

Nineteenth-century young women's diaries

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Résumé: *L'auteur examine plusieurs journaux intimes canadiens du 19e siècle afin de montrer de quelle manière la langue reflète les attentes et les pressions culturelles exercées sur les jeunes femmes.*

On her sixteenth birthday in 1867 Hellen Bowlby began a new diary with the words that confidently established her identity and her place in the world:

Hellen V. Bowlby
Prospect Hill Seminary
Silver Lake, Port Dover
To be perused by the writer only¹

Hellen is one of the few young women whose personal diaries now repose in public archives; also among them are Hellen's sisters, Hattie and Louisa. Her sister Louisa's diary, also written at Prospect Hill Seminary, begins with the assertion that it will be "Founded on facts;"² while their younger sister Hattie needed some help from a friend even to begin the task of recording her life: "Today I am sweet sixteen and I never was so old before. Emma German my old chum and I both concluded we begin a journal on our birthdays."³

None of these young sisters was destined to become a writer, despite these confident beginnings. The archives, as far as I know, hold no further written records of their lives; we can read only what they have defined and described in their adolescent diaries. These brief diaries, like those of other young girls now in public archives, are the sole texts of their creation, the only record of their personal stories. As personal records of a particular time and place, women's diaries have value not only as accounts of social history, but also as literary texts.⁴ Like other literary texts, diaries reflect the context of their creation, or the "literary, cultural, and personal imperatives dictated by the writer's milieu" (Buss "Dear Domestic" 2). An important facet of the writer's milieu is the linguistic culture in which she writes. I began my study of these diaries because I wanted to understand this linguistic culture, to discover how young women viewed language use, and to extend the discussion of Canadian English to include more specific reference to the language of women.

Diaries are paradoxical texts for a linguistic study: they show features of both written and spoken English. Simply because they are written, they follow some of the rules for formal written English, which is usually used to con-

vey factual information.⁵ But much of that factual information has been omitted from the diaries because they were primarily intended for the writers' eyes only. They require the reader now, over 100 years later, to guess about who the people mentioned are and what their importance was to the young writer.⁶ Diaries, to a greater degree than many other written texts, depend upon a lost context for their meaning.

Diaries, although written, can also show many of the functions of speech, especially the function of speech in establishing and maintaining human relationships. Several of the writers shared their diaries with a friend; others treated the diary itself like a friend, chatting comfortably with themselves in their own words. Because of their personal subject matter, diaries are among the most intimate of texts, and are therefore subject to the ellipsis and suggestion of the most informal speech.⁷ They also are sometimes written in the contemporary slang of their day, giving fresh voice to long-silent girls. Because they occupy an unusual stylistic middle ground, they can illustrate rules for both writing and speech in 19th century Canadian English.⁸ They show both form and function of language in everyday life.

The young women whose diaries I read in the Public Archives of Canada and the Public Archives of Ontario were all in their teens between 1845 and 1885. Sophia MacNab, daughter of the politically and financially prominent Allan MacNab, kept a diary for seven months in 1846, during her emotional thirteenth year at Dundurn, near Hamilton, Ontario. Sixteen-year-old Mercy Ann Coles from Charlottetown, P.E.I., kept a diary of her trip to Quebec with her father, who was attending the *Confederation Conference* of 1864. At roughly the same time, young Louisa Bowlby was dutifully keeping a diary of her sixteenth year while attending Prospect Hill Seminary in Port Dover, Ontario. Louisa's two sisters, Hellen and Hattie, each kept a diary when they too reached sixteen (Hellen a few years later, Hattie a decade later). In 1879 fourteen-year-old Lizzie McFadden was travelling with her family from their home in London, Ontario to Prince Albert, in what is now Saskatchewan. She kept a careful record of the overland journey from Winnipeg to their new home in the Northwest Territories. Christina Bogart was sixteen when she began her diary in Granville Ferry, Nova Scotia in 1880; she continued her writing in her book just past her eighteenth birthday.

