

COMING OF AGE:  
CANADIAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND NATIONAL IDENTITIES, 1900 – 1945  
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## Introduction

Between 1900 and 1945, Canadian authors produced some of the most enduring texts for children in national cultural memory, founding a canon of works still popular today. L.M. Montgomery's Anne of Green Gables (1908) continues to be read passionately by children worldwide, just as the animal stories of Charles G.D. Roberts and Ernest Thompson Seton inspired a vibrant genre that continues to be popular among contemporary authors and readers. Among a wide host of lesser-known works, Canadian children's literature came of age during the period, in the process defining and negotiating the distinct features, myths and modes of Canadian life, mapping the social, cultural and physical landscape of the nation, and consequently constructing narratives of Canadian identity within its pages. Through the central child characters of these texts, the generalized child reader is posited as the centre of the nation, encouraging participatory action and citizenship to lead Canadian nationhood into maturity.

In contrast to the Canada of the nineteenth century, a period that witnessed the literal and figurative birth of the nation and its gradual growth from colonial outpost to primary member of the British Empire, the Canada of the early 1900s to the end of World War II was defined by a period of social and cultural growth as the disparate elements of nation began to coalesce. Where the previous century found identity centred in a singular narrative of Canada's British heritage, the new century witnessed the evolution of Canadian identities that began to privilege both the unique local and shared national characteristics of the nation, encouraging pride in the distinct elements of Canadian history, culture and society. While identity in empire always remained in the background, frequently determining the manner in which Canadian identities began to shape themselves, the new century saw the nation taking steps towards substantive identity, though never as a single, unified narrative. The rapid expansion of immigration, agriculture,

industrialism and trade, together with action towards political sovereignty from Britain and the influence of the two world wars, created a society actively negotiating a burgeoning Canadian nation and the interests of imperial membership (Thompson 97). The pages of Canadian literature quickly began to reflect changes in the nation. Canadian literature of the early twentieth century expanded tenfold compared with the previous period, as Canadian-born authors began to write in greater numbers, aided by the growth of middle-class readership, domestic publishing and literacy (Roper 275, 278). Within the emergence of greater production in Canadian literature was a growing catalogue of texts written wholly or in part for children that attempted to better reflect the particular character of the nation, often self-consciously so, as authors sought to influence the identity and citizenship of new generations of Canadian children (Egoff 137). If national literatures are “models by which a society conceives of and articulates a view of itself,” then the literature produced for children of the period represents the ideal form of such a model (Turner qtd. in Sandis 109).

Children’s literature is well-suited to the project of determining national identities, perhaps even more so than literature for adults. Through their pedagogical practice, texts for children reflect dominant views of “society as it wishes to be, as it wishes to be seen, and as it unconsciously reveals itself to be” (Hunt 2). Children’s literature functions to “inform the child about the world it is living in here and now, and what it means to be an adult” in a particular society (Weinreich 16). In doing so, the literature rigidly enforces dominant social and cultural codes in the work of socializing “children into society and [teaching] them to behave ... in acceptable ways” (Kutzer xv). In its ideological work, the literature posits “an image of the ideal child that society would like ... to produce” (Murray xv). While visions of the ideal child vary based on the individual ideological bent of authors, all children’s literature works to influence

the child reader towards certain sets of beliefs, values, perspectives and roles in the future of that society. Due to these characteristics of the genre, children's literature functions as an excellent barometer of the competing visions of nation that authors wished to disseminate and reinforce, consequently providing accurate insight into the "social milieu in which [a] work was developed" (Murray xv).

The nation is a particular point of focus for children's literature, as any texts for children produced in a particular country work to teach children to claim the nation as "home" in order to ensure the continuation of that nation, thereby revealing a "nation's relationship with its surroundings, its interaction with the national landscape and its concept of space" (Nimon 65). The "national landscape" includes geography, gender interactions, social norms and values, cultural production and concepts of ethnicity and nationality. In mapping these landscapes, a nation's literature for children functions to create a "sense of identity, an identity that is simultaneously personal and social" that "[shapes] the way children find a 'home' in the world," where "'home' is understood as the nation" (Watkins 183, Reimer xv). "Consciously or unconsciously," the concerns of nation are woven into works "as a reflection of the values, tensions, myths and psychology that identify a national character" in order to create a meaningful "home-identity" for the child reader (Sandis 109).

