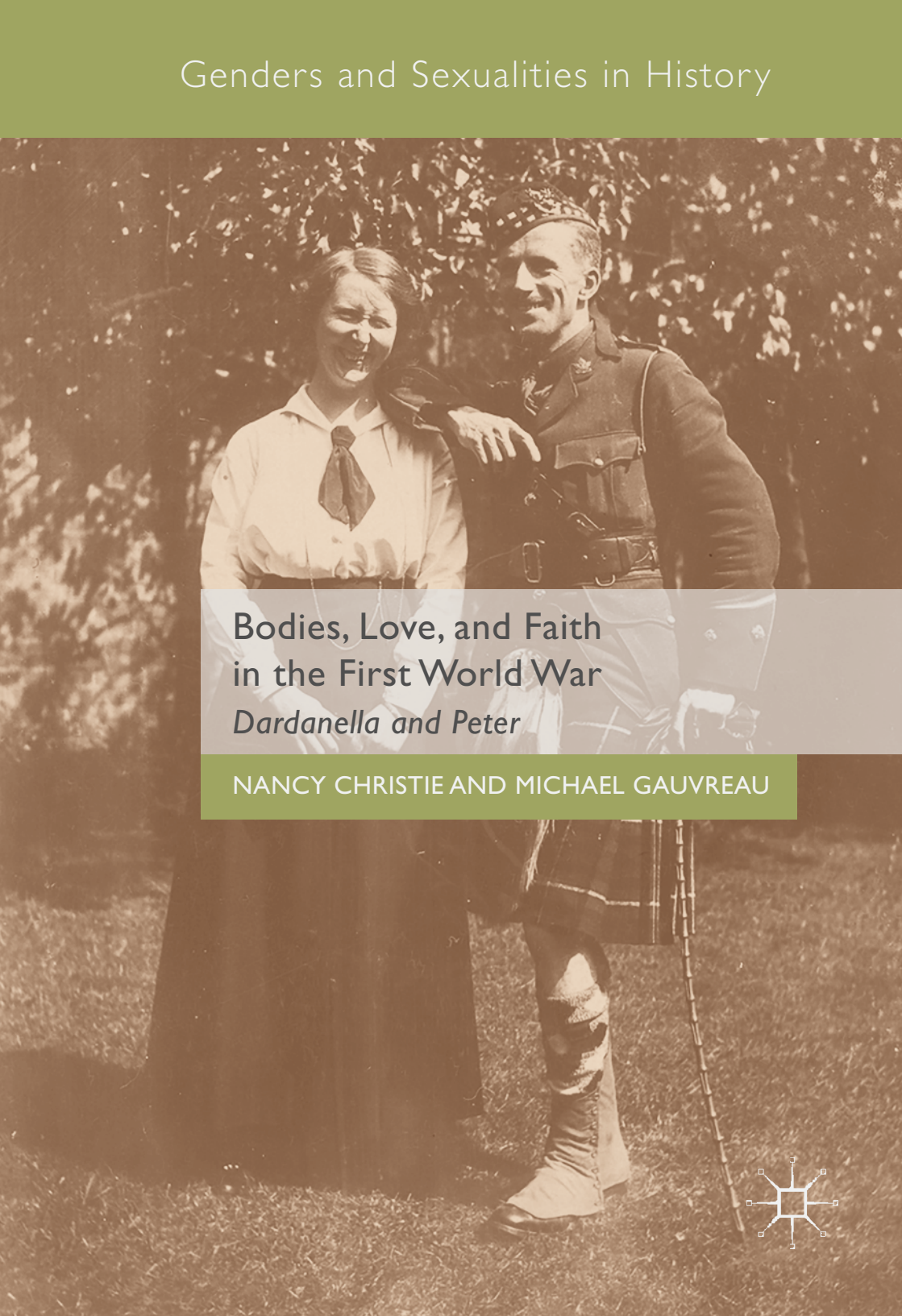


Genders and Sexualities in History



**Bodies, Love, and Faith
in the First World War**
Dardanella and Peter

NANCY CHRISTIE AND MICHAEL GAUVREAU



Genders and Sexualities in History

Series Editors
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King's College
University of Cambridge
Cambridge, UK

Sean Brady
Birkbeck College
University of London
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Nancy Christie • Michael Gauvreau

Bodies, Love, and Faith in the First World War

Dardanella and Peter

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Nancy Christie
University of Western Ontario
London, ON, Canada

Michael Gauvreau
McMaster University
Hamilton, ON, Canada

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Cover illustration: Harry and Gwyneth in the garden at Sunnyside just before their marriage in May 1916. Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada

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For Deryck M. Schreuder
Eminent scholar of Victorianism

SERIES EDITOR PREFACE

The history of sexuality and modernity is one of the most dynamic fields in gender studies. Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau's *Bodies, Love, and Faith in the First World War: Dardanella and Peter* is a particularly exciting contribution to this literature because it looks at the 'big questions' of romantic love, carnality, and modernity through the lens of an aspiring clergyman Harry Logan and suffragist Gwyneth Murray. This Edwardian couple struggle to negotiate new mores associated with emotional receptivity, sexual expressiveness, Christian ethics, Freudianism, and parenthood. Separated as a result of the First World War, they explore their sexuality by adopting the personae of Dardanella and Peter, writing as their vagina and penis. Their experiences show how the transition from Victorianism to the modern world was often contested and always incomplete. In common with all the volumes in the Gender and Sexualities in History series, *Bodies, Love, and Faith in the First World War* is a multifaceted and meticulously researched scholarly study. It is an exciting contribution to our understanding of gender and sexuality in the past.

