Discipline, Bodies, and Girls' Diaries in Post-Confederation Canada

—Kathryn Carter

Sally Mitchell's study *The New Girl* enumerates social changes encountered by British girls between 1880 and 1915 such as "compulsory schooling; changes in child-labor laws and economic circumstances; the new female occupations of nursing, school-teaching and clerical work . . . and the opportunity of extended academic or professional education for some among the middle classes" (3). Mitchell makes the case that "girlhood" was a site of cultural scrutiny after 1880, newly defined in advice manuals, magazines, and fiction as a result of social changes that marked out new territory in a female's life between childhood and sexually mature adulthood (6). At the same time, diaries became "almost obligatory companions to a class endowed with a modicum of leisure," according to Peter Gay's study of the "bourgeois experience" in the nineteenth century (447). Diary writing at the end of the nineteenth century was a conventional habit among people of culture associated with a genteel life and an ideology of refinement (Fothergill 34; Culley 4). These social and cultural developments can be traced in Canadian history as well, and examining the confluence of "girlhood" and diary writing by teenaged girls in Canadian educational institutions during the same period as Mitchell's study shows that the textual production of diaries in educational settings is analogous to the cultural production of social understanding around the sexual maturation of girls' bodies and their desires; both are constructed within discursive limits specific to their historical moment.

Diaries written in Canadian schools by Marjorie Saunders, the Bowlby sisters, Kathleen Cowan, Sadie Harper, Mary Dulhanty, and Bessie Scott show readers what does and does not require confession at the moment of writing.[1] The forms of discretion summoned in their diary writing adumbrate the

limits of subjectivity suggested by a culture with its newly produced category for "girlhood." Although I focus on Canadian examples, the tendencies that occur in these diaries are evident in American and British diaries too, suggesting that this was a widespread phenomenon tied to certain class positions, particularly a middle-class position. According to the researchers who examine the girlhood diary of Manitoban Mamie Pickering, written in the 1890s, "the nineteenth century middle classes developed their own particular version of girlhood, the ideals of which coincided with the ideals of their social class" (Williamson and Williamson, "Mamie Pickering's Reading, Part Two" 54).[2] And while these class identifications may not be limited geographically, I would argue that historical variability is linked to geography in the case of writing school diaries: women's access to education occurred unevenly and was available in specific locations at specific times. The middle class is more easily attainable in certain places and at certain times, and post-Confederation Canada was one of the places where it was more easily attained.

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Forms of discretion and confession in the diaries show that diary writing fulfills a disciplinary function, producing (rather than recording) the limits of allowable knowledge. Especially interesting is that the diaries' boundaries between the unremarkable and the confession-able are positioned differently than contemporary readers might expect. For example, in terms of acknowledging a distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality, the writers ignore or neglect (rather than refuse or resist) to categorize and define, queering the categories under construction at that time by Kraft-Ebbing and others. Even though frequently cast in erotic language, descriptions of same-sex relationships in the diaries apparently do not require a rhetoric of confession. Entries that eroticize boarding-school friendships add credibility to the argument put forth in Kathryn R. Kent's study *Making Girls into Women*, that "the subject-forming project at the heart of disciplinary intimacy" such as that found in the school settings "threatens to queer, even as it regulates, the female subject" (5). Although Kent focuses more on the "possible erotic effects of disciplinary intimacy" (11) attaching student to teacher, the diaries reveal strong attachments between students whose role as peers is to police each other even as they encourage transgressions, revealing another manifestation of

"disciplinary intimacy." Commentators such as Martha Vicinus, Diana Fuss, or the contributors to Felicity Hunt's collection of essays have noticed the paradox inherent in girls' school stories where the educational setting specifies preferred subjects through the imposition of institutional rules even while it provides the material conditions for same-sex alliances of many kinds and for transgressive behaviour.[3] The content of school girls' diaries maps out the paradoxes and possibilities inherent in that setting. The content reveals the relational and provisional nature of identity, but more than that, the act of writing a diary plays a material role in these processes.

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This paper shows how the diary genre promises the regulation of girls subject to educational discipline even while it rehearses the queer indeterminacy of that subject position. While some commentators use the term "queer" to refer to an oppositional stance, a way of making oneself at odds with the "normal," I am not suggesting that the diarists consciously articulate a subject position that challenges dominant gender expectations. Rather, I choose to emphasize the "querying" of queer theory, joining other commentators in insisting that queer refers "to nothing in particular," that it is "an identity without an essence" (Selden 255). This version of "queer" is more closely aligned with the critical possibilities that Judith Butler uncovers in the term. Butler, of course, links her definition to the performativity of gender identity and to the idea that discourse around gender and sexuality has a history which precedes the subject, a view that certainly influences this paper. The editors of a review article on queer theory explain this perspective when they define queer as "a disruption of normative sexual identities and a conception of agency linked to the 'performance' which installs those identities" (Selden 255). My investigation of diaries written by young women in Canada shows not only that their understanding of sexual identity at this historical moment is more fluid than contemporary readers might expect, thereby disrupting our understanding of normative sexual identities, but it shows how the agency of the diarists is tied to performances of gender identity as rehearsed in lived experience and written record.