Although their diaries are the only written records these young women have left behind, they must have done other writing, especially in school or with their teachers, where they learned the rules for proper speech and writing. They were among the lucky ones, for very few young people in 19th century Canada had more than rudimentary education.⁹ Most young people were educated in a haphazard fashion, either in a public-supported school if one was available in their community; or, more likely, in a private school; or, like Sophia MacNab, with a tutor hired by their family or a group of families.¹⁰ The Bowlby family was wealthy enough to send all three daughters to a private female

seminary where they learned a combination of academic and "ornamental" subjects and presumably wrote diaries as part of a course of study.

The core of any school's course of study was basic reading and writing, and in Ontario, at least, the standard was established early. Ontario students, progressed through a series of standard readers, as did Maritime readers, with their Halifax editions of the same texts. The first were the Irish National School Books, which were adopted as the common school books in Upper Canada in 1846. By 1876 there was a Canadian version of the same; auxiliary texts included Miller's *Analytical and practical grammar, English grammar for junior classes* by Davies, and Collier's *History of English literature*.

Young people reading these books would have been constantly made aware of the sense of a religious moral, and, implicitly, a linguistic standard. Many of the stories they read in the early readers were Bible stories; even little stories about ordinary children were followed by moralistic aphorisms, such as "God gave this law to men, that they should love him more than all things in this world" and "You must not vaunt or boast of your skill."¹¹ English literature, if they got that far in their course of study, was supposed to be good for them; reading literature could curb the "inclination to read those trashy novels that are undoubtedly poisoning the intellect and moral life-blood of the readers."¹²

Therefore, whatever education these young people received linked the word and the good, and tied literacy to a moral and social standard. They learned "good English," the social dialect of the dominant class. Even educated young women, however, were removed from the linguistic standard by virtue of their sex and their age. These young women wrote when the social standard promulgated by etiquette and advice books stressed the importance of deference and politeness in women's speech. Male writers on feminine decorum often proscribed women's speech: one wrote that "a Female's conversation should be the index of her mind, pure, chaste and unaffected."¹³ Women's language is conventionally seen as a deferential language that is, or ought to be, more polite than language used by men.¹⁴

Women themselves have long felt that self-assertion and self-expression were unfeminine, and in their writing would deflect attention from themselves and deprecate their own desires and abilities.¹⁵ Denied access to the larger sphere of education and ideas, 19th century women diarists tended to develop a linguistic style that focused on the particulars of their daily lives. Their diaries consequently differ in subject matter from the private writings of men, many of whom wrote with a stronger sense of ego about their place in the physical or political world.¹⁶ Women diligently wrote to the standard if they could, but often preferred conversation to exposition. In their private writings they indulged in long, unpunctuated sentences, contemporary slang, and other speech-like writing that shows little evidence of the written standard.

Young women writers, especially, show their distance from the polished

standard of written English; many wrote with anxiety over their worthiness at the task. The Bowlby sisters wrote for improvement and consequently were self-conscious about writing, and often reflect on the nature of writing. Perhaps their journals were marked or read by an instructor at Prospect Hill Seminary, for Louisa guiltily confesses, "Well I have written the rest of this book so badly. I am going to finish it much better if I do not get in too big a hurry" (15 Jan). Her sister Hattie is ever pessimistic about her abilities: "Well I have not written any thing worth mentioning for I don't know how long and I guess I never will either" (8 May).¹⁷

All three girls, as educated young ladies of their day, understood the purpose of their writing as an exercise in improvement. In the schoolroom, Louisa writes in her journal when the other girls write, explaining, "Bell is just writing a letter, Dora is writing in her journal" (9 Jan). Hellen draws attention to her need to catch up on her writing duty if she misses a day: "I did not have time to write last night so I will have to finish my yesterday's work today" (16 May). Louisa Bowlby liked to write, but was torn between obligations to write in her diary and to do her schoolwork: "I ought to be studying my French instead of writing here for it is getting late" (Holidays 1862) and torn also by the requirement to keep the Sabbath, "It is Sunday and I had not ought to be writing" (23 Feb 1863).

