

“Pure Books on Avoided Subjects”: Pre-Freudian Sexual Ideas in Canada*

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“PURE BOOKS ON AVOIDED SUBJECTS” :
PRE-FREUDIAN SEXUAL IDEAS IN CANADA *

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Books purporting to contain facts and wisdom about human sexuality were common in North America long before Dr. Reuben, *Human Sexual Response*, the Kinsey Reports, or even the Freudian revolution. The best-selling sex “manuals in Canada between about 1900 and 1915 were the eight volumes in the ‘Self and Sex Series’”, published in Philadelphia and distributed in Canada by William Briggs, official publisher for the Methodist Church. The Self and Sex books for males were *What a Young Boy Ought to Know*, *What a Young Man Ought to Know*, *What a Young Husband Ought to Know*, and *What a Man of 45 Ought to Know*. Their author and publisher was the Rev. Sylvanus Stall, a Lutheran Minister. Dr. Mary Wood-Allen, a popular lecturer and writer on sex education, contributed *What a Young Girl Ought to Know*, and *What a Young Woman Ought to Know* to the series; and Dr. Emma F. Angell Drake completed the symmetry with *What a Young Wife Ought to Know* and *What a Woman of 45 Ought to Know*. The first “ought to know” book was issued in 1897; by 1908 the publisher claimed sales of one million copies of the series in English and the books had been translated into the leading European as well as eight Asian languages. No Canadian circulation figures have been recorded, only the claim that they outsold all other books of their kind. The individual volumes, all in common format, were accompanied by glowing commendations from prominent clergymen, medical experts (including, in later editions, the Canadian Dr. Amelia Yeomans of Winnipeg), popular writers such as Charles M. Sheldon and Margaret Warner Morley, and other public figures including Josiah Strong, W. T. Stead, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Anthony Comstock. Advertisements for the series in Canada were headed “Pure Books on Avoided Subjects”.¹

* I would like to record my debt for support in this and other work to my brother, the late Dr. James Quartus Bliss.

¹ For further biographical information on Stall and Wood-Allen, see *Who's Who in America*, v. 2 (Chicago, 1901-02), 1072, 1260; on Drake, *Woman's Who's Who of America*, 1914-15 (New York, 1914), 258. The circulation claim is contained in the frontispiece of the 1908 revised edition of *What a Young Wife Ought to Know*. The best-selling claim is contained in the Briggs advertisement in *The Canadian Woman's Annual and Social Service Directory* (Toronto, 1915),

The Self and Sex books are a compendium of orthodox sexual knowledge and precept in late-Victorian and Edwardian Canada. It is true that they are American sex manuals. But the few works by Canadians that do exist on the subject are both derivative from and in complete agreement with foreign writers. In this field, as in so many others, Canadians initially relied on a kind of cross-fertilization from the United States. Assuming, then, the relevance of the Self and Sex series for the study of sexual thought in Canada, I will try to do three things in this paper: outline the fundamental ideas expressed in the Self and Sex books, attempt to explain the background of some of these ideas in North American medical and popular thought, and finally note some additional evidence of the spread of this approach to sexuality in Canada as well as suggest directions for further research.

I

There was no rejection of sex *per se* in the Self and Sex series. On the contrary, Sylvanus Stall advised his readers that "Sexuality has been strongly marked in all the great men who have risen to eminence in all departments of life. Without it man would be mean, selfish, sordid and ungracious to his fellow-men and uncivil to womankind. . . . No other part of his being so much assists him in the development of that which is highest, noblest and best in his nature."² He argued that the sex act itself was meant to bring "pleasure and a sense of satisfaction", and criticized those women who proclaimed utter indifference to marital intercourse.³ Similarly, Dr. Wood-Allen told young women that their womanhood was "the mental, moral and physical expression of sex, . . . a glorious, divine gift, to be received with solemn thankfulness".⁴

The major theme of every book in the series, however, was the difficulty that the fact of sexuality created for boys, girls, men, women, husbands, wives, and the elderly.

By far the most persistent and pernicious difficulty for the unmarried was the temptation to indulge in the habit of the secret

325. The series was also regularly advertised in the *Christian Guardian* beginning in 1902. About 1908 most of the books in the series were slightly revised; in the late 1920's they were considerably rewritten and watered down. The Ryerson Press still distributed the series in Canada in the 1930's. All quotations are from the first edition.

² Sylvanus Stall, *What a Young Man Ought to Know* (Philadelphia, 1897), 23.

³ Sylvanus Stall, *What a Young Husband Ought to Know* (Philadelphia, 1897), 125, 127.

⁴ Mary Wood-Allen, M.D., *What a Young Woman Ought to Know* (Philadelphia, 1898), 116.

vice, the solitary vice, self-pollution, self-abuse, onanism, or masturbation. After a few pages on plants and fishes, the *Self and Sex* books for boys and girls became little more than anti-masturbation tracts. The subject was introduced as a misuse of sexual parts that could be learned innocently enough by sliding down banisters, climbing trees, and wearing tight clothes, or not so innocently from other children and nurses. However commenced, the act rapidly led to a grim series of consequences :

The health declines. The eyes lose their lustre. The skin becomes sallow. The muscles become flabby. There is an unnatural languor. Every little effort is followed by weariness. There is a great indifference to exertion. . . . (The victim) complains of pain in the back; of headache and dizziness. The hands become cold and clammy. The digestion becomes poor, the appetite fitful. The heart palpitates. He sits in a stooping posture, becomes hollow-chested, and the entire body, instead of enlarging into a strong, manly frame, becomes wasted, and many signs give promise of early decline and death. . . .

If persisted in, masturbation will not only undermine, but completely overthrow the health. If the body is naturally strong, the mind may give way first, and in extreme cases imbecility and insanity may, and often do come as the inevitable result. Where the body is not naturally strong, a general wasting may be followed by consumption, or life may be terminated by any one of many diseases.⁵

Boys were told of how parents often resorted to drastic measures to stop the insidious habit, including tying children's hands behind their backs, to bed posts, or to rings in a wall, or simply wrapping the whole child in a straight-jacket.⁶ The books for mothers and fathers did not actually advise any of these methods; but in *What a Young Wife Ought to Know* Dr. Drake called on mothers to be "Argus-eyed" in watching their babies, to keep young children from sleeping in the same bed or playing together without an adult's presence, and to teach them right attitudes at the earliest possible age.