I am interested in the rehearsal of gender identities in girls' diary writing for two reasons. The first reason is that the diarists show an awareness of written gender rehearsals as provisional. Their diary writing, then, assumes the stance of "camp" in that

it is aware of the self as improvisational, partaking in performance and tried-on identities. Secondly, the diary stands in metonymic relation to the girls' bodies; exposure of the body or the text can result in shame or drama. Taken together, these reasons may suggest why diary writing becomes implicated in the creation and rehearsal of gender identities and why diary writing (along with hiding or locking the diary) is still assumed to be an activity associated with adolescent girls who are in the process of preening, posturing, trying, and refining adult gender roles.

1. Diaries and Discipline

Late-century developments in diary writing coincided with the growth of leisure among the middle and upper classes especially after 1859 when an increasing number of servants were employed in middle-class homes (Hunter 55). The changing social dynamics were at play in Canada, where household labour was well entrenched by the 1880s; by 1891, domestic servants accounted for 41% of the female work force (Leslie 71). Compulsory education for Canadian children after 1871 and access to post-secondary education for Canadian women after 1862 meant higher rates of literacy all around. In particular, one segment of the population—the daughters of middle- and upper-class families—had reading and writing skills and little work to do at home. Mercy Coles, one such daughter of leisure, remarked in her 1864 diary on how much work was done at the home of American relatives without servants: "They are making cheese this morning. No servants, here they do all their own work. I am not surprised. Bertie found it so different at our house, when he had half a dozen to wait on him" (qtd. in Powell 74). The labour of a half-dozen servants relieves Mercy Coles of housework that would take time away from her diary writing. The 1878 Crease household of Victoria, B.C., diarists all, experienced disruption in their daily routine when their Chinese servant went on strike due to the imposition of the poll tax to regulate "the evils of Chinese labour" (Crease 184n5). Twenty-three-year-old Susan Crease, a pampered daughter, was obliged on the morning of 18 September 1878, "to *see about breakfast*" [her italics] (161). The next day, Susan quarreled with her sister about who would wash the dishes, and on 23 September complains of another "hard day" when she has been forced into "kitchen work" (163). When the "*New Chinaman came*" [her italics] two days later, she resumed her usual round of social diversions (163). Mamie Pickering in Manitoba describes 2 June 1893, a typical day, in her diary: "I helped with the housework this morning and loafed this afternoon and evening. I read a little, played a little, wrote a little and worried the dog. Nothing satisfied me" (qtd. in Williamson and Williamson, "Mamie Pickering's Reading, Part One" 3). Young women with literacy

and leisure were in an ideal situation to keep diaries, but the resulting ennui ("Nothing satisfied me") signaled a potential problem.

Growing access to literacy and leisure brought its own set of consequences. In an 1859 edition of an American children's magazine, a correspondent asked advice writer William Thayer "how can a girl like me be orderly when I have nothing to order?" Thayer's answer to the "pert miss" with excessive leisure is to order her wardrobe and her room (Hunter 55). What might girls get up to with time on their hands? Especially now that they had increased social mobility? Historians note that expanded social possibilities for Canadian women brought increased possibilities of social censure at this time:

> The sight of young women outside the home, [in] the street, the factories, and the lecture halls was profoundly unsettling for many Victorians—and the more the range of young women's activities broadened, the more censure was leveled at a life outside the discipline of family. (Light and Parr 49)

The relative expansiveness of young women's lives in the late-nineteenth century presented unique social challenges to be addressed, even corrected, by the discipline of diary writing.

According to scholar Lynne Vallone's survey of conduct books, popular fiction, and religious tracts, disciplining girls, especially, was a widespread concern in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The common message in all of these manuals was that "each girl must decide how to conquer and then channel her girlish nature—characterized by desire, hunger, anger, ignorance and aggression—into valuable, beautiful, womanly conduct" (5). Certainly, girls would have encountered disciplinary lessons in prescriptive conduct manuals from at least the seventeenth century on. By the mid-nineteenth century, the family was emphasized as the "center of childhood education and of the child's social life," according to Sara Newton in her study of American conduct books before 1900 (5). The family was seen as a primary site for educating and disciplining the child, but it was losing its primary hold as young women moved away from the discipline of family into more public educational settings after the 1870s. If the discipline of the family was dissipating at this time, the discipline of diary writing offered an opportunity to practise order. The work of social historian Jane Hunter shows that girls encountered instructions about the

benefits of diary writing, specifically, in post-1860s magazines, advice manuals, and didactic literature. The relative expansiveness of young women's lives in the late-nineteenth century presented unique social challenges to be addressed, even corrected, by the discipline of diary writing.