This study seeks to map the manifestations of Canadian nationhood through a series of twelve texts ranging from 1900 to 1945, balanced by their authors' gender and with an attempt to integrate works of poetry and a selection of prose genres such as adventure novels, historical fiction, fairy tales, animal stories and travel narrative representative of the scope of the literature produced during the period. While not every text was written exclusively for children, specifically in the case of Roberts and Montgomery, all texts enjoyed a wide audience of

children and therefore deserve to be examined within the contexts of their primarily young readership. This study will discuss five dominant themes manifest throughout the texts that lend to wider visions of national identity: representations of nature and landscape; gender negotiations in Canadian contexts; First Nations peoples and their relationship to the nation; the place of nation and empire in texts; and the role of the Canadian child. Throughout these chapters, the nation is the silent protagonist refracted by the mirror of text and context. Though not always acknowledged, the nation is always present as texts seek to realize the “self-awareness of the people for whom it speaks” (Blodgett 27). Written in step with the growth of the nation, Canadian children’s literature from 1900 to 1945 offers a remarkable portrait of a changing Canada and the emergence of new national identities of the twentieth century.



## Chapter 1

### Mystic Naturalists: Nature, Environment and Landscape

Following a century of literary tropes featuring characters either pitted against a merciless and forbidding wilderness or revelling in the pastoral, colonized landscape of a romanticized nature (Whittaker 38), Canadian writing for children of the early twentieth century represents new movement in two distinct directions: naturalist realism and national mythmaking. Literature of the former mode includes empirical observation, the practice of woodcraft and environmentalism. Of the latter, authors attribute mystic and magical qualities to the Canadian landscape and its animals, in the process creating new shared national myths located in nature. In the final section of this chapter I suggest that these two methods are nearly identical in purpose: each produces a myth and method of writing the Canadian landscape in order to claim nature as central to national identity.

#### **Naturalist Realism**

The naturalist-realist approach seeks to represent landscape and animals in scientific terms that favour empirical observation and accurate physical description. Humans are accorded a place in nature as biological animals themselves, but have the added moral responsibility of overseeing its preservation (Murray 35). To fulfill this responsibility, naturalist novels encourage children to learn the skills necessary to live in the wilderness through woodcraft while always underscoring the related theme of environmentalism. In order to maintain realist approaches to nature while still writing fiction, authors depend on citing naturalism and biology as epistemological bases of their narratives. While this approach is problematic in practice, attempts at the seamless blend of naturalist description with fiction preoccupy a number of children's writers over the course of the period surveyed. The cultural contexts of continued

post-Victorian interest in biology, an increasing acceptance of Darwinism, emerging disillusionment with urban society, and the growth of nature and conservation movements contributed to the realist-naturalist approach to literature (Whittaker 39, Dean 3).

The central naturalist form is the realistic animal story, a genre often cited by critics as the unique creation of Canadian writers (Egoff 88). Developed by Charles G.D. Roberts and Ernest Thompson Seton at the turn of the century, it was continued in various forms by such authors as Grey Owl (Archibald Belaney) and Roderick Haig-Brown into the 1930s and 1940s. As he writes in the introduction to The Kindred of the Wild (1902), Roberts sought to bring the reader “back to the old kinship of the earth, without asking ... to relinquish by way of toll any part of the wisdom of the ages” (19). Citing Christianity as having previously “set man at odds with the natural world,” the animal story attempts to re-unify human connections with nature by demonstrating that “the mental life of animals resemble[s] that of man” (Roberts 13, Dunlap 106). Each story in The Kindred of the Wild is told, wholly or in part, from the perspective of an animal or several animals. As Roberts states in his introduction, the influence of science has “reduced” the “gulf dividing the lowest of the human species from the highest of the animals ... to a very narrow psychological fissure” (16). Though frequently accused with the charge of anthropomorphism in the act of projecting “human emotions into the minds of the animals he portrays,” Roberts’ writing more accurately seeks to demonstrate the similarities between animal and human life in terms of a Darwinian struggle for survival (MacLulich 115, Murray 28). Despite what the genre “animal story” might imply, humans are rarely absent from the stories in The Kindred of the Wild: either by conflict or curiosity, both animals and humans are drawn together by the common theme of survival in his works.

An archetypal example is in the story “The Watchers of the Camp-Fire.” Omniscient narration switches between a panther stalking the woods in search of food, a doe traveling through the same woods, and a lone lumberman making camp following a brief holiday at home. The deer curiously approaches the man’s fire, while the panther eyes both man and deer with hunger. The man catches the panther sighting the doe, shoots the panther dead and spares the doe for saving his life. Each plays the game of hunter and hunted. Though possessing the most power in the scene by virtue of firearms, humans are no less bent on survival than their fellow creatures. The mental processes of each animal are placed on equal terms and rendered within an empirical framework: each subject has its needs (food, shelter) and its emotions (curiosity, sympathy). As such, they underscore Roberts’ naturalist purpose by demonstrating that “the motivation behind basic behaviour” between animals and humans is the same (Murray 35).