While yet very young, they can be taught that the organs are to be used by them only for throwing off the waste water of the system, but that they are so closely related to other parts of the body that handling them at all will hurt them and make them sick. Tell them that little children, sometimes when they do not know this, form the habit of handling themselves and as a result they become listless and sick, and many times idiotic and insane, or develop epileptic fits. This will so impress them that they will not fall easily into the bad habit.⁷

Single young men who avoided the curse of self-pollution (the results of which in their book also included "the dwarfing and wasting

⁵ Sylvanus Stall, *What a Young Boy Ought to Know* (Philadelphia, 1897), 104-05.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁷ Emma F. Angell Drake, M.D., *What a Young Wife Ought to Know* (Philadelphia, 1901), 239.

of the organ itself" ⁸) were nevertheless bedevilled with the problem of nocturnal emissions or "wet dreams". The Rev. Stall rejected the views of those experts who taught that any and all sexual emissions were indications of coming imbecility — discounting in passing the old story that Newton had never lost a drop of semen in his life — and reassured his readers that even the most continent men often experienced emissions every ten or fourteen days as a "safety-valve". Nevertheless, it was "relatively" true that nocturnal emissions were debilitating to the system, and "few men can suffer emissions more frequently than once in two weeks without serious physical loss". With proper physical and mental habits it should be possible to avoid nocturnal emissions entirely. ⁹

Resorting to sexual intercourse outside of marriage was not an acceptable substitute for onanism. Chapters IV, V, and VI of *What a Young Man Ought to Know* were each entitled "Evils to be Shunned and Consequences to be Dreaded" and composed a sixty-one page warning of the horrors of venereal disease. It was claimed that more than 25% of the population was infected with this "leprosy of lust", a sad comment on a society which inoculated its cattle against contagious diseases, but left its own young men and women in total ignorance "to be crushed beneath the Juggernaut of lust, disease and death, as its gory wheels roll from ocean to ocean... in the rising dawn of the Twentieth Century". ¹⁰ Even the young woman of good social standing who had innocently allowed a young man of dubious reputation to kiss her one night on the doorstep had fallen prey to syphilis; today she bore the loathsome disfigurement in consequence. "I do not need to multiply such cases", Dr. Wood-Allen wrote. "You can be warned by one as well as by a hundred." ¹¹

The chaste young couple who had enjoyed a quiet wedding and wisely foregone an exhausting bridal tour were now legally and morally free to indulge themselves, but not exactly physiologically free. For they now had to deal with the major sexual problem of married life — excess.

Do not wait (Stall warned) until you have the pronounced effects of backache, lassitude, giddiness, dimness of sight, noises in the ears, numbness of fingers and paralysis. Note your own condition for the next day very carefully. If you observe a lack of normal, physical power, a loss of intellectual quickness or mental grip, if you are

⁸ *Young Man*, 56-7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 72-7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 98, 140. Also 121: "It has for years been a serious question in our mind whether, for the protection of the pure, the government should not brand upon the forehead those who have this disease, so that they could always be recognized."

¹¹ *Young Woman*, 230.

sensitive and irritable, if you are less kind and considerate of your wife, if you are morose and less companionable, or in any way fall below your best standard of excellence, it would be well for you to think seriously and proceed cautiously.¹²

It was not entirely clear how frequently sexual intercourse could be enjoyed with safety. Some physicians were inclined to recommend once a month, but the Rev. Stall was slightly more permissive, suggesting that a couple in average health who stayed within the bounds of once a week would not be in danger of having entered upon "a life of excess".¹³ On the other hand, the theory that absolute continence except for the purpose of reproduction was the ideal married state had some "very strong arguments" in its favor. Unfortunately, it required a degree of self-denial "far beyond the possession of the great mass of humanity".¹⁴

Nature had, however, placed a beneficial check on the natural sexual aggressiveness of males by making women sexually passive, in fact rather disinclined to participate in sexual relations at all. Husbands were to understand this diffidence in their wives, and above all to respect it. Far too many marriages were little more than legalized prostitution or arrangements by which husbands turned the right to enjoy sexual intercourse into a form of legalized rape.¹⁵ "Be guarded, O husband!", Dr. Drake warned lustful men, "It is woman's nature to forgive, . . . but there comes a time when love and forgiveness have reached their limit, and love struggles vainly to rise above disgust and loathing." At the same time, though, she advised wives not to allow "little carelessnesses and thoughtless acts" to "invite attentions" which they would afterward repel. Best to preserve "womanly modesty" and "innate dignity" at all times.¹⁶

When men and women reached approximately age 45, the activity of the sexual organs would cease. Accordingly, two volumes in the Self and Sex series were designed to explain to the aging the

¹² *Young Husband*, 95-6.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 87-8.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, ch's. II, III, IX, X. Especially 49: "With rare exceptions, both of person and of instances, in married life all the sexual aggressiveness is with the male. Wives seldom seek the closer embraces of their husbands. They are generally indifferent; often absolutely averse. With the husband, while in perfect health, the conditions are quite the opposite; and the wisdom of the Creator is manifest in the fact that were the wife equally quickened by the same amative tendencies, the male nature would be called into such frequent and continuous exercise that the power of reproduction would be either totally destroyed or so impaired that the race would degenerate into moral, intellectual and physical pigmies. God has made the passivity of the wife the protection of her husband and a source of manifold blessing to her children.

"Upon the other hand, her uninterrupted and entire neglect of the sexual relation is wisely overcome, to the advantage of the wife, by her husband's greater sexual activity, . . ."

¹⁶ *Young Wife*, 84-5.

impact of the menopause. Its main effect on sexual behaviour was flatly to rule out any further intercourse. The increased lassitude or weariness that a man of 45 would feel after the act was a warning from nature to avoid any further use of a secretion "which can now ill be spared". Sexual indulgence from now on would merely be throwing so many pellets of earth upon his coffin. Women, too, would find that sexual relations during and after the menopause would be positively harmful, and they also had to be particularly careful during this period not to arouse their husbands.¹⁷ But in both cases nature offered returns that fully compensated for what had been lost. Not the least of these was "the grateful sense of relief" that "the stress of the sexual impulse is gradually passing away".¹⁸

Before the menopause men and women of all ages could take special measures to reduce the "stress of the sexual impulse", and thereby stave off the urge to fall into one of the several kinds of sexual excess. Physical exercise was recommended for everyone, particularly bicycling, horseback riding and calisthenics, as well as the use of dumbbells and Indian clubs by males. Cold baths or showers every morning, followed by a brisk rub-down with a coarse towel, were always helpful, especially for young men worried about excessive nocturnal emissions. A right diet throughout one's life was an essential complement of this regime, one which minimized the consumption of stimulating foods, such as spices, and animal foods, particularly meat. Regular evacuation of the bowels also seemed to reduce sexual propensities and contributed to general physical well-being. Further, the Rev. Stall advised that no young man troubled with sexual weakness could hope to attain entire relief while sleeping on or under bedclothes stuffed with feathers.¹⁹ If none of this worked for a troubled young man, he could try tying a towel around his waist with a hard knot opposite the spine; by preventing him from lying on his back it would inhibit nocturnal emissions. If that failed, a footnote in *What a Young Man Ought Know* advised that the Sax Company, 105 South Broad St., Philadelphia, offered for 50¢ "An effective and satisfactory device, to prevent lying on the back and its attendant evils".²⁰

More important, sexual propensities could only ultimately be reduced by a rigid avoidance of stimulating thoughts. "No man

¹⁷ Sylvanus Stall, *What a Man of 45 Ought to Know* (Philadelphia, 1901), 78, 84; Emma F. Angell Drake, *What a Woman of 45 Ought to Know* (Philadelphia, 1902), 148, 157-8.