Diary writing was said to teach lessons of morality and discipline. Students in nineteenth-century Canadian educational settings would have encountered in standard school texts "the sense of a religious moral and, implicitly, a linguistic standard," writes Barbara Powell in her article "Nineteenth-Century Young Women's Diaries" (70). Powell emphasizes the importance of diary writing in this context. She outlines how diary writing was connected to morality and self-improvement by the link of literacy itself, by linking the word and the good (70). Because of this link between the word and the good, and because of the importance of disciplining girls, diary writing by young women at the end of the nineteenth century was encouraged by parents, educators, and peers. Certainly diary writing was advocated for a wide cross-section of the population at this time. For example, in Ontario, the editor of the 1893 *Millbrook Reporter* extolled the self-improving functions of the diary as an expedient to memory and envisioned for the diarist—young girl or otherwise—a highly regular life punctuated by external events rather than internal dilemmas (Hoffman and Taylor 1). Late-nineteenth-century diary writing promised self-improvement and self-regulation through morally-inflected lessons of discipline and obedience.[4]

Parents and teachers alike became interested in the disciplinary potential of diary writing. Hunter argues that American parents promoted diary writing as "a means to good character and refinement" and "as a valuable 'discipline' useful in structuring time and character" (54). In the United States, Bronson Alcott watched over the diary writing of his daughter Louisa May during the late 1840s; the future writer and her sisters were "required to keep regular journals . . . open to the inspection of their parents" (Moffat and Painter 28).[5] The Alcott girls were by no means alone in opening their diaries to the scrutiny of others. In British Columbia, Martha Douglas wrote her 1866–1869 diary under the watchful eye of her father who sometimes wrote in the diary himself; and in Hamilton, Canada West, Sophia MacNab began a journal at the urging of her mother in 1846. Sophia's dying mother left explicit instruction to avoid waltzes, refrain from quarrels, and tend to her diary (24). Despite her hope of reaching thirteen volumes, Sophia's writing stopped far short of the goal just after her mother's death (67). The Crease family mentioned above wrote diaries in a social milieu that favoured the practice. They were joined in the enterprise by Jessie Nagle, a sometimes visitor to their home, and her sister, Susan, who both kept diaries in the 1870s

(Carter 12). Diary writing clearly circulated within, and operated as part of the discipline of, the family.

The discipline of the family was recreated in schools where teachers assumed the role of overseeing the diary. Louisa Bowlby (along with her sisters) was expected to keep a diary when she attended Prospect Hill Seminary in Port Dover, Ontario. During what may have been a formal period set aside for writing, she comments that "Bell is just writing a letter, Dora is writing in her journal" (9 Jan. 1862; qtd. in Powell 71). Diary critic Barbara Powell suggests that the diary may have been "marked or read by an instructor at the seminary because Louisa worries over the nature of the writing" (71). Diary writing is expected if not always enjoyed. Sadie Harper at the Ladies' College of Mount Allison University writes on 9 March 1894, "I forgot all about writing in this whenever I had time to until this morning. So sincere! I have an hour to spend in this schoolroom [so] I thought that I might as well put in the time by doing this" (Allen 103). The fact that Louisa and Sadie find themselves tacitly invited to produce diaries in these educational settings underscores the diary's importance as an "exercise in improvement" (Powell 71), a form that invited vigilance from its readers—whether parents or guardians—and demanded attentiveness from its young authors.

What these young writers intuited (with help from magazine articles and pressure from their parents) is that the lessons of diary writing have to do with the benefits of regularity and the dangers of procrastination.

Because diary keeping was associated with moral development, and because authority figures were a primary, if sometimes indirect audience, nineteenth-century diaries became a site of confession, tracing a map of the operations of self-discipline.[6] Transgressions and regressions of all kinds were dutifully reported. Frequently, the perceived failings concern the content or penmanship of the journal. Louisa Bowlby frets, "I have written the rest of this book so badly. I am going to finish it much better if I do not get in too big a hurry" (15 Jan. 1862; qtd. in Powell 71). Likewise, her sister Hattie, who wrote while attending the same seminary some years later, admits, "I have not written any thing worth mentioning for I don't know how long and I guess I never will either" (8 May 1875; qtd. in Powell 71). Expressions of penitence follow diary-writing negligence, as in this entry from Sophia MacNab: after two weeks of missing entries, during which time her mother dies, Sophia writes,

"I have not written my journal for a fortnight and I hope dear papa will not be displeased with me but allow me to leave out a fortnight and just merely say that poor Mama was buried on Tuesday May 18th at two o'clock" (23 May 1846). Louisa Bowlby finds it likewise necessary to apologize when she neglects her journal: "I did not have time to write last night so I will finish my yesterday's work today" (16 May 1862). What these young writers intuited (with help from magazine articles and pressure from their parents) is that the lessons of diary writing have to do with the benefits of regularity and the dangers of procrastination. Of course, diary writing itself could lead to procrastination, as when Marjorie Saunders avoids her homework at Glen Mawr school: "This is Thursday and I am sitting in study writing this instead of studying scripture and mythology" (25 Mar. 1909; Dingwall, Diary 1908–1909). Diary writing was aligned with moral development, so failing to write, writing badly, writing at the wrong time, or writing about the wrong thing are all akin to a spiritual failing that demands penitence. The diarists' acknowledgement of this discipline and the tedium of its daily demands leads Hunter to speculate that, "like Catholic confessionals described by Foucault, diary writing [for nineteenth-century young women] was an internalized discipline of the self" (52). The resulting confessions recorded and the discipline of self practised show emergent, gendered identities being textually rehearsed.