When Louisa does write she gives a sense of a girl's daily life without too many strenuous duties. She spends her day learning French, practicing her music, and painting birds while Ma does the washing. She loved music, and names in her diary several popular tunes of the day. She also loved a good time, and writes of parties where those present danced the "Caribou dance," and where "the boys all acted the negro first rate." At one party Uncle J. has too much of a good time, for Louisa reports that he "had a bowl of bread and milk with a stick in it" (15 Jan). This is, I assume, a slang phrase for drunkenness, for *milk* has often been associated with alcohol in slang terminology. She highlights with quotation marks, but no explanation, other slang words: "Ed was there with his new 'Jumper'" (20 Jan) and "Mrs. Alt was over to tea last night and the 'social' is to meet there next Friday night" (23 Feb). She does not explain what these words and phrases mean, for she is writing for herself, and she already knows.

Her sister Hellen begins writing with the same limited audience of one in mind. She admonishes at the beginning that her diary is "To be perused by the writer only," but relents just two lines later: "Annie and Hellen read this in partnership." Hellen often comments on the other girls writing away in the classroom, and finds herself writing at the same time. She finds some solace in this, as writing can be a cure for her lonesomeness: "I am not in the habit of writing in my journal Sunday but Annie was writing and I am a little lonesome so I thought I would write awhile" (8 June). Apparently, diary-writing was not enough to occupy a girl out of school, lonesome or not, for Hellen re-

sumes in November: "It has been a long time since I have written in my journal and everything of importance has passed by."

When Hellen does write it is often of social events that were terribly important to her, but that, removed from their context, seem trivial to a reader of today. Like many women diarists, she records few feelings or larger social or political events. She yearns for something to write about that will elevate her record into an exciting plot: "I hope something very important will happen before long because I want to make my journal interesting" (15 May). She tried once to write as she thought a writer should, in a long, distanced, and elaborate description of her holiday destination, putting the reader in the picture: "Just imagine yourself, a beautiful farm house surrounded with trees and shrubs growing in rich profusion around the neat little yard and then take a peep inside and there you will find Uncle and Aunty Brigman and three of the most splendid boys you ever met" (7 June). Despite her ambitious beginnings Hellen ends her diary most abruptly on 1 June 1868. Some pieces are cut out and missing, and we have no more to read of her long life.

Her little sister Hattie begins with innocence and good cheer, sociable at the start of her writing, since she intends to share her diary with her friend Emma. But neither of them can write according to their expectations: "Emma said she knew she couldn't write anything in her journal worth a kick, but I guess she will have more to write than I will for there isn't a single thing going on around here" (12 April). Some of what is going on is housework. Hattie writes of papering walls, putting down new carpet, and doing laundry, which now occupies Hellen's time: "Ma and Hellen washed today and the clothes dried so fast that Annie ironed the starched clothes today" (12 April). Unlike her sister Louisa, Hattie writes about doing housework herself. "We were so busy yesterday house cleaning that I couldn't write any" (15 April).

Usually, for Hattie, writing is a task of last resort. As obliged, she records the whos and whats of daily life, but strains against the requirement:

Lottie is going to stay a week or so. I guess the girls will go up after her when she comes home because they want to go to Waterford any way. I think Ma and Annie will go to Brantford in a few days and see Mrs Shannon. I have nothing to write about and have nothing else to do so I want to write some more. I never read what I have written and I don't think I will until I get it written through or until my next birthday and then it will be something new. (30 April)

She becomes bored and petulant with writing. Her only delight is in sharing words with Em: "I will have to take my journal down to Caledonia with me for I am going to let Em see mine and she is going to let me see her journal" (5 May). Otherwise, she frets about writing, and spins out a long list of people and events when she does. Eventually even that exercise palls, and Hattie comments, "I have not written any for quite a while but I thought I would write a little tonight. Anything is good for a change" (31 Aug). Even Em gives up, long

before the year of writing is over: "The last time I heard from Em German she said I must not neglect my journal but I don't think she writes much in hers" (29 Nov). Hattie's last words mark her transition from literary into domestic duty: "I must stop writing now and get the table set" (11 April).