While not animal stories proper, Two Little Savages (1903) by Ernest Thompson Seton, The Adventures of Sajo and Her Beaver People (1935) by Grey Owl and Starbuck Valley Winter (1943) by Roderick Haig-Brown all owe to Roberts a debt for overt scientific naturalism and his particular approach to the realist mode of nature writing. Each novel positions its young characters as an integral part of the nature they encounter rather than as engaged in a struggle against it. While always fighting for survival, sometimes playfully and other times seriously, they do so with a consistent respect for the natural world that surrounds them. These novels contain frequent naturalistic descriptions of animals and plant life rendered in empirical terms. Two Little Savages takes this to an even further extent by containing illustrations of plants and animals with proper Latinate labels on nearly every page. Common to all three novels is their participation in two sub-topics that come out of naturalist-realist modes of fiction: woodcraft and environmentalism.

## Woodcraft

Woodcraft is the logical extension of the Darwinian view espoused by the naturalist-realist claims of Roberts and others. If humans are part of nature by virtue of survival, and if authors participate in naturalism and realism as modes of representing nature, then the wilderness must be immediately accessible to the child reader. Thus, woodcraft: an education in nature that encourages the development of a “passionate curiosity about plant and animal life, as well as the practical skills necessary to survive in nature” (Henderson 473). Though Roberts’ stories were not specifically intended for children, his works have been since appropriated into the canon of Canadian children’s literature (Egoff 188). While this can be attributed to the traditional “childhood fascination with and trust of animals” (Connor 495), Roberts also frequently represents young characters with which the child reader can identify. This is most prominent in The Kindred of the Wild in the character known simply as “the Boy,” who is present in three stories: “The Moonlight Trails,” “The Boy and Hushwing” and “The Haunter of the Pine Gloom.” “The Boy,” by virtue of his un-naming, is the archetypal young male naturalist. As introduced in the first story, he lives in the backwoods settlement of “Far Bazziley” with his father, a clergyman. Educated at home, he is described as “belonging to a different class from the other children of the settlement” (26). This difference is his interest in nature and his desire to prove himself as its equal. His woodcraft naturalism is solidified in “The Moonlight Trails,” where the boy, initially excited about snaring rabbits, saw “for the first time, the half-open mouth ... the expression of the dead eyes” of death and declares he won’t snare again (35). From then on he captures animals, such as the owl Hushwing, only to “test his own woodcraft” and “to get the bird under his close observation” (114). By testing “woodcraft” against an animal, this implies that animals as well as humans possess this knowledge of living-in-nature. It is the

responsibility of humans to re-educate themselves in woodcraft knowledge that has been lost to “advancing civilisation” (Roberts 13).

Ernest Thompson Seton is the originator of the formalized practice of woodcraft through his “Woodcraft Indians” organization that would later become the basis for the Boy Scout movement through his friendship with the founder of Scouting, Lord Baden-Powell (New 114). While the appropriation of woodcraft from First Nations will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, especially in relation to Grey Owl and The Adventures of Sajo and her Beaver People, Seton’s conception of an institutionalized woodcraft is a clear undercurrent of Two Little Savages. The novel follows Yan, a would-be naturalist trapped by the strictures of town life and parental influence, who eventually gains the confidence and knowledge required to live in the bush by the information and influence supplied to him through the mentorship of the woodsman and trapper Caleb. As Yan and his friends learn to become self-sufficient in nature, so does the child reader through the numerous diagrams and instructions the book weaves into its narrative. By the end of the book Yan is pronounced a “Woodcrafter now,” indicating a graduation of sorts from the school of nature (542).

Though the relationship between gender and nature will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter, it must be noted that woodcraft is an exclusively male practice: women have no place in the woods in these novels. As Misao Dean has argued, this is a condition of a “masculinist discourse of the early twentieth century in which the ‘primal’ experiences of hunting, scouting and woodcraft serve as an antidote [to] the feminised life of the industrial city dweller” (3). This is still evident in mid-century works such as Roderick Haig-Brown’s Starbuck Valley Winter (1943), where the city-bred Don Morgan becomes an idealized masculine woodsman following a winter spent learning how to trap in the remote Pacific Canadian

wilderness. Don learns the skills necessary for self-sufficiency in the woods, at the same time participating in the observational-naturalist tradition of previous novels. As he reasons, he must learn to “know [nature] properly and learn to use it” for the correct purpose, and earn a livelihood without denigrating the environment he depends on (173). By the end of the winter, Don emerges triumphant, having proved his masculinity by surviving on the landscape and earning enough money for a prized fishing boat.