The diarists examined here were all in school when they wrote their diaries, all of them on the cusp of sexually mature adulthood. They were, to quote the researchers of the diary written by Mamie Pickering, "in a glorious never-never land of freedom—after Papa and before husband" (Williamson and Williamson, "Mamie Pickering's Diary, Part One" 5). Marjorie Saunders and her sister Beatrice attended Glen Mawr, an elite private boarding school in Toronto that later graduated writer Dorothy Livesay. Saunders kept a diary there from 1908 to 1909 when she was seventeen and eighteen. Sadie Harper wrote from the Ladies' College at Mount Allison University in 1894 when she was eighteen. Bessie Mabel Scott, the first woman from Ottawa to attend university full time, wrote during the first year of a math program (which she loved) at the University of Toronto in 1889, before being persuaded to enroll in the "more suitably feminine" arts course. Kathleen Cowan kept a diary when she attended Victoria College at the University of Toronto between 1907 and 1910. Mary Dulhanty, writing from 1926 to 1927, attended Mount Saint Vincent Academy in Halifax, Nova Scotia when she was seventeen and eighteen.

Like Sophia McNab, Marjorie begins her diary with the best intentions: "I am going to keep a diary. I have always intended to but never really got started on it till now" (3 Oct. 1908; Dingwall, Diary 1908–

1909). Only the diary knows that Marjorie is "really going to try and learn 'some good resolutions need carrying out'" and how she smiles as she writes it, knowing it to be "an almost impossible thing" (6 Mar. 1909; Dingwall, Diary 1908–1909). She and her diary conduct a conversation about rules and ideals and the possibility of failure. On the pages of her diary, Marjorie rehearses the role of the unworthy penitent striving towards a necessarily unattainable ideal, set in part by the iconic matriarchal figure of Miss Veals, who ran the school. Miss Veals was remembered by a former student as a figure of authority and discipline whose fondest desire for her pupils was "that [they] should have the language and habits of Christian gentlewomen" ("Sixty Years Since" 5). Marjorie tries to live up to institutional expectations represented by her teacher: "If only I could live up to Miss Veals' ideals how much better it would be for all concerned. I have been making great resolutions about how I am going to behave when I get home but I daresay I will be as bad as ever" (16 June 1909; Dingwall, Diary 1908–1909). The possibility of failure is ever present, flavouring even those entries which record her good behaviour:

> [One of the teachers] told me the other day that I had done everything that was quite correct since I came to Glen Mawr and she told Mother that Beatrice and I were two of the nicest girls she ever had in her school. Isn't that a compliment. I don't believe she knows what a beastly temper I have and how we sometimes bring eatables into the school. (27 Jan. 1909; Dingwall, Diary 1908–1909)

As a record of the dialectic between institutional ideals and personal failings, the diary emerges as a silent interlocutor in a discussion about the expectations of society. As Foucault suggests of sexuality under the rule of the repressive hypothesis, diary writing becomes not the mechanism for the liberation of the self—as it is so often touted to be, especially in the twentieth century—but instead the mechanism for the containment and discipline of the self, indeed an incitement to discourse.

Let's be clear, however, that the threats of discipline are not all in Marjorie's head. Failure to attain the institutional ideal and the concomitant threats of disciplinary measures were real enough. Another Glen Mawr student recalled how the mere sound of Miss Veals's silk petticoat struck terror in their hearts because "it presaged punishment" (Maynard 50), and Marjorie did not escape from Miss Veals or other teachers. She describes one encounter: "I am going to church. . . . I hope I manage to control myself better after this, I got a dreadful raking over from Miss Gordon last night because I laughed in prayers, I worried over it all last night and this morning" (30

Jan. 1909; Dingwall, Diary 1908–1909). Two months later she is up on the carpet again before the dreaded Miss Veals:

> Miss Veals took me into the drawing room and told me how she had heard that some girl . . . boasted about keeping eatables in her room and also asked me about the boys that passed us on the way home from church on Sunday . . . Of course, I couldn't tell her anything about the boys but that she needn't worry then I told the girls they would have to be more careful. (25 Mar. 1909; Dingwall, Diary 1908–1909)

Getting caught is a problem, and Marjorie frets about having the teachers find out that she was sneaking off to a corner store one night, writing, "my gracious I'm scrade [sic]" (9 Mar. 1909; Dingwall, Diary 1908–1909). Nowhere else in the diary does she make such a jumbled spelling mistake. Certainly the diarists disciplined themselves and adopted particular values, beliefs, and practices at the individual level but these activities were encouraged at the institutional level, and made the diarists subject to explicit regulations.

