

A RESPECTABLE WOMAN'S PLACE:
THE IDEOLOGY OF GENDER IN PROTESTANT ONTARIO,
1830 TO 1890

BY

NANCY GREER HALL

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

Historians have long understood the general outlines of the nineteenth century ideal of womanhood, but no one has investigated it in a detailed way. This thesis identifies the decades from 1830 to 1880 as a critical period of gender delineation in Protestant Ontario. By constructing a history of the domestic woman as she was represented and examining the ideological work performed by these representations, the assumptions that underwrote and reinforced the regulation of gender are explored. This is accomplished by a discussion of the social construction of woman, wife, and mother in religious, medical, and educational discourse, the domestic fiction of the mid-century, and in discussions of the place of the spinster in middle class society. It is clear from the evidence that this discourse took place within the context of a redefinition of and intensifying regulation of gender relations in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, this regulation of gender was an additional means for the consolidation of middle class respectability and power.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The middle decades of the nineteenth century have long been of interest to Canadian historians. This is the period when Canada took shape as a political entity. The rebellions of 1837-38 and their republican challenge were beaten. Responsible government, resting on colonial semi-autonomy and electoral reform, emerged. Finally, Confederation, in 1867, provided the framework for a transcontinental nation.

The 1830s to 1880s also saw a number of important social transformations. Massive immigration, almost entirely from Britain, led to rapid population growth. Agriculture became more commercialized as internal markets grew. There were land shortages before the 1830s in Lower Canada and by the 1850s in Upper Canada, forcing new immigrants into wage labour.¹ The Family Compact, which had sought to create "a society characterized by political, social, and economic inequality in the interests of stability and progress" was unseated from power due to the political changes of the 1830s and 1840s.²

¹ Bryan Palmer, Working-Class Experience (Toronto and Vancouver: Butterworth, 1983), 9-10.

² David Gagan, Hopeful Travellers: Families, Land, and Social Change in mid-Victorian Peel County, Canada West

And, from the 1850s on, the British North American colonies experienced their Industrial Revolution. Labour historians maintain this industrialization "wrought significant changes in the Canadian class structure" as it helped to consolidate two new classes - a bourgeoisie and a working class.³ However, they do not analyze the formation of this bourgeoisie. In Colonial Leviathan capitalism, although not yet the predominant form of economic and social organization, had led "various elements of a colonial bourgeoisie" to begin to take an "active and influential role in reshaping society."⁴ For Greer and Radforth, the old colonial elite slowly gave way to an alliance of middle class professionals and a Canadian commercial class. Alison Prentice's The School Promoters seeks to explain the "gradual formation of a definition of class" through educational reform.⁵ According to Prentice, "distinctions of wealth and birth were disappearing," as were the old "stations" and "orders". The traditional view, brought from Britain to Upper Canada, was of a hierarchical society composed of "many mutually dependent ranks and orders."⁶

(Toronto:University of Toronto Press,1981),31.

³ Michael S.Cross and Gregory S.Kealey.ed., Canada's Age of Industry,1849-1896 (Toronto:McClelland and Stewart,1982),6.

⁴ Allan Greer and Ian Radforth,eds., Colonial Leviathan:State Formation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Canada (Toronto:University of Toronto Press,1992),6.

⁵ Alison Prentice, The School Promoters:Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada (Toronto:McClelland and Stewart,1977),84.

There were certain kinds of work that upper class gentlemen did not do and fundamental distinctions between "the respectable classes and the lower orders."⁷ However, in a society with several occupational categories not sharply delineated and one in which "gentlemen" were sometimes involved in "manual labour", traditional distinctions became increasingly hard to maintain.

Bruce Curtis's work on education and the state points out that reforms in education were made with a view to the making of "proper" middle class Canadian citizens.⁸ Curtis points to liberal intellectuals such as Charles Duncombe - educational reformer and author of the 1835 Duncombe Report on Education - who argued that social position should not come from birth or inheritance. "Rather if a person were to be ever anything he must make himself."⁹ In this regard his views had much in common with another educational reformer, Egerton Ryerson, who placed himself in opposition to the beliefs of one of the spokesmen of the colonial elite, Bishop Strachan. Strachan believed that a fixed social hierarchy was essential to both individual happiness and social progress. At mid-century Ryerson could still refer to the various "ranks" of society. There were gentlemen,

⁶ Ibid, 91.

⁷ Ibid, 67.

⁸ Bruce Curtis, Building the Educational State:Canada West, 1836-1871 (London,Canada:The Althouse Press 1988),28.

⁹ Ibid.

who included "gentlemen of leisure" and "gentlemen of the several professions," as well as holders of public office. "There were merchants, mechanics or artisans, and farmers, but some of these could apparently be gentlemen as well. There were labourers and servants. Within these categories were, of course, many more specific trades, professions and occupations."¹⁰ The use of the term "ranks" rather than the more modern middle class more accurately suggests a disparate group rather than a homogeneous whole. For the school promoters, the function of education was to elevate this group into "a respectable or 'middle class' in Upper Canada."¹¹

Neil Sutherland has suggested that by the 1860s the Canadian middle class was composed of "prosperous farmers, skilled artisans and craftsmen, through public employees, the commercial and business occupations, to professions such as preaching, law, medicine, [and] dentistry...¹²." He states that economic growth in the 1870s led to a rapid rise in the size and prosperity of this middle class. Yet Susan Houston, in her study of schooling and social change in Upper Canada, suggests that a middle class "state of mind" existed in the colony as early as the 1830s: "in

¹⁰ from "On the Social Advancement of Canada," Journal of Education for Upper Canada 11(Dec,1849) as quoted in Prentice, The School Promoters, 91.

¹¹ Ibid, 115.

¹² Neil Sutherland, Children in English-Canadian Society:Framing the Twentieth-Century Consensus (Toronto:University of Toronto Press,1976),14.

socio-economic terms this new outlook could be attributed to a 'middle class', in towns and cities defined occupationally in the range from artisan to professional, in the countryside more by prosperity."¹³ Clearly, as Michael Katz has written, the notion of class is not an easy one to establish in the Upper Canadian context.

It is obvious that, too often, Canadian historians have depicted this class as a unified, coherent entity and have failed either to analyze its "making" or to reconstruct its emerging culture. What Mary Ryan has pointed out in the context of her own work is largely true of Canadian historiography. The middle class is largely a residual category; "the assumed, but largely unexamined, context for much of the writing about popular culture and reform movements."¹⁴ Because there is so little analysis of this group as a class, the class context continues to remain nebulous. We do know that by mid-century one's calling, rank, or station appeared less important than what one did within that calling; what notions of morality, respectability and self-regulation one brought to bear on individual conduct. In many ways the creation of a coherent and distinct class identity was established around these

¹³ Susan Houston, "Politics, Schools and Social Change in Upper Canada" in Education and Social Change: Themes from Ontario's Past, M.Katz and P.Mattingly, eds. (New York: New York University Press, 1975), 30.

¹⁴ Mary Ryan, Cradle of the Middle Class: The family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 13.

shared notions of individual conduct. The importance of these new cultural and moral values suggests that the Ontario middle class was as much a cultural as an economic category.¹⁵

Catherine Hall has argued that in British historiography the middle class is "treated as male and the account of the formation of middle class consciousness is structured around a series of public events in which women played no part." Yet, contemporary descriptions of the British Victorian family emphasize the formative role domesticity had in the creation of middle class culture. Therefore, the nineteenth century middle class is assumed to be sexually divided but that "process of division is taken as a given." Hall maintains that definitions of masculinity and femininity played an important role in "marking out" the middle class.¹⁶ It will be argued that central to the process of class definition in nineteenth century Upper Canada were domestic ideology, clearly demarcated gender roles, and the production of ideals of masculinity and femininity. The

¹⁵ Gary Kinsman, The Regulation of Desire: Sexuality in Canada (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1987), 32.

¹⁶ "Gender Divisions and Class Formation in the Birmingham middle class, 1780-1850" in Catherine Hall, White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History (New York: Routledge, 1992). See also, for other examples, Lynda Nead, Myths of Sexuality: representations of women in Victorian Britain (Oxford, 1988) and J. Wolff, "The culture of separate spheres: the role of culture in nineteenth century public and private life" in The Culture of Capital: art, power and the Nineteenth Century Middle Class, J. Wolff and J. Seed, ed. (Manchester, 1988).

domestic ideal was a crucial component in a series of representations that supported both the middle class's economic power and its legitimation of this position. As Catherine Hall has argued in her collection of essays: "one of the ways in which the middle class was held together, despite the many divisive factors, was by their [sic] ideas about masculinity and femininity."¹⁷ Masculine characteristics came to be defined in terms of their political and economic qualities while femininity became recognized in terms of its emotional content. Rather than see the rise of the Canadian middle class in relation to the economic and political changes that occurred in the nineteenth century, it is as useful to see this emerging class as establishing cultural hegemony through the relocation of values and virtues within the domestic domain. In effect, the conception of class relied on gender for its articulation.

The explicit aim of my work is to insert an awareness of the constitutive role of gender into the historical analysis of mid- nineteenth century Ontario. Like race and class, gender is a fundamental social variable that operates at all levels of daily life and characterizes all social institutions. Both the social meaning of sexual difference and sexual difference, itself, are seen as constructed and variable. As Joy Parr has noted, we have sketched out sexual differences but we have not tackled the more

¹⁷ Hall, White, Male, and Middle Class, 95.

important question of why these gender divisions exist.¹⁸ For it is within the system of gender regulation that the social practices of everyday life and social institutions are constructed.

As yet there is little published in the Canadian context that utilizes gender theory: "particularly if one seeks some synthesis and interpretation rather than a monographic description of a single aspect of social life."¹⁹ Canadian women's historians have often assumed that gender does not become an issue until late in the nineteenth century. They have documented the experiences of educated, predominately Anglo-Saxon women as they struggled to gain entry into the so-called "public sphere" around the turn of the century.²⁰ However, by exploring gender formation in the decades from the 1830s to the 1880s, it becomes apparent that gender

¹⁸ Joy Parr, "Nature and Hierarchy: Reflections on Writing the History of Women and Children", Atlantis 11,1 (Fall, 1985) 39-44.

¹⁹ Lykke De La Cour, Cecilia Morgan and Mariana Valverde, "Gender Regulation and State Formation in Nineteenth-Century Canada" in Greer and Radforth, Colonial Leviathan, 163. For two exceptions see Joy Parr, The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) and Marjorie Griffen Cohen, Women's Work, Markets and Economic Development in Nineteenth Century Ontario (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

²⁰ see Linda Kealey, ed., A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1880s-1920s (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1979), Veronica Strong-Boag, The Parliament of Women: The National Council of Women of Canada, 1893-1929 (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1976) and Carol Bacchi, Liberation Deferred?: The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983).

regulation originates much earlier in Canadian history. Also, since the period under consideration concerns the imposition and consolidation of definitions of masculinity and femininity and their rigidification, the most suitable analytical framework is that of gender history rather than women's history. Yet, notwithstanding De La Cour, Morgan, and Valverde's unfortunately overly optimistic statement that few would now dispute "that gender is a major axis of social and political power, and that it therefore deserves to be regarded as one important analytical category," it continues to be exceptionally difficult to insert gender into the main agenda of social and historical analysis.²¹ However, gender, by anchoring social and power-relations in society, provides a crucial understanding of how that society is structured and organized. It will be argued that middle class power and its self-legitimation relied on a renegotiation of gender relations in the middle years of the nineteenth century. It is within this renegotiation that a model of gender difference was constructed and deployed.

The middle class also defined itself through the establishment of new cultural patterns and institutions. Central to this definition was an emphasis on the separation between male and female spheres. The ideology of separate spheres played a crucial role in the creation of a

²¹ Lykke De La Cour, Cecilia Morgan and Mariana Valverde, "Gender Regulation and State Formation in Nineteenth-Century Canada" in Greer and Radforth, Colonial Leviathan.

specifically middle class culture. The mid-nineteenth century witnessed the construction of a new male and middle class public sphere. "To be a middle-class man was to be a somebody, a public person, while the essence of middle-class femininity was being constructed as private and domestic. Such oppositions acquired their meanings ideologically, but that ideology had material effects of the most immediate and concrete kind."²²

In the mid 1960s, three American historians of women identified the centrality of the separate spheres metaphor: Barbara Welter, Aileen Kraditor, and Gerda Lerner. In "The Cult of True Womanhood:1820-1860", Barbara Welter outlined what she called the "Cult of True Womanhood". This ideology, according to Welter, confined women to a private sphere which denigrated their status.²³ Kraditor's Up From the Pedestal linked the nineteenth century separation of spheres to the Industrial Revolution and stressed the persistence of the home as haven in contemporary literature.²⁴ "The Lady and the Mill Girl" pursued this link to the Industrial Revolution.²⁵ However, rather than

²² Ibid, 17.

²³ Barbara Welter, Dimity Convictions:The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century (Athens:Ohio University Press,1976).

²⁴ Aileen Kraditor, Up From the Pedestal:selected writings on the history of American Feminism (Chicago:Quadrangle Books,1968).

²⁵ Gerda Lerner,"The Lady and the Mill Girl:Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson,1800-1840" in A Heritage of Hew Own:Toward a New Social History of

associate the "Cult of True Womanhood" with subordination, Lerner saw separate spheres as a way by which middle class women attempted to elevate their status.

With this increased emphasis on equality and sisterhood, American feminist historians began to look for the sources of modern feminism in women's separate culture. In 1975, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's essay "The Female World of Love and Ritual" suggested that separation had led to the creation of a distinctive women's culture rooted in the shared experiences and emotional ties of women.²⁶ Two years later, Nancy Cott's The Bonds of Womanhood argued that through these female friendships women began to recognize their mutual interests and extend their influence outside the family into semi-formal reform organizations.²⁷ Cott maintained that the feminist political movement had grown out of and received impetus from the separation of spheres. Mary Ryan, in her Cradle of the Middle Class, further developed this argument by looking at the ways in which women's organizations successfully challenged the boundaries between the public and private and linked their interests to the upward mobility of their families. This dichotomy between the public and private continued to structure much

American Women, Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth H. Pleck, ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979).

²⁶ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

²⁷ Nancy F. Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England, 1780-1835 (Yale University Press, 1977).

of the work on nineteenth-century American women until the late 1980s.²⁸

The use of the separate spheres metaphor in American historiography has not gone unchallenged. Critics have pointed out that the language of separate spheres has proved to be vulnerable to sloppy usage.²⁹ The separate spheres metaphor has too often been used, interchangeably, as something both imposed on women and observed by women. In response to this problem, Feminist Studies published an exchange in which five historians discussed the usage of the terms "woman's sphere" and "woman's culture".³⁰ The problem of allocating how much was prescribed for women and how much was created by women remained, however, unresolved. Linda Kerber has, more recently, cautioned against conflating the terms "sphere" and "culture"; the first expressing a limiting ideology and the second embracing the creativity and distinctiveness of the domestic sphere and female social relationships.³¹ Kerber suggests a more sceptical approach

²⁸ see Mary Beth Norton, Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800 (Boston, 1980) Linda L. Kerber, Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America (Chapel Hill, 1980) Marilyn Ferris Motz, True Sisterhood: Michigan Women and Their Kin, 1820-1920 (Albany, 1983) and Suzanne Lebsock, The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860 (New York: Norton, 1985).

²⁹ Linda Kerber, "Separate Sphere, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History", The Journal of American History 75, 1 (1988) 9-39, 12.

³⁰ Ellen Dubois, et al., "Politics and Culture in Women's History: A Symposium", Feminist Studies 6 (1980) 16-64.

which would view "separate spheres" as a rhetorical device utilised to express nineteenth century "power relations for which they had no other words."³² She cautions that the continued use of the separate spheres metaphor prevents feminist historians from developing stronger analytical frameworks. Joy Parr, in a 1985 article in Atlantis, points to the fact that too often "these Victorian prescriptions have been mistaken for social formations."³³ Parr suggests that woman's role should be seen as "a question rather than a given"; not as something inevitable but rather as something that requires explanation.

In Britain, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall have offered the most complex use of separate spheres as an organizing concept to date.³⁴ They have taken into account the recent debates on the subject but still maintain the significance of the ideology. Many feminist historians see the work as the most appropriate and analytical usage of the separate spheres metaphor. Family Fortunes, an account of the economic, associational, religious, and domestic lives of middle-class families in Birmingham, Essex, and Suffolk

³¹ Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female World's, Woman's Place". See also Thais E. Morgan, ed., Victorian Sages and Cultural Discourse: Renegotiating Gender and Power (London:Rutgers, 1990).

³² Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female World's. Woman's Place", 39.

³³ Parr, "Nature and Hierarchy", 40.

³⁴ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850 (London:Hutchinson, 1987).

from 1780 to 1850, documents the public world of work and politics and the private world of the home. It suggests that the development of domestic ideology and its emphasis on the sanctity of family life and the moral role of women as wives and mothers regulated women to the private sphere.

If in the United States the dominant paradigm has been equality and sisterhood, in Britain it has been the equally contentious issue of class which has held greater pertinence for feminist historians, particularly the influence of Marxist class analysis.³⁵ In Family Fortunes, Davidoff and Hall show how the ideology of domesticity and the separation of spheres gave distinctive form to middle class identity. They argue that;

The English middle class was being forged at a time of exceptional turmoil and threatening economic and political disorder. It is at such times that the endemic separation of social categories which exaggerate differences between groups, including men and women, produces intensified efforts to create a 'semblance of order.'... They sought to translate their increasing economic weight into a moral and cultural authority.... Each [men and women] had their appointed place in this newly mapped social world. The privileges and duties [of each]... differed in crucial ways. ... Masculine identity was equated with an emerging concept of 'occupation', while women remained within a familial frame.

In the American context, it was Mary Ryan's study of Oneida County, New York between 1790 and 1865 that first addressed the "story of class-making." Ryan's theory was that "early in the nineteenth century the American middle

³⁵ See Hall, White, Male and Middle Class.

class moulded its distinctive identity around domestic values and family practices."³⁶ For Ryan, the domestic woman was a crucial component in the reproduction of middle class identity.³⁷

Yet one very recent critical reviewer argues that "if loosely speaking there have always been separate spheres ... and perhaps there still are, then 'separate spheres' cannot be used to explain social and political developments in a particular century, least of all to account for Victorian class formation."³⁸ Vickery suggests that the language of separate spheres looks like a conservative response to an expansion in the opportunities of Victorian women. She does admit that the vocabulary of public and private was pervasive, as was the language of true womanly duty. The unprecedented expansion of the public sphere; the myriad of activities and institutions - banks, political organizations, voluntary societies, cultural institutions - provided men with a realm of life in which public opinion could be formed. Vickery does not explain why women were denied entrance to this newly expanded sphere. Most importantly, she does not address Davidoff and Hall's

³⁶ Ryan, Cradle of the Middle Class, 15.

³⁷ For a more recent example of the argument see Barbara L. Epstein, The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism and Temperance in Nineteenth Century America (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1981).

³⁸ Amanda Vickery, "Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History", The Historical Journal 36, 2 (1993) 383-414.

contention that "claims for middle class recognition were refracted through a gendered lens."

Catherine Hall has written that British feminist historians had to discover a new analytical term that was strong enough to counter Marxist class analysis without being reducible merely to sex. That analytic term was gender. Davidoff and Hall place gender at the center of their analysis, arguing that gender played a crucial role in the structuring of the emergent middle class culture.³⁹ Their premise is that identity is gendered and that the organization of this gendered difference is central to the nineteenth century social world: shaping experience, influencing behaviour and structuring explanations. Class becomes the second variable in their analysis but class itself includes the dimension of gender. Mary Poovey has also utilized gender in her analysis of the middle class world of nineteenth century England. Poovey's analysis of the discourses of law, literature and medicine show how the middle class's masculine identity has depended on the construction of the feminine.⁴⁰

³⁹ See also Nead, Myths of Sexuality, where Nead argues that "the production of clearly demarcated gender roles were central features in this process of class definition."p.5.

⁴⁰ Mary Poovey, Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England (University of Chicago Press, 1988). For a brief overview of British women's history see Jane Rendall "'Uneven Development': Women's History, Feminist History and Gender History in Great Britain" in Writing Women's History: International Perspectives, K.Offen, R.Roach Pierson, Jane Rendall, eds. (Bloomington Indiana: University Press, 1991).

Feminists have long argued that every individual's relation to the world is filtered through their sexual identity. That subjectivity is organized by a complex system of social relationships between the sexes; not only in the family but in legal, political, economic and social institutions as well. The term "gender" was first used by historians of women in the late 1960s to refer to this social organization. Most often gender was used to describe the social meanings attributed to sexual differences as distinct from those sexual differences themselves.⁴¹ The social meaning of sexual difference was seen as constructed and variable while sexual difference itself was viewed as unchanging; a universal underpinning the social meaning. Today, many historians assume that gender explains men's and women's different histories but do not offer a theory about how gender operates historically. "Gender" becomes, then, a synonym for "woman", gender roles for sex roles, and gender differences for sexual differences.

Influenced by the post-structuralist anti-theoretical bias, some feminist theorists have infused the term "gender" with new meaning.⁴² For these theorists, gender no longer merely reflects or implements apparently fixed and natural

⁴¹ see Louise M. Newman, "Critical Theory and the History of Women: What's At Stake in Deconstructing Women's History," Journal of Women's History 2,3(1991)58-68.

⁴² see Poovey, Uneven Developments, Joan Wallach Scott, Gender and the Politics of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) and Elaine Showalter, ed., Speaking of Gender (New York and London: Routledge, 1989).

differences between women and men. Sexual difference assumes that the sexes are separate and equal. Gender adds the dimension of power in inequitable relationships. For Scott, "gender is the knowledge that establishes meaning for bodily differences."⁴³ Sexual differences are not universal and unchanging, rather they are another form of social organization that is historically and culturally reproduced and given meaning through gender. Knowledge of the past does not come from reconstructing "objective" experiences but "through analyzing the systems of meaning that make possible and construct those experiences in the first place."⁴⁴ Poovey's work points to the importance of representations of women which have an ontological status of their own. Thus, for historians of gender, representations are analogous to the category of experience in women's history.

It is obvious that gender history differs from women's history in several crucial ways. As Louise Newman has suggested, the difference concerns not just what categories of analysis should be utilised but how power or human agency is conceptualized. Historians of women use the terms "experience," "identity," and "woman" and invest individuals - women and men - with the power to alter material conditions of oppression. Historians of gender, on the other hand, offer as substitutes the terms "representation,"

⁴³ Scott, Gender and the Politics of History, 2.

⁴⁴ Newman, "Critical Theory and the History of Women", 58.

"discourse" and "gender". In place of experience, historians of gender speak of representations that are either present or absent in texts; in place of identities they speak of discourses constructing subjects; and in place of women's experiences, they speak of "gender" " as that which gives meaning to sexual differences."⁴⁵

Poovey's work, for example, is based on the idea that "woman" is a social construct with no inherent basis in nature. "Woman", in this analysis, is a term whose definition depends on the context within which it is being discussed. Historians of women, rejecting this definition, insist on focusing on the collective and individual experiences of "real" women. Gender history seeks to extend the analysis by examining how gender operates, through specific cultural forms, to construct the meanings associated with "masculinity" and "femininity", "male" and "female". Historians of gender argue that it is this analysis which provides the key to understanding how and why women experience their lives the way they do. Scott maintains that our knowledge of the past cannot come from reconstructing "objective" experiences but only through an analysis of "the systems of meaning that make possible and construct those experiences in the first place." For De La Cour and Valverde, gender history examines "the whole social formation rather than taking for granted a unitary category (women) and then proceeding to document its particular

⁴⁵ Ibid.

history."⁴⁶

Ruth Roach Pierson has discussed the "heavy valorisation of 'the category of experience'" in Canadian women's history.⁴⁷ Much of the work previously done, according to Pierson, "seeks to recover and validate a separate sphere of women's culture." The Women in Canadian History Documentary series, in the words of the series editors, sought "to retrieve and make accessible records of the past as the women of Canada experienced it."⁴⁸ These selected documents, in the form of letters or diaries in women's own words, privileged the lived "experience" of women over analytical theory. This emphasis is also found in several works that focus on a particular region or on particular women. A Flannel Shirt and Liberty, Eliane Silverman's The Last Best West, the diaries of Elizabeth Smith and Henriette Dessaulles and No Place Like Home, all give primary emphasis to the experience of women as they themselves describe it.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ "Gender Regulation and State Formation in Nineteenth Century Canada" in Greer and Radforth, Colonial Leviathan, 165.

⁴⁷ Ruth Roach Pierson, "Experience, Difference, Dominance and Voice in Writing Women's History" in Writing Women's History, 85.

⁴⁸ see Beth Light and Alison Prentice, ed., Pioneers and Gentlewomen of British North America, 1713-1867 (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1980) and Beth Light and Joy Parr, eds., Canadian Women on the Move, 1867-1920 (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1983).

⁴⁹ Susan Jackel, ed., A Flannel Shirt and Liberty: Emigrant British Gentlewomen in the Canadian West, 1880-1914 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1982), Eliane Silverman, The Last Best West: Women on the Alberta Frontier, 1880-1930 (Montreal, 1984), Veronica

Essay collections such as The Neglected Majority and Rethinking Canada reflect the growing developments of the history of the diversity of women's experience.⁵⁰ Working class and farm women have also received some attention.⁵¹ Canadian Women:A History provides an impressive synthesis of the historiography relating to women's past experience.⁵² However, due to the attacks from both post-structuralists, on the positivist aspect of "experience", and feminist historians, who argue for the growing awareness of differences among women, studying gender construction has become a more interesting analytical category than the essentialism inherent in shifting femininities.⁵³ This type of analysis alters the importance historians of women give to "experience". We can no longer view the history of women

Strong-Boag,ed., A Woman With A Purpose:The Diaries of Elizabeth Smith (Toronto:University of Toronto Press,1980).Liedewy Hawke,trans., Hopes and Dreams:The Diary of Henriette Dessaulles,1874-1881 (Willowdale,Ontario:Hounslow Press,1986) and Margaret Conrad, Toni Laidlaw and Donna Smyth,eds., No Place Like Home:Diaries and Letters of Nova Scotia Women, 1771- (Halifax:Formac Publishing Company,1988).

⁵⁰ Alison Prentice and Susan Mann Trofimenkoff,eds., The Neglected Majority:Essays in Canadian Women's History, v.2 (Toronto:McClelland and Stewart,1985) and Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman,eds., Rethinking Canada:The Promise of Women's History (Toronto:Copp Clark Pitman,1986).

⁵¹ Janice Acton,et al., Women at Work,Ontario 1850-1930 (Toronto:Canada Women's Educational Press,1974), Joy Parr, Labouring Children:British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada,1869-1924 (London:Croom Helm,1980) Susan Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice,eds., Neglected MajorityEssays in Canadian Women's History, v 1 (Toronto:McClelland and Stewart,1977.) and Linda Rasmussen, A Harvest Yet to Reap:A History of Prairie Women (Toronto:Women's Press,1976).

as an accurate reconstruction of objective experience. By assuming that women have an objective experience, definably different from men, it can imply that the gendered differences between men and women are a natural rather than a social construction. The attempt to analyse the history of women then "gets caught by a circular logic in which 'experience' explains gender difference and gender difference explains the asymmetries of male and female 'experience'."⁵⁴

The use of gender ideology allows the examination of the ideological work performed by representations of woman across a variety of social institutions. Representations are ideological and can be analysed by studying cultural production, which is itself a reflection of specific historical conditions. It is how these representations of women and men as subjective categories of identity have been constructed that becomes the important story.

The process of gender construction and regulation in social institutions and organisations must be shown. There was not a simple consolidation of a new image of woman but an ideological construction that required extensive and

⁵² Alison Prentice et al, Canadian Women: A History (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988).

⁵³ See Mariana Valverde, "Poststructuralist Gender Historians: Are We Those Names?" Labour/Le Travail 25(Spring 1990) 227-236 for a discussion of the impact of deconstruction on Canadian women's history.

⁵⁴ Scott, Gender and the Politics of History, 4.

continuous work. By constructing a history of the domestic woman as she was represented and examining the ideological work performed by these representations, one can explore the assumptions that underwrote and reinforced the regulation of gender. As Scott has shown, the important questions become: what representation of woman is invoked, how, and in what particular social context; what are the symbols involved in this representation, how are they expressed in religious, educational, scientific, legal and political assertions; how do they assert and maintain the meanings of masculinity and femininity.⁵⁵ By examining how definitions of gender were expressed and constructed in a range of relationships - how they work, why they are constructed the way they are, and what the possibilities for change might be - new light will be thrown not only on women's experiences "but on social and political practice as well."⁵⁶ It is important to bear in mind that this does not presuppose either a ready-formed or static "middle class", or a straight forward economic and ideological "separation of spheres". "Indeed, this separation was constantly and multiply produced (and counteracted) in a variety of sites."⁵⁷

If a gendered culture was a primary means to the creation of middle class identity what you should find in the specific areas under discussion is an increasing regulation

⁵⁵ Ibid, 43.

⁵⁶ Poovey, Uneven Developments, 2

⁵⁷ Wolff and Seeds, The Culture of Capital, 118.

and re-definition of the nature, role, and mission of women. There should be an elaboration and justification of gender ideas that coalesce into an ideology operating at all levels of the social formation and organizing social existence. A bricolage of gender ideas, a patterning, will reappear in discourses on women's behaviour, duties, powers, relationships, and opportunities. Tracing the relations that subsist among the entities studied will point to the reappearance of crucial ideas regarding gender formation in nineteenth century Upper Canada.

The social construction of woman would be built upon a belief in the meanings behind recognizable differences between men and women and centre on a belief in the basic and immutable nature of the female. Self-sacrifice and dependency had traditionally be seen as an integral part of woman's nature. It will be argued that by mid-century it was through this selflessness and sacrifice that a woman would achieve personal satisfaction. Religious representations would play a critical role in definitions of womanly nature and sphere. Crucial changes in the interpretation of Christ and God and a softening of Calvinism would have ramifications for man's view of woman. A reformulation of woman's essential nature would now make her peculiarly suited to the denial and self-sacrifice required of religion. This redefinition of woman and religion would increase the perceived affinity between the

two and help to define and determine the particular ways women would become involved in religious work. The medical model of reproductive difference would also be invoked to define what governed woman's nature. Medicine would provide the evidence that women's social characteristics were rooted in her difference by linking physiology and nature. According to medical professionals, woman's physical biology defined her nature and dictated the answers as to her social place. The emergence of a specific moral code that sought to regulate both sexual and social arrangements would provide physiological explanations for women's morality. The almost century-long debates concerning women's education also would contain a persistent undercurrent of concern with the impact educational reform would have not only on proper notions of female nature but on gender relations. The development of a genre of domestic fiction in the 1850s would also play a major role in reinforcing cultural prescriptions by characterizing images of womanly selflessness and self-sacrifice. Fiction written by, about, and for women said what was female by discussing the acceptable traits of womanhood.

It will be shown how the social construction of marriage and motherhood also underwent redefinition and regulation. Religious discourse would describe the godly wife and mother and utilize woman's God-given nature to limit her to a sanctified, domestic and maternal role. Religious views of

woman had emphasized the Christian wife and mother previous to the nineteenth century. What was new was that Protestant clergymen utilized the changed view of woman to reinforce her special role. The rationale for reforming women's education remained based upon their marital and maternal destiny. From the 1830s, when Charles Duncombe promoted a restructuring of female education, through to Social Darwinistic assumptions about evolution and social progress, the critical importance of marriage and motherhood remained the rationale for reforms. Fiction showed that the positive aspects of feminine conformity were found in the fulfilling reward of love and marriage. What was now reflected in that fiction, it will be shown, is that marriage remained the only desirable goal for a woman. Upon marriage woman had assimilated to herself the acceptable characteristics of true womanhood. It has been argued that it was not until the late 1800s that attitudes towards mothering shifted from a view of biological to social reproduction. I will argue that as early as the 1840s Canadians began to re-evaluate the moral nature of childhood. Mothers replaced fathers as the most important parent in childrearing. Love replaced force and authority in the social relations of parenting and there was a progression to a model of full-time mothering.

A further question to be explored is if this redefinition of woman proceeded alongside of and became an integral part of the consolidation of middle class power in nineteenth

century Upper Canada. If so, then morality and virtue would have to be increasingly articulated upon gender. It will be argued that woman's roles began to be seen as carrying particular moral significance. Religious discourse would gradually transform woman from some errant part of man to his opposite, his moral hope and spiritual guide. Medicine would transform womanhood from a biological definition to a class-based moral assessment. Educational reforms, predicated on middle class views, would instill in women proper character and culture. And fiction would articulate the values and the structure of middle class assumptions about the feminine ideal and the norms of middle class life.

If these ideas about female dependence and self-sacrifice, motherhood and marriage did provide a powerful component of middle class identity, it would explain why, by the last quarter of the century, the single middle class woman was perceived as a potential threat to this identity. The spinster and her educational and economic plight received increasing attention, disproportionate to her increased numbers, as the century unfolded. Yet this potential independence threatened an entire social organization built upon home and marriage and threw into question the "natural" definitions of woman's maternal nature, her selflessness and willing dependence. How could the spinster be accommodated by the nineteenth century social system while retaining the ideology decreed by middle class culture?

Because historians have failed to recognize the continued influence of gender regulation they have looked for the progressive expansion of opportunities for women and seen the 1890s as a watershed for change in the ideal of womanhood. Usually, therefore, the focus has been on the growth of educational and professional opportunities for women. The present analysis is a reminder that the ideology of gender informed the entire period.

Chapter II

THEIR PECULIAR DUTIES AS WOMEN

The Social Construction of Woman, Wife and Mother

The mid-century Victorian middle class ideal of womanhood is one that is well documented in British and American history. The "angel in the house", the "relative" creature whose role was to maintain the home as haven is a very familiar figure. Kathryn Sklar's work on Catherine Beecher shows how gender roles provided a key to evolving new social structures in the early nineteenth century as Americans abandoned more traditional status definitions. Sklar maintains that "gender roles were an effective way to channel the explosive potential of nineteenth century social change and bring it at least partially under the control of a national elite."⁵⁸ Davidoff and Hall's work on mid-nineteenth century England stresses that although the domestic virtues and the emphasis on marriage, home, and motherhood was not new, there was a significant reworking of the ideal. "The Puritan divines had led the way in formulating doctrines on the proper place of home and family from the early seventeenth century, their ideas finding echoes among domestic ideologues of the eighteenth and

⁵⁸ Kathryn Kish Sklar, Catherine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), xii.

nineteenth centuries."⁵⁹ What was different by the early years of the nineteenth century, they argue, was this ideology came to encompass particular ideas about masculinity and femininity that commanded wide-spread appeal. Davidoff and Hall conclude these beliefs, and the centrality of domestic values and practices, came to be seen as specifically middle class.

A study of mid-nineteenth century ideas about women has received less attention from Canadian historians of women. We have long understood the general outlines of these ideas but no one has investigated them in a detailed way. Even less understood is the restructuring of gender roles as gender differentiation became more formal in mid-century Ontario. Of critical importance to any analysis of gender formation is the social construction of woman, wife, and mother. Rather than seeing the rise of the middle class exclusively in relation to the economic and political changes that occurred in the nineteenth century, it is as useful to see this emerging class as establishing cultural hegemony primarily through the relocation of values and virtues within the domestic domain.

⁵⁹ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850 (London: Hutchinson, 1987), 155. See also Catherine Hall, White Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History (New York: Routledge, 1992).

In Ontario, representations of women constructed a particular feminine identity around a redefinition of the meanings behind recognisable and traditional sexual differences between men and women. At the center of these representations was a belief in the basic and immutable nature of the female. This immutable nature assimilated diverse personalities into one "woman" and was predicated on innate differences between man and woman. An 1841 article in the Literary Garland suggested that "benevolence, sympathy, and love" were found in much purer form in woman's nature.⁶⁰ Female Excellence suggested the most important characteristics of female nature were "humility, submission, and contentment ... benevolence, meekness" and a greater capacity for forgiveness.⁶¹ An 1852 Christian Guardian article, in discussing woman's nature, pointed to woman's "meek and modest deportment", "purity of heart" and "kind, benevolent disposition" as the true characteristics of woman's nature.⁶² Robert Sedgewick, writing in 1856 on the proper sphere of woman in a Christian society, maintained that the "whole texture of the mechanism" of a woman's inner nature was in "every way more susceptible and impressible."⁶³ Thirty years later, the Methodist minister

⁶⁰ H., "Woman", Literary Garland 4(1841-42), 135.

⁶¹ A Mother, Female Excellence, or, Hints to a Daughter designed for their use from time of leaving school till their settlement in life (London: Religious Tract Society, 184_), 76.

⁶² "Woman - her Beauty, Temper, Influence", Christian Guardian (June 16, 1852).

and woman's college president Benjamin Austin echoed the same sentiments when he wrote that a "meek and quiet spirit" was an integral part of woman's nature. He encouraged women to continue to cultivate certain specifically feminine "dispositions" of the mind; "humility, submission, and contentment ... benevolence, meekness, and forgiveness."⁶⁴

It was also believed that woman accepted dependency as a natural and gratifying part of her own nature. Respectable femininity meant being dependent. "In it's [society's] estimation the complete man is husband and father, and the complete woman is wife and mother. It treats them as presumably such, logically regarding fathers and husbands as providers and wives and mothers and children as dependents."⁶⁵

Furthermore, woman was seen as innately more virtuous than man. "Creative wisdom" had implanted in her very soul a "love of virtue, unequaled in the other sex."⁶⁶ Female Excellence suggested the three moral virtues exemplified in woman were integrity, benevolence, and prudence.⁶⁷ Austin maintained the crucial virtues of patient endurance, humble

⁶³ Robert Sedgewick, "The Proper Sphere and Influence of Woman in a Christian Society", 1856, 25.

⁶⁴ Benjamin F. Austin, ed., Woman Her Character Culture and Calling (Brantford: The Book and Bible House, 1890), 204.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 402.

⁶⁶ H., "Woman", 135.

⁶⁷ A Mother, Female Excellence, 98.

obedience, and self-control had "their native home in woman's heart."⁶⁸

Woman had traditionally been seen as naturally self-sacrificing but this characteristic would become perhaps the most powerful tenet supporting nineteenth century representations of femininity and domesticity. The following extract is one of a number of such pieces published.

[H]er sunny heart of self-forgetting love will not let her hands be at rest while there is any bit of helpful service she can render. If she can, without observation, slip the burnt toast or undercrust on her plate, it is done. If someone must stay at home when there is a day's outing she tells, with music in every tone, how glad she will be to be left quietly behind and have all to herself to do ever so many things she has in mind. And none suspect from word or tone how great the sacrifice to give up the pleasure.⁶⁹

Woman's love was seen as naturally self-sacrificing and motivated by "the self-abnegation which is the special glory of ideal womanhood."⁷⁰ Love was one thing to a woman and quite another to a man. George Henry Napheys, the popular doctor and medical author, was quoting Madame de Stael when he stated; "to him it is an episode: to her it is the whole history." Fame, riches, power, and pleasure all distracted man from the "sentiment of love." But, for woman, "one

⁶⁸ Austin, Woman Her Character Culture and Calling, 402.

⁶⁹ B.G.Jefferis and J.L.Nichols, The Household Guide or Domestic Cyclopaedia: A Practical Family Physician (Toronto: J.L.Nichols, 1894, Reprint, Coles, 1974), 26.

⁷⁰ Fidelis, "The New Ideal of Womanhood", Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly 2(1879)659-76, 675.

passion only sits enthroned in her bosom, one only ideal is enshrined in her heart, knowing no rival, no successor. This passion is love."⁷¹

By the later part of the century it would be maintained that it was through selflessness and sacrifice that a woman would achieve personal satisfaction. As Lynda Nead has argued, respectable femininity was produced around the belief that the pleasure of self-sacrifice and womanly fulfillment were inextricably bound together.⁷² The influential Countess of Aberdeen, wife of the Governor-General and founder of the National Council of Women of Canada, spoke of how "the greatest influence wielded by women had been acquired by the action of laws of Nature and Evolution, imposing on her for centuries ever-increasing, willing self-sacrifice."⁷³

Women who embodied selflessness and accepted that their fulfillment would be obtained through their service to others, found their compensation in the exercise of moral influence. "It was moral influence which was to allow a reassertion of self for women."⁷⁴ The purity of domestic

⁷¹ George Henry Napheys, The Physical Life of Woman: Advice to maiden, wife and mother, 4th ed. (Toronto: Maclear and Company, 1875), 49.

⁷² Lynda Nead, Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain (London: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 24.

⁷³ Benjamin F. Austin, Woman: Maiden, Wife, and Mother (Toronto: Linscott Publishing, 1898), preface.

⁷⁴ Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, 171.

life was to be maintained by the influence of woman. An intelligent and pious woman in her "domestic relations" became "an instrument of Providence". She would "scatter the roses of content" over the dark and serpentine paths of life" and, in so doing, change man's sorrows into brightest joys."⁷⁵ The female sex was also particularly situated to raise the moral level of society. The content of Reverend Stevenson's 1867 address on woman and her relation to the country, contained themes that would have been familiar to a late eighteenth century congregation. The greatest influence to redeem the world from the "evils" that existed lay in "the hands of woman." Although her sphere was narrow, it exerted a powerful enough influence to "accomplish wonders." It was that power of

penetrating the heart, that vigilance that cannot be seen, that household economy that is so requisite and that evinces so much management and care, - that freedom of thought and speech and action during all the trials of life, - that support in affliction and sorrow, that sympathy and constant watchfulness and tender care in seasons of pain and sickness, - that devoted attachment through all the adverse circumstances that may be man's lot, and every other charm and power she is capable of putting forth, - everything, indeed, that makes her what she is, - woman, - shows the power within her and the influence she is capable of exerting upon the world.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ "Woman - her Beauty, Temper, Influence".

⁷⁶ Reverend Stevenson, "Woman and Her Relation to the Country: A Lecture Delivered in the Centenary Church, July 16, 1867", The New Dominion Monthly N.S. 1 (July 27, 1867).

As a daughter, her influence was extensive and intense. She was her mother's companion and cheerful aid; her father's confidante and friend whom she provided with conversation, sympathy and devotional feelings "when at his own happy fireside he is solacing himself from the fatigues and cares, the toil and moil of this weary world." As a lover, her influence was "mighty" yet "tender", able to turn a man from selfishness and enable him to quit himself of the "vile propensity" to be "swayed by mundane motives." As a wife, woman influenced her husband to "holiness and virtue" and warned him against sin. Minnie Campbell's future husband Colin, in an 1882 letter, referred to her as his "censor and guide in matters of doubt as to any action. I feel in addition to our Father's guidance that whenever I am tempted your bright eyes will look me in the face and say "Don't do it Colin" and how could I transgress ... what guide and reward to do right a mother and a lover's confidence and prayers."⁷⁷ And as a mother, her influential power was greatest for who else could "furnish the understanding and bend the will, and direct and control and subdue the affections."⁷⁸

The roles of woman were seen to carry a particular moral significance as she became man's moral hope and guide. Her special vocation was to regulate personal relations; to

⁷⁷ Minnie Julia Beatrice Campbell Papers, MG14 C6, Public Archives of Manitoba.

⁷⁸ Canadian Gem and Family Visitor 2,2(Feb,1849).

"affect and subdue, and enlighten and raise, and purify and etherialize and sublimate." Morality and virtue, instead of being articulated upon an inherited class position, were increasingly articulated upon gender and associated with the domestic sphere. Woman's purpose was to fit man to pursue worldly aims in a moral and regulated fashion. "In the home, the woman's hand reigns triumphant. Here her influence is most seen and felt. ... When oppressed by the cares of life and business, a man returns from his day's toil to his home, how pleasant it is to be received with smiles and a kiss of welcome from his loving wife, sisters, and mother."⁷⁹ Through her influence woman was to ameliorate the harsher aspects of man's sphere for "in her hands rests the power to uplift man from moral degradation."⁸⁰ To her was given the influence to restrain and soften "the violence of Human passion." Woman was to exert her powerful influence on the virtue of the community by elevating the "moral character of the age." She was to reinforce "the motives of moral purity ... and impress on the minds of all a reverence for the sanctity of obligations of virtue."

What was naturally masculine and feminine came to be defined in relation to two different fields of responsibility - one public - one private. A vital part of making domesticity the practice of a class was the increasing secularization of writing on both women and the

⁷⁹ Jefferis, The Household Guide, 25.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

domestic sphere. Although remaining within a general Christian framework, the primary concern was on the reworking of the domestic world into a proper setting for morality. This loose association between religion and morality meant it could become acceptable to many. Several articles in the Literary Garland placed woman at the centre of the home. The "duties of domestic life" not only called forth "all the sensibilities of the female" they were necessary to the "full development of her charms."⁸¹ An 1849 article in the Canadian Gem and Family Visitor stated that, from the centre of her domestic realm, woman would "diffuse sunshine and warmth through the whole atmosphere of the home."⁸² An 1850 article in Harper's suggested that the "laws of God and nature" would be fulfilled only where each sex fulfilled "its peculiar duties" and woman rendered her sphere "a sanctuary." Woman was to be "enshrined in the privacy of domestic love and domestic duty" and look for her only happiness to home and "the blessed shelter and pure harmonies of private life."⁸³ Late in the century a "true woman" was still being told that she would not want to exchange "her motherly all-aroundness, her sweet womanly loveliness", that is her "true nature", which enabled her to function so well in the home for any other type of labour.⁸⁴

⁸¹ "Domestic Life", Literary Garland 2(May,1839),275. See also H., "Woman", 135.

⁸² Canadian Gem and Family Visitor 2,2(Feb,1849).

⁸³ Mrs.S.C.Hall, "Memories of Jane Porter", Harper's 1(Sept,1850),4.

Woman and her occupations in the home represented an alternative to the emerging pace and competitiveness of the nineteenth century economy. As early as the 1840s, the most common representation of woman and the home was of a haven from the competition and conflict of the public world of work. Woman was to provide a haven for the male who was subject to these conflicts in the new industrial world and provide him with the emotional sustenance he would require to face the outside world.

To what source of happiness would he resort to render life's journey, through the bleak desert of existence, tolerable? What solace find, to calm his wounded spirit in the day of trouble, and nerve him to withstand the dread attacks of care, when misfortunes meet him at every turn? ... All would be an endless strife and buffeting against the varying currents of the wide world's whim, and peace a stranger to his soul. What substitute will he find for wife, or sister, who ... with her gentle soothing voice, pours a sweet solace into his mind, a balsam for all his racking ills leaving him calm - and filled with eager hope of better times, and brighter prospects.⁸⁵

Home and the woman in it were seen as a peaceful refuge where values could be nourished and sustained and where labour was integrated with life. "His business will probably take him from home most of the day, and it should be your care and delight to see to his comfort both before he starts and when he returns. It may sometimes happen in his fighting the battle of life that he has to encounter much that is unpleasant and he may return home depressed.

⁸⁴ Emma F. Drake, M.D., What A Young Wife Ought to Know (Toronto: Briggs, 1893), 66.

⁸⁵ H., "Woman", 35.

You will have to cheer him."⁸⁶ Home contrasted to the competitive world because its "presiding spirit" was woman who was "removed from the arena of pecuniary excitement and ambitious competition." Woman inhabited a "sanctuary ... full of the merry sunshine of happiness," where one found "calm and joyful repose from the busy heartless world" in her cloister.⁸⁷ If man, the "giant", went out into the world "for the battle of life", woman made her home "a place of rest and refreshment for body and mind."⁸⁸ The land she governed "was a bright oasis in the desert of the world's selfishness."⁸⁹ These representations were necessary not only to maintain the illusion of a non-competitive, non-alienated home life for man, but a delicate, pure, and elevated womanhood. Woman's morality and purity made the home a haven for competitive man, while, in turn, woman's morality and purity were ensured because she was protected in the domestic sphere. Only as long as woman remained in the home would the self-reinforcing notion of womanly nature be sustained. This message was highly contradictory. Woman was confined to the private sphere yet the same ideology argued for her importance in "nurturing morality in an amoral world."⁹⁰

⁸⁶ The Ladies Book of Useful Information
(London, Ontario: London Printing and Lithography Co., 1896).

⁸⁷ "Woman's Sphere", The Harp (Dec, 1874), 25.

⁸⁸ Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly 5(1880), 550.

⁸⁹ "Woman's Sphere", 25.

However, the image of woman's labour within the domestic sphere and for the larger society was as a nonalienating expression of selflessness. Woman's work was emotional labour that was intrinsically self-fulfilling. Fidelis compared man's and woman's work in an article in The Canadian Monthly in 1878;

Man's work and woman's work in the world are so inextricably blended that it would be simply impossible to disentangle them, from the time when the woman was first given as 'helpmeet' for man. Man's work, indeed has as a rule, been rather with the ruder material forces, or the public affairs of life; woman's as a rule, rather with the inner sanctities of home. But, without woman's work in the latter department, how much of man's work in the former would have been possible? ... Not only has woman's work proper been of a kind that can never be measured by outward sense - the work of mother, teacher, trainer, helper of man from his cradle to his grave - work that can never be too highly estimated; but, more than this, her actual direct aid to man in his more special achievements can never be fully appreciated, just because her unselfish love has preferred that her share should be merged in his.⁹¹

Woman's work eluded the productive work of the world. Home was emptied of its association with paid work and became defined as a place of privacy and shelter. It was the emotional nature of woman's work that was a desirable and unsurpassable goal. Its emotional nature was based upon the pleasure of self-sacrifice and fulfilment through others. In fact, woman's work seemed to elude rationalisation. By the 1880's, a debate ensued in Round

⁹⁰ Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, 171.

⁹¹ Fidelis, "Woman's Work", Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly 1(1878)295-311, 296.

the Table as to whether woman's labour could be considered as productive in the same sense as the work of man. Was the wife's "contribution of time and labour" equal to man's? "I have looked into Adam Smith and MacCulloch and Ricardo, and I found that there is labour which is productive and labour which is non-productive. The husband's work means money. It can be turned into bread and butter. ... The phantom bread of the 'loaf-giver' will not be found to fatten."⁹² It was argued conversely that the wife's work was more truly productive "even though he gives his work to the outside world for money, and she gives her's to the home for love." Although the husband was the bread-winner it was woman that transformed the "raw material" of domestic life, through her "loving care and industry" into the comforts of her household.⁹³

Only as long as woman's domestic labour was distinguished from man's paid labour could the illusion persist that men were fundamentally different from women and that there were separate spheres.