Cambridge, UK
London, UK
London, UK

John Arnold
Joanna Bourke
Sean Brady

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Our research and writing of this transatlantic love story has greatly benefited from the advice and suggestions of colleagues in the wider British world who sought to know more about a treasure-trove of personal experience. Nancy Christie had initially thought to write a short article on the wartime letters of Harry and Gwyneth, and without the perceptive suggestion of Dr. Mark Boda of the Divinity College, McMaster University, who thought that the letters sounded sufficiently intriguing to support a larger project, we may never have thought of writing a book. Dr. Alana Harris of University College, London, has been an enthusiastic supporter from the beginning, offering a number of perceptive insights, as has our series editor, Dr. Sean Brady of Birkbeck College, London, whose searching questions about the Oxford and Cambridge contexts of Harry and Gwyneth's lives prompted us to think more deeply about the terrain of gender and emotion. And we are particularly grateful to the participants in the Religion and Sexualities Conference held at the University of Nottingham in the spring of 2017, where Drs. Harry Cocks, Dominic Janes, Jacqueline DeVries and Sue Morgan provided stimulating commentary and advice. We owe a particular debt to Professor Bill Reddy of Duke University, who offered a number of suggestions of key texts on the history of love, but also contributed greatly to clarifying our thinking on a number of points relating to the history of emotions. We would also like to thank Dr. Rosemary Annable for sharing her research on the Christian student camps at Baslow, and for providing hospitality during several visits to Britain. We are grateful to these wonderful colleagues who have generously provided advice and good counsel.

Every historian knows the degree to which their work benefits from the assistance of knowledgeable archivists and librarians. Hannah Westall, archivist of Girton College Archives, unearthed several vital sources which have allowed us to greatly enrich Gwyneth's experience at Girton, after Harry destroyed her own letters written from Cambridge. Melissa Downing, archivist of Rhodes House, provided access to Harry Logan's extensive biographical file, while Michael Riordan, archivist of St. John's College, Oxford, answered our queries and provided documents related to student life at the College. Candice Bjur, of the University of British Columbia Archives, was invaluable in researching their holdings of the extensive Logan collection. At McMaster University, Kim Pickett of the Interlibrary Loans Department, graciously and promptly handled our incessant requests for Edwardian periodicals and books on the history of sexuality.

Our greatest intellectual debts are, first to our editor, Sean Brady, who from the inception of this project engaged enthusiastically with its aims and is a testament to the truism that a book is only as good as its editor. Our thanks to the entire Palgrave Macmillan team for bringing this book so smoothly and expeditiously to publication. This book would not have been written in as timely a fashion nor with as much joy, but for the constant inspiring presence of Nancy Christie's former supervisor at the University of Sydney, Professor Deryck M. Schreuder, who first introduced her to all things Victorian and not only generously read the entire manuscript, but also provided us with so many perceptive comments. It is very rare to encounter someone who so fully immersed himself in Harry and Gwyneth's world of love, as they made their journey out of the confines of Victorianism. When Deryck was not reading the chapters, he kept us apprised of new work in the field, but most importantly, kept our spirits buoyed up and our attention focused with a steady stream of humorous writings on the vagaries of love and sex. Nancy Christie in particular wishes to honour him for a lifetime of "care and consideration" for helping enrich her scholarship, and it is with heartfelt thanks that we wish to dedicate this book to him.

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ABBREVIATIONS

G	Gwyneth (Murray) Logan
GCA	Girton College Archives
GF	W.L. Grant Fonds
H	Harry Logan
HTLFP	Harry Tremaine Logan Family Papers
LAC	Library and Archives Canada
LF	Logan Fonds
MMUA	McMaster University Archives
MUA	McGill University Archives
UBCA	University of British Columbia Archives

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Making Love Sexual in the Edwardian Age

“The inner laws of the sex-passion, of love, and of all human relationships—must gradually appear and take the lead, since they alone are the powers which can create and uphold a rational society; and that the outer laws—since they are dead and lifeless things—must inevitably disappear. Real love is only possible in the freedom of society; and freedom is only possible when love is a reality.”
Edward Carpenter, *Love’s Coming of Age* (1896)

One of the few things that Gwyneth Murray and Harry Logan were able to agree upon was that a biography of them would be difficult to write. In response to Harry’s observation that biographers would come to grief in trying to reconcile their intimate selves, Gwyneth averred: “Yes our biographer *will* have a very difficult task but what an exceptionally interesting one it will be! Two such wonderful people as you and me to biograph!!”¹ This, however, is not a biography in the conventional sense of narrating an entire life course; rather, it is a biography of a relationship,² a microstudy of subjective attitudes to sexual love and their intersection with Edwardian culture.

Like the modernist novel, this book ventures directly into the flow of the relationship of this young couple, and explores letters which recount mundane everyday states of mind which have no fixed beginning and no resolved endings.³ By exploring the complexities, tensions and gender

conflicts inherent in modern courtship and marriage as told through the story of the romance of Dardanella and Peter, this book offers one of the first sustained treatments of how heterosexual identities were both articulated and contested in early twentieth-century Britain. This book continues a scholarly conversation launched by William Reddy, which interprets attitudes to sexual desire and romantic love as historically contingent, and shows how these two entities, viewed as dichotomous for centuries,⁴ were brought into closer proximity as seen through the lived experience of a young married couple. In using the remarkably frank and emotionally charged correspondence of Gwyneth Murray, the youngest daughter of Sir James Murray, the famous editor of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, and her fiancé Harry Logan, an aspiring clergyman from Canada, it seeks to uncover the ways in which the language of love changed between the Victorian era and the Edwardian age. In assessing how the coded language of religion gave way to explicit sex talk, our study contributes to furthering our understanding of how sexual love became culturally central as Britain entered World War I.⁵