¹⁸ *Man of 45*, 60.

¹⁹ *Young Boy*, Part IV; *Young Man*, ch. III; *Young Woman*, ch's. III, VIII, IX; feather beds, *Young Man*, 54.

²⁰ *Young Man*, 89.

can look upon obscene pictures without the danger of photographing upon his mind that which he might subsequently be willing to give thousands of dollars to obliterate", Stall advised young men, after earlier warning them that "The appeal to the amative and sexual nature is so universal in novels that... no young man or young woman should be permitted to read a novel before they arrive at the age of twenty-five."²¹ The Roman Catholic confessional had revealed that nineteen out of every twenty fallen women confessed the beginning of their sad state to the modern dance, and the "debasing influences" of the theatre plunged more young men into vice and sin "than it would be possible accurately to imagine". The more direct carnal temptations of the married state could and should be reduced by the use of separate beds, preferably separate bedrooms, and by avoiding "the sexual excitement which comes daily by the twice-repeated exposure of dressing and undressing in each other's presence".²³ Alcohol and tobacco were condemned throughout the series as both unhealthy in general and as sexual stimulants in particular.

Many other problems peripherally related to sexual behaviour were considered in the Self and Sex books, including the need for women's dress reform to avoid the destructive effects of the "corset curse" on feminine reproductive organs, the desirability of taking a healthy and normal view of both menstruation and the curious side-effects of the menopause in women,²⁴ the six- to eight-week period of total confinement necessary for mothers after giving birth, and methods of caring for prostate trouble in older men (a problem on which Stall advised from his own experience). Various theories of the sex determination of children were considered, the authors leaning to the belief that children conceived early in the menstrual cycle were girls, later in the cycle, boys.²⁵ Abortion was condemned as infanticide, the mere desire for which might cause the birth of a monstrosity or a potential murderer.²⁶ Too frequent child-bearing was recognized as a problem, but the use of birth-control devices

²¹ *Ibid.*, 241, 33.

²² *Ibid.*, 243, 245.

²³ *Young Husband*, 100; *Young Wife*, 85.

²⁴ Women were thought to exhibit such extraordinary behaviour during the menopause — dim vision, loss of voice, spitting of blood, hysteria, melancholia, loss of religious interest, etc. — that Stall took pains to convince their spouses not to have such women removed to insane asylums. *Man of 45*, ch's. XVI-XVIII.

²⁵ *Young Husband*, 288. Discussing "signs of fruitful conjunction", i.e. conception, Stall noted that "with some women the act of conception is attended with great emotion, a sense of unusual pleasure, and even of a tremor, in which all parts of the body may participate. Sometimes it is followed by a sense of weakness." *Ibid.*, 95. This is the only hint that the authors of the series were aware of the female orgasm.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 159.

was both ineffective and injurious. The authors did delineate the "safe" period of the menstrual cycle when conception was unlikely, but generally felt that continence was the surest contraceptive (we may hope that concerned readers followed the latter advice because the recommended timing for the "safe" period was exactly wrong). Marriage was a divine institution; divorce was sanctioned only for adultery and on the condition that divorcees never remarry.²⁷

The most important and most emphasized of the subsidiary themes was the role of heredity in human reproduction and development. The "Law of Heredity" doomed men and women to inherit both their physical structure and all their character traits from their ancestors. All physical deformities, most kinds of insanity, venereal diseases, proclivities to sexual excess, and potential addictions to alcohol, nicotine, and masturbation passed from parent to child. So, too, did the mental impressions felt by the pregnant woman, thus making it possible for women to shape the characters of their unborn children by thinking beautiful and uplifting thoughts during pregnancy, and also making it necessary for mothers to avoid upsetting

²⁷ All of Stall's thought was permeated with Christian verbiage. Early in his book for husbands he pleaded with his readers to practice Christianity, outlining in passing his remarkable sociology: one should divide society into two classes, "and then the result is seen at a glance. In the one class you have the profane, the vicious, the intemperate, the dishonest, the law-breakers, and the defiers of God and man. To this class belongs every man who staggers, reels and falls into the gutter, every tramp who walks the road, and nine-tenths of all persons who fill our almshouses. It includes, with scarcely an exception, every man and woman who fill our prisons and reformatory institutions; those who crowd the great tenements and live in filth and squalor in the slums of our cities; those whose bodies reek with physical and moral rotteness — these, and many others, constitute the class of the ungodly, and no attentive person can fail to observe that this is the character of that portion which the ungodly have in this world.

"Now, turn to the other class. Walk up and down the streets where you find the most comfortable homes, the largest dwellings, and abodes of the most affluent and respectable in any city, and then answer the question, whether or no the wealth of the nation is not to-day largely in the hands of Christian men and Christian women? These are the people who have the best credit, who can draw checks for the largest amounts. Among this class you will find the most influential in business, the owners of our largest mercantile establishments. Men who direct and control the commerce of the world. Men who are at the head of our largest banking institutions, railroad and other corporations. But not only so. These are the people who dwell in the best homes, who eat the best food, who have the largest amount of material comforts. They are the people who enjoy the best health, who have the brightest minds, who produce the best books, the most helpful literature. They have the brightest eyes and the strongest bodies, and when cholera and plague come and sweep away men and women by the thousands, it scarcely ever crosses the line which separates these from the intemperate and the vicious, who go down before these scourges like grass before the sickle. Truly, my dear friend, if you are to look at it only from this lowest plane of present good and material comfort, godly living will bring to you the promise of life that *now* is, and in addition you will also have the promise of the life that is *to come*, . . ." *Young Husband*, 71-3. This passage was reprinted without alteration in the 1933 revision of the book.

experiences such as the sight of the physically deformed for fear of transmitting the same deformity to the infant in the womb.