2. "Us Poor School Girls"

If the dialectic between the subject and ideological structures constitutes selfhood as Lacan suggests, it is possible that the dialectic is more pronounced during the transition from childhood to adulthood, as children are expected to conform more rigidly than before to the expectations of those ideological structures. Sharing the tension of this intermediate space with Marjorie Saunders are other girls at Glen Mawr, including her sister Beatrice. One of the seemingly contradictory aspects of boarding school culture is that a shared sense of potential failure on the individual level serves to strengthen female camaraderie at a collective level, evident in the passage above where Marjorie dissembles in order to maintain group cohesion and to protect her friends who are then told to be more careful. This also happened to girls attending a boarding school on the outskirts of Paris, France in the late 1870s: "I obeyed the rule book without revolt," writes diarist Eugénie Servant, "that book which made us all sisters, alike in all respects and so united under the influence of that high guidance over which reigned the idea of God" (qtd. in Rogers 532). In the United States in the final decades of the nineteenth century, women entering educational institutions "were exhorted to consider themselves a little band of sisters" (Todd 176). Diaries by young women in schools reflect their shared sense of sisterhood.

Sisterhood evoked mixed emotions. On the one hand, Marjorie Saunders uses her diary to quell excitement at being part of a Glen Mawr sisterhood

because it fit poorly with her desire to please authority as an individual. At these times she heaps scorn upon her biological sister:

> Beatrice is the awfullest little brat I've seen in ages, she talks back to Miss Brough like fun. Beatrice did something or other at breakfast and came to our room while we were making our beds and marched to her room and told her if she ever did it again she would report her but Bea doesn't care a rap she says she isn't frightened of any of them and don't believe she is and they know it too. (30 Jan. 1909; Dingwall, Diary 1908–1909)

On the other hand, though Marjorie is so horrified by Beatrice's inattention to authority that she loses control of pronoun agreement, she delights when her sister pulls off another prank: "cousin Mae sent us a box of cookies. I thought I would be clever and carry them to my room but Miss Gordon met me and asked what they were and I had to tell and she made me put them on the cabinet but Beatrice went down and hooked them next morning so that put matters right" (6 Mar. 1909; Dingwall, Diary 1908–1909). Students also tried to avoid discipline at the all-female residence of Mount Allison University in 1894, where Sadie Harper took delight in the transgressive behaviour of her classmates: "it was more than fun to see some sneak down and get over to the college without Mrs. Archibald seeing them." "Sneaking" is desirable but tricky as she explains on 12 March:

> It is the half hour between eleven and half past and I am again in the school room as every morning at this time I have to spend here, and dare not sneak as Mrs. Archibald is here at this time and she makes sure that we all are here. Oh how strict they have been lately. They are just getting a little bit too fussy altogether. (Allen 104)

Like Marjorie, the threat of punishment for Sadie and her friends is real enough, as in this example when they are caught sneaking around:

> weren't we astonished to see Miss Johnson amongst us, and asked us if we were excused. Of course we had sneaked there, and didn't she go and march us all off to our rooms. O dear, *sich* is life among us poor school girls. (Allen 97)

Diaries from this era record close relationships flourishing in boarding schools where female students cohabited. Sally Mitchell's study of fiction about college girls suggests that the stories overwhelmingly borrowed endings from a culturally scripted narrative of heterosexual romance and marriage (71). Diaries also borrowed narrative from the plots of heterosexual romance and marriage, but it was often

grafted onto passionate female friendships.

Passionate friendships are described by scholar Sheila Jeffreys and others as a phenomenon of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, an expression of ambiguous desire that may or may not have been acted upon physically.[7] The passionate friendships engendered by the boarding-school experience brought a mixed response from authorities. A 1908 British advice manual equivocated on the issue of strong female friendships: "the romantic sentimental feeling that one girl has for another . . . is not altogether a bad thing . . . for, if kept within bounds, it is very often an incentive to work harder and to higher efforts after good. . . . It is only when such a feeling becomes intensified and all-absorbing, so that a girl can think and dream of nothing save the adored one, that it is altogether wrong!" (qtd. in Mitchell 88). In Canada, strong words were leveled against female friendship in a 1907 college newspaper which decried "the broken friendships, class division, and the apparent reluctance of the charmed circle to mingle with the vulgar crowd" that resulted when "members of the sorority . . . consider primarily the need of the little coterie to which they belong" (Cowan 132–33). Eugénie Servant's intimate friendship with Virginie was not seen as harmless by the authorities. She and Virginie sneak about the boarding school in order to recopy a book about the names of flowers, a project which necessitates "leav[ing] the dormitory together, an act which is completely forbidden, to go to the washroom together" (qtd. in Rogers 538). When Eugénie is caught trying to wake Virginie in the early morning hours, after making plans to stay awake together all night, Eugénie is punished by being sent to another part of the dormitory, noting "it was very humiliating for me to be sent there" (Rogers 538). On another occasion, the headmistresses mock a declaration they had written about their friendship. The sanctions work, and although Virginie remains Eugénie's closest friend, the circle widens, and a band of coconspirators name themselves the "clan des dissipées" (qtd. in Rogers 539).

