

Creating the Ideal Man: Middle-Class Women's Constructions of Masculinity in Nova Scotia, 1840-1880

Janet Guildford

Volume 24, Number 2, Spring 1995

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad24_2art01

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

The Department of History of the University of New Brunswick

ISSN

0044-5851 (print)

1712-7432 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Guildford, J. (1995). Creating the Ideal Man.: Middle-Class Women's Constructions of Masculinity in Nova Scotia, 1840-1880. *Acadiensis*, 24(2), 5–23.

JANET GUILDFORD

Creating the Ideal Man: Middle-Class Women's Constructions of Masculinity in Nova Scotia, 1840-1880

MIDDLE CLASS WOMEN IN 19th-century Nova Scotia, like their counterparts in the United States and Britain, were prolific writers. Much of what they wrote was private: letters to friends and family, or diaries written to record their daily lives and their personal spiritual journeys. Some women also wrote novels, stories, poetry, history and social and political commentary for publication. Feminist historians have established the importance of both private and published sources in understanding the gendered dimensions of middle class culture and identity.² From 19th-century women's writing we have been able to learn a great deal about how women understood themselves, their work, their sense of time and place, and their relationships with other women.³ But their writing is also a rich source of women's ideas about men, manliness, and the relationships between men and women. In fact, a study of women's writing offers an important alternative viewpoint on the history of masculinity, which has too often relied on studies of men in isolation from women, rather than in relation to them.⁴

A study of middle class women's writing about masculinity helps us to understand more fully the process of middle class formation. Their writing not only delineated the contours of difference between men and women, but also drew

- 1 I am grateful for the support of a SSHRC Post Doctoral Research Fellowship and of the Institute for the Study of Women at Mount St. Vincent University which permitted me to undertake this research. I also want to thank the members of the Halifax Women's History Group for their careful and generous reading of earlier drafts of this article.
- 2 Nova Scotian women's writing has been very well served by Margaret Conrad, Toni Laidlaw, Donna Smyth, eds., *No Place Like Home: Diaries and Letters of Nova Scotia Women, 1771-1938* (Halifax, 1992); Margaret Conrad, "Recording Angels: The Private Chronicles of Women from the Maritime Provinces of Canada, 1750-1959", in Diana M.A. Relke, ed., *The CRIAW Reader: Papers on Literary Productions by Canadian Women* (Ottawa, 1992), pp. 1-48; Gwendolyn Davies, "'Dearer than his Dog': Literary Women in Pre-Confederation Nova Scotia", in Gwendolyn Davies, *Studies in Maritime Literary History, 1760-1930* (Fredericton, 1991), pp. 71-87; Elizabeth Waterston, "Margaret Marshall Saunders: A Voice for the Silent", in Carrie MacMillan, Lorraine McMullen, Elizabeth Waterston, *Silenced Sextet: Six Nineteenth Century Canadian Women Novelists* (Montreal and Kingston, 1993), pp. 137-68.
- 3 See, for example, Margaret Conrad, "'Sundays always make me think of home': Time and Place in Canadian Women's History", in Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman, *Re-Thinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History* 2nd edition (Toronto, 1991), pp.97-112.
- 4 See Michael Roper and John Tosh, eds., *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800* (London, 1991), pp. 1-4; and John Tosh, "What Should Historians do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain", *History Workshop*, 38 (Autumn 1994), pp. 179-202.

Janet Guildford, "Creating the Ideal Man: Middle-Class Women's Constructions of Masculinity in Nova Scotia, 1840-1880", *Acadiensis*, XXIV, 2 (Spring 1995), pp.5-23.

6 *Acadiensis*

boundaries around the white Anglo-American middle class, fostering a class identity shared by both men and women. The exclusion of men who failed to conform to middle class gender ideals, whether on the basis of their attitudes towards women or towards the monogamous heterosexual patriarchal family, is a recurrent theme.

Their writing also allows us to address a central tension in the relationship between middle class men and women in the 19th-century, a tension fraught with considerable potential for danger to women. Middle class women's financial, social and political status was highly dependent on the power and success of the men in their lives, while their status in the family and their safety and that of their children were dependent on the restraint of male power at home. The ideal men created by middle class Nova Scotian women writers attempted to balance these concerns. Their ideal men were powerful and successful in the public spheres of the market and politics, but they were compassionate and companionable at home.

Through their writing, women subtly subverted and reshaped male cultural values while also reflecting them. The public and private writing of mid-19th-century middle-class Nova Scotian women both represented and constructed ideas about the proper relationship between men and women and about what they regarded as the nature of manliness. The interplay between representation and construction is complex. These women were strongly influenced by the prevailing gender ideals of their society, and by the social and literary conventions which regulated women's writing. But as they wrote to and about men they were also actively creating and modifying middle class gender ideology.⁵ Women raised sons, influenced brothers, friends, lovers and husbands, and used the power at their disposal to shape and control male behaviour in a variety of ways.

Catherine Hall, writing about English ideals of manliness, argues that the core of middle class masculine identity was "the notion of individual integrity, freedom from subjection to the will of another".⁶ She compares the lack or loss of individual autonomy to emasculation.⁷ Around that central core value, however, different traits and behaviours received more or less emphasis and appreciation, and competing and overlapping versions of middle-class manliness emerged. Anthony Rotundo, in his influential study of middle class masculinity in the northern United States, developed a chronological model of three overlapping masculine ideals.⁸

5 See Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago, 1988), especially Chapter One.

6 Catherine Hall, "Competing Masculinities: Thomas Carlyle, John Stuart Mill and the Case of Governor Eyre: The 1865 Riot in Morant Bay, Jamaica", in Catherine Hall, *White Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (New York, 1992), p.257. See also Anthony Rotundo, "Learning About Manhood: Gender Ideals and the Middle-Class Family in Nineteenth-Century America", in J.A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds., *Manliness and Morality: Middle Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (New York, 1987) and Clyde Griffen, "Reconstructing Masculinity from the Evangelical Revival to the Waning of Progressivism: A Speculative Synthesis", in Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, eds., *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America* (Chicago, 1990), pp.183-204.

7 Hall, "Competing Masculinities", p. 256.

8 Rotundo, "Learning about Manhood".

His approach is a useful one because it helps to explain how and why different groups of people within the middle class might emphasize particular elements as most important in defining masculinity, and addresses the question of change over time. There is, moreover, considerable resonance between his masculine ideals and those present in the writing of Nova Scotian women and men.

