

Canadian children who lived outside the camera's gaze, become the focus. The next step will be to bring the two together.

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Little, Jack, I., ed. *Love Strong as Death: Lucy Peel's Canadian Journal, 1833-1836*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001. Pp. 240.

A newly married couple from the lesser English gentry, Lucy and Robert Peel arrived in the Eastern Townships in April 1833. Lucy Peel kept a letter journal that was sent in instalments to their families. This edition of Peel's accounts is based on transcriptions probably copied for circulation among family members. The last extant entry dates from December 1836, when the couple decided to return to England. Although the journal can be read as a self-consciously literary product – a genre of crafted life and travel writing from a particular period – the content is often private and timeless: a young couple justifying their choices as to where and how they would live; reassuring their families as to their happiness and the success of their marriage; and detailing their domestic concerns.

The introduction and footnotes to this edition contextualize the entries and make many useful links both to people and events in the Eastern Townships region and to broader cultural, social, and political processes on both sides of the Atlantic. J. I. Little notes the ways in which the Peels' experience and this journal resembled or differed from those of other gentry immigrants of the time to British North America or elsewhere. Little's introduction supplements his 1999 article for the *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*: "Gender and Gentility on the Lower Canadian Frontier: Lucy Peel's Journal, 1833-36." Both analyze the journal as a source for social history, with some themes developed more in the article, but the introduction to this edition adds more discussion of Peel's letters as literary works in a particular cultural context. For example, Little situates Peel's response to and representation of landscape within English Romanticism, within North American travel and emigrant writing, and within the scholarship on cultural production as "a

colonizing act in itself' (p. 5). Little reminds us that the contents of the journal were preselected and shaped by Peel for family consumption, and that what we read are further transcriptions. Nevertheless, what remained is fascinating in and of itself.

Praising the generosity and gregariousness of most of her fellow travellers or neighbours, Peel's letter journal nevertheless shows her repeated attempts to maintain social distances and distinctions between herself and those she regarded as her social inferiors, all the more challenging because of this generosity and gregariousness. As she portrayed herself in her journal, Peel did this through behaviour, language, and sociability – primarily through social relations and only secondarily through work or consumption. Although the Peels were able to employ domestic and farm labour, they also engaged in domestic and farm work themselves. Peel's own portraits of and relationships with the women who worked for her (whether as a live-in domestic servant or as a midwife) seem more favourable as the journal progresses. One can only speculate whether this portrayal reflects the greater skills and compatibility of the women who figure in the journal at this point compared with those earlier, or whether it indicates changes in Peel herself.

But the primary themes of these letters were not the immigration experience, or the nature of the community the Peels settled in, but the experience of romantic love and companionate marriage, the parenting of infants and very young children, death and bereavement. Lucy Peel is both idealistic and realistic in her motherhood, exalting maternal love within a hierarchy of human feeling, but regretting too closely spaced pregnancies. Nearly all of the letters are from Lucy, but a few are from Robert, and they show his equal preference for private domesticity over public life. Her portrait of her husband and his letters suggest not only the emotional intensity of his attachment to his children and assistance at their birth and in their care, but that he resisted pressures to become involved in local government and politics. Robert Peel's periodic involvement in domestic work can be interpreted as a reflection of their material circumstances as settlers, and his occasional needlework on home furnishings as an extension of his carpentry; in these respects, the immigration experience changed his work in terms of gender expectations and social identity from that associated with his occupational profile: a naval officer and aspiring gentleman farmer. At times, these letters suggest that the Peels might have seen themselves in contrast with other social models,

as in, for example, Robert Peel's implied critique of men who did not stay with their wives throughout labour and childbirth.

The end of their honeymoon with picturesque landscape, homemaking, and family bliss came with the sudden death of their first child before her first birthday. Lucy Peel portrays their grief as understandably overwhelming, and here the letters provide a useful contrast with portrayals of infant death and its impact on families in a later period. The Peels' bereavement was no less powerful, but as described in these letters, their mourning was more private and less materially manifest than the bereavement practices of families of their class much later in the century in urban settings; the Peels predated the late Victorian cult of death and mourning. Nevertheless, it is their separation from the grave of their first child that is portrayed as the greatest sacrifice they made in returning to England after their three years of relatively unprofitable farming,

Periodic reflections on this death inspired the relatively few passages on religion in these letter journals, a clear contrast with the genre of spiritual history in the diaries kept by many evangelical writers. Instead, Lucy Peel portrays herself as a serious adherent of the Church of England, though not, as she reassures her mother, "enthusiastic." Whether from the cultivation of domesticity or a mild Sabbatarianism, she notes that she and Robert resisted their neighbours' attempts to persuade them to go visiting on Sundays. A brief passage conveys the varying degrees of church involvement found in other communities in nineteenth century North America. Lucy noted the clergyman's pre-Sunday visits to local families and his sermon urging the congregation to remain for the whole service "even if they did not partake of the Holy Communion" but she regretted that "many persons left notwithstanding all he said" (p. 161).

Only very briefly mentioned in the introduction, the musical subthemes in these letters will be of interest to historians of music and music-making in early British North America. Lucy Peel's training in voice, keyboard, and harp was fairly typical for her gender and social status in England, but these letters also suggest considerable talent and commitment. Until the arrival of her harp, perhaps one of the new double-action pedal harps manufactured between 1811 and 1835, Lucy Peel took up the guitar available at the home of one of her elite neighbours. Social exclusiveness, however, appears to have prevented her from having regular access to a piano for several years until

these same neighbours themselves purchased one. Until that time, the only local piano belonged to another musician who gave lessons, but she was a “cobbler’s wife” who kept “no servant” and bound “the shoes for her husband.” By the winter of 1835-36, Peel noted musical progress: a church organ, and a few more pianos in the community. Her early letters note that she composed a few things, and had begun compiling a book for her daughter entitled “Canadian Airs” (published volumes by others with this form of title dated from the early 1820s). At her daughter’s death she packed her harp away for six months, and although she returned to playing, the journal notes no further entries on composition.

This journal’s inclusion in the series “Studies in Childhood and Family in Canada” reflects its greater usefulness as a primary source for one gentry family’s experience of a short but intense stage of early married life and parenthood, than as a source in immigration history. As Little shows, the journal supports the revisionist arguments of recent studies of gender and family in the British Isles and in North America that the valuation and cultural celebration of domesticity was not exclusively female, middle class, or evangelical. As these studies and this journal show, Victorian gender identities included possibilities for both women and men to cultivate and express their sensibilities as conscientious and emotionally involved parents, and to experience both the mundane routines and the powerful joy and grief of parenting at a time when infant mortality was still relatively high.

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