The assumption which underlies the mutual relations and duties of husband and wife is the idea that the former is the bread-winner and protector, the latter the loaf giver or home provider. He goes out to labour for his family's support, she abides at home, directs the menage, and is supposed to turn his earnings to the best account. Each bears part of the common burden, and the wife's part is no less necessary than the husband's to the common well being whence it

⁹² F.B.R., "Is the Wife's Labour Nonproductive", Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly 5(1880), 550.

⁹³ Ibid, 663.

follows that the earnings of the husband should be considered a common purse to be used by her prudently for the comfort of the family, including herself, for certainly her time and work are worth her own comfortable maintenance.⁹⁴

In positing a distinction among kinds of labour, the illusion of an alternative to the competitive, amoral public sphere of man was created. The world of business and politics was one of strife and its competitive nature was contrasted to that sphere of woman that was immune to self-interestedness. Business and public life thus diverged from the home because the two were the separate domains of the two sexes.

Our factitious state has well nigh engulfed [sic] whatever of nature and heart a poor man had left him. The artificial and technical has all but absorbed the real and the true; ... with but one exception ... the bosom of a Christian family. ... [S]he must be a keeper at home, and so arrange her family, so that he, when he return from the care and contention of the world, shall find a retreat in which sweet converse shall beguile him of his cares; and peace, and love, and gentle welcome, and soothing sympathy shall form a striking contrast to the scene he has just quitted.⁹⁵

By segregating women according to a domestic ideal and providing an alternative to competition, men could pursue economic success while still preserving notions of middle class respectability and morality.

The female world of loving support was represented as a counterpart to the male world of work and politics. "If government requires a masculine understanding or

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

temperament, and if the practical character by which political questions are likely to be best settled resides in the man, whose sphere is the world, rather than in the woman, whose sphere is home, that is a reason for preferring such government and legislation."⁹⁶ Women were defined as domestic beings 'naturally' suited to duties in the home and with children; "in no other sphere in which she can move, will she so answer the end of her being."⁹⁷

Gender identities had always appeared to coincide with the ideology of separate spheres. Now, based on woman's immutable nature, morality, and influence, they appeared to provide the very basis of the dichotomy between the spheres. "[I]n the economy of nature or rather in the design of God, woman is the complement of man. In defining her sphere and describing her influence, this fact is fundamental. ... [I]t must follow that the sphere of one is different from the other. ... Besides, it is only at home ... that man finds woman to be his complement."⁹⁸ Goldwin Smith maintained there was nothing of inferiority or inequality in this dichotomy for it was "quite independent of any invidious comparisons, whether intellectual or moral. Perfect equality may reign between two beings whose spheres are

⁹⁶ Goldwin Smith, Essays on the Questions of the Day, political and social (Toronto:MacMillan and Co., 1893), 520.

⁹⁷ Sedgewick, "The Proper Sphere and Influence of Woman in a Christian Society", 25.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

different, and who are the complements, not the competitors, of each other."⁹⁹ John Dryden, in a speech delivered in the Ontario legislature, stated that a man's very appearance indicated the force of his nature, his authority, decisiveness, and self-assertion. Woman's appearance showed exactly the opposite and indicated instead her "trust, dependence, grace and beauty. In other words, man was made in such a form when compared to woman as "stamps him with the attributes of authority, government and control."¹⁰⁰

In 1879, Fidelis, the pen name of Agnes Maule Machar, published an article in Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly entitled "The New Ideal of Womanhood" where she addressed the "changed view of woman and her needs."¹⁰¹ She suggested that, in the past, the ideal woman had been "the 'clinging-vine type', a creature of sentiment and emotion, absolutely dependent of man for any life worth living." Now, a nobler ideal was superseding the old; an ideal that saw woman's nature as encompassing "endurance, foresight, strength and skill."¹⁰² Fidelis also saw a new attitude

⁹⁹ Smith, Essays on the Questions of the Day, political and social, 520.

¹⁰⁰ John Dryden, "Womanhood Suffrage", A speech delivered in the Ontario Legislature (May 10, 1893), 5.

¹⁰¹ Fidelis, "The New Ideal of Womanhood", 660. See also M, "The Woman Question", Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly 2(1879)568-79 and "Woman's Rights and Sphere", Christian Guardian (August 18, 1883).

¹⁰² Fidelis, "The New Ideal of Womanhood", 660.

afoot regarding the role of woman. She was now the "friend and counsellor of man"; a creature with "larger conceptions, wider views, and nobler possibilities."¹⁰³

Fidelis spoke of this new perception of woman as a particularly middle class ideal which would work upward in society and counteract the "utterly vacuous waste" of so many "society" women's lives. She quoted the Bishop of Manchester, who suggested there had been no alteration in the "vacuity and restless indolence" of woman in "the upper ranks of society."¹⁰⁴ This new ideal had no greater enemy than "fashionable society" and its too frequent victories over the impulse of usefulness, an encroachment which would increase as social life became more complex and artificial. What was needed was "a sufficiently strong counteracting force" which could only be found by "training girls to live with a purpose, to taste the pure delight of pursuing ... some worthy end, whether this be found in an ennobling study, or in practical philanthropic work."¹⁰⁵

Fidelis' demand for women was for individual fulfilment. Of course, a woman's efforts towards achieving this ideal "must always be reckoned secondary to their peculiar duties as women."¹⁰⁶ Any personal desire was to be sacrificed at

¹⁰³ Ibid, 662.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 664.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 666.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 668.

the call of "womanly duty". Home and family was still the most satisfying site for married women of the middle class. "Love, in some form or other, will almost always be lord of a woman's life, and a truly happy marriage its most perfect fruition."¹⁰⁷

Fidelis believed that there always would co-exist the two types of womanhood - "the weaker and more clinging" and the stronger but no less loving.

But just in proportion as woman approaches the higher ideal that wisely loves rather than weakly worships, that can postpone even the temporary gratification of its own affection to the real good of the beloved object - that would not artfully "manage", but nobly influence, as one rational being may another; in proportion as her warmer emotions and her livelier imagination are trained and disciplined by true culture, and her more vividly realizing faith gains the firmer footing of a more intelligent basis - in the same proportion will she be more and more fitted to fulfil her high mission as 'helpmeet' for man in an age of restless and clashing thought - and to realize the noble ideal to which Charles Kingsley clung so steadfastly for a quarter of a century - of 'woman as the teacher, the natural and therefore divine guide, purifier, inspirer of man.'¹⁰⁸

The principle that underlay nineteenth century gender divisions was that men and women were different and complementary. Their differences meant men and women were assigned different spheres of activity. The fact that the two sexes were complementary meant, however, that neither was complete without the other. Together they created the

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 675.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 676.

perfect social unit through marriage.¹⁰⁹ Married life was to be a life "of mutual dependence"¹¹⁰ built on a "strong and fervent mutual affection as the prime essential."¹¹¹ Female Excellence cautioned young people that the first consideration in choosing a partner ought to be the moral and religious character of the intended. Proper character would provide the "foundation of happiness in the married life."¹¹² The writer also suggested that "congeniality in temper, taste, and pursuits" was desirable for married life was to be based on "thoroughly conjoined interest in every particular."¹¹³

As man's complement woman brought to marriage certain characteristics inherently feminine. An early nineteenth century advice book to young men listed the attributes thought desirable in a wife. Listed in order of importance, they were; chastity, sobriety, industry, frugality, cleanliness, knowledge of domestic affairs, good temper and

¹⁰⁹ See Peter Ward, Courtship, Love and Marriage in Nineteenth Century English Canada (Montreal:McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990) for a different perspective on marriage. Ward explores the formal codes, social rules, and institutions governing courtship and marriage in nineteenth century Canada. He delineates how religious and legal regulation of the two played a vital role in creating and defending the family. His work is uninformed by a concept of gender, a theory of power, or by any feminist historical scholarship.

¹¹⁰ A Mother, Female Excellence, 223.

¹¹¹ Canadian Monthly, 2(July to Dec, 1875).

¹¹² A Mother, Female Excellence, 221.

¹¹³ Ibid, 223.

beauty. Chastity, or "perfect modesty, in word, deed, and even thought" was so essential that in its absence "no female was fit to be a wife." The notion of sobriety pertained to the wife's conduct and expressed not only steadiness, seriousness and prudence but, more importantly, a proper sense of propriety and trust-worthiness. This was the "treasure" that young men were to prize above all the others. "Miserable is the husband, who, when he crosses the threshold of his house, carries with him doubts and fears and suspicions. I do not mean suspicions of the fidelity of his wife, but of her care, frugality, attention to his interests, and to the health and morals of his children."¹¹⁴ An 1859 Christian Guardian article entitled "Words to Women" suggested the most important characteristic a woman brought to marriage was "gentleness - unvarying gentleness - that 'suffereth long and is kind', that 'never faileth' gentleness to the husband in manner, in words - tender, loving gentleness."¹¹⁵ For woman, made to obey, had to learn early to "suffer injustice and bear wrong" from a husband without complaining.¹¹⁶ Twenty years later, Pye Henry Chavasse stated that the greatest charm a woman held for her husband was her "gentle, loving, confiding, placid, hopeful, and trusting disposition,"¹¹⁷ sentiments that were echoed at

¹¹⁴ William Cobbett, Advice to Young Men (New York: John Doyle, 1833), 84-90.

¹¹⁵ "Words to Women", Christian Guardian (March 23, 1859).

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Pye Henry Chavasse, Advice to A Wife on the Management

the end of the century in Mary Wood-Allen's advice book to young women. A wife was to be pure and strong, prudent and judicious. Her true womanliness was to be found in her sweetness, purity, and grace.¹¹⁸

In entering the "sacred realm" of marriage, women assumed enormous duties and responsibilities. However, these duties were never viewed as onerous because they were done in the spirit of love and willingness and with a womanly sense of self-sacrifice. Several Christian Guardian articles portrayed the beauty of womanly self-denial and self-sacrifice.¹¹⁹ John Lanceley, in his book on domestic life, told women entering married life; "Now is the time to display your tact, to learn how to express an opposing opinion without arousing antagonism, to yield a desire for the sake of a greater love than that of self, to adhere to principle without unpleasant discussion; in short, to be dignified and womanly without pettiness or littleness of any kind." Most importantly, young wives were to remember the words of Ruskin, that the woman must be "incorruptibly good, instinctively, infallibly wise, not for self-development but for self-renunciation." That was to be woman's highest development.

of her own Health (Toronto:Hunter Rose,1879),65.

¹¹⁸ See Mary Wood-Allen,M.D., What A Young Woman Ought To Know (Toronto:Ryerson Press,1899).

¹¹⁹ See,for example,"Woman's Work", Christian Guardian (Sept 20,1876) and "Of Self-Sacrifice", Christian Guardian (Feb 21,1877).

Both husbands and wives contributed to marriage but in different ways. It was woman's domestic duty to keep her husband's happiness continually in view "so that her husband need not fret about the management of home wants and duties." It was the duty of the husband to love, protect and defend his wife as "the weaker vessel" and to provide for her the necessities and comforts of life. It was the duty of the wife to "obey and venerate her husband" because God had made the woman for the man. "Love and protection on the one hand, affectionate subjection and fidelity on the other."¹²⁰ If the duties and responsibilities of husband and wife were to be reciprocal and complementary, she was to remember always that if her husband failed in his duty it did not absolve her of her own. "The oath that she took on marriage was not to do her duty so long as he did but 'till death us do part' and she is not warranted in the omission of one jot of her household observances because he is indifferent or abusive regarding them."¹²¹

Woman's role in marriage was explained in terms of emotional needs and not in the more material aspects of domesticity. Her support was phrased in the language of morality and affection.

A good wife is Heaven's last, best gift to man - his angel and minister of graces innumerable - his gem of many virtues - his casket of jewels; her

¹²⁰ John Ellis Lancelly, Domestic Sanctuary, or, The importance of Family Religion (Hamilton, Spectator Publishing, 1878), 13-24.

¹²¹ New Dominion Monthly N.S. 9 (July-Dec, 1875), 129.

voice is sweet music - her smiles, his brightest day - her kiss, the guardian of his innocence - her arms, the pole of his safety, the balm of his health, the balsam of his life - her industry, his surest wealth - her economy, his safest steward - her lips, his faithful counsellors - her bosom the softest pillow of his cares - and her prayers, the ablest advocate of Heaven's blessing on his head.¹²²

Woman's mission in marriage was to "renew the heart of man." He was to protect her and provide for her material well-being, she was to nourish him with love.¹²³ Notions of romantic attraction were played down and marital compatibility was sought. Mutual respect and affection counterbalanced notions of marital duty. Charles Boulton wrote to his wife Augusta; "It is to you I look for that love and happiness that God grants to his people in bringing two hearts together that beat in love and sympathy for one another and I trust and pray that it may lead us to a higher and purer love which is the gift of our Lord and Saviour alone."¹²⁴

It was in woman's greater ability to love that lay her greatest influence on man.

The influence which woman exerts as a lover is proverbially mighty and tender. When she has awakened that master emotion of the human breast, and when she reciprocates it, why, for the time being and ever afterwards, she sits as a queen in the heart of man, and rules him thoroughly and at

¹²² Sedgewick, "The Proper Sphere and Influence of Woman in a Christian Society", 25.

¹²³ Chavasse, Advice to a Wife on the Management of Her own Health, 65.

¹²⁴ Charles Arkall Boulton Family Papers, MG14 B20 Public Archives of Manitoba.

will. Love is essentially romantic. It is the ideal of human existence. It imbues the dull, cold realities of life with the spiritual element, and paints them with the beautiful colourings of imagination and of hope."¹²⁵

Woman's loving influence was to temper the harsh realities of the field, the market, the workshop, or the office with its "disagreeable competition and petty jealousy." Her love was also to improve her husband morally; "her quietness may calm him ... she may teach him giving ... she may restrain him ... her love and affection may subdue him."¹²⁶

Marriage held out promise but also anxiety. Despite the proliferation of domestic and marital advice manuals, marriage represented a major adjustment. Women were expected to forge intimate, life-long, inter-dependent relationships with beings, who, by virtue of gender, were believed to be their temperamental opposites. Just before her marriage, Henriette Dessaulles wrote in her diary; "I'm about to begin a new life, a life partly hidden by a mysterious veil that no one lifts for me. I'll discover it with him, my beloved who will be my husband. How strange it is to be entering an unknown world that everyone seems to be familiar with and yet no one speaks to me about."¹²⁷ Shortly after her 1862 marriage, one young bride wrote in her

¹²⁵ Sedgewick, "The Proper Sphere and Influence of Woman in a Christian Society", 31.

¹²⁶ Lanceley, Domestic Sanctuary, 31.

¹²⁷ Liedewy Hawke, trans., Hopes and Dreams: The Diary of Henriette Dessaulles, 1874-1881 (Ontario: Hounslow Press, 1986), 342.

journal; "Charlie does not understand me yet, and I do not understand him."¹²⁸

Adding to this anxiety was the matter of choice. A man could search for his ideal woman, he could even choose whether to marry or not. A woman could only choose to answer yes or no to a particular man. Therefore, in the decision that was to determine her entire life, she had no range of selection. As one advice book for ladies wrote, the young man was "to be actively desirous of meeting with a suitable partner" while it was more "becoming in a young woman to wait patiently."¹²⁹ This matter of choice was even more constrained by the parental control that was obviously exercised throughout the entire period under discussion. Diaries and letters often refer to the necessity of parental permission and few women would consider marrying without it. Parental control was also enshrined in law. In Quebec, until 1866, women were not allowed to marry under the age of twenty-five and men under the age of thirty without parental consent. This age was lowered to twenty-one in Quebec and by the end of the century the marital consent age was eighteen in the rest of Canada.¹³⁰ Didactic literature also

¹²⁸ Mrs. Charles C. Carpenter Daily Journal MG29 D63 National Archives of Canada.

¹²⁹ The Ladies Book of Useful Information: compiled from many sources (London, Ontario, 1896), 80.

¹³⁰ Constance Backhouse, Petticoats and Prejudice: Women and Law In Nineteenth Century Canada (Toronto: Women's Press, 1991), 39. Backhouse provides an extensive analysis of the ways in which the laws and the legal profession helped to dictate women's rights. In her descriptions of

emphasized the importance of family interests and parental control. "Parents have at heart the interests of their children, and know better than they do the means by which they can be promoted. Children should, therefore, follow their advice rather than blind inclination, in an affair so important and on which their happiness for time and eternity is so dependent."¹³¹

Despite the ideal of mutual dependency, complementarity, and the dominance of the rhetoric of woman's sphere there remained substantial elements of male dominance codified in the law. Legally a married woman remained not only passive and powerless but totally dependent on her husband. Constance Backhouse has asserted that the nineteenth century legal system actively defended gender as a vital criterion in Canadian law.¹³² James Snell suggests that it was not until the early twentieth century that the inequitable power relationship within the family began to be contested.¹³³ Common law placed married women in an anomalous position. The principle of this common law was coverture or the

the "patriarchal" assumptions of the legal system she discusses masculine dominance and the sexual regulation of women. Backhouse's emphasis on narrative makes this work very much a part of Canadian historiography, however, she provides little theoretical interpretation of the material.

¹³¹ Ibid, 31. In essence this was the father's control since equal guardianship did not exist.

¹³² See Backhouse, Petticoats and Prejudice, op cit.

¹³³ James G. Snell, In the Shadow of the Law: Divorce in Canada, 1900-1939 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

"doctrine of marital unity". Married women were legally represented or "covered" by their husbands which meant that, in fact, her very existence was absorbed into that of her husband's. In the eyes of the law she became non-existent until his death.

The husband and wife were now one person and that one person was the husband.¹³⁴ The Upper Canada Law Journal of 1856 stated the matter quite clearly; "The natural rights of man and woman are, it must be admitted, equal; entering the married state the woman surrenders most of them; in the possession of civil rights before, they merge in her husband; in the eye of the law she may be said to cease to exist."¹³⁵ A woman could not make her own will, sign any contract, or engage in business. In 1859, an Upper Canadian law allowed married women to own property but she required her husband's consent to sell it. However, under British common law a married woman was entitled to a lifetime interest in one-third of her husband's property.

Her basic structural inequality in the eyes of the law was reinforced by the economic system. Women's inability to earn, or if to earn to retain, money solidified the husband's legal authority into actual personal power. All a wife's personal property, which included any wages she earned, belonged absolutely to her husband until an 1872

¹³⁴ Backhouse, Petticoats and Prejudice, 177.

¹³⁵ Ward, Courtship, Love, and Marriage, 39.

Ontario statute gave married women control over their own earnings. In 1884 the Married Women's Property Act gave married women the right to rent, to sell, or to enter into contracts with respect to their own property without their husband's consent.

Issues of marital discord such as separation, divorce, and abuse further illustrate the paradoxical nature of the relationship between husband and wife. Prior to Confederation, Upper Canadian law followed the precedent of English legal tradition which forbade divorce. There were several attempts in both Upper and Lower Canada to establish divorce courts between 1833 and 1859, but these failed. The legislature could pass special statutes for individuals but only seven petitions had been heard and five divorces granted prior to Confederation.¹³⁶ In Lower Canada, marriage could only be dissolved by the death of one of the spouses. After 1867, although divorce was under federal jurisdiction, divorce laws varied across the provinces. Residents of Ontario and the Western provinces utilised federal statutes to obtain a divorce. Prior to the turn of the century, only sixty-nine such divorces were granted. In those provinces with matrimonial courts, such as Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, there were fewer than three hundred. Divorce was typically provided only to men whose wives had committed adultery. Women had to prove that their husbands had been guilty of some additional crime such as incest or bigamy.

¹³⁶ Backhouse, Petticoats and Prejudice, 167.

A further consequence of the doctrine of marital unity was that women were denied basic protection from husbands who mistreated them. It was not the mistreatment that bothered the judiciary but that "transactions of this sort" should be "screened from public gaze." Very few court rulings would sanction the wife's leaving her husband's home. These decisions were given justification by an appeal to the sanctity of marriage. "The well-being of our whole social system rest[s] upon this foundation of mutual forbearance. Those who enter into that engagement do so for better, for worse. [W]here the result fails to realize all our anticipations, it is our manifest duty to bear and forbear."¹³⁷ That changes to married woman's anomalous position in the eyes of the law were so resisted by the judiciary suggests the unwillingness of the legal system to examine the rhetoric of the relations between the sexes and develop more egalitarian family law.¹³⁸ If they acknowledge the paradox they threatened to expose both the limitations of the marital ideal and the artificiality of separate spheres.

Of equal importance to the social construction of woman and wife in the analysis of gender formation is the social construction of mother. The ideology of motherhood was a

¹³⁷ Ibid, 176.

¹³⁸ see Backhouse, Petticoats and Prejudice, who contends the legal system reinforced patriarchal views of marriage even as legislators attempted to develop more equitable law near the end of the century.

central part of the nineteenth century ideal. Neil Sutherland writes that it was not until the late 1800s that attitudes towards mothering shifted from a view of biological to social reproduction. Sutherland suggests that it was not until the 1890s and the impact of industrialization and urbanization that there was a heightened awareness of the importance of the mother in developing the child.¹³⁹ However, as early as the 1830s educational reformers such as Ryerson discussed the three-fold nature of childhood and the need for increased attention to their mental, moral, and physical development. In the same period, the traditional idea of original sin as relating to infants and the idea of eternal damnation were being questioned. The belief in the innate sinfulness of the child slowly gave way to a more sentimental understanding of childhood that saw an innocent in need of protection and development. As Marguerite Van Die argues, by the 1840s Canadians were re-evaluating the moral nature of childhood.¹⁴⁰ Mothers replaced fathers as the most important parent in childrearing: love replaced force and authority in the social relations of parenting. It is from the 1830s that we see a progression to a model of full-time mothering.

¹³⁹ Neil Sutherland, Children in English-Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth Century Consensus (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 18.

¹⁴⁰ Marguerite Van Die, An Evangelical Mind: Nathanael Burwash and the Methodist Tradition in Canada, 1839-1918 (Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 1989), 26.

Married life with children was the only guarantee of marital bliss, contentment, and a truly happy home. Motherhood was the glory of womanhood. Predicated on an inherent maternal nature, it became woman's highest calling. If marriage was woman's "vocation", it was only in motherhood that she would find her true "calling" and main reason for being. Maternal love was woman's definitive characteristic and motherhood was the most valuable component of woman's natural mission. Above all else, woman's passion was grounded in this notion of maternal instinct.

The love of offspring is one of the strongest instincts implanted in woman, there is nothing that will compensate for the want of children. A wife yearns for them; they are as necessary to her happiness as the food she eats and as the air she breathes. ... If she be not a parent, her mission in life will be only half performed, and she will be robbed of the greatest happiness this world can afford.¹⁴¹

The ideology of domesticity and marriage depended on believing that woman's sexual capabilities were dictated by her maternal nature.¹⁴² More importantly, this nature was not aggressive like man's, but selfless. "It is natural to desire to know the joys of parenthood. In the home, through the cares and love, the anxiety, self-sacrifice, tenderness and patience which accompany parenthood, the education of

¹⁴¹ Chavasse, Advice to a Wife on the Management of her own Health, 8.

¹⁴² The gendered conceptualization of sexual desire will be discussed more fully in Chapter Three.

the individual is made most complete and perfect."¹⁴³ The desire for maternity constituted woman's chief pleasure and maternal love was seen as the truest expression of woman's purity. Both naturalistic and scriptural explanations were invoked to portray this maternal instinct as the definitive characteristic of woman's nature. "The tender love, the sleepless care, the unselfish sacrifice of the mother are indeed beautiful, but mother-love is instinctive. She does not feel it a sacrifice to care for her child; her love is the most undying instinct of her nature."¹⁴⁴ This, once again, maintained the illusion that freedom and autonomy for man within a non-alienated domestic sphere did exist. As Mary Poovey has discussed, it was only as long as "women remained in the home and did not claim a more sexually aggressive or other than maternal love" that "this form of (apparent) nonalienation [could] seem to emanate from womanly nature."¹⁴⁵

It was in her relations with her children that a woman's power for good was supposed to be especially manifest. Mothers assumed almost complete responsibility for the raising of children as economic concerns increasingly took fathers away from the family. Legally and conventionally fathers retained final authority over their children, yet

¹⁴³ Wood-Allen, What a Young Woman Ought to Know, 249.

¹⁴⁴ Mrs. Emily Huntington Miller, "The Woman and Home" in Austin, Woman Her Character Culture and Calling, 129.

¹⁴⁵ Poovey, Uneven Developments, 77.

the increasing proliferation of "domestic education" books assumed that children would spend the majority of time in the company of their mothers. Also, new educational and religious theories began to emphasize the malleability of children's minds. With the emphasis on early character development and the designation of motherhood as the calling of women, it was clear that only women would be the nurturers of the young. The crucial influence of mothers aided in developing the designation of motherhood as a specialised vocation. With early childhood seen as the appropriate time for the training of individual virtue, the child was what the mother made it: "it is in her hands as clay in the hands of the potter, and she can mould it at will."¹⁴⁶ This belief was based on the acceptance of the Lockean idea that "early influences on a child directly and inevitably decided his or her later character."¹⁴⁷ When a child was committed to the mother's care, "[n]othing save the finger of God has written on the tablet."¹⁴⁸ Mothers had the charge of "immortal beings" in their care.

A child's physical, mental and moral temperament was "for a long period exclusively in their hands."¹⁴⁹ It was mothers

¹⁴⁶ Sedgewick, "The Proper Sphere and Influence of Woman in A Christian Society", 34.

¹⁴⁷ Nancy F. Cott, Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England, 1780-1835 (Yale University Press, 1977), 84.

¹⁴⁸ Mrs. Sigourney, "True Economy in Child Care", New Dominion Monthly N.S. 8 (1875), 299.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

that were responsible for the social reproduction vital to the middle class's maintenance of power. They were cautioned always to "spend systematically a portion of time in their daily instruction" and to convey "useful knowledge or moral and religious instruction." For what a mother was doing "for the minds and souls of her children" was training them "up for the Kingdom of heaven." No one else could perform this duty as well as the mother and if she neglected her duty it would "be a loss for which Eternity must pay."¹⁵⁰ The influence of maternal love followed a child throughout its life. "When launched into the world, each to take part in its labours, anxieties, and trials, they still turn to their mother for consolation, if not for counsel, in their time of trouble and difficulty. The pure and good thoughts she has implanted in their minds when children continue to grow up into good acts long after she is dead."¹⁵¹ The mother was to inculcate values and characteristic traits that were deemed essential to middle class achievement and respectability.

To her is mainly committed the task of pouring into the opening mind of infancy its first impressions of duty, and of stamping on its susceptible heart the first image of its God. Who will not confess the influence of a mother in forming the heart of a child? What man is there who cannot trace the origin of many of the best maxims of his life to the lips of her who gave him birth.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 301.

¹⁵¹ B.G.Jefferis, Searchlights on Health, Light on Dark Corners (Toronto:J.L.Nichols, 1895.Reprint Coles, 1974), 24/25.

Woman's maternal instinct accounted for the seemingly undeniable fact that women were not aggressive and competitive like men, but self-sacrificing and tender. "The mother loves her child, the child loves the mother, yet love differs much in these two instances. The first is protecting, anxious, self-sacrificing, unstinted care, unqualified devotion; the other is sweet dependence, unquestioning acceptance, asking all and giving little."¹⁵³ As the apex of woman's self-fulfillment, motherhood meant self-denial. "Willingly does she watch it [her baby] by day in its cozy crib, ... willingly does she prevent the night watches, that its rest may be sweet and undisturbed. Forgetful of herself, her sole care is centred on this little object, and she lives, and moves, and works, and watches, and wrestles for its good."¹⁵⁴ Maternal influence also conferred upon women an extraordinary influence not only over their children but over all men. "The mother can take man's whole nature under her control."¹⁵⁵ Motherhood meant not only the nurturing of children. It was assumed that an individual adult's moral qualities not only measured but determined his failures or progress. Thus, to ensure the individual's and, therefore, society's development, women were to continue to influence individual morality in

¹⁵² Ibid, 30.

¹⁵³ Drake, What a Young Woman Ought to Know, 204.

¹⁵⁴ Sedgewick, "The Proper Sphere and Influence of Woman in a Christian Society", 32.

¹⁵⁵ Jefferis, Searchlights on Health, 21.

their husbands and adult children.

It cannot be forgotten, however, that, the rhetoric of motherhood aside, paternal authority was firmly entrenched in common law. A father's exclusive control and custody of his children went largely unchallenged throughout the period, despite the changing perceptions on child-rearing and the influential role of the mother. Thomas Wardlaw Taylor, the nineteenth century Manitoba jurist, stated succinctly in 1893; "the Court is always unwilling to interfere with the Common Law rights of the father."¹⁵⁶ A mother's character and reputation had to be impeccable if she wished to obtain custody of her young children (under the age of seven or twelve depending on the province.) She also had to be under the protection of a male relative - father or brother. Obviously, a mother could not have been guilty of adultery, a stricture that did not apply to fathers.

Motherhood was not, however, solely a spiritual and ideological mission. In fulfilling these ideals, women encountered an intensely physical process through a good portion of their adult lives. Michael Katz's study of mid-nineteenth century Hamilton shows that, in the 1850s, sixty percent of the married women forty to forty-five years of age had a child between the ages of one and five. Eighty-one percent of the married women of the same age had

¹⁵⁶ as quoted in Backhouse, Petticoats and Prejudice, 201.

a child ten or younger.¹⁵⁷ In Peel County circa 1840s, studied by David Gagan, a woman could expect to bear children for almost forty percent of her life, have children under ten for sixty percent of it, and have still dependent children (under sixteen) for seventy-five percent of her life. This meant she would "never be wholly free from the obligations of motherhood."¹⁵⁸

The social construction of woman, wife, and mother made domesticity the practice of a class and not just one particular group. Middle class ideology, its systems of ideas and institutions, was conditioned by the redefinition of the female ideal. Representations of woman were, thus, a crucial component that supported both the middle class's economic power and its legitimation of this position. The social arrangement of separate spheres, the sexual division of labour, and the model of woman's moral influence based on an idealized image of domestic woman, constituted the basis of middle class identity. The rhetorical and material separation of spheres, combined with the ideal of feminized morality, consolidated middle class power because it linked the new moral values to a figure supposedly immune to the aggression, self-interest, and competition of the public world. Thus morality and middle class values were preserved

¹⁵⁷ Michael Katz, The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth Century City (Harvard University Press, 1975), 246.

¹⁵⁸ David Gagan, Hopeful Travellers: Families, Land and Social Change in Mid-Victorian Peel County, Canada West (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 87.

without inhibiting economic growth. Through the separation of the domesticated woman, an illusion was created of an alternative to the strife and alienation of the male world of work. As will be seen in the next chapter, religious doctrine supported existing representations of woman, and thus, contained her role within established church structures.

Chapter III

THE GENTLE MINISTRIES OF UNSELFISH CHRISTIAN LOVE

Women and Canadian Protestant Religion

The importance of religion in the development of the Canadian nation has received considerable attention.¹⁵⁹ There have also been numerous denominational and church organization histories.¹⁶⁰ Two recent works, Two Worlds and The Church and Canadian Culture, emphasize the cultural importance of the Protestant religion in Canada.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ S.D.Clark, Church and Sect in Canada (Toronto:University of Toronto Press,1948),Goldwin French, Parsons and Politics:The Role of Wesleyan Methodists in Upper Canada and the Maritimes from 1780 to 1855 (Toronto:Ryerson Press,1962),J.S.Moir, Church and State in Canada West:Three Studies in the Relation of Denominationalism and Nationalism,1841-1867 (Toronto:University of Toronto Press,1959) and J.W.Grant, The Church in the Canadian Era:The First Century of Confederation (Toronto:McGraw-Hill Ryerson,1972).

¹⁶⁰ See, for example, J.T.McNeill, The Presbyterian Church in Canada,1875-1925 (Toronto:General Board,Presbyterian Church in Canada,1925),J.S.Moir, Enduring Witness:A History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada (Toronto:Bryant Press,1974) and W.H.Elgee, The Social Teachings of the Canadian Churches:Protestant, the Early Period,before 1850 (Toronto:Ryerson Press,1964).

¹⁶¹ Robert E.VanderVennen,ed., The Church and Canadian Culture (Lantham:University Press of America,1991),William Westfall, Two Worlds:The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario (Kingston:McGill-Queen's Press,1989).

For the most part, however, historians of women have appeared uninterested in women and religion.¹⁶² Although by the mid to late 1980s a growing number of articles and theses began to appear, the emphasis has been on religious activity and social reform.¹⁶³ Ruth Compton Brouwer and Rosemary Gagan have analysed women's foreign missionary experience in the Canadian Presbyterian and Methodist churches. Brouwer suggests that Presbyterian foreign missions provided an alternative for women "who wanted to assert themselves without repudiating contemporary social and religious ideas on appropriate gender roles."¹⁶⁴ Gagan shows that women's missionary work in the Methodist Church provided "a vehicle for their liberation": an alternative to marriage and motherhood for those few women who made the

¹⁶² for one important exception see Marta Danylewycz, Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood and Spinsterhood in Quebec, 1840-1902 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987).

¹⁶³ The very first was Wendy Mitchinson's 1977 "Canadian Women and Church Missionary Societies in the Nineteenth Century: A Step Towards Independence", Atlantis 2,2(Spring, 1977) 57-75. See also Christopher Headon, "Women and Religion in Mid and Late Nineteenth Century Canada", Journal of the Canadian Church History Society, 20(March-June, 1978) 15-46, John Thomas, "Servants of the Church: Canadian Methodist Deaconess Work, 1890-1926", Canadian Historical Review, 65,3(Sept 1984) 371-95, Christina Simmons, "Helping the Poorer Sisters: The Women of the Jost Mission, Halifax, 1905-1945" in Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History, Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman, eds. (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1986), Nancy Hall, "'Not by Might, Nor by Power, but by My Spirit': Women Workers in the United Church of Canada, 1890-1940", Master's Thesis, University of Manitoba (1986) and Nancy Hall, "The Professionalization of Women Workers in the Methodist, Presbyterian, and United Churches of Canada" in First Days, Fighting Days: Women in Manitoba History, Mary Kinnear, ed. (Regina: Great Plains

work a life-long career.¹⁶⁵ Yet both works point to the undeniable fact that the foreign missionary experience was "irrelevant for women living in Canada"¹⁶⁶ and that in neither church did these women "lobby for a voice" within their church.¹⁶⁷ However, an analysis of gender regulation within Canadian Protestant Churches has been absent within the secondary historiography.

Women's seeming affinity for religion was a socially constructed phenomenon.¹⁶⁸ Religious representations played a critical role not only in scriptural definitions of womanly nature and sphere but in defining the relation of woman to religion. What emerged was a series of beliefs and practices as to the distinct nature and sphere of men and women which "provided the basis for a shared culture among the middle class."¹⁶⁹ The God-given nature of woman was

Research Centre, 1987) and Marilyn Fardig Whiteley, "'Doing Just About What They Please': Ladies' Aids in Ontario Methodism", Ontario History 82, 4 (Dec, 1990) 289-303.

¹⁶⁴ Ruth Compton Brouwer, New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Mission, 1876-1914 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 188.

¹⁶⁵ Rosemary R. Gagan, A Sensitive Independence: Canadian Methodist Women Missionaries in Canada and the Orient, 1881-1925 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), 4.

¹⁶⁶ Brouwer, New Women for God, 194.

¹⁶⁷ Gagan, A Sensitive Independence, 205.

¹⁶⁸ See Ruth Compton Brouwer, "Transcending the 'unacknowledged quarantine': Putting Religion into English-Canadian Women's History", Journal of Canadian Studies 27, 3 (Fall, 1992) 47-61.

utilised to limit her to a sanctified domestic, maternal role and religious dogma encouraged her to accept her powerlessness and dependency. Biblical texts could be, and were, invoked to prevent women from intruding on male prerogative. In no other area of women's lives did the definitions of "true" woman's peculiarly religious nature provide such a close description of the reality of woman's role and functions.

This chapter will emphasize material from the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches in Canada. For several reasons it is these two churches that best exemplify Canadian nineteenth century middle class Protestantism. It is not just the paucity of sources and the apparent lack of debate within the Church of England in Canada that suggests this Church does not warrant the same attention when addressing the role of women. Although there is some disagreement between church historians, it appears that Church of England communicants were drawn from the Canadian corporate and social elite.¹⁷⁰ What is not disputed is the class-consciousness of Anglican clergy, who tended to identify themselves with the social and intellectual elite of Canada.¹⁷¹ The Church of England's three-tiered

¹⁶⁹ Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, 74.

¹⁷⁰ Robert E. VanderVennen, ed., Church and Canadian Culture (New York:University Press of America, 1991), 19.

¹⁷¹ Curtis Fahey, In His Name: The Anglican Experience in Upper Canada, 1791-1854 (Ottawa:Carleton University Press, 1991), 213.

government of bishops, priests, and deacons reflected their belief that a graded social order was "the work of God." This led to a social and political conservatism that emphasised order and reason.

The Church of England's hierarchical structure was sanctioned by an ecclesiastical tradition that emphasised the apostolic succession of the priesthood and episcopal government; what S.D.Clark has called its "top-down" approach.¹⁷² Ecclesiastical decisions were not made by Committees of clergy and laity. In fact, for much of the period under discussion, the male laity fought to increase their representation within the Church of England structure. Prior to Confederation lay involvement was strictly circumscribed. Only Bishops and the clergy were members of Synod with communicants allowed representation only at the diocesan level. Yet, the Bishop retained absolute veto over all legislation enacted.¹⁷³ From 1867 to 1879 growing controversy within the church led to an increasing equality between male clergy and male adult laity. It was not until 1897 that the Lambeth Conference debated the role of women within the Church.¹⁷⁴ The ordered and hierarchical character of the Church of England in Canada emphasised that each member had to accept his or her station within the social

¹⁷² Vandervennen, Church and Canadian Culture, 17.

¹⁷³ Alan L. Hayes, ed., By Grace Co-Workers: Building the Anglican Diocese of Toronto, 1780-1989 (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1989), 37.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 66.

hierarchy. For women, their place in this order would go largely unquestioned.

By contrast the Methodists and Presbyterians incorporated a graduated system of legislative bodies with lay representation in equal numbers with the clergy. The disruptions in Scotland in the 1840s that led to the establishment of the Free Church had an enormous impact on the Presbyterian Church in Canada. The Presbyterians already had a synodical form of government that included the laity. The Free Church movement led it further away from its establishmentarianism position and towards a more evangelical and voluntarist one very similar to that occupied by the Methodists.¹⁷⁵

As one historian of the church has stated; the Church of England in Canada "was not a full partner in the Protestant culture of the late nineteenth century."¹⁷⁶ Hostility and suspicion persisted between the Church of England and other Protestant denominations. Internal strife between High Churchmen and Evangelicals distracted the church's attention away from social and political matters. While the church increased its numbers, these issues divided the Canadian "Church of England from the society it served."¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, the Church of England in Canada maintained its

¹⁷⁵ Westfall, Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario, 82.

¹⁷⁶ In His Name, 297.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

identification with its British character. It refused for generations to use the denominational term Anglican, maintaining its name until 1954.¹⁷⁸ It preserved "the trappings of Empire" within the church and The Canadian Churchman, despite its name, continued to put English news on the front page while relegating Canadian news to the inside.¹⁷⁹

The Methodists and Presbyterians, on the other hand, experienced "staggering" growth between 1842 and 1881. The Methodists increased their combined membership more than seven fold; the Presbyterians more than five fold.¹⁸⁰ By the 1860s, this rapid growth seemed to confirm, at least to the Methodists, that their church "was peculiarly well suited to the circumstances of the developing Canadian community [as] the new national church."¹⁸¹ The President of the Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada, Reverend Morley Punshon, argued that Methodists had replaced the Church of England "as the real Canadian establishment. Without any special favours it had become the leading Protestant denomination in the new Dominion; even though it was not established by law it was nonetheless the new national Church of Protestant Canada."¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Vandervennen, Church and Canadian Culture, 18.

¹⁷⁹ Hayes, By Grace Co-Workers, 21,22,66.

¹⁸⁰ Westfall, Two Worlds, 10.

¹⁸¹ Two Worlds, 52.

Most importantly for women, there were two views of the role of the church in Canadian society. Methodists and Presbyterians believed in salvation by works. Methodists channelled their religion of feelings and emotions directly into Church affairs "where they sustained not only the individual but also a host of religious institutions."¹⁸³ In their attempts to address the social and moral problems of the new nation they increasingly relied on women as dutiful workers in the creation of the "Kingdom of God" on earth. With disestablishment, and the effects of the Oxford Movement, the Church of England saw itself as primarily a spiritual organization; a sacred institution in a secular world. Its growing introversion led to the construction of "a counter world of the sacred that stood against the values and beliefs of the new secular society - 'a city on a hill'."¹⁸⁴

In the early years of the nineteenth century, the various denominations had distinct class associations. John Strachan attacked the un-respectability of the Methodists and other non-conformists, such as the Presbyterians, suggesting they were "unrestrained and even licentious."¹⁸⁵ Furthermore, Strachan claimed the more respectable

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid, 78.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 119.

¹⁸⁵ John Strachan, "The Christian Religion Recommended to his Pupils" (Montreal:1807) in Prentice, The School Promoters, 68.

non-conformists eventually joined the Church of England. By the 1820s, the Methodist Egerton Ryerson began to counter Strachan's view of the social inferiority of Methodists and the Church of England claim to superior status as a class. Ryerson encouraged Methodist adherents and clergy to improve their intellectual and social respectability. "Ministers were charged with the duty of keeping up with the 'intellectual progress of society', and the soul-searching zeal of pioneer days was gradually played down in favour of the respect for family privacy and reserve associated with respectability."¹⁸⁶ By mid-century, the Methodists and Presbyterians appeared to have left their lower class status behind them.¹⁸⁷

There were also crucial changes in the interpretation of both Christ and God in nineteenth century Protestant theology. In seventeenth century Calvinism, the dominant strand in colonial Protestant thought, God had been rigorous, demanding and patriarchal. The belief in predestination had emphasized the fearful sinner and the omnipotence of God. The Great Awakening of the eighteenth century had helped to undermine this authoritative position. By the mid-nineteenth century, mainstream Protestantism had transformed the view of a stern God into a Christianity that stressed His humanity. This softening of the stricter

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 72.

¹⁸⁷ This search for middle class respectability had ramifications for woman's role in the church. See pp 96-99 following.

dictates of Calvinism led to a concern with the active struggle for salvation and an emphasis on one's personal relationship with Christ. "Sympathy" was now middle class Protestantism's "characteristic feature and humility the pre-eminent grace." It was now a gentle religion more interested in "feelings" and "delicacy of sentiment"; "a refiner as well as a purifier of heart."¹⁸⁸

This reinterpretation had enormous ramifications for man's view of woman for it increased the perceived affinity between woman and Christian religion. Canadian Protestant doctrine identified women with piety and religiosity and, increasingly, female characteristics manifested a religious temperament. It was Christ who first recognised the value and "blessedness" of the womanly virtues that "find an expression in patient endurance, humble obedience and self-denial." But more than this, the human Christ stressed his feminine as well as masculine characteristics, epitomising the Christian view of womanly nature; "our blessed Lord had exalted woman by incarnating and rendering glorious in His own person and character those qualities of human character which belong truly and especially to woman." The "new" Christ exemplified meekness and humility. His activities on earth were motivated by the same sacrificial, self-denying love that was woman's special possession.

¹⁸⁸ Annie Stagg, The Importance of Religion to Woman (Stratford, Ontario, 1875), 28.

His tender womanly heart is breaking with grief over Jerusalem. ... Look again, as He takes the Children into His arms and blesses them. There you see the tender affection of His womanly nature. ... He is like a lamb led to the slaughter, and through it all there is an infinite patience, a divine forbearance, seen nowhere in the world to-day so clearly as in the forbearance of woman's love. Listen. He is speaking now to His poor, tired followers, and He bids them come into the desert and rest awhile. What a glimpse we catch here of that womanly thoughtfulness about temporal comfort and womanly kindness of heart that He ever manifested. Many of His miracles display the same womanly characteristics of thoughtful kindness and loving service. Take for example, the feeding of the multitudes, in which we have on a large scale that kindly provision of food which through the ages has characterized the life of woman. There was in Christ at all times a womanly recognition of human needs and a womanly readiness to provide a supply for them.¹⁸⁹

Religion encouraged female identification and participation because their less cognitive, less rational, more emotional natures harmonized with this new view of Christianity.

In their explanation of woman's religious nature, nineteenth century clergymen drew on the traditional belief that Eve's descent from the "spiritual plane" in Eden to gratify a "physical appetite" had led to woman's subjection and inferiority. The mid-century reformulation of woman's essential nature, however, now made her peculiarly suited to the denial and self-sacrifice that evangelical Christianity required: "from her cradle to her grave, a spirit of submission and obedience, pliability of temper and humility of mind are required from her and the most gifted cannot quit the path thus pointed out to them by habit, nature, and

¹⁸⁹ Austin, Woman Her Character Culture and Calling, 204.

religion without impairing her usefulness and injuring ... her own character."¹⁹⁰ Now, quite simply because she was a woman, God had given her the gift of a more religious nature. "Woman differs from man in those qualities that make her more like God! In her warm heart piety blossoms more speedily and with more fragrance. The most beautiful specimens of incarnate Christianity are found among the female sex."¹⁹¹

Womanly piety included "faith, devotion, resignation, and that love and gratitude to God which stimulates us to enquire His will, and perform it so far as the weakness and imperfection of our nature permits."¹⁹² The ideal woman exemplified piety in her religious devotion and in her home duties. In fact, female piety constituted the very basis of a "true" woman's nature. It was the core of her virtue and the source of her moral strength. Without religion, woman's "character is sadly defective, even in the eyes of ordinary persons. A woman may as well be without heart as without religion, and there are few men, however irreligious themselves but would shrink from impiety in woman. It involves a coldness and hardness of character offensive both to taste and feeling. The mere suspicion of irreligion

¹⁹⁰ Stagg, The Importance of Religion to Woman, 15.

¹⁹¹ Austin, Woman Her Character Culture and Calling, 203.

¹⁹² Stagg, The Importance of Religion to Woman, 53. Although these were characteristics seen in men it was maintained they were not indigenous in man's nature.

lowers a woman in general esteem."¹⁹³ Christ had exalted woman because he had recognised and honored those "specially feminine and truly womanly" "attributes of humanity" that encompassed the passive virtues of "gentleness, patience, self-denial, [and] obedience." Ministers believed that, although these virtues were seen in men, they were not "indigenous" in man's nature. "They spring up and bloom as naturally in the soil of woman's nature as flowers beneath a vernal sun."¹⁹⁴

It was believed that woman was peculiarly susceptible to religion and more religious than the other sex due to her "positions and habits." Woman "needs solace and occupation, and religion affords her both." Religion was "woman's panoply", the "best security" of her virtues and well-adapted to her needs. Without it she was "ever restless or unhappy; ever wishing to be relieved from duty or from time; she is either ambitious of display or greedy of pleasure, or sinks into a listless apathy, useless to others and unworthy of herself."¹⁹⁵ The other view of woman was always close by for woman also needed religion because her weakness had caused "man's shamefull fall" and she had therefore lost not only "the esteem of man" but the "favour of God." To regain that esteem and honour, woman was to practice obedience as the one true virtue of a woman's

¹⁹³ Ibid, 3/4.

¹⁹⁴ Austin, Woman Her Character Culture and Calling, 203.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

character. In fact, obedience was viewed as a religious duty. Fortunately, modesty as "the inherent virtue and native grace of woman" rendered "obedience in general easy and habitual to her."¹⁹⁶ Religion was woman's protection, and home her safest place, for it afforded security from the world and "from illusions and errors of every kind."¹⁹⁷

At the centre of this view of Christian womanhood, constructed in religious terms, was the Christian wife and mother. Certain elements within this religious representation had a long history. "Puritan divines had preached and written about the importance of a loving marriage and a concerned mother who would supervise the religious education of her children."¹⁹⁸ What was new was that clergymen, from Robert Sedgewick to Benjamin Austin, utilised Christianity to reinforce the special role assigned to woman and glorify her limited sphere of activity.¹⁹⁹ As the natural embodiment of religion and morality, woman was the primary nurturer of these values in her children. As the primary model of pious virtue she was also expected to

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 15.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 34.

¹⁹⁸ Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, 114.

¹⁹⁹ see Ramsay Cook, The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 69-78 for an account of Austin's career from "the very model of a modern Methodist divine" to his expulsion for questioning divine retribution and eternal punishment. Austin remains an important indicator of the more liberal church view on woman's role which, it should be noted, falls well within the gendered definitions of her nature and duty.

exert her moral influence over fathers, husbands, sons, and brothers. If the world was ever to become truly regenerated, it had to be by the agency of Christian women within the home. Here was "woman's highest and holiest field of labor. ..." God - said Canadian Protestant clergymen - created woman with natural moral superiority over man. She was his saviour, his moral angel, and thus the saviour of civilisation.