Rotundo's first ideal type, the "masculine achiever", emerged in the first half of the 19th-century and was strongly shaped by economic forms. The "masculine achiever" regarded himself as active and dynamic, hard working and persistent, and he believed he should restrain his tender feelings. This ideal encouraged independence of thought and action, the core value identified by Hall.⁹ Rotundo's second ideal, the "Christian gentleman", emerged after mid-century in opposition to the masculine achiever. Influenced by Evangelical Christianity, it stressed love and compassion as central male values. But the "Christian gentleman" ideal also stressed hard work and impulse control, although it discouraged excessive personal ambition and greed.¹⁰ The areas of overlap between the "masculine achiever" and the "Christian gentleman" were substantial, and, in both, independence of thought and action retained a central place. As Catherine Hall argues, the middle class masculine identity which emerged in Britain in the early 19th-century was located "within a rich discursive formation linking Evangelical religion, romanticism and political economy".¹¹

Rotundo's third ideal, the "masculine primitive", was not part of the ideal of masculinity envisioned by any of the middle class women writers. The "masculine primitive" emerged in the third quarter of the 19th-century, and was defined by a belief in the Darwinian notion that "all males shared primordial instincts for survival".¹² Support for the idea that physical prowess constituted a part of the middle class masculine identity had emerged by mid-century, as evidenced by the proliferation of gymnasiums in cities like Halifax. Reflecting this ideal, P.S. Hamilton, a Nova Scotian lawyer and journalist, described himself at 35.

I stand just under 5'11" and have been called symmetrically proportioned. I girth 42" naked around the upper part of my chest, tapering to 30" around the waist...I am now considered one of the first, if not the very first, in feats both of agility and strength in the Halifax gymnasium; and I understand that I have the reputation of being the best woodsman and best boxer in Halifax.¹³

9 *Ibid.*, pp.36-7.

10 *Ibid.*, pp. 37-40.

11 Hall, "Competing Masculinities", p. 257.

12 Rotundo, "Learning About Manhood", p.40-3.

13 P.S. Hamilton Diary, MG1, vol. 335, Public Archives of Nova Scotia [PANS], p. 77. This document is somewhat misleadingly listed as a diary. It is best understood as two autobiographical fragments, the first begun in 1861, the second in 1878. In each fragment Hamilton reconstructs and interprets events in the past. For biographical information about Hamilton see William Hamilton, "P.S. Hamilton", *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, XII (Toronto, 1990), pp. 405-7; P.B. Waite, "A Nova Scotian in Toronto, 1858", *Ontario History*, LV, 3 (1963), pp. 155-9.

8 *Acadiensis*

It can certainly be argued that the fact that women did not idealize the “masculine primitive” reflected their ambivalence about male power and physical strength.

Although there was considerable overlap between men’s and women’s ideas about what constituted the ideal middle class man, women’s writing emphasized the manly qualities which were important to women in their domestic relationships, and often attributed to men values that were generally assigned to women by the gender codes of their society. Their ideal man perhaps owed most to Rotundo’s “Christian gentleman”, but it also contained elements of the “masculine achiever”. The value placed on male tenderness and love in marriage, on male nurturance as fathers, and on men’s admiration of nature and art suggests that women valued these qualities in their own lives, and wanted to promote a culture which reflected women’s interests. While we must remember the class and racial specificity of the ideas about mid-19th century women’s culture developed by feminist historians in the United States such as Nancy Cott and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and by Margaret Conrad in Atlantic Canada, the values of that culture were asserted with considerable confidence.¹⁴ Women’s confidence, nurtured by their relationships with other women and the institutions they created, was manifested in their efforts to encourage men to identify with feminine values.¹⁵ At the same time, however, they also valued men who were successful in the public sphere of the market and politics, men who were powerful enough to support women in comfort, and to represent and protect their political interests.

Both men and women valued a harmonious domestic life. When we consider the value placed on a well-ordered domestic life by middle class men in England and the United States, the difference between men’s and women’s constructions of masculinity can be understood as a difference in emphasis. John Tosh, in his study of English cleric and teacher Edward White Benson, provides compelling evidence that mid-19th-century middle class men drew much of their male identity from their roles as husbands and fathers.¹⁶ Like Edward Benson, Halifax lawyer and politician John S.D. Thompson was deeply concerned with his domestic life, and during his absences from home he wrote frequent letters to his wife, expressing his loneliness and his concern for the health and well-being of his wife and children.¹⁷ Women’s writing about men as fathers, husbands and lovers, as well as what they wrote about men in public life, was consonant with masculine ideals already familiar to their readers.

Women’s advocacy of a masculine ideal which emphasized love, respect and trust towards women is well-represented in romantic fiction. Much romantic fiction, especially the didactic novels of manners so popular at mid-century, reads as thinly

14 Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: “Woman’s Sphere” in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven, 1977); Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America”, *Signs*, 1 (Autumn 1975), pp. 1-29; Conrad, “Sundays always makes me think of home”.

15 I would like to thank Frances Early for reminding me of this important connection.

16 John Tosh, “Masculinity and Domesticity in the Victorian Middle Class Family: The family of Edward White Benson”, in Roper and Tosh, eds., *Manful Assertions*, pp. 44-73.

17 P.B. Waite, *The Man from Halifax: Sir John Thompson, Prime Minister* (Toronto, 1985).

disguised advice on how to choose a husband, and it provides a useful starting point for exploring constructions of the ideal man.¹⁸ These novels were shaped by literary conventions, but they were also works of imagination, and, as such, they provide insights into women's fantasies about ideal men in ways that are rarely so accessible in other forms of writing. As Stephen Kern suggests, "novels offered the most direct source of past ways of loving...[as they] render the social world and historical context of the relationships that sustain their plots".¹⁹ They also offer sustained explorations of ideas about romantic love, which was increasingly regarded as the only right justification for middle class marriage. Karen Lystra argues that "[r]omantic love was an intellectual and social force of premier significance in nineteenth-century America", but it was also very private.²⁰ Romantic fiction provides us with a public expression of ideas about it.