Fortunately, the Law of Heredity was meliorated by the "Gospel of Heredity", the divine provision by which humans could overcome many, if not all, of the less fortunate effects of heredity and then transmit better qualities to succeeding generations. The Gospel of Heredity indeed held out the promise of infinitely improving the species through right physical and sexual living. In fact it was this fundamental duty to conserve and improve one's health for the sake of future generations that the authors of the "ought to know" books for women, both doctors, returned to repeatedly as the ultimate moral imperative that should bind their readers. By contrast, the Rev. Sylvanus Stall, in his books for men, was more concerned with salvation and the afterlife.²⁸

Before attempting to place the ideas of the Self and Sex series in the context of North American thought on these subjects it may bear repeating that in 1915 the Methodist Church publishing house claimed these had been the best-selling books of their kind in Canada.

II

The Self and Sex series was reviewed in the *Canadian Journal of Medicine and Surgery* by Dr. B. E. McKenzie, Surgeon to the Toronto Orthopedic Hospital, Surgeon to the Out-Patient Department, Toronto General Hospital, and Assistant Professor of Clinical Surgery, Ontario Medical College for Women. He found that while the books had been written for non-medical readers, "yet they throw much needed light upon subjects that the medical practitioner is called to deal with constantly, and upon which he may profitably consult this excellent series". He took issue with the question of whether conception during a state of intoxication would produce alcoholic offspring, but without further quibbling concluded that "Every book of the series may be confidently recommended... as containing the very best statement of the important information which should be supplied to every young man and woman, every boy and girl, entering upon the duties and responsibilities of life."²⁹

This is not a surprising review, inasmuch as "Leading Canadian Medical Men" were at approximately the same time supplying exactly similar information on sexual problems to the Canadian public in the pages of one of the few native-Canadian home medical

²⁸ On heredity see *Young Husband*, ch. XVII; *Young Woman*, ch's. XXVIII-XXX; *Young Wife*, ch. XI. On maternal impressions, *Young Husband*, ch. XVIII; *Young Wife*, ch. VIII.

²⁹ *Canadian Journal of Medicine and Surgery*, XII, 2, Aug. 1902, 147-8.

encyclopaedias, *The Family Physician, Or, Every Man His Own Doctor*. Here, too, masturbation destroyed beauty and manhood, leading to "absolute idiocy or a premature and most horrible death"; frequent nocturnal emissions were very harmful; children had to be shielded from late hours, sensational novels, questionable pictorial illustrations, love stories, the drama and the ball-room, all to avoid unnaturally hastening puberty; and engaged couples were commanded to exercise "caution and reserve" in their ordinary embraces because "one impure, indelicate, or low word uttered in the ear of a truly chaste and virtuous woman may be destructive of her true happiness for all time to come".³⁰

Clearly, then, there was little in the complex of sexual beliefs and maxims popularized by the *Self and Sex* series that Canadian doctors found objectionable.

On the simplest level much of this ready medical acceptance of what now seems to be quaint, ludicrous, and/or harmful can be explained by reference to the state of medical and scientific research in the late Nineteenth Century. Doctrines of prenatal influence or "maternal impressions", for example, rested in large part on medical confusion about the physiological bond between mother and foetus during gestation. Doctors did not know the extent to which mental and physical shocks to a mother's system were transferred along with food and oxygen through the wall of the placenta. Lacking this basic physiological knowledge they had to pay attention to the many current stories about monstrosities and geniuses being the products of maternal impressions. Nineteenth Century medical journals are laced with reports of such cases.³¹ Similarly, the key problem in the field of evolutionary thought – the question of the inheritance of acquired characteristics – would only be finally clarified at the beginning of the Twentieth Century by the discovery of the mechanism of genetic transmission. Until then there was no basic contradiction between Darwinian thought and the "Law" and "Gospel" of Heredity.³²

³⁰ *The Family Physician* (Musson, Toronto, n.d.), 328, 164, 319, 332. Medical librarians have been unable to date this book; internal evidence suggests 1890-1905. The publishers deliberately left it undated to maintain the aura of up-to-date authority.

³¹ In *Ædæology, A Treatise on Generative Life* (New York, 1892), Dr. Sydney Barrington Elliott includes a list of several hundred articles on prenatal influences. For Canada see J. Draewieki, "The Influence of Maternal Impressions Upon the Foetus", *Canada Lancet*, 24, Dec. 1891, 110-13, in which it is concluded, "I am thoroughly convinced that different psychical and physical defects . . . are in most instances the results of moral impressions derived from the surroundings of the mother."

³² Mark H. Haller, *Eugenics, Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1963), 59-61. Haller notes that the new theories denying the inheritance of acquired characteristics seriously distressed social

On the crucial issue of masturbation the medical profession had long been aware of the seemingly empirically-based conclusions of the first medical personnel to observe uncontrolled masturbation among large groups of people – the superintendents of asylums for the mentally ill. In a classic application of the *post hoc propter hoc* fallacy, these well-intentioned doctors (influenced as well by Eighteenth Century preconceptions) concluded that as much as fifty percent of mental illness stemmed from masturbation. In their concern they penned horrifying descriptions of the effects of the practice that were often copied from their reports by the authors of popular sex manuals. Two Canadian doctors, Joseph Workman and Daniel Clarke, successive superintendents of the Toronto Asylum for the Insane, contributed mightily to the Nineteenth Century masturbation scare in their respective 1865 and 1877 annual reports, anticipating everything that would be said about masturbation in the *Self and Sex* books. In fact, Workman's 1865 observations about the secret vice found a prominent place in one of the most popular post-Civil War American sex manuals, and were being reprinted in popular literature at least as late as 1911.³³ Although Canadian medical attitudes towards masturbation began to change gradually by the mid-1880's,³⁴ the up-to-date medical student of 1909 would still find in the seventh edition of William Osler's *The Principles and Practice of Medicine* that "sexual excess, particularly masturbation" was an important causal factor in hysteria, and that sexual excesses were in a number of instances responsible for neurasthenia or nervous exhaustion.³⁵

By far the most influential factor shaping medical and popular attitudes towards sexuality was the persistence of vitalist concepts

reformers, who were now told that the achievements of one generation would not be passed on to the next. For this reason the *Self and Sex* authors also rejected the new doctrine that had just been proclaimed. See Wood-Allen, *Young Man*, 236-7.

