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SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION AND ESSENTIALISM IN VICTORIAN EMOTIONAL CULTURE:

A CASE STUDY OF ELIZA LYNN LINTON AND BEATRICE WEBB

by

Pauline Phipps

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
through the Department of History
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts at the
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1997

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ABSTRACT

Emotional culture is the study of behavioral standards and feelings through time. Historians usually explain emotions as either socially constructed or essentially innate. The theory of social construction suggests that emotions are constructed behaviours for people within a particular society. In comparison, essentialism conceives them as biologically fixed. An analysis of Eliza Linton’s autobiography, which she wrote in 1885, showed her ambivalence between her acceptance of cultural gender-specific norms and her own perception of her masculine behaviour. She resolved her conflict by adopting a literary male persona in her autobiography. Beatrice Webb’s extensive diary, written during the same period, indicated a similar ambivalence. Webb described her dilemma as a controversy between her rational and her emotional self. Her resolution was within her adopted religious practice. The conclusion is that each woman’s particular masculine/feminine contradiction was played out in unique performances, which involved a mediation between self and the society. Thus, even though Linton and Webb acclaimed the constructed gender-distinct emotions in Victorian England, their actions also gave voice to the psyche as the visceral negotiator between public requirements and private wishes. In the future, this intertwining of the social construction and essentialist theories is recommended for understanding the under-researched emotional culture of the past.
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Chapter One

Introduction And Background To Emotional Culture

This thesis will explain how some women in Victorian England sought self-expression in diverse and subversive ways both within and outside of prescribed behavioural norms: the two individuals chosen for close examination are the novelist/journalist Eliza Lynn Linton and the social reformer Beatrice Webb. Although both women acclaimed the contemporary values of female domesticity, they also seemed stifled by an age which ascribed women as the weaker sex—physically, mentally and emotionally. The memoirs of Linton and Webb indicate that their “masculine natures” caused an identity crisis for each of them owing to their internalized cultural values. Linton, who was born into a middle-class family, experienced ambivalence towards her “masculine” behaviour after her childhood experiences in the 1830s. In a similar vein, Webb was unresolved about her emotional and rational longings as a young, upper-middle class woman in the 1870s. This work will focus on the years during the 1880s when both women were active in their careers, and were coming to terms with their divided selves. Their innovations for satisfying their sensual, deeply passionate natures resolved each woman’s particular contradictions. The texts of Linton and Webb will indicate their unique “performance,” in which they deftly evolved in order to facilitate their negotiations between self and other.

Linton’s and Webb’s dichotomies with self and other were partly rooted in, if not consistent with, the eclectic nature of Victorian society during the mid-to-late nineteenth century. After the onset of industrialization and commercialism, middle-class families had become accustomed to living in homes separated from work. These economic changes had created
gendered roles, modes of behaviour and experiences for men and women. Manuals and advice books, written by reformers such as Sarah Stickney Ellis, characterized the family as a repository of stability and firm values. Prescriptive literature indicated that women were expected to remain in the private sphere of the home in the roles of domestic, nurturing and moral upkeepers.¹ Human qualities such as meekness, virtue, modesty and purity were encouraged and claimed as feminine attributes.² Thus the “domesticated” woman was at the center of femininity.³ In comparison, men traversed the public sphere of the education facilities, the public recreation establishments and the work force. Their masculine identity depended on their ability to operate as economic agents, and to provide a home or “sanctuary” for their family.⁴ Intense romantic love was expected to unite the otherwise separated sexes. Diaries and letters indicate how the fervency of passion caused both men and women to become “weak with desire.”⁵

By the mid-1880s, however, middle-class women were gaining more access to educational facilities. For example, secondary schools for girls were opening during the second half of the nineteenth century. The rise of all-female communities, such as Westfield College, trained women for occupations in teaching or nursing. Even though the middle-class founders of these facilities sought to improve women’s lives, they wanted to avoid disturbing prescribed roles. In short, they


³ Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, 192.

⁴ Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, 227-271.

carried domesticity into the public world. By 1878, middle-class women were admitted to lectures at Oxford University and could pursue degrees at the University of London. More of them were remaining single and seeking economic independence through careers. Others fought for new freedoms, such as sexual expression or suffrage. But men and some middle-class women deplored the emergence of the so-called “New Woman.” Somewhat hypocritically, while both Webb and Linton actively pursued “masculine” careers, they denigrated “mannish” women who “aped” or were “bad copies of men.” When Mrs Humphrey Ward, the novelist, published her notorious manifesto against suffrage in 1889, Webb initially signed the document.

Alongside changing attitudes towards prescribed Victorian femininity, there was a growing division over religion. Protestantism no longer offered an exclusive organizing principle for the expression of identity. Since the 1830s, the growth of Anglo-Catholicism and ritualism within the Church of England had seriously challenged the credibility of Protestantism in terms of

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5Layard, Mrs. Lynn Linton, 149; MA, 360-1.


10David Hempton, Religion and political culture in Britain and Ireland, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 118, 174. Linda Colley in Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837 (New Haven: New Haven University Press, 1992) suggests that throughout the “long”eighteenth century, a shared Protestantism, with the growth of associated values of cultural chauvinism, was the most important component in the formation of a British identity.
its undiluted opposition to popery.11 Disputes arose between the orthodox and the heterodox, the episcopalian and the Presbyterians, and the evangelicals and the High Churchmen. The success of a doctrine began to depend upon its ability to evoke religious zeal and, simultaneously, to reflect and to propagate the social, political and cultural aspirations of its members.12 This was not only behind the emergence of diverse Protestant sects, but it also initiated a renewed interest in Roman Catholicism. The return to this traditional religion was inspired by the quest for social and sexual respectability by conservative members of society.13 In addition, the sheer scale of Irish migration, and temporary residence of French emigres, brought a fresh stimulus to Roman Catholicism in cities such as Liverpool and Northampton.14

Paradoxically paralleling its growing religious diversity, Victorian Britain was also surprisingly irreligious in the mid-nineteenth century. In the eighteenth century, Hume had suggested that the origin and the continuance of the world was explainable in terms of its own life and energy, a necessity inherent in matter itself. God was rendered not only redundant but also a hindrance to comprehending human existence. Hume’s thesis became the basic principle of the

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12 Hempton, *Religion and political culture*, 178.


natural sciences, and it was consistently applied to scientific research by the early nineteenth century. For example, the natural theologians attempted to place religious interpretations on scientific discovery. Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859) challenged the biblical creation narrative, while subtly reinforcing or justifying contemporary gender roles. Advocating male supremacy, Darwin proposed that males were more highly evolved than females because they had developed higher mental faculties through survival skills such as “hunting” and “defending.” The move to neo-Kantianism, which followed Kant in trying to separate faith and knowledge, value and fact, also took place during this period. Kant, like Hume, had been interested in the nature of the intellectual drive where questioning constantly “transcended” towards “truth.” There is debate over the *significance* of Kantian thought on Victorian England. But the general consensus is that Kant’s insights did have some impact on English thinking. Biblical criticism was now becoming an intellectual force which resulted in furthering the establishment of the scientific method. However, religious and scientific ideals continued to co-exist. Scientists such as Draper, White, Huxley and Tyndall acceded to leaving the Church to its own religious sphere, providing


16 In *Science and Religion in the Nineteenth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), Tess Coslett argues that natural selection destroyed the widely accepted relationship between science and religion, and what had been a prop of religion was now turned against it. Moreover, the scientists rather than theologians aggressively defended religion.


18 John Macquarrie, “Philosophy And Religion In The Nineteenth Twentieth Centuries: Continuities & Discontinuities,” *Monist* 60 (1977), 269-73.

their own endeavors went unchallenged. Their reflective application of religious morality within
their schemas implies their attempts to reconcile both cultural and personal concerns. Tyndall
assigned emotions to the realm of religion and science over the domain of the rational. Huxley,
although bitterly opposed to clerical theology, could not disclaim the Bible. He proposed that the
ultimate nature of reality could never be known to us. In short, we must forever remain agnostic.20

This diversity of thought during the mid- to late-nineteenth century, about gender
behaviour, scientific development and religious thought, had an unsettling psychological impact
on English Victorians. Linton and Webb grew up questioning self-identity as a result of such
discourse. Their search for self, within their complex cultural context, gave rise to multiple forms
of self expression, including desire. The following chapters reveal how they blurred categories by
negotiating between gendered roles and behaviour. This perspective challenges former
interpretations about each woman’s struggle as a choice between one state of being or the other.
Conversely to the opinions of Linton’s and Webb’s Victorian and modern biographers, neither
woman suppressed her eroticism.

Chapter 2 discusses theoretical approaches to the study of emotional culture. Contrary to
those scholars who argue for characterizing the emotions as either socially constructed, or
determined by the essential nature of women (or men), I argue that both approaches can be used
together. Since Linton’s and Webb’s memoirs demonstrate how anger and jealousy were gender-
distinct, it can be argued that, in their culture, emotions were at least partly socially constructed.
Aspects of essentialist discourse, based on Freudian psychoanalysis, will be incorporated in this
work to indicate the multi-faceted nature of desire, and to give voice to the psyche, the facilitator

of human agency. My discussion of historical, psychoanalytical, literary and theoretical works derived from these two different approaches furthers my exploration into behavioural standards.

Chapter 3 clarifies Eliza Linton’s self-conception, initiated by her middle-class cultural background, as sources of her internal conflicts and subversive behaviour both within and outside Victorian norms. Linton’s ambivalence about female emotional roles was projected in her autobiography, and this most poignantly mediated through the male persona she adopted in her work. Her male performance indicated that she sought alternative, more promising strategies of coping when her prescribed scripted performance became untenable. Linton’s role as a male suitor also suggested interesting meanings about her real-life male and female relationships. Linton’s adoption of masculinity demonstrates the tenuous and imitative structure of gender, and indicates the polymorphous nature of desire.

Chapter 4 introduces the complex character of Beatrice Webb, whose liberal upper-middle class upbringing motivated her to challenge culturally prescribed gender norms. Webb’s memoirs reveal her ambivalence about female emotional behaviour, which was apparent in her ongoing struggle between her emotional and rational self. Her decision to appease her rational self in favour of her passionate nature produced strategies of coping with her sensual side. Webb internalized her tension between self and other through the spirit of Roman Catholicism. Her performance in the religious sphere not only facilitated her emotional and rational needs, but also evoked a release of tumultuous, highly unconventional, sexual passion.

The written memoirs of Linton and Webb indicate the existence of prescribed gender-distinct emotional norms in Victorian England. While it was frequently acceptable for women to exhibit jealousy, female anger was perceived as deviant behaviour. Men’s jealousy was never
discussed; but they could channel anger constructively in the public sphere. Linton's and Webb's texts will also reveal the polymorphous innate nature of female desire, and demonstrate how desire motivates the self to seek sensuous expression. Recognizing that emotional norms exist, the visceral self or the psyche continuously negotiates between the two polar forces, culture (public requirements) and nature (private wishes).
Chapter Two
Theories of Emotional Culture

Emotional culture, defined by one historian as "the study of the collective emotional standards of societies across time,"¹ has flourished as an area of historical research in recent years with the cross-fertilization from theoretical discourse and psychological studies. This interdisciplinary approach to the study of emotional culture, which forms the basis of my approach to the topic, will be outlined in this chapter. Although there tends to be an ongoing dispute between whether emotions are socially constructed or essentially innate, I will not privilege one view over the other. On the one hand, constructionist historians propose that behaviour is determined by an individual’s cultural context. Emotions are viewed as variables, and thus behavioural standards are judged as historically particular.² As I will show that Eliza Linton's and Beatrice Webb’s texts confirm that their emotional experience was influenced by Victorian values and norms, I am demonstrating that English Victorian emotional culture was at least partly socially constructed. On the other hand, essentialist discourse, which reifies emotional expression and behaviour, directly opposes the constructionist view.³ Accordingly, aspects of Sigmund


Freud's essentialist psychoanalysis will be introduced to indicate the innate polymorphous nature of desire, and to give voice to the human psyche. I will argue that this is the other part of the facilitator of human agency, or the "negotiator" between Linton's and Webb's public requirements and private wishes.

The self as socially constructed was the basis of Michel Foucault's groundbreaking work. Texts such as *The Archaeology Of Knowledge* (1972) warned (the subject) against accepting "ready-made syntheses...and divisions or groupings" because they were "reflective categories" and not universal truths.\(^4\) Foucault rejected the notion of an overarching power such as class or patriarchy, asserting instead that power is excised through dispersed networks and nodes, in which subjects are constituted through various discourses.\(^5\) For example, the book "was a node within a framework," constructed solely "on the basis of a complex field of discourse."\(^6\) *Discipline and Punish* (1977) similarly argued that power (punitive method) was not exercised from a solitary site, but existed as minute forces within the depths of the social body.\(^7\) Writing in the 1970s and 1980s, Foucault was influenced by contemporary philosophies at the time. Poststructuralism, deconstruction and postmodernism pervaded his observations on the

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\(^6\) Foucault, *Archaeology Of Knowledge*, 23.

(historical) subject. These theories, based on social construction concepts, continue to be employed to subvert, to de-stabilize, or to fragment previous “truths” about classifications or identities. For example, terms such as masculinity and femininity are perceived as unfixed categories which are defined in opposition to each other; thus the meaning of masculinity is understood by otherness, femininity. 

One main historian writing about emotional culture, Peter Stearns, agrees that these behavioural norms were not fixed. He believes that the construct theory allows emotions as variables, and this is encouraging for historians interested in developing histories of emotional standards. His convincing study (1993) of American Victorian emotional culture revealed that, as one emotional culture gave way to another, relationships between white middle-class men and women dramatically altered. But, even though he acknowledged the interrelationships among

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3 Mariana Valverde, in “Postructuralist Gender Historians: Are We Those Names?” *Labour/Les Travailleurs* 25 (Spring 1990): 228, points out that poststructuralist discourse does not perceive any unity, rational autonomy or privileged positions from which truth might be known. Terms such as “woman” are signifiers defined by competing discourses. In “Postmodernism, Poststructuralism, and Deconstruction: Notes for Historians” *Central European History* 22 (1989): 267-7, Jane Caplan defines deconstruction as a theory which breaks down the assumptions in a text and re-analyses its meaning. An example is Jaques Derrida’s “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology,” in his *Writing and Difference* trans. and intro. by Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 160.

