: *The General Evening Post*, 14-16 April 1747, *The London Evening-Post*, 14-16 April 1747 and *The St James's Evening Post*, 14-16 April 1747. As *The London Evening-Post* printer confessed: 'every Post we copy the principal Paragraphs from the Morning Papers (without which our Evening Paper would be of no Service to the Country).' Cited in : *London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole*, Michael Harris, Associated University Presses, 1987, p. 161.
- Two weekly papers: *The Westminster Journal. Or, New Weekly Miscellany*, 18 April 1747 and *Old England: Or, The Broadbottom Journal*, 18 April, 1747.
- *The Penny London Post: The Penny London Post, Or, The Morning Advertiser*, 17-20 April 1747.

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- *The London Magazine: The London Magazine*, April 1747, pp. 178-9.
- *The British Magazine*: Advertised in *The General Advertiser*, 1 May 1747 as containing her speech in *The British Magazine*, April 1747.
- 'God save great George our king': *The Gentleman's Magazine*, October 1745, p. 552.
- *The Gentleman's Magazine: The Gentleman's Magazine*, April, 1747, pp. 175-6.
- *The Scots Magazine: The Scots Magazine*, April 1747, pp. 177-8.
- 'it has been insinuated, that the speech publish'd in her name was entirely fictitious': *The Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1747, p. 211.
- No offspring: Letter from L. Americanus in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, June 1747, p. 295. '...by whom he never had any children'.

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- A month to arrive: Based on an article published in 2012, '18th century sailing times between the English Channel and the Coast of America: How long did it take?', <https://www.rmg.co.uk/discover/behind-the-scenes/blog/18th-century-sailing-times-between-english-channel-and-coast-america> (accessed July 2021).
- American publications: *Hall*, pp. 38-40.
- 'groundless, vile and injurious'; 'her great modesty, virtue, and other amiable qualities'. and 'his malicious and gross abuse': *The Gentleman's Magazine*, July 1748, p. 332.
- 'a fictitious speech': *The Gentleman's Magazine*, June 1747, p. 295. As far as I'm aware this is the first time that it is implied in print that the speech was made up.

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- Franklin: Biographical information about Ben Franklin comes from *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Franklin, Benjamin (1706–1790) and *American National Biography*, General Editors John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, Volume 8, OUP, 1999.

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- 'a Wife, a Daughter, and a Sister'; 'the Just, the Generous, and the Young' and 'only mentions three Qualifications...in the Reader': *The New-England Courant*, 25 June 1722.
- Door of printing shop: *Autobiography of Ben Franklin*, Edited from his Manuscript with Notes and an Introduction, By John Bigelow, Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1868 p. 103.

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- 'naughty girl': *Ibid*, p. 106.
- An apparent Witch Trial: The *Gentleman's Magazine*, January 1731, pp. 29-30, printed amended extracts of this, along with two other genuine witch trials.

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- 'Flesh and Bones ... outweighed that great good Book by abundance' and 'naked': 'A Witch Trial at Mount Holly', *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 22 October 1730.
- 'Old Mistresses Apologue': although dated 25 June 1745, it was never published during Franklin's lifetime.
- 'diminish the violent natural Inclinations you mention': 'Old Mistresses Apologue'.
- 'a small masterpiece of eighteenth-century bawdry': *The Life of Benjamin Franklin Volume Two, Printer and Publisher 1730-1747*, J A Leo Lemay, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, Volume 2, p. 526.

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- 'always hit the Day of the Month': *Poor Richard, 1737. An Almanck For the Year of Christ 1737*. By Richard Saunders, Philadelphia, p. 2.
- Ten thousand peak: *The Life of Benjamin Franklin Volume Two*, p. 185. The best selling almanac was Nathaniel Ames's *An Astronomical Diary, Or, An Almanack*.
- Leeds' death imminent: *Poor Richard, 1733*, p. 2.
- Leeds saying he was alive: *The Life of Benjamin Franklin Volume Two*, p. 175.
- 'his Esteem and Affection for me was extraordinary'. *Poor Richard, 1734*, p. 3.

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- 'to visit an old Stargazer of his Acquaintance' and 'was not worth a printing': *Poor Richard, 1738*, p. 2.
- Broke her glasses: *Ibid*.
- 'the Teachers and Supporters of Virtue and Morality': 'On that Odd Letter of the Drum', *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 7 May 1730. This was in response to the 'Letter of the Drum' that was posted by Franklin on 23 April 1730.