This is a book about the courtship and marriage of an Edwardian couple who wrote in the persona of their vagina (Dardanella) and penis (Peter) during World War I. From the first stirrings of sexual lust in 1911, when Peter began to imagine Dardanella's erotic body while advising about weight loss, to the more explicit sex-talk about her vagina, breasts, nipples, pubic hair and marble limbs following their marriage in 1916, this aspiring clergyman and his British fiancée sought to develop a modern language of love and erotic desire which threw off Victorian moral sensibilities in favour of a more open mode of expression that evoked the pleasures of sex. Their correspondence spanned an era bracketed by Virginia Woolf's celebrated aphorism that "human character changed on or about December 1910"⁶ and the publication of Lytton Strachey's famous psychological study *Eminent Victorians*. The couple avidly read Strachey because it encapsulated their own journey of reflection and self-discovery and confirmed their personal break with the sexual mores and conventions of their parents' generation. Because their first-person epistolary discussion of their courtship and marriage paralleled those broader cultural developments within the Edwardian temperament, usually encompassed under the term "modern", their personal experience serves as a critical vantage point from which to assess how Edwardian culture was read, appropriated and lived by ordinary men and women of the middle classes.

The idea for writing *Dardanella and Peter* began with the following question: how did the experience of higher education for women affect the gender dynamics of courtship and marriage in the first decades of the twentieth century? The marvellous “archive of feeling”⁷ generated by the extensive correspondence of Harry and Gwyneth was discovered by Nancy Christie in the winter of 2014. As a scholar of the Victorian family, her curiosity was piqued when she encountered Harry’s first letter in which he was so obviously erotically fantasizing about Gwyneth’s entire body even as he cautioned her against getting fat. Christie immediately sensed an engagement with love and sex which was distinctly at odds with Victorian sensibilities which enjoined reticence and prudence about love and its relationship to the body. As she was to discover, Harry and Gwyneth first met while he was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford. Harry was a Canadian son of the manse and was himself aspiring to become a Presbyterian clergyman when he met Gwyneth who was a stellar student at Girton College, later achieving a coveted First in the Cambridge Maths Tripos. Like her mother and older sister Hilda, Gwyneth sympathized with the cause of women’s suffrage and believed in the intellectual equality of the sexes. Gwyneth was alive to new cultural stirrings, being drawn to the work of Henri Bergson and other exponents of vitalism, the new psychology and the new theology; as an amateur artist she was drawn to post-impressionism. Like many of her contemporaries at Girton, Gwyneth avidly read and discussed the sexually liberated *Ann Veronica*, the eponymous heroine of H.G. Wells’ novel, and while she accepted the new feminism in which individual freedom for women was linked to greater sexual satisfaction, she rebuffed other symbols of female emancipation, such as shorter skirts and the jettisoning of restrictive corsets. However, she ultimately believed that women’s emancipation could be achieved through love and marriage, hoping that ideally she could combine these with a career.

Although she was known in her family circle for her shyness and reserve, she was always welcomed as a cheerful addition to the family because of her voluble humour and sense of fun. This is perhaps what first drew her to Harry, who was also known as a prankster, but who was more emotionally volatile in contrast to the confident and strong-minded Gwyneth. Harry was loquacious both in personal conversation and in his letter-writing, and as Gwyneth later related, upon his death in 1971, he was “chattering right up to the end”. He was later memorialized as a “prince among men” with a “secret mischievous grin”, usually holding a “cheerful cigar”. Although a Rhodes Scholar, he likely won the award because of his prow-

ess on the track rather than for his academic accomplishments. However, when we first meet him he was puritanical and priggish, especially on issues of intemperance and sexual excess, as one might expect from someone raised in a strict Presbyterian home and ambitious for a clerical career. Harry presented himself in his correspondence as boisterous in personality, but he was also given to much introspection and bouts of depression, caused in part by the great pressure to succeed imposed upon him by his demanding father. The fact that he had a stutter may also have contributed to the lack of confidence and maturity which were self-evident during his courtship with Gwyneth. He was demanding and paternalistic in his attitude towards women, persistently picturing his fiancée as a sympathetic helpmeet, much like his mother, despite Gwyneth's demand that she be treated like a real human being with her own needs.

Gwyneth and Harry may have shared a family background in evangelical Protestantism, which led to an ideal of religious service in missionary work, but in other respects their families were poles apart. Gwyneth was the youngest of eleven children from a prestigious Oxford family and remained emotionally distant not only from her parents but from her siblings, attributing her undemonstrative nature to the English public schools. Indeed, she revelled in her reserve as a sign of her rebellion against the standard image of the hysterical woman. By contrast, Harry was the younger of two brothers, and possessed a particularly intense bond with his indulgent mother. However, he also seemed to enjoy what he termed a "teasing" relationship with his father, whom he both admired and resented because he wished Harry to replicate his own career. Although Harry was raised in a well-known Presbyterian family in Vancouver, he was attracted to marrying into the Murray family for its prospects of upward mobility, but he nevertheless remained painfully conscious of the status differential between them. However, for both Gwyneth and Harry, attending university was a transformative experience, exposing them to an exciting spectrum of new ideas and permitting them to enjoy the comradeship of a youthful peer group that functioned as a counterweight to familial constraints. To an unparalleled degree, Oxford and Cambridge symbolized freedom to choose their friends and ideas, and was remembered by both of them as the most memorable time of their lives.⁸

In 1911, Harry and Gwyneth became secretly engaged but it was a courtship that remained a long-distance one until they married in the spring of 1916, when Harry, an officer in the Canadian Machine Gun Corps, was posted to the Western Front. As a result, their personal archive contains

over 2000 letters written daily between 1911 and 1919, providing an unrivalled account of the psychological and emotional dimension of courtship and marriage in the Edwardian era. In so far as their correspondence involved a remarkably self-conscious engagement with a wide spectrum of emotions, including sexual desire, anxiety, frustration, anger and even shattered nerves, the letters of these two ordinary middle-class youth coming of age in Edwardian Britain are comparable to the vividness and psychological immediacy of those exchanged between Sigmund Freud and Martha Bernays during their own lengthy courtship, a correspondence characterized as among the great love literature of the world.⁹ Although the sexually explicit wartime letters are compelling in terms of what they convey about male and female sexuality within marriage, the courtship letters are no less interesting for the ways in which they increase our understanding of gender conflicts over issues of sexual love; perceptions of femininity and masculinity; the value of psychology, interiority and sexuality and their relation to religious faith; concepts of the body; and aspirations about marriage.