Choosing the right husband was a central theme in the fiction of Halifax writer Mary Eliza Herbert. As a member of a successful upwardly mobile family, Herbert had solid middle class credentials. In addition to a literary career which included writing and publishing novels, stories and poems, and a brief stint in the early 1850s as the editor and publisher of a literary magazine, she was an active Methodist and a life-long temperance advocate. She herself never married, perhaps reflecting the moral she promoted in her novels, that it was better not to marry than to marry the wrong man or for the wrong reasons.²¹

In her 1859 novel, *Belinda Dalton, or Scenes in the Life of a Halifax Belle*, Herbert used an intimate late-night conversation between Belinda and her sisters as the setting for an explicit discussion of men and marriage.²² Alice, the oldest sister, had spent the evening flirting with a foppish old bachelor, and she shocked her sisters by telling them that she would marry him if he proposed, because "a man with an income of several thousand pounds per annum is not to be despised...old and conceited though he be".²³ Belinda, who thought that Alice's attitude verged on the criminal, represented the correct attitude to marriage. Young, virtuous and beautiful, she had a number of suitors, and, with a little prodding from Alice, she explained why each, in turn, failed to meet her exacting standards of manliness.

William Eddington had "youth, health and good looks in his favor", but he was an egotist.

18 Janet Eagleson Dunleavy, "Maria Edgeworth and the Novel of Manners", in Bege K. Bowers and Barbara Brothers, eds., *Reading and Writing Women's Lives: A Study of the Novel of Manners* (Ann Arbor and London, 1990), pp. 49-66.

19 Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Love: Victorians to Moderns* (Cambridge, Mass./London, 1992), p. 2.

20 Karen Lystra, *Searching the Heart: Women, Men and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York and Oxford, 1989), pp.4-6. For other discussions of romantic love see Ellen K. Rothman, *Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America* (New York, 1984) and Peter Ward, *Courtship, Love and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century English Canada* (Montreal, Kingston, London, Buffalo, 1990). Unlike Ward, I argue that the emerging middle class had developed distinctive ideas about romantic love by the middle of the 19th century.

21 See Davies, "'Dearer than his dog'".

22 Mary Eliza Herbert, *Belinda Dalton, or Scenes in the Life of a Halifax Belle* (Halifax, 1859).

23 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

10 *Acadiensis*

The subject of his conversation, from morning to night, is ever the same. You are continually hearing of his wonderful achievements, the dangers he has experienced, of his fearlessness and courage, and the commendations he has received for the performance of various feats. A miserable woman indeed, his wife will be, continually obliged to hear of his amiable disposition, but never beholding a proof of it.²⁴

Even worse, he lacked charity, the cardinal sin in Herbert's lexicon. Belinda had seen him, just the day before, peremptorily turn away a poor woman with a baby in her arms. Edward Oliver had faults of a different kind. He was too generous and had too little respect for himself. Because he did not have "the very nicest sense of honor", he failed Belinda's test of manly independence. Henry Palmer was "young, handsome, generous, yet prudent, exceedingly fascinating in manners, unexceptionable in morals", but Belinda condemned him as a social butterfly.

He is superficial, his learning, his accomplishments, all seem to float on the surface; his affections are evanescent; like the butterfly, he is continually roving from flower to flower; there is no wellspring of generous feeling, that gush irresistibly forth, keeping the heart pure from the defiling touch of fashionable life. He is the complete 'man of the world'; sentiment is on his tongue, but it never awakes noble and lofty impulses in his heart.²⁵

Finally her sister Lavinia offered the possibility of Captain Alfred Elton, a young man with a flashing eye and a curling lip, who had attended a party at their house. He had neither beauty nor riches, and he had held himself aloof from Belinda all evening. But Lavinia added a story told by her maid. Captain Elton's groom had recently broken his arm and would be unfit for work for several months. With a wife and six children to support, the groom was in despair. Captain Elton, although poor by the standards of the Daltons and their circle, paid his servant's medical bills and promised to pay his full wages until he recovered. Noting Belinda's response to this story, Alice teased "[h]ow flushed your cheeks are, you really appear feverish".²⁶ Belinda hurried off to bed.

Through the intimate and informal late-night conversation, Herbert offered her readers some advice for identifying an ideal man as well as the signs to look for in a bad one. Drawing on her readers' familiarity with the conventions of romantic fiction, she caused her beautiful and pious heroine to flush at the mention of the poor, surly, unattractive Alfred Elton. His flashing eyes and his aloofness would already have alerted readers that this was a man to watch. And within the genre of didactic domestic fiction, Alfred Elton's sacrificial generosity to his servant was an

24 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

equally important sign that the reader was meeting a romantic hero. As we learn more about Captain Elton, we discover that compassion for the less fortunate was a central pillar of his character. His aloofness from the rich and beautiful Belinda was rooted in his abhorrence at the idea of sacrificing his manly independence on the altar of Belinda's father's wealth, and in the pain caused to his tender heart by an earlier rejection. His dark brooding stance barely concealed his capacity for compassion and for passionate heterosexual love.

Captain Alfred Elton captured Belinda Dalton's heart with his benevolence to his injured groom; he kept it with one act of compassion after another. Alfred and Belinda became partners in philanthropy when they set out to rescue Belinda's impoverished, widowed school friend and her children. Alfred was deeply moved by the plight of the widow and children, and when he first encountered them in their freezing garret he had to turn his back to hide his tears. Herbert's ideal man experienced pain and heartache, especially empathetically. But he was restrained in his expression of emotion. Another male character in *Belinda Dalton* expressed the fear that his "emotions would unman" him.²⁷ It was manly to feel emotion, but unmanly to allow it to affect one's public performance.

Alfred Elton's compassion ultimately proved his undoing. He died after rescuing a drowning child who had fallen overboard during a transatlantic crossing. His tragic death may have served Herbert's plot, but to the modern reader it is curious and somewhat ironic. Belinda never recovered from the loss of Captain Elton; she mourned her dead hero alone for the rest of her life, and she never protested that her lover's reckless and sacrificial generosity was at the cost of her own happiness. Herbert's treatment of Elton's death supports an ideal of manliness in which a man's adherence to the dictates of his conscience was crucial, his relationship with his beloved secondary. As Hall has argued, personal autonomy is a central feature of middle class masculinity.²⁸

Herbert did, however, emphasize the importance of shared interests between lovers. Belinda and Alfred shared a love of nature. On a winter sleigh-ride Alfred listened with warmth to Belinda's praise of the beauty around her, and romantically suggested that the evergreen spruce she admired was an "emblem of constancy".²⁹ The association between women and nature was a powerful theme for members of the Victorian middle class, and natural themes dominated the art, dress and decorations produced and consumed by women.³⁰ But Alfred's ready response reflected an enthusiasm for romanticism, with its natural themes, which was

27 *Ibid.*, p. 46.

28 Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class*.