4 For examples of works which show how categories are constantly changing through time see Thomas Laquer, “Orgasms, Generation and the Politics of Reproductive Biology,” *Representations* 14 (Spring 1986): 2 and Genevieve Lloyd, “Reason, Gender and Morality in the History of Philosophy,” *Social Research* 50 (Autumn 1983): 509. Both historians show that before the Victorian era, masculinity and femininity seemed to be thought of as a fragile hierarchy as opposed to binary opposites. Mary Poovey, in *Uneven Developments: the Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 4 points out that during late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the middle class developed a new contrasting ideology of separate spheres which saw specific, gender-distinct behaviour.

ideas, mentalities and biological behaviours, his essay could be criticized for generalizing male and female experience.\textsuperscript{11} Nonetheless, an application of Stearns’ argument suggests that anger and jealousy were similarly gender-distinct in England during the second half of the nineteenth century. Thus, his work pertaining to those emotions will be discussed next.

Stearns proposed that Victorian culture emerged from an initial, if short-lived, synthesis, where there had been no apparent emphasis on gender-appropriate emotions. But from the 1840s to 1900s, prescriptive literature, fiction and rituals indicated the existence of gender-distinct emotional norms. Citing examples such as Lydia Sigourney’s (1850s) advice to girls and Louisa May Alcott’s\textit{ Little Women} (1868), Stearns pointed out these writers’ admonishment of “unfeminine” displays of anger. Sigourney also suggested that as girls were destined for domesticity, they must learn to control their temper.\textsuperscript{12} Conversely, \textit{Rollo at Play} (1860), which illustrated boyhood fights, indicated to Stearns that boys were expected to channel anger and confront it in others.\textsuperscript{13} G. Stanley Hall’s suggestion that powerful emotions in the work force could lead to “achievements and performance of a high level” also implied that males could demonstrate anger in the form of aggression and/or ambition.\textsuperscript{14}

Stearns asserted that jealousy was perceived as a “typically female” trait by 1900 because

\textsuperscript{11}Stearns, \textit{Emotion and Change}, 5.


\textsuperscript{13}Stearns, “Girls, Boys, and Emotions,” 44. Rollo was the hero of a Victorian-era series of boys’ books by Jacob Abbott.

\textsuperscript{14}G. Stanley Hall, “A Study of Anger,” \textit{American Journal of Psychology}, 10 (April 1899), 570. Hall was a psychologist who wrote about emotional “traits” in children and adults.
prescriptive literature and advice givers, such as Hall, claimed that jealousy was a much greater problem among women than men.\textsuperscript{15} A further insight was the large number of novels written between 1840 and the early 1900s which depicted a wife's jealousy towards her husband's work. Another form of female jealousy, as patronizingly noted by Hall, was evident in "matters of the heart." While jealous exhibitions by women to claim male attention was somewhat sanctioned, women advice writers, such as Mrs Duffy, began to urge young women to avoid jealous pangs in the 1870s.\textsuperscript{16}

Stearns proposed that the onset of industrialization and commercialism created Victorian American behavioural standards, and also formed the separate spheres for men and women. His observations agree with those in other studies, such as the one by Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall who also showed how the structuring of class and gender roles, alongside societal values and norms, created separate spheres for English Victorian middle-class men and women.\textsuperscript{17} Also, the shifting of the expertise from moral authority to science, coupled with women's entrance into education facilities and the work force, contributed to the modification of formerly gender-distinct emotions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.\textsuperscript{18} Stearns demonstrated that, after 1920, jealousy and then anger became perceived as negative forms of behaviour. American corporations began to organize training sessions for potential employees.

\textsuperscript{15}Stearns, "Girls, Boys, and Emotions," 45-55. Jealousy had been formerly attached to the masculine domain with concepts such as male ownership and honour.

\textsuperscript{16}Stearns, "Girls, Boys, and Emotions," 49.

\textsuperscript{17}Stearns, "Girls, Boys, and Emotions," 52; Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, 172-84.

\textsuperscript{18}Stearns, "Girls, Boys, and Emotions," 54; Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, 431-3.
Women were warned against jealous “backbiting” while men were instructed to curb anger;\textsuperscript{19} “control your emotions—control your remarks—control your behavior” became the new watchword for all workers.\textsuperscript{20}

Although love had been perceived as a positive emotion, Stearns proposed that the former ideal of Victorian intense romantic love\textsuperscript{21} was replaced by what \textit{Esquire} magazine termed “new love.” New love took hold after the 1930s, and it focused on harmonization between the genders. Companionship, physical gratification and more equality between the genders replaced intensity as the goal. Stearns suggests that men found these new values easier than the former romantic relationships, while women’s views were divided.\textsuperscript{22}

Stearns’s theory about emotional culture is the important groundwork for further research into the multiplicity of Victorian emotional behaviours. His search for patterns of behaviour, his hypothesis on emotional standards and his analysis of how change affected such norms are invaluable. An interdisciplinary approach to the study of emotions gains further insights into behavioural standards, and also explains how emotions can influence an individual’s reactions to such values. This is important in furthering an understanding of the actions of historical subjects such as Linton and Webb.

\textsuperscript{19}Stearns, “Girls, Boys, and Emotions,” 61-6.

\textsuperscript{20}Stearns, “Girls, Boys, and Emotions,” 59.


Cultural psychologists no longer tend towards viewing emotions as a unified neuronal program. They have proposed that feelings such as desire and anger could well reflect social and cultural processes. Furthermore, even when a claim is made that anger or desire exists in both Cultures A and B, there is no conclusive evidence that the two forms of these emotions, as observed therein, are identical.23 This functionalist perspective, shared by historians, sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists and biologists alike, appears to posit emotions as an assortment of socially shared scripts made up of physiological, subjective and behavioural processes. These emotion scripts develop as individuals actively, personally and collectively adapt and adjust to their immediate sociocultural, semiotic environment. In short, the individual learns how to “perform” in her/his culture. But what appears pivotal in these recent enquiries is that, if emotions are formed through an individual’s active pursuit of adaptation to their cultural environment, then emotional self-expression will in turn function to maintain and regulate or, in some cases, challenge the very cultural environment to which it has been tuned.24 In fact emotions could well “set the stage” for the possibility of change by challenging existing structures of thought, emotion and behaviour. An individual is startled into an awareness that previous strategies of coping no longer apply, or that other strategies offer promising new alternatives.25

These insights are similar to Judith Butler’s interpretations of gender as a performance. Employing a poststructuralist perspective, her observations on drag caused her to debate whether

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it was either an imitation of gender, or a dramatization of the signifying gestures through which
gender itself was established. Butler, claiming that dominant ideologies assume true gender
identity and natural sexes, concluded that as female no longer appeared to be a stable notion, its
meaning was as troubled and unfixed as feminist theorizing and categorization of woman. These
observations can be applied to the nineteenth century too. Chapter three will suggest that Linton’s
assumed male persona in her autobiography demonstrates the disjuncture of anatomical sex from
gender identity.

Even though the notion of behaviour as a societal construct will be emphasized in this
work, essentialism will not be entirely dismissed. While theories such poststructuralism
undeniably strengthen the idea of social construction, as Kathleen Canning and Diana Fuss have
noted, such perspectives also facilitate the disruption of binary oppositions such as essentialism
and construction, or discourse and behaviour. An application of these two schools of thought
will be employed as a means of explaining how desire can become the negotiator between the self
and society.


27In “German Particularities in Women’s History/Gender History” *Journal Of Women’s History* (1993): 106-8, Kathleen Canning attempts to break down binary oppositions between discourse and experience in her work. She sees identity as a location in which subjects are constituted as they encounter and interact with discourse. In a similar vein, Denise Riley rejects the nineteenth century public/private dichotomy in *Am I That Name?: Feminism and the Category of “Woman” in History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1988). Diana Fuss in *Essentially Speaking* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 23-46 employs a poststructuralist perspective to explain that if a subject’s constructs are reified in any given society they could be perceived as essentially fixed. She continues, as an existence (or essence) is historically contingent one could argue that there is no essence to essentialism. Thus, historically, philosophically and politically, we can only speak of “essentialisms.”
To focus on desire as constructed is to return once again to the work of Foucault, who did not believe that sex and/or desire existed in of itself. Libidinosness for him was merely an amalgamation of influences from various scientific, cultural, religious and ethical discourses that were subject to variation throughout history.\(^{28}\) For example, in his first volume on *The History of Sexuality* (1978) he discussed how three major explicit codes: canonical law, the Christian pastoral and civil law, governed sexual practices up to the end of the eighteenth century. “They determined, each in its own way, the division between licit and illicit.”\(^{29}\) However, while the memoirs of Linton and Webb indicate that they had internalized sexual norms, both women’s *expression* of desire was at variance with prescribed Victorian heterosexuality. Their texts also suggest that desire, or sensuous expression, *initiates* human agency. Sigmund Freud’s innovative theories on sexuality (1905) indicate the polymorphous nature of desire and give voice to the psyche. Thus an incorporation of his psychoanalysis with Foucault’s “social construction of desire” lends further insight into the actions and, possibly, the experience of Linton and Webb.

Freud suggests that the formation of the libidinous “self” was not *totally* contingent upon


\(^{29}\) Foucault, *History Of Sexuality*, 37.
cultural constructions. The sex instinct was initially so auto-erotic, and so polymorphously perverse that the individual (infant) could readily attach itself to any object which gave it physical pleasure. But the child's psychosexual process involved the progressive focusing on just one subset of all possible sexual objects, while progressively repressing all other objects of desire into the subconscious.\textsuperscript{30} Normal psychosexual development determined male-female desire, while an arrested psychosexual development initiated same-sex desire. However, Freud did not view same-sex desire as abnormal. It was merely a differing outcome of the same psychosexual childhood process.\textsuperscript{31} When an object-desire was not gratified, the object-libido was re-directed towards an aim other than sexual satisfaction.\textsuperscript{32} There has been much debate surrounding the understanding of Freud's theory of sublimation. Some historians, referring back to Freud's notion of polymorphous desire, claim that the sexual aim is not repressed but finds another outlet for sexual expression.\textsuperscript{33} As desire appears to have facilitated Linton's and Webb's negotiations between public

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{30}Sigmund Freud, \textit{Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality}, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books 1962), 98-100, 73. Freud's much contested theory asserts that men and women attained different and unequal natures through childhood development. For girls, "penis envy" resulted from her discovery of her lack of penis. This led the girl to blame her mother for her "castration" and reject her as an object of desire. The girl's ensuing attention on men was normal. It was the beginning of her oedipal stage, and it would eventually lead to heterosexual relationships. But the girl's penis envy would result in her feeling inferior to men. Sandra Lipsitz Bem in \textit{Lenses Of Gender}, (New Haven : New Haven University Press, 1903), 56-62 points out Lacan's contestation of Freud's "penis envy." Lacan sees the phallus as a \textit{signifier} of male privilege in patriarchal society.

\textsuperscript{31}Lipsitz Bem, \textit{Lenses Of Gender}, 90.


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requirements and private wishes, this theory will be applied.

Although Freud’s views on psychosexual development have been criticized as essentialist and sexist, some social scientists continue to hypothesize that experience emerges from negotiations between the human psyche and the individual’s surrounding environment. A good example is Theodore Zeldin’s An Intimate History of Humanity (1994) which he describes as “the portrait of a living person who has desires and regrets.” Zeldin, who largely interviews French women such as Dominique Lepeze, portrays how each woman faces her particular dilemma by mediating between desire and fear. Zeldin not only assays the sensual situation of each person in the context of history, but also touches on all periods and cultures to illustrate how a historical subject’s behaviour and experience is determined. He cites for example how nineteenth century women sought self-fulfillment by carving out “male” careers, yet had to generally accept the rules of those already in power. Zeldin views “humanity as...the meeting of people, bodies, thoughts, emotions or actions as the start of most change.” Although he is quick to point out that not all meetings are positive encounters, he proposes that if the individual would be willing to take the chance, or, stretch desire beyond their immediate horizon, the possibilities could be endless.

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34 Partner, “No Sex, No Gender,” 432.


37 Zeldin, Intimate History, 470.

38 Zeldin, Intimate History, 465.
“Hope is the origin of humanity.”

Adrienne Rich focused on desire in a somewhat similar vein by stretching it beyond conventional limitations. Her concept of a “lesbian continuum” for both hetero- and homosexual women was important in 1980 in that it challenged, and blurred, heterosexual and homosexual categories. Applying Freudian psychoanalysis, she reasoned that as the infants first erotic bond was to its mother, then surely the natural sexual orientation of both men and women was towards women. Although Rich’s continuum has been criticized as essentialist, she did provide a more nuanced understanding of the variety of relationships which can exist between women. Assumptions of an unchanging “homosexual” essence have been challenged within gay studies; as Eve Sedgwick has stated, “there may be no continuous defining essence of ‘homosexuality’ to be known.” Butler believes that the sign, lesbian, should be “permanently unclear” to counteract identity categories which normalize (or contest) desire. Like Butler, Fuss criticizes the constructionist view of sexual subjectivity for eliding the psychic with the social. She favours the idea of a transitory, provisional identity that is continually assumed and immediately called into

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question.\(^{43}\) This implies an allowance for single or multiple, brief or long lasting affiliations without being trapped in institutionalized sex categories.

Evidence suggests that female Victorian desire took many forms both within and outside social constructs. This not only indicates that desire was negotiated, but also implies its polymorphous nature. Peter Gay’s examination of American and European white middle-class Victorian attitudes and behaviour concluded that, despite Victorian feminine ideals, some women experienced highly erotic, sexual relationships with men. Tracing the lives of married couples through correspondence, Gay found that letters, such as those by Mabel and David Todd, indicated mutual, unabated marital passion; yet Mabel’s extramarital affair with Ned Dickinson suggested to Gay that she craved (and sought) male devotion beyond her marital satisfactions.\(^{44}\) Although Gay’s work could be criticized as essentialist because of his reliance on Freudian psychoanalysis, his work, written in 1984, was important in that it challenged the notion of Victorian female asexuality.

Women’s passion for other women complemented heterosexual norms, according to works written in the 1970s and 1980s. But although there has since been debate surrounding both the innocence and the cultural acceptance of these nineteenth century friendships,\(^ {45}\) the point is


that Victorian women appeared to find differing ways to mediate, and to express desire. An investigation into the role of female friendship in English Victorian novels, such as those by Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot, portrays emotionally intense and often maternal relationships which operated to assimilate the heroine(s) into conventional roles. Earlier Victorian texts prescribed that marriage was the only desirable goal for women. Later writers likewise presented the "New Woman" as nonthreatening to traditional institutions. If she did not marry, her death or complete isolation ended the novel. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has similarly indicated that the erotic nature of relationships between American middle-class white women appeared to be fully compatible with heterosexual marriage. Linton's text suggests that she viewed her highly sensual relationships with both men and women as entirely respectable.