Mercy Ann Coles is less bound by duty in her writing; she records impressions of her travels with great delight and literary assurance. Her diary includes accounts of her trip to the Confederation Conference in Quebec in October, 1864, accompanying her parents. Her father, George Coles, was a prominent brewer, merchant, and politician. Mercy was one of twelve children, but according to her diary no other siblings went on this historic trip. She emulates published travel accounts of her day with their "statistics of hotel service, modes of transport and picturesque descriptions" (Buss "Dear Domestic" 4). She writes early in her journey: "We saw beautiful scenery coming through New Hampshire it was too dark to see the White Mountains. Mr. Tilly helped me admire it."¹⁸ She is easily distracted from the scenery to sociability, for she continues on the subject of Mr. Tilly, noting that "he is the only beau of the party and with 5 single ladies he has something to do to keep them all in good humor."

Her writing has significance beyond that of recording an exciting trip to a city far from home. She seems aware that she is on the sidelines at historic moments, and has the wit to record the private sides of famous people: "D'Arcy McGee took me to dinner and sat between Lady McDonell and I. Before dinner was half over he got so drunk he was obliged to leave the table. I took no notice of him. Mr. Gray said I acted admirably." Mercy shows her sophistication when she writes with delightful irony: "John A. [MacDonald] was to have made a speech but he was tight or had a palpitation of the heart and could not go on." Her attention to politicians soon wanes, and Mercy prefers to write about fashion. About a ball where over eight hundred people were presented to the Governor General she writes: "Ma wore her grenadine over black silk. I wore my blue silk. There were only 2 or 3 trains there."

Mercy's vocabulary gives her writing its liveliness in her early diaries. She refers to details of fashionable dress, suggesting in this comment just how formal an occasion the conference was: "Ma is going to have a new black silk waist made. She has only the one evening dress & finds it rather awkward." Sometimes her diction retains a sense of distinctive vocabulary. In calling Mr. Tilly a *beau* she was using a term that was nearly obsolete in England by 1860; it lived on as an American slang word for lover or sweetheart.¹⁹ She has no fear of calling John A. MacDonald *tight*, as well as an "old Humbug," and "The Conundrum," words that may have had a special colloquial connotation for her. Like other trip diaries she frequently refers to people and places she visited, but her youthful voice is often breathless and immediate in referring to them: "The Ball is to come off to night they say it is going to be such a crush."

Unfortunately, Mercy develops a sore throat while in Quebec, and misses

most of the arranged outings. She comes to hate Quebec, and thinks the weather is terrible because it rains all the time. Before her spirits are utterly dampened, she reports on the view from her hotel window: "Such dumpy, draggled women they have here. I have just seen one go by with a handsome embroidered skirt over a red one. The white one an inch thick with mud." Later she succumbs to irritation and despair, "I am sure I shall know the shape of every shingle in the roof of the old house opposite." After the Confederation Conference Mercy travelled to visit her relatives in the United States. Here she comments on the money and privilege that have given her room to write: "They [Aunt Elizabeth, Uncle William, and the cousins] are making cheese this morning. No servants, here they all do their own work. I am not surprised. Bertie found it so different at our house, when he had half a dozen to wait on him."

Her diaries are brief but unaffected; her tone is, in her early writings, enthusiastic, despite her dampened spirits. The delight in the act of writing marks her social class. She is sophisticated enough to give a sense of setting a scene for a reader, describing current fashion, and even picturing natural marvels for the reader. Her style is self-confident, her writing voice sparkles as she describes from a comfortable distance the world she visits on her trips, as on this visit to Barnum's Museum in New York: "Tom Thumb & his wife are in Europe but we saw two other dwarfs 2 Albano [sic] children with perfectly white hair, such lots of wonders it will take me a week to think of it all."