The influence of intelligent, pious females upon all questions of a reformatory character, perhaps has never been appreciated. ... To female influence, to a very great extent, may be attributed the moulding of the principal habits and feelings of community. Universal consent, in all Christian communities, has invested the intelligent female with peculiar prerogatives, They can speak and act when others cannot; they can reprove when others dare not. The purity of their character, the gentleness of their spirits, and melody of their voice, gives terror to their frowns, restless power to their smiles, imparts force to their arguments, pungency to their rebukes, and renders successful those bold expostulations which would often procure for the other sex insult, if not violence. Though their influence may be as gentle as the breath of a summer evening, it is as powerful as that mighty wind that agitates the ocean. ... [T]hey can enthrone virtue, array it in drapery of light, crown it with gems, and diffuse its smiles through community like golden sunbeams, to cheer and beautify.²⁰⁰

The importance of religious practice being firmly embedded in the family was also stressed. Clergymen believed that the most effective means of creating true Christian character was through family religion. The newly

²⁰⁰ "Woman, Her Beauty, Temper, Influence", Christian Guardian (June 16, 1852). See also "Educated Women", Christian Guardian (Feb 4, 1880).

created emotional content of the home, discussed in the previous chapter, in turn created a religious function for woman. Religious leaders emphasized the role of Christian parents in nurturing moral and religious offspring. Early in the century it was to the fathers that clergymen had sermonized regarding the education and upbringing of those under their care. "Every master of a family is answerable to God for the welfare of those souls that are under his care."²⁰¹ By mid-century, clergymen maintained that in this communication mothers had more impact than fathers. Her ability to create a wholesome and religious home for her family grew from her God-given piety and purity. The religious connotations placed on the home defined it as a sacred sanctuary. As Reverend Carman explained: "Let good women fulfill the ministry to which God has appointed them, in their natural relation to the family, and it will be found that from that ministry will come the best and most enduring order of society."²⁰² What religious leaders like Sedgewick and Austin did was to create a religious role for the home that made it an even more crucially important sphere. Charity and reform in the larger society could give "no permanent redemption" until the home and the family were reached. What was required was the creation of a "higher ideal of what the home means and what duties and

²⁰¹ Rev C.J. Stewart, Two Sermons on Family Prayer (Montreal, 1814) quoted in Family, School and Society in Nineteenth Century Canada, A. Prentice and S. Houston, eds. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975), 10.

²⁰² Austin, Woman, Her Character, Culture and Calling, 405.

responsibilities attach to it."²⁰³ The home on earth was to be a reflection of the Father's home in heaven. The father of the family was "to be the image and likeness" of "the heavenly"; "the home in heaven, with the Father there, the original of the home on earth, and the father there."²⁰⁴ But home was woman's sphere, the place where woman's best and noblest gifts and virtues could find ample scope. This was the sphere for which woman was "particularly designed and fitted by heaven."²⁰⁵ Even if the "Lord had not forbidden the other sphere", home was the place in Christian society "where God intended her to move."²⁰⁶ "What is more beautiful on earth than the godly woman doing her gracious ministry to her own household ... helping joyfully in every goodwork, adorning the gospel of Christ by meek subjection to rightful authority - training children for the Lord - requiting her parents - loving and serving her husband ... and in all things bringing Heaven into the House."²⁰⁷ Marriage was instituted by God. He had made the woman out of the man "to intimate the closest union and the most affectionate

²⁰³ Ibid, 44.

²⁰⁴ Reverend Murray, The Children for Christ: thoughts for Christian parents on the consecration of the home life (Toronto: S.R. Briggs, 1887), 12, 14, 15.

²⁰⁵ "She Was A Good Woman", Christian Guardian (Sept 14, 1859).

²⁰⁶ Sedgewick, "The Proper Sphere and Influence of Woman in a Christian Society", 25.

²⁰⁷ John Munroe, The Place and Work of Women in the Church, 12.

attachment should subsist in the matrimonial connection."²⁰⁸
 The family was ordained by God as the first divine institution of society. The family, antecedent to and pre-eminent over Church and State, provided the basis for society. On the family rested the continuance and progress of the race.²⁰⁹

Motherhood came to be seen as the apex of woman's mission in the home and a sacred trust given by God. Motherhood was God's plan for woman and the "mother's womb the work-place of the Holy Spirit." Women were the vessels chosen by God to fulfill his purpose and perfect His Church.²¹⁰ Christian tradition provided a model representation of this highest of human relationships. It also portrayed maternal love as the most integral component of feminine purity. The birth of Christ had rendered "motherhood forever glorious."

He has conferred most signal glory on motherhood and made it illustrious through all ages by calling Mary His mother. In the sight of the angels and all heaven's hierarchy and before a universe, He has placed perennial honors on woman and made mother the most glorious appellation of woman.²¹¹

From the pulpit and in the religious periodicals of the day, woman were encouraged to view motherhood as "more exalted" than any "vaulting ambition". "No royal retinue can add

²⁰⁸ Lanceley, Domestic Sanctuary, 23.

²⁰⁹ James George, The Sabbath School of the Fireside: and the Sabbath School of the Congregation as it Ought to Be (Toronto: A.H. Armour; Montreal: B. Dawson, 1859), 1.

²¹⁰ Murray, The Children for Christ, 255/56.

²¹¹ Austin, Woman Her Character Culture and Calling, 100.

dignity to one who is queen of home. No wreath that human hands can place upon thy brow, no radiance that genius can shed upon thy life, no fame that heroic deeds can add to thy name, can ever equal the unsullied glory Christ has placed upon the brow of womanhood." Just as labour, by the sweat of his brow, was man's lot in his fallen state so the labour of childbearing was woman's route to salvation and the means to perfection of her womanly character.²¹² Motherhood was a "labour of love" by which God had "appointed and set apart the mother." Thus, motherhood was a sacred trust, a relationship established between woman and her God. "So, when God puts an infant in a mother's arms, he says to her, 'Take this child and nurse it for me.' Every mother should regard herself as a trainer of immortal souls for God."²¹³

Ministers addressed women not only as a sex but as a social group, thereby conflating women's biology into a socially defined gender role. For the clergy, women had particular abilities to defend the ministers' interests. Women were entrusted with the morality and religious faith of the next generation. Moreover, it was to be a generation of sons who would provide male religious leadership. In an address concerning increasing the numbers of the [male] ministry, a Canadian Methodist minister praised woman's role in the perpetuation of religion through their reproductive labour:

²¹² Murray, The Children for Christ, 275.

²¹³ "Woman's Work", Christian Guardian (Sept 20, 1876).

This instrumentality is owing in a good degree under God, to parental dedication and training. There is a power in the family covenant and family work, which God sanctifies, has sanctified, and will sanctify, from one generation to another. Sir, I yesterday saw in this assembly a venerable and lovely Christian matron, a mother in Israel, who has four sons in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Everyone of the sons whom God gave to her she consecrated to God, and trained up to God in the work of the ministry: and behold the honor that God has set upon her, in her maturing old age. Mr. Moderator, when I saw her I felt like bowing reverently at her feet, as one of the sons of the Church, exclaiming in her presence "Mother!" Who shall ever know the covenant power of parents, and perhaps especially of mothers, in bringing their sons to Jesus, and in introducing them as preachers of the cross, into the waste places of the earth.²¹⁴

Theologians had justified woman's subordination to man by pointing out that Eve's actions in the garden had ordained that subordination. As Reverend Bashford stated in Austin's Woman Her Character Culture and Calling "The upholders of the doctrine of woman's subjection to man go back to the command, Genesis iii,16, 'Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.'" This penalty "fell upon woman" as the result of the original sin.²¹⁵ But Christ had removed the consequences of the fall from both man and woman. Thus it was necessary to go back to the "true account" of the ideal relation of the sexes found in the Biblical descriptions of the creation. Many religious leaders found "in the account of creation itself some indication of woman's subordination." Debate centred on

²¹⁴ "Mothers and Ministers", Christian Guardian (Oct 5, 1859).

²¹⁵ Austin, Woman Her Character Culture and Calling, 131.

interpretations of the word "helpmeet"; "I will make an helpmeet for him." Reverend Doctor Dexter maintained "here is struck before the Fall, before the creation of Eve even, the key-note of the divine intent as to the female nature. ... We submit that it involves a certain natural implication of secondariness and subordination." Since woman was created "after man and out of a portion of his body", she was 'ancillary' to him.²¹⁶ Other clergymen suggested that although woman's subjection to man was a consequence of the fall God had originally given "joint dominion" to both men and women. This meant that the sons and daughters of God were spiritual equals.²¹⁷

Religious leaders also debated the inferences of Paulian injunctions. These discussions not only held enormous importance in interpreting a Christian woman's relationship to her husband and other males but in defining woman's sphere of activity within the Christian church. The strongest statement of woman's subjection to man was found in the New Testament interpretation of Paul's declaration that "the head of every man is Christ, and the head of woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." Paul further declared: "Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the Church. ... But as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their

²¹⁶ Ibid, 132.

²¹⁷ Ibid, 135.

husbands in everything." Traditionally interpreted, these passages made woman's subjection "an essential part of the Christian scheme" and rooted in the very natures of man and woman. Any attempt to reinterpret this relationship would not only overturn Christian society but blaspheme Christ.²¹⁸ Because the spheres were "unchangeable" any attempt to alter their relations to one another "were fraught with damage, it may be with ruin."²¹⁹

By the later part of the century, Pauline injunctions were utilised to express the principle of "rulership by service" as exemplified by Christ's superior services to humanity. In effect, even in its most liberal interpretation, it was a powerful injunction for the maintenance of separate spheres.

In those departments in which the husband serves the family, he may consult others, but the right of decision rests with him. In those departments in which the wife serves the family, she often advises with other members, but the decision is conceded to her. ... So this divine principle of authority springing from service may sometimes clothe the wife as well as the husband with power.²²⁰

Manhood was honoured because Christ had come to earth in the form of a man. But woman was "forever linked with God" because she was the human agent who had given birth to "the Head of the New Humanity." It was through this action that

²¹⁸ Ibid, 138.

²¹⁹ Sedgewick, "The Proper Sphere and Influence of Woman in Christian Society", 6.

²²⁰ Austin, Woman Her Character Culture and Calling, 141.

woman had been lifted from the degradation of her original sin and restored to her ideal position. Moreover, for many Canadian religious leaders, the great enlargement of woman's freedoms was directly due to the spirit of Christianity. It was Christianity that lifted woman up, elevated her to a higher plane, enlarged her sphere, and improved her intellectually.²²¹ In those countries "unblest with Gospel light and liberty" woman continued to hold an inferior place. It was only Christianity, of all the world's religions, that conferred "special honor on woman" and exalted her to a position of equality with men within the Church. Only within the Christian church were men and women "equal partakers in the blessings, responsibilities, and duties of Christian life."

Hence it is, wherever Christ has been preached; womanly attributes have risen in the estimation of mankind and woman herself lifted up into social and religious equality. Wherever Christ's banner has been unfurled, woman has found protection and privilege and power. That hand that was pierced has reached down to woman in her darkness and sorrow, and has lifted her up into the sunshine of favor with God and man. The voice that amidst the awful agonies of the passion cried out, 'Woman, behold thy son', has called woman into Christian service, and assured her of the divine presence, and of the all-sufficient grace of God.²²²

Christianity had emancipated woman from servitude and the slavery of ignorance, from prejudice, fear, and degradation, from "the sport of the passions, and the "cruelty of man her master."²²³

²²¹ Reverend Gracey in Ibid, 164.

²²² Ibid, 204.

In 1859, the Methodist minister, F.D.Huntingdon suggested that woman's obvious devotion to the church was recompense for her elevation, through the Christian gospel, from this degradation. Because Jesus had emphasised in both his character and teachings qualities which women naturally embodied, "it seems natural to suppose there is something of affinity between Christianity and womanhood."²²⁴ Furthermore, by comparison to women in other cultures, it was easily affirmed that Canadian women owed their equitable social position to the "civilizing influence" of Protestant Christianity. For Huntington, and many others, Canadian women had a special obligation to religion because of the glory God had conferred on her womanhood.

Clergymen were most obviously and most actively involved in public discussions concerning "the delicate question of the proper sphere of woman in the work of the Church." By endorsing the view that women were both especially suited and especially obligated to religion, ministers encouraged woman to view the church as a place where she was to find "a field for all her powers."²²⁵ Nonetheless, the idea of woman's special religious nature helped define and determine the particular ways women would become involved in Christian voluntary associations. Woman's nature and woman's duty were

²²³ Sedgewick, "The Proper Sphere and Influence of Woman in Christian Society", 48.

²²⁴ F.D.Huntingdon, "Man's Duty to Woman", Christian Guardian (July 13, 1859).

²²⁵ "Woman's Sphere", Christian Guardian (May 9, 1877).

in perfect harmony.

There is a special naturalness existing and manifest between the doctrines and duties and delights of evangelical Christianity and the intellectual and spiritual process of her inner nature, and hence her aptitude for piety in its principles and practices and pleasures, hence too her attainments, and hence the vast influence which godliness exerts on herself and which it enables her to exert on others.²²⁶

Woman had "peculiar gifts, talents and abilities for usefulness in the Christian assembly."²²⁷ After all, woman was fitted by God for Christian benevolence and church work did not take her away from her "proper" domestic duties or make her less submissive.

Man and woman were co-workers in the redemption of the race. In her rights, privileges and duties, woman was man's peer under Christianity, therefore sharing equally in God's atonement and promises of divine grace. Although she was promised "equality of position with man in the Church of God", her labors and duties were not identical with man's; "they are marked rather by diversity of sphere than by any inferiority of character."²²⁸ It was "not the province of ladies to mingle in the rough and stormy scenes of life, and by masculine authority to control the destiny of the world, but in her appropriate sphere - the nursery, in the domestic circle, and in other gentle and retired scenes."²²⁹ Earlier

²²⁶ Sedgewick, "The Proper Sphere and Influence of Woman in Christian Society", 27.

²²⁷ Austin, Woman Her Character Culture and Calling, 154.

²²⁸ Ibid, 202.

in the century some Protestant churches had encouraged women to speak out at meetings or even to preach. The Methodist sects initially gave large scope to the energies of woman. As a revival religion attempting to convert the world "she could not be spared." "At that time the most timid Methodist was not offended if a gifted sister 'led the class', addressed a revival meeting, or thrilled a multitude at a camp-meeting love-feast."²³⁰

Early Methodist Church polity and doctrine had not only allowed leadership positions for women but had encouraged them to take an active role in leading sex-segregated class and band meetings. Elizabeth Muir has discussed Methodist women's role in missions in Upper Canada in the 1820s and 1830s.²³¹ Many of these women emigrated from Bible Christian and Methodist Episcopal Churches in the United States where there had been a tradition of female preaching. In the Canadian branches, this preaching was severely curtailed and by the 1830s it had clearly become unacceptable for women to speak from the pulpit. Muir quotes a Christian Guardian article of 1829 which stated that women were to promote their faith by the "eloquence which flows from

²²⁹ Christian Guardian (June 16, 1852).

²³⁰ John W. Corson, M.D., "'Our Mother', a sketch of Mrs. Emma Corson", The New Dominion Monthly xi (Jan to June, 1880), 546.

²³¹ Elizabeth Muir, "The Bark Schoolhouse: Methodist Episcopal Missionary Women in Upper Canada, 1827-1833" in Canadian Protestant and Catholic Missions, 1820s-1960s, J.S. Moir and C.T. McIntire, eds. (New York: Peter Lang, 1988).

subjection."²³² Woman's proper sphere was in the home, particularly for those in "the middling class of life."²³³ After the 1833 merger between the Canadian Methodist Episcopal Church and the conservative British Wesleyans, women's public role was even more substantially reduced.²³⁴ In the more radical Bible Christian and Primitive Methodist Churches, clergymen were objecting to female preaching by the 1840s and by mid-century women were rarely involved in regular preaching schedules.

As the ideology of femininity became more defined and these churches sought to ensure their middle class respectability, it appears that woman's role became more contained. As the churches outgrew their initial evangelical fervour and became more bureaucratic, they viewed with increasing disfavour a public role for women. By the third quarter of the nineteenth century the question of public speaking was finally settled, in the negative. Common sense "proved" there were "constitutional and mental differences which the Creator has stamped on each sex" and natural adaptations of each sex to one sphere of work more than another. There was a certain "instinctive repugnance" toward women who mingled in the "rough conflict" of the professions. "As the whitest linen is most easily soiled,

²³² Ibid, 32.

²³³ Christian Guardian (Dec 4, 1830), 10.

²³⁴ Muir, "The Bark Schoolhouse", 40. The Wesleyans had passed legislation in 1803 prohibiting public speaking for women.

the very delicacy and attractive grace of womanhood render any work, not entirely in harmony with that retiring modesty which is the greatest charm of the gentle sex, inconsistent with delicate womanliness." To woman was given "the more unobtrusive and gentle ministries of unselfish Christian love."²³⁵ Man's ministry was a public one and, consequently, included both the pulpit and public preaching and the "magistrature of the doctrine." The mission of woman within the church was not to explain God's truths but to make them felt; "to effect the entrance of truth into the heart, to convert it by love."²³⁶

Numerous articles in church periodicals from the 1870s and 1880s began to discuss woman's ecclesiastical rights in the church. Many pointed out, as did an 1877 Christian Guardian article, that no clear limits had been drawn on woman's sphere in the church and that every member, regardless of sex, was at liberty to use their gifts in any way which would edify the church. No prohibitions restricted woman's spiritual freedom. "There is no direct Scripture rule which settles explicitly the question of woman's right to assume all the functions of the ministerial office. Common sense and Christian expediency, rather than an absolute precept, must settle the question."

²³⁵ "Woman's Sphere", Christian Guardian (May 9, 1877).

²³⁶ Munroe, The Place and Work of Women in the Church, 11.

In an 1877 publication entitled "The Place and Work of Women in the Church", John Munroe utilised Biblical texts and Calvinist admonitions to explain "the law of the Lord" in defining the position of women in the Church. The basic issue debated in the article revolved around "the right of women to take a leading part in public religious meetings." Munroe stated that, although women "in their individual and social capacity" had been "in all ages most excellent and useful members of the Church", "they were not allowed to preach, to govern, or to dispense the sacraments."²³⁷ Quoting Paul's injunction "let your women keep silence in the public assemblies", Munroe saw women's role as one of "help-meet" and limited to the "help afforded by pious women in dealing with converts of their own sex ... [and] their personal service ... as sister or wife."²³⁸ It was "a shame" for women to speak in the Church; with the word "shame" translated as "ugly, deformed" and a word which excited "disgust". Therefore, "as the peculiar power and usefulness of women depended upon their being the objects of admiration and affection, anything which tends to excite the opposite sentiments should for that reason be avoided." Peter had urged women to be in subjection to their husbands. John had only addressed women concerning their superintendence of their households. Timothy had stated that women were not to usurp authority over man because "Adam was first formed" and

²³⁷ Ibid, 2.

²³⁸ Ibid, 4.

it was the woman [Eve] who had been deceived not Adam. Furthermore, women having no authority from God could not be ministers in His church. Men, not women, were the overseers, elders and presbyters of the church. The natural distinctions God had made between men and women were to be observed in their relative duties to English-Canadian Protestantism. Authority was vested in the man. Woman was not "to affect authority", or presume a public function. Man was "the head of the woman ... always and universally."²³⁹ By the 1890s, although women's sphere within these churches had broadened considerably, public speaking and, therefore, the ministry of words was still closed to women. As Benjamin Austin pointed out, theirs was "the far more eloquent ministry of loving deeds."²⁴⁰

Woman was not only unsuited to the public ministry, she was also not fit for the managerial duties of church life. Women occupied no positions of leadership or responsibility in the official church hierarchy at any level. Thus they had no voice in establishing or managing church policy. Two-thirds of the church was governed, preached to, prayed for, and taught by the other third. As woman was not to usurp authority from man and as she had no authority from God, men were the overseers within the Church. Women had no legal ecclesiastical rights, what they had was influence.

²³⁹ Ibid, 10.

²⁴⁰ Austin, Woman Her Character Culture and Calling, 209.

Though the Quarterly Conferences and Boards of Trustees are the local executive bodies, discreet and godly women are as influential in their home churches as the members of these boards. No pastor can succeed who does not command the respect and sincere personal regard of the best women of his congregation. No superintendent can be elected or long hold his place without the women being of the opinion that he is suitable for the position. Their taste exerts a powerful influence over the music and they often have a controlling effect, by conversation with their husbands, brothers, and friends, in deciding who shall be the pastor.²⁴¹

The reforms that clergymen such as Benjamin Austin sought did not endanger this division of service within the church. They felt that it would be very exceptional indeed for a woman to hear a 'divine call' to public service. The vast majority of women were "called to home lives". For those women called to "special service in His Kingdom" the work in home and mission fields provided the appropriate sphere for her ministry.²⁴² As Reverend Aylesworth of Grace Methodist Church in St Thomas pointed out, women had already proved their ability and fitness for mission work. "They have more tenderness, more patience, and can endure more hardships and privations, with less complaint, than men."²⁴³ Women were not, by nature, adapted to the pulpit. In fact, work in the mission fields differed from the public ministry in precisely the same way woman's nature differed from man's. "Yet the work in mission fields differs from the home work

²⁴¹ "Women in Methodism", Christian Guardian (July 30, 1890).

²⁴² Austin, Woman Her Character Culture and Calling, 146.

²⁴³ Ibid, 191.

more in this respect, that a larger proportion of it must be done by personal, individual, hand-to-hand contact; and from house to house. ... This house-to-house work is precisely that for which woman is adapted."²⁴⁴

Leaving out of the question all ministerial functions, it was, yet again, Christ's service on Earth that provided a model for women's special service. It was in the "holier ministry of Christian love" that was to be found woman's mission. Their faith was to be preached by "the eloquence of holy living" and through the ministry which "incarnates in deeds of love and mercy" the Christian gospel. Shrinking from publicity, women ministered in the home; a field of toil which was peculiarly suited to "her gifts and graces."

In an article heavily laced with irony, one minister pointed out that the Protestant religion had sufficiently rewarded woman for the work she had done in the church. It was the church who had pioneered in female education. Many women had risen to positions of great power in seminaries, schools, and colleges, and as secretaries and managers in missionary and benevolent organisations, and as Bible readers, evangelists, and temperance workers. By giving women legislative and/or ministerial authority, "the two fundamental differences that were left by Christ and his apostles between the position of women in the church and that of men, and have come down through all the great

²⁴⁴ Ibid, 192.

organized churches from the apostolic age to us" would be removed. This was an order appointed by God. Fortunately, it was not necessary to move swiftly on the subject or be blinded by passion and hurried by accounts of frightful evils existing towards women. It was after all, not a case "of setting free some millions of serfs, peasants, or slaves. The groans and tears and cries of countless down-trodden ones, writhing under the iron heel of a heartless despotism, do not now call to heaven for vengeance on the male members and ministers."²⁴⁵

Despite the fact that the success of the Christian gospel in saving souls depended "upon the deep piety, zeal, enterprise, and influence of the female portion of the church" not only through "maternal instruction, example, and influence" but in their "activity in the departments of moral and religious enterprise,"²⁴⁶ women continued to be denied access to established church structures. They were denied voting participation and membership in church courts - the conferences, synods, councils and assemblies that officially interpreted and acted upon church social and ecclesiastical issues. In short, women had little influence in policy-making decisions.

²⁴⁵ Christian Guardian (1890).

²⁴⁶ "Our Daughters", Christian Guardian (Jan 6, 1858).

A resolution that Methodist women should have equal rights with men regarding all the privileges of church membership did not pass until the 1918 Canadian Methodist Conference. The first Conference in which women were actually eligible to participate occurred in 1922.²⁴⁷ Presbyterian women, although they had equality with men on the congregational level by this time, were not permitted to be members of the local governing board, the session. This meant that they could not be elected as representatives to Synod or Assembly meetings.

The first recorded attempt to raise the issue of ordaining women to the ministry of the word in Canadian churches occurred in 1894 when the Methodist General Conference received a memorial regarding the admission of women to the ministry. It was referred to the Conference Committee on Memorials and there is no record of this Committee reporting back to the General Conference.²⁴⁸ The second resolution occurred at the Methodist General Conference in 1918 and sporadic attempts continued until 1936 when the recently formed United Church of Canada granted women full ecclesiastical equality with men. Church of England women did not obtain access to the priesthood until the 1970s.

²⁴⁷ Methodist General Conference Report, 1922.

²⁴⁸ Conference Journal Methodist Church of Canada, 1894.

Religious ideas regarding women were reflected in the organization and governance of these churches. Denied a voice in Church policy, access to established church structures and with no voting participation on mission or education boards, women's sphere within the church was not only subordinate but limited and controlled by the authority of men. Spiritual organisations which included women members saw to the distribution of tracts and to district visiting. Women were also active in prayer associations which saw to the "spiritual oversight and instruction of members of their own sex."²⁴⁹ By 1900, approximately two-thirds, or 22,000, of all Sunday School teachers in the Methodist Church were women.

The first female organisations in the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches were Ladies Aids that limited their activity to the local congregation and channelled their concerns into areas that were an extension of their traditional duties: teaching, nurturing, and private charity for the poor, the sick, and the aged. By the time woman's missionary societies were organised, aid societies were already well established. There is evidence that groups of women organised before the appearance of formal church organisations and that the first Canadian Ladies Aid was established as early as 1832.²⁵⁰ The objectives of such

²⁴⁹ National Council of Women of Canada, Women of Canada, Their Life and Work (1900, reprinted 1975, National Council of Women of Canada), 304.

²⁵⁰ The United Church of Canada, The Observer (Jan, 1975), 32.

groups were local congregational ones - furnishing parsonages, assisting ministers, and supplying churches. Their expenditures included the cleaning and painting of church basements, the purchasing of clocks, carpets, hymnbooks, and pianos, flowers, heating plants, Christmas baskets, and groceries. In 1832, The Ladies Aid of Bathurst, New Brunswick recorded the purchase of "five pounds of candles" and "one bushel of oats" toward the maintenance of the minister and his horse.²⁵¹ A similar organisation of women in Bridgetown, in 1848, assumed the responsibility for the furnishing and maintenance of the minister's manse. Many Aid societies shouldered the major financial burden of the church mortgage. "One minister, observing the growing frequency of this and the complacency with which it was accepted by an inactive board [of managers] suggested changing the name of the woman's organisation to 'Men's Relief'."²⁵²

By the 1890s there were over 1350 such societies in the Canadian Methodist Church alone. By 1898 Methodist Ladies Aids were contributing an astonishing average of \$100,000 per year for parish work.²⁵³ As early as 1836 a Canadian minister confessed his work "would have been seriously handicapped but for the fact that women organised and did

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1875-1925, 140.

²⁵³ National Council of Women of Canada, Women of Canada, 304.

most of the visiting."²⁵⁴ In spite of the obvious contribution these women made to the spiritual life and financial health of their congregations, the Ladies Aids never possessed more than congregational organisation and were not an officially recognised part of the general structure of the Church. At no time was there a central organisation or a constitution which outlined their work. A female observer, present at the formation of the Halifax Wesleyan Benevolent Society, commented on the novelty that Church women might contemplate organising their own society; a "very daring idea for women of that day! That they might draw up rules and even have a name."²⁵⁵ For those women of the Ladies' Aids, their acceptance of the private sphere as the one appropriate for their work demonstrates how perfectly their church-related work meshed with the dominant ideology concerning womanhood. Their theology told them they had a special uplifting work that only they could perform. Their definition of woman's nature suggested it was to be peculiarly self-effacing and self-sacrificing.

Woman's missionary groups were also organized, at first, on a local basis.²⁵⁶ In 1825, for example, Prince Edward

²⁵⁴ S. Davey, ed., Women Work and Worship in The United Church of Canada (The United Church of Canada, 1983), 20.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ See my MA Thesis, "Not by Might, Nor by Power, but by my Spirit" for a more comprehensive account of organizational activity into the twentieth century. See also Ruth Compton Brouwer's New Women for God and Rosemary Gagan's A Sensitive Independence.

Island women organised the "Prince Town Female Society for Propagating the Gospel and other Religious Purposes."²⁵⁷ By 1841, an interdenominational Ladies Society, in conjunction with the French-Canadian Missionary Society of Montreal, was supporting a missionary. This group of women, re-organised under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church as the Ladies' French Evangelization Society, opened a mission house in Montreal in 1876. The Church of Scotland Ladies' Auxiliary was also actively involved in French evangelisation work in this period.²⁵⁸ A Ladies French Missionary Society was supporting a bible woman in Montreal prior to 1881. In that year, this organisation united with a Methodist Woman's Society to help in the work of the French Mission Church and the French Methodist Institute (which trained missionaries and educated French-Canadian Roman Catholic converts.)²⁵⁹ In 1882, the Montreal Presbyterian Woman's Missionary Society for Home, French and Foreign Work was organised and merged with the Ladies' French Evangelization Society. Canadian women also participated in the Centenary Conference in London, in 1885, joining with their British and American counterparts to create the World's Missionary Committee of Christian Women. This was the first international Church mission organisation established for either men or women.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁷ McNeill, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 142.

²⁵⁸ H.L. Platt, The Story of the Years: 1881 - 1906, A History of the WMS of the Methodist Church, Canada (Canada:n.p., 1908) vol. 1, 85.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

Formal woman's missionary societies developed out of the male missionary societies organised at the unions in the Methodist and Presbyterian churches. Their organisational goal was "woman's work for women"; they sought the redemption of the personal, social, and home life of underprivileged women in other countries.²⁶¹ It was the Presbyterian Church women of Belleville, Ontario who provided the nucleus for the formation of a Woman's Foreign Mission society. In Belleville, in 1868, women worked under the direction of Mrs. Wm. MacLaren to support Presbyterian foreign missionaries.²⁶² Mrs. MacLaren's husband, the first convenor of the Presbyterian Assembly's Foreign Missionary Society and another Presbyterian minister, Dr. Topp, moved in 1876, at the Second General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, that a woman's foreign missionary society under the aegis of the men's society be created.

Your Foreign Missionary Committee, guided by the instructions of the late Canadian Presbyterian Church, with the view of securing the more full co-operation of the female membership of the Church in support of the women who are employed as missionaries among the heathen, took steps to organise a WFMS, as an auxiliary to your Committee.²⁶³

²⁶⁰ R. Pierce Beaver, All Loves Excelling: American Protestant Women in World Mission (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 143.

²⁶¹ Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, Presbyterian Church in Canada, 25th Annual Report, 1900.

²⁶² McNeill, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 143.

²⁶³ Acts and Proceedings, Second General Assembly, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1876.

At its outset, the organisation was limited to a Toronto society with fifty female members. In the same year, a Halifax WFMS was organised and immediately sent its first foreign missionary, Miss A.L.M. Blackadder, to the Trinidad Missionary Field.²⁶⁴

In October, 1876, The Woman's Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada was formed "to engage and unite the Christian women in mission work, both at home and abroad." The General Conference of the Methodist Church of Canada discussed the question of a woman's organisation in 1877 but felt that "the time was not yet" and referred the suggestion to the Central Board.²⁶⁵ A year later the same General Conference, in response to urgent appeals from missionaries in Japan and requests for the support of homes for Canadian Indian girls, approved the organisation of a WMS. The Methodist Conference authorised Reverend Dr. Sutherland, General Secretary of the Methodist Missionary Society, to organise, as soon as feasible, a society of women.

During the Hamilton Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in 1880, Dr. Sutherland addressed a group of women who then proceeded to draft a constitution and by-laws for a WMS auxiliary. It was believed to be premature to attempt to organise a general connectional society immediately.

²⁶⁴ McNeill, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 141.

²⁶⁵ The Missionary Outlook (Jan, 1881).

However, "it soon became evident that to secure united action and the wisest distribution of funds, some comprehensive scheme would have to be adopted, embracing a wider organisation."²⁶⁶ In April, 1881, a resolution to form a Dominion-wide WMS was moved by Miss M.J.Cartmell (later a missionary for the organisation). After corresponding with local conference women, whose names had been proposed by their ministers, a general meeting was held November 8, 1881. This organisational meeting saw the creation of a national woman's board.²⁶⁷ In 1885, following the union of the various Methodist Churches in Canada, the Woman's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church of Canada was organised.

The Methodist Missionary Outlook of 1881 briefly outlined the circumstances which required the formation of woman's missionary societies;

1st. The missionary work of the Church has advanced beyond the power of the existing society to keep pace with it. 2nd. There are certain departments of work, such as the employment and support of lady teachers for missionary schools, the support of benevolent institutions, like the McDougall Orphanage and the Crosby Home, which might appropriately be undertaken by the women of our church thus relieving the present society of part of its burden, leaving it free to employ all its energies and resources in purely evangelistic work.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁶ Platt, The Story of the Years, 85.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, 7.

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 15.

These women articulated a deep concern and sense of responsibility for mission work for women that appears to affirm the notion of womanly self-sacrifice. The constitution of the Presbyterian WFMS stated the organization's objective was to

aid the Foreign Mission Society or Board of Missions, by promoting its work among women and children of heathen lands and especially to raise the necessary funds for the support of female missionaries in India and elsewhere.²⁶⁹

The Methodist women expressed this same desire "to engage the efforts of Christian women in the evangelisation of heathen women and children" as well as to support female missionaries and raise funds for the work of their society.²⁷⁰ Unfortunately, these statements also express a sense of cultural dominance that is both class-specific and self-serving.

The Presbyterian Woman's Foreign Missionary Society was auxiliary to the Foreign Mission Committee of the General Assembly and "subject to the action of that Committee." They also, at all times, consciously sought "the counsel and co-operation of the Pastors of the Church."²⁷¹ The Methodist Woman's Missionary Society was also subject to the approval of their church's Missionary Society and worked "in harmony

²⁶⁹ Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, 1st Annual Report, Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1877.

²⁷⁰ WMS Methodist Church of Canada, Ninth Annual Report, 1889-90.

²⁷¹ Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, First Annual Report, Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1877.

with the authorities."²⁷² The existing church missionary societies wanted to avoid any conflict of authority and the church itself felt that "to be of real service" it was essential that the men retain administrative and financial control. Church women accepted their auxiliary relation and appeared happy that they did not have the responsibility an independent organisation would bring:

The position of this Society, as an auxiliary to the Foreign Mission Committee of our Church, affords us an excellent opportunity for doing work of a congenial kind. We are happily free from much responsibility which would be unavoidable in an independent organisation. There is nothing to do which ought to bring us before the public or which will interfere with the priceless possession of a meek and quiet spirit.²⁷³...

Church authorities believed that, by making the woman's societies auxiliary, any monies raised by the women would not be funds merely diverted from other more established church programs. The executive of the WFMS suggested that each of its auxiliaries ensure that they would not interfere with any other mission work; "make no appeal that shall conflict with duties Church members owe to any other benevolent work."²⁷⁴ Money was to be raised "by additional self-denial."

²⁷² Woman's Missionary Society, Annual Report, Methodist Church of Canada, 1910-1911.

²⁷³ Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, Fifth Annual Report, Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1881.

²⁷⁴ WFMS, First Annual Report, Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1877.

Fears were expressed at the very formation of the WFMS that church finances and programs would suffer as a result of its organisation.²⁷⁵ In 1893 the Presbyterian Church experienced a serious financial deficit. Some clergy and laymen blamed the deficit on the woman's society.²⁷⁶ In 1895, the WFMS asked the Foreign Mission Committee to publish an official statement outlining its auxiliary relations to that Committee and the General Assembly due "to many unwarranted statements from church ministers and others" about WFMS budget allocations.²⁷⁷

Nonetheless, the WFMS and the WMS demonstrated a remarkable ability to raise money. Between one-quarter and one-third of all foreign mission funds raised in the Presbyterian Church before union were donated by the missionary society women.²⁷⁸ The numbers of women participating in their respective female missionary societies increased dramatically within the first years of organisation. In 1882 the Methodist WMS had twenty auxiliaries with 900 members who raised \$2,916.78 for mission work.²⁷⁹ By 1915 the number of auxiliaries had risen to 1229, with 43,221 members and receipts of over \$160,500.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ WFMS, 18th Annual Report, 1893-94.

²⁷⁷ WFMS, 19th Annual Report, Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1894-95.

²⁷⁸ Moir, Enduring Witness, 179.

²⁷⁹ Mitchinson, "Canadian Women and Church Missionary Societies in the Nineteenth Century", 62.

The Presbyterians had 26,184 members in 1899 who raised \$56,544. In 1915 their membership had risen to 36,367 in the WFMS alone, with an income of \$104,000.²⁸⁰ In 1916, of the 250,000 Canadian women who belonged to national organisations, 200,000 were members of the various denominational woman's missionary societies. By comparison, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union had 10,000 members.²⁸¹ Despite the obvious magnitude of their work, woman's organisations were not part of the official church structure. The woman's missionary societies were present at Council by deputation only.

Deaconesses were the first female professional lay workers to work in Canada for the Protestant churches.²⁸² The Deaconess movement represents the most comprehensive effort to address the relationship of women to the church. The female diaconate not only provided women with opportunities for service but signified the first attempt to establish an office for women within the ecclesiastical hierarchy itself. They became an integral part of the Protestant social reform movement, particularly because they translated Social Gospel ideology into concrete programs of relief. Working within an urban setting, deaconesses

²⁸⁰ The Canadian Women's Annual and Social Service Directory (Toronto:McClelland,Goodchild,and Stewart,1915).

²⁸¹ M.MacMurchy, The Woman - Bless Her:Not as Amiable a Book as it Sounds (Toronto:S.B.Gundy,1916),12.

²⁸² See Thomas,"Servants of the Church" which talks of misspent energies and the legacy of maternal feminism and my Master's Thesis.

extended the church's mission to the poor, the homeless, the unemployed, and the immigrant. The debates concerning the establishment of the female diaconate and its relation to the church hierarchy capture the true flavour of the gender ideology at work within the denominations. The fullest expression of this is in the definitions chosen for woman's work; "helping work and "helpful service".

By 1890 a handful of Canadian clergymen and women began agitating for the establishment of the office of deaconess in the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches. They hoped to create a consecrated office for single women and establish a vocation for women who wished to serve in occupations like nursing, settlement house work, and education. Mary Daniels, in The Methodist Magazine and Review, wrote; "[t]he time is fast approaching when the organized benevolent work of women must have a recognized place in the economy of the Church."²⁸³ An article in the Christian Guardian entitled "Concerning Methodist Sisterhoods" outlined the salient arguments for the office.

One of the most important events of this generation is the waking up of the Church to the discovery of the fact, that a vast amount of latent power for usefulness exists in the women of the Church, who are free from the cares of motherhood. There has always been a high estimate of the service, tact and tenderness of the mother, daughter and sister in the home circle. But the Protestant Churches have been slow to recognize the extent which these feminine aptitudes may be applied in the wider sphere of religious and reformatory work. The Church of Rome has all along appreciated and used this agency with great

²⁸³ Davey, Woman Work and Worship, 216.

effect. Because there are some things which we deem wrong and unscriptural in that system this should not prevent us learning the lesson which their employment of women is adapted to teach us.

There has been no time in the history of the Churches when Christian women have not been valuable helpers in most departments of church work. But mere voluntary unorganized zeal is not enough. The Church needs trained, intelligent workers. If the usefulness of men is increased, by being trained for the work of teachers and pastors, why will not the influence and usefulness of women be equally increased by instruction and training for the work they have to do. This fitness for the different departments of work cannot be acquired without an organized system.
...

What our sisters have already done in mission work and temperance work should inspire hopeful confidence in a movement for their further and fuller employment on a wider scale.

Nor should it be assumed that this class of workers should be drawn from those whose circumstances impel them to seek for such work in order to make a living. Culture, intelligence and social standing are not too good to be consecrated to the Master's work. ... The more truly a Sister is a lady in every sense of the word, the greater is her influence for good over the most vulgar and degraded in the slums.²⁸⁴

That same year Methodist General Conference was memorialised by Toronto and Montreal Conferences "to legislate for the establishment of a Sisterhood", and also by the Conferences of Bay of Quinte and Niagara.²⁸⁵ The Methodist Conference, although "feeling the importance of a more definite recognition of woman's work" recommended that each Conference could, "if deemed desirable", legislate for "a

²⁸⁴ "Concerning Methodist Sisterhoods", Christian Guardian (Feb 16, 1890).

²⁸⁵ Methodist Church of Canada, Third General Conference Minutes, 1890.

systematic organisation of consecrated women as will give them an official relation to the Church, similar to the Order of Deaconesses in the primitive Church."²⁸⁶ Methodist General Conference, while approving of the establishment of a Deaconess Order, felt that the time was not yet ripe. Conference expressed the recurring belief in its dealings with women that Canadian society was not yet ready to have females employed in the work of the Church. Referring the issue to the Committee on the State of the Work, they said;

[B]eing in fullest sympathy with the employment of women in the work of the Church and knowing that every encouragement is given for the exercise of their talents in promoting the work of God, [the Conference] is persuaded that the time has not come, in this country, for the establishment of an order of Deaconesses.²⁸⁷

Young women had been working in Methodist missions as early as 1876. However, Canada lacked the training facilities and these women had to be sent to a Methodist Deaconess Training Institute in New York. To remedy this situation, and without waiting for official church sanction, Toronto Methodist women established a Deaconess Aid Society in 1893. In May 1894, the Methodist Deaconess Home and Training School was established.²⁸⁸ The Training School was established with the express purpose of establishing a

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Committee on the Deaconess Order and Women Workers, The First Fifty Years, 1895-1945: The Training and Work of Women Employed in the Service of the United Church of Canada (The United Church of Canada, 1945), 4.

Deaconess Order in Canada. However, the Methodist General Conference only officially recognised a "Deaconess Society" which was essentially a Board of Management for the Deaconess Training Home. In 1895 the first three women were designated as Methodist Deaconesses in a formal church ceremony.²⁸⁹

Presbyterian women, specifically the WFMS, also took the initiative in establishing a training center for female church workers. In 1897 the WFMS provided the impetus for the opening of the Ewart Missionary Training Home as a school for female missionary candidates only.²⁹⁰ The Ewart Home remained under the auspices of the WFMS and, in 1901, was unofficially (that is without Church sanction) broadened in scope to include women training for church work at home.

[I]t is hoped that this practical training will have fitted and prepared the students to make the Deaconess Work a success, so that we may look forward to the time when the Ewart Home Deaconess (or Bible-woman) will be in such request that they may be sent far and wide in Canada, wherever there are congregations recognizing the value of this form of service, and willing to avail themselves of it.

In effect, the WFMS had organised a Deaconess Order that was independent of Church policy.

In 1904, the WFMS approached the executive of the Foreign Mission Committee requesting that the Ewart Home be made "a more recognised institution of the Church." These women

²⁸⁹ Journal of the Methodist General Conference, 1895.

²⁹⁰ WFMS, Annual Report, 1897-98.

also requested that an official committee be established by the General Assembly to "enlarge the scope of the Ewart Home."²⁹¹ However, it was not until the General Assembly received an overture from the Presbyterian Synod of Manitoba in 1907, that they acted. The overture asked the General Assembly "to take steps to set apart an order of women who shall be known as deaconesses; who shall serve the Church as nurses, parish visitors, dispensers of charity and in any other way that may prove to be desirable."²⁹²

The General Assembly established a Committee on an Order of Deaconesses to confer on the question. The Committee included four representatives from the Woman's Home Missionary Society and other Church Committees, but no representatives from the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society appear to have been included. The Committee report, which included a history of the service of deaconesses, made constant reference to "deaconess work". It suggested that women's care of the poor and the sick and their other benevolent work had always existed in the church.²⁹³ The Committee proposed to formalise this service by instituting an Order of Deaconesses. In 1909 directions were issued for the establishment of such an order. The Ewart Home became the Ewart Missionary and Deaconess Training Home. At this

²⁹¹ WFMS, Annual Report, 1904-05.

²⁹² Presbyterian Synod of Manitoba, Record of Proceedings, 1908-09.

²⁹³ Presbyterian Church in Canada, Minutes of Assembly, 1908.

time, and without the consent of the WFMS, control of the training school and the deaconess order was put into the hands of a predominately male Board of Management.

The major focus of deaconess work was in the inner-city missions. However, they also established schools, industrial homes, orphanages, Redemptive Homes (for unwed mothers), charitable institutions, settlement houses, hospitals, and churches for the poor. The Methodist Society Report outlined the work in this fashion;

The duties of the Deaconess are to minister to the poor, visit the sick, pray for the dying, care for the orphan, seek the wandering, comfort the sorrowing, labor to save the sinning, and devote themselves fully to such forms of Christian work as may be suited to their abilities.²⁹⁴

Presbyterian deaconesses were designated by their local presbyteries and it was made clear that "such designation is not, however, to be regarded as an ordination."²⁹⁵ No vow of perpetual service was asked for and deaconesses were expected to withdraw if they married.

With maintenance in a Deaconess Home assured, there was little need for remuneration. "No salaries shall be paid, the work of the Deaconess being done for the love of Christ, and in His name." Methodist deaconesses received a small personal allowance every month and a Rest and Relief Fund was established to provide for those deaconesses unable to

²⁹⁴ Methodist Church of Canada, Deaconess Society Report, 1912.

²⁹⁵ McNeill, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 149.

work due to ill-health or retirement. Presbyterian deaconesses, however, received a salary "based upon what is necessary for comfort and health and for making provisions for age."²⁹⁶ In 1908 the salary was \$360.00 per year. Methodist and Presbyterian ministers received from \$750 to \$4000 plus manse in 1906.²⁹⁷ The meagreness of the deaconess allowance often placed women close to poverty. One deaconess wrote;

I do not believe it possible that a Deaconess could live on the allowance in the West, and be absolutely comfortable in her own mind as to appearances. ... I have not yet begun to live on my allowance yet.²⁹⁸

In spite of the enormous importance of the work of the deaconess, she was no more independent in her relation to the Church than she was in her salary or living arrangements. She was not an official of the church but a member of a lay movement in the service of that church. It was not until 1908 that the Deaconess Society became an official part of Methodist national structure and not until 1922 was the official label 'Deaconess Order' brought into use and mentioned in the Methodist Discipline. Deaconesses at work were under the direction and superintendency of a local church minister or the local Conference Board. In the

²⁹⁶ Presbyterian Church in Canada, Minutes of Assembly, 1908.

²⁹⁷ Claris Silcox, Church Union in Canada (New York: Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1933), 157.

²⁹⁸ All People's Mission Papers, United Church Archives, Winnipeg.

Presbyterian Church the relation of the deaconess to the Church was through the Ewart Home Board of Management, which was the Deaconess Board of the Church. Deaconesses had no representation on this Board.

Women's voluntary organisations and professional functions institutionalized the widely-held belief that woman's pious influence would reform society. The identification of woman's nature with virtuous piety and religiosity reinforced her belief in her own superior nature yet left her more susceptible to control. In their attempt to express their superior morality women were torn between their service in the wider world and their desire to remain modest and unassuming. Woman's belief in her special virtues was a means to emancipation but also a snare. By developing separate spheres of service woman's work was, in many respects, isolated from the major work of male religious leaders. Men were to minister. Women were to serve.

The representations of the religious nature of woman were an important part of the redefinition of middle class Protestantism in Canada during the nineteenth century. As politics and economics became increasingly competitive and aggressive, more masculine, religion became increasingly domesticated and more emotional, more feminine. Canadian Protestant Churches became an extension of home life and the virtues encapsulated there. With both religion and woman

located within the "personal" sphere, it reinforced the notion that religion was a particularly female responsibility. The traditional religious values of humility, meekness, and submission, incompatible with the ethic of competitive capitalism, could be maintained by their identification with women. As men became preoccupied with the public world of work, woman became identified with the realm of religion.

Chapter IV

GUARDIANS OF THE HEALTH OF WOMEN

Medical Ideology and the Idealisation of Woman

Nineteenth century medical attitudes toward women represent one of the best researched areas of Canadian women's history due to Wendy Mitchinson.²⁹⁹ As the nineteenth century unfolded, physicians began systematically to transpose gender representations and their concomitant ideology regarding women into medical and scientific dogma. Cloaking their cultural pronouncements in the guise of science, these doctors transferred the debates over "female nature" from the spiritual to the somatic. As the authors of much of the prescriptive literature on health, sexuality, and proper gender roles, male physicians played an instrumental role in articulating social concepts, ideas, and practices pertaining to women. The theme of regulation is treated cautiously in The Nature of Their Bodies, which assumes that "culture and medicine go hand in hand" and argues that stereotyped notions about women's proper roles

²⁹⁹ Wendy Mitchinson, The Nature of Their Bodies: Women and Their Doctors in Victorian Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991). See also Wendy Mitchinson, "Historical Attitudes Toward Women and Childbirth", Atlantis 4, 2 (Spring, 1979) 13-34 and Wendy Mitchinson, "Gynecological Operations for Insane Women", Journal of Social History 15 (1981-82) 475-82.

were reinforced by medical practice.³⁰⁰ I will argue, as do De La Cour, Valverde, and Morgan, that more than merely reflecting contemporary social attitudes, the medical profession actively sought to regulate sexuality and morality on the basis of gender and in so doing created another location for the regulation of gender in society.³⁰¹ The materials utilised in this chapter are nineteenth century popularized medical works written for the general public and aimed specifically at the middle class. Articles also appeared in the popular journals of the time such as Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly and The New Dominion Monthly. What is seen in this medical advice literature is the transformation of "womanhood" from a biological definition to a class-based moral assessment.

Within the context of the growing respect for science in the nineteenth century, the medical profession assumed the responsibility for writing about the female body. It produced a prolific discourse about woman's health, particularly her reproductive health. Male physicians began to portray all women as fragile bodies dominated by their reproductive processes. Menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and menopause determined all aspects of a woman's physical and social experience. Her unique physiology "established the reason and the rhythm" of her

³⁰⁰ Mitchinson, The Nature of Their Bodies, 32.

³⁰¹ Greer and Radforth, Colonial Leviathan, 177.

life.³⁰² The nineteenth century doctor conceptualized the reproductive abilities of women as the defining difference between the male and female norm. This medical model of biological difference was an important component in the justification of separate spheres for it appeared to be based on "scientific" fact. Gender differences and female dependence were grounded on complementary human biology. Woman's biological ability to bear children became the defining characteristic of her femininity.

As ministerial authority faced the challenges of biblical criticism, evolutionary theory, and secularization, Canadians increasingly looked to science to provide social truths. Carl Berger has discussed Canadian intellectuals' belief in natural theology: "the notion of science devoted to the revelation of the activity and plans of God in nature."³⁰³ Science was the exploration of God's design. It was assumed that He had ordered nature in a permanent way and an objective science would reveal his plan. It was this fusion of science and religion that was ultimately challenged by Darwin's theory. Canadians who had previously looked to religion to explain their world, increasingly looked to science for information. "By aligning itself with science, regular medicine could bask in reflected glory. As

³⁰² Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 23.