Martha Vicinus' work in the 1980s proposed that the richly nurturing environment which existed in all-female colleges provided the opportunity for intensely passionate and homoerotic relationships between English middle-class women in the mid- to-late 1800s. "Raves," the name for these teacher/student or student/student infatuations, became an accepted part of these institutions and were often considered preliminary to heterosexual courtship. English society

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47 Cosslett, *Woman To Woman*, 138-47. New Women wanted to relinquish Victorian feminine ideals. They sought higher education, careers, political rights and more sexual freedom. These aims would be realized at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century in England.


generally accepted female/female intimacy as beneficial for a woman’s spiritual needs. But the college raves, depicted in Vicinus’ book, appeared to be *erotically charged* by elements of self-control and/or spiritual fervor. An interesting comparison is how male/male relationships took form within the sensual, erotic and ritualistic services offered by the Anglo-Catholic church, despite societal disapproval of such activities. From this point of view, religious activity appears dedicated to filling voids, calming fears, gratifying wishes and reinforcing beliefs of the group or individual. Chapter four will indicate how Webb’s religious feeling facilitated her achievement of erotic self-fulfillment on *her* terms.

Most historians cite social changes as the cause of changes in female sensuality. They claim Victorian middle-class women appeared to place less emphasis on their primary social bonds with each other and concentrate instead on self-fulfillment through companionate marriages, education, improved rights and careers. During the late nineteenth century, a same-sex desire was becoming perceived as “sexual inversion” by sexologists such as Havelock Ellis, and classified as

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51 Hilliard, “Unenglish and Unmanly,” 190-206. Anglo-Catholicism was important for this marginalized group because it rejected entrenched societal beliefs such as enforced heterosexuality, and confronted condemnation by society. Achieving eroticism through religious practices was not particular to English Victorian society. Timothy Mitchell, in *Passional Culture*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 47, 87, 111, describes how in southern Spain, eloquent Roman Catholic rituals and ceremonies, which center around the passion and death of Christ and the suffering of Mary, have infused a guilt and suffering complex on that society for centuries. Religious norms have also shaped libidinal drives and the preponderance of external forces over personal freedom.

a disease alongside other mental disorders. Jonathon Katz suggests that the two sex-differentiated erotic categories, heterosexual and homosexual, were actually in the making from the 1860s onwards by pioneers such as Karl Heinrich Ulrich, Krafft-Ebing and Karl Kertbeny. In fact the making of the middle-class and the invention of heterosexuality went hand in hand. Because middle-class women now understood sexual activity as heterosexual, when raves became viewed as deviant behaviour, interactions between women in all-female colleges gradually changed. The stigmatization of deviance also led to decreased eroticism between (heterosexual) women towards the end of the century. Even though some women still chose to seek same-sex relationships, as a result of the “normalization” of heterosexuality, and “abnormalization” of homosexuality, the emerging erotic world became less polymorphous. By the early twentieth century, Freud’s explicit use of the word heterosexual to define desire, as opposed to the earlier reproductive model which had focused on acts, helped to further constitute a different-sex eroticism as the dominant norm. Freud’s theory of arrested development later became


56 Vicinus, Independent Women, 278-91.

57 Smith-Rosenberg, “Female World,” 70-5.


59 Katz, Invention of Heterosexuality, 66.
transformed into a theory of psycho-pathology by sexologists and physicians. Women who had desire for other women, now saw themselves as erotically different from heterosexual women. In short, their identity gave meaning to their experience.

Although desire, similarly to other emotions, appeared to be negotiated by Victorian middle-class women within gendered social constructions and/or identities, Linton’s and Webb’s memoirs demonstrate that women were not always passive or submissive actors. Future research should discover more ways in which they mediated between societal norms and self-fulfillment.

Locating how negotiations between desire (self) and society are expressed is undoubtedly difficult, especially when dealing with the historical subject. But although “the unconscious is intractable,” as Peter Gay has noted, because it leaves almost illegible traces behind, historical interpretations of human behaviour must take into account both dimensions of human experience.

An investigation into a culture’s emotional norms is useful in gaining the historian further insight into understanding the behaviour of the historical subject. Stearns has advanced a convincing argument that the cultural climate of American Victorian prescribed gender-distinct emotional norms from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. Although

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60 Lipsitz Bem, Lenses Of Gender, 90.

61 Discussions on twentieth-century lesbian life have noted the prominence of butch-fem roles. The butch projected male mannerisms and dress while the fem performed the female image. An example is Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline Davis’s “The Reproduction of Butch-Fem Roles: A Social Constructionist,” in Passion & Power, 241-259. Lisa Duggan, in the “The Trials of Alice Mitchel: Sensationalism, Sexology, and the Lesbian Subject in Turn-of-the-Century America,” Signs 18 (1993): 791-813, points out that during the late 1880s, female/female eroticism was often portrayed by the American mass media in a hostile light. Sexologists later re-appropriated these “sensational” stories as “cases,” linking female “masculinity” with desire. Duggan suggests this joining became the basis for the later notion of the mannish lesbian.

Stearns' study tended to generalize Victorian male and female behaviour, his work is the foundation for further explorations into emotional culture. This thesis proposes that similar gender-distinct behavioural standards existed in Victorian England from the 1850s to 1890s. Anger was a prescribed masculine norm, while jealousy was perceived as a typically female trait. An investigation into Linton's memoirs will reveal that she was painfully aware that her uncontrollable unfeminine temper tantrums caused her ostracization as a child. Linton's resolution to her dilemma can be further understood by psychological studies into emotional culture. She sought alternative, more promising strategies of coping when her prescribed "scripted performance" became untenable. By assuming a male persona in her autobiographical novel, her text became a "stage" which enabled her to confront, and perhaps to come to terms with, her shameful otherness.

Although emotional norms are acknowledged as social constructions, the essentialist approach is not entirely dismissed in the ensuing chapters. Freud's notion of the innate polymorphous nature of desire is pertinent to explain how historical subjects such as Linton and Webb sought, and found, different ways to fulfill their sensuous natures. Contrary to the opinions of their biographers such as Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie and Nancy Anderson Fix, neither woman suppressed her eroticism. Linton's desire was projected through her performance as male, while Webb expressed her erotic self internally through religious practice. Given my theoretical approach, desire will not be placed in a specific category. Also, the classification of a historical subject who has not assumed that particular identity is a precarious endeavor for the historian.

The application of theoretical discourse breaks down the meanings of words such as gender and desire, indicating that these terms are unstable or historically particular. Postmodernist
discourse clarifies categories such as femininity as understood by *otherness*, or, masculinity. The memoirs of Linton and Webb indicate that although they acceded to prescribed gender norms, the discovery of their *otherness*, or masculine traits, was behind their identity crisis. But binary oppositions should not always signify that the subject cannot be one thing and the other. Of course, there is no doubt that Linton and Webb each faced their particular struggle. Linton was ambivalent towards her masculine and feminine needs. Webb faced controversy between her emotional and rational self. My criticism of Webb’s and Linton’s biographers focuses upon their tendency to set each woman’s struggles as a *choice* between one state of being or the other simultaneously. Although Linton’s and Webb’s particular contradictions led to struggles throughout their lives, each woman’s performance evolved to facilitate her coping with her sense of difference. They blurred categories by negotiating between gendered roles and behaviour. They both found ingenious, self-fulfilling ways to meet their public requirements and private desires.
Chapter Three

Gender as Performance, Desire as Other: An Analysis of the Writing of Eliza Lynn Linton

Eliza Lynn Linton sought self-fulfillment in diverse and subversive ways within and outside middle-class cultural ideologies during the mid nineteenth century. Her ambition propelled her talent into a writer with a successful career. Her economic independence, coupled with her ability to participate in male discourse, enabled her partial entrance into the male dominated public sphere during the 1840s. Linton traversed the female private sphere equally idiosyncratically. Although she adhered strongly to the values of domesticity and prescribed femininity, she did not assume Victorian female characteristics such as passivity and submissiveness. Linton was the dominant force in her marriage, often supporting the family financially. Linton’s world was very complicated. Her perspectives, expressed in her writing, indicated her acceptance of gender-distinct behaviour. However, Linton’s work also illuminated her struggle with her performance as a woman. This identity crisis appears to have been further exacerbated by her tendency to slip into, and between, gender roles and behaviour. This chapter will investigate how Linton expressed her passions and gender anxieties through her writing.

Eliza’s ambivalence regarding self-identity was likely inaugurated during her childhood. Although she had the advantage of being born into a privileged family, the way of life at Crosthwaite Vicarage in Keswick was “simple in the extreme.”¹ Charlotte Lynn died in 1822 shortly after giving birth to Eliza, the youngest of twelve children. Eliza’s father, Vicar James

Lynn, was not a nurturing parent. Unloving and neglectful, he showed little interest in educating his younger children. Eliza however learned to read and spent hours in his library. Although a sad, lonely child, she had great affection for a brother named Arthur and a sister called Lucy. To the adoring Eliza, both older siblings embodied masculine and feminine perfection. But despite Eliza's passion for Lucy, she was ambivalent about her sister's "womanliness" because it painfully served to contrast to her own "masculine" self. Eliza's boisterous nature and fierce temper nature were diametrically opposed to Victorian femininity and resulted in her identification as a tomboy by her family and friends. She believed her difference caused her ostracization, especially when she displayed anger. Her autobiography depicted how the ensuing pain, resulting from such an unacceptable gender performance, culminated in immense feelings of dislocation, loss and anguish when she was a child. Such emotions persisted throughout her life, appearing during struggles with self-identity, relationships and belief systems.

As an adolescent, Eliza's sensual self was expressed through religion. She would enter trance-like states and punish herself by sleeping on the floor. But her religious fanaticism did not endear her to her Anglican father who was repulsed by her religious excesses. At seventeen she rejected orthodox Christianity. For many years she maintained a deistic belief in a God as creator and maintainer of the universe. During the last part of her life, she called herself an agnostic.

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²CK, 1: 53-54.
⁴CK, 1: 74-90.
⁵CK, 1: 79-152.
Eliza's deeply passionate nature also led to intense relationships with both men and women throughout her life. At twenty, she experienced an infatuation for an older married neighbour, Adeline Dalrymple. Adeline was "the most exquisite creature under heaven," causing Eliza's head to swim when she "laid her long white arm on [her] shoulder." Eliza tried to hide from her family "the strange effeminacy that had overcome [her]." As a result, the strain from controlling her feelings eventually made her ill. She learned upon her recovery that the Dalrymplies had moved away.

Eliza's "man's brain," to use a term coined by Mrs. Alex Tweedie, was a factor in her success in the public sphere. She was ambitious and developed a keen interest in masculine issues such as social reform and science. Her first published work, in Ainsworth's Magazine (1845), demonstrated to her family that she intended to be a writer. Having won permission and a year's allowance from her skeptical father, she left for London chaperoned by the family solicitor. Securing a job on the Morning Chronicle gained her the distinction of becoming the first woman journalist to draw a salary in the 1840s. She also published two novels, Azeth the Egyptian (1847) and Amymone (1848). Amymone drew the attention of the poet Walter Landcr, who wrote

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7CK, 1:181.

8CK, 1: 177.

9CK, 1:210-11; Anderson, Woman Against Women, 30-32.

10Mrs Tweedie interviewed Eliza Linton for the serial, Temple Bar, in July 1894.


12Colby, Women Novelists, 21.
a very favorable review in the *Examiner*. He and Eliza became very close friends. Eliza’s early articles demanded women’s rights to such things as divorce and property. She proclaimed Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) as “one of the boldest and bravest things ever published.”\(^\text{13}\) However, even during this period, Eliza revealed conflicting feelings about the nature and role of women. Although she assumed masculine traits and did not adhere to conventions, she declared for others that “the homebound woman” was “glad to be the recipient of strength and the giver of purity.”\(^\text{14}\) She was opposed to women doing “all those things which have hitherto been exclusively assigned to men.”\(^\text{15}\) Thus, Eliza intellectually if not emotionally acknowledged male superiority.\(^\text{16}\) Darwinism, as mentioned in chapter one, aided in naturalizing sexual inequalities and further legitimized the separate spheres after the mid-nineteenth century.\(^\text{17}\)

During her exciting years in London socializing with literary figures such as the Leweses, Hunts and Landor, Eliza fell passionately in love. She loved Edward MacDermot “beyond self, beyond jealousy, beyond passion,... with heart and soul and adoration...”\(^\text{18}\) But Edward was married and also a devout Roman Catholic. Unable to reconcile these differences, she parted with the Irish doctor. Eliza was in extreme pain after the relationship and always maintained that

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\(^{13}\) Anderson, *Woman Against Women*, 70.


\(^{15}\) *CK*, 1: 4; Colby, *Women Novelists*, 18-22.

\(^{16}\) *CK*, 1: 4.


\(^{18}\) *CK*, 1: 223, 236.
Edward was the “enduring loss and unhealed sorrow of [her] life.”\textsuperscript{19} They remained life-long correspondents but never saw each other again. Eliza developed another intense relationship during this period with Lady Monson, a wealthy women who had separated from her husband. Eliza enjoyed the older woman’s society and the attention she lavished upon her. But Lady Monson’s interest was short-lived. The end of their friendship left Eliza hurt and angry. Lady Monson later formed a life-long sexual relationship with Matilda Hays. Eliza left London shortly after the breakup of the friendship. A quarrel with the editor of the \textit{Morning Chronicle} in 1851 resulted in a move to Paris where she worked as a correspondent for several years.\textsuperscript{20}

Eliza’s marriage followed her return to Keswick in 1854. She had initially returned to England to care for her dying father. His death in 1855 left her a small income from a part of his estate as long as she remained unmarried. However, while nursing her father Eliza had formed a friendship with Emily and William Linton. William was an engraver and an author. His wife Emily, who was ill with consumption, died in 1856 leaving seven children behind. Eliza consented to marry William (1858) “with more a sense of duty than attraction,” feeling “driven” to care for his “desolate” family.\textsuperscript{21} William’s feminine passivity facilitated her masculine control of their finances, freedom in house management and child-raising. \textsuperscript{22} Marriage also enabled her to embrace domesticity and gain the respectability and feminine identity she had craved since childhood. But at times William’s impractical endeavours would leave the family financially burdened, forcing

\textsuperscript{19}\textit{CK}, 1:217-242.