Sophia MacNab, daughter of Allan MacNab, a prominent businessman and politician, was also a wealthy, educated young woman. She kept a journal for seven months during 1846, a year in which she turned fourteen-years old, travelled to Montreal, and most significantly, lost her mother to a lingering disease. Sophia, like Mercy, writes about visits and dinners with the important men of the day and their families. But she also writes affectingly of the wasting away of "dearest Mamma" in her upstairs bedroom at Dundurn. Sophia kept her diary under a strict parental eye; she often records that she sat in Mamma's sickroom writing. She must have written early in each day about the previous day's events, for she often begins an entry for a day with "Wrote in my diary," going on to recount a day's visits and activities. Writing was for her a recording of the previous day, not making a breathless, immediate account of the current day. When she tires of beginning each entry with the same series of sentences, she revises the pattern, in a telling comment on the purpose for her writing: "As I am a good way past half through my book and I think it is useless to give such a long detail of each day so I am merely going to put that we went through the usual routine and anything particular that happens or anything that I want to remember."²⁰

Sophia was tutored at home three hours a day: a Mr. Thomson taught her and her sister Minnie each morning. But Mamma, from her sickbed, wielded far greater power. Beginning at the back of her diary Sophia writes a list of

Mamma's rules for her and Minnie, as well as a list of faults which her mother thought she ought to correct. Among these are faults in both speech: "Mamma says that when we are speaking to a person we should never say will you be kind enough we should always say will you be so kind" and writing: "Mamma says that you should never write and that (&) way you should always write it in full." Mamma's rules covered all sorts of behavior, from not dancing the Polka ("or any of those fantastic dances") with gentlemen to not lounging about on the furniture. Sophia was limited even in where she could go within her own home: "Dearest Mamma does not wish us to go to the stable or yard except for eggs or to feed our hens," and "we are never to go to the Kitchen without leave."²¹ Within her life of both privilege and privation Sophia seemed to take little joy in writing. When her "dear dear Mamma" finally dies, Sophia records not her genuine grief, but her guilt for neglecting her diary-writing: "I have not written my journal for a fortnight and I hope dear Papa will not be displeased with me but allow me to leave out a fortnight and just merely say that poor dear Mamma was buried on Tuesday May 18th at two o'clock" (23 May, 1846). When she finally fills up her book, she reflects: "Dear Mamma told me to keep one [diary] always, and if I keep it until I am twenty-one, I will have thirteen volumes. I only hope I may have the perseverance to continue." She may have continued, but the Public Archives contain only one volume, and a scrapbook of Sophia's later years as Lady Bury, including notices of Balls, where Sophia may indeed have danced fantastic dances with gentlemen.

Christina Bogart's mother influenced her to write, too, but in a more benign way. Christina's diary is in the very book that her mother used to keep a trip she took with her sea-captain husband when Christina was just a baby. She begins after reading "this sketch of Mamma's voyage" and is "determined, if possible, to continue a description of *our life*."²² Christina's syntactic style, like Sophia's, is repetitive; she begins almost every entry quite formulaically with a phrase describing the weather. This correlates with an important social condition, however, since bad weather prevented people from visiting. These social visits were essential for both Christina and her writing. She bravely sets out to write of daily life, and focuses on that life with a fairly clear eye. As she writes, she abandons her comfortable repetitive syntactic patterns and begins to develop a narrative sense, writing anecdotes with humour and suspense.

This narrative skill is an oddity of diary writing which forces one to ask who the writer's intended audience was. Christina already knew the outcome of her own stories. By spinning out a tale or by recounting a joke, she is stringing along a hypothetical reader and indulging in narrative for its own sake:

Nan came down after tea and we played a trick on Emmie – tied a little bell on the foot of her bed then led the string in our room along the floor and after things had been quiet for some time & Nan & I supposed to be asleep, we began winding up the thread, it got caught some way & we nearly exploded – Nan bundled out of bed to untangle it and

before we expected it began to ring – Emmie says ‘for the *land* sake what’s that’ in such a funny voice that Annie laughed right out.

Her writing style suggests speech, but she mentions no one who may have shared her conversation. We are sometimes left wondering just what she means, since the point of her jokes and stories can be dependent on a particular context: "Sunday after Methodist meeting came as far down as Willetts with Mr Jas Reed then Susie Mills & Herb called me back & I played propriety the rest of the way – strange things happen some times" (Sunday 27 February).