³⁰³ Carl Berger, Science, God, and Nature in Victorian Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 31.

a result, Canadians could endow doctor's views of women ... with scientific objectivity."³⁰⁴ George Henry Napheys, a popular medical doctor and author of a medical advice book for women, spoke of the pronouncements of male physicians regarding female nature as "the Revelation of Science of Woman."³⁰⁵ A review of a physiological work on women commented that the doctor had written "like a man of true science."³⁰⁶

However, medical doctors also maintained the association of science with religion as shown by the way religious terms persisted in the new "scientific" discourse. The profession couched its vocabulary within religious terms and religious values. One nineteenth century commentator on the medical profession noted the close analogy between "the great medical order" and "the position of the priesthood of former times." Medical men assumed "the same airs of authority" as the clergyman and entered "every family with a latchkey of private information comparable to that obtained by the confessional. The influence of the family medical man on wives and children is almost unbounded."³⁰⁷ The majority of medical writers referred to God's plan in the creation of

³⁰⁴ Mitchinson, The Nature of Their Bodies, 14.

³⁰⁵ George Henry Napheys, The Physical Life of Woman: Advice to Maiden, Wife, and Mother, 4th ed. (Toronto: Maclear and Company, 1875), 25.

³⁰⁶ The Ladies Book of Useful Information: compiled from many sources (London, Ontario: n.p., 1896).

³⁰⁷ Frances Power Cobbe, "The Little Health of Ladies", The New Dominion Monthly (Jan to June, 1878) 443-457.

woman. Emma Drake spoke of a woman's "peculiar adaptation, and the peculiar suitability of each part to the purpose intended by the all-wise Creator."³⁰⁸ Chavasse pointed out that "it was ordained by the Almighty that wives should be fruitful and multiply."³⁰⁹ Jefferis, in discussing woman's physiology, explained it was based on "nature's laws as laid down by nature's God."³¹⁰ Thus, medical men formulated their views about woman from the same beliefs about female nature that were found in religious discourse. The fact is that these views did not follow from medical inquiry, they preceded the evidence. Scientific presumptions were influenced by cultural precepts. As Morantz-Sanchez illustrates in her discussion of the American medical profession: "nineteenth century evaluations of female health were informed not by empirical evidence tested carefully in the lab, but by cultural assumptions that had a particular non-medical use in ordering society and power relationships."³¹¹

³⁰⁸ Emma F. Drake, M.D., What A Young Wife Ought to Know (Toronto:Briggs, 1893/1902), 27.

³⁰⁹ Pye Henry Chavasse, Advice to A Wife on the Management of Her Own Health (Toronto:Hunter Rose, 1879), 2.

³¹⁰ B.G. Jefferis, Searchlights on Health Light on Dark Corners, 25th ed. (Toronto:J.L. Nichols, 1894), 247.

³¹¹ Regina Morantz-Sanchez, Sympathy and Science: Women Physicians in American Medicine (New York:Oxford Press, 1985).

The scientific model of the human body implicit in medical men's view of physiology was that of a closed system which contained a fixed amount of energy. This physiological mechanism meant that if stimulation or expenditure took place in one part of the bodily system a corresponding depletion had to take place in another. Thus, if abnormal demands were made on one part it would deplete the potential for the healthy development of another. So, for nineteenth century physicians, the human body maintained a fragile and delicate balance that was easily destroyed by external forces. This theory was often applied to both men and women, particularly when sexuality was discussed.

The seminal fluid is too precious - nature bestows too much care in its elaboration for it to be wasted in this unproductive manner. It is intended, when not used for the purpose of procreation, to be reabsorbed again into the system, giving vigor of body, elasticity and strength to the mind, making the individual strong, active and self-reliant. When kept as nature intended, it is a perpetual fountain of life and energy - a vital force which acts in every direction; a motive power which infuses manhood into every organ of the brain and every fiber of the body.³¹²

However, physicians appealed to the closed energy theory most often when discussing women. Although both men and women shared this self-regulating system and both were susceptible to the variations and irritations that could upset its balance, women were thought to be more susceptible due to the greater delicacy and sensitivity of the female body. For woman, it grounded a belief that her bodily

³¹² Ladies Book of Useful Information, 105.

system was continuously unstable. This greater instability stemmed from what medical men designated as "female periodicity." It had no analogous counterpart in the male because the male did not experience menstruation. Woman's uterus and ovaries dictated her life from puberty to menopause. As Wendy Mitchinson has pointed out, woman's sexual organs were not part of the whole as they were in man but "virtually the whole."³¹³ In fact, without these organs woman could no longer be considered feminine but was now masculine.³¹⁴ Thus, all women were prisoners of their body's reproductive cycle. Puberty, menstruation, childbearing, and menopause were all critical moments in their life history.

Doctors maintained that women were subject to an enormous and bewildering array of physical and emotional disorders due to a set of reproductive organs that determined her physiology. Henry Pye Chavasse, a popular Birmingham doctor whose books were aimed specifically at middle class mothers, spoke for the majority of the medical profession when he stated that uterine or womb ailment was a "fruitful source of a lady's illness... ." In fact, Chavasse affirmed that the uterus was almost always "mixed up with a woman's illness, hence, the womb has, by a medical man, to be considered in all the diseases and disorders appertaining

³¹³ Mitchinson, The Nature of Their Bodies, 30.

³¹⁴ R.Pierce, People's Common Sense Medical Advisor as quoted in Mitchinson, The Nature of Their Bodies, 32.

both to girlhood and womanhood."³¹⁵ Due to the organization of her body, it was impossible for a woman to achieve the same standard of health as a man.

The fundamental vulnerability of woman's body led to a belief that many women suffered from a perpetual state of ill-health. Napheys wondered how many women there were "with health, beauty, merriment, ay, morality too, all gone, lost for ever."³¹⁶ An unhealthy woman was not just destroying her own comfort, she was destroying the comfort of the home and the future health of her offspring. Chavasse in his Advice to a Wife cautioned women to maintain their health in order to bear healthy children. In fact, he maintained that if a woman marred or ruined her health through "injudicious" living she might remain childless. "The fact is a wife now-a-days, is too artificial; she lives on excitement. It soon plays havoc with her constitution." A young wife was at all times to prepare herself for having a family.³¹⁷

By the later part of the century, some doctors were suggesting that the instability of the female body was further enhanced by a greater sensitivity of the female nervous system.

³¹⁵ Chavasse, Advice to A Wife, 22.

³¹⁶ Napheys, The Physical Life of Woman, 25.

³¹⁷ Chavasse, Advice to a Wife, 6.

All women have many trifling ailments and uncomfortable feelings, vague sensations, scarcely defined enough to be dignified by the name of pain. Perhaps our more sensitive nervous organization renders us more susceptible to these influences than men are.³¹⁸

It was assumed that the uterus was connected to the central nervous system; "shocks to the nervous system might alter the reproductive cycle ... while changes in the reproductive cycle shaped emotional states."³¹⁹ As John C. Webster pointed out in his 1898 treatise Diseases of Women, it was "not to be wondered at that neuroses should be so common in women." Though he disputed the doctrine that "woman's life is a history of disease" he admitted that her life was "one of physiological unrest, except in youth and old age." Webster suggested that the high incidence of neuroses in women was due to "the subtle and complex activities of her physical life in its various diastaltic functions." He went further to establish a direct link between manifested neuroses and their relation to her reproductive mechanism. Woman's emotional states were tied to the periodicity of her

³¹⁸ Elisabeth R. Scovil, Preparations for Motherhood (Philadelphia:Altemus, 1896), 36. Scovil, 1839-1934, was also the author of The Care of Children and the associate editor of the Ladies Home Journal. The microreproduction of Preparation for Motherhood was found in the Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions index, which reproduces materials published/printed in Canada, written by Canadians or dealing with Canadian subject matter. The original is in the National Library of Canada.

³¹⁹ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Woman and Her Role in Nineteenth-Century America", Journal of American History 60(1973)332-56, 335.

reproductive cycle.³²⁰

By mid-century. medical writers were also beginning to caution their readers that children would acquire all their personality and biological characteristics from their parents. Hereditary damage to the child occurred from disease, ill-health, or the improper lifestyle of either parent. Because it was the woman who carried the child, however, it was her lifestyle that could most influence its future well-being. A nervous mother would produce a nervous, under-weight child. Even her morality, or lack of, could be transmitted to the child. An 1856 article in The Medical Chronicle insisted that a mother's mental state could influence her unborn child not only physically, but morally and mentally as well.³²¹ The stronger and more beautiful the mother became, the more beautiful her child would be. Napheys went so far as to suggest that the attributes of the child were determined to a large extent "by the bodily and mental conditions of the parents at the time of conception."³²² Mothers-to-be were constantly reminded that the body of the child would be influenced by the mind of the mother.

During pregnancy the mother should often have some painting or engraving representing cheerful and beautiful figures before her eyes or often contemplate some graceful statue. She should

³²⁰ John C. Webster, Diseases of Women (1898), 119.

³²¹ As quoted in Mitchinson, The Nature of Their Bodies, 157.

³²² Napheys, The Physical Life of Woman, 110.

avoid looking at or thinking of ugly people, or those marked with disfiguring diseases. She should take every precaution to escape injury, fright, and disease of any kind. ... She should keep herself well-nourished. ... She should avoid ungraceful positions and awkward attitudes, as by some mysterious sympathy these are impressed on the child she carries. Let her cultivate grace and beauty in herself at such a time, and she will endow her child with them, as anger and irritability leave imprints on the features, she should maintain serenity and calmness.³²³

Above all, the expectant mother had a higher duty than just to provide for the physical comfort and safety of her unborn child. In the 1890s women were still being cautioned that a child's whole life would be biased by the influences of its mother's nature. Its "temper and disposition [were] being fashioned as surely as feet and hands, face and fingers." A woman who refused to exert self-control over her own character would give birth to a child who was irritable, cross, and peevish and unable to exert the self-control so necessary to his moral well-being.³²⁴ Thus, appropriate female behaviour was reinforced by injunctions concerning the higher duty of producing healthy offspring.

Emphasizing the role of the female reproductive system meant that the similarities between men and women were no longer as important as their gender-specific differences. Woman's reproductive system and hence her ability to have children made all women the same. By providing a medical explanation for the differences in bodies and functions,

³²³ Ibid, 121.

³²⁴ Scovil, Preparation for Motherhood, 215.

sexual differentiation and all that it entailed could be proved by scientific means. Therefore, woman's sex was ordered wholly in terms of reproduction and ruled by the effects of its functions. Governed and defined by this reproductive capacity, an elaborate explanation was provided for woman's femininity as well as a defence of her role as wife and mother.

The most peculiar features of woman's life are hers for a limited period only. Man is man for a longer time than woman is woman. With him it is a lifetime matter; with her it is but for a score of years or so. Her child-bearing period is less than half her life. Within this time, she passes through all the phases of that experience which is peculiarly her own.

And these phases, what are they! Nature herself defines them. They are three in number - the maiden, the wife, and the mother.³²⁵

The extent to which woman's generative organs controlled her body had no parallel in the man's. Man's impulses could be controlled by his will. He could choose to control them through the rational functions of his brain. Woman was subject to bodily rhythms that she was unable to control and thus was "the product and prisoner of her reproductive system."³²⁶

Numerous writers in the popular medical literature pointed to the dire consequences in store for a woman who violated the natural laws of her body. What was to be "dearest to a woman" was to maintain a strong body to

³²⁵ Napheys, The Physical Life of Woman, 29.

³²⁶ Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female Animal", 335.

provide for future offspring.³²⁷ The preparation for motherhood was to begin in early girlhood. Mothers were to strive to prepare their daughters to be mothers of the next generation. "As they deal wisely, or unwisely with the souls and bodies of their charges, the children of the future are helped, or hindered, in their equipment for the battle of life."³²⁸ In order to fulfill her ordained role as mother, a young girl was not only to have "good food, pure air, cleanliness, exercise, proper clothing, [and] sufficient sleep,"³²⁹ she was to develop the traits of "sweetness, grace, purity, and all true womanliness."³³⁰ The young woman, in order to develop into "perfect womanhood", was admonished to view her sexual organs as "immature buds of the flower" that needed extra care for a perfect development. After all, "her added value to the world" came "through the perfecting of her entire organism...³³¹."

Young women were encouraged not to see themselves as "periodic semi-invalids" and at the same time cautioned that the care they took of their bodies would determine their future health. Yet medical writers realised "the majority of civilized women feel more or less lassitude and

³²⁷ Drake, What A Young Wife Ought to Know, 81.

³²⁸ Scovil, Preparation for Motherhood, 11.

³²⁹ Ibid, 11

³³⁰ Wood-Allen, What A Young Woman Ought to Know, 115

³³¹ Ibid.

discomfort, and many suffer intensely."³³² In one of the many contradictions in the medical literature regarding women, this "normal" process required a great deal of time and attention if no lasting damage was to be done. Hence if there was any future ill-health the blame was laid squarely at the door of the woman herself. A "kind and just God" could not have made it necessary for "women to suffer merely because they are women."³³³ The woman must have done something wrong, either in her dress or in her diet, or far more importantly, in her personal or social habits.

Due to the fact that a woman's body contained only a finite amount of energy, at the onset of puberty all this energy was needed for the full development of her female sexual organs. To concentrate her energies, a young woman was to curtail much of what had been her normal physical level of activity and not partake in any physically or intellectually absorbing activity. Any suffering came as a "just penalty" of a woman's "wrongdoing." The most frequent cause of ill-health was thought to be "injudicious conduct at the time of the beginning of sexual activity [puberty]."³³⁴

At this time of life the girl is often called lazy because she manifests lassitude, and this is nature's indication that she should rest. The vital forces are busy establishing a new function, and the energy that has been expressed in bodily

³³² Ibid, 119.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Ibid, 123.

activity is now being otherwise employed .. [T]he average girl needs much judicious care, in order that her physical womanhood shall be healthfully established. She should be guarded from taking cold, from over exertion, from social dissipation, and especially from mental excitement, and other causes of nervousness.³³⁵

As Napheys warned, the "thousands of wretched wives" owed their "wretchedness" to a neglect of the serious responsibility entailed in the change from girl to woman. She could "seal for ever the happiness or the hopeless misery" of the rest of her life. "They decide whether she is to become a healthy, helpful, cheerful wife and mother, or a languid, complaining invalid, to whom marriage is a curse, children an affliction, and life itself a burden."³³⁶ Physical causes such as improper food and inadequate rest would cause problem enough. However "mental causes" were far more potent still. Napheys condemned whatever would stimulate the emotions in a young woman. The extensive list included "late hours, children's parties, sensational novels, 'flashy' papers, love stories, the drama, the ball-room, talk of beaux[sic], love and marriage." Music was particularly dangerous because it awakened "the dormant susceptibilities to passion." Thus, at the very age her brothers were encouraged to further study and an increased role in the larger world, a young woman was to avoid "hard study" and "do less than usual." The male medical profession firmly believed that ignoring their precepts

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Napheys, The Physical Life of Woman, 32.

would not only prevent a woman from fulfilling the higher calling of motherhood, it would bring "suffering, disease, and sometimes death."³³⁷

By the early 1870s the unity of science and religion, already challenged by biblical criticism and the secularization of society, came under the additional challenge of evolutionary theory. Not only did the separation of God from nature threaten religious belief; it threatened the basis of morality. "Personal and social morality had been founded on the simple belief in future rewards and punishments: the removal of a superintending deity from nature was bound to shake this faith."³³⁸ Science, and by association medicine, became the arbiter of morality. The emergence of a specific moral code that sought to regulate sexual arrangements was based on the medical model of reproductive difference. The attempt to classify 'normal' sexuality scientifically marked a shift away from a religious framework that had depicted marriage in strictly moral terms as a sacred and God-given institution. For theologians, sex within marriage was natural while certain sexual acts outside its confines were sinful. Any individual could transgress by committing a moral sin. What was now different was the link provided by medical science between an individual's gender-defined sexuality and her character. In the nineteenth century,

³³⁷ Ibid, 79.

³³⁸ Berger, Science, God, and Nature in Victorian Canada, 62.

gender became the primary category in the regulation of sexuality. Physicians began to offer advice on the proper limits of sexuality and the marital relation. Thus, they intruded their scientific expertise into an area that had formerly been solely a religious issue. Where once the punishment for transgressing religious precepts regarding sex had been spiritual, deviance from natural laws would now entail dire physical and social consequences.

As with the sexual body, sexual desire was conceptualized in terms of complementarity not similarity. Male sexuality was instrumental, forceful, and direct. Female sexuality was expressive and responsive, based on emotion, essentially modest. Sex was not just a local expression; it inhered in the mind as well as the body. Sexuality was "expressed in masculine courage, energy or daring, or in feminine constancy, self-abnegation, or sweet courtesy."³³⁹ Having established that woman's primary social duty was to bear children it was necessary to portray those emotions that were necessary to good mothering and the perpetuation of the species as intrinsically part of a woman's sexual nature. Linking female sexuality to the desire to reproduce, to specific personality traits, and to a sexually passive nature rendered female sexuality safe.

³³⁹ Wood-Allen, What A Young Woman Ought to Know, 260.

Popular medical literature spoke of "the urgency of the man and the timidity of woman." Napheys pointed to a "wise provision of nature" that ordained "that woman shall be sought. She flees and man pursues." For Napheys and his colleagues, this provision ensured that susceptible man "ever prone to yield to woman's solicitations" would not "fritter away his powers at an early age." If this were to happen, "those very impulses which nature has given to perpetuate the race would bring about its destruction." Happily for the race, such a disaster was prevented because woman was "endowed with a sense of shame, an invincible modesty, her greatest protection and her greatest charm."³⁴⁰ Young women were cautioned about the volatility of a man's nature. They were "playing with a dangerous fire" when they allowed "caresses and unbecoming familiarity." If she permitted such "fondlings", even though holding herself above "criminal deeds", she would be directly responsible for arousing such passion in a man that he would lose his "honor and purity" in the company of "dissolute women."³⁴¹ In one of the many contradictions found in the medical literature, it was maintained that man lacked the power to control this passion. Woman had to be his moral safeguard. She was "by her wise, modest, womanly demeanor [to] make it impossible for him to feel an impure impulse in her presence."³⁴² For it was not only his physical actions that

³⁴⁰ Naopheys, The Physical Life of Woman, 59.

³⁴¹ Wood-Allen, What A Young Woman Ought to Know, 165.

woman was to govern but his very thoughts.

It is in its moral effect on the mind and the heart of man, that the influence of woman is most powerful and important. In the diversity of tastes, habits, inclinations, and pursuits of the two sexes, is found a most beneficent provision for controlling the force and extravagance of human passion. The objects which most strongly seize and stimulate the mind of man, rarely act at the same time and with equal power on the mind of woman. She is naturally better, purer, and more chaste in thought and language ... restraining and softening the violence of human passion.³⁴³

The writers of such advice all agreed that such thoughts in a man might very well "prove provocative of deeds."

It was not that woman had no sexual appetite. One medical writer divided women into three groups based on the "intensity of the sexual instinct." He asserted that a large number had little or no sexual feeling. A small number were "subject to strong passion." However, the vast majority of women had a sexual appetite "as moderate as all other appetites."³⁴⁴ The "science of physiology" indicated that passion in a woman was not a "derogation to her sex" and those wives who were proud of their distaste for their "conjugal obligations" were "incomplete in their organization, and deficient in the special function of their being."³⁴⁵ Generation was a duty and passion was the feeling that excited the preservation of the species. "The instinct

³⁴² Ibid, 167.

³⁴³ Jefferis, Searchlights on Health, 30.

³⁴⁴ Napheys, The Physical Life of Woman, 84.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

of reproduction in mankind is thus joined to an affectionate sentiment, which adds to its sweetness and prolongs infinitely its duration." In fact, those women who denied themselves sexually were prone to hysterical and other disorders.³⁴⁶ Thus marital sexuality (and that was the only variety allowed) was limited to a reproductive framework. "The great object of the conjugal union is the transmission of life - a duty necessary in order to repair the constant ravages of death, and thus perpetuate the race."³⁴⁷ The very fact that conception could result at any time proved to the medical community that "the conjugal relation was not instituted primarily for the gratification of the lower nature", but for procreation. Even the passion of love was intended by nature to be "dependent upon the capacity of having offspring."³⁴⁸

In no relation of life was self-control so needed than in the marital relation. The "government of the passions", as Elizabeth Blackwell described it, or self-control, was seen as something natural to a woman. "The conduct of a pure woman should be the safeguard ... of a man."³⁴⁹ Although men were encouraged to attempt to practice sexual self-control, women were enjoined to internalize this self-control. Because men lacked the ability to control their sexual

³⁴⁶ Ibid, 86.

³⁴⁷ Ibid, 79.

³⁴⁸ Ibid, 51.

³⁴⁹ Wood-Allen, What A Young Woman Ought to Know, 167.

impulses, marriage was the only state within which they could function.

It is no doubt difficult for some men to fully abstain from sexual intercourse and be entirely chaste in the mind. The great majority of men experience frequent strong sexual desire. Abstinence is very apt to produce in their minds voluptuous images and untamable desires which require an iron will to banish or control. The hermit in his seclusion or the monk in his retreat, are often flushed with these passions and trials. It is, however, natural; for remove these passions and man would no longer be a man. It is evident that the natural state of man is that of marriage and he who avoids that state is not in harmony with the laws of his being.³⁵⁰

The love of man for woman differed from all other emotions of love due to its sexual component. However, it was not to rest on the fleeting notions of physical attraction and sexual passion. Couples had to make the physical aspects of their relationship subservient to their higher natures. Man, "the aggressive part of the human family", was always in great danger of allowing his lower nature to dominate. Sexual attraction, however, was to be manifest in intelligent congeniality and spiritual sympathy. "[T]he earth can offer no more desirable future than that in which men and women, knowing each other as immortal intelligence, shall leave the vale of unsafe sentimentality and sensuous poison to dwell on the heights of noble companionship."³⁵¹ Their sexuality would only be expressed as the feelings of love in marriage.

³⁵⁰ Jefferis, Searchlights on Health, 137.

³⁵¹ Wood-Allen, What A Young Woman Ought to Know, 260.

Within marriage, too frequent "repetition of the reproductive act" was believed to be "injurious to the general health." Too much sex would shorten an individual's existence and bring lassitude and weakness. Therefore, "science" recommended the adoption of a mean between two equally destructive extremes. The "highest degree of bodily vigor" was consistent with only a "very moderate indulgence in sexual intercourse."³⁵² Popular medical literature was unclear as to how often conjugal relations should be experienced. Reverend Stall, in his advice books to men, believed that couples in good health could enjoy relations once a week. Others recommended once a month. Stall believed that there were strong arguments in favour of abstinence except for procreation but felt that this required more self-control than many men possessed.³⁵³ Napheys urged husbands to practice "continence, self-control, [and] a willingness to deny himself."³⁵⁴ But he also knew from the "1,000 voices [that] reach us from suffering women" that husbands refused to restrain themselves. He admitted that "such advice is useless, because impractical."

³⁵² Ibid, 89.

³⁵³ Michael Bliss, "Pure Books on Avoided Subjects: Pre-Freudian Sexual Ideas in Canada", Canadian History Papers (1970), 93.

³⁵⁴ Napheys, The Physical Life of Woman, 103.

The woman was the key to control of marital sex. She was expected to "dampen" her husband's desire for sex. It was in woman's nature, when she loved, to forgive. She would forgive man's uncontrolled passion but her love would struggle to rise above her disgust and loathing. In marriage, as in no other relation in life, self-control was the key and man's sexual passion was to be kept in check by woman's higher nature. To prevent man from yielding to his impulses and "fretting" away his powers, woman was "endowed with a sense of shame, an invincible modesty, her greatest protection and her greatest charm."³⁵⁵ Nineteenth century commentators rarely disputed the physiological differences between men and women. In fact, physiological explanations were accepted not only for gender traits but for those of class and race. What had to be decided was exactly what these differences entailed in social and moral terms, without resort to scriptural authority, in order to explain woman's morality. The profession, as yet, had no theory that could separate women's physiology from her morality. Not until the twentieth century, with the development of the psychoanalytic theory of the unconscious, would a temporary boundary be imposed between the two. The reproductive female body that resulted from discussion in the popular medical self-help books constituted the basis for this explanation. However, as Mary Poovey has pointed out, medicine's attempts to define the sexual sphere

³⁵⁵ Ibid, 59.

enmeshed doctors in a problematic discussion of physiology and morality. "Reducing all women to a socially undifferentiated reproductive body foregrounded the biological difference between man and woman ... [and] opened a space in which contradictory meanings inherent in the domestic ideal could proliferate."³⁵⁶ If women were sexual as well as moral individuals then the morality supposedly inherent in woman might be subject to the same kinds of desires experienced by man. If the socially operative difference was not between men and women but within each individual, then women's self-regulation could less confidently be trusted to mitigate the effects of the aggression men assumed essential to their own nature, and women's social subordination could less easily be defended...."³⁵⁷

If woman's physiological characteristics made her constitutionally different than man her social characteristics were rooted in this difference. As medical science increased its knowledge of the female reproductive system, physicians were able to present a more elaborate explanation for the interconnections between women's generative organs and her social characteristics. Medical men stated that woman's nature "was distinct from man." It was her "physical biography" that not only defined this nature but "dictated answers" to the absorbing question

³⁵⁶ Poovey, Uneven Developments, 49.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

"regarding woman and her social place in society." For Napheys the "master authority" which could guide society through the problems of defining woman's place were the very laws of woman's physical life. These laws shaped her destiny and revealed her future. "Within these laws all things are possible; beyond them, nothing is of avail."³⁵⁸

As Emma Drake pointed out to the readers of her What A Young Wife Ought to Know sex, although centralized in the reproductive organs, "makes itself manifest throughout the whole organization." She went on to conclude that not only did men and women differ as individuals but that their physiological differences were "inherent in them as men and women."³⁵⁹ Woman's inherent nature - her nurturance, morality, domesticity, and greater affection - was rooted in her biological difference. Physically frailer, with a smaller skull, more delicate muscles, and a more finely balanced nervous system, woman's emotional propensities dominated her rational faculties. In fact, physical appearance could tell even the casual observer much about the different natures of male and female. "Solidity and strength are represented by the organisation of the male, grace and beauty by that of the female. His broad shoulders represent physical power and the right of dominion, while her bosom is the symbol of love and nutrition."³⁶⁰ Readers

³⁵⁸ Napheys, The Physical Life of Women, 25.

³⁵⁹ Drake, What A Young Wife Ought to Know, 109.

³⁶⁰ "People's Common Sense Medical Advisor" as quoted in

of What A Young Wife Ought To Know were told that woman was specifically created for fitness for her work as wife and mother. The "all-wise Creator" has caused each part of her body to be peculiarly adapted and suitable for the purposes He had intended.

The nervous system is a little more highly organized than in man, the heart and blood vessels adjusted to swifter work; the brain quicker, the muscles not so hard and tense. In place of the logical, she possesses the intuitive mind, which makes her capable of reaching a conclusion while man is thinking about it. She has less strength but greater endurance.³⁶¹

The medical model sought to equate woman's reproductive capacity with her maternal nature. But, in so doing, the medical profession had to contain the sexuality which was the other side of her reproductive abilities. Woman's maternal nature, and hence her sexual morality, lay in an uneasy relationship with her physical sexuality. "Idealized womanhood was asexual and chaste yet the supreme goal for women was marriage and motherhood, conditions which publicly proclaimed sexuality."³⁶² The belief that woman's mental and moral love was both separate from and superior to man's baser sexual desires coupled with such biological "facts" as the model of spontaneous ovulation, were utilized to provide scientific proof for woman's definitive sexual characteristic - maternal love. This maternal instinct was

Mitchinson, The Nature of Their Bodies, 32.

³⁶¹ Drake, What A Young Wife Ought to Know, 27.

³⁶² Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, 322.

linked to the obvious physiological fact of woman's reproductive ability. Jefferis felt that a woman who did not want children should not marry. Drake believed the young matron had no right to the title of wife if she did not immediately prepare for maternity.³⁶³ For Henry Pye Chavasse, the love of offspring was one of woman's most powerful instincts and nothing could compensate a married woman who did not have a child. Children were as necessary to her as the air that she breathed and the food she ate. "If she be not a parent, her mission in life will be only half performed, and she will be robbed of the greatest happiness this world can afford."³⁶⁴ A young woman needed both marriage and motherhood to stabilize her personality and her bodily organization. A childless wife was far more liable to hysteria and many other diseases than a prolific mother, as was the single woman.³⁶⁵ An unmarried or childless woman was incomplete. In fact, many sickly young women were believed to regain their health upon marriage. The impulse towards maternity was seen as a law of woman's nature and one which allowed a woman to subject herself to male sexual aggression.

This linkage between physiology and nature led doctors to define woman's social role as limited to domesticity. For women to remain healthy they were cautioned to remain within

³⁶³ Wood-Allen, What a Young Woman Ought to Know, 101.

³⁶⁴ Chavasse, Advice to a Wife, 8.

³⁶⁵ Ibid, 102.

the domestic setting. Napheys told women that "Nature was as beneficent to those who obey her precepts as she is merciless to those who disregard them." As Chavasse went on to explain; "the quiet retirement of her own home ought to be her greatest pleasure and her most precious privilege."

The judicious spending of the first year of married life is of the greatest importance in the making and in the strengthening of a wife's constitution, and in preparing her for having a family. How sad it is, then, that it is the first twelve months that are, as a rule, especially chosen to mar and ruin her own health, and to make her childless! The present fashionable system of spending the first few months of married life in a round of visiting, of late hours, and in close and heated rooms calls loudly for change."³⁶⁶

In this way marriage and motherhood became both social and medical norms; necessary to ensure female health. Deviation from this prescribed norm resulted in disease. Therefore, any social deviancy could be defined as a medical abnormality.

With the acceptance that married woman's reason for being was explained by her desire for children, it was but one short step to suggest that marital relations were solely for the purpose of procreation. "[T]he passion of love is dependent upon the capacity of having offspring, and such was the intention of nature in implanting in our bosom this all-powerful sentiment."³⁶⁷ Conjugal relations were never to be allowed without a willingness to have children. The fact that conception could occur at any time proved that marriage

³⁶⁶ Chavasse, Advice to a Wife, 6.

³⁶⁷ Napheys, The Physical Life of Woman, 51.

was for procreation not physical gratification. "When the marital state is entered in the spirit of Him who ordained it, no sanctuary is more sacred. ... Wrongly interpreted, and its liberties used as a license for unbridled desire, while the great object for which the relation was instituted is not only not unrecognized, but by every means avoided and abused, it becomes a snare and degradation to the nobler instincts and aspirations, and lets in a legion of evil spirits which lead farther and farther away from truth and righteousness."³⁶⁸ Marriage would then be "little better than licensed prostitution" if the "animal nature" of man dwarfed the "higher nature" of woman.³⁶⁹

Notions of sexuality and morality put in this context help to explain the intense jeremiads against family limitation. The McLarens' study of birth-control and abortion practices in Canada suggests that the medical profession actively campaigned to change the social concepts and practices of reproduction. They suggest that before the nineteenth century neither birth-control nor abortion before "quickenings" were illegal. Abortion was not a statutory crime in British law until 1803 and the concept of "quickenings", meaning the first fetal motion, was retained until 1837. Prior to 1861, abortion laws had been aimed at the abortionist. It had not been a crime for a woman to

³⁶⁸ Drake, What A Young Wife Ought to Know, 80.

³⁶⁹ Ibid, 88.

abort herself.³⁷⁰ However, during the nineteenth century laws were introduced that not only prohibited abortion and the use of birth-control but the very distribution of information.³⁷¹ Attacks on birth control and abortion asserted both the necessity and the inevitability of a woman's reproductive role. A woman who deliberately attempted to avoid motherhood put herself at both moral and physical peril. The attempt to enjoy the pleasures of a physical relationship while escaping its legitimate results were "a menace to the health and a degradation to the moral nature."³⁷² Giving "rein to lust" would result in looseness of character and a "deadening of conscience to all sin."³⁷³ Abortion would "stain her soul with crime" and prove of terrible consequences "to body and soul alike."³⁷⁴ And the use of birth control methods were "the almost certain cause of painful uterine diseases and of shortened life."³⁷⁵

Although the majority of writers in the popular medical literature realised that some women were burdened beyond their strength from the frequent recurrence of maternity,

³⁷⁰ Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar McLaren, The Bedroom and the State: The Changing Practices and Politics of Contraception and Abortion in Canada, 1880-1980 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), 39.

³⁷¹ Ibid, 139.

³⁷² Wood-Allen, What A Young Woman Ought to Know, 250.

³⁷³ Drake, What A Young Wife Ought to Know, 80.

³⁷⁴ Scovil, Preparation for Motherhood, 12.

³⁷⁵ Napheys, The Physical Life of Woman, 105.

what they counselled was self-control in marriage. In fact, views on birth control and abortion appear to be closely linked to views on proper middle class self control. Readers of What a Young Wife Ought to Know were told to help their husbands "to see that children that come from such self-indulgence cannot be the strong, vigorous and noble children they would be if generated under self-control. Occupy separate beds, and help him by every means in your power to attain self-control, and become master of his passions, not their slave.³⁷⁶..." What male writers such as Chavasse, Jefferis, and Napheys recommended was "avoidance of offspring to a certain extent"³⁷⁷ by the use of "nature's law as laid down by nature's God, and discovered by medical science."³⁷⁸ The nursing of children was believed to help prevent conception. It could also be avoided with absolute safety "by refraining from coition except for this particular number of days, and there will be no evasion of natural intercourse."³⁷⁹... Unfortunately, as we now know, the medical profession's understanding of woman's biological rhythms was so inadequate that the "days" suggested for conjugal relations coincided with a wife's most fruitful time. Gagan's study suggests that the mid-century decline in fertility was the result of delayed age of marriage, not

³⁷⁶ Drake, What A Young Wife Ought to Know, 131.

³⁷⁷ Napheys, The Physical Life of Woman, 101.

³⁷⁸ Jefferis, Searchlights on Health, 247.

³⁷⁹ Ibid, 248.

because of a more wide-spread use of birth control. Marital fertility declined among woman aged fifteen to forty-four by nearly forty percent in the years 1850 to 1890. At the same time, the marriage age increased, on average, two to three years between 1840 and 1870, affecting the number of children born.³⁸⁰

By the end of the period studied, such female physicians as Wood-Allen and Drake were involved in writing the popular medical advice literature for women reprinted in Canada. These books maintained that a woman had a right to good health: views that were shared by male professionals such as Boston's Dio Lewis.³⁸¹ However, by the end of the period studied, female physicians more often were involved in popular advice literature for women. Despite their conservative approach to woman's physiological milestones, most denied that it was destined for a woman to suffer because of her reproductive system. Wood-Allen stated that she could not believe "that a kind and just God had made it necessary for women to suffer merely because they are women."³⁸² Frances Power Cobbe, the English writer and moderate feminist, suggested in an article reprinted in The New Dominion Monthly it was impossible to believe that "the Creator should have planned a whole sex of patients;

³⁸⁰ Gagan, Hopeful Travellers, 77/86.

³⁸¹ Dio Lewis, New Gymnastics and Our Girls (Toronto:Adam Stevenson, 1871) where Lewis argues that "woman in her normal state is a vital healthy being".

³⁸² Wood-Allen, What A Young Woman Ought To Know, 119.

that the normal condition of the female of the human species should be to have legs which walk not, and brains which can only work on pain of disturbing the rest of the ill-adjusted machine - this is to me simply incredible.... I do not believe that even the holy claims of motherhood ought to involve - or, if women's lives were better regulated, would involve - so often as they do, a state of invalidism for the larger part of married life; or that a woman ought to be disabled from performing the supreme moral and intellectual duties of a parent towards her first born children when she fulfills the powerful physical part of her sacred office towards those who come afterwards.³⁸³

Turning to environmental and social reasons for ill-health, women physicians, like their male counterparts, criticized the artificialities of civilized life. Wood-Allen said it was difficult to realize how far women's lives were from being natural. She quoted a specialist in the diseases of women who stated: "At the very dawn of womanhood, the young girl begins to live an artificial life utterly inconsistent with normal development. The girl of the period is made a woman before her time by associating too much with her elders, and in diet, dress, habits, and tastes becomes at an early age but a reflection of her elder sisters."³⁸⁴ Drake cautioned those female readers "misled by the false philosophy of the day" about social demands on their time. Wasting their time and energy in society laid "the foundation for a young old age" and made young wives unfit for their duties in the home.³⁸⁵ Home was the first

³⁸³ Cobbe, "The Little Health of Ladies", 444.

³⁸⁴ Wood-Allen, What A Young Woman Ought to Know, 120.

³⁸⁵ Drake, What A Young Wife Ought To Know, 51.

and foremost duty of a woman. Society wasted her strength and laid the foundation for a train of illnesses.³⁸⁶ However, a few female commentators departed from their male counterparts by criticising the social role assigned women, and even marriage itself. Doctor Celia Mosher, writing in Woman Her Character Culture and Calling, suggested that "mental dissastifaction and unrest" were critical elements in producing ill-health. "Perhaps the young wife quickly finds that her idol is made of clay, and this knowledge, which must be hidden forever in her own breast, is the withering blast before which her beauty and freshness fade."³⁸⁷ She went on to point to the hard manual labour women were required to perform, coupled with the "close confinement to the house which doubles the strain and the nerve wear and tear..." Then comes the "double task" of pregnancy and, with it, deteriorating health.

Then come the nights of broken slumber, the anxieties connected with the health of a child, household complications of which its advent is the herald. Social duties make their demands, and her husband's pleasure must be considered also. With all this weight of care and labor, with the giving out, as it were, of her very existence, is it strange that a woman's health breaks down? What man could endure it for a month?³⁸⁸

Mosher went on to suggest that the ill-health that followed upon so many marriages suggested that an "unwise choice is made in the beginning." Cobbe believed that it "scored one

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Dr.E.Mosher,"The Health of American Women" in Austin, Woman Her Character Culture and Calling, 237.

³⁸⁸ Ibid, 238.

against her chances" for good health as compared to a man, "that she has no wife." She also maintained that much of the invalidism of women was due to the "depressing influences of an unhappy home" or the "lack of affection and care and tenderness" found in a marriage with an "uncongenial husband."³⁸⁹

Mosher stressed that the large number of "apparently blooming and vigorous young women" who entered marriage only to have the bloom fade and their vigor depart was the result of health laws that had been broken. Another writer suggested that what was "conducive" to female health was "pure air, cleanliness, attention to diet, cheerfulness, regular exercise, and sound sleep."³⁹⁰ Drake believed in the need for exercise and recreation, rest and good ventilation. They appeared to be far more interested in preventing ill health rather than its cure. Scovil in her Preparation for Motherhood stated that the "function of a medical man ought to be not so much to cure his patients of disorders as to keep them in order."³⁹¹ What women required was practical training about their bodies. "Ignorance is not purity, but is often the cause of the grossest impurity. While intelligent knowledge is productive of purity of the highest and noblest type."³⁹² It was not enough that a wife came to

³⁸⁹ Cobbe, "The Little Health of Ladies", 452/53.

³⁹⁰ A Mother, Female Excellence, 47.

³⁹¹ Scovil, Preparation for Motherhood, 50.

³⁹² Drake, What A Young Wife Ought To Know, 33.

the marriage with good health but that she learn "how best to preserve and conserve" her strength. Wood-Allen believed it was imperative that to ensure good health women needed "to understand very fully how, through care of yourself, to prevent disease." A knowledge of the "structure of their own physical frames" and "the laws that govern the reproduction of the species" would lead to better health not only for the mother but for her offspring. Over and over, they stressed the basics of rest, good food, and appropriate exercise. Women had to take proper care of themselves and husband their powers. It was a duty they owed not only to themselves but to their families.

Attitudes towards their female patients' biological milestones provides further evidence of their belief in prevention rather than biological inheritance. Menstruation and childbirth were not diseases but healthy functions.³⁹³ Wood-Allen wrote to young women that "menstruation is a perfectly physiological process and should be without pain." If there was "lassitude and discomfort" or even "actual pain" it was due to something being wrong "in the dress or the diet, or the personal and social habits of the individual" not a woman's fate. Just because she was a woman it did not mean that she "of necessity [must] be a periodical semi-invalid." Perfect womanhood was attainable by taking care of bodily health. Ignorance led to "injudicious conduct", particularly on the part of young

³⁹³ The Ladies Book of Useful Information, 62.

girls and it was the woman physician who could best guide young girls through to the establishment of adult health.

Like their male counterparts, women doctors revered motherhood and few challenged woman's primary role as mother. From the day of her wedding, the young wife "should shape her life to the probable and desired contingency of conception and maternity."³⁹⁴ Motherhood was "the common duty and the common glory of womanhood" and if a woman did not want to become a mother she had no right to become a wife. Scovil viewed motherhood as the "crowning glory of woman."³⁹⁵ Mosher saw marriage and motherhood as "divinely ordered", designed to replenish the earth and provide both the "highest earthly happiness" and the state most conducive to health.³⁹⁶ They devoted their attention and training to improving woman's health during the process of pregnancy and childbirth. Drake maintained that in childbirth women were but "fulfilling a natural law." Scovil argued that childbirth was not a "disease" but a natural process that in a healthy woman should "give rise to no disturbance of the health and to very little discomfort." Beyond a "stricter attention to the laws of nature" no change in a woman's life style should be necessary. The married woman should, however, always bear in mind the possibility of pregnancy and carefully direct and guard her health to this end.

³⁹⁴ Drake, What A Young Wife Ought To Know, 101.

³⁹⁵ Scovil, Preparation for Motherhood, 11.

³⁹⁶ Austin, Woman Her Character Culture and Calling, 236.

Most female physicians expressed abhorrence of abortion and disdain for birth control, as did their male counterparts. Mosher argued that besides the crime committed by abortion a woman's health received a shock "from which it is long in recovering, if it ever does."³⁹⁷ Drake stated that there was "no excuse whatever for the crime of abortion."³⁹⁸ Both Drake and Wood-Allen argued that entering marriage determined to avoid motherhood loosened the character and deadened the conscience to sin. Deliberately avoiding pregnancy put the mother in "moral peril"; it was "a menace to the health and a degradation to the moral nature."³⁹⁹

Women physicians were sympathetic to those women who suffered from repeated pregnancies. Drake believed that often women were driven to abortion "by maternity being thrust upon them when they are already weakened by too frequent child-bearing." Scovil maintained "that some women are laden with burdens beyond their strength to bear, and maternity from its too frequent recurrence becomes an oppressive weight, instead of the blessing it was intended to be." All argued that women should "insist on the better way, namely, ...continence." Women were admonished to help their husbands "to see that the selfish gratification of his desires are hardly worth while when secured at such a cost

³⁹⁷ Ibid, 238.

³⁹⁸ Drake, What A Young Wife Ought To Know, 127.

³⁹⁹ Wood-Allen, What A Young Woman Ought To Know, 250.

to your health and comfort....Occupy separate beds, and help him by every means in your power to attain self-control, and become master of his passions, not their slave."⁴⁰⁰ Only one woman writing on the subject alluded to the possibility that the medical profession could be of some help to women. Scovil suggested that after childbirth, women consult "the best and wisest physician within reach" and follow "his advice implicitly."⁴⁰¹

It was on the subject of the marital regime that women writers seemed to differ most from male physicians. The marital ideal was one "which recognizes that in wedded life all that is lasting in affection, in tender courtesy, in most intimate companionship, in sweetest demonstration, is possible without the physical union."⁴⁰² Male passion, overriding all other considerations, saw but one thing - "the accomplishment of desire." With no thought of the possible results hindering him and with nothing hazarded on his part, "everything on hers", he lost his "better self". His lust overcame "the tender sympathetic love and consideration in which he should always hold her."⁴⁰³ He was admonished (in advice literature to women that he probably never read) to always hold in "tender consideration" her "comfort and wishes." There was a higher form of loving

⁴⁰⁰ Drake, What A Young Wife Ought To Know, 131.

⁴⁰¹ Scovil, Preparation for Motherhood, 13.

⁴⁰² Wood-Allen, What A Young Woman Ought To Know, 260.

⁴⁰³ Drake, What A Young Wife Ought To Know, 86.

than man's sexual nature alone furnished. Women were not entirely blameless if physical passion overcame the husband. "While the husband is the aggressive one, yet she may, by many little carelessnesses, and thoughtless acts, invite attentions which she afterwards repels."⁴⁰⁴ A young wife was to maintain the modesty and innate dignity that characterized her girlhood in order to prevent too frequent relations. The wedding-night scene depicted in advice books for women seems to underscore woman's powerlessness in physical and sexual terms.

Many a happy marriage which otherwise would have been happy, is wrecked in the first days of the honeymoon.

Frightened and timid, and filled with a vague unrest at the mysteries of marriage which await their revelation, you place your destiny in the keeping of your husband, for wedded happiness or wedded woe. Whispers and covert suggestions of the unwise ones about you, as they allude to the life you are coming to, have given you this unrest, and it remains for the husband, by his loving considerateness, to win you away from fearfulness to a sure confidence in himself.

Many otherwise kind men have become possessed with the thought that every right is theirs immediately; and in their inconsiderate, rapacious passion; in the speedy consummation of marriage, at whatever cost of pain or wounded feelings on the part of her whom they have taken to love and honor, they well nigh wreck the after happiness of both in the first days of their united lives....

It will be difficult for her to be persuaded that the animal nature does not control and dominate your love for her, rather than the higher instincts of the soul.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid, 85.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid, 53/54.

Women doctors remained ambivalent about work outside the home. Wood-Allen discouraged the idea. "Motherhood is a profession most exacting in its demands ... and the strength, thought, courage, and patience of the wife are fully occupied in caring for the needs of the family."⁴⁰⁶ Others suggested interests outside the home but remained unclear as to whether they were recommending paid or voluntary work. "All the wife can do in outside work, while not neglecting the higher duties of home and heart, will only freshen and brighten her for companionship; and give her glimpses, yes, extended views, of the world and its doings, that will serve to broaden her horizon, and bring her in closer-touch with her husband in his wrestlings with the affairs of life."⁴⁰⁷ Both Power Cobbe and Doctor Augusta Stowe-Gullen were bolder in suggesting outside interests, offering alternatives to the more somatic definitions of woman's nature. Power Cobbe spoke of the need of "something to live for, something which she may look to accomplish for herself or others in God's world of work."⁴⁰⁸ Stowe-Gullen condemned those who argued against careers and professional education for women while ignoring the "unceasing toil and struggle, both physical and mental" of housewives,

⁴⁰⁶ Dr. Wood-Allen, Marriage, Its Duties and Privileges as quoted in Regina Morantz-Sanchez, Sympathy and Science: Women Physicians in American Medicine (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 218.

⁴⁰⁷ Drake, What A Young Wife Ought To Know, 71.

⁴⁰⁸ Cobbe, "The Little Health of Ladies", 453.

particularly farm wives.⁴⁰⁹

The image of woman created by medical science was wholly consistent with the conventional role society had allotted to her. The maternal instinct, connected to her reproductive capacity, made her by nature more gentle, affectionate, and nurturant. With a weaker body subject to the perilous rhythms of menstruation and childbirth, she was physically dependent on the stronger male. Therefore, due both to her physiology and her nature, her interests lay within the home. It was nature not social convention that had decreed this domestic role. Far from reinforcing traditional gender norms, the medical profession actively campaigned to instill new ideas and practices concerning gender and sexual morality. Medicine created a new location for the regulation of gender in Canadian society.

But this model did more than regulate gender relations. It ensured the stability of the home and therefore society. In a chaotic and ever-changing world, these stable social divisions appeared rooted in an unchanging and absolute physiological law, backed by the power of medical and scientific fact. Placing sexual difference as the decisive difference between men and women remained, however, problematic. By retaining the already ambiguous religious categories of inherent moral differences between man and woman, the scientific model was fraught with contradictions.

⁴⁰⁹ Austin, Woman Her Character Culture and Calling, 123.

This necessitated further ideological work as women attempted to enlarge their moral role through demands for better educational preparation.

Chapter V

TO TRAIN IN A SUITABLE MANNER:

Education and Gender

Nineteenth-century educational reform in Upper Canada is a well-researched area in Canadian history. Early liberal views posited a growing equality of educational opportunity and suggested that education reform in the nineteenth century had succeeded in giving equal advantage to all young Canadians.⁴¹⁰ More recent interpretations have based their explanations of educational reform on class relations. Susan Houston and Alison Prentice have shown how nineteenth century schools were used to inculcate proper social and moral values in their pupils.⁴¹¹ Another historiographic school sets educational reform within the context of broader cultural changes in nineteenth century society.⁴¹² Bruce

⁴¹⁰ See discussion in Neil Sutherland, "Introduction: Towards a History of English-Canadian Youngsters" Education and Social Change: Themes from Ontario's Past, M. Katz and P. Mattingly, eds. (New York: New York University Press, 1975), xvii.

⁴¹¹ Susan Houston and Alison Prentice, Schooling and Scholars in Nineteenth-Century Ontario (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), A. Prentice and S. Houston, Family, School and Society in Nineteenth Century Canada (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975). See also Alison Prentice, The School Promoters: Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977) for a class analysis.

⁴¹² see J. Donald Wilson, ed., An Imperfect Past: Education and

Curtis explores the increasing bureaucratic control of schooling in his Building the Educational State. Curtis's work,⁴¹³ and others such as An Imperfect Past, have made us aware that educational reform can no longer be viewed as increasing equitable opportunities for nineteenth century Canadians. "Radical" revisionists go so far as to suggest that education reform ensured "the old divisions of power and resources" permitted already advantaged individuals "to use for their own benefit a system that the rhetoric says was designed for all."⁴¹⁴ Three British works have alerted us to the fact that a progressive framework that sees a widening of educational opportunities for nineteenth century women is also no longer adequate.⁴¹⁵

Gender divisions were nurtured in a school system where students were educated for their roles in life. For woman this meant a suitable education for her role as wife and mother. Gender influenced not only the educational experience of female students but the very structure and organization of education. This led women to define

Society in Canadian History (Vancouver:University of British Columbia Press,1984).