\textsuperscript{22}\textit{CK}, 2: 33-49.
Eliza to pay bills from her own money. This, and William’s growing intolerance towards his wife’s regimented dogma, such as rules for eating, behaviour and dress, resulted in the breakdown of the marriage in 1867. The couple separated but never divorced because they had no legal grounds during this period. Although Eliza had regretted her marriage, she felt desolate when it ended. In many ways, the Lintons had supplemented her loss of Edward.23

After the breakup of her marriage, Eliza Linton launched into her literary career. Although she was driven by ambition, her marriage had depleted her inheritance leaving her quite impoverished, but being a hard worker paid off. She soon became popular with editors because she was conscientious and prompt with assignments. Linton began her association with the Saturday Review in 1866 as a critic of women’s literature. The position worked well because the journal’s traditional hostility towards women’s emancipation concurred with Linton’s views. In 1868, the editor published her infamous, initially anonymous essay, “The Girl of the Period.” The essay lamented the passing of the former domestic ideal of the English woman, and criticized the hard, ambitious, unloving modern woman.24 “The Girl of the Period” soon became a catchword and was applauded, parodied, caricatured, reprinted and endlessly discussed.25 By the late 1860s, Linton had written a series of hard-hitting acrimonious essays, and she was perceived as one of the leading female critics on women. She became renowned for her satirical wit, revealed in such statements as “the androgynous woman despises every approach to (feminine)

23Layard, Mrs. Lynn Linton, 96-101.


25Gay, Education Of Senses, 211.
coquetry.”

While reviling “mannelsh/androgynous” women who sought higher education, careers, political rights and more sexual freedom, Linton was equally contemptuous of “irrational, frivolous or superficial ‘womanly’ women.”

From the outset, Linton’s views were strongly criticized, both by conventional men and women’s rights. Many, such as Jane Panton, were infuriated to learn that a woman was denigrating women and they accused Linton of hypocrisy and misogyny.

Although Linton was devastated by such characterizations, she would not change her position.

Linton’s reason for leaving England in 1875 is unclear. She may have wanted to escape the hostilities her essays on social criticism were generating. Also, a troubled relationship with Katie Pender left her feeling vulnerable. Linton had rented an apartment in Katie’s parents home in 1872. She had taken an active interest in Katie’s desire to become a writer and enjoyed the pretty young woman’s company. Linton began to loan Katie money to pay her debts, and Katie in turn took full advantage of Linton’s generosity. The relationship abruptly halted when accusations surrounding the young woman’s “possession” of one of Linton’s rings was never resolved.

In 1876, Linton met Beatrice, the eighteen year old daughter of her friend, Mr. Sichel. Their summer in France together marked the beginning of a life-long attachment. Linton saw Beatrice as the epitomization of Victorian femininity. She was “obedient, gentle, steadfast and unselfish.” In fact

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26 Anderson, Woman Against Women, 130.


29 Anderson, Woman Against Women, 155-8.

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she was “a typical woman of the best kind,...she was a prize.” Linton was proud to introduce her pretty young ward to her friends. These were happy years for Linton and she wrote consistently. Novels such as *The Atonement of Leam Dundas* (1876) and *Under Which Lord?* (1879) appeared serially in periodicals such as *Temple Bar* or the *Cornhill*. Beatrice’s marriage in 1879 proved difficult for Linton. Lonely and depressed, she became anxious to return to her homeland and renew old acquaintances. When settled back into London she continued to write, champion young writers and see friends. The autobiographical novel, *The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland* (1885), was published in her sixties. During this period middle-class women were gaining more access to the public sphere and pursuing education and careers. Thus, when Linton wrote her anti-suffrage articles in the late 1880s, they were not only challenged by Millicent Garrett Fawcett, but perceived by many as irrelevant. But Linton acclaimed the private sphere. She preached the virtues of feminine meekness, modesty and purity until her death in 1898.

Although well known in Victorian society for her polemical journalism, Linton was never regarded as an accomplished novelist by her peers. For example, in 1898, the *Athenaeum* stated that “naturally she was an essayist rather than a novelist. She wrote novels simply because the novel was the accredited form of literature of her day.” It continued, “she had no ability to create living personages.” While Linton was disappointed by such reviews, and quite envious of the fame of contemporaries such as George Eliot, she was fully aware that her Victorian audience

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wanted thrills and vicarious stimulation. Such features were evident in her novels. For example, *Azeth the Egyptian* dealt with the struggle between sexual passion and spiritual purity. *Amymone* condemned the legal and moral oppression of women. *Under Which Lord?* exposed sexual feelings in religious activities. *The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland* depicted Linton’s yearning for acceptance, her painful rejection of faith and her passionate relationships.

Linton’s novels were provocative and challenging to some powerful Victorian ideologies. Her novels also appealed to Victorian sensibility in that they evoked passion. Victorians approved of passion, ascribing it positively to anger, love, courage and grief. Linton’s thematic plots explored the dichotomy between the self and rigid belief systems. She revealed how the joy, sorrow and isolation, which emanated from such struggles, facilitated highly emotional intensity ranging from pleasure to pain. However, implicitly in these works, she underscored the institutionalized norms and the emerging values of womanhood.

It is plausible to suggest that, while Linton targeted her audience with her “literary ploys,” the writing process itself gave her vicarious stimulation. This form of sensationalism could have enabled her to distinguish her private desires apart from her entrenched Victorian ideologies. This

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36Van Thal, *Eliza Lynn Linton*, 143.


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bespeaks a more immediate connection to, and collusion between, the senses, the body and the subject. Perceived in this way, Linton’s novels provided a context of sorts which spontaneously reflected her life experience, perspectives and desires. As Linton herself stated, “we are all a part of our work.”

*The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland* became an important space for Linton to project her sense of tension between self and other. Cast in fictional form, and written in the persona of a man, it was, as she readily admitted, her own autobiography. This work is of particular interest because it conveys her ongoing dilemma regarding gendered behavioural norms. While, on the one hand, her autobiography portrays her approval of Victorian female values, it also exemplifies her ongoing struggle with what she perceived as her difference. Her internalized struggle created an ambivalent, volatile space. Within this space her sensuous expression took form, most poignantly mediated through her male persona, Christopher Kirkland. Added to this, the ambiguous space between the factual and fictional aspects of this work reinstated her intuitive, sensual and imaginative self.

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41Anderson, *Woman Against Women*, x.

42*CK*, 1: 75.

43Partner, in “No Sex, No Gender,” 441, indicates that the two polar terms, nature vs. culture, establishes an inadequate conceptual framework. A third term, such as “self,” is needed to acknowledge the developmental negotiations of the mind with world. Benjamin Semple’s interesting study, “The Male Psyche and the Female Sacred Body in Marie de France and Christine de Pizan,” in *Yale French Studies* 86 (1994):164-186, depicts how two medieval female
George Layard, who wrote Linton’s biography in 1901, criticized *The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland*, arguing that the novel was “marred by the fact that it (was) that of a woman masquerading as a man,” and should have been reclothed “in the garments proper to its sex.” Although on the one hand Layard appeared fascinated that Linton “liked pretty clothes...yet..would horrify some women by her ‘masculine’ views;” he seems to have regarded Linton’s male impersonation as unseemly, given the normalization of gender-distinct roles and behaviour for middle-class Victorians during this period.44

One could argue that the adoption of a transparent masculine disguise was a conventional gesture for women writers in the nineteenth century.45 Although Linton wished to obscure her identity to take off “the sting of boldness and self-exposure,” she knew she was wearing a “very thin veil.”46 Linton was inspired by George Sand, whose “sensationalist” works and androgynous identity led to her fame in the 1830s.47 George Lewes commented that Linton’s novels reflected Sand’s influence in their “boldness and “passion.” Linton also identified herself with Sand’s male/female make-up. This is evidenced through her adopted literary male persona, Christopher Kirkland. Nonetheless, Linton was defensive about her femininity. She always insisted that she

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writers created a “space” to facilitate woman as a *desiring* subject. This attribute was not included in the medieval Christian concept of Logos, the perfect human state.


was a “true woman.” 48 Possibly, Linton’s appropriated male persona “reflected her deep unconscious feelings of maleness.” 49 Nancy Fix Anderson, who incorporated Freudian analysis in her work on Linton, tended to focus on how the mutually exclusive cultural roles of Victorian masculinity and femininity led to Linton’s repression of lesbian desire. This not only produced a certain level of conflict within her psyche but also constituted a threat to her female identity. Anderson proposed that Linton handled her inner conflicts by denigrating mannishness in other women. Anderson also surmised that Linton’s adoration of her sister Lucy prefigured in her later intense homoerotic relationships. 50

Layard did not extrapolate from Linton’s passions for other women but he did quote her reference to Lucy as her “beloved.” 51 Layard also drew attention to Linton’s youthful adoration for Adeline Dairymple, whom Linton claimed was her “Madonna” and caused her to become “lost in a dream of nameless yearnings.” 52 Layard argued that “even though the phenomenon of a girl’s infatuation” for an older women was not “unusual,” Linton “metamorphosed” the relationship “into the passionate devotion of a youth for a young and fascinating married woman,” which changed the whole situation, leaving “wrong causations of necessity to suggest themselves.” 53

Layard’s distress over how Linton conveyed her eroticism towards Adeline implies his

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48 Anderson, Woman Against Women, 61.

49 Anderson, Woman Against Women, 11.

50 Anderson, Woman against Women, 3.

51 Layard, Mrs. Lynn Linton, 25-6.

52 CK, 1. 187.

53 Layard, Mrs. Lynn Linton, 42.
own late-Victorian sensitivity regarding “appropriate” same-sex expression. As historians such as Katz point out, in the early nineteenth century, various forms of erotic activity passed “as perfectly permissible in a love relationship precisely because it wasn’t intercourse.”\(^{54}\) Since the 1860s, analysts such as Krafft-Ebing, and later, Havelock Ellis, had popularized the terms heterosexual as normal, and homosexual as abnormal. Freud particularly constituted the belief in the existence of a unitary, all encompassing sexual norm, “heterosexuality” by the early 1900s. Such classification not only identified and mediated sexual behaviour, but also created strict boundaries which curtailed polymorphous eroticism.\(^{55}\) Thus, while Layard did not disapprove of female/female infatuations (raves) in 1901, by 1917, works such as D.H. Lawrence’s *The Rainbow* and Clemence Dane’s *Regiment of Women* characterized such behaviour as abnormal.\(^{56}\)

Layard voiced discomfort with Linton’s sensual expressions in her writing and attempted to explain them. Anderson focused on analyzing such expressions through Freudian theories (and fixities) and placing them in some form of cultural context such as sexual orientation. While each study provides historical and contemporary insights into gender and sexuality, that is their limitation. I will focus on how Linton’s sensuous expression, emanating from her struggle as a

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\(^{54}\)Katz, *Invention of Heterosexuality*, 47.

\(^{55}\)Katz, *Invention of Heterosexuality*, 65–82. Boswell, in *Christianity, Social Tolerance, Homosexuality*, and Chauncey, in “Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality,” 87-118, propose that social conditions such as urbanization and/or “favorable” attitudes also affect the tolerance towards forms of eroticism such as same-sex desire.

\(^{56}\)Vicinus, in *Independent Women*, 194, suggests that raves were quite commonplace in all-female education facilities. For an eloquent depiction of an English Victorian woman’s infatuation for her teacher see D.S. Bussy’s *Olivia*, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1949). Lilian Faithfull’s *You And I: Saturday Talks At Cheltenham*, (London: Chatto And Windus, 1927) also depicts a passionate rave between two women.
Victorian woman, exposed gender as a social construct and evoked the multi-faceted nature of desire.

When Linton appropriated a male persona in her autobiography, she also determined the gender of key figures in her life. Her husband, William Linton, became Esther. Edward MacDermot, her former lover, became a woman called Cordelia Gilchrist. Close friends such as Beatrice Sichel and Lady Monson maintained their gender under a different name. Lady Monson became Althea and Beatrice Sichel became Claudia Hamilton. Adeline Dalrymple and Katie Pender maintained their gender and name.⁵⁷ Although Linton sustained her heterosexual relationship with William in her autobiography, her portrayal of their marriage provides some interesting insights into gender. Linton’s male persona, Christopher Kirkland, proudly conveyed (her) masculine tendencies such as protector/provider, while (his) wife Esther embodied William’s feminine temperament. When Esther rejected her domestic role, Christopher was confused, pained and angered.⁵⁸ While this incident exemplified Linton’s own perspectives on masculinity and femininity, Christopher and Esther appeared fully heterosexual to her readers, despite their inverted gender. Thus, Linton revealed that (Victorian) gender was an ideological construct, a “performance,” actuated by norms which determined behaviour.

Linton’s text can be analyzed in the context of Peter Stearns’s research into Victorian American gendered emotions. As previously discussed, Stearns proposed that from the 1840s to the 1920s, prescriptive literature dictated that women could exhibit some forms of jealousy but must learn anger control. Conversely, men were encouraged to channel anger constructively in the


form of assertion or ambition. Jealousy was not considered a masculine trait.59

Although research into Victorian English emotional culture is limited, Linton’s autobiography does imply that prescribed gender-distinct emotional norms did exist during this period. She indicated that her father had regarded her aggression as boyish in the 1830s. When she wrote in the 1880s, she still accepted this characterization.60 Her description of Christopher’s “agony” over his “boiling blood” indicates her deeply felt pain regarding her uncontrollable anger. She recounts, with excruciating pathos, how Christopher’s “turbulence of nature” deprived him of the love he yearned for from others.61 However, he could derive pleasure from protecting a woman from harm. This channeling of anger seems to have been appropriate behavior for men during this period.62

Linton, consistent with Stearns’ observations on prescribed masculine behavior, did not depict Christopher as fearful or jealous. However, Althea, (Lady Monson) jealously demanded Christopher’s undivided attention and affection.63 When she suddenly replaced him, he “grew savage and sulky,” evincing anger and moodiness rather than jealousy.64 Christopher’s close tie with Claudia, (Beatrice Sichel) was severed after Claudia married. Lamenting her loss,

60Layard, Mrs. Lynn Linton, 21.
61CK, 1: 75.
62CK, 3: 207.
63CK, 2: 130
64CK, 2: 137-140.
Christopher voiced his loneliness, not his jealousy of her husband. Nonetheless, Linton’s actual letters to Beatrice did express jealousy. She felt Beatrice neglected her after she married. Linton’s memoirs also indicated her envy of Lucy’s quintessential femininity. The loving attention that her sister received from the family starkly contrasted with Linton’s own painful neglect.