³³ *Report of the Inspectors and the Medical Superintendent of the Provincial Lunatic Asylum, Toronto, for the Year 1865* (Toronto, 1866), 35-43; *Report of the Medical Superintendent of the Asylum for the Insane, Toronto, 1877* (Toronto, 1878), 18-26. Workman's report was initially reprinted in John Cowan, M.D., *The Science of a New Life* (New York, 1869) and as part of the excerpts from Cowan in *The Education of Sex, a Compilation from the writings and teachings of many eminent physicians and authorities . . . forming a textbook on the Physiology of Marriage, the Phenomena of Life, Existing Social Evils and their Needed Reforms* (Philadelphia, 1911). For a definitive account of medical attitudes towards masturbation see E. H. Hare, "Masturbatory Insanity: The History of an Idea", *Journal of Mental Science*, 108, January 1962, 1-25.

³⁴ Stephen Lett, "The Relationship of Insanity to Masturbation", *Canada Lancet*, 19, August 1887, 360-3, argued that masturbation was more a symptom than a cause of mental disorder; the practice was so widespread that it could not possibly cause insanity. See also Hare, "Masturbatory Insanity". As Prof. Frank MacKinnon pointed out in the discussion at the initial presentation of this paper, other doctors seem to have held similar common-sense attitudes to the phenomenon.

³⁵ (New York, 1909), 1077, 1087.

in physiological thought throughout the Nineteenth Century. Until late in the Century any systematic theory of the human organism almost by definition implied the belief in some vital force or vital principle uniting its parts and enervating it in its totality. This could be just simple "vital force" or "life force", or in some of the more esoteric medical systems it could be any or all of magnetism, electricity, galvanism, animal heat, nervous energy, or nerve force. Sexual activity was the function of the human system most obviously connected with transmitting forces vital to human existence — it was the activity that transmitted life itself. Accordingly, the identification of vital energy with sexual energy was made by virtually all writers on sexual problems in the Nineteenth Century.³⁶

This was done in two basic ways. Those writers who followed the system of the Swiss doctor S. A. Tissot (whose 1758 book on onanism was a classic in the field) taught that male semen was pure condensed vital energy, secreted from the blood for the purpose of creating a new life — a concept summarized in the engaging phrase *totus homo semen est*. The other system, first popularized in North America by Sylvester Graham in the 1830's, saw the sex act as involving an enormous release of nervous energy, a force akin to electricity. This latter view, a variation of which became physiological orthodoxy in the last third of the Century, had among other things the merit of restoring the idea of some sexual sensitivity to women. Most sex manuals, however, including the *Self and Sex* books, mixed the two theories indiscriminately, and were generally muddled, usually dubious, about female sexuality.³⁷

Whether male semen was pure vital force or whether sexual energy was simply another form of nervous energy, its expenditure

³⁶ Among numerous other sex manuals that have been consulted the most representative are Cowan, *The Science of a New Life*; J. H. Kellogg, *Plain Facts for Old and Young* (Burlington, Iowa, 1879; revised edition 1886); Diocletian Lewis, *Chastity, or Our Secret Sins* (Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Cincinnati, Chicago, 1875); George H. Napheys, *The Transmission of Life* (Philadelphia, 1870). At an indeterminate later date the Hunter, Rose Co. of Toronto published an "Enlarged and Revised" edition of Napheys. It is slightly more technical and moderate than the *Self and Sex* books, but not significantly different. The Cowan book, copies of which circulated in Canada, represents the extreme of Nineteenth Century sexology: it calls for total vegetarianism to repress sexual desires and marital intercourse no more frequently than every two years — for the sole purpose of conception.

³⁷ On Graham and Tissot see S. W. Nissenbaum, "Careful Love: Sylvester Graham and the emergence of Victorian sexual theory in America, 1830-1840" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Wisconsin, 1968), esp. ch. 6. The Latin phrase is quoted in Lewis, *Chastity*, 245. For more orthodox concepts of nervous energy, neurasthenia, and the belief in the conservation of energy see Charles E. Rosenberg, "The Place of George M. Beard in Nineteenth-Century Psychiatry", *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 36, 3 (1962), 245-59; Rosenberg, "Science and American Social Thought", in David Van Tassel and Michael G. Hall, eds., *Science and Society in the United States* (Homewood, Illinois, 1966).

was obviously a drain on the limited amount of vital energy in the human system. This is the heart of the matter. All the prohibitions and restrictions on sexual activity follow. Masturbation, nocturnal emissions, sexual intercourse itself, all represented outpourings of vital energy, the preservation of which was absolutely essential to the well-being of the human organism. As Sylvanus Stall told young men with emphasis, "Nature has provided us not only with the sacs for the retention of seminal fluid, but *its retention is necessary in order that this vitalizing and life-giving fluid may be reabsorbed into the system, and become the vitalizing and strength-giving source of added physical and intellectual power.*"³⁸

Here, then, is what might be called the doctrine of creative sexual repression. Because sexual energy is vital energy, or life force, it is too important to the whole physical economy to be expended in autoerotism or mere sexual intercourse without procreation! Far better to repress urges to waste the energy in basically animal activities and instead use it for truly human, truly creative, intellectual and aesthetic purposes. In themselves sexual energy and man's sexual nature were good, and the act of propagating a new life by the transmission of life force was one of the great creative achievements open to man. The only thing evil or harmful about sexuality was the way it could be misused, abused, or indulged in irresponsibly, in other words wasted in non-creative activities.

(It appears that one of the implications of these vitalist physiologies was the belief that the second most demanding drain on vital energy was intellectual activity; thus the mind suffered most when vital force was expended in sexual activity. Therefore, idiocy was thought to be an even more common consequence of masturbation than death. Further, the idea of a competition between sex life and intellect as the major consumers of vital force seems to have provided the physiological underpinning for several Nineteenth and Twentieth Century popular beliefs: that the nervous, intellectual child or man was the most liable to have sexual problems; that negroes, who were obviously short of mental ability, must have enlarged sexual inclinations by way of explanation or compensation; that as civilization grew ever more complex, requiring the expenditure of ever more intellectual force, the stock of vital energy available for reproduction would be diminished — hence the falling birth rate in the most advanced western civilizations and fears that the most advanced "races" would be swamped by simpler peoples who had more energy available for copulation and reproduction. A. R. M.

³⁸ *Young Man*, 75. Also Cowan, *Science of a New Life*, 91-2; Lewis, *Chastity*, 25, 245-6; Kellogg, *Plain Facts*, 277.