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- Fornication: *The Code of 1650, Being a Compilation; The Earliest Laws and Orders of the General Court of Connecticut, Commonly Called Blue Laws*, Hartford: S. Andrus and Sons, p. 48: 'It is ordered by this Courte and authority thereof, That if any man shall commit fornication, with any single woman, they shall bee punished, either by injoyning to marriage, or fyne, or corporall punnishment, or all, or any of these, as the Courte or magistrates shall appoint, most agreeable to the word of God.'
- Never specifically stated: In her fictitious back story, as related in *Edinburgh Magazine, Or Literary Miscellany*, April 1794, p. 288, she is very much depicted as falling into prostitution. She was 'reduced, by a strange kind of base necessity, to support herself and a helpless infant by illicit practices, and to tread the odious and disgusting path of filthy infamy'. However this was not, of course, written by Benjamin Franklin.
- Modern writers: *Benjamin Franklin Unmasked: On the Unity of His Moral, Religious, and Political Thought*, Jerry Weinberger, University Press of Kansas, 2005, p. 86 writes she is 'obviously a whore'. *The Life of Benjamin Franklin Volume Two*, p. 534 writes that it is 'the trial of a prostitute'.
- Comprehensive book: *Benjamin Franklin & Polly Baker: The History of a Literary Deception*, Max Hall, Virginia: The University of North Carolina Press, 1960.

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- 'conceive' and 'miscarriage': This emphasis of the double-entendre is apparently made by putting parentheses immediately after these words. 'The Text, Rhetorical Strategies, and Themes of "The Speech of Miss Polly Baker"', J. A. Leo Lemay, *The Oldest Revolutionary, Essays on Benjamin Franklin*, Edited by J. A. Leo Lemay, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976, p. 109.
- 'want of money'; 'solicit' and 'erected': *Ibid*. The author confesses that 'some readers may find me straining too hard'.

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- Increase and multiply: *King James Bible*, Genesis, Chapter 1, Verse 28. 'And God blessed them, and said unto them, 'Be fruitful, and multiply'.'
- England and fornication: The Adultery Act of 1650 imposed three months imprisonment for fornication. At the Restoration in 1660, this statute was not renewed. Prosecution for the mere act of fornication itself was abandoned.
- What Franklin truly thought: *Benjamin Franklin Unmasked*, 'Will the Real Ben Franklin Please Stand Up?' pp. 287-292.

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- 1 September 1730: *Autobiography of Ben Franklin*, p. 191.
- venereal disease: *Benjamin Franklin Unmasked*, p. 106.
- 'One good Husband is worth two good Wives'; 'for the scarcer things are the more they're valued.' *Poor Richard, 1742*, July.
- *A Modest Proposal*: connection to Swift pointed out in 'The Text, Rhetorical Strategies, and Themes of "The Speech of Miss Polly Baker"', p. 99.

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- Inserted by a friend: *Hall*, pp. 114-20. Hall argues a man called William Strahan best fits the bill; but also puts forward other possible contenders.
- At least four: *Hall* lists the *Boston Weekly Post-Boy*, *New-York Gazette*, *New-York Weekly Journal* and *The Maryland Gazette*.
- More authentic: 'The Text, Rhetorical Strategies, and Themes of "The Speech of Miss Polly Baker"', pp. 91-120.
- 'Verses on the Virginia Capitol Fire': Printed in *The New-York Gazette*, revived in the *Weekly Post-Boy*, 1 June 1747, Supplement.
- 'And that Fires kindled by Accident *always burn slow* / And not with half the Fury as when they *burn on purpose* you know': quoted in *The Life of Benjamin Franklin Volume Two*, p. 551.

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- 'expung'd for ever from your Books': 'The Text, Rhetorical Strategies, and Themes of "The Speech of Miss Polly Baker"', p. 94.
- Book on history: *Histoire Philosophique Et Politique, Des Établissements et du Commerce des Européens dans les Deux Indes, Tome Sixieme*, Abbé Raynal, 1773.
- Reproduce Polly Baker's speech: The English translation of the book, *A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies*, Translated from the French of the Abbé Raynal by J. Justamond, 3rd Edition, Volume 5, London, 1777, omits the Polly Baker Speech as it is 'in the hands of every English reader', p. 200.
- 'it must be a matter of astonishment to find that America has not yet produced a good poet, an able mathematician, or a man of genius in any single art of science': *Histoire Philosophique Et Politique* p. 239: 'On doit être étonné que l'Amérique n'ait pas encore produit un bon poëte, un habile mathématicien, un homme de génie dans un foud art, ou une seule science.'
- George Washington: *Retrospections of America*, 1797-1811 John Bernard, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1887 pp. 91-2.
- Thomas Jefferson: *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Thomas Jefferson (1781-1782 / Written in answer to 'Queries proposed to the Author by a Foreigner of Distinction, then residing among us.')] Query VI.

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- Declaration of Independence: This anecdote is related on p. 166 of *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, Edited by Albert Henry Smyth, Volume. 1, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1905. It has not been authenticated from another source.
- 'I took the greatest care not to insert a single fact, for which I had not the most unquestionable authority'; 'Massachusetts'; 'a story of my making, on one of those occasions'; and 'had rather relate your stories than other men's truths'. *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford, Volume X, 1816-26, New York: GP Putnam's Sons, 1899, p. 121.
- 'whole Life has been one continued Insult to good Manners and to Decency' and 'Morality and Decorum': *Warren-Adams Letters*, Volume II 1778-1814, The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1925, John Adams to James Warren, 13 April, 1783, p. 209.