While Linton’s autobiography demonstrates the social construction of gender and emotional standards, its composition also indicates the polymorphous nature of eroticism. This was at variance with the rigid Victorian gender stereotyping and normalization of heterosexuality. Same-sex desire had been placed under the umbrella of deviance since the mid-nineteenth century and repressed, along with other perversions such as fetishism, sadomasochism and transvestism. Linton’s gender delegation enabled her to enter into an ambiguous realm, creating intriguing nuances and ambivalence in her relationships. She blurred gender and sexual categories, performing as a male suitor to male/female (Edward/Cordelia) and female/female (Lady Monson/Althea) objects of desire. Linton’s “script” enabled her to express desire that did not fit into conventional categories of the culture’s gender system. However, in the transformed self, represented by Christopher, Linton represented herself as heterosexual.

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65*CK*, 3: 245.


68Kaplan, *Female Perversions*, 5. See also Vern Bullough, Joan Dixon and Dwight Dixon’s “Sadism, Masochism And History, Or When Is Behaviour Sado-Masochistic,” in *Sexual Knowledge, Sexual Science* eds. Porter and Mikulus (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 63-82. Bullough et al. propose that western medieval and early modern education was founded on scourging and pain to achieve both ecstasy and knowledge for men and women.

Linton’s (male) gaze effused sensual descriptions of the female form and indicated Christopher’s physical attraction. For example, he appreciated the “shining hair and the smooth outlines of [Katie’s] flower-like face,” and “the sense of her softness [and] sweetness.” He voiced intense euphoria for Adeline, exclaiming “As I looked...it was a sensation beyond physical excitement; and it would have been appalling in its intensity, had I enough consciousness left to examine or reflect.” He was demonstrative towards Althea taking “her in [his] arms and kissing her upturned face.”

The female body was portrayed as similarly alluring in other novels. However, as Linton did not assume a masculine identity when she wrote Under Which Lord? one could conclude that in that text, her gaze was that of a woman. This text described how Hermione’s “softly moulded figure...had bloomed into generosity without losing its grace.” Her “throat was...round and smooth, [and her] shoulders as finely modeled and as exquisitely polished...” Hermione “was the very ideal of a lovely woman, possessing every quality which men most adore and every virtue they most adore.” Female desire was also projected in this novel through the characters of

70 Jane Gains in “White Privilege and Looking Relations-Race and Gender in Feminist Film Theory Screen 29, n. 4 (Autumn 1988): 12-27, and Patricia White in “Female Spectator: Lesbian Spectator: The Haunting,” in Inside/Out, 142, both argue that the desire evolving from a woman’s gaze upon another woman does not cast her in the masculine position, but in fact disrupts it.

71 CK, 3: 207.

72 CK, 1: 202.

73 CK, 2: 130.

women who eroticized religion. However, Linton’s staunch agnosticism is reflected in her contempt towards the fatuous and gullible middle-class women who became seduced by Anglo-Catholic rituals and a handsome priest’s sexual and saintly appeal. “More than one heart beat fast as [Father Lascelles] passed with his slow and stately step.” Theresa even experienced “shameful”orgasmic revelry. After her “inevitable...moment of ecstasy...[her] burning hands clasped nervously together...her heart was throbbing wildly, her blood was all on fire [and] her brain was dizzy with excitement.”

Linton’s autobiography indicates her attraction for her brother Arthur’s “perfect embodiment of manly power and moral greatness.” Her lover Edward’s similar attributes were transposed into Cordelia’s “womanly” qualities in this text. Linton’s adoring awe of Cordelia’s (and Beatrice’s) beauty, obedience, gentleness, steadfastness and unselfishness became metamorphosed into Christopher’s doting “manly” passion. Thus, while it is clear that Linton revered Victorian notions of manhood and womanhood, in my view, such ideals also appear to have been a source of libidinousness for her.

Although Linton’s female relationships were tender and highly emotional, I am not, conversely to Anderson, classifying her as a lesbian. There is no evidence to suggest that any of her relationships with women were sexual, and she appears to have viewed her emotional life as

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75_UWL_, 2: 232, 117, 308.
76Anderson, _Woman against Women_, 10-13.

78See Rosamond Lehmann’s novel, _Dusty Answer_ (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, Pub., 1927), for an evocative depiction of a young woman’s passionate relationships with both men and women.
entirely respectable. Linton was ever vigilant in condemning female/female sex, claiming repugnance towards the “girl-man” who “flirts with and kisses...other women.” Historians continue to debate Victorian female/female passion. Vicinus and Moore claim that romantic friendship was not as “innocent” as Smith-Rosenberg argues. Although Linton’s condemnation of female/female sex suggests a defensiveness which could indicate that she repressed her sexual feelings, her love for Edward MacDermot was typical of Victorian romantic love between the sexes. It was all-consuming, intensely passionate and selfless. In fact, Linton claimed Edward was the love of her life. Linton’s libidinousness was not entirely controlled by the reins of societal hegemony. While such apparatuses had undoubtedly entrenched powerful psychological forces within her, such as the normalization of heterosexuality, her autobiography illustrates that her sensuality was multifarious and extremely difficult to define. A close examination of her


80 Anderson, Woman Against Women, 42, 132.


82 Stearns, “Girls, Boys, and Emotions,” 50; Lystra, Searching the Heart, 19-50.

83 CK, 1: 242.

84 This contradicts Foucault’s asserting in The History of Sexuality that sex and desire are a product of the way in which power and knowledge functioned. Halperin similarly proposed that the erotic experiences of human individuals are “artifacts” that reflect a society’s widely shared meanings in One Hundred Years Of Homosexuality (New York: Routledge, 1990). For an interesting debate on constraint and sexual expression see D’Emilio and Freedman’s Intimate Matters.
emotional makeup demonstrates that to insist upon classifications such as heterosexuality, homosexuality or bisexuality is to risk the reification of desire.\textsuperscript{85}

When Linton wrote \textit{The Autobiography Of Christopher Kirkland}, she created a stage of sorts, which enabled her to express her gender ambivalence by performing a different gender role.\textsuperscript{86} While her male persona reflected the dominant gender prescriptions, the space of the novel allowed her to switch places within the gendered constructs. Thus her performance, if one views gender imitation in its classical theatrical tradition, allowed her to express herself to her audience without really challenging predominant gender-and-sex-roles for either.\textsuperscript{87}

Some feminist theorists have treated the "arbitrary" aspect of gender imitation or transvestism as sinister. They claim that men are empowered by a pretense of femininity they can remove at whim. Also, when a man performs as a female, his underlying gender identity and privilege remains untouched or indeed enhanced.\textsuperscript{88} Perhaps one could argue along similar lines that in the construction of her autobiography, Linton entered and vicariously experienced the public sphere of dominance and authority. However, there are strong indications that her literary gender performance was an attempt to come to terms with what she perceived as her (shameful)

\textsuperscript{85}See Rich's conception of a "lesbian continuum" in "Compulsory Heterosexuality," 177-83. Janice Raymond's \textit{A Passion for Friends}, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), is another work which explores the varying and intensely passionate relationships which can exist between women. Martha Vicinus has similarly indicated the difficulty in defining the nature of desire in "Lesbian History: All Theory and No Facts or All Facts and No Theory?" \textit{Radical History Review} 60 (1994): 57-75.

\textsuperscript{86}Magai and McFadden, \textit{Role of Emotions}, 34.


\textsuperscript{88}Moon and Sedgwick, "Divinity: A Dossier," 16.
and ineradicable core identity.\textsuperscript{89} While her autobiography appears to verify Stearns’s observations on prescribed Victorian gender-distinct emotional standards, this work also demonstrates society’s intolerance towards “deviant” behaviour such as female anger. However, Linton has also indicated how rebellious idiosyncrasies can develop when one experiences otherness.

By ‘imitating’ a man, Linton revealed the imitative structure of gender itself--as well as its contingency. The reader becomes aware that her gender performance illustrates that the relationship between sex and gender is tenuous, and is not necessarily natural or necessary. Her denaturalization of sex and gender not only avows their distinctiveness, but also dramatizes the cultural mechanism of their fabricated unity.\textsuperscript{90} From Linton we gain some insight into what it was like for a Victorian to experience the disjunction of anatomical sex from gender identity. She also shows us that the two polar terms of sex and gender (that is, nature versus culture) can be bridged by the self. Linton’s self, facilitated by the ambiguous space of her autobiography, became the negotiator between her private desires and her public requirements.

\textsuperscript{89}Partner, “No Sex, No Gender,” 421.

Chapter Four

“Public” Performance, “Private” Desire: An Analysis of the Writing of Beatrice Webb

As a vehement advocate of Fabian socialism, Beatrice Webb improved working class conditions in late-Victorian England. Her marriage to Sidney Webb advanced this cause as they co-authored numerous publications on social reform from the early 1890s to the mid 1930s. However, notwithstanding her political and scholarly celebrity, a closer investigation into the personal life of Webb reveals a woman who, like Eliza Linton, also sought self-fulfillment in diverse and subversive ways both within and outside upper-middle-class cultural ideologies. Webb, comparatively to Linton, gained partial entrance into the male dominated public sphere due to her economic independence, her success as a researcher and her ability to engage in masculine discourse. But, since she adhered strongly to the values of prescribed femininity, she faced contradictions. Her personal experience within the private sphere brought some resolve. She formed a companionate marriage which, in contrast to Linton’s union, proved to be remarkably enduring.1 Yet, like Linton, Webb continuously struggled with her performance as a woman. Her particular dilemma was linked to her desire to satisfy both her rational and emotional self. She experienced an identity crisis as a result of her painful negotiations between these binary oppositions. Webb differed from Linton in that she internalized her sense of tension between self

1Christina Simmons indicates in “Modern Sexuality and the Myth of Victorian Repression,” Passion & Power, 162, that nineteenth century proponents of companionate marriage saw sexual and emotional comradeship as the basis of marriage. The use of birth control accommodated the woman’s sexuality and encouraged men to find sexual satisfaction within marriage. Couples were advised to marry earlier to prohibit sex outside of marriage. Divorce by mutual consent was acceptable for the childless. The Webbs agreement to a marriage based on a partnership and their decision to remain childless implies that their union was companionate.

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and other through the spiritual sphere. Moreover, religious faith became a crucial space for her sensuous expression. The aim of this chapter is to portray how Webb’s diary and autobiographies depicted her performance in the religious realm, particularly focusing on how the spirit of Roman Catholicism evoked a release of self-forbidden, and highly unconventional, sexual passion.

Born in 1858, Beatrice was raised in a mansion set in the Cotswold Hills. She became accustomed to servants and elite society. Governesses supervised her early education and in the 1870s she attended Bournemouth, one of the few schools available to privileged girls. Her father, Richard Potter, was an amiable yet ruthless entrepreneur who adored his family. His work as a railway promoter meant frequent absences from home. But as his daughters grew older one or two would often accompany him on his travels abroad. Beatrice’s mother, Lawrenzia, differed from her husband, tending towards depression and introspection. When her only son died at the age of two, she isolated herself further from the household, seeking refuge in religion and foreign grammars. Although Lawrenzia was fanatically religious, neither Beatrice nor her sisters were pressured to attend the Anglican church, where there was apparently a family pew. Richard, who was secularist, enjoyed taking his daughters to listen to the “most exciting [Sunday] speaker on religious or metaphysical issues.” Both parents encouraged their children to read on a wide range

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3*MA*, 4-8, 57.


5*MA*, 55.

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of topics. The Potter girls were also privy to innovative discourse with family friends such as John Tyndall, Thomas Huxley, Sir William Hooker and Herbert Spencer. Given her upbringing, it is not surprising that conflicts between religion and science would haunt Beatrice later in life. She was a sensitive child, who, despite her busy surroundings, experienced a lonely childhood. She did not feel close to her siblings or particularly favoured by either parent. To compensate for feeling “ignored,” she got “into the habit of scribbling [her] thoughts and feelings...to rid [herself] of painful emotion.” Her diary, begun at fourteen, became a private space for “self-expression” throughout her life.7

When Beatrice entered the London season in her mid teens, she enjoyed the flurry of social events and male attention. Her diary reveals, however, that while she reveled in flattery, she began to chide herself about her vanity and dishonesty. She concluded that “the gay life in London...weakened body and mind.”8 Hence, Beatrice’s emotional/rational ambivalence began to emerge. Spencer noticed her desire to achieve and urged her to develop her faculties. He became both her friend and “guide” until his death in 1903.9 Her mother, also sensing her need for

6MacKenzie and MacKenzie, Diary, 8. All of these men were notable Victorian scientists. Tyndall was a geologist, physicist and big supporter of scientific development. Huxley was a powerful advocate of Darwinism. Hooker was an accomplished and renowned botanist. Spencer, influenced by Hume and Kant, became known as one of the most influential thinkers by the 1890s. He wrote a series of volumes on evolutionary philosophy, for example, First Principles (1862). Spencer offered Webb both friendship and intellectual stimulus. Her taught her to discern the relevance of facts over truth. She fondly referred to him as “the old philosopher.”

7MA, 58, 60.

8MA, 75.

9Diary, September, 1881.
academic expression, encouraged her writing talent. But Beatrice also yearned to satisfy her sensual nature. She decided to “make a faith” to meet her emotional (and rational) needs. Her diary during the 1870s conveyed her regret concerning her irregular church attendance and the fact that she had been raised to question “all contemporary hypotheses.” She found Spencer’s First Principles and Comte’s “Religion of Humanity,” which aimed to “explain” the universe, only “rationally” appeasing. In 1880, she joyfully recorded how the symbolic nature of Roman Catholicism met her emotive, sensual needs. However, her infatuation with Catholicism was short lived during this period because she could not find a way to incorporate the religion’s dogma with her agnostic beliefs. By 1883, she declared that the act of prayer facilitated her negotiation between her intense rational and powerfully vibrant emotional. In short she had found a sphere to facilitate self and other, a “space” in which she could turn during times of emotional/rational conflict.

When her mother died in 1882, Beatrice faced the responsibility of managing her father’s home(s) as her older sisters were now in “well suited” marriages. While she undertook the busy role of hostess and guardian to her younger sister Rosie, she maintained a study schedule. Now twenty-four, she was perceived as an intelligent and attractive woman who would enter a “good”

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11 Diary, December 1874.