Lower's 1943 article, "*Two Ways of life: The Primary Antithesis of Canadian History*", seems to contain a representative expression of these latter fears in a Canadian setting, the physiological bases assumed.)³⁹

The Self and Sex manuals were late products of a long North American tradition of home advice on sexual problems. Dozens of books on anatomy, physiology, marriage, parenthood, masturbation, etc., were churned out in the United States from the 1830's, most of them written by members of health cults or medical sects, including vegetarians, phrenologists, homeopaths, and hydropaths.⁴⁰ These authors and medical practitioners were stepping into a sort of medical vacuum created by the retreat of orthodox doctors into a medical eclecticism which for a time seemed to offer neither cures nor explanations of illness.⁴¹ The new cultists were drawn to sexual problems partly because of orthodox medicine's reluctance to deal with them at all, partly because their systematic physiologies, usually throwbacks to the vitalism of earlier medical thought, seemed to lead directly to dislocations of vital energy as a basic cause of illness. Gradually, the regular medical profession stepped back into the field, but in so doing accepted and reinforced many of the ideas of the cultists. The influences of vegetarianism and the hydropathic (or "water-cure") system of medicine on sexual theories seem to have lingered on in the Self and Sex series' concern with reducing sexual passion by eliminating meat from the diet and by frequent bathing (and to this day Canadians continue to enjoy other legacies of the

³⁹ This concept also seems to have been popularized by Tissot. In *De La Santé Des Gens de Lettres* (Lausanne, 1770) he claimed that excessive mental activity resulted in the same disorders as masturbation. On the later idea of industrial society as consumer of nervous energy see Rosenberg, "The Place of George M. Beard in Nineteenth-Century Psychiatry", and John Duffy, "Mental Strain and 'Overpressure' in the Schools: A Nineteenth-Century Viewpoint", *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, XXIII, 1 (June 1968), 63-79. For fears of the impact of education on reproduction see Arthur Wallace Calhoun, *A Social History of the American Family* (Cleveland, 1919), v. III, 92-3. There is a clear statement of the myth of negro sexuality in Eugene S. Talbot, *Degeneracy, Its Causes, Signs, and Results* (London, 1898), 60. The best statement of the general concept of the problem is in W. H. Walling, *Sexology* (Philadelphia, 1904), 97: "A learned author has said that one must choose between leaving to posterity works of genius or children." The Lower article is reprinted in C. C. Berger, ed., *Approaches to Canadian History* (Toronto, 1967).

⁴⁰ American historians are just beginning to investigate this body of literature. Nissenbaum, "Careful Love", is invaluable — and includes a comprehensive bibliography of primary sources. See also Sidney Ditzion, *Marriage, Morals and Sex in America* (New York, 1953), and Eric John Dingwall, *The American Woman, A Historical Study* (London, 1956). Gerald Carson, *The Cornflake Crusade* (New York, 1957), ostensibly a study of the breakfast food industry, is an excellent survey of the health cults, unfortunately omitting the sexual emphasis.

⁴¹ Richard H. Shryock, *The Development of Modern Medicine* (Philadelphia, 1936), ch's. IX-XIII; Joseph K. Kett, *The Formation of the American Medical Profession, The Role of Institutions, 1780-1860* (New Haven, 1968), 65 ff.

vegetarian-sexologists – the foods named after Sylvester Graham and the corn flakes and peanut butter invented by John Harvey Kellogg to make vegetarian dishes palatable at his Battle Creek Sanitarium. Kellogg's establishment was the great North American health-cure institute of the late Nineteenth Century, having enjoyed its first popularity catering to the young men and women terrified of the consequences of sexual excess portrayed in the director's best-selling sex manual, *Plain Facts for Old and Young*.⁴²

The doctrine of creative sexual repression was intensely idealistic. Philosophic idealism was at the basis of the vitalist physiology that provided the foundations of the doctrine. Practical idealism was inherent in the work of the medical sectarians whose systems appealed to those who hoped for a medical millenium at a time when the orthodox profession was wallowing in uncertainty. The whole movement for physiologic and sexual reform was in every way connected with the outpouring of idealism in the form of a secularized evangelicalism that caused the ferment of reform movements in the United States in the 1840's and 1850's. The evangelists of sexual repression had extremely close links with antislavery work, the public health movement, the movement to liberate women – often, indeed to liberate them from male sexual tyranny – and with utopian "perfectionists" such as the Shakers and John Humphrey Noyes' Oneida Community. As S. W. Nissenbaum has shown, even the founders of the American free love movement, the most radical product of "freedom's ferment" in the mid-Nineteenth Century, were imbued with the idealism of sexual repression; freedom to love, they taught, could be safely enjoyed about once every two years. In the post-Civil War years the institutionalized "Purity" movement – in which the Self and Sex authors were deeply involved – was the crystallization of this basic idealism, the determination to purify human life of everything that tempted or conduced to harmful mental and physical practices.⁴³ Further, it was precisely the meta-

⁴² On the Kelloggs and Battle Creek see Carson, *Cornflake Crusade*; Ronald M. Deutsch, *The Nuts Among the Berries* (New York, 1961); and Horace B. Powell, *The Original Has This Signature – "W. K. Kellogg"* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1956). Although these authors ignore Kellogg's sex manuals the inference about the growth of the Sanitarium is reasonable in view of Kellogg's discussion of masturbation and his work with its victims in *Plain Facts*. His methods of treatment ranged from circumcision and the use of metal cages through suturing the male foreskin shut and applying pure carbonic acid to the female clitoris. *Plain Facts*, 294-6. Kellogg also argued that nocturnal emissions in males were no more necessary than vomiting. Consistent with his theories he remained continent throughout his life although he was married and adopted several dozen children; Mrs. Kellogg was active in purity work with the W.C.T.U.

⁴³ Nissenbaum, "Careful Love"; on the purity movement see David J. Pivar, "The New Abolitionism; The Quest for Social Purity, 1876-1900" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1965). The best published discussion and interpretation of "freedom's ferment" is still Gilbert Seldes,

physical idealism of these new Puritans, stressing the ability of mind to manipulate matter, that led them to advocate the most rigid forms of state thought-control in order to protect young men and women from powerful ideas that would stimulate the material, animal passions of the body. Censorship was a form of idealistic reform. After all, only a good idealist would believe that a young woman really could be ruined by a book.⁴⁴

If this account seems to be becoming a bit thin on purely Canadian sexual thought, consider the work of Alexander Milton Ross, a Belleville boy who was introduced into American reform circles in the 1840's by the exiled Reformer Marshal Spring Bidwell. Ross took a medical degree in hydropathy in the United States, was led from friendship with leading abolitionists into active work in the South encouraging negroes to flee to Canada, was a close friend of reformers ranging from Garibaldi to John Brown, and was employed by Lincoln as a special agent in Canada during the Civil War. After the War he became one of the most renowned Canadian naturalists, was president of the vegetarian Food Reform Society of Canada, worked for temperance, women's suffrage, and women's dress reform, took credit for securing Garibaldi a pension from the Italian govern-

The Stammering Century (New York, 1928, reissued, 1964). See also Carson, *Cornflake Crusade*, and the discussion of the Shakers and the Oneida Community in Lewis, *Chastity*.