29 Herbert, *Belinda Dalton*, p. 17.

30 See Sherry B. Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" in Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, eds., *Women, Culture and Society* (Stanford, 1974), pp. 67-88; Jane Leigh Cook, "Bringing the Outside In: Women and the Transformation of the Domestic Interior in Atlantic Canada, 1830-1860", *Material History Review*, 38 (Fall 1993), pp. 36-9; and Janet Guildford, "Maria Morris Miller: The Many Functions of her Art", *Atlantis*, 20, 1 (Fall/Winter 1995), pp. 113-24.

12 *Acadiensis*

common to both men and women in the 19th-century English middle class.³¹

A love of art and literature was another mark of Herbert's ideal man. Lawyer Levitt, the arch-villain in *Belinda Dalton*, was a selfish, cold-hearted, money-grubbing man, but we also know he fails to meet her ideal of masculinity because "the beauties of nature, the charms of poetry, and the exquisite delineations of the pencil, were objects to him, of contempt".³² In Herbert's unpublished novel, "Lucy Cameron", the heroine's dissatisfaction with her first husband was exacerbated by his disdain for art and literature; her second husband, Ralph Maynard, was devoted to literature. Of course we know that Ralph is an ideal man because during the years he and Lucy were separated by her marriage to the despicable Mr. Cameron he drowned his sorrows in helping the poor.³³

The line Herbert drew between an appropriate emotional sensitivity to art and nature and a superficial effeminacy is a fine one, as *Belinda Dalton*'s condemnation of Henry Palmer's flightiness and superficiality suggests. Her criticisms of all of her suitors, however, reflect a disdain for effeminacy and worldliness often present in bourgeois critiques of the aristocracy. Herbert's anti-aristocratic streak is pronounced, and her heroes and heroines all reflect the purity of heart, Christian piety and benevolent spirit which her character, *Belinda Dalton*, sought in a husband. In an earlier, serialized novel, "Emily Linwood, or The Promise of Bow", for example, Emily's suitor admires her simple purity and grace and rejects the rich and idle young women who clamour for his attention.³⁴ Anti-aristocratic sentiment is an important element in Herbert's middle class consciousness, and her novels provide her with a vehicle for promoting it.

Herbert's emphasis on rational choice sits somewhat uncomfortably with Lystra's suggestion that love is a powerful and mysterious force which sweeps unsuspecting lovers away, sometimes against all reason.³⁵ But some of Herbert's characters do have a capacity for heterosexual passion. Ralph Maynard, the romantic hero of "Lucy Cameron", was haunted by his memories of Lucy with "an almost torturing intensity", and experienced rapture at their reunion.³⁶ "It was bliss for him to be near her" and he realized that he loved her "more deeply, more passionately, more madly than ever!"³⁷ Lucy responded to the meeting "with a flushed cheek and a throbbing heart".³⁸ The contrast with her first husband, Mr. Cameron, is clear, and underlined by the fact that Herbert does not even endow this character with the most basic prerequisite for intimacy, a first name. According to

31 Lenore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London, 1987), pp. 155-79.

32 Herbert, *Belinda Dalton*, p. 29.

33 Mary Eliza Herbert, "Lucy Cameron", MS2 32, Dalhousie University Archives.

34 Mary Eliza Herbert, "Emily Linwood, or The Promise of the Bow", *The Mayflower or Ladies Acadian Newspaper*, 1, 1-6 (May - October 1851).

35 Lystra, *Searching the Heart*, p. 7.

36 Herbert, "Lucy Cameron", p. 43.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 50.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

Mr. Cameron, “sensible” people did not believe in love or the “wild rhapsody of passion”.³⁹

The capacity for passionate love may have been a masculine ideal for some middle class women in 19th-century Nova Scotia, but it was obviously not the only one women used in choosing a husband. The experience of two women who chose to marry Protestant ministers, one in 1823, the other in 1871, suggests the durability of other ideals. Shared religious faith, rather than romantic love, persuaded Eliza Chipman to marry a much older widower, with eight children, in 1823. “He is a beloved member of Christ and his Church, which is one particular inducement, as I always was opposed to believers and unbelievers being united”.⁴⁰ Believing that God had called her to a life as a minister’s wife, she was willing to take on the responsibility for eight children, one of whom opposed the marriage, and to ignore her preference for continuing to live at home with her family.⁴¹ Romantic love also played little part in the decision of Truro teacher and missionary Mathilda Faulkner to marry George Churchill in 1871. She wrote:

I must tell you of the great and abounding joy that has come to me this day. Mr. Churchill, who is under appointment to go to the foreign field, has written and asked me to accompany him as his companion and colabourer.⁴²

It was not her enthusiasm for becoming George Churchill’s wife which dominated her letter, but the opportunity to become a foreign missionary. Her ambition to be a foreign missionary had been “a burning desire” since her baptism at 14, and one which was denied to her as a single woman.⁴³ As was the case for Eliza Chipman, Mathilda Churchill’s husband remained a shadowy figure in her subsequent writing.⁴⁴

Halifax writer Clotilda Jennings created a passionate love affair in her short story “The White Rose of Acadia”. Although heterosexual passion is an important theme, the story’s greatest value for the historian is in helping us to understand the construction of a British middle class identity through its descriptions of ethnic difference.⁴⁵ Jennings, who often wrote under the pseudonym Alma Maude, was the daughter of dry goods merchant and municipal politician Joseph Jennings, and grew up on a comfortable suburban estate in north end Halifax. In the early 1850s

39 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

40 “Eliza Ann Chipman Diary, 1823-1837”, in Conrad, Laidlaw and Smythe, eds., *No Place Like Home*, p. 87.

41 *Ibid.*, pp. 87-8.

42 “Mathilda Faulkner Churchill, Letters 1871-1879”, in Conrad, Laidlaw and Smythe, eds., *No Place Like Home*, p. 122.

43 *Ibid.*

44 *Ibid.*, pp. 123-33.

45 Alma Maude (Clotilda Jennings), *The White Rose in Acadia and Autumn in Nova Scotia* (Halifax, 1855).

14 *Acadiensis*

she contributed poetry, and a feature called “Letters from Linden Hall”, to Mary Jane Katzmann’s *Provincial or Halifax Magazine*, and she continued to pursue a literary career throughout her life.⁴⁶ “The White Rose of Acadia” was written for the Industrial Exhibition of Nova Scotia and published in 1855.