12 MA, 57.

13 MA, 96, 143.

14 Diary, 14th November 1880.
marriage. However, Beatrice was convinced that her “tireless intellectual curiosity together with a double dose of will-power” would prevent her from adhering to such conventions. But she had clearly internalized her culture’s prescribed gender-behavioural norms. She believed in “the rearing of children, the advancement of learning, and the promotion of the spiritual life...as the particular obligations of women.” She saw “something exceedingly pathetic” about “the increasing number of women to whom a matrimonial career [was] shut,” and hoped that “instead of trying to ape men...they [would] carve out their own careers...” Beatrice did not support women’s enfranchisement. Although she later rescinded her opinion, claiming that “the root of [her] ant-feminism lay in the fact that [she] had never suffered the disabilities assumed to rise from [her] sex,” she always saw women as the weaker, inferior sex.

Beatrice’s obsessive passion for the Radical politician Joseph Chamberlain was the beginning of an emotionally difficult period in her life. Her initial remark, “I do, and I don’t, like him,” reflected a dilemma which would remain throughout the 1880s. She was in love, but she was convinced that marriage with him would compromise her masculine endeavors. Her

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15 Diary, January 1883; 22nd February 1883: MA, 113.

16 MA, 61.

17 Diary, 2nd November 1906.

18 Diary, November 1885.

19 MA, 360-1. In 1889 Beatrice had signed Mrs. Humphrey Ward’s, the novelist’s, notorious manifesto against female suffrage. Approximately twenty years later she publicly recanted, drafting a letter on the subject to Millicent Fawcett in 1906.

20 Diary, 3rd June 1883.

21 Diary, 16th March 1884.
father's stroke in 1885, and her ongoing ambivalence towards sisters, female friends and Chamberlain, led her to seek solace in "religious feeling" and career pursuits. Work, such as assisting Charles Booth's launching of the great survey of London, satisfied her rational self.  

Emotional self-fulfillment, through religious practices, saw her through the pain and disappointment of her personal relationships. By 1890 she felt dedicated to a career as a social reformer. She envisioned "a socialist community in which there [would] be individual freedom and public property instead of class slavery and private possession..."  

1890 also marked the beginning of Beatrice's relationship with Sidney Webb, the son of a Soho shopkeeper. Sidney was a fast-rising civil servant and Fabian ideologist. He saw socialism as an evolutionary rather than revolutionary process. He strongly believed that if the middle and upper-classes would support rights for the poor, socialist ideals could be put in place. Socialism, according to Sidney, would inevitably lead to class equality in Victorian England. He became infatuated with Beatrice, who, despite a bevy of consistent admirers, believed herself headed for spinsterhood at the age of thirty-four. Her diary indicated that they formed a friendship based on common interests and complementary abilities. Despite Beatrice's initial lack of romantic

22 Beatrice Webb, Our Partnership (New York: Longmans, Green And Co., 1948), 96. Hereafter cited as OP. Charles Booth was married to Beatrice's cousin Mary. A shipowner and manufacturer, Booth was a social investigator who became committed to helping the working class. Beatrice always regarded the Booths as close friends despite their distance after her marriage to Sidney Webb.

23 MacKenzie and MacKenzie, Diary, xii, 152; Diary, 21st February 1889.

24 Diary, 3rd Jan 1890.


26 Diary, Whitsun 1890; 27th July 1890.
interest in Sidney, he eventually won her agreement to a marriage based on a working partnership. They married in 1892, six months after the death of her father. Beatrice’s sisters and friends such as Spencer and the Booths disapproved. They disliked Sidney’s politics and were upset by her union with someone outside of her social class. However, most reconciled their misgivings. The Webb’s marriage was to prove mutually satisfying. Beatrice’s inheritance facilitated Sidney’s resignation from the Civil service thus he was able to devote his days to their collaborative research, writing and politics. Within seven years they had published their first joint work, *The History of Trade Unionism* (1894). Two other books on industrial problems followed shortly. By the late 1890s, they had founded the London School of Economics, become active in educational and municipal reform, and had committed themselves to a series of monographs on English local government that would span a thirty year period.

Although Beatrice was largely content with Sidney she was still subject to emotional/rational discord. 1901 was particularly self-torturing with periods of painful reminiscences about such episodes as her relationship with Chamberlain. She re-emerged through the following years as a dominant advocate of Fabianism, a powerful Royal Commissioner for Poor Law reform, and an energetic promoter of a welfare state. She had also

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27 *MA*, 410-1, 414.


31 *Diary*, 1st January 1901; 24th April 1901.

become an adept, politically-motivated hostess with a reputation for entertaining prominent politicians, academics and writers such as Arthur Balfour and H. G. Wells.\(^{33}\) While Beatrice’s resolution towards working for the “common good”\(^{34}\) had undoubtedly brought some peace of mind, she had also found relief for self through Roman Catholicism. This chapter will demonstrate how the religion had become a satisfactory facilitator for emotional and rational self-satisfaction.\(^{35}\)

The Webbs’ found themselves in an ambiguous position during the early 1910s. They spurned Kier Hardie’s new Independent Labour Party and Ramsay MacDonald as leader of the forthcoming Labour party. They disagreed with Liberal anti-imperialists over the Boer War, Nonconformists over their support for the Conservative government’s education policies, and with Lloyd George’s and Winston Churchill’s Liberal plans for reforming the Poor Law.\(^{36}\) As these differences excluded them from mainstream progressive politics and distanced them from fellow-Fabians they decided to travel for a year.\(^{37}\) Upon their return (1912) Beatrice overhauled the Fabian Society.\(^{38}\) They then founded a radical journal named the \textit{New Statesman} (1913) to

\(^{33}\textit{Diary,} 20^{\text{th}} \text{ April 1904; 8^{th}} \text{ February 1905. Balfour, a Tory politician, became Prime Minister from 1902-5. H.G. Wells was a staunch Fabian and novelist. He wrote largely about contemporary culture, particularly the working class.}\)

\(^{34}\textit{Diary,} 20^{\text{th}} \text{ June 1891.}\)

\(^{35}\textit{Diary,} 15^{\text{th}} \text{ January 1901; 30^{th}} \text{ September 1901.}\)

\(^{36}\text{Muggeridge and Adam, \textit{Beatrice Webb,} 143-95.}\)

\(^{37}\textit{Diary,} 10^{\text{th}} \text{ December 1910.}\)

\(^{38}\text{MacKenzie and MacKenzie, \textit{Diary,} xiv. Beatrice saw the need to refurbish the Fabian society because it had fallen way into squabbling factions during this period. She enlisted the younger, more active members to produce a new set of policies for social reconstruction to replace those initiated by the founding members.}\)
further their political views. Following the First World War they produced two books, *A Constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain* and *The Decay of Capitalist Civilization*. After 1916, the Webbs were increasingly drawn towards Labour politics. Sidney helped Arthur Henderson and Ramsay MacDonald reorganize the manifesto, *Labour and the New Social Order*, which marked its emergence as the main opposition party in post-war years. He then became a cabinet minister in the first Labour government in 1924 and sat again in 1929.³⁹ Beatrice became disillusioned with Fabianism after the collapse of the Labour government in 1931. Her new interest in the Soviet Union led to a visit in 1932 to collect the material on which they based *Soviet Communism: A New Civilization* (1935). This was to be their last collaboration before Beatrice’s death in 1943.⁴⁰

When Sidney became immersed in Labour politics in the 1920s, Beatrice began to think about employing her literary talents in a completely different, more personal way. This was not a new idea. In 1889 she “had been haunted by a longing to create characters and to move them to and fro among fictitious circumstances.” In short, she wanted “to write a novel.”⁴¹ During the early years of her marriage she had voiced her frustrations regarding the “horrid grind...of analysis” with “one sentence...exactly like another.”⁴² In 1895 she exclaimed how she was “sick to death of trying to put hideous facts, multitudinous details [and] exasperating qualifications into a


⁴⁰*Diary*, 28th July 1932; *OP*, 491.

⁴¹*Diary*, 30th September 1889.

⁴²*Diary*, 10th July 1894.
Her autobiography became the first major independent work she had undertaken since her marriage. Sidney felt the work was “far too subjective” and was in danger of being perceived as “the sentimental scribbling of a woman.” But *My Apprenticeship* (1926) was an immediate success, being widely acclaimed as an autobiographical masterpiece. A second volume, *Our Partnership* (1948), was posthumously completed by Barbara Drake and Margaret Cole.  

The writing of her memoirs represented a release from intellectual “drudgery” under which Beatrice Webb had worked for so long. The composing of the work also facilitated an extension of her relinquishment of “self” from the pages of her diary, despite her attempts to the contrary. Webb initially aimed to describe how she pursued “the craft of a social investigator” without disclosing her life-story. She had “neither the desire nor the intention of writing an autobiography” because she knew that she would be tormented by the “recurring decision of what degree of self-revelation [was] permissible.” When she realized her search for a craft could not be separated from her life experience, she tried to “dictate extracts [from her diary]...as if it were about someone else.” She soon concluded that it was “almost impossible to get into that frame of mind.” However, as both *My Apprenticeship* and *Our Partnership* consisted of

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43 *Diary*, 1st February 1895.  
44 *Diary*, 19th March 1925.  
47 *MA*, 1.  
48 *Diary*, February 1923.
carefully selected diary excerpts, alongside hindsight observations on her life and culture, one becomes aware of an element of control in her execution. In My Apprenticeship she made a point of informing the reader that "The Other One" (Sidney) was on the horizon, being "saved" for her by a "guardian angel." She never directly mentioned her long relationship with Chamberlain, even though it was a frequent topic in her diary. One sentence alluded to a "black thread of personal unhappiness," implying her pain over their association. Another passage was similarly abstract, referring to "dark days" of "sensual feeling" when she was "prey to passion." An investigation into Webb's diary also indicates her discretion in discussing certain topics. For example, she did not elaborate greatly on her home life, her father's long illness or her intimate interactions with siblings. Webb's reticence in such self-revelation can be explained in terms of her cultural climate. Victorian diarists and autobiographers tended to view blatant self-exposure as indecent. Some, such as George Eliot and Charlotte Bronte, resolved their dilemmas by setting their life stories within a quasi-fictional setting. Eliza Linton, as discussed in the previous chapter, assumed a male voice.

Barbara Caine, who has written extensively on Victorian female diarists, has suggested

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49 MA, 284.

50 MA, 279.

51 Diary, July 1888.


that Webb’s censuring of her self-expression not only reflected her cultural context, but was also a result of her emergent political interests. Caine points out that as Webb became more involved with socialism, she excised many aspects of her personality and imaginative capabilities in order to fulfill her “sense of duty and enter into the ‘partnership’ she chose.” Beatrice herself noticed such changes. She explained in My Apprenticeship how her “pre-craftsman years [were] records of...subjective experiences...of religious emotion and scientific thought.” But once she “started on the career of a social investigator...[her] diary [became] a tool...[for] synthetic note taking....” Leonard Woolf also believed that Webb had the soul of an artist but suppressed her passion and her imagination in order to write as a social scientist. There is no doubt that Webb’s memoirs reflect both modifications in her writing style and her changing concerns. My Apprenticeship was a candid (albeit veiled) portrayal of her emotional/rational struggle carefully interwoven with an account of her life. Our Partnership only palely echoed her dilemma, tending to focus more on her socialist ideals, her work and her companionate union. However, a closer investigation into Webb’s memoirs reveal that her acquisition of emotional self-fulfillment during the 1880s was not relinquished in her later life. In fact her continued expression of her sensual self likely facilitated her work as a social scientist.

Webb’s biographers such as Kitty Muggeridge and Ruth Adam, Norman and Jeanne

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55 MA, 285.

56 MacKenzie and MacKenzie, Diary, xvii. Leonard and novelist Virginia Woolf were friends of the Webbs. Leonard retired from the civil service after his marriage and became an active Fabian promoter.

57 MA, xiv; OP, vi.
MacKenzie. Deborah Epstein Nord, Lisanne Radice and Carole Seymour-Jones, have tended towards encapsulating her as a woman torn between two egos—masculine and feminine, rational and passionate, skeptical and mystical, sexual and celibate, achieving and denying.58 The MacKenzies, who edited Webb’s diary, cite her personal ambivalence as related to her upbringing, her cultural environment and her personality.59 But this presentation of Webb’s emotional/rational ambivalence as binary oppositions is an inadequate conceptual framework in that it is both limiting and rigid. While it is clear that Webb referred to her “continuous controversy between an Ego that affirms and an Ego that denies” in a variety of contexts, this chapter aims to demonstrate how her visceral self deftly negotiated between self and other.60 Her recordings during the 1880s are particularly interesting because they indicate how she came to employ religion as a sphere for such mediation. The religious domain also facilitated her erotic self expression. Webb, like Linton, sought a space where she could cope with her sense of difference. She performed, as other, within a culture renowned for its rigidly prescribed gender, emotional and sexual norms.

An analysis of Webb’s writing, in the context of Peter Stearns’ research into emotional standards, indicates her sensitivity towards prescribed gender-specific behavioural norms during the 1880s. Her text, like Linton’s, demonstrates that men were encouraged to express anger in the form of ambition and/or assertion, while women could display jealousy. Webb was aware that her father, conversely to most Victorian men, believed in female superiority.61 Encouraged to read

59MacKenzie and MacKenzie, Diary, xix.
60MA, xiii.
61MA, 10.
on a wide range of topics, she grew critical of conventional female education, sardonically pointing out that while men could enter "the...world of big enterprise," women's learning took place "in the annual 'London season.'" 62 Webb continued her studies and aggressively pursued a male craft in the mid 1880s. The public sphere became an approved framework for her anger, which was channeled appropriately in the form of masculine ambition. She took full advantage of her "scarcity value" as a female writer, foreseeing that enterprising editors would welcome her work. 63 She adopted "männisch ways" such as drinking and smoking which she viewed as symbols of emancipation, or the "wand" which allowed women access to men's world. 64 However, Webb's internalization of traditional gendered behavioural norms led to an ambivalence regarding female performance. For example, she saw women who tried "to ape men" as "abnormal." She also firmly believed that such women could never be as successful as men because of their "feminine temperament" and natural "inferiority" to the male of the species. 65 Webb's ambivalence surfaced again when she met Chamberlain. She was appalled by his assumed superiority over her, while intensely attracted to his domineering attitude. She admired his masculine attributes such as courage and ambition, and respected his constructive channeling of anger towards his political pursuits. But she knew she could never forfeit her own ambitions in favour of his, nor could she consider adopting female-appropriate domesticity within the private sphere. 66 Webb's eventual

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62 MA, 45.