When authorities prohibit joint trips to the washroom in the French boarding school or inquire after the boys who pass Marjorie and her friends on a Sunday morning, they reveal anxieties that are particularly sexual in nature. Unspoken in these regulations is a fear of sexual adventures on or off campus. The passionate friendships between school girls, as recorded in their diaries, do hint at the erotic. In Canada, eighteen-year-old Bessie Scott names "the charmed circle" (22 Nov. 1889; Lewis, "Freshman Year")—much like the *clan des dissipées*—with whom she lived during her first two years attending University College at the University of Toronto. Throughout the diary she records the individual strengths and weaknesses of each, the waxing and waning of specific friendships. Most

notable is her use of romantic language to explain a special bond with a roommate named Tina. When they are separated during Christmas vacation, Bessie writes dramatically, "Ah Tina, how I miss you—wish we were together again but if this cannot be I will try to be content where I am" (7 Jan. 1891; Lewis, "Diary"). Later in the diary she uses similar language to describe a growing attachment: "Lou is really the finest girl in many ways I *ever* met. I was afraid perhaps as I knew her more I would like her less but on the contrary I love and adore her more every day" (24 Feb. 1891; Lewis, "Diary"). In the same entry she writes, "Oh! darling girl, I love her so much and who could help it?" (24 Feb. 1891; Lewis, "Diary"). However, in an accounting of her friends, in which Lou emerges as "first and foremost," she predicts for herself a life where she will "teach until 40 and then marry a widower with several youngsters—must be rich though at least I would want enough to be comfortable" (12 Mar. 1890; Lewis, "Freshman Year"). The intimacies between female friends are not the primary focus of Scott's diary—the freshman diary climaxes with exams at the end of the year: Latin, French, Math, English, Latin Prose, Latin Sight, German Grammar, Latin Grammar, Math, German, and History. Seventeen exams in three weeks. "Poor Louie thinks she won't go back next year at all—try to persuade her *not* to do that," writes Bessie with empathy for the pressures facing her colleague (14 May 1890; Lewis, "Freshman Year"). Potential scripts of her future hover over the diary narrative, and she names at the end of the second diary a number of girls who do not make it to the next stage (22 May 1891; Lewis, "Diary").

Similarly, though at a later date, another student at the University of Toronto, Kathleen Cowan, uses romantic language for her female friendships. Her diary was later co-edited by her husband and published privately as a typescript entitled *It's Late and All the Girls Have Gone*. She writes of "crushes" that are directed towards either sex. These crushes could involve intense feelings of love such as when she writes, "After I came home had a long talk with Carrie Dunnett. I think she likes me and I am so glad because I just love her" (91) or "I quite fell in love with a girl in a red dress and black hat who sang" (114). The crushes also involve physical contact, as shown in entries such as "Slept with Ada and she told me all her love affairs" (101) or "Dottie sat on my knee and my! it was good to be loved" (351) or the night she spends with Edith, sleeping "in shirts and pants and *hugging*" [her italics] (167). However, Kathleen develops "crushes" on men too. So while she writes "I have quite a crush on Susie Findlay" (198), a few pages later she considers Mr. Rumball, a skating partner to be "a perfect dear and I could soon develope [sic] a crush on him" (202). More pointedly, she uses sentence structure to draw an

analogy between these kinds of attachments when she writes "I love Dorothy Luke and Edith likes Mr. [illegible]" (336). Cowan's assumption that she can have crushes on men and women, and the implicit equation of her romantic feelings for Dorothy Luke and Edith's feelings for Mr. —, does not seem to present a discursive problem in this diary. Queenie Crerar's diary, written by a Canadian attending a British boarding school between 1891 and 1892, directs romantic language primarily to heterosexual attachments. Her female friends are important, but she "goes mad" for a tenor; she "think[s] by day and dream[s] by night of his enthralling heavenly voice" (6). In diaries of this period, heterosexual and homosexual attachments seem equally remarkable and ordinary; none insist on "appropriate" avenues for romantic love.

Writing slightly after the period of Mitchell's study, Nova Scotian diarist Mary Dulhanty has a difficult time choosing her crush. She doesn't call them "crushes" but rather "cases," and vacillates between adoring Pearl, Kitty, or Sister Francis at the Catholic girls' school she attends. Her diary records emotive outpourings to a fourth unnamed woman in the following entry:

> Oh Diary, Diary I have an awful case and she doesn't even know about it. I wish I knew more about cases so I could find my way around. Oh Diary, I love, love, love her. . . . Surely she can see my loving glances. But I suppose she is too busy to notice me. Oh Boo hoo Boo hoo, Diary I am a sentimental fool. (338)

The editors of Dalhunty's diary are correct in saying not to make too much of these "cases" (326), by which they mean we need not read them as evidence of lesbian or proto-lesbian identities. Indeed, when Dulhanty was contacted many years later, she could not recall any of the events chronicled in this lost journal, suggesting that this was a particular version of self rehearsed and performed under specific institutional conditions.