Noyes' doctrine of "male continence" involved complete *coitus reservatus*; male incontinence, or sexual intercourse to orgasm, was nothing more than masturbation. Vital forces would only be expended for the purpose of procreation. Although conservative sexologists were repelled by the Oneida community's adoption of communal marriage and distrusted the idea of male continence, the doctrine lived on and ultimately came to Canada in the form of Dr. Alice Stockham's book on *Karezza* (origin. pub., 1896, rev. ed., 1905) or "a controlled sexual relation". When properly practised *Karezza* represented sexual "expression" rather than "repression" and was also an effective method of contraception. *Karezza* was given a most enthusiastic review at the 1896 Dominion Convention of the Canadian W.C.T.U. by the Superintendent of the Department of Purity in Literature, Arts and Fashion, who recommended that it "should be put into the hands of every young man before marriage". *Report of the Ninth Convention of the Dominion Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1896* (Montreal, 1897), 63. In 1911 McClelland & Goodchild published a Canadian edition of Dr. Stockham's earlier *Tokology* (first edition, 1883), a book on the "science of midwifery" which advocated painless child-birth through dress reform and vegetarian dietetics. *Tokology* is also one of the clearest demonstrations of the link between the women's rights movement and the doctrine of sexual repression.

⁴⁴ Popular idealism, the belief in the supremacy of mind over matter, permeated North American popular culture in the late Nineteenth Century. See, for example, Donald Meyer, *The Positive Thinkers* (New York, 1965), and Richard Weiss, *The American Myth of Success* (New York, 1969). Doctrines of "thought power" and the "mind cure" reached their apogee in Christian Science. Their sexual implications came to their logical culmination in 1890 when Josephine Curtis Woodbury, a Christian Scientist, announced that she had had a virginal conception (the child was named "Prince of Peace"). The *Self and Sex* books for women stressed thought power to the point where denials had to be made that they were preaching Christian Science doctrine.

ment, and led the anti-vaccination crusade in Montreal in 1885 (on the ground that vaccination for smallpox was a deadly ruse on the part of the Establishment to avoid its moral and social responsibility for public health). In the midst of all these activities Dr. Ross concluded from studies of insane asylum reports that fully “ONE-THIRD” of all the insane had brought the curse upon themselves by “indulgence in an unphysiological habit practised in ignorance of the results”. Finding that no voice of alarm was being raised in Canada about this “worm eating at the core of society, and doing more injury than all other diseases combined”, Ross resolved to do his duty. In the quarter century after Confederation he distributed, he claims, 600,000 pieces of literature alerting the Canadian public to the evils of masturbation.⁴⁵ Crusading for sexual enlightenment was then, as it is now, a necessary part of the work of any thorough-going reformer dedicated to the perfection of the human condition.

III

The Self and Sex books were advertised extensively through the Methodist Church publishing house for at least fifteen years. It seems reasonable to assume at a minimum that they were standard reference works for Methodist ministers concerned with their own and their congregations’ sexual problems (the Methodist minister, for example, who wrote Sir Wilfrid Laurier about the plight of a young lady whose husband had gone insane through self-abuse and abandoned her).⁴⁶ The series was also widely circulated by the ladies of the Canadian Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, whose Department of Social Purity was specifically designed to promote the doctrine of sexual repression in all of its manifestations.⁴⁷ Dr. Ross’s flood of anti-masturbation literature was supplemented by Dr. Daniel Clarke’s circulation of 600 copies of his own 1877 report on masturbation and insanity. The letters from educators and clergymen included in Ross’s autobiography suggest widespread, semi-underground fears of and campaigns against the secret vice in the two generations after Confederation.⁴⁸ So, too, do the notes on new cures for onanism and nocturnal emissions routinely printed in Canadian medical journals — such as the 1869 suggestion of Dr. George Wood that the application of a strip of isinglass adhesive plaster “worked like a charm” in cases of incurable masturbation (after tie-

⁴⁵ Alexander Milton Ross, *Memoirs of a Reformer* (Toronto, 1893); for his anti-masturbation work see 215-8, 261-5. Further biographical data is in H. J. Morgan, *The Canadian Men and Women of the Time* (Toronto, 1898), 883-4.

⁴⁶ P.A.C. *Laurier Papers*, 62267-9, Rev. W. J. Waddell to Laurier, Feb. 1, 1902.

⁴⁷ See the *Reports of Dominion W.C.T.U. Conventions*, 1890-1911.

⁴⁸ Ross, *Memoirs of a Reformer*, 261-5.

ing the hands, using hair gloves, croton oil linament, moral suasion, and many other methods had failed).⁴⁹ In addition, anyone who has browsed through Nineteenth Century Canadian newspapers will have noticed the hundreds of brands of compounds, pills, tonics, magnetic and electrical devices offered by quack doctors, to cure, among other things, "sexual weakness", "unnatural drains", "failing manhood", and "diseases peculiar to women". The fact of these ads indicates that a large market existed; their language suggests a general belief in the basic equation of sexual energy and vital energy.⁵⁰

Research into the activities of Y.M.C.A. groups, youth movements such as the Boy Scouts, and possibly certain religious denominations like the Salvation Army would almost certainly locate more evidence of the work of purity reformers in Canada before World War I. From 1906 to at least 1915 there existed a formal purity organization, the Canadian Purity-Education Association, staffed mainly by doctors and operating out of Toronto. In 1914 it sponsored 56 lectures on aspects of social purity, probably largely on the evils of venereal disease and masturbation. It distributed literature across Canada and in the United States, and reported in 1915 that its speakers were in great demand for mothers', girls' and women's meetings.⁵¹

In his recent book of memoirs, *Never Sleep Three in a Bed*, Max Braithwaite has finally broken the tacit conspiracy of silence about sexuality in Canadian history by describing his own sex education in Saskatoon in the 1920's. It featured books like *The Young Husband's Guide to Married Sex*, a horrifying tract on *The Solitary Vice*, and an earnest drill and hygiene teacher who with "jaw out-thrust" and "eyes flashing" lectured to young boys on the dangers of losing their manhood. "Take it out in good manly sport — such as boxing, wresting, club-swinging and the rest", he told his pupils. "I was so ashamed I couldn't look at him", says Braithwaite.⁵² Undoubtedly, there are similar stories to be told in memoirs yet unwritten.