63 OP, 361.

64 Seymour-Jones, Webb: Woman Of Conflict, 168.

65 Diary. November 1885.

66 Diary, 12th January 1884; 16th March 1884; 18th November 1888.
companionate union was acceptable as both she and Sidney saw themselves as relative equals. However, Webb’s view on traditional gender appropriate behaviour never truly wavered.

While Webb indicated that anger was a male-appropriate behavioural norm, she seemed to assign jealousy as a typically female trait during the 1880s. Feelings of jealousy were often cited as the cause of her diminishing friendships. Webb sadly recorded how her fifteen-year friendship with her second cousin, Maggie Harkness, was “undermined by [Maggie’s] jealousy of [her] small success.”67 A close friend, Alice Green, was described as “brilliant,...warm hearted [and]...supremely feminine.” But she also had “a latent capacity to be a nasty enemy” because she continuously “struggled against the feelings of spite and revenge.”68 An elderly housekeeper’s scornful remark, “see you’re knocked up. You’re only a woman: in spite of your manly brain,” was perceived as blatant envy over her career pursuits.69 Her siblings also expressed a “silent” condemnation towards her “want of success.”70 Webb herself evinced jealous tendencies. Her growing up in the shadow of her younger sister resulted in vengeful recordings on Rosie’s lack of health, stability, intelligence and independence. Webb later admitted that these comments had often been unjust.71 Mary Booth’s “absorption in a new friend” resulted in Webb’s jealous departure from Booth’s home because she was “choking with wounded feeling” over her cousin’s

67 Diary, 9th September 1890.

68 Diary, 22nd May 1891; OP, 234. Irish born Alice Green was a historian. She was the widow of John Green, who had also been a historian. Alice eventually became senator of the new Irish Free State in 1921.

69 Diary, 17th April 1889.

70 Diary, 10th December 1886.

rejection.  

While Webb’s memoirs imply the social construction of gender and emotional standards in Victorian England during the 1880s, the composition of her text also indicates how she found eroticism beyond normalized (heterosexual) boundaries. She thus alerts the reader to the multi-faceted nature of desire. Webb, in marked contrast to Linton, *internalized* her sexual dilemma within the spiritual sphere. Her diary reveals how the “spirit” of Roman Catholicism became a realm in which she could express her passionate nature. Moreover, she subverted the orthodoxy’s hierarchical constructs for erotic self-fulfillment, during a period when middle and upper class women were expected to adhere to values such as morality, piety and purity. The religious sphere also became an important facilitator for her negotiations between her emotive and rational self.

Webb’s complex attitude to religion was rooted partly in the debates of contemporary culture. She identified the last decades of the nineteenth century as “the watershed between the metaphysic of the Christian Church...and the agnosticism...which was designed...to submerge all religion based on tradition and revelation.” As a young girl she had been troubled about her

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72 *Diary*, 21st February 1889. Webb, who was particularly fond of her cousin Mary, appeared to be devastated by her slow withdrawal from their friendship. Obviously fond of both Booths, she displayed more concern over Mary’s rebuff concerning her marriage to Sidney. It seemed difficult for Webb to form intimate relationships with women. Estranged from most of her sisters, Maggie was the only one she cared for. It was perhaps her upbringing, and ensuing ambivalence about womanhood, that led to her circumspect attitude towards women.


74 Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 192.

75 MA, 54-5.
confirmation in the Church of England. She questioned different occultist and oriental creeds and listened eagerly to the views of family friends such as Tyndall, Huxley and Spencer. In 1876, she became particularly intrigued with Spencer’s “Religion of Science” which she believed could solve “all the problems arising out of the relation of man to man and of man towards the universe.”

However, she soon admitted that “the religion of science [had] its dark side. It [was] bleak and dreary in sorrow and ill health.” She found some respite in a generalized form of Comte’s “Religion of Humanity.”

Although it would appear logical to define her as agnostic, Webb’s attraction to some aspects of traditional religion undoubtedly met her emotional and, eventually, rational needs throughout her life. Perhaps influenced by Tyndall’s assigning of sentiment to the theological realm, she longed to find a religion to fulfill her sensual needs. In 1880, on a visit to Rome, she attended mass at St. Peter’s. She was entranced by the emotive, “beautiful ritual” and the notion of adoring “some being who is perfect.” She believed she had finally found a religion which

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76MA, 83.

77Diary, 8th March, 1878.

78MacKenzie and MacKenzie, Diary, 10. Comte’s Religion of Humanity, which he coined Positivism, was a belief system he designed to replace Catholicism which he had abandoned at thirteen. He sought to reconstitute the law, morality, politics and religion of the modern world on a rational and scientific basis.

79Addinall, Philosophy And Biblical Interpretation, 15, 208. Tyndall, perceiving the subject as an emotional and rational split, placed science over the realm of knowledge and religion over feeling and sentiment. He pointed out that the deep-seated feelings of awe, reverence and wonder formed the immovable basis of religion.
offered “restoration of that harmony without which life [was] incomplete.”

Concluding that Roman Catholicism could “leaven [her] whole life,” she tried to visualize how she could incorporate the orthodoxy’s beliefs with agnosticism. She reasoned that the Catholic Church had been “composed, through centuries, of men dedicating their lives and thought to the theory and practice of the religious ideal.” Thus, would it not be as logical for her to “submit to the authority of the great religious body” in the same way that she submitted to “the great scientific body?” “Could not [she], the agnostic, ... renounce [her] freedom to reason on that one subject?” Webb seemed unable to resolve this dilemma. Her reason forced her “to a purely negative conclusion.” Yet her emotional spirit dominated her “better and nobler moments;” and this spirit was increasingly insisting that “there [was] something above and around [her] which [was] worthy of absolute devotion and devout worship.”

Although Webb could not convert to Roman Catholicism because of her insoluble conflict, her interaction with the religion during this period made her realize that she could never “live in agnosticism” because it only satisfied her rational

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80Webb’s religious experience is explained in Charles Davis’s *Body as Spirit*, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976), 130, 31. Davis describes religious feeling as the arousal of a feeling of totality—of the physical and mental. He believes the subject experiences a sense of awe which ensues in a psychological submission to the will of God. This feeling of absolute dependence then evolves into a feeling of ultimate rightness coupled with a strange sense of object less bliss. Atmosphere, such as symbols, sound or smell make feelings explicit and conscious. The subject ultimately relates to the transcendent in and through religious activities and passivities.

81Webb’s dilemma is understandable. As Keith Yandell in *The Epistemology Of Religious Experience*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 10, 1 points out, social science and other nonreligious explanations of religious belief and experience do not cancel out the evidential force of religious experience. However, because knowledge is limited to what is within reach of our cognitive powers, we cannot know whether religious claims are true or false. As a result, we become intellectual prisoners.

82*Diary*, 14th November 1880.
side. In fact, "life without a religious faith [would be] unbearable" to one of her nature.\(^{83}\)

Webb’s "deep yearning...[to find a]... religion" to meet all of her needs continued throughout 1882, the year of her mother’s death. While negotiating a busy schedule between managing her father’s household(s) and self-directed study, she also found herself struggling between agnosticism and "religious feeling." She was finding that "a new and wondrous faith had] arisen in her—a faith in goodness—in God..." In fact this powerful feeling often threatened to "acknowledge its supremacy over [her] whole nature."\(^{84}\) In 1883, she triumphantly declared that "the long drawn-out controversy between the Ego that affirms and the Ego that denies...[had] ended...in an intuitive use of prayer." The act of prayer enabled her "to survive and to emerge relatively sound in body and sane in mind."\(^ {85}\) It would appear that this "ritualistic arena" satisfied both her logical reasoning and emotive outpour. She had at last found a comfort zone, but, more importantly, a personal space devoid of self-inflicted division.\(^ {86}\)

Webb’s passion for Joseph Chamberlain temporarily displaced her emotional need for religious feeling. Their initial attraction in 1883, quickly degenerated into what she identified as an emotional/rational dilemma which would span four years. At times she "no longer cared to adjust [her] mind to his" and wanted to merely "watch him." In other equally passionate moments, she

\(^{83}\)MA, 101.

\(^{84}\)Diary, 23\(^{rd}\) April 1882.

\(^{85}\)MA, 104-5.

\(^{86}\)Davis, Body as Spirit, 35-8, 92. Webb’s satisfaction from the act of prayer could have stemmed from the belief that she had at last found a way to communicate to a higher power. God had now also become personalized. In The Psychology Of Religion (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 92, Joseph Byrnes points out that all forms of prayer tends to focus on faith, sometimes in a very general way by self-reflection, or by the concentration of inner energies.
would contest his assumed control over her opinion. She struggled for three years before finally declaring the “deadly fight” over. “The intellectual [had] triumphed” she said, but only “by the force of circumstance” had it “beaten the sensual and denied to it satisfaction.” But despite these resolutions, she maintained contact with Chamberlain for over a year. Finally, in a moment of desperate frustration, she reiterated her passion for him while insisting they should no longer meet. Chamberlain wanted them to remain friends, but as Webb could no longer agree to those terms, they parted. He married, for the third time, in 1888. Webb was still wrestling with feelings of passion, pain and humiliation.

Although at a low ebb during 1888, Webb “regained [her] old religious feeling” which, similarly to her assertion in 1880, was a lifeline to “one of [her] nature.” This was not an underestimation. Her devastation over Chamberlain, alongside her ongoing care for her ailing father, had propelled her towards the domain which had formerly met her emotive needs. At the end of her relationship with Chamberlain, she realized she had lost “that holy influence...when [she] gave way to that delusion about the Great Man [Chamberlain].” She thus sought comfort in “the agony of [her] grief” through prayer and religious ritualism. Taking the sacrament, which she saw as “the great symbol of sacrifice,” enabled her to “resist the querulous grief at missing the

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87 *Diary*, 16th March 1884; 12th January 1884.

88 *Diary*, 12th January 1886.


91 *Diary*, 12th February 1888; MA, 318.
greatest happiness of [her] life (marriage to Chamberlain)."92 Such an act implies that Webb sought a form of anti-sexual asceticism through religious symbolism.93 But, by "physically embracing" the denial of her sexuality, Webb may have experienced "exquisite pain."94 A comparison of her activities with Linton's depiction of pleasure in Under which Lord? gains further insight. Linton's novel evoked how a middle-class English Victorian women's intertwining of sexual passion and religious asceticism, resulted in an intense release of disgraceful ecstasy.95 Implied was that painful pleasure was developed from such activities.

Webb's rejection by Maggie Harkness and Mary Booth also led her to seek solace in religious practice. She had loved Maggie despite her "feminist" politics,96 and had clung onto Mary's "forced" affection while knowing she no longer cared.97 Doubting as to "whether warm sentimental friendships with women" were even possible, she turned once again to "religious

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92 *Diary*, 15th March 1886.

93 Maynard, *Victorian Discourses*, 33. Maynard proposes that ascetic attitudes, largely stemming from St. Augustine's time, still influenced some aspects of Victorian orthodoxy. According to MacKenzie and MacKenzie, *Dairy*, 158, there is a strong indication that Webb was familiar with Augustine's *Confessions*.

94 George Bataille, in *Eroticism: Death and Sensuality*, trans. Mary Dalwood (San Francisco: City Lights 1986), suggests that sexual activity is often consecrated to religious ritualism because it violates normal boundaries and controls. Maynard, in *Victorian Discourses*, 10, suggests an extreme example of this is Tantrism which developed within Hinduism. Tantrism combines both sexual and religious practices; paying special attention to the sexual nature of the cosmic powers, sexual ecstasy as a religious goal and the sacralization of sexual intercourse. Although not this extreme, one can see how Webb could achieve sensual pleasure through religious practices.

95 *UWL*, 2:308.

96 *Diary*, 14th November 1889.

97 *Diary*, 21st February 1889.
feeling, [finding] communication with...creatures of [her] imagination...the only safe companions to the lonely mind." 98 Webb began to "protect" herself within religious walls. She could enter a space, or zone of articulation, where emotions such as pleasure, loss and anxiety could be acted out cohesively and privately. In My Apprenticeship, she summarized her emotional state in 1891 dispassionately, briefly stating that she warned the lovesick Sidney she was "a piece of steel." Although she was "not 'in love'...as [she] was [with Joseph Chamberlain]," she agreed to a marriage "based on fellowship, a common faith and a common work." 99

Although Webb's mid-to later-life recordings indicate a self-directness towards work, I am not---conversely to historians such as the MacKenzies and Caine---suggesting that she repressed her emotional needs in order to fulfill her duty as a social reformer. 100 An emergent Fabian Positivist, and writer on reform, Webb was certainly seen as a formidable figure. 101 However, it seems unreasonable to suggest that she could "shut down" and/or disregard her deeply passionate nature. In fact, there is strong indication that beneath her public austerity, she continued to seek private emotional self-fulfillment. Her recordings imply that the religious realm, once again, facilitated her emotive/rational negotiation. 102 1901 appears to have been the turning point

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98 Diary, 21st February 1889.

99 MA, 411.

100 MacKenzie and MacKenzie, Diary, 6; Caine, "Webb and her Diary," 86.

101 Radice, Beatrice And Sidney Webb, 50-1, 8. Beatrice's and Sidney's Fabian Positivism, based on the Comtean notion of a chosen few to lead mankind, led to their unpopularity. Contemporaries, such as Wells, claimed they were elitist. But while their politics undoubtedly appealed to Beatrice's "rational altruism," both she and Sidney were passionate believers in the rights of all individuals.

102 OP, vii.
towards such self-cohesiveness. Webb, now forty-two, described the year as one of sentimentality. She reminisced over Chamberlain, lost friendships\textsuperscript{103} and her decision to remain childless.\textsuperscript{104} She sought to control her feelings through a strict diet. Denying herself certain foods was pleasurable because her “rigid self-discipline” satisfied her rational self.\textsuperscript{105} Her longing, or emotive self, was appeased through music and religion.\textsuperscript{106} Through the ensuing years, she came to the decision that a severe diet was no substitution for religion. The “spirit” of Roman Catholicism, which had enthralled her in the early 1880s, became a more satisfactory intermediary for her emotive and rational self. She sought mediation through what she saw as Catholicism’s contrariety. Her rational side could be appeased by the orthodoxy’s “mental hygiene,” in short, its discipline “of the emotions” and/or advocacy of “physical self control [and] humility...”\textsuperscript{107} Her emotional side could be satiated by the religion’s seductive ritual. For Webb, “the more ritual, the more mystery, the more indefiniteness of thought, the greater the play for emotional purposes.”\textsuperscript{108} She could move along a continuum between erotic sensualism and physical self denial.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{103}Diary, 1\textsuperscript{st} January 1901.