⁴¹³ Bruce Curtis, Building the Educational State:Canada West,1836-1871 (London,Ontario:Althouse,1988)

⁴¹⁴ Sutherland,"Towards a History of English-Canadian Youngsters",xviii.

⁴¹⁵ Joan N.Burstyn, Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood (London:Croom Helm,1980),Carol Dyhouse, Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England (London:Routledge and Kegan Paul,1981) and Felicity Hunt,ed., Lessons for Life:The Schooling of Girls and Women,1850-1950 (Oxford:Basil Blackwell,1987).

themselves in terms of their gender and see it as the essential determinant of their lives. Nineteenth century education institutionalized gender difference by schooling men and women into particular roles. The almost century-long debates concerning women's education contained a persistent undercurrent of concern with the impact education would have not only on proper notions of what constituted female nature but on the system of gender relations that were considered 'natural'. From the ongoing debates it is possible to identify not only how middle class Canadians thought women should be educated but also what woman should be and what actually constituted her proper relationship to both men and society.

Early in the century, female education was most often domestic and private. In those ladies' academies that provided education for a fee, proprietresses went to great lengths to dispel any hint of "public" schooling. Numerous small schools operated in the early years, with at least fifty-eight in existence in Toronto alone between 1815 and 1846, and another forty-eight in Kingston.⁴¹⁶ This type of private schooling was to give young ladies social not intellectual skills. Many girls attended for only a brief period of time in order to acquire a modicum of social grace. There was little in the way of systematic training

⁴¹⁶ Kate Rousmaniere, "To Prepare the Ideal Woman: Private Denominational Girls' Schooling in Late Nineteenth Century Ontario", MA Thesis, University of Toronto (1984), 38.

and, surprisingly, usually no instruction in the female skills necessary for keeping house or mothering children. An early circular, circa 1818, for Mrs. Hill's School for Young Ladies provides an example of the type of education that could be expected;

from the attention she will pay to the improvement, moral and comfort of her pupils to merit the approbation of the parents, who will entrust their children to her care. ... She will teach reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar and geography, with plain and fancy needlework. Embroidery will also be at the option of the parents.⁴¹⁷

An early boarding and day school for the young ladies of Ottawa, run by the widowed Mrs. Sinclair and her daughter, formerly of the Church of England Ladies School, offered English, French, German, Drawing, Painting, Piano, Singing, Plain Sewing and Lessons in Calisthenics and Dancing for six dollars per term of ten weeks or sixty dollars for those boarding.⁴¹⁸

Early in the century, a few seminaries included both sexes within their institutions. In 1829, Stanstead Seminary welcomed "young ladies" as well as "young gentlemen" as did Grantham Academy of St. Catharines. The Quaker West Lake Seminary, later Pickering College, in Newmarket, Ontario also included young women, as befitted their belief in the equality of the sexes. Upper Canada

⁴¹⁷ Ibid, 39.

⁴¹⁸ Boarding and Day School for Young Ladies and children conducted by Mrs. S. Sinclair (widow of the late Samuel Sinclair of Montreal), Ottawa, 18__.

Academy, founded in 1832, was originally intended for both sexes. However, in 1841 a new charter established this academy as Victoria College and as an institution for young men.⁴¹⁹ It was Egerton Ryerson, upon becoming principal of the new college, who disbanded the Female Department of the Academy. However, when the Upper Canada Academy closed its doors to females it was possible to refer young girls to twelve other comparable ladies' academies; three in Cobourg, five in Toronto, and one each in Niagara, Kingston, Hamilton, and Cornwall.

It is important to keep in mind that even though these institutions admitted young ladies they were not co-educational. Rather the education was co-ordinate, with both curriculum and space differentiated on the basis of sex. The prospectus of the Upper Canada Academy stated that the male and female students would not be allowed to associate freely and that the female department was perfectly distinct in its instruction. "The front of the edifice is appropriated as a place of exercise for the females - the rear, and playground, for the males. And more effectually to preclude all intercommunication between the sexes, their corresponding, conversing, or in any way, associating together, save in the case of brothers and sisters (and that by permission of the Principal or Preceptress) is expressly interdicted."⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁹ Methodist Magazine and Review, (Jan to June, 1879), 399.

⁴²⁰ Marion Royce, "Methodism and the Education of Women in

The ideal young lady produced by such schooling would be dependent and moral; domesticated with a veneer of culture. The content of the education at these academies fitted their pupils for a private life within the confines of the family home. Their aim was not a more public role in the world of work nor was it meant to prepare them for housekeeping chores. The well-turned out product of a private venture school was to shine in society and attract a husband. The proper focus of their female education was on the "accomplishments"; a little music, a smattering of modern languages, some painting. As well, some elementary education was offered but often what was most important was the social and moral training that occurred within the confines of the school.

Charles Duncombe, author of the 1835 Duncombe Report on education, argued that this type of women's education had to be reconstructed. Duncombe, the first Upper Canada school reformer to consider female education, "deplored the ephemeral character of most female schooling."⁴²¹ He argued that times had changed and rather than the "fainting, weeping, vapid, pretty plaything once the model of female loveliness" it was "those qualities of the head and heart that best qualify a woman for her duties" that were now "demanded and admired."⁴²² Women's education should become

Nineteenth Century Ontario", Atlantis,
3,2(Spring,1978)131-43,135.

⁴²¹ Prentice, The School Promoters, 109.

more practical, directed to fit woman for her important domestic roles. It should also be based on what Duncombe perceived to be her natural characteristics; "her warm sympathies, her lively imagination, her ready invention, her quick perceptions" as well as inculcate the more "foreign habits" of "patient attention, calm judgement, steady efficiency, and habitual self-control."⁴²³ Reforms in education were necessary to prepare woman for her most important duty as the educator of her children. Other school reformers, such as Ryerson and George Paxton Young, remained more ambivalent about the education of young ladies. Alison Prentice has suggested that Ryerson remained reluctant "to admit women as a class to the status that went with education."⁴²⁴

Ryerson maintained that public schooling "should be in harmony with the views and feelings of the great body of the people, especially of the better educated classes."⁴²⁵ By serving the political, economic, and social needs of the state, educational reform would provide the middle class with a strategy for creating the proper society. By the late 1840s, the middle class view of schools as moral agencies and instruments for forging a Canadian identity had

⁴²² as quoted in Curtis, Building the Educational State, 31.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Prentice, The School Promoters, 109.

⁴²⁵ Susan Houston, "Politics, Schools and Social Change in Upper Canada" in Katz and Mattingly, Education and Social Change, 46.

gained ascendancy.⁴²⁶ Not only would boys and girls be schooled into particular roles, based on gender, they would be schooled in those societal values and cultural mores that would shape the rest of their lives.

For the most part, common schooling for boys and girls elicited little public debate. But from the 1840s the type of "accomplishment" education available in ladies' academies came under increasing criticism, particularly from the religious press. Duncombe had argued that a more systematic course of education should be pursued in ladies' colleges "to correspond with what is done in colleges for young gentlemen." He felt these colleges would not be able to eradicate all "stupidity and empiricism" but they would "elevate and purify."⁴²⁷ A small percentage of these ladies' schools began to develop a more intellectually ambitious curriculum, one that offered a higher education than that available in the common schools. The range and level of instruction at Upper Canada Academy included all the constituent parts of a superior English education, and French, Drawing, and Embroidery. The "English" education included grammar, geography, arithmetic, astronomy, and when required, Belles Lettres and Natural Philosophy. The Cobourg Star approvingly commented in 1838 "that whilst the

⁴²⁶ See Houston, "Politics, Schools and Social Change in Upper Canada" and R.S. Gidney, "Elementary Education in Upper Canada: A Reassessment in Katz and Mattingly, Education and Social Change.

⁴²⁷ Prentice, The School Promoters, 109.

essential branches of education are carefully taught, the importance of appropriate female accomplishments is not overlooked."⁴²⁸ The Burlington Ladies' Academy catalogue for 1847 divided its course of instruction into the useful and ornamental.⁴²⁹ The Cobourg Ladies' Academy offered an education for young women that more closely approximated other ladies' schools. Its circular for 1847 offered young ladies "all the branches of education necessary to fit them for a useful and elegant life."

An 1846 essay on female education suggested that the existing system of female education was fitting women "to be the satellites of men rather than their companions" and was not preparing them to "discharge the duties of life."

A young lady ... is sent at a suitable age to a boarding school. There she learns those things called accomplishments, first, whose very name seems to indicate that they should be taught last, while the improvement of the mind, the culture of the understanding, and the acquisition of real knowledge, which form the only true basis of a substantial education, are treated as if they were of secondary importance, and in many cases are altogether neglected.

Communicate as much knowledge as makes woman vain of herself... to regard all real thinking as too masculine for the delicacy of the female mind - as destructive of that elegance which is the only and appropriate adornment of the sex... . Substitute recklessness for genius - pertness and effrontery for talent and tact - selfishness for fixedness of purpose - stupidity for sterling independence of character. ... She lives to be

⁴²⁸ Royce, "Methodism and the Education of Women in Nineteenth Century Ontario", 137.

⁴²⁹ Burlington Ladies Academy Catalogue of the Officers and Students, Hamilton, 1847.

admired, not useful.⁴³⁰

Increasingly, clergymen, with their religious ideals of duty and service, voiced concern about the lack of educational provisions for girls. In an 1855 article in the Christian Guardian parents were asked how much longer the education of their daughters could be neglected. "In too many instances are daughters and sisters passing their equally precious years at home amid neverending toils in the nursery, the kitchen, and dairy - their mental faculties undeveloped and undisciplined; their opportunities for study few and imperfect." The article went on to point out the disadvantages of such neglect; it did not preserve "an equilibrium" in the family between sons possessed of "cultivated minds" and their "less-favoured" sisters. Their brothers and presumably other males looking for wives could not but help to prefer the "society of ladies better informed."⁴³¹

The strongest rationale for educating women lay in its social utility. The Christian Guardian condemned the "mistaken" education that created "a number of idle, useless young women" who paraded the streets expecting to pick up a husband who would indulgently "support them in idleness."⁴³²

⁴³⁰ "Essays on the Future Destiny of Nova Scotia - improvement of female education in Nova Scotia and on peace." Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1846.

⁴³¹ "How Long Shall the Education of the Daughters of Canada Be Neglected?", Christian Guardian, (Oct 31, 1855).

⁴³² "Young Ladies, Read!", Christian Guardian, (Jan 11, 1860).

An 1852 article emphasized the importance of education in order that a woman would be "fit for the discharge of the duties of her appropriate sphere of action, in the manner best calculated to secure the highest influence for good."⁴³³ The Picton Gazette believed that it was "universally admitted ... that the female mind cannot be neglected and left uncultivated without a serious injury to society at large." What was needed, they went on to point out, was an education in "that varied useful knowledge which would enable them to discharge duties, and exercise the influence of true woman."⁴³⁴ For Robert Sedgewick, a woman "enlightened by education and elevated and purified by Piety" would make "herself felt for good through every ramification of the body-social."⁴³⁵

Many clergymen became actively involved in the establishment of academies for young women. The Wesleyan minister, Reverend Daniel McMullen, established the Pictou Ladies' Academy in 1847. Reverend Samuel Rose established Dundas Ladies' College in 1857.⁴³⁶ Professor Reverend D.C. VanNorman, formerly of Victoria University and his wife, who had previously run a ladies' seminary, opened the Cobourg Ladies' Seminary in 1845. VanNorman urged the importance of

⁴³³ "Female Education," Christian Guardian, (Oct 13, 1852).

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Sedgewick, "The Proper Sphere and Influence of Woman in Christian Society", 3.

⁴³⁶ Methodist Magazine and Review, (1879), 399.

female education for it had "a more important bearing upon the improvement and well-being of society than that of the other sex; and therefore young ladies should enjoy the facilities for acquiring an intellectual and moral education; in some degree proportional to those afforded young gentlemen."⁴³⁷ A year later, the school was removed to Burlington and renamed the Burlington Ladies' Academy.

Alongside the criticisms of education for young ladies and part of the public debate on the ideal female education was the issue of young women attending grammar schools. The joint training that young boys and girls received at the common school level could not continue into adolescence. Until a girl reached puberty and embarked on her special reproductive functions it was not necessary to provide separate education. With puberty came not only sexual but educational differentiation. The attempts to improve grammar schools in the 1860s led to a debate on the appropriateness of classical subject matter for girls and whether they were even capable of learning such "masculine" knowledge.

Girls already attended some grammar schools but many male educators disapproved of their presence and they were admitted with the understanding that they would limit their work to English studies. In 1865, eighty-five of the one

⁴³⁷ Carolyn Gossage, A Question of Privilege: Canada's Independent Schools (Toronto: Peter Martine Assocs Ltd, 1977), 63.

hundred and two Ontario grammar schools admitted girls. At this time Egerton Ryerson, Chief Superintendent of Education, proposed that the grammar schools become free. But it was clear, at least to Ryerson, that free tuition would be for farmer's sons and young men, not women. Girls were to be encouraged to study French instead of the Classics and "they were not to be returned, or recognized as Pupils pursuing either of the prescribed Programmes of Studies" at the government-funded schools.⁴³⁸ Education department officials announced that, by 1867, girls studying Classics would count for only one-half as much as boys in the provincial grants system. They further proposed that, by 1868, girls would be completely disqualified for grant purposes in the grammar schools. By then, however the social benefits of a well-educated daughter had been recognized by countless middle class parents. In larger centers, such as Toronto, Kingston, and Bytown (Ottawa) private schools could still provide an affordable educational alternative. In smaller Ontario towns and villages the grammar school provided the only place to meet their needs.

That same year a draft bill proposed that the public school replace the common school and high schools and collegiate institutes replace the old grammar school system. In the ideal, the high school system was to be sex-segregated. Yet, at least in Toronto, common-school trustees refused to allocate funds to establish girls' high

⁴³⁸ Houston and Prentice, Schooling and Scholars, 320.

schools. The general opinion seems to have been that secondary education for girls was a frill, with the exception of normal school training. The lack of government support for female education at the secondary level led the Hamilton Spectator to suggest government financial support for Ladies' Academies; "we hope that the government, which provides amply for the education of youth of the rougher sex, will take into consideration the propriety of assisting to train in a suitable manner, those who contribute so much to the happiness, virtue and welfare of mankind."⁴³⁹ However, for those young woman whose families could not afford the alternative of a religiously-affiliated ladies' college, secondary level co-education would provide the only alternative. This would lead to a new round in the debate on female education. What co-education implied was both the assimilation of the education of girls to that of boys and the conducting of that education together; "thus compelling the girls not only to run the same race with the boys, but to run it in equal lengths."⁴⁴⁰

It was against this mode of identical co-education that Dr. Edward Clarke's Sex in Education or, a Fair Chance for the girls, published in 1873, was directed. Clarke outlined "several strong physiological reasons" for his urgent

⁴³⁹ as quoted in Ian E. Davey, "Trends in Female School Attendance on Ontario during the 1850s and 1860s", Social History, 16(Nov, 1975) 238-54, 249.

⁴⁴⁰ Fidelis, "Higher Education for Women", Canadian Monthly, 7(1875) 144-57, 145.

warnings against this type of education. A woman's physical system was "more delicately organized and less vigorous ... with a brain some five or six ounces lighter than that of man." This system could not withstand the same mental or physical strain. Woman had a "special organization" that marked her out for a "special career". The overworking of the brain at the very time when a woman required all her "vital force" to properly mature led to "injurious effects" that would become apparent when the more "serious work of life" began. In other words, serious study would prevent woman's proper reproductive development and prevent her from properly fulfilling her future role as wife and mother. Finally, the "law of female force and work" was sufficiently different to prevent a young woman from devoting the same number of hours daily to study and required "a remission of study and work at regular intervals."⁴⁴¹

Dr. Clarke's book posed a serious threat, not only to co-education, but to the promotion of higher education for women. Unfortunately, attempts to refute Clarke's argument were limited by a belief in the same view of woman's special nature. Fidelis argued, on the basis of the American college experience, that "so far as physical considerations are concerned, co-education has stood its ground" as had the intellectual and moral results of co-education.⁴⁴² Yet in 1875, higher female education in Canada was still based

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Ibid, 147.

entirely on the principle of separate education. The more immediate concern was therefore the issue of identical education. The general principle seemed to be that educators needed to recognize sex in education and provide such an education that would strengthen woman's weak or deficient mental characteristics while restraining those characteristics that were natural. Whether the female intellect was essentially inferior to man's or the difference was merely in kind, no one disputed the assertion of Principal Grant of Queen's College that there undoubtedly were "mental characteristics corresponding to the physical differences between the sexes."⁴⁴³ According to Fidelis, woman's mental characteristics were "much less accurate and thorough going", she had "less power of concentration and sustained thought", her "reflective and reasoning powers" were weaker than man's and her judgement was weaker and more likely to "be swayed by strong prejudices." Unfortunately, the present system of female education was, according to Fidelis, exactly adapted to increase these points of difference.

Women required a liberal "culture" that would strengthen and discipline the female mind so they might become "thoughtful, high-toned, earnest, intelligently-helpful women, crowned with that which high authority has declared to be woman's truest adornment, 'a meek and quiet spirit'

⁴⁴³ Principal Grant, "Education and Co-Education", Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly, 4(1880)624-27,624.

... to beautify with womanly and Christian graces, refinement, and culture, many a future Canadian home."⁴⁴⁴ Grant argued that due to the "enormous power" woman had as wives and mothers they should be educated "so that it may be used to the best advantage."⁴⁴⁵ An editorial in the Canadian Monthly agreed, arguing that for woman to be a "helpmeet" for man she needed a "trained reason."⁴⁴⁶ The editorial went on to question why the government and college authorities had yet to recognize the claims of young women "to the highest culture of which they are capable." It is important to stress that this higher education was to take place in "ladies' seminaries". As Grant pointed out in his address to the Montreal Ladies Educational Association, there would be no "ugly rush" of ladies seeking higher education. Therefore the Ladies' Colleges should accommodate their education to the "average condition" and supply "those branches and accomplishments that the majority demand."⁴⁴⁷

The value of a well-instructed mother and the prominence given the moral influence of women over men, laid the foundation for the educational ethos of the newly-created ladies' colleges. The Wesleyan Female College was established in Hamilton in 1863. The Christian Guardian assured parents who were sending their daughters to the

⁴⁴⁴ Fidelis, "Higher Education for Women", 157.

⁴⁴⁵ Grant, "Education and Co-Education", 512.

⁴⁴⁶ Canadian Monthly, 12(1877)311-13, 311.

⁴⁴⁷ Grant, "Education and Co-Education", 517.

Wesleyan Female College that "a healthy moral control and guardianship are exercised over the students - true and elevating views of life are constantly held up before the young ladies."⁴⁴⁸ The Ontario Ladies College, formerly Whitby Ladies College, was opened in 1874 under the supervision and patronage of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference. Alma College was formerly opened in 1881 in St. Thomas under the auspices of the Methodists and Reverend Austin. The 'ladies' department of Albert College, established in 1866 out of the Belleville Seminary, became officially known as Alexandra College. Near the end of the century, St. Hilda's College was opened in Toronto (in affiliation with Trinity University). Woodstock College, originally opened in 1857 as a co-educational college, renamed its ladies' department Moulton Ladies' College in 1888. By the end of the century it had moved to Bloor Street and affiliated with McMaster.

Wesleyan College officials believed a sound education was better than riches for it not only refined and elevated it increased the powers for usefulness in the future. Courses offered were thorough and practical, "such as will qualify young ladies for a more efficient discharge of the duties of life."⁴⁴⁹ The Ontario Ladies College offered a "thoroughly sound practical education which would provide instruction in

⁴⁴⁸ "The Opening of Hamilton Wesleyan Female College", Christian Guardian, (Aug 11, 1869).

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

refined manners, domestic habits and religious principles as well as what are considered the higher branches and accomplishments."⁴⁵⁰ Dr. Ryerson spoke at the opening of 1877 and touched briefly on the importance of female education: "it was of vital necessity that the mothers of Canada be educated so their sons would not remain ignorant." He also reiterated his belief that colleges for ladies and gentlemen should remain separate.

Another attempt at reforming higher education was established in 1868 when the Toronto Ladies Educational Association was formed. A similar Montreal association was established two years later. The purpose of both associations was to educate young women through a series of regular lectures in order to bring them up to the standard of a college degree. A second aim was to establish a college for ladies in connection with the University. The 1875 Toronto Ladies' Educational Association Report suggested that the principal value of the lectures lay not in the instruction but in "the education of a taste for the higher walks of learning. The training and discipline of the intellect in accurate habits of thought and profitable methods of study are the first steps in the way of progress."⁴⁵¹ Attendance at the series of lectures appears to have been large, 167 Montreal women attended the first

⁴⁵⁰ History of Ontario Ladies College, 15.

⁴⁵¹ "Report of the Toronto Ladies Educational Association", Canadian Monthly, 8(1875),262.

year, although few young women proceeded to take the certificate of standing given to those successful in examinations. Lectures included discussions of French and English Literature, Chemical and Physical Geology, Minerology, and English History.⁴⁵² The certificates, however, merely prepared the way for an academic degree. Not until 1883 did Bishop's College award an 'Associate in Arts' and a 'Senior Associate' to those women successful in exams. This still did not allow admission to University Courses. Despite the stress on the academic nature of the lectures, by 1878 courses were being offered in Domestic Economy, "which properly lies at the root of the highest life of every true woman."⁴⁵³ These lectures on cookery, household surgery, domestic medicine, nursing, and hygiene were far more well attended than the more academic lectures.

McGill Professor J. Clark Murray believed that the Educational Association was an unsatisfactory, because only partial, response to the need for higher education for women. In his estimation, the problem would not be solved "until the stronger sex abandon the selfishness with which they have ungallantly persisted in jostling their sisters out of all the avenues which lead into the Temple of Knowledge."⁴⁵⁴ Agnes Machar (Fidelis) agreed that the

⁴⁵² "The Montreal Ladies Educational Association, 1871-1885", McGill Journal of Education, 6(Spring, 1971)78-83, 79.

⁴⁵³ Margaret Gillett, We Walked Very Warily: A History of Women at McGill (Montreal: Eden Press, 1981), 59.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid, 61.

lectures would "have to be conducted on a more systematically organized plan ... before they can be of the degree of use which is desirable."⁴⁵⁵ The Ladies Educational Associations were "a laudable attempt to do something, but ... the system was too fitful and unalluring ... to be of permanent service - a kind of intellectual cul de sac leading nowhither."⁴⁵⁶ Yet Principal Grant felt that the aims of the two Associations were exactly suited to the "present condition of popular sentiment" with regard to education for young women,⁴⁵⁷ an attitude that was probably much more common than Murray's or Machar's among the general public.

In 1876 The University of Toronto admitted two ladies as matriculants, but University College was still closed to them. As an editorial in the Canadian Monthly of 1877 pointed out; "To refuse to give instruction where alone it can be imparted throughly and effectively, is equivalent to forbidding it altogether."⁴⁵⁸ The next year the University Senate proposed a scheme for the examination of women. Young women wishing to sit for local examinations had to secure voluntary support. As the same article explained; "A young woman, not over well provided with this world's goods, must either set about stirring up five ladies to take some

⁴⁵⁵ Fidelis, "Higher Education for Women", 156.

⁴⁵⁶ Canadian Monthly, 12(1877), 312.

⁴⁵⁷ Grant, "Education and Co-Education", 509.

⁴⁵⁸ Canadian Monthly, 12(1877), 312.

interest in her aspirations, and they must be willing to advertise for five more candidates, guarantee their fees, and provide them with boarding-houses, or she must resign herself all hope of being recognized by the Senate." Moreover, the most important obstacle to education, the actual teaching of the required subjects, had not been dealt with. In effect, "the machinery for examination is afforded without the machinery for thorough instruction."⁴⁵⁹ What was required was to open the College to lady students in the same way that Albert College in Belleville was open to Alexandra College students. Queen's College decided in 1878 to admit women; the first Ontario University to do so. The numbers of women attending, however, remained small and university life retained its male culture. From 1895 to 1900, of the 1006 students at Queen's, only 190 were women. All of these female students were enrolled in the arts faculty.⁴⁶⁰ By 1890, women comprised twelve percent of all Canadian college students. Of the 581 women enrolled, 538 were in Arts. Only twenty-four women had been granted degrees. A high proportion of women were non-degree students, attending for a year and not proceeding to graduation.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid, 313.

⁴⁶⁰ Lynne Marks and Chad Gaffield, "Women at Queen's University, 1895-1905: A 'Little Sphere All Their Own'", Ontario History, 78,4(Dec,1986)331-349,334.

⁴⁶¹ At Dalhousie the proportion of non-graduates to graduates was three to one. See Judith Fingard, "College, Career, and Community: Dalhousie Coeds, 1881-1921" in Youth, University and Canadian

Even this gradual admission of women to the universities was often met with hostility. As Lucy Maud Montgomery wrote when Trinity College admitted women in 1885; "One professor threatened to resign, the calendar advised women that their attendance at lectures was not required, and women students were asked to sit separately on chairs apart from the rest of the class."⁴⁶² University education could have no possible utility for a woman whose only career was that of wife and mother. One of the purposes of education was to provide a professional training - only men required this education. Woman's work was within the home and she required an education that would help her to perform this role more effectively.

Furthermore, it was maintained that a university education would undermine a woman's desire to marry and remain within a domestic setting. An educated woman would reject any man less educated than herself. Elizabeth Smith, who later became a doctor, wrote in her diary in 1880 of her encounter with "a little Methodist chap in the Divinity third year" who was one of the many who opposed female education on the grounds that an equally educated woman "will not look up to male men." Smith replied; "as if any such woman would be likely to marry a pigmy. Such a woman well educated ect [sic] would never need be asked to look up

Society:Essays in the Social History of Higher Education, P.Axelrod and J.Reid,eds.
(Montreal:McGill-Queen's Press,1989),26.

⁴⁶² Montgomery,"Dalhousie University,1896",297.

to her husband. She would understand."⁴⁶³

There were many observers, however, who maintained that a woman's chance of attracting a husband, and obtaining her major goal in life - marriage - would not be enhanced by her becoming a "blue-stocking" and she would be ill-prepared for marriage and motherhood. "A 'blue-stocking' makes as a rule, a wretched wife; it would be far better for the health of her husband, of herself, and her family, if instead of cultivating Latin and Greek, she would cultivate her household duties."⁴⁶⁴ Supporters of university education for women, such as Fidelis (Agnes Maule Machar), attempted to repudiate conservative claims that university education and marriage were incompatible.

[I]t has yet to be proved that the highest development of which any woman's nature is capable can possibly do anything to unfit her for fulfilling any duty of married life, should that be her lot. A distorted and one-sided development might well do so. ... But the more truly cultivated a woman is - according to the powers and capacities God has given her - the more truly fitted she will be for any work or duty to which He calls her. Neither is there any greater incompatibility between the 'liberal arts' and 'falling in love'. ... thorough devotion to any study or serious pursuit ... will never so alter a woman's nature as to render her proof against answering with her whole heart when the right voice calls. ... [T]he woman whose mental powers have been most fully disciplined, and who has been accustomed to habits of accuracy and of economy of time, will be not only a more intelligent companion, but a more efficient and prudent

⁴⁶³ Veronica Strong-Boag, ed., Elizabeth Smith, A Woman with a Purpose: the diaries of Elizabeth Smith, 1872-1884 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 171.

⁴⁶⁴ Chavasse, Advice to a Wife on the Management of Her Own Health, 75.

housewife than she who has drifted through life in aimless trifling, with morsels of gossip as the only food for her mental vacuity, and 'parties' as her most absorbing interest.⁴⁶⁵

It was also suggested that a well-educated young woman's marriage would be enhanced because the partnership would be based on love and not need. She would also, due to her education, make a worthier choice of marital partners. "No woman is ever likely to refuse the marriage to which her heart inclines through over anxiety to engage in a professional career; though she may be spared the temptation to come to the altar with a lie on her lips because she shrinks from the struggle of self-maintenance, for which she is so ill-equipped."⁴⁶⁶ Reverend John Clark Murray firmly believed that marriage would be improved when both men and women were "equally free to choose whether they shall marry or not."⁴⁶⁷

By the late 1880s there was a growing acceptance that a few women might desire access to higher education. This was not an acceptance of educating women for an independent life but the reiteration of its social utility. Murray stated that what advocates of woman's education were demanding was

⁴⁶⁵ Fidelis, "A Few Words on University Co-Education", Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly, 8(1882)313-319,315/16.

⁴⁶⁶ "Newfangle and Its Opinions" by a Non-Resident of the Same, Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly, 3(1879)100-102,102.

⁴⁶⁷ Reverend John Clark Murray, "The Higher Education of Woman".An Address Delivered at the Opening of Queen's College,Kingston,1871.

a recognition "not only of woman's rights, but perhaps more truly of her duties" to her husband, her children, and her household. An intellectually capable wife was a better companion for her husband and a better influence on her children. "If they marry, their husbands find in their wives an increased capacity for assistance and sympathy; their children can look up to their mothers for the clear-cut judgement and the wisest guidance."⁴⁶⁸ Furthermore, the moral future of the country depended more on daughters than on sons. Middle class rhetoric suggested that it was from his mother that a man received his first moral impulses and directions and from his wife that he received moral guidance in his maturer years. "Who can doubt that if our Canadian young women, as a class, should become truly cultivated, earnest, high-toned, full of the noble ambition to devote life to noble work to noble ends, a very few years would strikingly demonstrate their influence in raising our young men, as a class, to a very much higher plane than that which they at present occupy?"⁴⁶⁹

Despite the arguments of supporters that university educated women would make better wives and mothers, conservatives believed that university co-education threatened to realign gender roles. Arguments against female university attendance were often mixed with objections to the co-education of young men and women. Even

⁴⁶⁸ Montgomery, "Dalhousie College, 1896", 148.

⁴⁶⁹ Fidelis, "Higher Education for Women", 145.

those who accepted and supported women's access to universities, and therefore the desirability of identical education, often disagreed over the appropriate relationship between male and female students and the appropriateness of identical education.

Intellectual considerations constituted the first area of disagreement in the debate over the university education of women. President Eliot of Harvard University contended "that sex deeply penetrates the mind" and this necessitated a separate course of study for females.⁴⁷⁰ As late as 1892, the Canadian Lancet was publishing the opinions of Sir James Chricton-Brown, an English doctor. Chricton-Brown, arguing that men's brains were both heavier and had a greater specific gravity, maintained that the male's blood was directed to those sections of the brain that dealt with "volition, cognition, and ideo-motor processes."⁴⁷¹ The female blood supply, meanwhile, supplied those portions of the brain that dealt with "sensory functions." The Canadian Lancet stated the implications of these "scientific" facts for the university education of women. "Sir James said he regarded [female admission] as a retrograde and mischievous step, for what was decided amongst the prehistoric protozoa cannot be annulled by Act of Parliament." Chricton-Brown depicted university graduates as women with "stooping gait and withered appearance, shrunk shanks, and spectacles on

⁴⁷⁰ "Current Events", The Canadian Monthly, 4(1873),70.

⁴⁷¹ As quoted in Backhouse, Petticoats and Prejudices, 298.

nose."

Supporters countered that a theory of intellectual inferiority based on the alleged smaller volume and lighter weight of the female brain ignored the fact that this was relative to the size and weight of the female body. Furthermore, promoters of female education insisted that they had "no desire to ignore the differences that God made ... or deny that woman's mental characteristics are so differentiated from those of man, as to make her his complement, and not his duplicate."⁴⁷² They further suggested that if woman was "weak and poorly able to cope with the world" why make her weaker still by denying her the opportunity of "putting forth to the utmost such powers as she has."⁴⁷³ Conservatives then turned to the testimony of physiologists, "including some female physicians", to prove that women were not capable of the same intellectual strain as men. In response to the suggestion that a university-educated woman would make a better wife, detractors insisted that there would be no "new domestic paradise" created by teaching women classics and maths. In fact, women, rather than being better companions for their husbands, might become "exact intellectual counterparts" and therefore the rivals not the companions of man.

⁴⁷² Fidelis, "Higher Education for Women", 144.

⁴⁷³ M., "The Woman Question", Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly, 11(1879)568-579, 574.

According to a Canadian Monthly editorial, Canadian ladies were pursuing the correct path by attempting to create permanent separate institutions for the higher education of women. A Mr. Buchan of the Ontario Teacher's Association predicted that "the college that instructs the sexes together must finally have its standards relatively lowered."⁴⁷⁴ Critics also suggested that there was less value in educating women the higher they went in the process because women lacked creativity and originality; "... the faculty of invention or discovery ... seems to have no existence whatever. ... the amount of mental power and activity of our women is immensely exceeded by that of our men."⁴⁷⁵

Another contentious issue in the higher education debate was the danger of immorality. The mixing of young men and women at universities, away from parental supervision, was fraught with moral danger.⁴⁷⁶ The Christian Guardian suggested that this objection to co-education was "based solely on man's barbarism."⁴⁷⁷ While suggesting that both men and women should remain under family influence while attending university and not in the "pernicious" dormitory system, it contended moral objections were a chimera. "The

⁴⁷⁴ Fidelis, "Higher Education for Women", 147.

⁴⁷⁵ A Woman of Newfangle, "Some Newfangle Notions", Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly, 3(1879)80-92, 87.

⁴⁷⁶ "Current Events", The Canadian Monthly, 4(1873), 70.

⁴⁷⁷ "Mixed Education", Christian Guardian, (April 25, 1877).

testimony is uniform that young men are far more correct in their deportment than in colleges where young women are not found, and they are incited to a more faithful application to their studies, while young women feel the importance and happy influence of their position as a constant support of their feminine dignity."⁴⁷⁸ Observers of the American co-education experiment affirmed "that young men are never so animated to high endeavour, never so put upon their manliness, as when in the presence of women; and equally, that women are never so inspired by womanly sentiment or so raised to noble efforts, as by the presence of true gentlemen."⁴⁷⁹ Supporters of co-education maintained that the discipline of hard study and the occupation provided by higher education prevented "premature affaires de coeur" and the "precocious flirtations" with which young Canadian women seemed preoccupied. Grant maintained that young men and women attending the same colleges would be protected by womanly modesty, self-respect and principled virtue. However, he may also have been motivated to support co-education for more practical reasons. Because it was financially impossible to duplicate male universities for women and because, even if duplicated these female universities "would have as a rule empty benches for many a day", Grant agreed that those few ladies seeking a university education should be accomodated at existing

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid,

⁴⁷⁹ Canadian Monthly, 7(1875),148.

universities.⁴⁸⁰

Yet, like many others, Grant suggested that before allowing women into universities certain "practical regulations" would be required: "such as not allowing both sexes to board in the same house, and in colleges where residence is enjoined, having a separate hall with a lady at its head; sitting on different benches in the class-rooms; perhaps entering or leaving by different doors." At Queen's in the 1880s, it was contended the male and female students, despite common entrances, did not come into contact at all and did not necessarily become acquainted within the university. One male student suggested that "we very seldom meet in the street, because their studies keep them busy."⁴⁸¹ T.M. MacIntyre, in an 1885 article in the Canadian Educational Monthly, contended that the relatively small numbers of young women who attended Canadian universities suggested that women wanted something more than merely university education. He compared the seven women at University College, the eight at Queen's, and the two at Victoria to the thirty full and part-time female "Donaldas" attending separate classes at McGill as proof that the system of separate education established for women had met with marked success. For MacIntyre, these statistics proved that what women valued more highly was "the advantages of College Residence, and the mental culture and refinement

⁴⁸⁰ Grant, "Education and Co-Education", 510.

⁴⁸¹ Fidelis, "A Few Words on University Co-Education", 314.

that are to be obtained from coming into contact with their instructors and superiors as well as their fellow-student."⁴⁸² At McGill, special provisions had been made for separate classrooms for women and all their excursions were single-sex. The Dawsons' social gatherings were separate to preclude "dangerous contact with men students" and "every girl was sent home by herself in a cab."⁴⁸³ Lady Dawson feared the possibility of affairs between men and women attending the same lectures. And, it was not for the young women that she feared, but for "our sons."

The intellectual and moral considerations of co-education aside, the major criticisms were reserved for the issue of identical education.

The degrees of a University we consider inappropriate to the ladies for this reason - that they have reference solely to public life. Their conferment implies that the objects of it are to go forth to push their way in the outside world, and therefore acquire ipso facto a certain acknowledged position. The place woman fills in society, and the peculiarities of her nature, must determine what is the proper quality of her culture. ... The severer studies which are found necessary in the training of young men would not be best suited to women. Their proper sphere of action is the domestic circle. Their highest duties they owe to the family, which also calls forth their most shining virtues. Therefore her education should be practical, fitting her to govern her household with wisdom and prudence. For her own sake her mind should be cultivated, but her mental culture should not be what is

⁴⁸² T.M. MacIntyre, "Our Ladies Colleges in Relation to Our Education System", as quoted in Cook and Mitchinson, The Proper Sphere, 139.

⁴⁸³ Gillett, We Walked Very Warily, 98.

regarded as distinctively intellectual. It should be governed with reference to elegance as well as strength, to the development of the tastes and affections as well as the mere reasoning faculties.⁴⁸⁴

Objectors to university education in the Ontario legislature seemed to believe that "it implied a coercive re-modeling of our female education generally."⁴⁸⁵ They affirmed that men and women had different spheres in life and different "capacities and tastes to enable them suitably to fill these." While a course of study for young women was not to be less thorough, Fidelis maintained that a smaller number of courses should be compulsory for women. What was desired by female students was not that the entire course of education for both the sexes be assimilated nor that a university education be prescribed for young women but that "those exceptional young women who have the taste, the aptitude, the means and the perseverance, for taking a university course should have the privilege of doing so." MacIntyre pointed out that young ladies needed to know something of music and painting; demands not made of their brothers. A young woman could not, therefore, compete on equal terms or her work load would be much larger. "In order, therefore, that the young lady's literary work may be carried on in connection with these additional subjects, it becomes necessary for her to have separate classes, where

⁴⁸⁴ "Sweet Girl Graduates", Queen's College Journal, Dec 16, 1876, as quoted in Cook and Mitchinson, The Proper Sphere, 123.

⁴⁸⁵ Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly, 8(1882), 315.

satisfactory provisions can be made for the differences in study." Young women also laboured under the additional demands of social life, a burden not placed upon young men who were beginning severer studies.

Goldwin Smith saw the movement towards professional education as "part of a general attempt to change the relations between the sexes, ... and make her the competitor instead of the helpmate of man." He maintained that this "sexual revolution" had to have limits if the human race was to continue. Women were "the organs" of its perpetuation and they had to bear and nurse children. In Smith's eyes, this made it impossible for women to compete with men in those professional occupations that demanded "complete devotion as well as superior strength of muscle or brain."⁴⁸⁶ The crucial problem for those who agreed with Smith was that women competing with men for professional positions made women "independent of marriage." At the same time it withdrew employment "from men who might have maintained women as their wives."⁴⁸⁷

A "Woman of Newfangle" pointed out what was to her a contradiction in the argument of those who supported woman's entrance into medicine, law, politics, and the ministry. "They tell us that with women professional efforts must always be reckoned secondary to their peculiar duties as

⁴⁸⁶ Smith, Essays on the Questions of the Day, 184.85.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid, 193.

women, from which even professional women cannot claim immunity; and yet with their next breath they would have us believe that they are just as capable of all or any profession as men are."⁴⁸⁸ The "Woman of Newfangle" echoed Smith's contention that what was at stake was "the whole existing scheme of human affairs."

Medical admonitions led even supporters of university education for women to approve of lighter course loads or to restrict women's entrance into degree programs. Physicians not entirely opposed to higher education favoured education that would maintain existing gender relations. Music, literature, languages and art were acceptable areas for study but not the harder sciences or classics and certainly not the professions, such as medicine. Educators of women carefully guarded against the "evils of overwork" and manifested increasing concern for the physical as well as mental development of young women. Dr. Elizabeth Garrett Anderson insisted that education often improved a young woman's health. She believed that "the calm and regular routine of college life, with its constant, systematic, and pleasant employment, its early hours of going to bed and rising; its plain, wholesome diet; its daily appropriate physical exercise; its simple habits and rational style of dress, is highly conducive to physical health."⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁸ Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly, 3(1879),92.

⁴⁸⁹ Reverend W.H.Withrow, "Higher Female Education", Canadian Methodist Magazine, 1(1875)20-27,22/23.

Nineteenth century female physicians also attempted to refute their male medical colleagues' opinions about the physiological fragility of women. Women were no more fragile than men. Menstruation was a natural function that did not interfere with a woman's energy level or activities. Frances Power Cobbe, a British writer and supporter of woman's rights, responded to those who believed in the dangers to women's health of "over mental strain or intellectual labour." She suggested that "for one woman whose health is injured by excessive study ... there are hundreds whose health is deteriorated by want of wholesome mental exercise."⁴⁹⁰ Doctor Garrett Anderson replied to Clarke and others in a Blackwood's Magazine article that was reprinted in the Canadian Monthly. It was not intellectual development but the development of character that was the major benefit of higher education.⁴⁹¹ Higher education inculcated higher personal standards, a rejection of "vulgar ostentation", self-reliance, independence of character and a rejection of selfishness in favour of "due regard to the rights and privileges of others." For Garrett-Anderson and Cobbe higher education did not weaken but strengthened a woman and better prepared her for her participation in a progressive nation. "The greatest benefit of higher female education consists in the increased mental resources created, the intellectual discipline acquired, the strength

⁴⁹⁰ Cobbe, "The Little Health of Ladies", 454.

⁴⁹¹ Canadian Monthly, 7(1875), 144.

of purpose and habits of industry formed. Few things are more pitiable than the listless ennui of fashionable young ladydom."⁴⁹² Dr. Stowe Gullen suggested that detractors "waste less energy in groundless fears and expend their super abundance of sympathy upon the physical wrecks from a far larger portion of humanity, viz, the housewives...⁴⁹³."

As early as the late 1870s, the debates concerning the education of women had begun to be rephrased in terms of Social Darwinistic assumptions about evolution and social progress. Woman was not only physiologically unique, she was inferior on the evolutionary scale. She was genetically "conservative" while man progressed in the struggle for survival. The sexual mental characteristics were described by such influential anthropologists and scientists as Lecky, Delaunay, Ladd, and Hamerton.⁴⁹⁴ Woman was not only restrained by her reproductive function; "but, what is more important, she inherits a greater disability from thousands of ages of equal and in some cases greater disability in the countless generations of man's animal ancestors."⁴⁹⁵ Although she had benefitted by the general progress of the human race, woman's nature was thoroughly ingrained, a

⁴⁹² Canadian Methodist Magazine, 1(1875),23.

⁴⁹³ Augusta Stowe Gullen, "Women in the Study and Practice of Medicine" in Austin, Woman Her Character Culture and Calling, 123.

⁴⁹⁴ Edward D.Cope, The Relation of the Sexes to Government. The New York State Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, circa 1887.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid, 2.

permanent part of her organism. Woman and her domestic role were also important components in nurturing the health of future generations. Herbert Spencer's The Principles of Sociology fueled concerns about the quality of the race. Spencer maintained that a woman who developed her intellect diminished her future reproductive powers. Also, the survival of the race depended on a monogamous nuclear family with specific natural "sexual roles". A family with the husband as breadwinner and the wife as non-working homemaker was the most efficient and progressive organization for an industrial society. Quoting Herbert Spencer, Grant pointed out there was an "earlier arrest of individual evolution in women than in men" and therefore "the power of abstract reasoning and that most abstract of emotions, the sentiment of justice" were less well-developed in women. Grant, however, argued that it was therefore even more important that women receive a sound mental training because they were "already handicapped by nature."⁴⁹⁶ The true aim of education was to train the mind and develop its natural capacities, male and female. The female mind would mould "the same truths in feminine forms."⁴⁹⁷ Thus, "science" reinforced the acceptance of a primarily domestic role for women. The critical importance of proper motherhood in social evolution and progress led to an increased emphasis on an educational content that would better prepare women

⁴⁹⁶ Grant, "Education and Co-Education", 154.

⁴⁹⁷ "Mixed Education", Christian Guardian, (April 25, 1877).

for their roles as mothers. Herbert Spencer pointed to the necessity for preparation for motherhood when he asked "what is to be expected when one of the most intricate problems is undertaken by those who have given scarcely a thought as to the principles on which its solution depends? Is the unfolding of a human being so simple a process that anyone may superintend and regulate it with no preparation whatever? ... Is it not madness to make no provision for such a task?"⁴⁹⁸

Fidelis, a staunch supporter of higher educational opportunities for women, suggested that all female education should include some practical instruction in the different kinds of domestic work required of women. A system of education was defective if it contained no provision for "the discharge of those duties which are most likely to fall to the lot of the individual."⁴⁹⁹ She called for a professorship of domestic technology in ladies' colleges that would apply scientific principles to their daily needs. This training would solve another problem of female education - "how best to thoroughly utilize the period of female education and yet avoid excessive brain-work, and a one-sided development."⁵⁰⁰ A series of articles in The New Dominion Monthly called for educating woman for her work.

⁴⁹⁸ "Ruffles vs Reading", New Dominion Monthly, (1877)262-265.

⁴⁹⁹ Fidelis, "Higher Education for Women", 156.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

Women required a "special preparation, a technical preparation if you will" to qualify her to perform her duties.⁵⁰¹ Women required for their vocation what other professionals - teachers, clergymen, lawyers, and physicians - required. Even common school education came into question because it did not make "the faintest attempt at any provision for fitting girls for the special duties of womanhood."⁵⁰² By making a smaller number of studies compulsory girls would have more time to learn "housewifery" at home. The fact that young girls would then be even less prepared for higher academic study was not discussed.

An 1890 article in the Queen suggested there was a danger "that the bread winning occupations will receive undue attention in comparison with that given the old-time occupation of home-making." It was only in those countries where "the home is most sacred" that women were held in the highest respect.⁵⁰³ Helen Cameron Parker wrote, in 1893, that the system of higher education for women had produced fewer "good" mothers. The fact was that no education was provided for the one profession women did choose most often. "For every woman who enters a profession, 100 women enter homes, or, to put it in another way, for every woman who enters the profession of medicine or law, 100 enter the

⁵⁰¹ See, for example, Mrs. A.M. Diaz, "The Mother's Need of Education", The New Dominion Monthly, (1877) 466-68.

⁵⁰² Fidelis, "A Few Words on University Co-Education", 318.

⁵⁰³ "A Danger Signal", Canadian Queen, 2 (Sept, 1890), 254.

profession of home-maker."⁵⁰⁴ What was required was the establishment of training schools of cookery, dress-making, child-care, and the other practical works of the home. This was of vital importance to the nation for untrained women created "hovels instead of homes"; hovels that bred "disease and crime." Men had engineering schools, schools of practical science, and agricultural colleges. Women should demand practical schools in domestic training. "Let us, as women, arise and assert our rights. We have a profession as grand and as important as any: we need training for it - and we will have it."⁵⁰⁵

By the 1890s there was a growing interest in technical and practical education for both boys and girls at the secondary level. And, by the end of the century, Domestic Science was being introduced into the university curriculum. The result was the re-affirmation and institutionalization of gender specific education. In 1891 a Mount Allison University chemistry professor proposed teaching "domestic chemistry" to women, believing "education of this kind would raise the kitchen to the dignity of the laboratory and would add the charm of scientific interest to the housewife's tasks." This 1891 domestic chemistry course became a household science program in 1904 when Lillian Massey-Treble endowed the Massey-Treble School at Mount Allison. The

⁵⁰⁴ Helen Cameron Parker, Kingston, "Technical Schools for Women", Canadian Magazine, 1(1893)634-37, 634.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid, 637.

local Tribune wrote approvingly of the need for this type of education from which "girls will go out from this school fully equipped to grapple with domestic difficulties and as veritable household angels, to comfort and bless."⁵⁰⁶

The National Council of Women of Canada, organized in 1893 with Lady Aberdeen as President and Adelaide Hoodless as treasurer, was a vocal promoter of domestic education for girls. At their first meeting, in 1894, Mrs. Hoodless presented a resolution that the Council "do all in its power to further the introduction of industrial (or manual) training for girls into the public school system of Canada, believing that such training will greatly conduce to the general welfare of Canadian homes..."⁵⁰⁷ That same year, a National Council of Women delegation, led by Hoodless, to the Ontario Board of Education requested that cooking and sewing be added to the school curriculum for girls in order for them to become better homemakers. By 1898, Hoodless had prepared a school text book in Domestic Science. As President of the YWCA, Hoodless encouraged their support of domestic education. The YWCA's aim was to "develop the highest type of womanhood for both the home and for the Master's Service" and often provided, at the local level, the first formal classes in home economics for girls. In 1897 Hoodless founded the Canadian Women's Institutes with

⁵⁰⁶ John G. Reid, "The Education of Women at Mount Allison, 1854-1914", Acadiensis 12,2(1983)3-33,31.

⁵⁰⁷ Home Economics in Canada, (Modern Press, 1964), 11.

the motto "For Home and Country", to promote domestic education for adult women. The Lillian Massey School of Household Science and Art was established in Toronto in 1899. One year later, the Ontario Normal School of Domestic Science and Art was established in conjunction with the Hamilton Normal School, to provide domestic science teachers for public schools. Nine Canadian universities introduced home economics degree programmes within the first decades of the twentieth century. The attitude of educators is indicated by President Burwash's announcement of the establishment of a degree program at the University of Toronto. He did not emphasize that this Home Economics program would meet women's professional needs or create new careers for women. "He described it as a course in higher education 'pre-eminently fitted for women'."⁵⁰⁸

In 1898 the National Council of Women of Canada compiled Women Workers of Canada. One section of this study was devoted to the relation of women's work to home life. The question asked was whether "the education and training directly bearing on the higher development of home life, such as domestic science and all its departments, instruction in matters of health and sanitation, the care of young children and of the sick, received the consideration its importance demands from educational authorities and organized bodies of women."⁵⁰⁹ Once again, the authors

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid, 94.