Set in the Annapolis Valley in the mid-18th century, against the backdrop of the deportation of the Acadians, “The White Rose of Acadia” is valuable for the light it sheds on the relationships among class, gender and ethnicity. The White Rose was Edith Leicester, a young English woman whose family had moved to the Gaspereaux Valley in the early 1750s. Edith fell in love with Pierre Pontrincourt, a handsome young Acadian of noble French ancestry. The love between Edith and Pierre was as intense as any “grand passion claiming the world for its stage”, but the lovers were about to become engulfed in the events leading to the deportation.⁴⁷ Jennings’ portrayal of the Acadians is superficially a sympathetic one, but she did emphasize the cultural differences between French and English. The most significant difference for the plot is that Henri Pontrincourt, Pierre’s father, did not trust women. That un-English and ungentlemanly lack of trust eventually resulted in his son’s death. Henri Pontrincourt sent his son on a military mission, and forbade Pierre to tell Edith why he was leaving. As a result, they were unable to reconcile before the deportation, and the night before his ship sailed Pierre slipped over the side, swam ashore, borrowed an Indian canoe and paddled upriver to sooth Edith “with his hushed kisses...while she sobbed upon his breast”.⁴⁸ Pierre was shot and killed by a British soldier on his return to the ship in the early morning, and Jennings clearly blamed Pierre’s father for the tragedy.

Jennings’ portrayal of the Acadians and their fate emphasized ethnic difference and contributed to the creation of a British middle class Nova Scotian identity complete with deeply embedded gender codes. Jennings implied that Edith’s lover Pierre could have become part of the new order, a citizen of the modern British society in Nova Scotia. But his father was a relic of the primitive past, with outdated ideas about women, ideas which cost his son’s life. “The White Rose of Acadia” reflects both the romanticism of Longfellow’s *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadia*, published in 1847, which presented the Acadians as a simple, devout and prosperous people, and the emerging Nova Scotian historiographical response that the deportation was justified because the Acadians were unable to compete with the more progressive and energetic race of Anglo-Americans.⁴⁹ Henri’s “ungallant” view of women marked him not only as different, but as inferior. It was just this kind of difference in values among the Acadians which British Nova Scotians were using to build new justifications for their expulsion a century earlier. In Henri Pontrincourt’s attitude toward women there is an implicit acknowledgement that

46 Gwendolyn Davies, “Amelia Clotilda Jennings”, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, XII (Toronto, 1990), pp. 474-5.

47 Jennings, “The White Rose of Acadia”, p. 10.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 27.

49 See M. Brook Taylor, “The Poetry and Prose of History: *Evangeline* and the Historians of Nova Scotia”, *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 23, 1 and 2 (Spring and Summer 1988), pp. 46-67.

the Acadians were fundamentally not like “us”, and therefore the deportation had a moral justification.

Mary Jane Katzmann Lawson presented a similar view of the Acadians in “The Valley of the Gaspereaux”, a poem she wrote in 1858. She wrote of the time when “Acadian peasants” lived in the Valley, “tilled the grassy sod” and “lifted...simple hearts to God”.⁵⁰ Lawson published a substantial body of poetry and history in local periodicals, including *The Provincial or Halifax Monthly Magazine* which she herself edited in the early 1850s, and much of it contributed to the construction of British middle-class masculine identity.⁵¹ She wrote tributes to Lord Nelson, Queen Victoria and her son, the Prince of Wales, on his 1860 visit to Halifax, to English novelist Anthony Trollope and to Gordon at Khartoum.⁵² But she is probably best remembered for her *History of the Townships of Dartmouth, Preston and Lawrencetown; Halifax County, N.S.* which won the Nova Scotia Historical Society’s Akins Prize.⁵³ In her chapter on Preston she discussed the immigration of African Nova Scotians, characterizing them as a “most unsatisfactory class of emigrants”.⁵⁴

Lawson’s portrayal of the officers in the Maroon militia unit provides a compelling example of her racist assumption that African Nova Scotian men did not meet the standards of middle class masculinity.⁵⁵ Although her poetry evinced an enthusiasm for imperial military men and their heroism, she characterized the Maroon officers as “vain and ambitious to be regarded as great men”.⁵⁶ She wrote:

When in the spring of 1799, Captain Solomon...daily mounted guard to keep in check the insubordinate Maroons, [Maroon militia officers] Montagu and Smith always appeared in blue and scarlet uniforms with high cocked-hats and gold lace, and in every way endeavored to personate the appearance and authority of the British officer.⁵⁷

Of course, Smith and Montagu were serving as British officers, but for Lawson

50 Mary Jane Katzmann Lawson, “The Gaspereaux Valley”, in Harry Piers and Constance Fairbanks, eds, *Frankincense and Myrrh: Selections from the Poems of the Late Mrs. William Lawson, (M.J.K.L.)* (Halifax, 1893), p. 22.

51 For biographical information see Lois Kernahan, “‘MJKL’ — A Victorian Contradiction”, *Nova Scotia Historical Quarterly*, 5 (1975), pp. 231-41.

52 These poems were published in the posthumous anthology of her poetry, *Frankincense and Myrrh*.

53 Mrs. William Lawson (Mary Jane Katzmann), *History of the Townships of Dartmouth, Preston and Lawrencetown; Halifax County, N.S.* (Halifax, 1893). This book was published after the author’s death, and was heavily edited by Harry Piers, but most of the book was written as sketches for *The Provincial or Halifax Monthly Magazine* in the 1850s.

54 Lawson, *History of the Townships*, p. 156.

55 Suzanne Morton has argued that Lawson’s treatment of African Nova Scotian women reflected the same ideas. See Suzanne Morton, “Separate Spheres in a Separate World: African-Nova Scotian Women in late-19th-century Halifax County”, *Acadiensis*, XXII, 2 (Spring 1993), pp. 61-83.

56 Lawson, *History of the Townships*, p. 168.

57 *Ibid.*, pp. 168-9.

16 *Acadiensis*

their race disqualified them from inclusion in her version of middle class manliness. Lawson also excluded these officers because of their failure to adhere to middle class ideals of monogamous marriage. Thus, her tone was satiric and derogatory when she wrote that “Major Smith was the happy possessor of four wives”.⁵⁸ The writing of both Jennings and Katzmman illustrates the role of Nova Scotian women in creating middle class ideology and the need to be attentive to both its gendered elements and its ethnocentrism. The importance of men’s love, trust and respect for women and their interests was a major theme in women’s writing, but their vision of the masculine ideal could not accommodate different cultures or values.