The cases, crushes, and passionate friendships may have been commonplace among the students, but authorities remained vigilant to ensure that such feelings did not become "intensified and all-absorbing." Diaries were mandated as one exercise in self-discipline, but another variation on vigilance was the surveillance of bodies, behaviour, and clothing as external representations of internal discipline. Miss Veals at Glen Mawr was recalled by one former student as continually advising on proper behaviour: "Girls, an English gentlewoman does not do that!" Miss Veals took an interest in her students' attire. For example, one day she keeps Marjorie after dinner to tell her that "the lace around the neck of [her] dress looked 'dragged'" (5 May 1909; Dingwall, Diary

1909). Marjorie is infuriated to discover that it was actually her sister with the poor grooming habits and that Miss Veals got the two girls mixed up. The same thing happens to Sadie Harper in New Brunswick: "Mrs. Archibald made every girl that she got hold of show her how her neck was fixed, and if she didn't think it was all right, she made that girl either change her dress or sit down and fix the neck of it in some way" (Allen 107). Like Sadie Harper, who equates the dress's neck with a girl's neck, Miss Veals also trades in synecdoche. She was known by her trademark phrase: "Girls, remember buckles in and brooches out" (Maynard 46). For Miss Veals, buckles are waists and brooches are bosoms. Clothing stands in for the female body that must be made to conform, like the "I" that must be disciplined into a proper place in society and on the pages of the diary.

Clothing, like the written diary, is an outward manifestation of internal order and subject to disciplinary actions, and the attention brought to bear on bodies and clothing is consistent with a "modernist depth model of identity in which the surfaces of the body were interpreted as signifying a consistent and essential subject" (Meyer 18). At odds with the hoped-for essential subject is the content of school girls' diaries which records bodies that grow; desire; sneak away; get dirty, draggled, and mussed; and seek love and nourishment at the wrong times and in the wrong places. The subjects recorded in the diaries are queer subjects, rehearsing an identity that is, to use the language of Judith Butler, "improvised, discontinuous and in a process of becoming" (Brooker 213). They show that same-sex attachments do not require guilt-laden confessions and prove the seemingly contradictory assertion that "the subject-forming project at the heart of disciplinary intimacy," such as that found in the school settings, "threatens to queer, even as it regulates, the female subject" (Kent 5). It threatens to queer precisely because the girls involved become aware of the fairly arbitrary nature of institutional rules and of the sometimes arbitrary subject positions they assume within the institution. How seriously can you take discipline when it can be circumvented or when it is sometimes wrong? Although they are being trained to internalize modes of discipline, the diarists are aware of how provisional discipline is in this particular setting. Moreover, their sense of agency is "linked to the performance which installs those identities" (Seldon 255).

3. Hiding the Diary

Like an undisciplined, potentially sexual, transgressive female body, the diary—as material object—must be hidden, kept discrete, under lock, and properly dressed. The textual production of diaries in educational settings is analogous to the cultural production of social understanding around the sexual maturation of girls' bodies and their

desires: both are constructed within discursive limits specific to their historical moment, and the diary plays a material role in the processes of identity formation.

Diaries of young Canadian schoolgirls offer a *mise-en-scène* of textual creation. The following entry might be described as a typical, even stereotypical, scene of diary writing: the young girl scribbling in seclusion finds her privacy violated—someone interrupts—and she quickly tries to hide the evidence.[8] Here, Marjorie Saunders at Glen Mawr is nearly found out by one of the teachers:

> Yesterday while I was writing this, I had to keep putting it under the mattress every little while for fear someone should see me writing. Last night . . . I lit a match [to look at the diary] and Fraulein came in. I blew the match out, I don't think she saw it. (19 May 1909; Dingwall, Diary 1909)

The diary represents those parts of the female body—like the neck, the bosom, and the belly—that are vulnerable if they go public. Precariously contained by institutions (whether they be ideological or generic), the diary—like a girl's body—might spill out into unauthorized, public territory. The production of the diary is overseen by authorities or furtively hidden in the same way as are girls' bodies, their bodily functions, and their desires.

A young girl's diary is an open secret that must be protected. In *The Importance of Being Earnest*, first performed in 1895, Cecily openly writes a diary, an action that invites censure from her governess, Miss Prism, who says, "You must put away your diary, Cecily. I really don't see why you should keep a diary at all" (Wilde 1701). Miss Prism voices a mid-century opinion shared by Jane Carlyle, whose experience with diary writing led her to believe that it "aggravates whatever is factitious and morbid in you" (37). Cecily, being a late-century girl, continues with her diary while remaining keenly aware of its ambivalent social location. When Algernon asks to see it later in the play, she replies by campily putting her hand over it:

> Oh no. You see it is simply a very young girl's record of her own thoughts and impressions and consequently meant for publication. When it appears in volume form I hope you will order a copy. (Wilde 1710)

Her gesture flirts with the fascination of exposure and its decidedly gendered consequences. Diaries stand in metonymically for young girls' bodies as they undergo an openly secret transition from childhood innocence into adult maturity, a transition that is private, excruciatingly individual, and yet unremarkable in its ubiquity. It is a transition that

cathects shame and perhaps drama to exposure (see Marjorie Saunders relish telling the almost-got-caught-with-my-diary scenario) and to performances of gender identity.