In an era when courtship was beginning to be seen as a testing period for mutual self-discovery, personal letters became more explicitly psychological in tenor. These, in turn, had to register a “constant out-pouring” of their hearts so that their relationship might evolve; when her letter was lost on the *Titanic*,¹⁰ panic and insecurity ensued. Additionally, because Harry was a particular devotee of the new psychology, with its emphasis upon emotional introspection, he was particularly censorious of Gwyneth when her letters were “external” and did not address love and relationships as a psychological journey of self-discovery. As a result, he threw out all her letters written from Cambridge between September 1911 and the summer of 1912, dismissing them as merely chatty. Other than this gap, their correspondence is remarkably complete, and is a testament to the intense psychic fragility of young men and women caught between two ages, especially those confronting an unfamiliar landscape of changing sexual mores, gender identities and attitudes to love and marriage.

The central problem confronting this betrothed couple was how to evolve a novel language of love, which could effectively convey their mutual sexual desire and at the same time comport with prevailing codes of respectability. One of the Victorian conventions regarding epistolary etiquette was that the personal letter was often meant as a communal one to be read by friends and family. By contrast, viewing themselves as moderns for whom the private sphere was entirely sacrosanct, Harry and Gwyneth sought to protect their intimate relationship by developing their

own codes and euphemisms for denoting sexual love. Therefore, like them, the modern researcher must cultivate the art of “reading between the lines”.¹¹ However, during their courtship, the need to obfuscate often led to more friction within an already tempestuous long-distance relationship, especially when they had only met face to face on a handful of occasions prior to their engagement. Thus, when Harry spoke about “religion”, Gwyneth took him at face value. In actual fact, he was using the concept of religious passion to speak of sexual ecstasy. If such misunderstandings plagued two people so intimately enmeshed in their own peculiar linguistic codes, the historian is faced with the often frustrating task of mastering various idioms within the letters that were consciously intended to conceal, both during their extended courtship when they feared parental scrutiny of their correspondence, and during World War I, when the necessity of evading the censor again led to the invention of a secret but playful language to describe sexual longing.

One of the challenges of reading such densely written letters, in which their ideas of love were wrapped in a cloak of private jokes, often obscure literary allusions, and religio-philosophical ruminations, has been to delineate the full register of meanings and to place these in conversation with the wider Edwardian culture. As voracious readers, Gwyneth and Harry were acutely attuned to changing cultural attitudes, and their letters are particularly illuminating for the way in which they demonstrate how personal experience functions in constant dialogue with prevailing cultural scripts. This allows for a precise analysis of how they both unconsciously internalized and consciously deployed these codes as a means of speaking about love and sexual desire in an era rich in evolving new languages of sexual love. Their daily correspondence provides a unique window into how ordinary men and women of the Edwardian middle classes made the transition from Victorian to modern, in which sexuality became the foundation of personal identity and the touchstone for modern marriage, one based on the ideal of gender mutuality and emotional intimacy.

As Gwyneth once wryly commented, she had never seen anyone of their generation “with quite the mania for hoarding letters” as Harry did. One of the reasons the couple preserved the corpus of their letters in almost their full entirety, including the sexually explicit wartime letters, was so that they could reread them in later years as “we sit, soul with soul, in our own bright & cheery drawing-room”, reminding them of “the progress I have made along the journey of life, of how my understanding

and consequent usefulness has increased with all the love of my own darling to deepen and enrich my life's course and with her pure life beside me to make me understand the meaning, the holiness and sacredness of life".¹² Harry's reflection upon letters as an *aide-mémoire* demonstrates the way in which the couple sought to create new emotional protocols, ones that now firmly embraced notions of interiority and more overt emotional expression that were in contradistinction to Victorian notions of emotional and bodily restraint. Their daily correspondence therefore offers an unparalleled portrait of evolving psychological and emotional states and their gendered complexion, thus allowing the historian to document the emotional life of an era in which the religious passions were giving way to a more explicit recognition of sexual emotions. Many historians, most notably Michael Roper, have recently called for the study of first-person documents as an antidote to the overemphasis upon using normative scripts as evidence of subjectivity,¹³ which has tended to confine the study of emotions to the periphery of the historical discipline.¹⁴ Roper, in turn, has identified the emergence of the psychological or emotionally intense letter with the trauma of World War I. However, as our work shows, this turn towards interiority was well under way in the decades prior to the experience of the trenches, and equally significantly, this process occurred within the context of conjugal rather than maternal love. As we conclude, World War I in fact repressed this Edwardian psychological turn, for all emotions, including fear and anxiety, were channelled into sexual desire and longing.