⁵⁰⁹ "The Labour Question and Women's Work and its Relation

pointed out that while the educational system had provided opportunities for developing man's work "that phase of education which related to woman's responsibilities" had been done in a haphazard fashion. Woman's influence could not reach its highest point until she was more properly prepared to assume her God-given duties. "[U]ntil the power of education and influence is brought to bear upon those duties; and she has demonstrated her ability to do her own work well, she has no right to infringe on man's prerogative."⁵¹⁰ What the NCWC suggested was that, after a brief primary training, boys and girls education should be divided and each should be directed towards "those subjects bearing upon their future occupation." Maths and sciences could be taught to girls so as to apply to home duties - the chemistry of food, the science of ventilation, cookery, needlework. The "perverted education" now in place had developed woman's mental powers in a one-sided manner and she could not apply this education to practical matters.⁵¹¹ Women should receive every educational privilege accorded to men but it should not be the same kind of education. Higher education had the tendency to develop selfishness and no amount of education could "compensate for the absence of that loving and unselfish consideration of others, which is

to Home Life" as quoted in Cook and Mitchinson, The Proper Sphere, 149.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid, 150.

⁵¹¹ Ibid, 152.

woman's greatest charm."⁵¹² The NCW applauded those United States universities that had established Domestic Science departments and thus had recognized that this study was "necessary for the complete rounding out of a woman's education." Thus, by the end of the century, with the introduction of domestic science into the curriculum at all levels of education for women, woman's duty as wife and mother retained its importance as her pre-eminent role.

The rationale for reforming education for women remained based upon their marital and maternal destiny. The educated woman remained in a compensatory role to the males in her life. The rhetoric of the last decade of the century reiterated the belief that while man was being prepared for university or receiving a practical education that would prepare him for business, woman was being prepared for her peculiar duties as a woman.⁵¹³ Reverend Benjamin Austin believed that in promoting women's education one was promoting the world's advancement; "that in beautifying, adorning and enriching the home life, we are laying the foundation for all moral and social reform ... we are lifting humanity to a higher plane."⁵¹⁴ In 1895, Reverend John F. German outlined the aim of the instruction imparted at Ontario Ladies College: "it is not the production of mere

⁵¹² Ibid, 154.

⁵¹³ Morgan Dix, Rector of Trinity Church, New York, "The Education of Woman for Her Work" in Woman Her Character Culture and Calling, 390.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid, 26.

accomplishments, but the development of character, and the fitting of the young ladies for the practical duties of life."⁵¹⁵ And Nettie Burkholder, the Lady Principal at the Ontario Ladies College at the turn of the century, staunchly defended separate education and separate educational institutions because woman's life work dictated the kind of education she needed. She abhorred the idea of young men and women competing for academic achievement and felt that woman's natural role was that of homemaker. This necessitated a specific curriculum for a woman that included "besides some literary work, some study of music, some of art, and some of household economics." Burkholder maintained that Ruskin's idea of woman's education was the correct one - she was to be trained to please and help. "A degree given in such work may not be valuable in the money market, but the home would be brighter and more attractive."⁵¹⁶ Furthermore, nothing in the education she received challenged the inherent gender biases in Western culture. Women learned there were biologically determined sexual temperaments that assigned her the nurturing and passive role in society. Access to education did not encourage women to see themselves as disciplined autonomous intellectuals. As Jill Conway has argued, nineteenth century education institutionalized gender divisions into "the life

⁵¹⁵ Reverend J.F.German, "Ontario Ladies College, Whitby", Canadian Magazine, 5(1895)72-8, 78.

⁵¹⁶ Nettie Burkholder, "A College Education for Women", Vox Collegia, (Jan, 1903).

of the mind."⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁷ Jill Conway, "Perspectives on the History of Women's Education in the United States" History of Education Quarterly, 14(Spring, 1974)1-12, 11.

Chapter VI

UNCLOUDED DOMESTIC FELICITY:

Love, Marriage, and the Feminine Ideal in Nineteenth Century Canadian Fiction

The Literary History of Canada provides an historical survey of Canadian literature and authors from the early colonial period into the twentieth century.⁵¹⁸ Carole Gerson's A Purer Taste surveys the opinions of a nineteenth century literary elite on selected topics in order to provide a critical analysis of Canadian works of fiction. She incorporates fifty-eight writers into her analysis, with an emphasis on six (three of whom are women). Gerson's work is neither a history of Canadian fiction nor an analysis of popular culture that is class or gender based. She marginalizes the importance of romance and domestic fiction by her use of realism as both a literary theory and a benchmark of acceptability.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁸ Carl Klinck, ed., Literary History of Canada (Toronto:University of Toronto Press, 1965). See also R. Lecker et al eds., Canadian Writers and Their Works, v.1, Fiction Series (Ontario:ECW Press, 1983).

⁵¹⁹ Carole Gerson, A Purer Taste: The Writing and Reading of Fiction in English in Nineteenth Century Canada (Toronto:University of Toronto Press, 1989). See, also, the review in Canadian Historical Review 72,2 (June 1990).

We know from these secondary sources that, throughout the greater part of the century, fiction was required to demonstrate its utility by providing useful information or by supporting concepts of morality and virtue. The prevailing view was that the novel and serialized fiction were appropriate vehicles for improving the morals of and educating the reader. Authors were condemned if they sought to portray any depravity or vice or sought to stir the emotions by arousing sentiments not appropriate to middle class living. What was required was the ability to add "romance" to the realities of everyday life. In fact, most Canadians used the terms "novel" and "romance" interchangeably. As an editorial in Belford's monthly magazine stated; "[t]o surround familiar scenes, domestic incidents, and everyday pursuits with the halo of romance is the task which the average novelist of the period sets before him."⁵²⁰ While nineteenth century Canadian readers asked for depictions of real life what they desired was an illusion: "life as it should be, not life as it was."⁵²¹ A contemporary female writer, Louisa Murray, wrote in 1889 that successful stories should "strongly impress us with the truth that beauty and virtue are more real and permanent parts of nature and life than vice and ugliness, and for this reason they will always have the finest uses for humanity, being good for hope, for healing, and for the

⁵²⁰ as quoted in Gerson, A Purer Taste, 73.

⁵²¹ Ibid, 74.

strengthening and ennobling of men and women."

Writers of nineteenth century fiction subscribed to a notion of literary realism. Both contemporary readers and reviewers of this fiction were concerned that their reading material reflect the realities of daily experience. However, this desire for 'realism' was limited by the demand for conformity to contemporary norms of morality and respectability. Carl Klinck has suggested that Canadian literary realism was utilized as a "means to realize the ideal."⁵²² What Canadians appeared to desire in their fiction was what Goldwin Smith found in the works of Sir Walter Scott - unimpeachable morality.⁵²³ In a Toronto speech in 1871 in honour of the Scott centenary, Smith discussed the principles that should guide all writers of fiction. He called for writing that embodied the principles of "Reality, Ideality, Impartiality, Impersonality, Purity, Humanity, and Chivalry". For Smith purity was defined simply as sexual morality. For the Canadian author Charles Shrimpton, the "thought of principal importance" in issuing a book for the general public should be;

[W]hat will be the probable influence it will exert; is it trashy in its nature, or vicious in its spirit; will it offend or corrupt the moral sense; or to any extent injure the intellect by debasing it with impure thoughts and demoralizing imagery? Or, on the contrary, is it, in design and execution adapted, by its portrayal of character to give a winning beauty to virtue, and to exert a controlling influence for good on the mind of the

⁵²² Klinck, Literary History of Canada, 202.

⁵²³ Gerson, A Purer Taste, 66.

Reader?... to win its way ...by its intrinsic character and moral value, rather than by any pretensions to literary excellence.⁵²⁴

Canadian literature in the 1830s emphasized current events, science, and history.⁵²⁵ Publishers were interested in accounts of explorers, travel and settlement, visitors narratives, and emigrant settler's autobiographies such as Catherine Parr Traill's The Backwoods of Canada (1836). By the 1840s, Scott-influenced imitators were filling Canadian literary periodicals with historical romances,⁵²⁶ such as the serialized fiction found in The Literary Garland. The Garland began publishing in Montreal in December, 1838.⁵²⁷ The two Canadas had been united politically in 1841 and during that decade Montreal became the centre of English-Canadian literary activity. The Garland was devoted to the advancement of English-Canadian literature both original and "reprinted" and, according to its editor, John Gibson, had obtained a wide circulation in the colony by the 1840s. Serialized fiction in the Garland emphasized evangelical middle class piety and its outlook was ideal and romantic. A page count of work by identified authors shows that women produced fifty-five percent of the poetry and

⁵²⁴ Charles Shrimpton, Lillian, or, Women's Endurance (New York: Tibbals and Company, 1868).

⁵²⁵ Gerson, A Purer Taste, 6.

⁵²⁶ Ibid, 67.

⁵²⁷ Carl Klinck, "Literary Activity in Canada East and West, 1841-1880" in Klinck, Literary History of Canada, 145.

seventy percent of the fiction.⁵²⁸ Female contributors included Susanna Moodie and Catherine Traill and the historical romances of the Foster sisters; Mrs. Cushing, Miss Foster, and Mrs. Cheney.

The Foster sisters were the daughters of Hannah Webster Foster (1795- 1840), one of the earliest exponents of the sentimental novel in America.⁵²⁹ The daughters had published New World historical romances in Boston in the 1820s before two came to Canada. Mrs. Eliza L. Cushing (ELC) (1794-1886) contributed at least seventy varied items from 1838 to 1850 and finally became editor. Mrs. Harriet V. Cheney (HVC) wrote poems and prose sketches from 1848 and Miss Foster (TDF) sent in articles, probably from Boston, from 1842 on. Eliza had moved to Montreal in 1833 with her husband, who died in 1846.

Harriet wrote such historical romances as Jacques Cartier and the Little Indian Girl (6,1848), The Fort of St. John's (7,1849) about Acadia in the 1600s and The Daughter of the Congregation (8,1850) set during the 1690 French/English war and detailing the romance between the Roman Catholic convent-bred Marie, daughter of the French Colonel St. Leger and the British Captain Wallis. Cheney's Cousin Emma: A

⁵²⁸ Carole Gerson, "Anthologies and the Canon of Early Canadian Women Writers" in Re(dis)covering Our Foremothers: Nineteenth-Century Canadian Women Writers, Lorraine McMullen, ed. (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1990), 58.

⁵²⁹ Klinck, Literary History of Canada 146.

Sketch from Real Life (8,1850) details the doomed romance of Emma and Captain Maxwell. A conniving stepmother separates the engaged couple. Emma eventually marries another, unhappily, and she and her children die in a shipwreck.

Miss Foster (Mrs. Henry Giles) wrote, under the pen name of TDF, such romantic tales as The Maid of Saragossa in 1843, Fortune's Favorites a year later, The Indian Maid in 1846 and in 1847 both An Old Woman's Romance and Cousin Fan's First Lover. Fortune's Favorites is an historical romance set in Britain. Younger brother Robert, engaged to Alice, sets off from Scotland to seek a "brighter fortune" in London. Soon knighted by the King and "with a fortune sufficient to support the title" he succumbs to the "whisperings of ambition and gratified vanity."⁵³⁰ Forgetting the "humble" Alice, he meets and eventually marries the Countess of Essex (whose previous marriage is annulled by the King). The Countess is "the intoxication which was to prove his ruin." Robert finds the Countess is "destitute of everything calculated to fix the affections, to give a charm to the domestic circle." They are punished for yielding to the "crime" of their "ungoverned passion" by the "wretched existence they were destined to endure."⁵³¹

⁵³⁰ Miss Foster, "Fortune's Favorites", Literary Garland N.S.2 (March, 1844) 129-38, 133.

⁵³¹ Ibid, 138.

Eliza Cushing's short stories for the Garland provide early examples of the themes that will structure the domestic fiction of the third quarter of the century. Lessons in social propriety and the proper characteristics of the feminine ideal abound. Cushing's voice often intrudes into the dialogue to point out the lesson she wishes the readers to deduce. In Deaf Molly she points to the dangers of jealousy and suspicion and an unbridled temper.⁵³² In Grace Morley, Grace is the gay and celebrated belle whose faults are "lost in the assumed sweetness of her manners and disposition, or forgotten in the charm of her varied and lively conversation."⁵³³ Clara is less brilliant but more lovely, "lovely in person and still more so in mind and character, 'spirituel' beauty." Cushing contrasts Grace's actions, which are prompted "by purely selfish motives" and her "undisciplined, and selfish and exacting mind" and Clara's "self-sacrificing, serene, and benign spirit." Clara is eventually happily married to her cousin Charles. For Grace there would be no happiness for she had not learned "the task of self-discipline" nor had she cherished "as peculiarly became her sex, the kindly and gentle affections of her nature."⁵³⁴

⁵³² Eliza Cushing, "Deaf Molly", The Literary Garland N.S.6(1848)195-99.

⁵³³ Eliza Cushing, "Grace Morley, A Sketch from Life", The Literary Garland 1(August, 1839)405-12, 409.

⁵³⁴ Ibid, 412.

The Heiress chronicles the romance of Annabelle Hope and Captain Delancy.⁵³⁵ Cushing contrasts the "purity and happiness" of the two in the home which Annabelle made "ever joyous by the gentle lustre of her virtues and her beauty" to the disastrous marriage-for-money of Mowbray. Within two years he had broken his wife's heart, squandered her fortune, and ended his "brief and sad career by blowing out his brains in a gambling house."⁵³⁶ The Neglected Wife provides a cautionary tale about the potential for moral influence a good wife holds. Maurice Evelyn begins to neglect his wife Cecilia in favour of the fashionable yet notorious Mrs. Sinclair. Willingly would Cecilia have lured him from the "midst of temptations and perils" back to the path of virtue "by the sweet accents of affection, the holy influence of example, onward and upward to the great source of true and eternal happiness."⁵³⁷ Maurice does not listen and is fatally wounded over a gambling debt. Cecilia's days, too, are numbered. It is left to Arthur (who had been in love with Cecilia) and Grace, who patterns her own character after Cecilia's purity, selflessness, and moral discipline, to establish a proper marriage "based on mutual respect and deep affection."⁵³⁸

⁵³⁵ Eliza Cushing, "The Heiress", The Literary Garland 2(Oct, 1840) 500-11.

⁵³⁶ Ibid, 510.

⁵³⁷ Eliza Cushing, "The Neglected Wife", The Literary Garland N.S.1(1843), 249.

⁵³⁸ Ibid, 291.

If in 1853 Susanna Moodie could complain that native Canadians preferred "a good political article from their newspapers" to "romantic tales and "poetry", by the late 1850s serialized fiction in Canadian periodicals was beginning to replace newspapers and current politics as the primary reading material of the general public.⁵³⁹ Carl Klinck has suggested why the "texture of Canada's literary milieu" is exemplified by such Canadian periodicals as the Canadian Monthly, the New Dominion Monthly and Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly. "Newspapers, preoccupied with party politics, did not hold a clear mirror to national consciousness. Book publication was hazardous and for economic reasons failed to cover the true range of Canadian interests."⁵⁴⁰ A small group of periodicals are therefore particularly significant. The Canadian Monthly and National Review (1872-1878) under the leadership of Graeme Mercer Adam and Goldwin Smith, was established to promote a national culture through the development of a national literature. Continued as Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly from 1878 to 1882, this periodical was "consciously dedicated to nationalist ideals" and "embodied the central sentiment of English-speaking Canada."⁵⁴¹ Along with the New Dominion Monthly, which the Dougalls published in Montreal from 1867 to 1879, the image of a liberal yet moral

⁵³⁹ Gerson, A Purer Taste, 5,30,73,op cit.

⁵⁴⁰ Carl Klinck, "Confederation to the First World War" in Klinck, Literary History of Canada, 201.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid, 161.

earnestness that was projected "remained in focus for the rest of the century."⁵⁴² These literary periodicals contained a high level of activity on the part of women writers. In the Canadian Monthly fifty-two percent of the poetry and over thirty percent of the identifiable fiction was written by women.⁵⁴³ By the late 1850s there was an entire genre of "domestic fiction" written by, about, and for women in Canada.

The works that began the discussion of women's domestic fiction from a feminist perspective based their analysis on the writer's attempt to create new images and new roles for nineteenth century women.⁵⁴⁴ These feminist critics assumed that good female fiction would incorporate realistic images of strong women with whom the contemporary reader could identify. The pathbreaking work of Gilbert and Gubar suggested that the surface of the text concealed a deeper meaning wherein lay the real truth; that the woman writer was rewriting male mythologies into her own text. "This

⁵⁴² Ibid, 202.

⁵⁴³ Gerson, "Anthologies and the Canon of Early Canadian Writers", 58.

⁵⁴⁴ Patricia Meyer Spacks, The Female Imagination: a literary and psychological investigation of women's writing (London: Allen and Unwin, 1976). Ellen Moer, Literary Women (New York: Doubleday, 1977). Elaine Showalter, A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing (Princeton University Press, 1979). Patricia Stubbs, Women and Fiction: feminism and the novel, 1880-1920 (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1979). Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer in the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination (Yale University Press, 1979).

position, which in less sophisticated guises is perhaps the most recurrent theme of Anglo-American feminist criticism, manages to transform all texts written by women into feminist texts, because they may always and without exception be held to embody somehow and somewhere the author's 'female rage' against patriarchal oppression."⁵⁴⁵ Showalter's A Literature of Their Own and Patricia Stubb's Women and Fiction criticize the fiction written between 1880 and 1920 because it did not present truthful images of strong women with which the female reader could identify. Two Canadian texts rely on the theoretical framework of Gilbert and Gubar. Silenced Sextet and Re(dis)covering our Foremothers place their emphasis on the author's lives not their works. They argue that "although fiction is not autobiographical, every story does reveal the author's experience, reading tastes, obsessions, and values. All novelists express symbolically their own ideas, longings, and frustrations."⁵⁴⁶ The approach in Silenced Sextet suggests that women writing this fiction had to devise indirect ways of expressing significant parts of "their real

⁵⁴⁵ Toril Moi, Sexual/Textual Politics:Feminist Literary Theory (London:Methuen,1985),62.

⁵⁴⁶ Carrie MacMillan,Lorraine McMullen,Elizabeth Waterston, Silenced Sextet:Six Nineteenth Century Canadian Women Novelists (Montreal and Kingston:McGill-Queen's University Press,1993),6.It should also be noted that of the six women discussed three more properly belong to the twentieth century and the fourth is best known for her children's stories. Lorraine McMullen, Re(dis)covering Our Foremothers:Nineteenth Century Canadian Women Writers (Ottawa:University of Ottawa Press,1990).

life experiences." But we should be wary of a view that sees these texts as transmitting an authentic female experience. The focus is then on female culture or sub-culture but it remains difficult to see how nineteenth century women could maintain a feminist critique in the face of the dominant patriarchal structures elaborated by Gilbert and Gubar.

More recent feminist literary theory emphasizes how ideas about gender are constructed so that "the category of woman in particular underwrites and insures" the maintenance of a middle class value system.⁵⁴⁷ By analyzing what culturally specific representations of Canadian women were actively produced and reproduced in the periodical press, as well as novels, certain conclusions can be drawn about conventional ideas about women. The subject is, then, not literature but the ideas about gender and class expressed in the literature. As this domestic fiction became designated female - written for, by, and about women - it intensified the belief that "gender provided the true basis of human identity."⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁷ Laurie Langbauer, Women and Romance: The Consolations of Gender in the English Novel (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), 5.

⁵⁴⁸ Nancy Armstrong, Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 29.

Novels and short stories said what was female by discussing the acceptable traits of womanhood. The emphasis always was on woman's selflessness and her service to the needs of other for self-sacrifice was still the key to perfection for a woman. It was also maintained that self-discipline and self-control were important moral character traits and useful life strategies. Rosanna Leprohon joined the contributors to the Literary Garland in 1848, publishing six short stories before its demise. Leprohon also wrote for the Canadian Monthly and published two novels, Antoinette de Mirecourt in 1864 and The Manor House de Villerai in 1859. Born in Montreal in 1829, she married into a prominent French-speaking family in 1851, bore thirteen children and died in 1879. In Leprohon's Eva Huntingdon, Eva's brother Augustus is the spoiled heir who through his reckless extravagance has impoverished his father and encumbered the family estates.⁵⁴⁹ It is Eva's "gentle counsels and influence - her eloquent example" and her "gentle, self-sacrificing" nature that save both Augustus, his marriage, and the family from ruin. In Ida Beresford, Leprohon contrasts the proud cold character of Ida with the refined sensitivity of Lucy Vernon.⁵⁵⁰ The author suggests that with a different education Ida might have been a different person for some "good, generous

⁵⁴⁹ Rosanna Leprohon (REM), "Eva Huntingdon", The Literary Garland N.S.8(1850),59.

⁵⁵⁰ Rosanna Leprohon, "Ida Beresford; or, The Child of Fashion", The Literary Garland N.S.7(Jan, 1848),22.

feelings yet lurked in her heart..." It is only when she overhears the harsh criticisms of the man she loves and seeks solace in prayer that Ida is weaned from her passionate temperament and recklessness of spirit. Ida's reward is her eventual marriage to Claude.⁵⁵¹ In Mrs. Moore's "The One Who Loved Him", Hugh Denham is engaged to the beautiful Flora Grantley. Involved in a shipwreck and believed drowned, Hugh is reluctant to face his fiancée because he has been severely injured.⁵⁵² Encouraged by a friend to find out whether the physical changes in him have changed Flo's affections, Hugh returns and overhears a conversation between his Flo and Alice. Flo is suggesting that it is just as well Hugh has died rather than surviving horribly disfigured for she could never then have married him. Alice protests. "If I loved a man as beautiful as Appolo, and he loved me, and were to come to me maimed, broken down, but still mine, I would take him and tend him, and love him till our lives should end."⁵⁵³ Flo's suggestion that Alice is nothing but a "raving little goose" makes Hugh realize that Flo has no "purity of heart", no "refinement of mind", in fact, no soul. He sees that it is Alice that possesses "all the characteristics of his ideal woman. Refined and modest - loveable and with an intellect richly cultivated..." Flo was the "false tinsel that dazzled"

⁵⁵¹ Ibid, 375.

⁵⁵² Mrs.F.J.Moore,"The One Who Loved Him", Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly 3(1879)188-198,191.

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

while Alice is the noble, pure, and loving ideal woman. It is Alice that wins Hugh's "deepest respect and his truest love."⁵⁵⁴

Agnes Maule Machar's serialized story "Lost and Won" compares the pretty, indulged, and rather shallow-hearted Lottie with the much-admired characteristics of Lenore.⁵⁵⁵ Machar was born in Kingston in 1837, the daughter of the second principal of Queen's College. She wrote novels, poetry, and opinion pieces in several periodicals; publishing over sixty-five items in the Canadian Monthly and Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly alone.⁵⁵⁶ It was not until she reached middle age that Machar began to use the pen-name "Fidelis"; the majority of her early work remained unsigned. In this, her second serialized story, she creates a portrait of the ideal woman. Lenore is generous with her time and money, doing good for many people and with an earnest purpose "pervading everything she did." She seemed to be "the real centre and sunshine of home - the one to whom all instinctively turned for help and sympathy."⁵⁵⁷ Lottie is incapable of offering sympathy, tact, and support because, Machar suggests, she "lacked the genuine unselfish affection which will of itself teach this to any true-hearted

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid, 196.

⁵⁵⁵ Agnes Maule Machar, "Lost and Won: A Canadian Romance", Canadian Monthly 7/8 (1875).

⁵⁵⁶ Carole Gerson, "Three Writers of Victorian Canada" in Lecker, Canadian Writers and Their Works 203.

⁵⁵⁷ Machar, "Lost and Won", 296.

woman."⁵⁵⁸

Women readers were constantly admonished to defer their personal needs and interests to their duties to the family. Any woman who eschewed self-sacrifice for self-sufficiency, duty to others for personal ambition, was betraying her womanhood. "Fictional tradition was concerned to show that this not only pre-empted any personal desires, but also that its disregard led to a general and individual unhappiness."⁵⁵⁹ Juliet marries Cecil, not because she loves him, but because of the desires of both fathers to unite the Travers and Blaire properties. In the same short story, Georgie refuses the proposal of the man she loves, Wattie Ellison, because her father forbids it. "He is my father and I would not disobey him for worlds."⁵⁶⁰ Wattie is "hopelessly ineligible" for, with no profession or income of his own, he is without prospects and "a penniless ne'er-do-well." Although "madly in love", Georgie will obey her father and never see or speak to Wattie again. After her renunciation of Wattie, Georgie goes about her duties as usual and remains "perfectly sweet and gentle and submissive to her father."⁵⁶¹ In Agatha Armour's Lady Rosamond's Secret

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid, 118.

⁵⁵⁹ Judith Rowbotham, Good Girls Make Good Wives: guidance for girls in Victorian Fiction (Oxford University Press, 1989), 21.

⁵⁶⁰ Mrs. H. Lovett-Cameron, "Juliet", Canadian Monthly 10 (1876), 473.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid, 474.

Lady Rosamond promises to become the wife of Gerald Bereford even though she is in love with another.⁵⁶² Rosamond did so from "a true sense of duty and affection towards her only parent." For him she would sacrifice her life, if necessary, and would not shrink from the duty she owed this beloved father. Fleming tells Juliet that he must leave her rather than disgrace and dishonor her. He knows that her life will be lonely and miserable without their love but admonishes her "that there are duties still left for you, in the patient fulfillment of which you may still find - if not happiness, at least peace."⁵⁶³ In Louisa Murray's short story "Marguerite Kneller", Marguerite sacrifices her love for Maurice for the sake of her sister Claire, stating that "no one shall suffer through me."⁵⁶⁴ Her faithful servant tells her that by doing good to others she will heal her own sorrows. Marguerite does find solace in self-sacrifice; "she had made her own burden light by striving to lessen the burden that others had to bear. Many a homeless victim of

⁵⁶² Agatha Armour, Lady Rosamond's Secret: A Romance of Fredericton (St. John, New Brunswick, 1878). Armour, who died in 1891, wrote four novels: Marion Wilburn (nd), Sylvia Leigh, or, The Heiress of Glenmarle (1880), and Marguerite Verne; or, Scenes from Canadian Life (1886).

⁵⁶³ Lovett-Cameron, "Juliet", 508.

⁵⁶⁴ Louisa Murray, "Marguerite Kneller, Woman and Artist", Canadian Monthly 1 (1872), 434. Murray was born in Canada in 1818, moved to Ireland and then back to Canada, near Kingston, in 1841. The Garland story, "Fauna; or, The Red Flower of Leafy Hollow" was her first short story in 1851. She also wrote The Cited Curate, Within Sound of the Falls, Mr. Grey's Strange Story, and The Settler of Long Arrow (1861).

want, many a wretched hope-abandoned outcast found the way to that quiet dwelling; and none ever came there without receiving help and comfort."⁵⁶⁵

Sacrificing their own ambitions, numerous fictional young women assume the responsibility for the emotional support of their families upon their mother's death. "To hold a family together on a daily basis was an enormous emotional task, and one that could only be achieved at the cost of denying individual desires, in itself an issue of emotion."⁵⁶⁶ With the death of Marguerite's mother, Christian Kneller, the father, falls ill and neglects his business; leaving the family very poor. The young Marguerite, only seventeen, willingly assumes the burden of "all the cares and responsibilities of the family." With "good management", "industry, good sense, and affectionate devotion to her father", Marguerite supplies sufficient means for their simple wants.⁵⁶⁷ Louisa Murray's Carmina takes care of her fatherless family and when the man she loves asks her to go away with him she refuses. She cannot abandon her mother and sister for they have "nothing in the world" but Carmina.⁵⁶⁸ In the Algonquin Maiden, it is young Rose who assumes the emotional center of the family upon the death of their mother. "She had been informed in the 'Advice to

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid, 438.

⁵⁶⁶ Rowbotham, Good Girls Make Good Wives, 19.

⁵⁶⁷ Murray, "Marguerite Kneller", 109.

⁵⁶⁸ Louisa M. Murray, "Carmina", Canadian Monthly 2(1872), 387.

Young Women', 'Duties of Womanhood' and other ethical works of the day, that a sister's influence is illimitable, and she felt besides an added weight of responsibility towards her motherless sisters and brothers."⁵⁶⁹ She was her elder brother's "sympathizing confidante" as he "unburdened his heart to her" and felt it was her particular duty to reclaim her brother "from the very literal wildness of his ways." Rose was "a never-failing fountain of alluring fiction" to her younger siblings and she was "the comfort of life to her father" running "with eager steps to take the vacant place at his side..."⁵⁷⁰

The positive aspects of feminine conformity were found in the fulfilling reward of love and marriage. Lenore marries Allen, Alice Hugh, Eva weds her mentor Arlingford, and a reformed Ida finds happiness with Claude. It was the mutual respect and friendship found in an affectionate marriage that providing the lasting foundation for female happiness. In "The Stepmother", Amy's and Charles Delmour's eventual marriage is not based on passing fancy but "on the innate conviction of each other's long tried and well proved worth."⁵⁷¹ For Helen and Max in Louisa Murray's "Fauna", the guarantee of "immortal wedding felicity" was that they

⁵⁶⁹ G.Mercer Adams and A.Ethelwyn Wetherall, An Alonguin Maiden: A Romance of the Early Days of Upper Canada (Toronto:Williamson and Company, 1877. Reprint University of Toronto, 1978), 68.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid, 74.

⁵⁷¹ Rosanna Leprohon, "The Stepmother", Literary Garland N.S.5(1847), 217.

possessed "sympathy of souls."⁵⁷²

The "double-marriage" plot allowed writers to compare undesirable unions with desirable ones. An unsuitable alliance is proffered or occurs. Fortunately, this undesirable match is terminated, usually by death, so that a more desirable second marriage or engagement may be achieved. Authors rarely examined the actual dimensions of this second relationship, picturing it as the achieved goal. In Juliet, Mrs. H.Lovett-Cameron compares the love Juliet feels for her guardian, Fleming, and that which she has for Cecil Travers. Juliet loves Fleming "with the whole strength of her being" without knowing if he loved her in return.⁵⁷³ Separated by a conniving stepmother before Juliet is assured of Fleming's love, she feels unable to live. Juliet has little regard for the Travers eldest son and has rejected his numerous proposals. It is only when Georgie, Cecil's sister and Juliet's good friend, extracts a promise from her death bed that Juliet accedes.⁵⁷⁴ The marriage is a diasaster for they are totally unsuited. Cecil is inferior to Juliet "in mind, in refinement and in character." He becomes "peevish and discontented" and Juliet derives "no comfort or support" from his society. "Cis" is constantly grumbling and complaining and reproaching his wife for her

⁵⁷² Louisa M.Murray, "Fauna, or, the Red Flower of Leafy Hollow", Literary Garland N.S.9(1851),441.

⁵⁷³ Lovett-Cameron, "Juliet", 289.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid, 17.

"coldness and want of affection." When her sister-in-law, Flora, becomes engaged to Captain Hartly, although in love with Wattie, Juliet steps in to prevent another loveless marriage. "Never, if I can prevent it, shall you be guilty of the sin of marrying one man whilst your heart belongs to another. For sin it is and nothing less."⁵⁷⁵ The "tragedy of her life is played out" when Fleming returns after Juliet had married Cecil. Both realize their deep and honest love for one another but Juliet and Fleming must not meet again "in this world."⁵⁷⁶ Fortunately, for Juliet and Fleming, Cecil dies a tragic death and Juliet marries the man she has always loved.

Machar's serialized story "Lost and Won" also utilizes this plot line to discuss what constitutes true and proper love. Lottie has promised to marry Alan Campbell as the story opens. When Alan's family suffers financial reverses, Lottie becomes impatient with Alan's desire to know that their love is constant and will survive the long wait until he is able to establish a home for them. Chilled and disappointed, Alan feels that their trials should serve to make their love closer and tenderer. For Alan, a woman's love for a man was something "which could not be restrained, even by maidenly pride, from giving the frank, true-hearted expression of abiding affection which he craved."⁵⁷⁷ Lottie

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid, 510.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid, 508.

⁵⁷⁷ Machar, "Lost and Won", 215.

acquires a new admirer, Mr. Sharpley, and soon breaks off her engagement with Alan. Machar is at pains to point out the basis of the affection between Lottie and Sharpley.

She was not in love with Mr. Sharpley, anymore than she had been with Alan. But the prosperous, pleasant career which, as his wife, she seemed to see before her, beguiled her fancy. ... He [Sharpley] was in love, so far as his cold, shallow temperament would let him be, and he had had some misgivings as to whether he was not letting his feelings run away with him ... in bestowing himself on a country girl, with no 'style' about her ... he felt convinced that Lottie, with her good looks and the advantage of his supervision, would soon take on a polish. ... While he knew that from the miller's ample resources, a pretty substantial portion would, sooner or later, fall to Lottie's share.⁵⁷⁸

By contrast, the feelings that develop between Alan and Lenore are based on mutual respect and common interests. Both Alan and Lenore come to realize that their "highest happiness" lay in serving others. In their quiet talks and walks Alan felt that "he had known her all his life ... so completely at home did he feel with her." Their love was built on the "strong feeling of rapport" which had almost unconsciously grown up between them as they moved from friendship to mutual love.⁵⁷⁹ Alan and Lenore find "tranquil happiness" together at the end of "Lost and Won."

The young and naive Antoinette of Rosanna Leprohon's Antoinette de Mirecourt, recently arrived in Montreal from the Quebec countryside, is courted by the dashing English

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid, 13.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid, 296.

officer, Audrey Sternfield.⁵⁸⁰ Antoinette is the "unwary, inexperienced" young girl while Sternfield is the "wily man of the world."⁵⁸¹ He pours forth such "protestations of love" and "impassioned devotion" to the "young romantic girl" that his words are "fraught with dangerous power." Antoinette's father has chosen Louis Beauchesne as her future husband. But although Antoinette and Louis love each other dearly it is as brother and sister. Antoinette does take pause to consider Louis's affectionate written proposal and mentally contrasts "this really rational, truthful declaration of affection with the late impassioned words and looks of Audrey Sternfield."⁵⁸² Antoinette succumbs to the "protestations of love and devotion" and the "impassioned words and looks" of Sternfield and agrees to a secret marriage.⁵⁸³

Sternfield persecutes and intimidates his new wife. Leprohon strongly intimates that because their love was not rooted in a deeper affection, but in passion, Sternfield's conduct towards his wife passes from one extreme to another. One moment he is "all tenderness and passion," the next "prey to the most gloomy irritability": reproaching

⁵⁸⁰ Rosanna Leprohon, Antoinette de Mirecourt: or Secret Marrying and Secret Sorrowing (Montreal: John Lovell, 1864. Reprint Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973).

⁵⁸¹ Ibid, 71.

⁵⁸² Ibid, 62.

⁵⁸³ Ibid, 59.

Antoinette with her coldness and cruelty and reducing the young girl to tears. If Sternfield had been gentle and considerate to Antoinette, "the passing fancy which she had mistaken for love, would ultimately have ripened into deep affection."⁵⁸⁴ Instead, Antoinette's gentle and loving nature, under this system of persecution and intimidation, leads her to fear and dread not to love and confidence. Antoinette quickly realizes that he has married her "not from any romantic feeling of attachment, but from cold calculation, from motives of interest" and regrets her hasty actions;

She had erred, but how speedy had been her retribution; she had violated the dictates of conscience and religion - trampled on a daughter's most sacred duties, and what had it brought her? That which guilt and wrong-doing will ever bring to those who are not utterly hardened in evil, - remorse and wretchedness.⁵⁸⁵

In contrast is the "powerful fascination" Captain Evelyn exerts over Antoinette.⁵⁸⁶ He has laid bare his "proud heart" to her and promised to be a faithful friend "whom nothing can alienate."⁵⁸⁷ As Antoinette struggles against this dawning attachment she realizes she is "capable of a far deeper, truer love than that which she had bestowed on Audrey Sternfield."⁵⁸⁸ Leprohon contrasts Antoinette's

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid, 102.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid, 160.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid, 124.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid, 131.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid, 125.

"girlish fancy" for Sternfield with her feelings for Evelyn: "She loved with womanly love."⁵⁸⁹ The love that Evelyn offered is based on a "priceless devotion" that would shield Antoinette in his "kindly arms" from "life's trials and cares."⁵⁹⁰ Upon Sternfield's death in a duel, Antoinette marries Colonel Evelyn and to her "devoted idolizing husband she brought the unclouded domestic felicity he had for so many weary years of his life despaired of ever knowing, and in assuring his happiness, she assured her own."⁵⁹¹

Doubtless the most prolific Canadian author in the nineteenth century was May Agnes Fleming. Born in 1840 in St. John, New Brunswick, during the 1870s she earned as much as \$10,000 a year from one New York publisher. Fleming moved to the United States about 1875 where she died five years later.⁵⁹² First published at seventeen, she wrote serialized fiction for New York and London periodicals as well as publishing several novels in both Britain and America. Because so many of her books were published under different titles and by different publishing houses, it is difficult to determine the exact number of novels she wrote, with estimates ranging from twenty-two to forty-two within seventeen years.⁵⁹³ She explores the tragic complexities of

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid, 129.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid, 199.

⁵⁹² Klinck, Literary History of Canada, 111 and Dictionary of Canadian Biography 10.

love for her heroine Katherine Dangerfield in the 1873 novel A Wonderful Woman. Katherine is courted by two men, Peter Dangerfield and Gaston Dantree. She finds Peter a "wretched little bore" with a "hideous little weasen face;" a "little grinning imbecile" who asks for Katherine's hand in marriage.⁵⁹⁴ Katherine replies that she would not marry him if he was "the only man left in the world, and the penalty of refusing you be to go to my grave an old maid." She wonders if Peter is in love with her or if it is "Scarswood Park, and the heiress of eight thousand a year" that he really loves. She glimpses the handsome tenor, Gaston Dantree, at an evening concert and declares; "If ever I marry, it shall be a man - a demi-god like that."⁵⁹⁵ Katherine's father points out the dangers that lie in her notions of romantic love;

Peter's not handsome, I know, nor dashing, but he's a clever little fellow, and my nephew, and in love with you, and will make you a much better husband, my dear, than a much better-looking man. Handsome men are always vain as peacocks, and so deeply in love with themselves that they never have room in their conceited hearts and empty heads to love anyone else. Don't be romantic my dear - you'll not find heroes anywhere now except in Mudie's novels.⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹³ See Macmillan, Silenced Sextet and Klinck, Literary History of Canada.

⁵⁹⁴ May Agnes Fleming, A Wonderful Woman (New York:G.W.Carleton and Co.,1873),13.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid, 16.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid, 14.

Unfortunately, it is Gaston's "fatal beauty" that Katherine falls in love with. Gaston declares his love for Katherine and "his voice, his glance, his passionate words, were the perfection of first-class drama."⁵⁹⁷ The two plan to marry until it is revealed that Katherine is not the heiress that both Peter and Gaston believe her to be. Both Peter and Dantree are in love with her fortune. As the conniving Mrs. Vavasor points out; "You don't suppose now ... this Mr. Dantree is in love with her? ... She is the heiress of Scarswood; and Mr. Dantree - like yourself, I haven't a doubt - is in love with that. I wonder if either of you would want to marry her if she hadn't a farthing."⁵⁹⁸ Gaston refuses to marry Katherine, as predicted. Peter, now Sir Peter and the heir of Scarswood, offers to make Katherine his mistress; "he had offered one of the proudest girls in England the most deadly insult a man can offer a woman."⁵⁹⁹ Having lost everything - her lover, her fortune, and her father (who soon dies), Katherine runs away and is believed dead. It is not until the end of this lengthy novel that Katherine finds a love built on trust and mutual respect with Sir Arthur Tregenna.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid, 44.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid, 40.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid, 179.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid, 544.

Louisa Murray's "Marguerite Kneller" portrays the love that painter Maurice experiences for the two Kneller sisters, Marguerite and Claire.⁶⁰¹ It is Marguerite that he first falls in love with and subsequently plans to marry. She is not at all beautiful but Maurice is attracted by the strength of her character and her ability as an artist. Maurice leaves Marguerite, after their engagement, to study painting in Italy. Upon Maurice's return, after four years away, he realises the younger sister Claire has grown quite beautiful. Dazzled by his ideal of perfection and carried away by his "wild, resistless passion", he forgets Marguerite and is prepared to give Claire "all he possessed, admiration, worship, passionate love." Marguerite gradually realizes that Maurice's love for her has changed. "The word, the act, were there, but the soul which once inspired them, the love which gave them life, were fled forever, and only the worthless form remained."⁶⁰² In the end, both Maurice and Marguerite have achieved tremendous success as painters. Maurice is unhappily married to Claire and regrets his decision to paint society portraits for money and fame. Marguerite realises she would rather be a woman who is loved. "Fame, glory, or never-dying-name - if they were laid at my feet this moment, I would give them all to feel as I felt long years ago when I sat on this bench beside Maurice and he told me he loved me."⁶⁰³

⁶⁰¹ Murray, "Marguerite Kneller", 243.

⁶⁰² Ibid, 334.

A major sub-plot found in much of this fiction is the marriage for money. Agnes Maule Machar condemns the necessity of marriage as an alternative to poverty in The Heir of Fairmount Grange. Ethel Howard is left an orphan when her uncle dies. With the arrival of the supposed long-dead nephew Jack, Ethel now has no claim to her home and "must expect to earn her own living, like other poor girls she had known."⁶⁰⁴ She shrinks from the broad hints given by her aunt regarding the intentions of Edgar Fane. "She had never allowed herself to put the idea of marriage definitely to her own mind - even as the heiress of Fairmount Grange, and now that things were so changed it was horrible to have it suggested as a possible alternative from a life of poverty and struggle."⁶⁰⁵ Edgar is reluctant to propose marriage to the now penniless girl. He states he is utterly unable to provide her with a home and can only offer her a "share in a struggle for existence" which is difficult enough for him. Fane "bewailed the hard fate that had crossed his plans and hopes; but he thought very little about the prospects and fate of the girl he professed to love."⁶⁰⁶ Ethel's cousin, Jack Howard, is a "dissipated alcoholic" who offers her a marriage that will enable her to remain at Fairmount. "She knew in her heart that she could

⁶⁰³ Ibid, 522.

⁶⁰⁴ Agnes Maule Machar, The Heir of Fairmount Grange (Toronto:Copp Clark,1895),13.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid, 14.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

never accept it. Some girls in her position would scarcely have hesitated to do so; but her own innate sense of womanly delicacy and honour, strengthened by her uncle's influence, would have utterly revolted from a desecration of the most sacred of unions, for the sake of comfort and convenience."⁶⁰⁷

In "The Winning Card", Osmund Faulkner falls in love with and proposes marriage to Pauline Delapratte.⁶⁰⁸ However, Pauline's ambitious mother has arranged her marriage to a wealthy gentleman. This engagement is "an affair of pure worldliness" and although Pauline is in love with Osmond she accedes to her mother's wishes. Three years later Pauline is "a woman whose faded face and general look of being prematurely aged" gives visible evidence of her unhappy marital life. She "had sold herself for a mess of pottage" and her life of "thwarted dreariness, seemed to her like the stairway in some ruin, which still leads upward, but leads only to emptiness." Pauline dies an early death.

Paolo and Guilia, in Louisa Murray's "Carmina", have based their marriage on money and vanity. Paolo had married her "chiefly, if not altogether, that he might have money to aid in the liberation of Italy."⁶⁰⁹ Guilia's fancy for Paolo was "born of vanity." She believed she would get the "easy

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid, 42.

⁶⁰⁸ Edgar Fawcett, "The Winning Card", Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly 1(1878)462-72.

⁶⁰⁹ Murray, "Carmina", 486.

indulgence of an Italian husband of the old regime." But they were scarcely married before Paolo began to see "how utterly false, selfish, and worthless she was." To add to his punishment, he also found "that she was wholly incapable of understanding or sympathizing with his hopes and projects."⁶¹⁰ He had "sold himself to a loveless and degraded lot." As for Guilia, "she both hated and feared him as a tyrant." She turns her husband into the police, divorces him, and marries a man who poisons her within a year.

Two minor characters in the serialized novel Juliet have disastrous marriages that were based on financial considerations. Mr. Travers did not marry his wife for love but "for that slip of land that dove-tailed into Cosby farm." She also had a "bit of money besides." Although the elder Travers "liked and esteemed" his wife he "might have liked and esteemed her ever so much" but he would not have married her "if it hadn't been for the land and the money."⁶¹¹ He goes on to tell his son that there is "no particular virtue in marrying for love" for "it's all the same in a dozen years time whatever you've married for." The unhappy marriage is plagued by perpetual misunderstanding, quarrels, bickering, and divisions that "widen the breach slowly but surely day by day."⁶¹² Juliet's

⁶¹⁰ Ibid, 489.

⁶¹¹ Lovett-Cameron, "Juliet", 289.

⁶¹² Ibid, 381.

stepmother, Mrs. Blair, schemes to marry Reverend Daniel Lamplough of Belgravia in order to get into London society. Lamplough thinks she is a wealthy widow. She soon discovers her new husband is a selfish and vulgar domestic tyrant. Her dream of mixing in aristocratic circles has been replaced with the "three-fold tyranny" of husband, sister-in-law and "sour-visaged" maid.⁶¹³

Antoinette de Mirecourt's aunt Madame D'Aulnay has had her husband chosen for her. There is "scarcely a shadow of real sympathy" between them. He is "matter-of-fact, practical, and intensely literary." She is "romantic, enthusiastic in temperament, and cannot endure the sight of a book."⁶¹⁴ The rich and costly trousseau Madame D'Aulnay was allowed to select did much to reconcile her to a marriage with a man she did not love. Her husband's indulgence and generosity made her happy in her lot but she tells Antoinette it was a "fearfully hazardous" experiment that might have ended in lifelong misery. For Madame D'Aulnay, "the only sure basis for a happy marriage is mutual love, and community of soul and feeling." As the author points out; "[a]pparently mutual esteem, moral worth, and prudence in point of suitable choice, counted for nothing with Madame D'Aulnay."⁶¹⁵ These, however, constituted the true basis for marriage.

⁶¹³ Ibid, 650

⁶¹⁴ Leprohon, Antoinette de Mirecourt, 25.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid, 26.

Lottie's decision to marry Sharpley was based on her desire for a life of ease in the city. Her mother viewed marriage as "principally a comfortable settlement." But Lottie's mercenary marriage changed her for the worse. "The sensual, worldly expression in her face had become more prominent and the girlish softness and freshness had very much faded from a face which seemed hardening into lines of selfish scheming."⁶¹⁶

Lady Cecil and Lady Dangerfield discuss the desirability of arranged marriages in Fleming's A Wonderful Woman. Lady Cecil feels she is to be sold, if Sir Arthur Tregenna chooses to buy her, in order to replenish her father's depleted fortune. She does not love Sir Arthur and although "old enough to know better, certainly, and admirably trained by a thorough woman of the world" she believes in love.⁶¹⁷ Cecil finds the lives they lead and the marriages they make are miserable and degrading. Ginevra responds that poverty is like misery, torture, and death. "You may know how horrible poverty is, when it is more horrible than marrying Peter Dangerfield. I abhor both but I abhor poverty most." Of course, Sir Peter and Ginevra's marriage is miserably unhappy. They are "dragging out their married, not mated, lives, in the grandeur and dullness of Scarswood."⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁶ Machar, "Lost and Won", 108.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid, 218.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid, 544.

It is not the fact that the heroine marries which is significant but that the desirable marriage is symbolic. This convention does not necessarily reflect reality or actual experience. It reflects the assumption that marriage was, and remains, throughout the period, the only desirable goal for a woman. This fiction embodied that middle class ideology which viewed the heroine's marriage as an adjustment to and an acceptance of society's values. With marriage, the heroine took her proper place in the social structure. The overwhelming emphasis on the need to find love and to be married, takes precedence over any other women's issues - work, economic dependency, education. "All these problems are resolved, or rather, simply disappear on the marriage of the heroine."⁶¹⁹ She had assimilated to herself the acceptable characteristics of true womanhood.

For those young women who had yet to take to heart the fictional lessons regarding selfless love and duty, nineteenth century writers pointed to the dangers of flirtations. "Flirtation was universally condemned as unfair, deceitful, and impious ... and ultimately, a sure path to misery for the flirt herself, as well as the unfortunates she played with."⁶²⁰ Didactic works written for women had long railed against the practice. What A Young Woman Ought to Know pointed to the moral dangers for girls who flirted with admirers.

⁶¹⁹ Stubbs, Women and Fiction, 29.

⁶²⁰ Rowbotham, Good Girls Make Good Wives, 49.

I have known young men and women to enter into flirtations 'for fun'. I knew a girl whose chief delight seemed to be in getting young men in love with her, only to cast them aside when tired of their adoration. She called this fun, but it was cruelty. In olden times men amused themselves by throwing Christians to wild beasts and watching them while being torn to pieces. This was their idea of fun and the flirt's idea of amusement seems to be of the same order. She plays with the man as the cat with the mouse; and experiences no pangs of conscience, when, torn and bleeding in heart, she tosses him aside for a new victim. ... Many a girl who to-day is lost to virtue had no idea that she was starting on this downward road. She was only having a good time.⁶²¹

Agnes Maule Machar comments in both The Heir of Fairmount Grange and Lost and Won on the improprieties of flirtations. The heiress Ethel found "the very word flirtation odious."⁶²² Her uncle had often spoken severely of the "selfish vulgarity of flirting" and when she hears her Cousin Fanny described as "a great flirt" Ethel fears she will not like her. She is disappointed in Norman Stuart who appears to tolerate flirtations. But Stuart suggests Fanny is too open and impartial to deceive anyone. He does condemn "that flirting with intent to deceive" which he views as "selfish and wicked."⁶²³ "A man or woman who deliberately tries to win the love of another, just from selfish vanity is doing a cruel thing; and is taking a terrible risk." In Lost and Won Lottie's "flirting propensities", which did not end with her marriage, cause her to be spoken about "by the fast young men of

⁶²¹ Wood-Allen, What A Young Woman Ought To Know, 160-162.