### **Environmentalism and Conservation**

Woodcraft has the added effect of encouraging environmentalism and conservation among its readers; if nature is to be appreciated and humans are recognized as part of nature, then it follows that humans have the responsibility to protect it. Thus, when Yan in Two Little Savages insists that his work as a naturalist will “show men how to live without cutting down all the trees, spoiling all the streams, and killing every living thing” (56), when the narrator in The Kindred of the Wild condemns a farmer for foolishly “[cutting] down every tree in the neighbourhood of the cabin ... which might so well have sheltered him” (72), and when Don’s uncle in Starbuck Valley Winter maintains ““There ain’t either sense nor sport in blasting off shells at stuff you weren’t looking for and don’t need”” (32), all three novels participate in encouraging the responsible human stewardship of nature.

Grey Owl, in The Adventures of Sajo and her Beaver People (1935), develops the entire narrative around the central theme of conservation. As Albert Braz has noted, Grey Owl’s “outing” as Archibald Belaney, a white man working under the guise of First Nations ethnicity, has overshadowed much of the important conservation work he performed during his lifetime. Called one of “the foremost environmentalists in the world,” his chief cause was the preservation of the Canadian beaver (Braz 206). Grey Owl’s work echoes many of the same themes as

Roberts and other naturalist-realist writers. Quoted as saying “Remember that you belong to nature, not it to you,” Grey Owl cites empirical naturalist observation in the preface to The Adventures of Sajo as the source of his information on beavers’ behaviour, and attempts to demonstrate that animals “experience feelings so very much like” those of the young reader to whom the novel is dedicated (qtd. in Braz 213, Belaney xiv). The narrative of The Adventures of Sajo is an epic quest: two First Nations children, Sajo and Shapian, are given two beavers to nurse to health after an otter attack on their den orphans them. When financial reasons cause their father to sell one of the beavers to the local agent, the children set out on a long and perilous journey that leads them to the city, where they eventually recover the missing beaver from the confines of a zoo. Grey Owl sends a particularly anti-zoo message: the narration switches to the captured beaver who endures constant suffering in his caged pen, nearly dying before being nursed back to health by the keeper, who is revealed by the narrator to hate his work (176). The environmental implications are clear: animals should “live as the Great Spirit of the Wilderness had intended they should” in their natural habitat and free from the potential of destruction (236).

### **Mysticism**

Together with writing for children that represents nature through attempts towards scientific realism is a parallel trend that finds the mythic and mysterious in nature. These are represented by two approaches: nature is depicted as a “fairy land” replete with a fantastic mythology reaching into a historically distant Canada and animals are rendered unabashedly anthropomorphic. Both of these trends fulfill nationalist purposes by taking possession of the Canadian landscape and its animals with the aim of creating a national mythology. Rendering nature mystic and magical posits Canadians as having such a mythic and eternal connection with

nature, therefore creating a shared heritage belonging to all members of the nation (Wright 24). That such a connection with nature is always rendered in European terms underscores how human connections with nature were first appropriated from First Nations peoples. White authors make First Nations nature myths and traditions palatable to white readers, creating a shared culture at the expense of the Aboriginal cultures it has colonized. This tendency towards the mythic and anthropomorphic is most obvious in the self-conscious constructions contained within Canadian Fairy Tales (1922) by Cyrus MacMillan, and is notably present in Our Little Canadian Cousin (1904) by Elizabeth Roberts MacDonald, Bob and Bill See Canada (1919) by Alfred E. Uren and Funny Fables of Fundy (1928) by Grace Helen Mowat.

### **Fairy Lands and Wilderness Mythology**

In the preface to Canadian Fairy Tales, Cyrus MacMillan cites both the vague “Indian story-teller” and indeterminate geographical spaces “by river and lake and ocean ... in forest clearings ... [and] remote country places” as the sources for the tales contained in his collection (ix, xii, xi). This lack of transparency, alongside the catch-all caveat explaining that although the “skeleton of each story has been left for the most part unchanged ... the language naturally differs somewhat from that of the story-tellers,” leads to the likely conclusion that MacMillan wholly or partially wrote the stories for his own purposes (xi). The hazy world from which his tales have been collected creates the distinct sense of a “mysterious past” where “our ancestors dwelt and laboured” (xii). By citing “ancestors” MacMillan creates a continuum between a romantic settler-colonial space and the reader’s present through the erasure of First Nations’ influence, generating sites of identification in a mythic Canadian landscape. On the same page, his ultimate purpose is made explicit: that the “the traditions of our romantic Canadian past will not be lost in our practical Canadian present” (xii). In these passages and by a lack of distinct



regional information, MacMillan creates the myth of a shared, national culture based in a mystic and magical landscape.