In privileging inner thoughts over external events, in placing love at the core of life, and in deifying personal relationships in which the romantic and sexual relations of man and woman were deemed the most important, Gwyneth and Harry stood as typical modern Edwardians who occupied a similar cultural terrain as the more celebrated Bloomsbury circle. However, they never advocated free love nor would they have perceived themselves to be sexual radicals as did this literary and artistic avant-garde, even though they were influenced by similar systems of thought, drawn as they were to the works of H.G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw, Robert Louis Stevenson, Edward Carpenter, Henrik Ibsen, Walt Whitman, E.F. Benson and J.M. Barrie. They drew eclectically from a range of thinkers and writers and their correspondence reveals the influence of journals such as *Common Cause*, *The Freewoman*, *Eugenics Review*, *Punch*, *The Hibbert Review* and *Modern Man*, which exposed them to the ideas of the new sciences of sexology and psychology, although it was

likely that given Harry's facility in reading German that he had already encountered the writing of German psychologists and sexologists, including the work of Sigmund Freud. As was typical of Edwardians, they read these modern thinkers alongside Victorian worthies such as George Eliot, Thomas Carlyle, Charles Kingsley and Matthew Arnold. However, even though Harry had briefly considered a medical career and frequently perused the *British Medical Journal*, the couple's ideas concerning the body, sex and love owed more to the Victorian and Edwardian literary canon and religious writing rather than to the treatises of medical experts.¹⁵ Indeed, popular novels had such an enormous impact upon Harry and Gwyneth that it prompted the disclaimer that they were not merely actors in novels, which expressed a typical anxiety of Edwardians who were all too aware of the emerging idea of multiple or divided personalities. Indeed, much as did the murderess Edith Thompson, studied by Matthew Houlbrook,¹⁶ our couple used imaginative fiction to talk about their own feelings when they experienced difficulties in articulating a new language of love which spoke to the centrality of sexual desire and pleasure. Thus, as inveterate consumers of popular fiction and journalism, their pursuit of self-knowledge reflected a deep immersion in Edwardian cultural currents.

However, it should be stressed that cultural scripts served merely as a resource rather than a template, and were employed merely to help the couple explain the various dilemmas they experienced over issues of gender authority, the meaning of same sex friendships, sexual compatibility, how to define comradeship in marriage, and to resolve the ever-present question as to when they would get married. Thus, the intertwined lives of Harry and Gwyneth are a powerful testament to the priority of personal experience over cultural discourse in the making of modern values, and impels a more nuanced reading of the complex ways in which ordinary people read literature and integrated it into their self-identity, accepting some elements while rejecting or transforming others to suit their own subjective experience.¹⁷

Lytton Strachey's own vision of modernity as a complete and decisive rupture with the Victorian age has animated much of the subsequent historiography on the emergence of modern sexual values. Such an approach has highlighted the role played by sexual radicals on the political left.¹⁸ The life experience of Gwyneth and Harry demonstrates that new systems of thought could arise out of more conventional quarters and were more often than not accommodated to more traditional moral and religious

frameworks. As their courtship evolved, the couple increasingly rejected the Victorian precepts with which they were raised as children, but in the midst of World War I when, as a married couple, their explicit references to masturbation, oral sex, sexual positions and the adoption of jolly names to personify their genitals indicated a wholesale enjoyment of sexual pleasure, they continued to consider sexual intercourse as a means to achieving a higher spiritual self. While the story of Gwyneth's and Harry's personal lives demonstrates that modern attitudes to sex and love could emerge out of relatively conventional social milieus, their frequently strained courtship also illustrates that the journey from a Victorian to a modern outlook was often more protracted, contested and incomplete than those historians who have relied upon more static and monolithic texts have been prepared to acknowledge.¹⁹ A more rigorous attention to first-person accounts of modern sexuality, which this book undertakes, not only addresses the wide gap in our knowledge concerning "normal" or "conventional" sexuality,²⁰ but it reverses historical conventions which have posited the trajectory of social change as emanating from the realm of prescriptive discourses, and questions the centrality of these for the construction of personal experience.

By exploring the realm of personal experience and its engagement with the broader culture, this book advances the argument that there is a need to revise interpretations which have seen the publication of Marie Stopes' *Married Love* in 1918 as the progenitor of the idea that sexual pleasure was the key to marital success.²¹ As Clare Langhamer has argued, these ideas of romantic love, which became widespread in British culture by the end of the 1940s, involved a new emphasis upon courtship and marriage as a means for self-realization, imbued as modern couples were by an insistence upon introspection and emotional authenticity.²² These then led to an acceptance of the sexual openness so identified with the Swinging Sixties.²³ When viewed from the perspective of the relationship of Gwyneth Murray and Harry Logan who were a few years younger than the author of *Married Love*, Marie Stopes' book seems more of a synthesis of prevailing ideas rather than a landmark publication. Her supposedly revolutionary ideas about sexual mutuality in marriage would not have been revelatory to Gwyneth or Harry; they would have shared her vision of female sexual pleasure, and like her were familiar with the work of Edward Carpenter, Ellen Key and Havelock Ellis. Given their intense enjoyment of sex, which they believed was fundamental to marital harmony, Harry and Gwyneth's own lived experience was well in advance of Stopes' vision of

liberalized sexuality.²⁴ As to Stopes' view that sex and romantic love must be combined within a successful marriage, Gwyneth and Harry had quarrelled over this issue and finally resolved it in a marriage full of joyful sexual experiences, the range of which far surpassed anything conceived of by Stopes, and one that in no way accorded with her assessment of British middle-class marriage as being in a deplorable state. Setting aside the question as to when working-class people began to participate in this modern sexual revolution—although Jonathan Rose has shown that working-class men and women began to read Freud and Ellis as well as Marie Stopes during the 1920s²⁵—it is clear that modern notions of love and marriage, including the key role played by sexual intercourse, had reached a mass audience by the 1940s. Our evidence clearly shows, however, that this putative emphasis upon introspection and emotional self-examination by couples was already occurring on or about 1910, just as Virginia Woolf herself had assumed.