Women did, however, have to accommodate the greater power and access to wealth accorded men in their own society. Law, religion and social custom all upheld male power in the family and in public life, and middle class women had to accommodate the often conflicting needs of tempering male power in the household and promoting it in the market and in politics. Their own social status and economic well-being were highly dependent on the success of the men in their families; their political influence, too, depended on the wealth and power of their male friends and relatives. Thus the physical and emotional safety of women and their children demanded a construction of masculinity that placed a high priority on emotional tenderness, advocating the restraint of male power within the household, while supporting the carefully regulated use of it in public life. In other words, women’s writing suggests a construction of masculinity which emphasized both private domestic and public political and economic roles for men.

Annie Affleck Thompson’s correspondence with her husband, John Thompson, during the 1870s and 1880s provides an interesting illustration of a masculine ideal which combined both domestic and public elements.⁵⁹ Annie and John were married in 1870 and, very early in their marriage, John’s legal career, and, a little later, the political career which would eventually take him to the prime minister’s office demanded frequent and often long absences from home. Although she missed him during his absences, Annie strongly supported John’s public career. Her letters suggest that her masculine ideal included achievement and independence, but also acknowledged emotional tenderness and vulnerability. In response to this construction of masculinity she adopted a motherly role in her correspondence, nagging, cajoling and bracing her husband to withstand the separations. The letters often reflected her own emotional need for her husband, and they also had a playful and sexually suggestive tone. In 1882 Annie wrote to John in Antigonish, where he was a candidate for the Provincial Assembly.

My poor old tired Tory

I cannot tell you how glad I was to get your letter this afternoon. I know that you are feeling badly...I wish I could be with you for one ten minutes

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

⁵⁹ My discussion of the Thompsons’ marriage is based entirely on the portions of their correspondence published in Waite, *The Man from Halifax*.

to talk square to you. You want to know how I'll feel if you are beaten well child except for you being disappointed and tired to death not one row of pins...except that we never gave up a fight yet I wouldn't mind if you put on your hat and left them tomorrow[.] it is better to fight as long as you are started and be beaten than not to fight at all. So keep up your courage and I'll go part of the way to meet you coming home win or lose they can't keep you from me much longer. John is very exercised to know why they should want another man instead of pa...

So now my old baby you must not be such an awful awful baby until you get home and then I'll see how far you can be indulged.⁶⁰

Annie wrote a similar letter to John in Ottawa, while he was a member of Parliament, in January 1886, in response to his complaints of loneliness.

Oh my Pet my Pet,

Can't you bully things out when I am trying to do so...Baby you break my heart, if you don't try to be more of a boss, and look this thing in the face and make the best of it for a little while until I can be with you.⁶¹

Annie's belief that a man could be weak and emotionally vulnerable in relationship to his wife is strongly reflected in her correspondence with John. Lystra found the same idea expressed in many of the love letters between 19th-century middle class Americans.⁶² John Tosh also explored this theme in his study of Edward White Benson, arguing that the "alternation of mastery and dependence" in Benson's marriage to a woman 12 years his junior "exemplified the paradox which lay at the heart of bourgeois marriage in mid-nineteenth-century England".⁶³ And he cites historian David Pugh's notion of the 19th-century American husband as a "patriarchal child", a concept which embraces male public power and private vulnerability, as a useful one in reconciling these apparently contradictory ideals of manliness.⁶⁴

Fathers' relationships with their daughters revealed aspects of the patriarchal side of Pugh's characterization. In the writing of many middle-class Nova Scotian women, especially — but not exclusively — those in clergy households, fathers were accorded considerable power, and the good father emerges as one who took an active domestic role. A fatherly interest in the upbringing and education of children was an important pillar of mid-19th-century middle class masculinity, although

60 J.S.D. Thompson Papers, vol. 283, Annie to Thompson, 14 June, 1882 from Halifax, quoted in Waite, *The Man from Halifax*, p. 112.

61 J.S.D. Thompson Papers, vol. 283, Annie to Thompson, 9 Jan. 1866, quoted in Waite, *The Man from Halifax*, pp. 157-8.

62 Lystra, *Searching the Heart*.

63 Tosh, "Domesticity and Manliness", p. 56.

64 David G. Pugh, *Sons of Liberty: the Masculine Mind in Nineteenth-Century America* (Westport, 1983), pp. 83-8, cited in Tosh, "Domesticity and Manliness", p. 56.

18 *Acadiensis*

one often obscured by the late Victorian and Edwardian emphasis on mothering and a rigid delineation of public and private life.⁶⁵

For some daughters, attentive fathers provided important models of masculinity. Jane Sprott, the daughter of John Sprott, a Presbyterian minister living in Musquodoboit, began keeping a diary in February, 1837 when she was nine years old. The diary was, in fact, her father's idea and Jane "resolved to note down in this book any striking occurrence of any thing worthy of notice particularly to mark the goodness of God to myself and our family".⁶⁶ Many of the things she wrote about directly involved her father and her relationship with him, and others reflected John Sprott's well-publicized ideas about religion and education. Jane's mother offered her daughter a model of deep respect and love for her own father. In a letter home to her brother in 1841, she wrote:

I can never think of my father's memory but it does me good. The fond recollection of his virtue should keep us all from doing a thing mean or wicked or unworthy of him.⁶⁷

Jane's diary is certainly infused with the spirit of her father. She wrote about his role in family fireside education, reported trips taken in his company, and copied many of his letters to family, friends and colleagues into her diary. Whether this was because she admired them, or because she was the family clerk is unclear. When she wrote statements such as "Education is an introduction abroad and a companion at home. A poor Novascotian would rather sell his garment than leave his children without education"⁶⁸ or "Fireside education is of infinite importance and it gives form and colour to every texture in life",⁶⁹ she must have been highly influenced by her father, if not quoting him directly. Jane portrayed her father as capable of love, tenderness, laughter and hard work, and deeply interested in the spiritual and intellectual development of his children.