Diaries, written by young women just about to enter the apparatus of representation as adult women in post-Confederation Canada, provide a site where young women perform and rehearse gendered identities by describing proper feminine behaviour and by giving voice to erotic same-sex attachments that might function as rehearsals for future courtships. In writing about their behaviour, clothing, and erotic attachments and about how these are viewed by those in power, we see young women being schooled into how to act like "real women." The diaries are not to be labeled queer because they talk about the passion of same-sex friendships but because they highlight the provisionality of the girls' identities when writing in particular institutional situations and within the triumvirate of power, knowledge, and sexuality; they are camp because they are self-reflexively aware of how provisional and how theatrical it all is, like Cecily feigning protection of her diary in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. These young women use diary writing to gain queer access to the apparatus of representation, an apparatus built on shaky ground.

Diary writing by women in educational settings is an instrumental component in a disciplinary regime that is institutional as well as cultural. The paradoxes of discipline and its relation to subject formation are thrown into relief when the institutional practices of schools meet the material practices of diary writing. Writing at a time when the category of girlhood was itself under construction and just before homosexual identities would be pathologized, these post-Confederation diaries show how schoolgirls negotiate, perform, and sometimes challenge these identificatory categories; it shows that classification systems using age or sexual orientation cannot be considered fixed or stable. Certainly the ideals of institutions and cultures are internalized, but the diaries reveal the importance of collective experiences, of performing an identity which instills a sense of agency, and of the provisionality of identity when writing and navigating in these particular situations.

Notes

[1] Another diarist worth noting is Maude E. Abbott, a doctor and pioneer in the field of medical research who fought to gain entrance to the medical school at McGill University, though her diary is not explored in this paper. Excerpts from her diary of student days in the 1880s (the tone of which is remarkably similar to that of Bessie Mabel Scott's diary) can be found in Clifford.

[2] Mamie Pickering's diary is a valuable source for finding out what educated middle-class girls of the late nineteenth century were reading.

[3] Vicinus examines the representations of these friendships and the self-control they elicit in fictional works, like *Olivia* by Dorothy Strachey Bussy. Like Vicinus, I am also interested in how expressions of self-discipline coincided with the new public roles for women available at the time, and agree that "the process whereby women's friendships are labelled publicly deviant is more complex and uneven than previous historians have declared" (212).

[4] Thomas Augst writes convincingly that, "in its physical difficulty and ritual formality, writing in a diary was charged with both functional and symbolic importance as a rite of passage to moral maturity"; he argues that diary writing was a crucial component of a moral economy in nineteenth-century America (9).

[5] For a discussion of gender identity, discipline, and late-century discourses of childhood in the novels of Louisa May Alcott, see Michael Moon.

[6] Two kinds of confession are elicited by the diary. One is religious. At mid-century, religious moralism affected the diaries of those late Victorians who believed that "good deed and regular habits" also paved the way to salvation (Hunter 53). The second is secular, the kind chronicled here, which offers a place to perform or enact social scripts and define a culturally acceptable, embodied existence. Much more could be said about the connections between diaries and confession, going back to Puritan beginnings. In tone, the secular confessions are very much like those written in an explicitly religious diary by Hamiltonian Catherine Bell Van Norman with its repentance of writerly sins: "I commenced writing this journal thinking I would make some improvement in writing, but I think it will prove a failure. Well it may make some improvement in my spiritual welfare" (5 Jan. 1850).

[7] Relevant here is work by Janet Todd and Nancy Cott that traces the language of sisterhood to eighteenth-century novels, where epistolary heroines wrote to other women to avoid being ensnared in seduction plots and where such exchanges between female friends had erotic implications. Sheila Jeffreys also argues that female friendships were increasingly associated with lesbianism or proto-lesbianism in the late nineteenth century.

[8] Even more telling is that Freud looked to young girls' diaries for evidence of the psychological development of sexual identity. In 1908, he published and wrote an introduction to *A Young Girl's Diary* by Grete Lainer. During the period covered by the diary, she faces two momentous events: the beginning of menstruation and the death of her mother. But she frets most acutely when she misplaces pages of her diary, a point overlooked in Freud's

commentary on the diary. She writes, "O dear such an awful thing has happened. I have lost pages 30 to 34 from my diary. I must have left them in the garden or else on the Louisenhöhe. It's positively fiendish. If anyone was to find them" (29 Aug.). Despite her mother's assurances that these pages "will be of no interest to anyone" she is quite relieved to find them a day later, "pulped by the rain and the writing all run" and even more relieved to find out that her mother will not divulge the secret to her father (30 Aug.). It is well worth reading Freud's preface in connection with this article.

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