This then raises the question of periodization when addressing the transition from Victorian to modern values. It has become commonplace to view World War I as the hinge for modernity,²⁶ so that the 1920s has come to be recognized as a decade in which sexual freedom, the slim figure, the psychologized self and the recognition of the homosexual/heterosexual dichotomy crystallized.²⁷ Not only does Stephen Kern identify the immediate postwar period as one in which blatant, even crude, descriptions of sexual organs and explicit sexual language entered into the work of D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce and T.S. Eliot, but literary historians have all too readily accepted, as Samuel Hynes contends, Virginia Woolf's abrupt excision of the Edwardians from her concept of high modernity.²⁸ The image of the 1920s—the jazz age—with its evocation of the slim-hipped flapper with bobbed hair which has become synonymous with cultural modernity has remained largely intact, although more recently, scholars such as Ana Carden-Coyne have shown the way in which the war bequeathed a cultural legacy which combined traditional and modern features.²⁹ We do not wish to wholly discard the theoretical lens of viewing the emergence of modernity through changing generational sensibilities, but we do dissent from the notion that forms of modernism were merely the creation of the cataclysmic experience of war. After all, Gwyneth unquestioningly deployed the term “generation” prior to World War I. Edwardian England itself was riven by generational tension, and because of this Strachey's classic *Eminent Victorians*, although published during the last months of the war, much like Marie Stopes' *Married Love*, prop-

erly belongs to the cultural ferment of pre-war England, especially when one considers that he began the book between 1910 and 1912. Like Harry and Gwyneth, Strachey's restiveness with Victorian platitudes began while he was a university student at Cambridge, where as a member of the now famous Cambridge Apostles he would have been exposed to novel ideas and heretical discussions, all the while coming to terms with his own sexual preference for men. By contrast with Strachey and the Bloomsbury Circle, whose prurience about actual sex, despite their voluble sex talk, placed them closer to the Victorians,³⁰ Harry and Gwyneth had advanced further along the path to modernity than these well-known sexual radicals. Indeed, our couple talked the talk and walked the walk, albeit within the safe confines of marriage.

What they did share with the sexual avant-garde was a readiness to view the previous generation and its values as hopelessly obsolete and old-fashioned. In their letters they constantly juxtaposed old and new, as did Vera Brittain when she stated: "Things just at this moment of history are so very new & so very wonderful to us poor slaves of the ages, that a person who is modern at all cannot help but be very modern indeed."³¹ What is significant is that in 1913, prior to World War I, she and others of her age group already possessed an explicit consciousness of being moderns. When Gwyneth and Harry finally perused *Eminent Victorians* in 1918, they commended it because it so accurately encapsulated the mental journey they had so recently traversed during their courtship when attempting to throw off the social conventions and prudish morality of their parents' generation. Our conclusions, then, fully concord with those advanced by Jonathan Rose who has defined the Edwardian era as extending from 1895 to 1919.³² For Harry and Gwyneth, 1919 marked the end of youth, not because of the death of a loved partner in the trenches as Vera Brittain so poignantly evoked in *Testament of Youth*,³³ but because they had assumed the responsibilities of parenthood and Harry gained a stable career. Far from marking a catastrophic punctuation evoking a lost generation, the war and the horror of the Western Front served as a terrain upon which they could inscribe their vision of marital bliss. If anything, the war marked the genesis of the sexual and spiritual harmony that they had long hoped for and it promised a new foundation of mature romantic love. "Isn't it strange", declared Gwyneth, "that it should be in the midst of war and tumult that we have found our rest?"³⁴

Nor was World War I the catalyst for loss of religion. The rebuff to the authority structures of the institutional church, though it might have

reached its most overt expression during World War I,³⁵ had its roots in the pre-war decades, as exemplified by Harry and his friends' consuming interest in personal and emotional religion. This involved a rejection of traditional theology and especially doctrinal conventions regarding moral purity. Both Harry and Gwyneth were interested in a range of spiritual experiences, including spiritualism, and Gwyneth, inspired by lecturers like Maude Royden, sought to open church institutions to women's vocations, and was a staunch critic of patriarchalism in the churches. However, the couple remained churchgoers throughout their lives, and although sex drove them to rethink Victorian moral codes, this did not involve a wholesale rejection of their religious faith. Certainly, it prevented Harry from preaching, but the Christian religion remained a strong element in their lives. Like other Edwardians, religion for them was integrated into new ways of thinking, so that Christian discourses regarding spiritual passion continued to animate their feelings of sexual desire so that sex was defined by them to be a sacrament, a sentiment shared by people as diverse as Maude Royden, Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis. Here, again, there were distinct gender differences. For Gwyneth, sexual intercourse was a revelation, and ironically it was she, the partner who during their courtship was so adamantly fixated on the opposition between sex and religious faith, who ultimately almost entirely jettisoned the concept of spiritualized sex. On the other hand, whereas Harry had from the first espoused a highly erotic view of their relationship, in the midst of war, he held more firmly to a more romanticized language regarding marriage as the melding of two souls joined in sexual communion. The interaction between religious faith and sexual love in their relationship indicates that, contrary to both orthodox and revisionist exponents of the secularization thesis,³⁶ twentieth-century British culture was not traversed by a linear and monolithic progression from moral puritanism to sexual liberalization.³⁷