\textsuperscript{104}Diary, 24\textsuperscript{th} April 1901.

\textsuperscript{105}Radice, \textit{Beatrice And Sidney Webb}, 141.

\textsuperscript{106}Diary, 9\textsuperscript{th} December 1901.

\textsuperscript{107}OP, 170.

\textsuperscript{108}Diary, 15\textsuperscript{th} January 1901; OP, 1948: 209.

\textsuperscript{109}Alfred North Whitehead’s philosophy pertaining to religious discourse and experience is fruitful here. His \textit{Religion in the Making} (New York: Macmillan Co., 1926), 123, 65 suggests that we can live out and “know truth” on the basis of our total experience, where this totality of our experience extends beyond that portion of it which is dominated by language. Religious
Webb praised Roman Catholicism for the remainder of her life but never entered the church. In fact, she never laid claim to a “home for [her] religious faculty” as “church dogma” offended her “intellectual integrity and moral sincerity.” Nonetheless, she regularly attended church services. Her tendency towards institutions which favoured sensual symbolism reflected her early experience at St. Peter’s. For example, when she lived in London, she sought the “sympathetically rendered” service of St. Paul’s Anglican Cathedral. When she described St. Paul’s service, she claimed that she was attracted to the evocative music, seductive ritualism and charismatically rendered “rites.” She also sought pleasure in the architectural beauty of the building. Another influence of Roman Catholicism was the importance Webb apparently attached to the “personalized” confession of sin throughout her life. As early as 1872 she had prayed to God when she felt “her faith slipping away” and also begged “His” forgiveness for her “vanity.” This diary excerpt was accordingly placed under the heading, “Confession of Sin” in

experience occurs in and through bodily and symbolic, and imaginative and conceptual activity. Thus, our religious life will always be richer than our language. In short, prayer alone would not have satisfied Webb’s mental and sensual nature.

110 Diary, 14th April 1926.

111 Diary, 7th February 1934.

112 Diary, 14th November 1915. It is pertinent to note Edwin Starbuck’s The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Study of the Growth of Religious Consciousness (New York: Charles Scriber’s Sons, 1899). Starbuck, writing in the 1890s, spoke about how yielding, as one does in religious belief, is the giving of oneself over to a new life where one can achieve higher, better goals. This contemporary thought appeared to be in keeping with Webb’s political and personal aims.

113 Diary, 23rd December 1872.
My Apprenticeship. In 1934, she recorded her disapproval of the revivalist "Oxford and the Groups...group confession of sin...[which seemed] to have all the vices and dangers of 'emotional religion' without any of the safeguards of a disciplined corps of leaders like the Roman Catholic priesthood."

The act of prayer also met Webb’s emotional and rational needs throughout her life. From her discovery in 1883, to her contribution to “What I believe” in 1939, she never wavered from seeking pleasure in this spiritual practice. Possibly praying cushioned her need to follow “a creed” in her younger years. Its “intuitive use” had inspired her emotional self towards “some righteousness felt to be outside and above itself” and directed her rational self towards “the purpose of life.” But perhaps her approach to prayer was the link to her achievement of emotional/rational satisfaction through religion. In other words, her “intuitive” use of prayer influenced her employment of the contrariety of Roman Catholicism to meet her emotional and rational needs.

Webb’s concern over changing religious attitudes was evident in her memoirs during the 1900s. While her fears were understandable due to her own need for religion, her views were not without contradiction. Her desire for women to retain moral values within the home was

\[114\text{MA, 63.}\]
\[115\text{Diary, 7th February 1934. There is a strong indication that when Webb prayed, her prayers included her confession of her sins to God. Although there is no indication in her memoirs that she went to Catholic Confession, it is possible that the “mental hygiene” she referred to later in her life was her “symbolic” Catholic confessional.}\]
\[116\text{OP, 448.}\]
\[117\text{Diary, 18th June 1909.}\]
hypocritical given her own female performance and interaction with faith.\textsuperscript{118} Webb was very supportive towards the continuation of religious teaching in the school system, and proposed that schools should be sympathetic to all religious beliefs. Such views led to conflicts with colleagues and friends. She was deeply offended by H.G. Wells' supposition that children were "not fit for emotional training until after adolescence," and she hotly defended the necessity of religious instruction in schools.\textsuperscript{119} She also criticized Wells' complete "ignoring of religion" in his novels, "from the standpoint of realism." Faith in her view was still a powerful force in moulding working-class lives.\textsuperscript{120} During a social evening with the Haldanes, Webb admitted that prayer was a big part of her life. Their open ridicule, with gibes such as "prayer [is] mere superstition," was remembered with pain and duly noted as such in \textit{Our Partnership}.\textsuperscript{121}

Webb's memoirs demonstrate that although she subverted cultural norms for self-fulfillment, her internalization of her society's belief systems led to an ambivalence about her performance as a woman. She traversed the public sphere yet acclaimed the private sphere for women.\textsuperscript{122} Webb, like Linton, appeared to find resolution in performance. It was, in her case, Fabian Positivism. Her duty towards society exonerated her relinquishment of feminine ideals in

\textsuperscript{118}Diary, 2\textsuperscript{nd} November 1905.

\textsuperscript{119}Diary 11\textsuperscript{th} May 1905.

\textsuperscript{120}Diary 13\textsuperscript{th} March 1910.

\textsuperscript{121}\textit{OP}, 429. The Haldanes were lifelong friends of the Webbs. They were notable public figures who wrote on philosophy. Elizabeth became the first female magistrate for Scotland. Richard, a lawyer and politician, converted from Liberalism and joined the Labour Government in the 1920s.

\textsuperscript{122}Diary, 2\textsuperscript{nd} November 1906.
order to pursue progress. Her behaviour, although not as overt as Linton’s, can be said to reveal the imitative structure of gender. Webb’s frequent depiction of female jealousy, and her admiration of Chamberlain’s channeling of his anger in political ambition, appears to verify Stearns’ observations on prescribed Victorian gender-distinct emotional standards. Also, her diary indicates that her main fear about succumbing to her passion for Chamberlain stemmed from knowing she could not perform aggressively in the private sphere.

Webb’s sensuous self-fulfillment was not entirely controlled by contemporary hegemonic apparatuses. Thus her memoirs, similarly to Linton’s text, demonstrate the polymorphous nature of desire. Although her intense, romantic love for Chamberlain implied that she had internalized cultural heterosexual norms, her passion did not lead her to assume the prescribed domestic role. But she did not repress her sensual nature. When her desire for Chamberlain was unfulfilled, she sought the spiritual realm for gratification. Ensuing disappointments in intimate friendships also led to solace in religious practices. Her decision to form a companionate union to further her chosen creed did not end her emotional life. Her “limited physical relationship” with Sidney appears to have been recompensed through erotic self-satisfaction in the spirit of Roman Catholicism. It has been argued that when the object-libido is directed towards an aim other than sexual satisfaction, sublimation, or, repression of feelings takes place. Freud cited spirituality as

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125 *Diary*, 22nd April 1884; 12th April 1886.
126 Caine, “Webb and her Diary,” 86.
one potential site for unresolved sexual feeling. Webb did not repress her sexuality in the religious sphere. In fact, the domain became an important space for sensuous self expression.¹²⁸

The act of prayer facilitated Webb’s mediation between her emotional and rational self. One function of religious language is its ability to elicit religious experience into the realm of conscious experience. A further tenet is that such practices as prayer maintain religion in an individual’s life.¹²⁹ I have proposed that the emotional/rational negotiation Webb learned through praying was assimilated in what she identified as the spirit of Roman Catholicism. But another important outlet this facilitated was Webb’s “symbolic embrace” of the faith. I am proposing that on a subconscious level, she paralleled the religious “embrace” with the physical demonstrations of affection/rejection one performs with family, friends or suitors.¹³⁰ For example, her sacrificial rejection of desire, symbolized by Chamberlain, was acknowledged by taking the

¹²⁸Freud, Works Of Freud, xiv, 94. Freud’s process of sublimation has been open to much interpretation. Partner, in “No Sex, No Gender.” 436, believes that gratification is sought if the object-libido is re-directed. Maynard, in Victorian Discourses, 303, suggests that the re-direction is remote from that of sexual satisfaction. However, he admits that the amount of deflection, alongside the nebulous area between direct bodily stimulation and remote gratification of instinct, is undetermined. See also Freud’s Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, trans. Alan Tyson (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), xi for his ideas about the how Da Vinci’s “sublimated libido” directed his research and work as an artist.

¹²⁹Franklin, Speaking From The Depths (Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), xi.

¹³⁰Lee Stone, The Story of Phallicism (Chicago: Pascal Covici, 1927), 3, 86. Stone interestingly suggests that “most religious [expression] was formulated from the sexual embrace” and “without sexuality the world would have been cold and passionless and men would have felt no need for the exultation of religion.”
sacrament.\textsuperscript{131} The implication here, once again, being the pleasurable pain she achieved through denial. Through her struggle between her masculine needs and feminine desires, Webb demonstrated how an upper-middle class woman coped with her sense of difference within a society bound by behavioural, gender-distinct, religious and sex norms. Webb's search for self was illuminated in the pages of her memoirs. But it was through the ambiguous space of religion, that Webb's self was able to negotiate between her private desires and self-conceived public requirements.

\textsuperscript{131}See Georges Bataille's \textit{Eroticism: Death and Sensuality} for his speculations on the connection between the limits imposed by culture and the experiences of blood and death in ritual sacrifice.
Chapter Five

Conclusion

The theory was that Eliza Lynn Linton and Beatrice Webb would demonstrate that the second half of the nineteenth century was an exciting, yet unsettling time for middle and upper-middle class women. Their memoirs confirm that, even though they were influenced by the ebb and flow of modern discourse, and were aware of the organized woman’s movement, they acclaimed traditional gender-specific norms about women being the inferior sex. But although they applauded the contemporary values of female domesticity, their own “masculine natures” caused an inner struggle for both of them. Their texts written during the 1880s indicate how each woman’s particular masculine/feminine contradiction was played out in unique performances, which involved a mediation between the self and the society. Linton and Webb were not passive. Their innovative performance of self-expression not only evinced the sensual, deeply passionate nature of each woman, but also revealed the multifaceted nature of desire. Conversely to the opinions of Linton’s and Webb’s biographers, neither woman suppressed her feminine sensuality. In fact, it was desire that ultimately resolved each woman’s particular dilemma.

Since gender-distinct behavioural standards were prescribed in Victorian England, men and women were expected to perform in certain ways. Although jealousy was a typically female trait, these two women’s texts indicate that they did not perceive it as an attractive emotion. Female jealousy was not only painful, but they often cited it as the reason behind the diminishing of close friendships between women. Linton carefully avoided depicting her literary male persona as jealous. Christopher was described as feeling sulky, or sad in situations in which the real-life
Linton had actually expressed jealousy. Anger was declared an acceptable masculine emotion if channeled constructively. Linton's assumed male persona in her autobiographical novel exhibited abhorrence towards his temper tantrums, but she was proud to direct his anger in the form of ambition toward, or protection of women. Webb's passion for Joseph Chamberlain seems to have stemmed from her admiration of his ambitious political pursuits and from her love/hate for his assumed masculine superiority. However, neither woman's acceptance of masculine anger ensued in a marriage to a manly man. They each entered the private sphere on their own terms, retaining their independence and/or "control" by subverting prescribed ideologies for personal fulfillment.

Nevertheless, socially-constructed gender-specific norms resulted in Linton's and Webb's ambivalence towards their performance, since neither of them could adopt a female-appropriate role. Linton's ostracization by her family due to her inappropriate anger caused her intense anxiety. Her literary gender performance was an attempt to come to terms with what she felt was deviant behaviour by contemporary standards. While her male persona could reflect anger norms, the space of the novel also enabled her to switch places within such gendered constructs. Her text became a stage which perhaps allowed her to confront and further accept the self. Webb, like Linton, achieved some resolution in performance, and her commitment to Fabian positivism translated into a sense of duty to achieve betterment for her society. Thus her role as a leader exonerated her from feminine ideals, while simultaneously retaining and embracing femininity.

Female desire can take many forms, as Eliza Linton and Beatrice Webb have aptly demonstrated. Their texts not only provide comparisons between each woman's expression of desire, but they also suggest how an individual can experience multifarious eroticism. Both women indicated heterosexual desire; Linton's text also showed homoaffective desire. But they
also sought ways of sensuous expression which deviated from the rigid sexual norms. Thus, contradicting the social constructionist theory, each woman’s actions suggest that her desire was not entirely controlled by the grip of a powerful apparatus. Freud’s concept of the innate, multifaceted, nature of desire demonstrates that desire is a strong motivator for seeking self-satisfaction. I have concluded that Linton’s writing-process enabled her both to project her sense of tension between self and other, and to express her desire apart from entrenched English Victorian ideologies. Her literary male persona, coupled with her delegation of the gender of the key figures in her life, implies the meanings of her real-life relationships. She blurred sex categories by performing as a male either to men who became women in her novel, or to women who remained as women. This act disrupted (and dis-empowered) the link between gender and sex, and the notion of the (male) Victorian gaze. Webb sought the spiritual sphere for satisfaction when her sensual nature was unfulfilled by rational activities and human relationships. Her traversal within the religious sphere enabled her to express her intense eroticism, such as the tension between pleasure and denial, through religious ritual. Webb’s personalized interaction with faith also facilitated her mediation between her rational and emotional self, which was also achieved through the interplay of release and discipline. Webb and Linton remind us that an attempt to classify desire runs the risk of the reification of the powerful emotion.

In conclusion, there were beneath the public exteriors of Eliza Lynn Linton and Beatrice Webb, the private actions of two women who sought to resolve their dilemmas. An understanding of their experience is crucial in recovering the rich emotional texture of the past. As research into emotional culture is relatively underdeveloped, future investigations into English Victorian behavioural standards should lend more insights into how women (and men) experienced and
performed their lives. The intertwining of the social constructionist and essentialist theories is the beginning position for research into emotional standards. Whereas the historian may initially assume that behaviour is fundamentally socially constructed, the application of essentialism gives voice to the psyche—the visceral self, the unrelenting negotiator between culture and nature.
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