Christina’s colloquial vocabulary most strongly marks her text as conversational. She uses inexplicable in-jokes: "Monday 11th. Rainy ‘John did not call’ – good joke –", "Monday 28th Fine day (a la John White)," and "Nan was down and spent the evening – Emmie and I went up with her. She ate pudding all the way up and we brought the saucer back – People must have been struck, who met us for it was light as day." Some words and phrases are still current, "Nan was down a jiffy," and "I know if he were not so bashful he would have popped the question then and there;" others not, "Nan and I had a real *nigger* day." Some refer to practices now abandoned in Nova Scotia: on "the day poor Tebo [a convicted murderer] is to be hanged" a friend comes down "to see him strung up & came over to see us too." She uses vocabulary referring to the ladies’ fashions and crafts popular in her day: she sews a *wrapper* for her mother, makes several *comfortables*, and works when she has time on her *Russian embroidery*.

Christina reports on doing lots of housework, and cleaning and cooking are a constant refrain in her writing. However, she is less a dutiful drudge than a fun-loving practical joker. The more she writes in her diary, the more relish she seems to take in recounting the escapades that prompted others to call her "wild." She drives a pig away with her umbrella, watches her friends sprinkle alum on people’s necks at a tea party, and lies in bed to step tunes on the wall with her friend Nan. Her writing seems to be a refuge from the round of domestic duties. Occasionally Christina reproaches herself for not writing, but eventually fun overtakes guilt. Her final words are silly ones. She keeps the diary past her eighteenth birthday, closing her diary with copied bits of songs and verse: "'Oh! Tom tell them to stop!'/ Those were the words of Maria –" and "Jack was every inch a sailor/ Four and twenty years a whaler."

Lizzie McFadden, on her way to her new home, also makes stories of her life. She does not have the same polished sense of anecdote and incident as Christina Bogart does, however. Her diary is limited to an account of her trip; it begins with her family’s departure from Winnipeg in a wagon, and ends with their arrival in Prince Albert. Lizzie must have seen herself as part of an important historical moment, the settlement of the West. Despite her limited education (apparent in her errors in spelling, such as *wimen* for *women*), Lizzie wanted to keep a record of a personally and historically important family trip.

She expects a later reader, for she glosses some words she thought may be unfamiliar: "we baked our pies in a reflecter or (Dutch oven)"²³ and labels the tops of her pages to correspond to landmarks on her journey. In keeping with the traditions of private diaries, though, she never tells the names and family relationships of those who accompanied her. This indicates that the diary may have been intended as a family keepsake, to be read by relatives who already knew who had made the trip.

Lizzie writes in a reporter-like fashion, communicating facts, not emotions. Each entry, often a long, paratactic, unpunctuated sentence, lists striking images and pertinent facts and shows the stylistic features of a traveller's account, with mention of the weather, the condition of the roads, the distance travelled, other travellers, and strange sights: "Started verry earley this morning came ofer twentyeight slows [sloughs] before dinner, after dinner we had splendred roads when we came in vew of Foart Ellace there was great hill to go up and had to cross the Asscinboyne [Assiniboine] over a bridge" (30 July 1879). She focuses on the physical necessities, reporting on external actions and events rather than on her frame of mind, even when she may have had reason to be afraid: "camped at eleven 'oclock and let the horses feed but we could not feed our selves as there was no wood to be got so we had a little more oat meal and water the children was crying for bread and we could not get any wood to Bake any with we have not seen any wood for this last three days" (9 July).

She tries not to complain, and sometimes pauses to describe the scenery in a conventional fashion appropriate for a young woman on an adventure in a strange new land: "we reached tutch wood hills plains and had dinner it is a verry hillie place and some prettie seaneries" (6 August). She writes matter-of-factly even about a violent summer storm: "Lightened and thundred & blood through the night" (13 July). Lizzie rarely puts herself as the subject of a sentence, concentrating instead on the communal efforts of all those travelling together: "Camped for noon on a strawburry bed and picked straw burries all the while we staid there got a good few started and had a verry hard time with the horse we had one in frunt of the other and thay would not work well and burries for tea and pancakes" (23 July). She represents the cooperative spirit of the successful group traveller, with her focus on the survival of the group and the success of their journey. Even when supplies are limited, people share: "there was a man came to get his tea he had some meat and cakes and all we could give him was a cup of tea" (8 July).