In the years between 1910 and World War I, Edwardian men and women lived through a time of interrogation and flux with regard to gender identities. This uncertainty loomed large in the correspondence of Harry and Gwyneth. As a result, gender conflict formed a consistent thread throughout their relationship. As John Tosh has recently observed, much of the scholarship on gender has discounted subjective experience in favour of analysis of representations and public discourse.³⁸ The letters of Harry and Gwyneth permit a close-up view of how men and women lived, thought about, and refined their gender identities in the midst of an evolving personal relationship, which was often heated and combative because

they were respectively an anti-suffragist and suffragist. Although the couple closely followed prevailing discussions about the theme of “sex antagonism” which was a fundamental preoccupation of Edwardians, one commented upon prolifically by men and women and a wide range of social constituencies, each, in their own way, developed unique perspectives on these issues and increasingly throughout their relationship sought to challenge dominant definitions of sex roles.³⁹ They selectively drew from new ideas in psychology, the feminist movement, eugenics and imaginative literature to rethink gender relations, but more importantly, the challenge of refining their relationship provided the greatest impetus for reformulating the ways in which they perceived gender roles within marriage. The value of exploring subjective experience is that it provides a more nuanced reading of gender, as an ongoing process of self-definition, in which supposedly competing gender ideals often were not viewed by the individual as mutually exclusive. This raises larger questions about whether gender can ever be considered a fixed identity, especially when in terms of lived experience, it is full of contradictions, many of which remain unconscious. However, Harry and Gwyneth had a profound impact on one another: Gwyneth compelled Harry to rethink his patriarchal ideas in articulating a more egalitarian vision of marriage, while Harry exhorted her to abandon the Victorian view that women had less intense sexual urges than men. Within this broad framework, there were a series of micro-adjustments that took place around these questions, that allowed a distinct refashioning of gender power within the relationship which related to issues of fatherhood, career choices for women, emotional expression, parenting and what qualities constituted male and female.

The arc of the narrative begins with Harry as the central figure in the relationship; however, he was progressively pushed into the background by Gwyneth’s increasingly dominant sexual subjectivity which became most overt during World War I. More broadly the ongoing debate about it that lay at the core of their correspondence demonstrates that they saw gender in culturalist terms, viewing it as both fluid and malleable, a perspective which also informed their sense of the blurred boundaries between “heterosexual” and “homosocial” friendships.⁴⁰ This, however, was one dimension of their gender debate which changed quite drastically between their courtship and marriage, in which same-sex friendships became increasingly proscribed, particularly by Gwyneth. This was not because she had taken on board the ideas of sexologists, but because in terms of her own personal experience she had come to see marriage as a form of comradeship that was

distinct from other friendships, considering it more intimate and exclusive because of the act of sexual intercourse.

Hitherto the modernist temper has been framed in terms of a set of attitudes and preoccupations articulated in literature, philosophy and medicine. However, in order to expand and deepen our understanding of the transition from Victorian to modern which highlights the fractured, contested and incomplete character of this process, it is imperative, as the journey made by our epistolary lovers shows, to study how new moralities and ways of being were achieved through the subjective experience. The correspondence of Harry and Gwyneth stands at the intersection of a variety of modernist currents, beyond the most obvious, namely greater sexual freedom and the positive valuation placed upon sexual pleasure within marriage. The priority upon sexual love as constitutive of personal and marital happiness intersected with a spectrum of other modernities, in particular the overwhelming value placed upon interiority; the emancipation of women; and the privileging of everyday experience, and in particular personal relationships as the ultimate standard of values, a process by which the private sphere was utterly abstracted from the public gaze. Despite their sympathies with major currents of social reform, our couple's rendering of modernity spoke to a particularly individualistic strand of advanced thinking which saw the elevation of self through intimate relationships as a supreme good, which elevated harmony in love, sex and marriage to be the most significant markers of social progress. Within this new trinity, however, sex was the measure of all things.

NOTES

1. LAC, Logan Fonds, 7:1, G to H, 20 Nov. 1912; *ibid.*, 1:6, H to G, n.d. Nov. 1912.
2. We owe this excellent concept to our editor Sean Brady.
3. Kern, *The Modernist Novel*, 2–3.
4. Reddy, *The Making of Romantic Love*.
5. For an excellent discussion of the current state of the field in Britain, see Jones and Harris, "Introduction: Historicizing 'Modern' Love and Romance", 1–19.
6. Stansky, "*On or About December 1910*", 2.
7. Cook, "Victorian Sexualities", 175.
8. LAC, LF, 11:6, H to father, 11 Nov. 1912; *ibid.*, 18:6, Rosfrith to Mrs Logan, 6 Dec. 1910, 16 Jan. 1916; *ibid.*, 1:12, H to G, 5 Dec. 1914; *ibid.*, 9:2, G to H, 10 Feb. 1918; Rhodes House Archives, Harry Logan