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- 'wrote and printed a Piece called the Speech of *Polly Baker*': William Franklin to Jonathan Williams, 30 July 1807, cited in *Hall*, p. 90.
- Late 1770s: First publication appears to have been in French by Voltaire, see *Hall*, pp. 127-9. Next was Philip Mazzei, an Italian, in *Recherches Historiques et Politiques sur les États-Unis de l'Amérique Septentrionale*, 1788, cited in *Hall*, p. 131. First time in English was the translation by Joel Barlow of *New Travels in the United States of America, Performed in 1788*, J. P. Brissot de Warville, Translated from the French, London: J. S. Jordan, 1792, p. 331. He calls her '*Mary Baker*', instead of Polly. Next English version was *Travels in Canada, and the United States, in 1816 and 1817*, Lieut. Francis Hall, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, & Brown, 1818, pp. 382-3. On 4 December 1818 Jefferson sent to Robert Walsh seven anecdotes about Ben Franklin, which included this one.
- Forty years later: First reference I can find to Jefferson's anecdote in an English newspaper is in *Caledonian Mercury*, 23 January 1819. It appears in *The Percy Anecdotes*, Volume 6, London, 1822, pp. 38-9 and in *The Table Book*, William Hone, London, 1827, p. 45.
- *The Gentleman's and London Magazine*: Full title is *The Gentleman's and London Magazine: or, Monthly Chronologer*, 1771, pp. 173-5. It began in 1741 as *The London Magazine: and Monthly Chronologer*.
- 'for the entertainment of your Readers': *The Covent-Garden Magazine; Or, Amorous Repository*, April 1774, pp. 125-7. The speech was sent in by a reader who wrote: 'Thinking the following curious Speech should be preserved in your valuable Repository, I have sent it for the entertainment of your Readers. A. Z.'
- 'amusing to some curious and inquisitive persons to know something of this wonderful Lady, to whom the compliment is paid': *Evening Mail*, 1-3 July 1799. The same piece was in the *Star and Evening Advertiser*, 28 June, 1799.
- Named one of his mares '*Polly Baker*': *True Briton*, 14 May 1799 reported Mr Durand's Polly Baker finishing 4th (out of 4) in the Oak Stakes at Epsom.
- 'Interesting Reflections on the Life of Miss Polly Baker': *The Edinburgh Magazine, Or Literary Miscellany*, April 1794, pp. 288-294
- 'in New England, which has been called the Land of Saints, the Hot-house of Calvinistic Puritanism': *Ibid*, p. 289.
- *Remarkable Female Characters: Eccentric Biography; Or, Memoirs of Remarkable Female Characters, Ancient and Modern*, Worcester, 1804, pp. 18-23. The first edition was published in London in 1803, pp. 11-16.

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- *Of the Means of extending the Greatness of the Spanish Monarchie: The London Chronicle: Or, Universal Evening Post*, 11-13 August 1761, p. 147.
- Frederick II and Germanic settlements: *The London Chronicle*, 21-23 September, 1773, pp. 289-290. Franklin mentions this article in a letter to his son, stating that people were 'taken in' by it. He also regrets that it is 'stripped of all the capitaling and italicizing, that intimate the allusions and mark the emphasis of written discources, to bring them as near as possible to those spoken: printing such a piece all in one even small character, seems to me like repeating one of Whitefield's sermons in the monotony of a schoolboy.' Letter to William Franklin, 6 October 1773 in *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, Edited by Albert Henry Smyth, Volume VI 1773-1776, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1906, pp. 144-147.
- *Supplement to the Boston Independent Chronicle*: Part of this was published in *Parker's General Advertiser, and Morning Intelligencer*, 29 June 1782, pp. 2-3, citing the *Supplement to the Boston Independent Chronicle*, Boston, March 12. Also published in *The Rembrancer; Or, Impartial Repository Of Public Events*, London, 1782, Part II, pp. 135-6.

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- 'the grand Leap of the Whale in that Chace up the Fall of Niagara is esteemed by all who have seen it, as one of the finest Spectacles in Nature'; and 'the next Step might be a Disbelief in the well-vouch'd Accounts of Ghosts and Witches': *The Public Advertiser*, 22 May 1765.
- *Genesis* extract: *The London Chronicle*, 14-17 April 1764, p. 368.
- Two issues of *The London Chronicle: The London Chronicle*, June 23-25, and June 25-28, 1768, cited on p. 402 of 'Franklin's Deistical Indians', Alfred Owen Aldridge, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 94, no. 4, August 25 1950 pp. 398-410.
- *An Account of the Captivity of William Henry in 1755, and of his Residence among the Senneka Indians six Years and seven Months till he made his Escape from them*: published in Boston in 1766. Franklin's last hoax, 'On the Slave-Trade', was published in the *Federal Gazette* on 25 March 1790, only three weeks before he died. In replying to the pro-slavery arguments of Congressman Jackson, he put forward the argument by a fictitious Moslem writing a century before, called Sidi Mehemet Ibrahim, why the abolition of the slavery of Christians was a bad idea. See 'Humor in Franklin's Hoaxes and Satires', Richard E. Amacher, *Studies in American Humor*, vol. 2, no. 1, Special Issue in honor of Walter Blair, April 1975, pp. 16-17.