Shubenacadie teacher, historian and novelist Eliza Frame undoubtedly used her father as a model for the hero in her novel, *The Twilight of Faith*, published in 1872. The novel describes the spiritual journey of Mary Gray, a young woman who was devastated by the death of her husband. She was led to God by the ministrations of her brother-in-law. Through long months of gentle persuasion and example he was able to bring Mary into the Christian fold, restore her to her children and awaken in her an enthusiasm for helping others. In the story of Mary Gray, Eliza Frame expressed her gratitude to her father (who was, in contrast to Mary's brother-in-law, a farmer rather than a minister) for the spiritual instruction he had provided when she was growing up in the 1830s and 1840s. She dedicated the novel to her father, "who led me to Christ and taught me in all events to

65 Tosh, "Domesticity and Manliness", p. 44.

66 Diary of Jane Sprott, February 1837, PANS.

67 Letter from Jane Sprott senior to Rev. Mr. Neilson, Jane Sprott Diary, 7 February 1841, PANS.

68 Jane Sprott Diary, 2 April 1838, PANS.

69 Jane Sprott Diary, 9 January 1840, PANS.

recognize the Lord Jesus".⁷⁰

Women also created fictional father figures who were attentive to the instruction of their children. In some cases this practice served a double purpose, not only constructing an attentive and concerned father, but also lending male authority to the writers' words, especially when they were writing on subjects not generally regarded as within women's sphere. Eliza Frame, in *Descriptive Sketches of Nova Scotia in Prose and Verse*, and Miss Groves, in *Little Grace, or Scenes in Nova Scotia*, both created male voices to give authority to their work.⁷¹ In *Little Grace*, a history of the province aimed at young readers, Grace's father and brother generously and patronizingly explain historical events. Eliza Frame created a male narrator in *Descriptive Sketches of Nova Scotia* who recounted the travels of the imaginary Andrew Urban through the province.

Women called on men to exercise their power in the public sphere in the interests of women. In the 1870s, for example, two women teachers publicly appealed to men to use their power to protect them from exploitation and oppression in their employment. Both couched their requests in terms of male chivalry. One, in a letter published in the *Journal of Education* in 1871, argued that the fact that women were paid substantially less for their work than their male counterparts, no matter how effectively that work was performed, was a "sad commentary on the chivalry and gallantry of our countrymen".⁷² In 1874 a second woman teacher, whose letter was published in the *Halifax Daily Reporter and Times*, argued her case in the same terms. She complained bitterly about the lack of adequate wages and professional recognition accorded to women, and wrote that it was shocking that women were treated so badly because "one would suppose the chivalrous instincts of a *gentleman* would lead him to protect [women], not oppress [them]".⁷³ Whether or not these appeals were successful, they were intended to, and no doubt did, tap into the masculine ideals espoused by men. They acknowledged male power in their society and called on men to use it according to the ideals and dictates men themselves had created. By using this language, women were both criticizing men and offering them new ways of conforming to their own ideals of masculinity. For these women school teachers, the ideal man retained his power in the world but used it wisely and generously for the good of the women. It was, of course, a strategy with severe limitations for women, but it offered hope of redress in specific situations. Men, and women, familiar with the debates about the reform of married women's property law would have understood these appeals to chivalry. A number of the Nova Scotian politicians committed to legal reform were concerned with limiting the abuse of male power by men who did not accept middle class ideals of

70 Elizabeth Frame, *The Twilight of Faith*, 2nd edition (Toronto, 1872).

71 Eliza Frame, (writing as "A Nova Scotian"), *Descriptive Sketches of Nova Scotia in Prose and Verse* (Halifax, 1864); Miss Grove, *Little Grace, or Scenes in Nova Scotia* (Halifax, 1846).

72 "Female Teaching", *Journal of Education* (Nova Scotia), 36 (April 1871), p. 559.

73 *Halifax Daily Times and Reporter*, 12 January 1874.

20 *Acadiensis*

masculinity, and therefore threatened the basis of that power as good and natural.⁷⁴

Male power, independence and access to wealth were complex issues fraught with considerable tension for many middle class women. A man's power, wealth and status in the world had important ramifications for the women in his life, and had to be taken seriously by women. The attainment of some degree of wealth and public respectability was a necessary prerequisite for inclusion in the emerging middle class. But women rarely endorsed the pursuit of fame and fortune as appropriate activities, and the belief that wealth, and even the pursuit of wealth, could corrupt a man emerged frequently. Mary Eliza Herbert, as was her habit, took a strong stand on this question. In "Lucy Cameron" the narrator commented:

The trappings of wealth are very pleasant things doubtless to possess, but then if one should buy them too dearly, I am afraid it would be likely to tarnish their value.⁷⁵

All the male characters in her novels who actively sought wealth were villains. Lawyer Levitt, who we already know had no interest in art or nature, lived only to make money at the expense of others. Lucy Cameron's husband, "a shrewd, hard business man", was another greedy, ambitious villain. He speculated in gold mining stocks, a timely activity in Nova Scotia in the 1850s, and one fraught with great symbolic resonance. Mr. Cameron dreamed of becoming a millionaire but "[m]aking haste to be rich" was Mr. Cameron's downfall, and his wealth soon "took itself wings and fled away".⁷⁶

Herbert did not resolve the tension between the need for wealth and the evils of pursuing it. Wealth and independence came easily to her heroes, too often in the form of an unexpected legacy. In *Belinda Dalton*, the death of a distant relative provided Captain Elton with enough money to marry Belinda and to "allow her to contribute largely to the relief of her fellow creatures".⁷⁷ Belinda and her father were equally delighted with his proposal. Ralph Maynard, Lucy Cameron's second husband, had a private income whose source was never disclosed, and he supplemented it with the income from an unidentified profession. In "Emily Linwood" both of Emily's suitors inherited money.

Other women offered more complex responses to the question of wealth. In *The Twilight of Faith*, Mary Gray found her vocation in helping the young men who had come to the city in search of fame and fortune to avoid the moral temptations the city offered. Fame represented a widely held construction of masculinity which suggested another duality in the male character. Young men were vulnerable to moral temptation, but also had the capacity to resist it and to pursue pure and

74 Philip Girard and Rebecca Veinott, "Married Women's Property Law in Nova Scotia, 1850-1910", in Janet Guildford and Suzanne Morton, eds., *Separate Spheres: Women's Worlds in the 19th Century Maritimes* (Fredericton, 1994), pp. 67-92.

75 Herbert, "Lucy Cameron", p. 3.

76 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

77 Herbert, *Belinda Dalton*, p. 42.

wholesome lives. By the early 1870s, when Frame wrote her novel, the idea of the moral mother had gained considerable currency, and Frame created, in Mary Gray, a character who embodied that role.⁷⁸ Mary invited young men to her home on Sunday evenings for hymn singing and tea drinking, and created such an attractive and welcoming atmosphere with her Christian love that many young men were delighted to abandon their previous Sunday night haunts.⁷⁹

But Mary Gray supported her missionary enthusiasms with money she had inherited from her husband. Frame did not tell her readers the source of Edward Gray's wealth. As in Herbert's work, there is the suggestion that the morally upright are rewarded by material comfort. In her "Memoir of the Reverend James Murdoch", a pioneering Presbyterian minister and a relative, written for the Nova Scotia Historical Society, Frame argued that his life and his legacy proved "that the heritage of prayer is more enduring than the heritage of money".⁸⁰ Both Herbert and Frame sidestep some very central questions about middle class masculinity.