Underlying Lizzie's grammatically ragged account is the pattern of a fairy tale. The trip is fraught with physical dangers, which the travellers survive through perseverance and the kindness of strangers. Some of these strangers are fellow travellers with whom they share mutual generosity: "we have a partie of halfbreeds with us who are going out to P. Alberts, and have lots of company thay have a cow and we get lots of milk" (7 August), and "the cattle

eat all the Halfbreads flour up in the night and they had to borough from us" (9 August). Other times the strangers seem threatening, but offer no real physical harm: "In the morning we started away early in the morning as we passed the Indian tents thay all came out and laughed at us" (1 August). As though blessed by Providence, Lizzie's party passes through these potential dangers, which are minimized by Lizzie's optimistic fairy-tale diction (they travel through conventionally poetic "hills and dales" and "hills and hollows") that presages the happy ending.

The happy ending to Lizzie's fairy tale comes with the family's safe arrival in Prince Albert. Lizzie's last entry concludes: "went to Capt Youngs and there we had to stay as we could not get no further on account of the Smallpox we staid there all night and have been there ever since" (26 August). She ends her two-month trip with finality. She signs her name, on the last page, and writes "The End *End*."

Lizzie's comment that her family "have been there ever since" closes her narrative, just the way a teller would close an oral tale. This explanation, along with her frequent descriptions and occasional glosses, suggest that Lizzie expected someone to read her account later. Lizzie quite naturally wanted a record of an exciting transition in her life. She is exercising the "storage function" (Brown and Yule 13) of language, perhaps even considering writing as the storage of her youth. Others of the young women diarists appear to be motivated by the same drive; Hellen Bowlby wanted something exciting to happen now so that her diary would be good reading later. The other young women perhaps just wanted to store a small cache of their adolescence, of the brief time they were on the brink of womanhood.

The speech-like writing of many of the diaries suggests another function of this private writing. The diaries are often conversations of the writer with herself, and the writers use words and phrases that would have been proscribed in more formal writing.²⁴ The diaries, then, give us a glimpse of intimate, spoken language, rather than the public literary or journalistic styles previously examined in the history and development of Canadian English.²⁵ Reading her informal diaries we can hear Christina Bogart speak of having "choir practice" when singing loudly with her friends, or of being old enough at age 18 to "bang [? hang?] up to an apple tree." Like a participant in a friendly conversation, the reader of Hattie Bowlby's diaries (most likely her friend Emma) is expected to need no explanation of "Ma and I went out calling this afternoon. First I called at the Barretts then at the Riddles and Bryers...." The emotional content is important in these diaries: they exist and have been preserved as phatic documents, ones that maintain essential human relationships, such as are preserved and maintained in our daily, inconsequential conversations.

Not all the young writers enjoyed the conversation, and for them guilt, rather than cooperation, was the emotional stimulus to keep writing. For Sophia MacNab, and often for the Bowlby sisters, writing one's life was a rite

of passage. They strained against the duty, writing when required, and taking little pleasure in the process. Their misery in writing when they hadn't the desire shows in the formulaic patterns of their daily entries and in the emotional flatness of their accounts of events. Sophia's mother enjoined her "not to be sarcastic and unamiable," threatening that "if anything should happen to her & she should go to heaven and could see us [Sophia and her sister Minnie] committing any sins that it would grieve her so much to see her Children doing what we know would be displeasing to her." With such threats, it's no wonder that Sophia did not feel her words were her own. For her and other well-bred young women, writing was a duty, so they practiced a stilted version of the public discourse of their day, finding none of the solace and delight of the young women who wrote from their own exuberance.

These young women's diaries are all worth reading and understanding because their writers form the audience of readers for literary texts. Their writings imply readers' expectations of published works and can tell us about literary taste of the time. In the daily details they recount, they give us a sense of the texture of everyday lives, information of interest to both literary critics and social historians. But most importantly, they tell us how young women of another time used a vital communicative tool, the written word.