⁴⁹ "A Prevention for Priapism, due to Onanism", *Canada Medical Journal*, Nov. 1869, 246-7. This suggestion was reprinted in Napheys, *The Transmission of Life*. For a suggestion of suturing with silver wire see "The Prevention of Masturbation", *Canadian Journal of Medical Science*, Nov. 1876, 394. On the application of blisters and tonics to cure seminal emissions see "The Treatment of Seminal Emissions", *Canada Lancet*, July 1889, 340.

⁵⁰ Phrases taken from advertisements in the *Toronto Globe*, Sept. 1, 6, 9, 1899. The quacks did their best business playing on fears of venereal disease ("blood poisoning"), impotence, and sterility. One of the curious implications of the doctrine of sexual repression was that too much sexual activity led to the inability to perform at all, vital energy having been exhausted. Accordingly, the less one performed the better one performed. The Self and Sex books repeatedly warned their readers against falling into the hands of quacks, particularly those who offered to cure venereal disease. To some extent, of course, the sex writers were competing in the same market with the quacks.

⁵¹ *The Canadian Woman's Annual and Social Service Directory*, 273.

⁵² Max Braithwaite, *Never Sleep Three in a Bed* (Toronto, 1969), 148.

We also know that in Ontario between 1905 and 1911, 13,463 public school boys received the “advanced” purity lectures given by the Ontario W.C.T.U.’s “Purity Agent”, one Arthur W. Beall, a former missionary and teacher in Japan who had returned to Canada after suffering a nervous breakdown.⁵³ The main theme of these special talks was the danger involved in young boys bleeding away the “LIFE FLUID” from the “MALE PART”. It had been secreted from the “LIFE GLANDS” and was needed to feed the brain and the nervous system. Repeated draining of this fluid would occasionally lead to death, but usually to something “ten thousand times worse than dying” — the fate of Henry, the farm boy from Perth County whose evil habits had led to hospitalization in the insane asylum. Nevertheless, Henry continued to bleed away the precious “LIFE FLUID”, “until one day the doctors came along and cut off the two LIFE GLANDS just to keep the miserable dregs of a miserable existence from all being frittered away”. The Henry incident was told in Lesson Nine of Mr. Beall’s trail-breaking classes in sex education. The same lesson ended a few moments later with the boys all repeating after him, “The more you use the penis muscle, the weaker it becomes; but the less you use the penis muscle, the stronger it becomes.”⁵⁴

In 1911 the W.C.T.U. arranged to have the Ontario Department of Education take over this work and appoint Beall as a Special Lecturer.⁵⁵ He continued to lecture to Ontario pupils all through the 1920’s and well on into the 1930’s. The Department took no official notice of his work in its reports. But acquaintances of mine remember with no little vividness this little white-haired man, dressed in a flowing red-and-blue cloak, the expression on his face of a “benign Hindenburg”, striding about their classrooms delivering what he now called his “eugenics” lectures in the 1930’s — interesting young boys, it is thought, in masturbation for the first time in their lives.⁵⁶ When Arthur Beall died in 1939 the *Globe and Mail* hailed him as “one of the best informed men on educational matters in Canada”.⁵⁷

The doctrine of creative sexual repression represented the orthodox, even the “enlightened” sexual attitudes of those English-speaking

⁵³ Figures compiled from *Reports of Ontario W.C.T.U. Conventions, 1902-1912*. For biographical data on Beall see the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, Nov. 11, 1939, and H. J. Morgan, *Canadian Men and Women of the Time* (Toronto, 1912), 72.

⁵⁴ Arthur W. Beall, *The Living Temple, A Manual on Eugenics for Parents and Teachers* (Whitby, 1933), 62-5, 67. This little book is a word by word account of Beall’s lessons.

⁵⁵ *Report of the Minister of Education, Province of Ontario, for the Year 1911* (Toronto, 1912), 269.

⁵⁶ Interview with the Rev. Harold Hendershot, April 1970.

⁵⁷ Nov. 11, 1939.

Canadians who read about such problems before World War I. Indeed it was sexual orthodoxy throughout much of the Western world, and therefore I would be very surprised to find any significant variation of these attitudes in whatever literature in the French language on these questions that may have circulated in Canada.⁵⁸ In this paper I have tried to explain the doctrine of creative sexual repression and explore its paternity in medical and popular thought. This has been only a discussion of the *ideas* of sexuality held by well-informed Canadians of the period. It will be up to future research to correlate these ideas with the actual sexual *behaviour* of all Canadians. Such research might include studies of prostitution through police records, court cases, and army records, as well as analyses of illegitimacy rates, birthrates, and the time-lag between marriage and the birth of a first child. Probably Canadian sexual behaviour will be shown to be related to social class, and historians should be able to apply psychological and sociological tools to explain why some classes accepted extremely repressive ideas of sexuality both in theory and practice while others did not. When we finally know who believed what and which groups acted on their beliefs, then perhaps psychologists can explore the effects of various sexual attitudes on the people who held them or were exposed to them. As a preliminary observation I think we can safely say that the doctrine of sexual repression added somewhat to the anxieties of middle class Canadians.⁵⁹

Whatever emerges from more sophisticated and detailed future studies, I would like to urge Canadian historians to take this esoteric form of social history seriously. It has been ignored in our literature to the point where our readers might well conclude that sex simply hasn't been a factor in Canadian life. Yet who can deny that the problem of coming to terms with the fact of sex has caused Canadians more concern than the activities of all their politicians combined?

⁵⁸ Particularly because of the affinity of the doctrine with Roman Catholic sexual thought and ultimately the ideas of St. Paul. Although Nineteenth Century science challenged Christian ideology in many fields, in the area of sexual thought it obviously reinforced Christian beliefs. This is probably the chief reason why liberalism came to sex so much later than to other fields of human activity.

⁵⁹ In chapter one of *The Other Victorians* (New York, 1966) Stephen Marcus attempts a general explanation of Nineteenth Century sexual orthodoxy (as mirrored in Dr. William Acton's popular writings) as functions of an "essentially mechanical", "primitive form of materialism", that relied heavily on an economic model of scarcity, specifically the equation of male semen with money. This is largely incorrect. The doctrine of sexual repression was permeated with idealism. While the analogy with capitalism does hold, there is no evidence of a causal relationship. The economics of sexual scarcity arose out of the Newtonian concept of the universe and the second law of thermodynamics and were thus independent of the economics of capital scarcity.