They evaded questions of manly independence and worldly success which were directly addressed in the intimate and revealing memoir written by P.S. Hamilton, an ambitious Nova Scotian-born farm boy who moved to Halifax in his early 20s to make his mark as a journalist and a lawyer. Resembling Rotundo's "masculine achiever" much more closely than any of the characters created or discussed by the women writers, Hamilton strove to be regarded as "*a gentleman and a man of honor*", to protect his personal independence and integrity and to accumulate wealth and honour in the public sphere.⁸¹ Hamilton consistently refused the help of mentors and colleagues because he feared their support would compromise his autonomy. He never found the success or the wealth he sought. His career as a lawyer and journalist brought him limited success, but his speculations in Nova Scotian gold-mining stocks, like those of Herbert's fictional Mr. Cameron, were an unmitigated disaster.⁸²

Halifax journalist, lawyer and politician William Garvie, described by a contemporary as "full of bright kindly life, with a countenance betokening a man of deep thought and sympathies" and "deeply religious", had many qualities associated with the "Christian gentleman" and would have been much more acceptable to the women writers.⁸³ He articulated his ideas about manliness in an address to the North British Society in 1871 on "The Genius of [Sir Walter]

78 For a discussion of this process see Poovey, *Uneven Developments*, pp. 10-11.

79 Frame, *The Twilight of Faith*.

80 Eliza Frame, "Memoir of the Reverend James Murdoch", Nova Scotia Historical Society, *Collections*, vol. II (1881).

81 P.S. Hamilton Diary, MG1, vol. 335, PANS.

82 Hamilton, "P.S. Hamilton", pp. 405-7; After some years as an itinerant journalist and newspaper editor, he died poor and alone in a Halifax boardinghouse of an overdose of laudanum. Waite, "A Nova Scotian in Toronto, 1858".

83 Biographical Notes: William Garvie, *Annals of the North British Society of Halifax, Nova Scotia* (Halifax, 1905), p. 456; P.B. Waite, "William Garvie", *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, X (Toronto, 1972), pp. 300-1.

Scott".⁸⁴ Garvie was impressed that Scott "had his whole life so regulated by a high standard of moral control, he had all his emotions so well disciplined".⁸⁵

Garvie also admired Scott's chivalrous attitude towards women, and reminded his listeners that Scott "produced in his writings only a higher ideal of womanhood to grace his song and to sparkle forth in the pages of his romances".⁸⁶ Employing one of the standard conventions of mid-19th-century literary criticism, he contrasted the chivalrous Scott with Byron, "who turned and mutilated all the purer and all the lovelier elements in woman's nature".⁸⁷ But Garvie was also very impressed with Scott's sense of financial responsibility and independence, and told his audience about Scott's ceaseless efforts to recover from the brink of bankruptcy.⁸⁸ An honourable independence in public affairs was an important aspect of manliness to William Garvie.

Nova Scotian women writers found ways to impart special meaning to the power accorded to middle class men in the family and in public life. Their construction of the ideal man often emphasized a protectiveness and generosity towards women which simultaneously acknowledged male power and created limits and constraints on it. Calls for male chivalry rested on an acknowledgement of male power, and enabled men to construct a masculine identity based, at least in part, on using their power for the protection of women and children. Many men, including William Garvie, found this an attractive ideal, and other historians have noted its continuing resonance for men. Carolyn Strange, for example, has examined the meaning of chivalry in the murder trials of two women in Toronto, one in 1895, another in 1907.⁸⁹

Middle class Nova Scotian women's writing provides us with considerable insight into their ideas about how they thought men should act towards women and children of their own class, but it also tells us a great deal about the construction of the boundaries that defined appropriate middle class behaviour and attitudes. Mary Eliza Herbert's anti-aristocratic ideas, especially present in her condemnation of effeminate, superficial men, suggests the importance of distinguishing middle class values from those of the aristocracy by claiming the moral high ground as exclusively belonging to the middle class. Women were active participants in creating a white Anglo-American middle class identity, and helped to define who was "the other" through their writing. Clotilda Jennings' depiction of Henri Pontrincourt as a man who did not understand that women were to be trusted completely by men marked off the cultural differences between Anglo-Nova

84 William Garvie, "The Genius of Scott", *Annals of the North British Society* (1905), pp. 429-51.

85 *Ibid.*, p. 434.

86 *Ibid.*, p. 434.

87 *Ibid.* For the comparison with Byron see Ira Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History and the Waverley Novels* (Ithaca and London, 1991), p. 243.

88 Garvie, "The Genius of Scott".

89 Carolyn Strange, "Wounded Womanhood and Dead Men: Chivalry and the Trials of Clara Ford and Carrie Davies", in Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde, *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History* (Toronto, 1992), pp. 149-88.

Scotians and Acadians. Mary Jane Katzmann Lawson's racist descriptions of African Nova Scotian men in her history of the Dartmouth area also reinforced exclusionary ideas.

We can only speculate about the influence women's writing had in shaping middle class ideals of masculinity, although the attention historians have paid to male prescriptive literature about the nature of women demands at least equal time. Literary women's attention to the conventions of genre provided a comfortable framework for their readers to consider their ideas. The use of familiar rhetorical devices, such as calls for male chivalry, also traded on forms that readers could assimilate. Women's daily relationships with men and their power to reject unsuitable men as husbands suggest that women's ideas about masculinity would have some impact. And the power increasingly accorded to them, over the course of the 19th-century, as moral guardians gave them greater credibility when they drew social boundaries which excluded men from middle class status for moral violations. The fact that the ideals that emerge from their writing constructed a masculinity with specific class, ethnic and racial dimensions also contributed to their persuasiveness. Their assertions about gender were more convincing because they were made in the context of an inclusive middle class identity, attached to a cluster of ideas in a way that made their ideas about masculinity more acceptable. Women's writing provides valuable insights into the ways in which women and men together created a middle-class identity and established the moral justification for middle-class social, economic and political hegemony.

But women were denied explicit legal, economic and familial bases of power in mid-19th century society by the gender ideals prescribed to men and women. Their constructions of a masculine ideal which emphasized compassion, love and trust for women, can be understood as attempts to influence male behaviour both inside and outside the family. The fact that their ideal men had characteristics more often associated with feminine ideals suggests that women recognized the value of the traits assigned to them, and that they hoped to see these ideals permeate middle class culture. Nova Scotian women participated actively in negotiating and constructing masculine ideals and middle class culture.