NOTES

- 1 Hellen Bowlby, Diary 1867-8. Public Archives of Ontario, hereafter PAO, MU 282.
- 2 Louisa Bowlby, Diary 1862. PAO MU 282.
- 3 Hattie Bowlby, Diary, 1874-5. PAO MU 282.
- 4 See Helen M. Buss, "Canadian women's autobiography: some critical directions" in *A mazing space*, eds. Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kamboureli (Edmonton: Longspoon/NeWest, 1986) and Helen M. Buss, "'The dear domestic circle': Frameworks for the literary study of women's personal narratives in archival collections" *Studies in Canadian literature* 14.1, (1989).
- 5 Gillian Brown and George Yule, *Discourse analysis*, Cambridge UP, 1983, 4-13
- 6 One reason that diaries are difficult to understand out of context is that they combine features of speech and writing. They are written texts that function as one-sided conversations that do not follow rules for conversational implicature. See Brown and Yule, 29ff., for a discussion of how much information is required for a conversation.
- 7 For an engaging discussion of speech styles see Martin Joos, *The five clocks* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961).
- 8 See G.W. Turner, *Stylistics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973) for a general discussion of style in language.
- 9 Robert Stamp, *The schools of Ontario, 1876-1976*. Ontario historical studies series. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982) 7.
- 10 See R. D. Gidney, "Elementary education in Upper Canada: A reassessment" in *Education and social change: Themes from Ontario's past*, eds. Michael B. Katz and Paul H. Mattingly. (New York: NYU Press, 1975) 3-27. For a thorough documentary account of the development of public education and curricula see *Documentary history of education in Upper Canada, from 1791-1876* (Toronto) CIHM 49795-49822.
- 11 *First book of lessons* (Toronto, 1864) CIHM 41652, pp. 28-9.

- 12 Cited from the Annual Report on Education for 1885 in Stamp 10-11.
- 13 Cited in Barbara Berg, *The remembered gate: Origins of American feminism* (Oxford: OUP, 1978) 80.
- 14 For a recent discussion of gender and language, see Sally McConnell-Ginet, "Language and gender" in Frederick J. Newmeyer, ed., *Linguistics: The Cambridge survey Vol. IV, Language: The socio-cultural context*. Cambridge UP, 1988. The most readable and influential introduction to women's language is Robin Lakoff's *Language and women's place* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975).
- 15 See Patricia Meyer Spacks, "Female rhetorics" in *The private self*, ed. Shari Benstock (University of North Carolina Press, 1988).
- 16 Virginia Woolf noted this attention to particularity in her "Introductory letter" to *Life as we have known it* ed. Margaret Llewelyn Davis (New York: Norton rpt, 1975). See also the discussion of stylistic differences between men's and women's diaries in Elizabeth Hampsten, *Read this only to yourself: The private writings of mid-western women 1880-1910* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1982). For a discussion of the projection of one's ego in private writing see Robert A. Fothergill, *Private chronicles: A study of English diaries* (London: Oxford UP, 1974), 87.
- 17 Note that even when they are fretting about writing they preface their remarks with the conversational opener *Well*.
- 18 Mercy Ann Coles, Diary 1864, 1878, 1879. Public Archives of Canada, hereafter PAC, MG 24 B66.
- 19 John Russell Bartlett, *Dictionary of Americanisms* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1860).
- 20 Sophia MacNab, Diary 1846. PAC micro reel A-305 (25 March 1846).
- 21 The latter is really a stricter revision of an earlier rule: "Dearest Mamma says we must never go to the kitchen but she allows us to go for meat for our little dogs when the servants have not time."
- 22 Christina Bogart, Diary 1880-2. PAC MG 55/29.
- 23 Lizzie McFadden Diary 1879. PAC MG 29 C25. The Saskatchewan Archives has a typed (and altered) version of Lizzie's diary, listed under the name of Mrs. Coombs.
- 24 Elizabeth Hampsten also concludes that women's diaries are written in conversational style. She explains: "Women in their letters and diaries wrote as if public literature did not exist, or, if education and social aspiration drew this public style to their attention, their attempts at imitating it were erratic" (94).
- 25 See M. H. Scargill, *A short history of Canadian English* (Victoria, British Columbia: Sono Nis Press, 1977). The lexicographic study of Canadian English was pioneered by Walter Avis, whose work led to the compilation of *A dictionary of Canadianisms* (1967).

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