⁶²² Machar, The Heir of Fairmount Grange, 72.

⁶²³ Ibid, 83.

Carrington."⁶²⁴

Antoinette de Mirecourt's aunt is a married flirt. She is used to being courted and flattered and utilises the "whole artillery of her charms ... speaking glances, bewitching smiles, and sweetly modulated tones ..." on her dozens of admirers.⁶²⁵ Leprohon also describes her as vain, shallow, and selfish. Flora Grantly is also shallow, selfish, and spoilt, and a consummate flirt, even after her engagement to Hugh. While her betrothed is away on business she "continued to amuse herself very well without her lover. She laughed and flirted, for where were the use of being miserable?[sic] She was quite sure that Hugh would not desire that she would live in seclusion just because he was away."⁶²⁶ Lady Cecil Clive, in Agnes Fleming's A Wonderful Woman is described as a "flirt by nature - a coquette ripe for mischief, a beauty without mercy and without heart."⁶²⁷ Sir Arthur Tregenna is asked by his father, on his death-bed, to make Lady Cecil his wife. But seeing her flirting propensities he vows; "no hardened coquette shall ever be wife of mine."⁶²⁸ Although Lady Cecil draws the line at marriage, describing a married flirt as "the most despicable character on earth", her friend Ginevra

⁶²⁴ Machar, "Lost and Won", 215.

⁶²⁵ Leprohon, Antoinette de Mirecourt, 34.

⁶²⁶ Moore, "The One Who Loved Him", 188.

⁶²⁷ Fleming, A Wonderful Woman, 208.

⁶²⁸ Ibid, 239

Dangerfield (Sir Peter's wife) sees no harm. "I don't lead on men to gratify my own pretty vanity, to swell the list of a vain, empty-headed, empty-hearted woman of the world's triumphs. I only like to have people like me - admire me if you will; and when gentlemen are pleasant and dance well, and talk well, I can't be frigid and formal, talk to them on stilts. It's they who are stupid - moths who will rush into the candle and singe their wings, do what you will."⁶²⁹ Her habits lead to a separation from her husband, Sir Peter. In An Algonquin Maiden Rose gives Allan some reason for concern about her moral purity over her conduct with Mr. Galton. Allan knew Rose did not care for Galton and yet she appeared to be giving him reason to think she did. Allan wonders; "With how many men did she pursue this course of action; and was he to believe her guilty of careless coquetry? Upon how many admirers may a rose breathe perfume and still keep its innocent heart sweet for its lover?"⁶³⁰

Two stories in Belford's magazine paint a bleak picture for those women who flirt. In "The Story of a Flirt"⁶³¹ Alice is "an ordinary Canadian girl, too much petted at home and allowed too much freedom with her gentlemen admirers."⁶³² She is quite consciously drifting into a flirtation with

⁶²⁹ Ibid, 229.

⁶³⁰ Adams and Wetherall, An Algonquin Maiden, 131.

⁶³¹ F.T., "The Story of a Flirt", Belford's Magazine 2(1877)669-79.

⁶³² Ibid, 669.

Cyril. When he comments that he does not like flirting, Alice is reminded of her resolution not to flirt, caused by a scene in her father's drawing room a few months back.

It was the end of a flirtation. A man she had encouraged without caring for, merely because it was pleasant, stood, hat in hand before her, hurt and angry. He took his conge silently and proudly, but she had heard bad accounts of him since, and her conscience had given many a twinge of remorse.⁶³³

Cyril falls desperately in love with Alice and proposes marriage. Alice felt that she might love Cyril and did not want to lose him, yet "she did not want to bind herself." He is given permission to write and eventually wins a promise of marriage from Alice. They promise to be faithful to each other and wait for Cyril to finish his education and assume his profession. But Alice has been flirting all along. Upon Cyril's graduation he receives a letter from Alice informing him that she has just become the wife of a wealthy American. The story then takes a glimpse at the two ten years later. "Cyril's disappointment disarranged all the plans he had laid out for his life."⁶³⁴ He has given up his plans to study for the bar and become a missionary in the far west. "He never loved again, and never married." Alice reaps "the full reward of a heartless flirt." The money she sold herself for was lost in a stock market crash. Another woman might have stood by her husband, "a good-hearted man," but "she with her peevishness and

⁶³³ Ibid, 670.

⁶³⁴ Ibid, 679.

heartlessness drove him into courses which ended in a divorce."⁶³⁵ Alice is now a "wretched looking woman" living under her father's roof with her two spoilt children. She has become "an object of pity to all her former acquaintances."

In "Just for Fun" Alec Douglas laughingly tells his fiancée Irene Croftly that she might flirt while he is away in Europe. Irene "had the reputation, among the ladies of her acquaintance, and those of the other sex who had suffered from her cruelty, of being a flirt of the first magnitude."⁶³⁶... She keeps her engagement a secret and thus when she meets Gilbert Huntley "he knew of no reason why he should not show the admiration and the love she had awakened in his heart, and win her for his bride, if that were possible." Irene accepted his marked attentions, occasionally suffering pangs of remorse and determining to make him aware of her engagement. However, she did not want to "lose his pleasant society and his convenient escort." "Besides, the temptation 'to see how far he would go, just for fun,' proved too strong for her sense of right, and so the flirtation went on to its fatal end."⁶³⁷ It is the town doctor who points out to Huntly that, not only is Irene a "dreadful little flirt", she is engaged. Gilbert succumbs

⁶³⁵ Ibid.

⁶³⁶ Belle Campbell, "Just for Fun", Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly 5(1880)61-65, 61.

⁶³⁷ Ibid.

to a raging brain-fever and when he dies Irene feels that "his death lay at her door." When Alec returns from Europe he finds Irene "a changed woman." Her "punishment was greater than she could bear, and in the fall of the year she faded, drooped, and died like a broken lily."⁶³⁸ She left her fiancée "a lonely grief-stricken man, to pass a life of wretchedness and bitter regret, one more victim to the pastime in which so many women indulge, usually without much thought of cruelty, but, like Irene Croftley, 'Just for Fun'."

In this fiction, it was not only the flirts that forfeited their lives. Whoever broke society's rules was provided with no respectable way to live on. The "simple and innocent" Carmina falls passionately in love with the handsome Paolo. She waits patiently for his return and finally travels to the city only to find that Paolo has married the wealthy Giulia. After hearing that Paolo's life is in danger she rushes to Jacopo, her faithful friend, to beg his help in saving Paolo. Jacopo agrees to help "if you [Carmina] will vow on this image of the Madonna and the Holy Child ... that you will not have him for your lover. ... I could bear to see you his wife since you love him so much, but never his mistress."⁶³⁹ However, Paolo refuses to leave his villa unless Carmina runs away with him. Finding it impossible to resist her lover, Carmina accompanies Paolo

⁶³⁸ Ibid, 65.

⁶³⁹ Murray, "Carmina", 499.

but is shot during their escape. As she lies dying in Paolo's arms she says; "I could not be your wife, and Madonna would not let me be your beloved with out."⁶⁴⁰ For Jacopo, Carmina "was a pure lily" whom the Madonna took away "that this evil world might not stain her whiteness."

Norah Blake's passionate love for an English officer provides the motive for her mother's revenge in "Dinah Blake's Revenge." Led astray by the rich Major Barrington's promise of marriage, Norah becomes "a fallen and despised woman." "For her, the betrayed and fallen, there could be never more the sunlight of joy; still on her darkened horizon dimly there rose the star of heavenly hope illumining the night of despair. She rose up strengthened to endure the world's scorn, even her mother's bitter reproaches, still harder to bear - all as the punishment due to her sinful dereliction from the path of virtue."⁶⁴¹ Nora dies giving birth to the daughter who will be switched with the Major's infant. "Sinful passion" had ruined the "once beautiful and innocent girl."

The tragic implications of the love of beauty are explored in "The Bridal Veil."⁶⁴² Ada is a "proud, haughty, spoilt beauty" who will soon be married. In her haste to

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid, 500.

⁶⁴¹ Mrs. J. V. Noel, "Dinah Blake's Revenge", Canadian Monthly 1, 2 (1872), 203.

⁶⁴² Dorothea Dale, "The Bridal Veil", The Canadian Monthly 2 (Oct, 1872) 189-301.

get her wedding veil finished she visits the seamstress who is dying of small-pox and Ada contracts the disease. The day fixed for her wedding comes and goes before she has sufficiently recovered to see her fiancée Henry. When she catches a glimpse of her disfigured, "seamed and scarred face" she realizes "her power over him would be gone."⁶⁴³ When Henry visits her he sees no trace of Ada, only "the scarred lines, the disfigured features, a face which men would turn at now for its unsightliness, as they had once done for its rare loveliness." Ada sees he cannot love her as she is; that "it was not me you loved after all" but her beauty. Ada releases Henry from their engagement; "the spoiled darling of society...[now] a miserable, rejected woman."⁶⁴⁴ Sir Henry marries another, but she does not love him as Ada had and their marriage is a failure. He retires from the world "a sadder, but perhaps a better man."⁶⁴⁵

Several authors point to the evils of romance-reading and their emphasis on passion as a basis for relationships between men and women. Several fictional characters' ideas and judgement have been distorted by their reading of sentimental romances. It was firmly maintained that this type of novel, as opposed to the improving fiction which espoused moral values, engendered false and unreal notions of life. Mrs. Mary Wood-Allen, M.D., cautioned against the

⁶⁴³ Ibid, 295.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid, 298.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid, 299.

"false, pernicious idea of the relation of men and women" emphasised in foreign novels.⁶⁴⁶ "The central idea of romances is this passionate attraction of the sexes. The plot gathers in intensity around the lovers, and culminates in their marriage, after which life is presumed to move on without a jar, and silly girls and impulsive boys imagine that the sweet pain that accompanies the touch of hands or the glance of the eyes is love, and is a sufficient guarantee for the forming of a life partnership."

Rosanna Leprohon discusses the implications of such reading in two of her serialized works, "The Stepmother" and "Ida Beresford" as well as in Antoinette de Mirecourt. The conniving stepmother is addicted to "silly French novels". Ida's library contains nothing "useful or improving" just "silly novels and insipid poems." Leprohon asks; "What could be expected from such a course."⁶⁴⁷ By contrast, Lucy reads aloud from a story "full of deep interest and pathos; beautifully, yet forcibly inculcating the necessity of gentleness and forbearance towards others; and of rigid self-command."⁶⁴⁸ Antoinette is placed under the care of her cousin Mrs. D'Aulnay whose ideas of romance have been formed from novel-reading. Although Antoinette's "moral perceptions were of a keener character", Mrs. D'Aulnay "with her unfixed principles, her lax ideas of right and

⁶⁴⁶ Wood-Allen, What A Young Woman Ought to Know, 203.

⁶⁴⁷ Leprohon, "Ida Beresford", 114.

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid, 74.

wrong" sees no harm in permitting Colonel Evelyn's attentions to her charge.⁶⁴⁹ "On the contrary, to a mind stored, like hers, with novels, love-tales of the most reprehensible folly, there was something inexpressibly touching in this dawning of un amour malheureux." Katherine, the heroine in A Wonderful Woman, gets her ideas of love from novel-reading. The disastrous results of basing affection on the admiration of beauty and passion propel the entire plot of the novel. Agnes Maule Machar deals with this issue in two novels serialized in The Canadian Monthly, 'For King and Country' and 'Lost and Won'. Lottie bases her ideas of courtship on "the proceedings of the heroes of the vapid romances which constituted her only reading."⁶⁵⁰... It is to these "unquestionable authorities" that she turns to judge the conduct of her two lovers. "Alan ... had certainly no aptitude for making the pretty speeches and compliments indulged in so freely by the heroes of her favorite novels, and seeming to come so readily to the lips of her new acquaintance, Mr. Sharpley." In contrast to the round of charitable activities carried on by Lenore, Lottie spends her time "lying on the settee ... engrossed in one of the morbid sensational romances she was so fond of reading... not only vapid and unprofitable, but positively pernicious, from their highly coloured and false views of life."⁶⁵¹

⁶⁴⁹ Leprohon, Antoinette de Mirecourt, 126.

⁶⁵⁰ Machar, "Lost and Won", 16.

Authors also showed a profound mistrust of "society's" ability to inculcate proper notions of middle class love. They cautioned young women against emulating the woman of fashion whose endless round of mindless public functions were contrasted with dutiful charitable works and the moral superiority of living a more private personal life. The fashionable woman was derided for her idleness and unproductive leisured life. The medical profession had pointed out that the artificial fashionable life was disastrous for a woman's health. Fiction suggested it was disastrous for her morals.

Amy's mother had watched over her, striving "both by precept and example, to inculcate in her youthful mind the pure precepts of religion and the necessity of submitting in everything to the will of Heaven."⁶⁵² Her stepmother, by contrast, is an unworthy mentor for she spends her days in carriage rides and visits and her nights dressing fashionably or going to balls, theatres or concerts. The orphan Pauline lives with her cousin, the fashionable Mrs. Fortescue-Jones. An old friend of her long-dead mother cautions Pauline about the "morally poisonous" atmosphere which surrounds her. "Are you not a mere plaything in the hands of this foolish, flippant, extravagant woman, your money ministering to her pleasures while your young life is soiled by an incessant contact with her sordid, almost grimy

⁶⁵¹ Ibid, 214.

⁶⁵² Leprohon, "The Stepmother", 220.

worldliness."⁶⁵³ Faulkner proposes marriage to Pauline, to save her, but shortly dies. His death and his strong moral conscience move Pauline to change her life. Faulkner's words break upon her "deadening conscience." She leaves her cousin Lydia's to live with her Aunt Margaret, "a prim little maiden-lady" who views Lydia as "a lost soul" and now considers Pauline "a reclaimed one." Henceforth, she rarely appears in fashionable society, preferring "a quieter, highly cultured circle," where "senseless follies are not worshipped" and "depraved gossip and scandal find no conversational openings."⁶⁵⁴

Young Agnes hears "the voice of duty" and wishes she could remain in the country "secluded from the gay world, far removed from its temptations and allurements."⁶⁵⁵ When she returns to the city she declines "all invitations to balls, or gay parties", and refuses to attend the theatre. She replies to her friends' inquiries "that she had, at length, become convinced of the vanity and sinfulness of such pursuits, and no longer dared to imperil her immortal interests by engaging in them." After many tribulations, Agnes marries Arthur Bernard - a man who, like her, "believes in the powerful influence of women if used for good."

⁶⁵³ Fawcett, "The Winning Card", 468.

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid, 472.

⁶⁵⁵ Mary E. Herbert, Woman as she Should Be, or, Agnes Wiltshire (Halifax, 1861), 21.

For Antoinette, the temptations of her cousin's gay, fashionable, pleasure-loving house prove to be too much for her "weak heart and feeble resolves." After receiving letters from her father, warning her to watch over her affections, and her governess Mrs. Gerard, which spoke of duty and the errors of the gay life, Antoinette examines her new fashionable life.

Was she really the same innocent, guileless little country girl, whose thoughts and pleasures a few weeks previous had been as simple as those of a child? - She, whose long conversations with Mrs. D'Aulnay ever turned on dress, fashion, or silly sentiment, who lived in a round of glittering gaiety that gave no time for serious reflection or self-examination? What amusements had replaced her former quiet country walks and useful course of reading - her religious and charitable duties? The perusal of silly novels and exaggerated love poems; the conversation of frivolous men of the world, whose whispered flatteries and lover-like protestations had become so familiar to her ear that they had almost ceased to make her blush.⁶⁵⁶

It is Colonel Evelyn who tells Antoinette to go back to her happy country home, the home in which she had grown up "candid and truthful; remain with the tried, wise friends of your girlhood. You will meet none such in the gay, heartless life on which you have lately entered."⁶⁵⁷

Shortly after her honeymoon, Virginia Weston enters the "whirl of society." Mrs. Leprohon comments that it was truly sad to see "a woman that God had endowed with intellectual abilities of a high order" devote her hours to the "fashioning of a dinner robe or the trimming of a

⁶⁵⁶ Leprohon, Antoinette de Mirecourt, 45.

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid, 96.

ball-dress." Her abilities had been calculated to make her her husband's friend and counsellor and enable her to elevate and enoble the members of her own sex.⁶⁵⁸ As Virginia queens it in society "more despotically than ever", her true friends remark that she has grown "more reckless... less feminine and gentle..."⁶⁵⁹ Tired of the "fashionable folly" and grown weary of the "flattery and homage" she feels herself "capable of better and higher things..." It is not until she turns her back on society, due to financial reverses, that she strives to follow a "nobler path."⁶⁶⁰

Juliet Travers throws herself into the whirl of London society as she realizes her marriage to Cecil is doomed. But she plunged into this "whirl of dissipation" in vain. She became reckless and bitter, "reckless of good and evil, and very bitter against her life."⁶⁶¹ Juliet tries to fill up the blank of her life with admiration and flattery "thus perverting all the best and highest feelings of her nature." She is no longer the truthful young woman "with the best and highest instincts of womanhood shining out of her ever-varying face" but a cold and unloving worldly woman "whose doings had become talked and gossiped about."⁶⁶² It

⁶⁵⁸ Rosanna Leprohon, "Clive Weston's Wedding Anniversary", Canadian Monthly 2(1872)97-111, 100.

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid, 111.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁶¹ Lovett-Cameron, "Juliet", 131.

⁶⁶² Ibid, 134.

is Fleming that recommends that she return to the country. He tells her that her "heart is too noble, your mind is too refined ... to waste on such companions as these." She trades the "empty and wasted existence" of fashionable life for the peaceful life of duty and work at Sotherne.⁶⁶³

Another characteristic of this domestic fiction is that all of the major female characters are without mothers. In a model of domesticity that presumed it was women who held the family unit together, the absence of a mother's moral guidance was disastrous. The father might continue to provide material support for his children but, by his very nature, was unsuited to assume the moral responsibilities of his dead wife. This motherless heroine represents "an ideological polarity for women of family/autonomy: on the one hand, the safe female world in which, by definition, nothing happens, and a woman's identity replicates her mothers; on the other, the dangerous world of the unprotected female, who has to find her own identity, about which stories can be written."⁶⁶⁴

Ida is a helpless orphan brought up in the artificial atmosphere of fashionable life. "With no fond mother to watch over her, to instil the love of virtue and religion in her young heart ... She had grown up proud, passionate, and

⁶⁶³ Ibid, 508.

⁶⁶⁴ Tess Cosslett, Woman to Woman: female friendships in Victorian Fiction (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1988), 2/3.

overbearing, a stranger alike to self-control or forbearance."⁶⁶⁵ In An Algonquin Maiden Rose Macleod's father forbids the romance between Alan and Rose. Although Rose dutifully obeys her father's wishes, her pale cheeks and lifeless manner cause him concern. Macleod wonders if he has been "unnatural and tyrannical"⁶⁶⁶ and contemplates the advice his dead wife, "who had been infinitely his superior," might have given Rose. "If she was alive now would she have taken this cruelly peremptory course with their daughter."⁶⁶⁷ Ada is an only child whose mother had died when she was quite young. She had grown up head-strong, self-willed, and imperious. "Her father, during his early life, had worked hard and saved money - money that he only cared about in as much as it enabled him to surround his idolized daughter with the luxuries that money alone can procure."⁶⁶⁸ A man of "naturally quiet tastes" who did not like "to go much into society", he provides Ada with a respectable chaperone and companion, whom Ada easily manipulates. Her lack of moral guidance and the absence of a mother's influence to curb her selfish nature led her not only to an unsuitable engagement but to disfigurement by small-pox.

⁶⁶⁵ Leprohon, "Ida Beresford", 16.

⁶⁶⁶ Adams and Wetherall, An Algonquin Maiden, 178.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid, 180.

⁶⁶⁸ "The Wedding Veil", 291.

Mrs. Hamilton dies, leaving an infant daughter Pauline. Before her death, the mother sends a letter to her old friend asking that he watch over Pauline's future; "there can be no question that the thought of this child's future education under the care of a man [Mr. Hamilton] whom she believed one mass of callous worldliness, was to the poor wife a pang worse than any which either death or disease might inflict."⁶⁶⁹ The friend, Faulkner, declines any involvement with the young Pauline for the first eighteen years of her life. Pauline has grown up under the care of her gay and fashionable cousin Lydia. Consequently, there is a "hardness and coldness" about Pauline due, no doubt, to her constant exposure to the fast and vulgar life around her. When Faulkner speaks to her of the life she is leading Pauline comments; "I almost feel as if my mother had spoken to me chidingly from her grave."⁶⁷⁰ Faulkner replies that it would not be chidingly but "warningly and lovingly."

Virginia Bentley grows up a motherless child raised by an indulgent aunt who always gave her her own way.⁶⁷¹ Consequently, she has "reached the age of womanhood without ever hearing the accent of reproof. Indulged in every whim when the thing was possible, when not, condoled with and petted, it was not wonderful that the noble qualities of her

⁶⁶⁹ Fawcett, "The Winning Card", 464.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid, 468.

⁶⁷¹ Leprohon, "Clive Weston's Wedding Anniversary", 99.

nature were smothered by the evil ones."⁶⁷² It takes financial and marital ruin to bring Virginia to her senses.

Another Leprohon character, Antoinette, is also a wealthy heiress with no mother. Although she has had the benefit of a governess she has no mother to take her into society and is left to the care of her cousin, Mrs. D'Aulnay. The governess fears that Mrs. D'Aulnay is "eminently unfit for the responsible office of mentor to a girl of seventeen." Mrs. D'Aulnay is "a dangerous guide and companion" and Antoinette's "simple childish reasoning" stood little chance against the "refined sophistries of this accomplished woman of the world."⁶⁷³ Antoinette's tragic secret marriage to Sternfield is due to the inadequate moral guidance she receives from her cousin.

The two major female characters in A Wonderful Woman are both without mothers. Katherine Dangerfield has "perfectly horrible manners", "the temper of a very termagant" and is "boisterous"; "a hoyden, she said whatever came uppermost in her mind. ..." She was also utterly spoiled by a doting father who confesses, "I am afraid it is true what they say of you here - Indian nurses - the lack of a mother's care - and my indulgence, have spoiled you."⁶⁷⁴ Lady Cecil, the Earl of Ruysland's daughter, also has had no mother during

⁶⁷² Ibid, 100.

⁶⁷³ Ibid, 58.

⁶⁷⁴ Fleming, A Wonderful Woman, 13.

her formative years. She has been "admirably trained by a thorough woman of the world."⁶⁷⁵ Flora Grantly is her father's spoilt only child, who grows up a vain and shallow butterfly.⁶⁷⁶ Eva Barrington's mother dies at birth as does Juliet's. Ethel, the heiress of Fairmount Grange, is an orphan. Marguerite Kneller does not have the guidance of a mother in her womanhood. Agnes Wiltshire is an orphan who lives with the kind but thoroughly worldly uncle and aunt Denham. The Denham's standard was "the fashionable world" and when Agnes rejects its artificiality they "banish her" from their presence.⁶⁷⁷

Lady Rosamond's father requests that she marry Sir Gerald Bereford, a man she is not in love with. She tries to find some means to escape the engagement. Sobbing bitterly she cries; "It is at this trying moment I miss my dear mother. ... Heaven pity those who have no mother. With her loving and tender heart my mother never would have allowed the sanctity of my feelings to be invaded and trampled upon."⁶⁷⁸

From the 1850s through the 1880s fiction was characterized by a particular image of woman and by its preoccupation with private relations and moral values. Serialized stories of this genre gendered human identity

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid, 280.

⁶⁷⁶ Moore, "The One Who Loved Him", 192.

⁶⁷⁷ Herbert, Woman as She Should Be, 11.

⁶⁷⁸ Armour, Lady Rosamond's Secret, 27.

both by saying what was female and by arguing that domestic life and morality constituted a specifically female domain. An examination of the representations found in this fiction illuminates not only the role of women but also the self-image of Canadian society as a whole. A moral structure was built up around an intensely private personal sphere of individual experience with woman at its center. These concerns were designated specifically female. Male concerns, economics and politics, were rarely discussed. By placing women at the "moral centre of the fictional structure" the maintenance of moral values became woman's responsibility and duty.⁶⁷⁹

It might be argued that middle class cultural authority rested, in part, on the power attributed to women in maintaining these values and in defining and controlling domestic relationships. The dissemination of the feminine ideal is thus intertwined with both the rise of the domestic novel and the hegemony of the middle class. The texts articulated both the values and the structure of middle class assumptions about the feminine ideal. By articulating the norms of middle class life, these works illustrate the conscious self-development of a middle-class culture. By the last decades of the century, this fiction would begin to address the situation of the most problematic nineteenth century woman: the old maid.

⁶⁷⁹ Stubbs, Women and Fiction, 8.

Chapter VII

AN HONOURABLE INDEPENDENCE

The Old Maid as Incomplete Woman

There has been an absence of serious inquiry into the single woman's position in nineteenth century Canadian society. Three works, however, explore similarly situated middle class women in America and Britain. Lee Chambers-Schiller's Liberty, A Better Husband is a study of one hundred New England spinsters.⁶⁸⁰ She argues that the spinsters of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century opened up "new possibilities for thinking about the nature of womanhood." In her search for autonomy and in her rejection of marriage, the spinster committed her life to the improvement of her own sex, her family, and her community. Yet Chambers-Schiller points to the severe limitations of the single woman's achievements. She pursued a vocation not a professional career, she remained dependent upon the needs and demands of her family, and her challenge fostered an anti-feminist reaction at the turn of the century. Sheila Jeffreys' The Spinster and Her Enemies also discusses the reaction against the spinster and the attempts

⁶⁸⁰ Lee Virginia Chambers-Schiller, Liberty, A Better Husband: Single Women in America, The Generations of 1780-1840 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984).

to discredit and undermine what Jeffreys sees as the vast amount of work single women were doing in the woman's movement.⁶⁸¹ The single woman's passionate search for meaningful work is the subject of Martha Vicinus's Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women. Her work analyses the new opportunities created by a small group of middle class women who sought to reinterpret Victorian myths in their search for dignity and independence. Vicinus concentrates upon those women who established separate women's communities in the 1860s and 1870s and those born a generation later who demanded political and economic change. Vicinus, too, outlines the massive post-war backlash against celibate women that "left women peculiarly vulnerable to the reassertion of traditional male-dominated political and economic structures."⁶⁸² Women's efforts to gain entry into male centers of power were met with defeat, according to Vicinus, because they failed to "confront the degree to which sexual differences were structural and social rather than personal and moral."

The growing debate in Canada regarding women's employment and educational opportunities centred largely on the concern that unmarried and potentially impoverished women from the middle class achieve an "honourable independence". Yet this

⁶⁸¹ Sheila Jeffreys, The Spinster and Her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality, 1880-1930 (London: Pandora, 1985). Jeffreys devotes only one chapter of the book to a discussion of spinsterhood, despite the title.

⁶⁸² Martha Vicinus, Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920 (London: Virago, 1985), 281.

potential independence threatened an entire social organization built on home and marriage and threw into question the "natural" definitions of woman's maternal nature, her selflessness and willing dependence. How could the spinster be accommodated by the nineteenth century social system while retaining the ideology regarding women decreed by middle class culture?

The reasons women do not marry involve particular social and cultural factors which influence marriage rates in any given period. The ratio of men to women can inhibit the marriage market, most obviously if women outnumber men in the population. The costs entailed in supporting a family, either real or perceived, influence marriage rates. So too do the economic opportunities available to women who do not marry and the social opprobrium attached to the single state. There is little doubt that in nineteenth-century Canada, the marriage rate declined and there were growing numbers of single women in the larger Canadian towns and cities. More women had to remain unmarried as the ratio of women over men grew. The sex ratio went from approximately 104 males for each 100 females in Ontario in 1851 to approximately 92 males per 100 females in 1891.⁶⁸³ Michael Katz's study of Hamilton at mid-century shows there was a large increase in the number of spinsters, 97 percent, between 1850 and 1860, although the number of total

⁶⁸³ Marjorie Griffen Cohen, Women's Work, Markets, and Economic Development in Nineteenth-century Ontario (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 122.

households increased only forty percent.⁶⁸⁴ The number of female heads of households stating themselves as unmarried rose from five to seven percent, that is from seven households to thirty-four.⁶⁸⁵ This ratio was compounded as both men and women began to postpone marriage until they were able to support a family in a style equivalent to the homes they were leaving. In the 1850s Canadian men married, on average, in their mid-twenties while the majority of women were two or three years younger.⁶⁸⁶ The marriage age for both men and women gradually rose, thus adding to the numbers of single women. In 1851, in the twenty to thirty year age group, one-third of the women were single. Thirty years later this had increased to forty-five percent. By 1891 over seventy percent of women under twenty-five were not married. The average age of marrying was now 26.6 years, an increase of over four years from 1851.⁶⁸⁷ As the proportion of married women declined, reaching its lowest point in 1891, it appeared to observers that it was becoming increasingly difficult to marry. For most social commentators on Canadian marriage it had become "a fact capable of easy proof" that marriages were on the decrease in proportion to the population, that the proportion of

⁶⁸⁴ Michael B.Katz, The People of Hamilton Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth Century City (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1975), 58.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid, 59.

⁶⁸⁶ Ward, Courtship, Love, and Marriage, 51.

⁶⁸⁷ Cohn, Women's Work, Markets, and Economic Development, 122.

marriages of men between the ages of twenty-three and thirty had declined, and that the number of unmarried persons had materially increased.⁶⁸⁸ However, marriage remained the most common state for Canadians. Ninety percent of Ontario women wed between the ages of eighteen and twenty-eight, while ninety percent of the men were wed by the age of thirty-two. Just over eight percent of women over the age of forty-five remained single in 1851; just over eleven percent in 1881, and slightly over nine percent in 1891 and 1900.⁶⁸⁹ Thus, approximately ten percent of adult women, at most, never wed. With the exception of Manitoba and British Columbia, in all Canadian provinces women outnumbered men from the 1860s through the end of the century. Gee has pointed out that the depression that began in the 1870s might have resulted in the postponement of marriage by making it less economically viable at an early age. However, the trend preceded the economic depression and suggests that the availability of males was an equally important factor in nuptiality.⁶⁹⁰

It was in the larger cities that the ratio of spinsterhood was most noticeable as the ratio of women to men was highest there. Throughout the mid and late

⁶⁸⁸ "The Displacement of Young Men", Canadian Magazine, 1(1893)467-70,468.

⁶⁸⁹ Ellen M. Thomas Gee, "Marriage in Nineteenth-Century Canada", Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology, 19,3(1982)311-25,315.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid, 318.

nineteenth century in Montreal and Quebec City, women outnumbered men, with the proportion of women steadily increasing.⁶⁹¹ The surplus of women in Toronto and Kingston also grew as the century progressed. Single, marriage-aged women outnumbered single men of the same age by ten to fifteen percent.⁶⁹² As early as 1851, the Halifax census showed a surplus of women over men.⁶⁹³ Imbalanced sex-ratios were also evident in Hamilton from mid-century on. In 1851, seventy-one percent of Hamilton women had married by the time they had reached twenty-six. Twenty years later the percentage of women married by this age had fallen to fifty-two. For twenty-eight year-old women, the rate of marriage dropped from seventy-nine percent in 1851 to sixty-one percent by 1871 and for thirty year olds from eighty-three percent to sixty-six.⁶⁹⁴ By the 1870s, spinsterhood had become a real possibility for Canadian women.

The majority of women who discussed the circumstances in which women came to remain single suggested that most often these women did not freely choose their marital status. Old maids, particularly fictional ones, remained single because

⁶⁹¹ D.Suzanne Cross, "The Neglected Majority, or, the Changing Role of Women in Nineteenth Century Montreal", Social History, 6, 12 (Nov, 1973) 202-223.

⁶⁹² Ward, Courtship, Love, and Marriage, 56.

⁶⁹³ Margaret Conrad, et al., No Place Like Home: Diaries and Letters of Nova Scotia Women, 1771-1938 (Formac Publishing Company, 1988), 75.

⁶⁹⁴ Katz, The People of Hamilton, 279.

of a tragic love affair or the death of a man to whom they remained forever faithful.

On analysing the spinster heart, I trust to show that it may have beaten as rapidly, may enshrine memories as cherished as that of the sentimental damsel who scoffs at a tranquil apathy which is often but the slumber, not the death of feeling; the calm decay of plants crushed down to earth before they could be crowned with blossoms or fruit.⁶⁹⁵

Van Draecken's essay contains several sketches of spinsters who had not rejected marriage. The single life was thrust upon them through some tragic situation. One, before retiring every night, gazes on a small miniature of a gentleman's picture taken long ago to which she "presses her withered lips." Elsewhere in the room is a box of old letters, "their faded ink being blotted by tears." Among the letters is one in a different handwriting "which blighted all her prospects and told her that he who should have claimed her hand was dead - that her young bright life, with its joy and hope, was to be suddenly changed for despair and suffering from which there would be no relief but in that seared apathy of feeling which has nothing more to hope or fear - which has exhausted the bitter spring of grief."

Margaret is a motherless daughter of a prosperous man who has seen her only sister obliged to break with a man she loved in order to be driven into marriage with an

⁶⁹⁵ Katherine Von Draecken, "Essay on Old Maids: Sketches of Spinster Life in England", Canadian Monthly, 4(1873)179-191, 179.

"unprincipled man, titled, and apparently wealthy." She watches her sister's miserable life and when a similar fate is pressed on her she refuses. Not only does she dislike the proposed match, she is deeply in love with one whom her father will never allow her to marry. When Margaret is left co-heiress to a fortune and still beautiful, she receives numerous proposals. "But she found none who could efface the memory of her former attachment."⁶⁹⁶ Tabetha, long past the prime of life, has always been plain and unattractive. Although cheerful and good humoured, her homely face has never encouraged male admiration and flirtation. For her, love remains a word that has "struck no chord thrilling with sweet memories." Marah is also plain and commonplace, with a homely face that has no redeeming features. Nor was she "compensated by sparkle, originality, or special intelligence."⁶⁹⁷ Overshadowed by two beautiful and accomplished sisters, she has grown up with exaggerated ideas about the value of beauty in attracting suitors. When she entered society her situation worsened due to her increasing failure in flirtations and love affairs. "There is perhaps no position so lowering to womanhood as this ... [when] the standing in social estimation of some good and perhaps intelligent girl, depends on the degree to which she can attract the notice of men."⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid, 182.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid, 185.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid, 186.

William Alger suggested that many girls, "with sublime self-renunciation", gave up a lover to a friend.⁶⁹⁹ In Alger's view, women, who were capable of any sacrifice, would willingly withdraw themselves in order that a friend might marry a man they both loved. Other women chose not to marry because of insanity in the family. For such women there could be no happiness in taking this "awful heritage into a home": in buying "my fireside with such a sin."⁷⁰⁰ Ida Grayson, in the short story "For Humanity's Sake", breaks her engagement and vows never to marry because of the mental illness of her father.⁷⁰¹ Then, too, there were those women who would not marry because they could not bear children. Under these circumstances it "would be dishonourable to marry."⁷⁰² Adele Frechette refuses the proposal of the man she loves, Doctor Chalmers, because her parents had dedicated her to the church at birth. Her conscience would never let her be perfectly happy in marriage for she had been taught from early childhood that she was to be a nun.⁷⁰³

⁶⁹⁹ William R. Alger, The Friendships of Women (Boston:Roberts Brothers, 1868), 166.

⁷⁰⁰ The Canadian Magazine, 6(1895-96)474-475.

⁷⁰¹ William Lewis Edmonds, "For Humanity's Sake", The Canadian Magazine, 5(1895)411-419.

⁷⁰² Wood-Allen, What A Young Woman Ought to Know, 116.

⁷⁰³ Clifford Smith, "A Daughter of the Church", Canadian Magazine, 5(1895)378-85.

The majority of single women portrayed in fiction have a sentimental, romantic, frequently sad, past of which only a few know the intimate details. Although the sentimental situations are often overdrawn, writers emphasized that their fictional spinsters had known love and therefore could still be considered "womanly". These spinsters were not rejecting marital norms, which would pose a threat to society. In Louisa Murray's "Marguerite Kneller, Woman and Artist", Marguerite sets her fiancée, Maurice, free in order that he might marry her sister Claire. Marguerite will never marry for "such women do not love twice." In fact, Murray suggests that this is the fate of all too many women.

Perhaps, reader, you expect me to finish my story by telling you that he there met Marguerite, that they loved each other, were married, and were happy. It may have been so, but I have told the story as far as it was told to me, and have no such happy ending to relate. I own, too, that to me it seems more in accordance with the usual course of events in this unsatisfying world that these two should never meet, or if they met should not recognize each other; but if you, dear reader, are inclined to hold a pleasanter belief, so much the better, and I sincerely hope you may never have any reason to change it.

Margaret also willingly gives up the man she loves, and is engaged to, because she becomes aware that he loves her cousin Rose more. She does not even let Rose or Eric know that she truly is in love with him: "they must not know, must not guess ...". As with other fictional single women, Margaret's love for Eric would remain "the one great constant passion of life" and nothing but death could erase

that love.⁷⁰⁴ As the years roll by and Margaret's raven hair whitens, "though not with age," there remains about her a "saintliness", a "sacredness of a great though hidden grief."

The most complete portrait of a spinster occurs in "Lost and Won" by Fidelis. Her Miss Honeydew has also suffered the tragic loss of a much loved man who, though "the grass had been green on his grave for many a year," had never been forgotten.⁷⁰⁵ Beatrice was the "queen" of the family in Elizabeth Campbell's 1879 story "How it Happened."⁷⁰⁶ She had lost her lover due to a treacherous friend. Her fiancée's love letters and declarations of devotion had never been delivered. Although tall and beautiful, "stately, cold and grand", Beatrice was "really an old maid." Family legend had it that she "had once been deeply in love - engaged in fact - and during those halcyon days she was as merry, frolicsome, full of fun and mischief as any of the ordinary mortals of the household..." When the young English officer, with whom she "was desperately, absurdly in love," left with no word, she "wanted to die" of the shame, anguish, and heart-break. Aileen also lost her fiancée through the flirtation of a cold, callous, and

⁷⁰⁴ Belle Campbell, "Margaret's Sorrow", Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly, 2(1879)685-91.

⁷⁰⁵ Fidelis, "Lost and Won", Canadian Monthly, 7(1875),399.

⁷⁰⁶ Elizabeth Campbell, "How It Happened", Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly, 3(1879)396-401.

treacherous woman.⁷⁰⁷ At eighteen, Aileen met Will; "the first man I had ever seen whom I considered worthy of a woman's love and homage, and the whole fresh love of my young heart went out to him in one great burst that left it, when, after a few happy months, I found that the return love which I had cherished as a priceless thing was no longer my own, as empty and void as space itself, save only for its misery and despair." Twenty years later, as she writes this reminiscence, she is no longer a girl but a "grey-haired weary-hearted woman." Although she has had many offers she has refused them all. "I gave all my heart to Willie - I had none left for any other."

Despite the attempts of some commentators to show that women did not invariably remain single because they were not worth having, a caricature of old maidenhood seemed firmly fixed in popular nineteenth century imagination.

By maidens yet buoyant with youth and hope, the spinster is regarded as an awful warning; an upright finger-post pointing out the way they should not go. Her solitude, with its consequent oddities of dress and manner, her defiance of fashion and scorn of hoop or bustle, drive girls of the period to more determined pursuit of a better future - a future bright with dreams of gaiety and pin-money. She excites in them too a more personal hostility, by didactics and ejaculations on dress, dissipation and flirting.⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰⁷ 'Esperance', "My Life", Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly, 6(1881)171-81.

⁷⁰⁸ Von Draecken, "Essay on Old Maids", 179.

Van Draecken points to the characterization of spinsters often found in even the greater writers, such as Dickens. She is viewed as a creature incapable of sympathy with the young, with no vocation, no consolation, no one to mourn her death or dispel the odium attached to her singlehood. Her features are "of preternatural ugliness enhanced by the sourest expression" or, if attempting to attract masculine admiration, "contorted into a repulsive smirk."⁷⁰⁹ Her hair is false, her dress is plain, her figure flat and rigid, and she has large flat feet. She is a malicious gossip who indulges in spiteful envy of the young and the fair. The old maid is viewed "as an excrescence on the face of society."⁷¹⁰

C.S.Clark's vituperative portrayal of a single woman suggests how prevalent this view remained. "Some eight years ago Grip had on its staff, a cantankerous disappointed old harridan who used to write acidulated dirt which she thought was satire. I never saw her and do not know her name, yet the way she wrote ... convinced me that I was correct. No one but a disappointed woman could have framed such language."⁷¹¹ Clark goes on to describe this anonymous writer's work as "like the wail of some disappointed old maid." The writing somehow conveyed the jealousy of youth

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid, 183.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid, 179.

⁷¹¹ C.S.Clark, Of Toronto the Good, A Social Study, The Queen City as it is (Montreal:Toronto Publishing Company, 1898:Coles, 1970)

and beauty in face of the fact that she was "getting scraggy and lean, and vinegar like" in expression. Like all old maids, she had a "vindictive nature." She was also "one whose acidulated face would stop a clock."⁷¹² Napheys stated that the common portrayal of spinsters as "peevish, selfish, given to queer fancies and unpleasant eccentricities" was most often correct.⁷¹³ The spinster life was one of monotony and idleness with little or no resources for happiness. "Deprived of the natural objects of interest, the sentiments are apt to fix themselves on parrots or poodles, or to be confined within the breast or wither for want of nourishment." Single women, as a class, presented a "sad spectacle of prolonged nervous maladies ... [and] sickly sensibility."

Medical knowledge exacerbated this negative portrayal of the old maid. For the medical profession, marriage was seen as the only natural and desirable condition for a woman. Marriage denoted normalcy and health. It was only through marriage that a woman would become complete and fulfilled, physically and mentally. The medical fraternity frightened spinsters with its theories about the decay of "unused organs" and the unnaturalness of celibacy for both men and women. Woman's natural biological function was childbearing, her natural social role that of wife and mother. Medicine added biological dysfunction to the social

⁷¹² Ibid, 46.

⁷¹³ Napheys, The Physical Life of Woman, 277.

deviancy of which spinsters had already been accused.

Spinsterhood entailed its own health threats. It was a "common observation" among doctors who had studied woman's physical nature, that despite the 'perils of maternity' the health of single women during the child-bearing years was not as good as that of their married counterparts.⁷¹⁴ Marriage exerted a curative influence on many female ailments. Doctors pointed to the fact that upon marriage many women improved in health. One maintained that these favourable results were accounted for by the fact that success was a tonic and for women marriage was success.⁷¹⁵ There were physical implications to long term celibacy. Doctors believed that there were a startling list of diseases that either originated from strictly observed celibacy or were greatly intensified by it.⁷¹⁶ For Holbrook, the proverbial eccentricities of the old maid were the "unavoidable consequences of an unnatural way of living." Doctors consistently linked the particular medical problems of the spinster to their non-fulfillment of the role they felt women were destined to fulfill. "Our own opinion is that nature gave to each sex certain functions, and that the whole system is in better health when all parts and powers fulfill their destiny."⁷¹⁷

⁷¹⁴ Ibid, 276.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid, 277.

⁷¹⁶ M.L.Holbrook, M.D., Parturition without Pain (1875), 10.

⁷¹⁷ Napheys, The Physical Life of Woman, 277.

The woman whose reproductive organs went unused would also experience the atrophy and physical derangement of those organs. Dr. Chavasse stated that the sterile and the single woman were both much more prone to womb disease than the fruitful married woman.⁷¹⁸ According to the Practical Home Physician, fibroid tumours were more common among women who had not borne children. Two medical treatises on the diseases of women argued that female celibacy increased the risk of disease. Henry Jacques Garrigues argued in 1894: "especially is the liability to the formation of fibromas of the uterus greater in unmarried and nulliparous women than in those who have borne children, as if the uterus, deprived of the function of building up new being were more liable to use the material for the formation of a tumour." Dr. Charles Penrose's textbook on the diseases of women put it more succinctly in 1905: "Celibacy is an unnatural state and a common cause of disease."⁷¹⁹ As with other female ailments, those which arose from defect or disease of the ovaries or other female organs were often improved or completely removed by marriage.⁷²⁰

The medical profession went even further in suggesting that the single life incurred dysfunction and disease not only in the sexual organs but elsewhere as well. Spinsters

⁷¹⁸ Chavasse, Advice to a Wife on the Management of her Health, 105.

⁷¹⁹ Mitchinson, The Nature of Their Bodies, 62.

⁷²⁰ Napheys, The Physical Life of Woman, 276.

were told that their lifespans would be shorter. "Elaborate statistics" showed that over the last half century, of the women who had died between the ages of twenty and forty-five, more were single than married. Doctors maintained they could find no instances in history of any single woman who had lived to a remarkably great age.⁷²¹ Napheys could only concur. He cited the "celebrated" Doctor Hufeland's The Art of Prolonged Life, which laid down the rule "that to attain a great age one must be married."⁷²²

Celibacy could also lead to insanity. In the view of the medical profession, marriage also provided a curative for chronic nervous ailments. "Chorea, for instance, or St.Vitus' dance ... has been repeatedly cured by marriage."⁷²³ It was well known to the medical profession that there were a whole series of emotional disorders - "hysteria, and various kinds of mania and hallucination" - which were almost exclusively found in single women. Holbrook suggested that of women who commit suicide, from two-thirds to three-quarters were single. He further suggested that from three-fourths to four-fifths of all women confined to lunatic asylums were single. Napheys utilised statistics to show that "of those unfortunates who, out of despair and disgust of the world jump from bridges, or take arsenic, or hang themselves" nearly two-thirds are

⁷²¹ Holbrook, Parturition without Pain, 53.

⁷²² Napheys, The Physical Life of Woman, 53.

⁷²³ Ibid, 276.

unmarried, and in some years as much as three-fourths. And what of the "dead yet living" - those in asylums? "Driven crazy by their brutal husbands, do you suggest? Not at all ... throughout the civilized world there are every where three or four single to one married woman in the establishments for the insane."⁷²⁴ Richard Bucke, of the London Insane Asylum, believed that single women, particularly older single women, were there in much larger numbers than their married sisters. This is despite the fact that statistics clearly showed it was married women and single men who were over represented in Ontario asylums throughout the last half of the century.⁷²⁵

A few attempted to dispel the prejudice which existed against the unmarried woman and portray her as like any other woman. What these social commentators and writers wished to show was that there really were "such beings as unmarried ladies, who are cheerful, amiable, and useful ... who were equally admired and loved for their domestic and social virtues - as cheerful, intelligent companions - warm-hearted faithful friends - and judicious and unwearied benefactors."⁷²⁶ The single woman had faults, as did any woman, but these faults could not be generalized to her condition. Indeed, she was often more content, patient, and

⁷²⁴ Ibid, 53.

⁷²⁵ See Mitchinson, The Nature of Their Bodies, 305-09 and Wendy Mitchinson, "Gynecological Operations for Insane Women", Journal of Social History, 15(1981-82)475-82.

⁷²⁶ A Mother, Female Excellence, 215.

serene than wives who were tried by household duties and domestic cares.⁷²⁷ The old maid could be "plump, pretty, amiable, interesting, intellectual, cultured, warm-hearted, benevolent" and with "ardent friends of both sexes." Married women had no more charm, in the mass, than did single women. The problem lay in depicting all single women as dissatisfied, querulous, envious, disagreeable, and useless. Married women were spoken of individually. Their characteristics were not criticised or commented on in general terms. "They are spoken of individually as pretty or plain, bright or dull, pleasant or unpleasant; while old maids are judged as a species, and almost always unfavourably."⁷²⁸

A single woman was not necessarily doomed to a life of loneliness. William Alger pointed to instances of single women, with money, who invited some friend to accept a home together, "and they live thenceforth in indissoluble union."⁷²⁹ One of the few glimpses provided of a Canadian spinster provides just such an example. Lily Dougall was born in 1858 and her correspondence provides ample evidence of the life-long intimate attachments she maintained amongst a circle of single women. Lily corresponded with Agnes Drummond, J.A.Cooper, and K. Drummond, or 'Kitten', well into the twentieth century. In 1884 she formed life-long

⁷²⁷ Jefferis, Searchlights on Health, 141.

⁷²⁸ Ibid, 143.

⁷²⁹ Alger, Friendships of Woman, 28.

friendships with the Principal of Abbott Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, Miss Merrill, and with Miss M.R.Walker, Head Mistress of the St.George's School in Edinburgh. But it was with Miss Earp that she desired to make a home. They were together from 1888 through 1891, and then again in 1892 when Lily joined Earp in Cannes. By 1899, at the age of forty-one, Lily dreamed of making a home together, a dream realized in 1903 when, with Miss Earp, she moved to Exmouth, England. The two moved to Oxford in 1910 and remained there twelve years, when it is presumed that, at the age of sixty-four, Lily died.⁷³⁰

Unlike brothers, unmarried sisters often passed all their years together "inseparably united." Laura Elizabeth Bradshaw, born in 1875, lived on Fairview Farm near Morden. In 1909, Mrs Bradshaw and her two unmarried daughters moved to Winnipeg. Laura remained at home through most of her life, keeping house for her parents in Morden, from 1901 to 1909, and then for her mother and youngest sister in Winnipeg until her death in 1956.⁷³¹ Emma and Annie Duff were the spinster sisters of Sir Lyman Duff. Emma was a kindergarten teacher and Annie kept the house they had together in Barrie.⁷³²

⁷³⁰ Dougall Family Correspondence, 1,8, MG 29 C34, National Archives of Canada.

⁷³¹ Laura Elizabeth Bradshaw Papers, MG9 A120, Public Archives of Manitoba.

⁷³² Sir Lyman Duff Papers, MG30 E141, National Archives of Canada.