- Biographical File, Gwyneth to Dr. Williams, 16 Mar. 1971; *ibid.*, Stuart Keate, "Harry: The Gentle Professor", clipping, n.d.
9. Whitebook, *Freud*, 129.
 10. LAC LF, 1:6, H to G, 2 Nov. 1912, 21 Apr. 1912.
 11. LAC, LF, 1:2, H to G, 17 Sep. 1911.
 12. LAC, LF, 2:10, H to G, 8 Apr. 1917; *ibid.*, 7:10, G to H, 27 Aug. 1916.
 13. Roper, "Between Manliness and Masculinity", 345.
 14. Bourke, "Fear and Anxiety", 112, which critiques a developing trajectory in the historical study of emotions which has relied heavily on prescriptive literature. For explicit statements about the need to examine the way in which individuals negotiate emotional protocols, see Reddy, "Historical Research on the Self and Emotions", 302–15; Roper, *The Secret Battle*, 1–43. The foundational statement for the history of emotions is Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*. See also, Plamper, *The History of Emotions*; Frevert, *Emotional Lexicons*. For Britain, see Francis, "Tears, Trantrums, and Bared Teeth", 354–87; Cook, "From Controlling Emotions to Expressing Feelings", 627–46. Our work revises the periodization of the division between emotional self-control and expression.
 15. See, for example, Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society*; Porter and Hall, *The Facts of Life*; Hall, *Hidden Anxieties*; Bland and Doan, eds., *Sexology Uncensored*; Crozier, "The Medical Construction of Homosexuality and its Relation to the Law in Nineteenth-Century England", 61–82; Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body*. The influence of medical knowledge upon sexual identities has now begun to be questioned. See Brady, *Masculinity and Male Homosexuality in Britain*, 19, 23; Cocks, "Approaches to the History of Sexuality Since 1750", 38–54.
 16. Houlbrook, "A Pin to See the Peepshow", 215–49.
 17. Here we are critical of the conclusions of Light, *Forever England*, who uncritically assumes that fiction directly reflects prevailing attitudes, without recognizing that some of the writers she studies came of age in the Edwardian period.
 18. Stansky, "On or About December 1910"; Brooke, *Sexual Politics*; Lutz, *Pleasure Bound*; Stansell, *American Moderns*; Delap, *The Feminist Avant-Garde*; Fernihough, *Freewomen and Supermen*; Snitow, Stansell, Thompson, eds., *Powers of Desire*; MacLaren, "Sex Radicalism in the Canadian Northwest, 1890–1920", 527–46; Rowbotham and Weeks, *Socialism and the New Life*. For scholarship which emphasizes more conservative roots of modernism, see Thomson, *Psychological Subjects*; Kent, *Sex and Suffrage*; Richardson, *Love and Eugenics in the Late Nineteenth Century*; Stone, *Breeding Superman*; Greenslade, *Degeneration*; Dobb, "The Way of All Flesh", 589–603; Morgan, "A 'Feminist Conspiracy'", 777–800; Owen, "Occultism and the 'Modern' Self in *Fin-de-Siècle* Britain", 81–96.

19. Kern, *The Modernist Novel*; Levenson, *Modernism and the Fate of Individuality*.
20. Houlbrook, "Cities", 148–9, 133–56; Doan and Bland, eds., *Cultural Sexology*, 3; Doan, "'A peculiarly obscure subject'", 87–108, on how heterosexual and homosexual have not been trans-historical categories; Carden-Coyne and Doan, "Gender and Sexuality", 91–114.
21. The work of Stopes is often the starting point for much of the scholarship on twentieth-century British sexuality. See, for example, Hall, *Hidden Anxieties*; Burke, "In Pursuit of an Erogamic Life"; Hall, *Dear Dr. Stopes*; McKibbin, "Introduction", vii–liii.
22. Langhamer, *The English in Love*; Langhamer, "Love, Selfhood and Authenticity in Post-War Britain", 277–97; Francis, *The Flyer*, 63–84; Szreter and Fisher, *Sex Before the Sexual Revolution*; Fisher, "'Lay Back, Enjoy It and Shout Happy England'", 318–60; Fisher, "Marriage and Companionate Ideals Since 1750", 328–48.
23. Cook, *The Long Sexual Revolution*; Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*; Brown, "Gender, Christianity, and the Rise of No Religion", 39–59. For the sexual revolution as a media construct, see Brewitt-Taylor, "Christianity and the Invention of the Sexual Revolution in Britain", 519–46.
24. On this point, see McKibbin, "Introduction", xxiii.
25. Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, 219–20.
26. There is now a vast literature on World War I as the crucible of literary, artistic and psychological modernity. See, for example, Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*; Leed, *No Man's Land*; Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*.
27. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Managing the Body*; Bingham, *Gender, Modernity and the Popular Press in Interwar Britain*; Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism*; Goldhill, *A Very Queer Family Indeed*, who identifies the explicit naming of homosexuality with the 1920s, 169–86.
28. Kern, *The Culture of Love*, 347–9; Hynes, *A War Imagined*, 399–401.
29. Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body*. See also Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*.
30. Taddeo, *Lytton Strachey and the Search for Modern Sexual Identity*.
31. MMUA, Vera Brittain Papers, Box 50, Diary, 21 Oct. 1913.
32. Rose, *The Edwardian Temperament*, xiii.
33. Brittain, *Testament of Youth*.
34. LAC, LF, 8:10, G to H, 29 Sep. 1917.
35. Brown, *Religion and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain*, 88–115.
36. For historians positing a more gradual linear decline of religion, in which the Edwardian era marks a key moment in which the canons of moral puritanism were increasingly assailed by the forces of liberalization, see McLeod, *Religion and Society in England, 1850–1914*; Green, *The Passing of Protestant England*. For revisionists who see a sudden rupture in the

1960s between religion and the imperatives of secularization, Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*.

37. There is now an emerging literature which presents a more variegated picture of the relationship between religion and sexuality which does not simply cast Christianity as a morally repressive force. See, for example, Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality*; Gibson and Begiato, *Sex and the Church in the Long Eighteenth Century*; Cocks, "Religion and Spirituality", 157–79. On sex and religion in Canada, see Christie, "Sacred Sex: The United Church and the Privatization of the Family in Post-War Canada", 348–76.
38. Tosh, "The History of Masculinity", 25, 17–34.
39. Tosh, "What Should Historians Do with Masculinity?", 193, 196, 179–202; Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*.
40. Our analysis of their attitudes to homosociality has been influenced by Queer Theory and we have therefore purposely left aside the question as to whether Gwyneth or Harry gave physical expression to their same-sex intimacies. Despite their acquaintance with the new sexology, they did not accept the taxonomy of homosexuality and heterosexuality posited by early twentieth-century sexologists. See, for example, Brady, *Masculinity and Male Homosexuality*, 12, 18; Janes, *Visions of Queer Martyrdom*, 5; Houlbrook, *Queer London*; Goldhill, *A Very Queer Family Indeed*, 160–207; Carden-Coyne and Doan, "Gender and Sexuality", 91–114.