Van Draecken stated that if the old maid was dried up and querulous it was perhaps due not to her single status but to a society that precluded her from active employment. For middle class women, with no aim in life but social success, days were frittered away in endless rounds of social visiting. "As years drag on, all that gave life and stimulus to society has long died out for such as cannot shine in it. ... They have no hopes, no aspirations. All they can do is draw farther and farther back out of the sunshine and see others ... taking their places."⁷³³ If such women are left soured and jealous, Van Draecken asks, can they be blamed? "What fault has she in the matter, but that attractions so longed for were beyond her reach?"⁷³⁴ These might have been the emotions of Ethel Chadwick of Ottawa. Born in 1882, Ethel was a debutante of the 1900 Ottawa social circle. She played the society belle through 1907 - when she was then twenty-seven. Her diaries of 1912 - 1924 list an endless round of card calling, social visits and church. It appears that by the age of forty-four, Ethel, along with her younger sister, was still single, and had no larger purpose in life than the society round.⁷³⁵ Other women, like Ethel, spent their days in church going and social calls, often living in small houses in dull suburbs, pinching pennies to ward off poverty, their solitude

⁷³³ Von Draecken, "Essay on Old Maids", 187.

⁷³⁴ Ibid, 188.

⁷³⁵ Chadwick Family Papers, 1, MG30 D258, National Archives of Canada.

enlivened "by unwearying details concerning every trifling gossip the town affords."⁷³⁶ In Katz's study of Hamilton, none of the daughters of the entrepreneurial class reported an occupation at the time of their marriage. This meant that they remained at home between school leaving at age fourteen to seventeen and their marriage. In 1871, almost fifty percent of the women were still not married by the age of twenty-eight. Fifty percent of middle class Hamilton women spent ten to fifteen years dependent on and supervised by their parents.⁷³⁷

In portraying single women, most women writers took pains to show that these women often made the best of difficult, even tragic, situations and led lives of usefulness and fulfillment. This group of spinsters commanded much more respect than those characterized as 'idle' sisters. Their lives often more closely resembled "the ordinary course of masculine rather than feminine existence."⁷³⁸ Minerva Lascelles, with above-average beauty and intelligence, had sufficient wealth to break out of the "conventionalities and restraints which had fettered her from infancy."⁷³⁹ She had not lacked in suitors but had never married. Although considered slightly eccentric, she was a respected member of upper class society. Miss Treherne was the squire of

⁷³⁶ Von Draecken, "Essay on Old Maids", 180.

⁷³⁷ Katz, The People of Hamilton, 59.

⁷³⁸ Von Draecken, "Essay on Old Maids", 188.

⁷³⁹ Ibid.

Treherne, gifted with a masculine turn of mind and forced by circumstances to develop these talents. She also was not lacking in suitors but did not need to get married for the sake of being married. Marriage would also mean sacrificing her responsibilities as landlord and guardian of the poor; duties she did not take lightly. Although a spinster, she led a useful life of duty and remained a respected member of country society.⁷⁴⁰

Beatrice, despite being an old maid, had retained her youthful attraction. She always managed to be well-dressed on very little money and retained her slender and elegant figure. Her superb head of hair had "not a single silver thread among its silken coils."⁷⁴¹ Fidelis' Miss Honeydew exemplifies the "old maid" as one capable of living both a busy and bountiful life. Her life, although a solitary one, was "by no means so lonely an existence as that of an 'old maid' is commonly supposed to be."⁷⁴² Miss Honeydew was an "important personage in Mapleford" not the least because she shared with those more needy than herself. She "often had some little protege in the shape of a neglected village child, whom she would take in, and with infinite pains, train up to be a tidy little handmaid, letting her go to some more lucrative service as soon as she was fit for it." Her house was a favorite with both young and old; "with the

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid, 189.

⁷⁴¹ Campbell, "How It Happened", 397.

⁷⁴² Machar, "Lost and Won", 211.

young because of her lively talk, as well as the cakes and fruits they knew were readily forthcoming; with the old, because they enjoyed a cheery chat with her, and because they brought to her their physical troubles." Miss Honeydew was kept busy by the concerns and problems of the community. Any opportunity of usefulness, any call to be helpful, any attempt to increase other people's happiness and comfort, she pursued. "Little girls brought her their doll's clothes to cut out, and little boys ... came to claim her help in making kites. At quilting bees, and in sick rooms, where patient watching and clever, cheerful nursing were wanted, Miss Honeydew's services were always especially in request, and she never came in contact with a trouble, that was capable of being remedied, that she did not immediately set to work to devise, if possible, some means of remedying it."⁷⁴³

Some fictional portraits of old maids showed single women who were admired for their "courage, integrity, goodness, and loyalty." More importantly, these women were valued by their families and their communities. However, these representations limited spinsters to the two roles deemed appropriately feminine; the "Maiden Aunt" and the "Sister of Charity".⁷⁴⁴ These women lived useful lives as dutiful daughters or selfless women who cared for others in the family or the needy of the community. Always available when

⁷⁴³ Ibid, 213.

⁷⁴⁴ Chambers-Schiller, Liberty a Better Husband, 24.

needed, they remained at home through adulthood doing good and fulfilling their duties as daughter and sister. Female Excellence pointed to "many an affectionate daughter tenderly ministering to the comforts of her aged parents, many a kind maiden sister sharing and lightening the burden of domestic care, affording her valuable aid in the sick chamber and the nursery, imparting instruction to nephews and nieces, and alleviating the distresses of the poor, an enlightened and indefatigable agent in diffusing knowledge and happiness in the world."⁷⁴⁵

Julia Lambert, born in 1792, came to York with her sister Susan and Susan's husband, the Honourable George Crookshank, in 1821. With the Lambert home in Connecticut, Julia at first visited York at the birth of the Crookshank children or during their infancy. Her brother-in-law, Robert, wrote in 1834; "Susan's health is so delicate she cannot well get on with out Julia's assistance. She manages everything in such a quiet way I think it a pleasure to be under the same roof. What an excellent wife some blockhead has missed."⁷⁴⁶ Julia was also available for those who needed her at home in Connecticut. In 1836, Julia wrote to Sam Lambert from York; "I think I must return home next summer to remain, as sister Betsey is so liable to be unwell."⁷⁴⁷ However, Julia made

⁷⁴⁵ A Mother, Female Excellence, 215.

⁷⁴⁶ S.A.Heward and W.S.Wallace, eds., "An American Lady in Old Toronto: The Letters Of Julia Lambert, 1821-1854", Royal Society of Canada Transactions, 3, 40 (1946) 101-42, 102.

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid, 129.

Toronto her permanent home in 1840, when her sister Susan died. She became the Chatelaine of the Crookshank home and cared for Susan's two children. When George died in 1859, he left Julia five thousand pounds "in consideration of the devotion of her life to me and my children ..." When Julia died two years later, her niece Catherine inscribed this memorial over her grave: "In memory of her untiring devotion in filling a mother's place to her sister's children."

Julia had few illusions about the life of a spinster. In a letter to her sister-in-law Julia wrote;

You know single ladies are of no consequence themselves, only as far as they can be useful to others, and it is no matter where they make their abode, the world goes on just as well with out them. Those who have husbands to take care of, and be taken care of by them, are of some importance at home and have duties to perform and a station in life to fill - have an object to interest them, and a reason for endeavoring in every way to make their house pleasant and agreeable to their husbands, and have a reward in doing it. Every exertion they make in that way redounds to their own comfort and happiness, it is like charity twice blessed.⁷⁴⁸

A short story in the 1838 Literary Garland provides an early positive portrayal of spinsterhood. In "Aunt Mary's Notebook", Aunt Mary has an "amiable, cheerful manner" and a kind heart that leads her to promote "the happiness of all around her. Deeply pious, but without austerity, she was beloved and appreciated as she deserved, and her friendship considered one of the greatest privileges."⁷⁴⁹

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid, 102.

⁷⁴⁹ Mrs. Maclachan (EMM), "Aunt Mary's Notebook", Literary Garland, 1(1838-39)26/67. EMM was the sister of Sir Wm

Van Draecken used the examples of Tabetha and Margaret to exemplify this maiden aunt type. Margaret first nursed her father through some years of sickness. Then, with the death of her sister, her children were left "to be fondly and carefully educated by their maiden aunt."⁷⁵⁰ Tabetha devoted her life to "homely and useful purposes." She educated and chaperoned her younger sisters until they married and was the first one "appealed to by her family to nurse the sick, comfort the sorrowing, and be a companion to the aged..." She was the one who looked after the parents in their old age. When they died, Tabetha turned her energies to the community - to the poor, the sick, the young. Her "peaceful life was spent in constant, self-denying benevolence."⁷⁵¹ And the fictional Miss Honeydew had received several invitations from married brothers to make her home with them. They did so because their sister "would have been an invaluable adjunct in any household."⁷⁵² When her sister-in-law plans an extended trip to Europe with her older children, Miss Honeydew is prevailed upon to give up her house for a year and come to care for her brother and the younger children.

Colebrooke, Lt-Gov of New Brunswick. She died in 1845.

⁷⁵⁰ Von Draecken, "Essay on Old Maids", 182.

⁷⁵¹ Ibid, 183.

⁷⁵² Machar, "Lost and Won", 211.

The Christian Guardian provided a sketch of the spinster who had not joined "that quite too large body of women who have 'nothing to do.'" Her comfort was secured in the home of relatives "who would take no other recompense than her unstinted love" and thus she had no real need to be useful elsewhere. However, her "self-sacrificing love" and sense of duty to the poor and needy of the neighbourhood and the young of the Church had made her "quite the most useful and important member of the community."⁷⁵³ With some interest in the outside world, spinsters' lives would be less disappointing, less barren and empty. Furthermore, "the term 'Old Maid' will have lost its only sting, which has been the suggestion of uselessness and loneliness..." Spinsters were no longer one of the "superfluous" but members of a "benevolent and beneficent sisterhood of service."⁷⁵⁴

Those fictional women whose exceptional circumstances had precluded fulfillment in marriage were all encouraged to devote their lives to others. When her engagement to Eric is broken so that he might marry Rose, Margaret stays with her uncle and takes care of him. She was also a "ministering angel" to the poor and needy.⁷⁵⁵ Marguerite Kneller finds solace in doing good for others. "She had

⁷⁵³ "On Woman's Sphere", The Christian Guardian (Sept 6, 1876).

⁷⁵⁴ "The Millionth Woman", Canadian Magazine, 8(1896-97)537-39, 539.

⁷⁵⁵ Campbell, "Margaret's Sorrow", 691.

made her own burden light by striving to lessen the burdens that others had to bear."⁷⁵⁶ Ada, whose disfigurement by small pox ends her marital plans, resolves "that her future life should be given more to the service of her fellow creatures ... realizing, in a life of self-sacrifice, that peace which the world could never have bestowed, and which it was powerless to take away."⁷⁵⁷ Ida Grayson, rejecting marriage due to family insanity, becomes a missionary in India.⁷⁵⁸

Clearly, these portrayals, although positive, were conditional. "Only so long as these women enacted certain roles, those traditionally associated with the female gender, did ... women's literature affirm singlehood as beneficial to women, their families, and to their communities. Only so long as spinsters exemplified the qualities of true womanhood, self-abnegation in particular, were they portrayed as womanly despite their marital status."⁷⁵⁹ The spinster was supposed to be utterly self-sacrificing; unselfishly available for anyone who needed her, just as were mothers.

⁷⁵⁶ Murray, "Marguerite Kneller", 438.

⁷⁵⁷ Dale, "The Bridal Veil", 301.

⁷⁵⁸ Edmonds, "For Humanity's Sake", 414.

⁷⁵⁹ Chambers-Schiller, Liberty a Better Husband, 25.

Nearer the end of the century, some commentators began to question this vision of the sacrificing spinster. Eliza Moser, writing in Woman Her Character Culture and Calling, stated that although the unmarried daughter who remained at home was a great comfort to aged parents, it was at the expense of her health and "best mental growth."⁷⁶⁰ "With no responsibility or care which demands her best endeavour, or which stirs her deeper nature, how can it be otherwise than that she will in time lose her ambitions and the hopes which filled her as she ascended the lovely heights of womanhood?" For Mosher, a medical doctor, the only solution lay "in taking up some important work, and doing it with the whole soul." Dio Lewis wrote that "without a regular occupation" neither men nor women could preserve "a sound mind in a sound body."⁷⁶¹ The right to work was vital to a woman's welfare. Ada Saunders, who received a certificate in Business Education in 1887 from the Commercial Department of the Collegiate Institute in St Thomas, Ontario, transcribed this quotation in her 1891 notebook. "The most valuable gift that can be bestowed upon women is something to do which they can do well and worthily, and thereby maintain themselves."⁷⁶²

⁷⁶⁰ Austin, Woman Her Character Culture and Calling, 242.

⁷⁶¹ Dio Lewis, Our Girls (Toronto:Adam Stevenson, Montreal:John Lovell, 1871), 67.

⁷⁶² E.S.Ferguson Collection, 1, MG30 C217, National Archives of Canada.

As early as the 1870s, those few concerned over the plight of the spinster had voiced the necessity of providing women with the means for self-support. At a time when statistics suggested that many women would not become wives and mothers, it seemed a cruel delusion to perpetuate the belief that "in marriage lies a woman's only prosperous and happy career, failing which, life must be blank and objectless."⁷⁶³ If the single life was to be the lot of so many, girls should be encouraged to possess themselves of "some means of achieving an honourable independence." For those who had to travel the journey of life alone, Reverend Murray stated; "the barest justice to them requires that they should be brought up, as men are, to support themselves by their own labour."⁷⁶⁴ Fidelis argued for an "honourable independence" for those whose lot in life was the necessity to maintain themselves. She went on to suggest that young girls should be made to realize early the importance of developing their natural gifts or abilities because the possibility lay before every girl that she would not marry. It was a cruelty to bring up girls to believe that they would always have every luxury without any care, or work, on their own part.⁷⁶⁵ A "non-Resident of Newfangle" asked why young women should not have, like their brothers, "every

⁷⁶³ Fidelis, "Higher Education for Women", 153.

⁷⁶⁴ Reverend John Clark Murray, "The Higher Education of Woman", An Address Delivered at the Opening of Queen's College, Kingston, 1871.

⁷⁶⁵ Fidelis, "The New Ideal Of Womanhood", Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly, 11(1879)659-76, 668.

facility for achieving an honourable independence in the line best suited to whatever capacities God has given them."⁷⁶⁶ The need for independence was seemingly recognized "among the humbler classes" where girls were soon made "self-supporting and self-reliant."⁷⁶⁷ It was in the richer homes that daughters spent years in comparative idleness until it was too late for them to learn some means of subsistence.

Furthermore, single middle-aged women should not be subjected to the "humiliation of dependence" that was often their lot in life. "Half the terrors of a single life to a woman lie in the fact that she will never have a home of her own, but must remain a dependent on her father and brothers; the one too many in the household; the beneficiary on sufferance in the family, though she actually work twice as much as the actual members."⁷⁶⁸ It was natural for fathers to keep their daughters dependent, even though what the daughter, like the son, required was "to take her own place in the world - to be a rooted plant not a parasite." Another article in The Christian Guardian also argued for the necessity of training up young girls for independence. Parents should teach their daughters how to deal with money and also provide for them not on the basis of their making a

⁷⁶⁶ A Non-Resident of the Same, "Newfangle and its Opinions", Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly, 3(1879)200-6,205.

⁷⁶⁷ Fidelis, "Higher Education for Women", 153.

⁷⁶⁸ "Providing for Daughters", Christian Guardian, (July 6, 1881).

rich marriage, but on the probability of their remaining single. "Above all, help them to help themselves. Fit them to add to their own means, rather than to be forever pinching and economizing till their minds are narrowed and their hearts sick."⁷⁶⁹

Without a means to an honourable independence, young women were being driven to choose between poverty, "a dependence that sacrifices her self-respect, or a mercenary marriage still more destructive of it."⁷⁷⁰ Forced to choose between marriage and a life of struggle, it was probably too true that economics continued to force young women into marriages that were little better than economic alliances and not romantic love matches. Reverend Murray asked, "For how many a woman does it thus become a torturing alternative that she shall surrender herself, under the symbol of a love she does not feel, to one who will provide for her support, or that she shall struggle to support herself without the luxuries - without even the comforts, of her earlier life, by some kind of sadly unremitting and sadly unremunerative toil?"⁷⁷¹ A non-resident of Newfangle argued that too often the choice for "superfluous women" lay in accepting "a loveless and mercenary marriage."⁷⁷² A Christian Guardian

⁷⁶⁹ "How to Train Up Daughters", Christian Guardian, (Jan 27, 1876).

⁷⁷⁰ Fidelis, "Higher Education for Women", 153.

⁷⁷¹ Murray, "The Higher Education of Woman", 9.

⁷⁷² A Non-Resident, "Newfangle and its Opinions", 205.

article pointed to the mercenary marriages occurring night and day on the part of penniless, dependent women. The writer argued that parents, if they were truly concerned for their daughters, would either settle money absolutely on them or give them a trade or occupation by which they could earn their own money.⁷⁷³

Even though writers such as Fidelis believed in marriage as woman's destiny, they did not denigrate spinsterhood as a state to be avoided at any cost. It was better to be single than to marry for the wrong reasons: to suffer from a bad marriage or to compromise self-respect by marrying to be supported. "Better a thousand-fold to live and die in maiden solitude than desecrate God's eternal sacrament of love by unworthily, or for base or sordid motives, assuming its awful and irrevocable vows."⁷⁷⁴ If, before rushing blindly into marriage, young women would remind themselves of the many marriages "in which care and sorrow, anxiety and unrest, have transformed a bright-looking girl into a weary, haggard woman, broken in health and spirits: if they will recollect the husbands of such wives - evil-tempered, selfish, prodigal, or vicious - for whom the peaceful home-life has been given up, sacrificed lightly, without even perhaps the excuse of affection, for the sake of an establishment, and to escape the reproach of old-maidism ... a spinster's parlour may be a haven of rest and

⁷⁷³ "Providing for Daughters".

⁷⁷⁴ Fidelis, "Higher Education for Women", 152.

safety.⁷⁷⁵..."

What was required was a change in the basis for marriage. Women did not willingly choose the single state by rejecting marriage or by having spinsterhood thrust upon them. Jefferis argued that it was a mistake to believe that all women who remained single did so from necessity. He maintained that almost any woman could get a husband if she really desired to. He presumed that old maids waited, not for any opportunity to marry but, for an acceptable proposal. "Many an old-maid, so-called, unexpectedly to her associates, becomes a wife, some man of taste, discernment, and sympathy having induced her to change her state. Probably no other man of his kind has proposed before, which accounts for her singleness."⁷⁷⁶ Some sought to improve marriage by advocating a higher marital standard. Marriage was to be based on mutual respect and co-dependency not economic necessity. "The fact that women are no longer obliged to wed or starve may result in a nobler standard of choice. Men will be forced to a higher plane if they would satisfy women not in search of homes."

A few began to argue that if women were trained to be independent they would make a better marriage choice; one based on love and reason and not on dependence. Reverend Withrow suggested that if girls became "more self-reliant,

⁷⁷⁵ Von Draecken, "Essay on Old Maids", 191.

⁷⁷⁶ Jefferis, Searchlights on Health, 143.

and less dependent on the protection or support of a husband, they will often make a worthier choice. They will not rush into rash and often wretched marriages as the only escape from a life of helplessness or the reproach of spinsterhood."⁷⁷⁷ Austin argued that no woman should be placed in circumstances that made marriage the only refuge from poverty. If she had the capability of self-support she was free to accept the "marriage lot" for the proper reasons.⁷⁷⁸ Women were not going to refuse marriage for the sake of a professional career but they would be spared from coming "to the altar with a lie on her lips because she shrinks from the struggle of self-maintenance, for which she is so ill-equipped."⁷⁷⁹ Also, sacrificing their personal ambitions and self-interest often made women better wives. Feminine devotion would be strengthened when women consciously sacrificed "material advantage, proud independence, and cherished ambition to be what God intended - help meets for men." Dio Lewis quoted Margaret Fuller who wrote that for a woman to enter marriage with a sense of dignity, "she must be able to stand alone." To make marriage a "true marriage" and not "a contract for board", women should not be compelled to choose between "marriage and starvation."⁷⁸⁰ Elizabeth Smith argued that she was

⁷⁷⁷ Reverend W.H.Withrow, "Higher Female Education", Canadian Methodist Magazine, 1(1875)20-27,25.

⁷⁷⁸ Austin, Woman Her Character Culture and Calling, 33.

⁷⁷⁹ A Non-Resident, "Newfangle and its Opinions", 206.

⁷⁸⁰ Dio Lewis, Our Girls (Toronto:Adam

preparing herself for independence that she might be able to marry for love rather than "mercenary motives."⁷⁸¹

But there were those who continued to argue that, by encouraging women to be independent and enter an occupation, there was a danger that marriage would become unpopular. They argued against providing women alternatives, perhaps in fear they would not marry at all. For some commentators, particularly those who were male, men's reluctance to marry was blamed on women. Even the argument for expanded work opportunities for women, not its reality, created a backlash. One writer suggested that the falling off of the number of marriages was due to the increasing number of working girls. "It would be unreasonable to say that when a young woman undertakes to earn her own living she necessarily cuts herself off from marriage; but I do contend that when she does so she diminishes her chances, in that she aggravates the conditions which make for a reduction in the marriage rate."⁷⁸² The article went on to suggest the two main causes for the increase of single women; "the feverish desire of the great middle class to live like the rich", and what the writer considered "the popular doctrine of woman's independence." With daughters earning their living as well as sons, neither showed the willingness to

Stevenson, Montreal: John Lovell, 1871), 70.

⁷⁸¹ Strong-Boag, ed., Elizabeth Smith, A Woman with a Purpose, 184.

⁷⁸² "The Displacement of Young Men", 468.

"begin married life on a humble scale." Although he could not find it in his heart to blame young women for wanting to earn a livelihood, it was "an unnatural thing to have women working" that violated one of the fundamental laws of creation. It was the man alone that was to be the breadwinner. When girls worked they intensified the conditions "which are filling this country with spinsters and bachelors."⁷⁸³

Of those young women who did not work, young men complained of their "frivolity, indolence, and slavery to fashion" as serious impediments to marriage. These young men could not afford to marry because "the girls are so awfully extravagant, you know."⁷⁸⁴ Young women could also lessen their matrimonial chances by becoming too well educated for the average Canadian male. One young male, "of more than average intellect and culture" commented: "I don't think I should care to marry a girl who knew more than I did."⁷⁸⁵ C.S.Clark, in his sociological study Of Toronto the Good, suggested that the "latter day opportunities presented to the female sex for earning a livelihood are bound to culminate into a degeneration of the race."⁷⁸⁶ Clark maintained that the majority of people from the middle class

⁷⁸³ Ibid, 470.

⁷⁸⁴ "The Marriage Question", Canadian Methodist Magazine, 11(1875)567-68.

⁷⁸⁵ Fidelis, "A Few Words on University Co-Education", 315.

⁷⁸⁶ Clark, Of Toronto the Good, 125.

could no longer afford "the luxury of marrying." Positions formerly held by men were now being filled by women at salaries "that men would scarcely look at much less think of attempting to support a family upon. The result is precisely what so-called social teachers predicted as a result of licensing houses of ill-fame. If licensing houses of ill-fame decreases the possibility of marriage so also does the emancipation of women." Clark went on to say that it might be possible that future women, by virtue of their ability to earn a livelihood, might ask a man to marry them but he felt it was highly unlikely.

George Napheys felt that present day social conditions forced the single life upon many young women. Women chose not to marry "from motives of economy, from timidity, or as a religious step." Women also refrained from marrying "to keep out of trouble." Increasing numbers of women were "not going to worry themselves to death, bearing children and nursing them. It is too great a risk, too much suffering."⁷⁸⁷ Napheys pointed to yet another group of women who did not marry because they had a "life work" to accomplish and a husband "would trammel them" and cause them to go through life with "an indignant protest at its littleness."⁷⁸⁸

⁷⁸⁷ Napheys, The Physical Life of Woman, 52.

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid, 54.

There were three ways for the single middle class woman to get money; "through the dead fingers of their dead kin, the living ones of their existing relatives, or by their hands or wits."⁷⁸⁹ Yet many women remained single, into their thirties at least, and remained a financial burden on their families. An 1896 article in the Canadian Magazine suggested it might be better to support one's self rather than to depend on ageing parents for support. And it was far better for single women to be independent than to live dependent on a brother's or uncle's or cousin's family. If young women could support themselves "the strain of anxiety would be removed from every father of healthy, intelligent daughters ... Many a young man would be relieved of the terrible responsibility of caring for a host of female relatives, most of them better able to work than himself!"⁷⁹⁰ Remaining in dependence upon their father's money often meant subsisting upon "a miserable pittance." And the support of these idle daughters was "tracing each day a new furrow on their father's brow."

Frances Marshall was the daughter of a wealthy father who suffered financial reverses just as she graduated from college. The monetary difficulties the family experienced enabled Frances to seek paid work. Frances suggested that it was her "greatest good fortune" that her father had

⁷⁸⁹ Ella S. Atkinson, "Women and Money", Canadian Magazine, 1(1893)277-79, 277.

⁷⁹⁰ "The Millionth Woman", 539.

business troubles. If not for this she would "have had to settle down quietly and become a regular home woman. Neither he nor my mother would ever have considered the possibility of my having any occupation or profession."⁷⁹¹

The question became "to find remunerative and suitable employment for single women, who are compelled to earn their own living..."⁷⁹² But the need to provide these women with work could not disturb the established gender roles and ascribed areas for each sex. Employment for women was described in terms that saw it as an extension of the domestic into the public world. Women were not encouraged to move beyond a specified sphere in their attempts to find work. "We think in seeking out spheres of employment for intelligent unmarried ladies, it is well to have regard to the peculiar fitness of women for such employment as demand sympathy, tact, delicacy, gentleness, and other qualities of womanhood."⁷⁹³ Women were especially fitted for nursing and teaching because of their "natural tenderness." By the end of the century, unmarried women trained for jobs that were seen to be of comparable status to those of their brothers. Yet the new employment that evolved remained assigned to one sex or the other. Once again what was emphasized for women was self-sacrifice and duty, not individual ambition:

⁷⁹¹ Alice Chown, The Staircase (Boston: Cornhill, 1921), 53.

⁷⁹² "Employment for Women", Christian Guardian, (Sept 16, 1872), 284. (emphasis mine)

⁷⁹³ Ibid.

service to society not individual rights. "This devotion to others' welfare was the highest expression of and validation for the idea of women's self-sacrificing nature. The stigma of paid labour for many middle-class women was thus removed. The rather negative notion of doing one's duty was changed into a positive hope for the future; work for others was part of God's plan, in which single women played a crucial role."⁷⁹⁴

There were those who objected to the admission of women into paid occupations. It was argued that the entrance of women into the labour field would crowd out men "who are the sole breadwinners for large and helpless families." It was also suggested that women who might remain at home to be supported by father, brother, or other male relatives, would be encouraged to seek unnecessary employment. This would increase competition in already overcrowded fields of occupation and hurt those women who had no other option but to earn their own livelihood.⁷⁹⁵ Not only would too great competition deprive the truly needy of employment, it would depress the wage standard. In reply, supporters of waged work for women argued that, by making every woman self-dependent, the financial pressure on male workers would be decreased not increased.

⁷⁹⁴ Vicinus, Independent Women, 15.

⁷⁹⁵ "The Millionth Woman", 537.

In the 1893 article "The Displacement of Young Men", the male writer argued that the numbers of young working women had "materially contracted the range of congenial and promising employment for young men."⁷⁹⁶ Employment which young men had previously viewed as a starting-point in their careers had been taken by young women, thus forcing young men "to toil for long hours, often at night, for the munificent salary of \$15 a month." The writer went on to suggest that if the next twenty years saw the same relative increase in the numbers of women entering employment, "we shall see young men doing the housework, and their sisters and mothers carrying on half the business of the land."⁷⁹⁷ It was maintained that over fifty percent of women then working did not need to make their own living and had no other excuse for working than a desire for opulence and luxurious living, "from the considerations of cupidity, selfishness, and pride."⁷⁹⁸ If all those women who truly did not need to work remained at home, the writer argued, two hundred young men in Ottawa alone would find job openings. And, of course, there were those who argued that if women pursued a professional occupation they "ran the risk of closing against themselves the gate of domestic life."⁷⁹⁹ However, this ignored those women forced to find the means

⁷⁹⁶ "The Displacement of Young Men", 467.

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid, 468.

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid, 470.

⁷⁹⁹ Fidelis, "Higher Education for Women", 154.

for subsistence. Self-dependence meant a more dignified position for women. No longer forced "to drag out idle useless lives", single women with "delightful and engrossing occupations" made their "developed and cultured womanhood a blessing to their country and their age."

Lucy Maude Montgomery compared the unmarried woman of the late nineteenth century with the lot of the spinsters of the past, "the unfortunates." "If they did not live in meek dependence with some compassionate relative, eating the bitter bread of unappreciated drudgery, it was because they could earn a meagre and precarious subsistence in the few and underpaid occupations then open to women. They could do nothing else. Their education had not fitted them to cope with any and every destiny. they were helpless straws, swept along the merciless currents of existence."⁸⁰⁰ Montgomery pointed out that, in her day, those women who did not marry lived lives that are "full and happy and useful; they have some thing to do and can do it well, and the world is better off from their having been born in it." No matter what circumstances or prospects faced a young woman she could now, "if God's providence so order" win her own way and lead a productive and useful life. With an honourable independence, unmarried women were emancipated from dependency and enabled "with calm courage, to face life, if need be, alone."⁸⁰¹

⁸⁰⁰ Lucy Maude Montgomery, "Dalhousie College 1896", Atlantis, 5,1 (Fall, 1979) 146-53, 148.

Despite the gains made by the unmarried, Canadian women remained ambivalent toward spinsterhood. Although few believed any longer that any marriage was better than none, those who, through circumstance, chose work over marriage and motherhood felt they led incomplete lives. Even those who attempted to improve the image of the old maid felt that marriage was the best state for women. Van Draecken stated that there could be no doubt that marriage was "a source of happiness higher than any the old maid can know. It is the more perfect state of existence."⁸⁰² Elizabeth Smith wrote, at the age of twenty, that she hoped to be "a matronly mother of children" and not an old maid or she would not think that her destiny had been fulfilled.⁸⁰³ Motherhood remained the Queen of all the professions. Well into the twentieth century Ellen Knox could suggest that professional women "deep down in the bottom of their hearts, Cinderella-like, are biding their time merely waiting the day when they will each step forward to reign a queen supreme in a home of her own."⁸⁰⁴ A working woman's professional value decreased as she grew older; a mother's value reigned on "supreme." And even though professional women tried to mend the lives around them, it was only the mother who created new lives. Thus, the ideal of marriage

⁸⁰¹ Austin, Woman Her Character Culture and Calling, 33.

⁸⁰² Von Draecken, "Essay on Old Maids", 190.

⁸⁰³ Strong-Boag, ed., Elizabeth Smith, 141.

⁸⁰⁴ Ellen Knox, The Girl of the New Day (Toronto:McClelland and Stewart, 1919), 217.

and motherhood still far exceeded any possible attainments in the world of work.

Fiction writers began to incorporate the young working woman into their stories, utilising her independent life and wider experiences. But the stories written in Canada at the end of the century, reaffirmed marriage as the pre-eminent profession for women. Writers, as did all social commentators on the issue, shied away from the possibility of a revolt against marriage. Two stories, written in the last years of the century, portray a spirited working heroine who, by the end of the story, almost meekly decides to marry.

"Dora, the Pretty Typewriter", written in 1895, follows the career of Dora Summerhayes.⁸⁰⁵ Forced to find some remunerative employment after her father's death, and unable to go to college, Dora trains as a stenographer and typist. As Dora's uncle points out, it was hard for a pretty woman to go into an office filled with men who will probably want to "make love to her."⁸⁰⁶ However, if a young woman remained true to herself, she would be not only respected but "she will sweeten the life of the office, and be, in the reformation of manners, an unconcious blessing to the men themselves." Not for Dora the demoralizing yet commonly held idea that sex was to be forgotten in employments where

⁸⁰⁵ William Lutton, "Dora the Pretty Typewriter", Canadian Magazine, 5(1895)52-8.

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid, 53.

men and women mingled. It was in these places that a woman had to be most womanly and purify the whole atmosphere of the office by her presence. Dora is forced to give notice at her first place of employment because the manager, Mr. Maynard, wants to get to know her and sends her flowers and notes. Dora tells him this is all very wrong. "You had no business to think of my looks or my hair. It was your duty to simply regard me as a clerk who was to hire to obey your orders, and further the interests of the company." [sic]⁸⁰⁷ Her next position was in an insurance company that employed several young women. But the jealousy of the other employees, that "parcel of backbiting, envious, malignant girls," when they see that the head clerk is partial to Dora, forces her to quit. Dora's employment trials are brought to an end when she falls in love with and agrees to marry her third employer, John Blackmore.

In Kerchiefs to Hunt Souls, Dorothy Pembroke is the spinster principal of a successful boarding school for young ladies. Although she has "advanced ideas" on the rights of women, she is a devoted believer in old-fashioned love.⁸⁰⁸ Dorothy maintains that "marriage, thank goodness, is not the aim and end of woman's life in this nineteenth century." She wants to make her way in the world and thinks "a work-less life a worthless life." She refuses to barter her

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid, 55.

⁸⁰⁸ Maria Amelia Fytche, Kerchiefs to Hunt Souls, (Boston: Arena Publishing Company, 1895, Mount Allison University: R.P. Bell Library, 1980), 8.

independence "for filthy lucre; in other words sell myself for creature comforts."⁸⁰⁹ Yet Dorothy feels incomplete and complains that all her aspirations fall short of the mark. For all that Fytche has made Dorothy an emancipated working woman, the major thrust of the novel lies in its discussions of the proper basis for marriage. In fact, Dorothy marries twice. The first time, to Count de Gallerand, is a disaster based on romantic and emotional notions of love. By the end of the story, Dorothy admits that perhaps she had asked too much of life. It had proved impossible to realize all she had hoped to attain.⁸¹⁰ The story ends with her second marriage, to Harry Alexander. This was to be a marriage based on mutual respect and common bonds of friendship and work.

The most tragic consequences await those women who consciously choose career and personal ambitions over a suitable marriage offer. Ada Morton is the twenty-four year old heroine of "The Sister of Mercy."⁸¹¹ She has decided not ever to marry that she might give up her life to the sisterhood of nurses. Her Aunt admonishes her by saying that although her desire to do good is praiseworthy, "a woman's true mission is to make a home happy." If she marries Mildmay, "she would find as large a sphere in which

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid, 19.

⁸¹⁰ Ibid, 289.

⁸¹¹ Cynico, "The Sister of Mercy", The Canadian Monthly, 4(1873)308-20.

to benefit her fellow-creatures as she ever will as a Sister of Mercy." However, despite Mildmay's desire to marry her, Ada sacrifices herself to her work, "the summit" of her worldly ambitions. Tragic consequences ensue. Mildmay enters battle "resolved not to come out of the struggle alive" and rides to a certain death in the front rank of the battlefield. Near the end of the war, a close friend finds Ada, drastically changed from the "once blooming girl", and informs her of Mildmay's death. Six months later, the friend, Trent, and his wife make a pilgrimage to Mildmay's grave. "As they neared it they saw a woman's form half prostrate on the grave, her arms wound round about the humble wooden cross, her face hidden. ... The woman was dead! Ada Morton had joined Frank Mildmay."

The significance of the nineteenth century spinster lies not in her increased visibility but in the fact that she threatened to expose the ways in which middle class cultural concepts were structured by gender. Even those who argued for expanding educational and employment opportunities for women shared the assumptions of their opponents concerning women's special nature. By retaining these assumptions they "remained blind to the fact that privileging woman's moral role kept women as a 'class' in an economically disadvantaged place."⁸¹² In some respects, spinsters pioneered crucial changes for women that held the potential to challenge not only traditional female roles but the very

⁸¹² Poovey, Uneven Developments, 159.

thinking about the nature of woman. But because the discussions about expanded work and educational opportunities had been couched in the traditional language of womanly values rather than, say, political or economic rights, the spinster's impact upon society was limited. The Victorian idealisation of women was reinterpreted to encompass those women who did not marry. The single life remained circumscribed by the same values applied to mothers; self-sacrifice, duty, devotion to others. The majority of middle-class women continued to view marriage as their only natural and desirable destiny. And societal expectations remained unchanged for women. If they could not devote themselves to their families, they would utilise their womanly characteristics in mothering their society.

Chapter VIII

CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined the ways in which gendered identities were constructed and related to a historically specific cultural representation of woman. The decades from the 1830s to the 1880s witnessed a distinct redefinition and more intense regulation of ideas about gender in Protestant Ontario society. Representations of women constructed a particular feminine identity rooted in definitions of woman's basic and immutable nature. I have argued that these representations of woman have played a vital part in the formation of the middle class.

Woman had traditionally been seen as naturally self-sacrificing but this characteristic became perhaps the most powerful tenet supporting nineteenth century notions of domesticity. By mid-century it was maintained that it was through selflessness and sacrifice that a woman would achieve personal satisfaction. A softened Calvinism, now focused on one's personal relation with Christ and the renunciation of self, also emphasized the practice of self-sacrifice. The perception grew that there was an affinity between woman and Christian religion. Christ and woman were seen to be motivated by the same sacrificial,

self-denying love. Also at the core of the Protestant view of woman was the notion of dependency. These ideas about woman's special religious nature helped to define and determine the particular ways women would become involved in religious work.

Medical representations of women as dependent were also integral to the separation of spheres. Increasingly, the medical model of reproductive difference was invoked to define what governed woman's nature. It was her reproductive capacity, not her original sinfulness, that justified her dependency. Medicine also provided the scientific explanation for what rapidly came to be considered woman's definitive characteristic - her maternal instinct. Woman's inherent nature - her nurturance, morality, domesticity, and greater affection - were rooted in this biological difference. Debates concerning women's education were confined by these definitions of womanhood. Viewed as nurturant and passive, woman was seen as more emotional and less rational than man. She was, therefore, his intellectual inferior except in mental action that depended on affection or emotion. Educational reformers stressed her essential and uneffaceable mental differences. Education was to be suited to her special mental nature. Even higher education need not liberate women from this gendered definition for they learned that biology determined sexual temperaments.

The image of female nature characterized in the fiction of the time, particularly domestic fiction, also played a major role not only in shaping but in reinforcing cultural prescriptions about proper womanhood. The fictional emphasis lay on woman's inherent selflessness and self-sacrifice in her service to the needs of others.

This redefinition of woman proceeded alongside of and became an integral part of the consolidation of middle class power in nineteenth century Upper Canada. Morality and virtue, instead of being articulated upon an inherited class position, were increasingly articulated upon gender and associated with the domestic sphere. The roles of the ideal woman were seen to carry a particular moral significance. Women were seen as protecting and, increasingly, incarnating middle class morality. The rhetorical and material separation of spheres, combined with this ideal of feminized morality, consolidated middle class power because it linked the new moral values to a figure supposedly immune to the aggression, self-interest, and competition of the public world.

Woman's exercise of moral influence was necessary to maintain not only the illusion of a non-competitive, non-alienated home life for man, but a delicate, pure, and elevated womanhood. Medical and religious discourse gradually transformed woman from some errant part of man to his opposite, his moral hope and spiritual guide. Religion

stressed the influence of the pious woman. Medicine equated her maternal nature to her morality which made her man's spiritual guide. Woman embodied morality because her motivation was love not the self-interest or ambition of man. Moreover, her very selflessness became a sign of her moral superiority. Domestic fiction placed woman at the moral center of the fictional structure and attributed to her a specifically female domain of emotions and values.

It was also necessary to significantly rework ideas about the domestic virtues which emphasized marriage, home, and motherhood. Relations within the home had been hierarchical with the weight of authority clearly resting with the male. He had been the moral arbiter as well as the ultimate decision maker in the family. By the 1850s women in their homes were the locus of moral authority in society. Home and woman in it began to represent values antithetical to those of market capitalism. It was through this separation of the domesticated woman that an illusion could be created of an alternative to the strife and alienation of the male world of work. Non-alienation seemed to emanate from womanly nature because it was not aggressive but selfless. The belief that her domestic labour was based on the pleasure of this self-sacrifice and constituted by its emotional nature solidified its non-alienating nature. The illusion that men were fundamentally different from women could persist if woman's domestic labour could continue to be distinguished from man's paid labour.

In this redefinition of domestic virtues woman was defined by her role in the womanly professions of marriage and motherhood. Marriage became more emotional, based more on mutual esteem and respect rather than on family considerations. Motherhood also became more emotional and intense, more demanding of the mother. Her maternal nurture replaced the father's discipline as the molder of character. Religious discourse also placed the godly wife and mother at the center of Protestant womanhood. Drawing on traditional religious ideas, woman's salvation would now come through the fulfilment of her responsibilities as wife and mother. The medical profession would add scientific credibility to this representation by defining marriage and motherhood as a social and medical norm. Any deviancy from this norm would be viewed as a medical abnormality. Her reproductive capacity and her maternal nature provided an elaborate defense of her role as wife and mother. Educational reforms were predicated on the need to provide a suitable education for this role in her life. And domestic fiction was replete with notions of what constituted proper middle class love and marriage. The marriage-ending plot so common in this fiction signalled the adjustment of the protagonist to society's values and the assumption that marriage was the only desirable goal for a woman.

It has been argued throughout that the regulation of gender was an essential factor in the consolidation of

middle class power. Woman was represented as protecting and, increasingly, incarnating middle class values. She came to embody certain crucial cultural functions that were instrumental in the domination of the middle class. As a mother she became the perpetuator and inculcator of middle class values and character traits as the process of social reproduction was increasingly delegated to females. Moreover, this progression to a model of full-time motherhood became a central part of middle class gentility. The traditional religious values of humility, meekness, and submission, incompatible with the ethic of worldly success, would be maintained by their identification with women. Thus religious woman became a repository for middle class values. Furthermore, religious belief became a character and function of class and nineteenth century orthodoxies about woman's place increasingly marginalized her position in the church. Medicine, by linking female sexuality to the desire to have children, to specific personality traits, and to a sexually more passive nature not only rendered female sexuality safe but changed the previously sexualized image of woman into the domestic ideal. In so doing, it led to the transformation of woman from a biological definition to a class-based moral assessment. Educational reforms, starting in the 1830s, created schooling that forged a distinctly middle class identity through the reconstruction of character and culture. Through the inculcation of educational values and cultural mores middle class women

learned what constituted proper middle class behaviour. And finally, the dominance of domestic fiction by the 1850s, by espousing woman's fulfilment in marriage, motherhood, and home provided the vital integrative tissue for this emerging middle class.

It was because these ideas about female dependence and self-sacrifice, motherhood and marriage provided such a powerful component of middle class identity that the single middle class woman was perceived as a potential threat to this identity. Because she could throw into question the accepted definition of female nature upon which morality and class stability were based discourses surrounding the plea for her "honourable independence" were careful not to challenge the foundation upon which middle class ideology rested.

Discussions of both the upper and working classes, aside from a few provocative glimpses, are conspicuously absent from this discourse. This leads me to suggest two possibilities. What we may be seeing is the myth of the classless society. Contemporary commentators, consciously or unconsciously, appeared to be acting as if the whole world was middle class and, perhaps, established the hegemony of one class through the notion that society was classless. Or, what one could argue is that gender issues often displaced the more politically volatile issue of class so as to address and manage it symbolically, and to divert attention from a potential source of conflict.

Nineteenth century women, by accepting the gendered definitions prevalent in their society, came to prize their special temperament and moral purity. An important contemporary debate has centered on whether women contributed to the construction of this domestic ideal; that is, have we participated in our own oppression. Historians have emphasized women's ability to capitalize on the power that the moralization of women created. That, by manipulating the terms of representation, they began to achieve equality. Conversely, there are those who have emphasized the limitations of this idealization of women. I have not explored either the advantages men have obtained by this idealization, nor have I discussed the ways that women have utilized this representation to their advantages. Both men and women were subject to the constraints imposed by gender differentiation. As Mary Poovey has argued, however, it is important not to forget that "as long as difference was articulated on gender, men and women were subject to different kinds of ideological constraint."⁸¹³ The move from morality to politics was a difficult one to make. No matter how much moral influence women could wield, they did not have the institutionally recognized power to influence the terms of their own representation. Ultimately, the ethic of self-sacrifice rebounded, reinforcing the belief in woman's innate nature and masking the degree to which this regulation was structural and political rather than moral

⁸¹³ Poovey, Uneven Developments, 22.

and individual.

Gender theory forces us to reconceptualize not only what politics is but how political change may occur. Unless we can understand how gender regulation operates we cannot envision a society where it might not exist. The "radical potential" of writing women's history in this way comes through exposing "the often silent and hidden operations of gender that are nonetheless present and defining forces in the organization of most societies."⁸¹⁴ Furthermore, to accept this categorical difference is to accept the political argument that sameness is a requirement for equality. The location and organization of difference is crucial to a culture's self-representation and its distribution of power. If power is constructed on difference it must be challenged "from the ground of difference". If we continue to argue within the terms of this discourse "we grant the current conservative premise that because women cannot be identical to men in all respects, we cannot expect to be equal to them."⁸¹⁵

⁸¹⁴ Scott, Gender and the Politics of History, 27.

⁸¹⁵ Ibid. pp.46/48.

Chapter IX

NOTE ON SOURCES

Generally this work has relied on two types of sources. The first were the printed works, both the primary ones of the era and the secondary sources that relate to it. The complete volumes of such popular journals as the Literary Garland, (1838-51), The New Dominion Monthly, (1867-79), Canadian Monthly and National Review, (1872-78), Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly, (1878-1882), and The Canadian Magazine (1893-1925) are available. Every issue of each magazine for the entire run was examined carefully for every article apparently concerned with gender issues. The journals published in this country represent Canadian content. Some of the articles published in these journals had their origins outside Canada, although the decision to reprint them in Canadian journals suggests approval of the contents, at least on the part of the editors. These journals also published a good deal of Canadian material and, as such, represented a forum within which concerns about women could be addressed. Although the exact circulation numbers are unknown, it has been suggested they were highly representative of the middle class thinking of the era. Carl Klinck has argued that this small group of periodicals is suggestive of the national consciousness at

this time. The Literary Garland was devoted to the advancement of English-Canadian literature. The Canadian Monthly and National Review was established to promote a national culture, and Rose Belford's Canadian Monthly was dedicated to nationalist ideals.⁸¹⁶ These popular journals not only provided a forum for debate on the issues of the day; they provided numerous examples of nineteenth century fiction - both short stories and serialized novels - which have, for the most part, long been out of print. As well, these popular journals published several debates on education for women, including such influential commentators as Murray, Dawson, Grant, and Machar.

As I have argued, materials from the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches best exemplify the middle class Protestant ethos of Ontario in the Religious journals such as The Canadian Methodist Magazine and Review, (1875-1905), the Presbyterian Outlook, and, particularly the Christian Guardian, (1829-1925), which was the "official" voice of Methodism in the nineteenth century, provide the most useful indication of the concerns of those people at the congregational level.

The major source for the information on medical representations of women is the popular health manuals that were either published in Canada or read by Canadians. These popularized medical works were written for the general

⁸¹⁶ See Klinck, The Literary History of Canada.

public and aimed specifically at the middle class. The major sources used were Jefferis' Search Lights on Health and The Household Guide, (both published in Toronto), What A Young Woman Ought to Know and What A Young Wife Ought to Know, George Naphey's The Physical Life of Woman which was printed in Toronto by Maclear and Company, and Advice to a Wife by Pye Henry Chavasse which was published by Hunter Rose of Toronto. These popular health books enjoyed a wide circulation. Naphey's was into a fourth edition by 1875 and 10,000 had been published within three months of the first edition in 1869. Chavasse's was into the twelveth edition by 1879. As Wendy Mitchinson has suggested, these books are particularly important for they reflected the opinions read by the wider community.

The secondary literature that relates to this subject, particularly in the United States and Britain, is immense. Much, though not all of it, appears in the notes, in the introduction, and in the bibliography.

The other major source was unprinted manuscript collections. The Public Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, and the Archives of the University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg provided access to invaluable collections that helped me to understand the private experience behind the public ideology. An examination of private collections, diairies, and published diaries like Elizabeth Smith, Woman With a Purpose, helped to

overcome any potential misrepresentation of the issues addressed. At the Public Archives of Canada, I examined the collections and correspondence of numerous families like: Bell, Logan, Parkin, Rowell (1842-1880), Ferguson, Wright, Currie (1855-1932), Sir Lyman Duff Papers, J.E.G. Curran Papers (1875-1914), Green Family Correspondence (1842-50), Martha Field (1814-1880) and the Agnes Butler Leacock diaries (1862-1883). In Manitoba, the United Church Archives at the University of Winnipeg provided access to Conference Journals and Reports for the Methodist Church, Records of Proceedings for the Presbyterian Church, and Woman's Missionary Society Reports for both churches. The Provincial Archives of Manitoba holds correspondence from families like: Boulton (1872-1917), Bradshaw (1875-1950), the Campbells (1862-1952), Carpenter, Chadwick, Coldwell (1834-1907), Currie, Dougall, Ferguson, Harrison, and Kittredge.

The Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions proved to be a goldmine of sources from the nineteenth century, many of which are no longer in print. These reproductions provided numerous examples of pamphlets, lectures, essays, and addresses on the "woman question". As well, they provided copies of published novels that have gone out of print. CIHM provided such diverse sources as Domestic Sanctuary, The Ladies Book of Useful Information, the influential Woman Her Character Culture and Calling, and

Goldwin Smith's Essays on the Questions of the Day, as well as several religious pamphlets and addresses like Sedgewick's "The Proper Sphere and Influence of Woman in a Christian Society", Annie Stagg's "The Importance of Religion to Woman" and John Munroe's "The Place and Work of Women in the Church".

In order to examine the propositions of this thesis in the context of nineteenth century Canada I turned to the historical sources which are, admittedly and by accident, Ontario specific. Although certainly read in Western Canada and the Maritimes, and we do know that Ontario consciously attempted to recreate the West in its own image, we can only presume, as yet, that these representations had the same resonance across Canada.

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