Many of the stories in MacMillan's volume follow a similar pattern, beginning with a slightly altered traditional fairy tale introduction informing the reader that the story took place "long ago" in "a remote place in the Canadian forest" (23). In each of the twenty-six stories in Canadian Fairy Tales, an archetypal magical quality is attributed to the landscape and its inhabitants: characters possess "more than human power" vested upon them at birth by fairies, animals speak and interact as humans, giants and witches terrorize the landscape, and old, magical fairy-women reward those who treat them kindly with magical powers (124, 109). Between tales of quests for the chief's fairest daughter and mysterious foundlings, MacMillan establishes the image of a vibrant and ancient Canadian folk tradition always in communion with nature. The stories contained within the volume fulfill Macmillan's stated mythological-national goal, more explicitly rendered in the introduction to a companion volume, Canadian Wonder Tales (1918): "that the children of the land may know something of the traditions of the mysterious past" (xii). All of his interpretations of First Nations oral tales, though referencing such figures as Glooscap and Raven, are rendered through the European folk tradition. MacMillan's stories are meant to speak to white audiences, and his cultural signifiers reflect this appropriation of voice.

Elizabeth Roberts MacDonald participates in a similar vision of nature prior to MacMillan without the association with First Nations peoples. While canoeing, the children in Our Little Canadian Cousin come across "tree-clad shores [that] wore a fairy glamour" and islands that "might have been each the home of an enchanted princess, a dryad, or any of the many 'fair forms of old romance'" (47). In finding the mystic in landscape, both MacMillan and

MacDonald participate in a larger “new” nationalist movement contemporary to the early twentieth century in Canada. In a study of the Group of Seven, critic Robert Wright identifies their art as “[evoking]... the mystical and spiritual qualities of the northern landscape” in a “heady mix of myth and history” (37-8). By creating such mythologies through rendering the Canadian landscape a place of mystical and fantastic possibility, cultural producers of the twentieth century articulated a “wilderness myth” to which all Canadians could ascribe (Wright 25).

### **Anthropomorphic Animals**

While criticism for anthropomorphism was levelled at Roberts and Seton for their ostensibly false pretences towards realism, other Canadian authors absconded from such a debate entirely by participating in the age-old tradition of rendering their animals explicitly anthropomorphic for the immediate purposes of delight and education. As Alfred E. Uren writes in the introduction to Bob and Bill See Canada, the volume serves a nationalist purpose alongside entertainment: “Bob and Bill will not only prove entertaining, but [the] boys and girls ... who read it will have a greater conception of Canada and things Canadian” (7). Similarly, Grace Helen Mowat in Funny Fables of Fundy notes two purposes of her poetry in the volume’s preface: “They have a moral at the end / ... But just for that, you need not cry / ... For in these fables, every one, / You’ll find a fund of Fundy fun” (vi). Beyond the explicit purposes of these books lies a third purpose: mythologizing a nation as inherently connected to nature. Both works represent humans in free discourse with animals, implying that Canadians have an intimate and personal connection to nature. Furthermore, both books participate in similar discussions of environmentalism as in the works of Roberts, Seton and Grey Owl.

In Bob and Bill See Canada, two rabbits decide they should travel across Canada to better acquaint themselves with their nation. Abandoning the brush pile in Nova Scotia that is their home and working their way from East to West, the rabbits participate in agriculture, heavy industry and mining as a means of earning money. In each of the locations they visit, Bob and Bill engage in friendly relations with humans. This is true even though they are hunted as prey: when in the woods outside of Fredericton, the rabbits hear a rifle shot nearby. Bob “spied a hunter with a bag / And quickly waved a British flag, / And cried: ‘Put down that harmful gun; Is that what you call sport and fun? We want to live – we’re no use dead’” (26). The hunter is silenced by the speech of the animals: “He knew not what to do or say,” approaches them and promises that “‘from this time I’m not the sort / To shoot at rabbits just for sport’” (26-7). The rabbits are able to convince the hunter to treat nature with respect by waving a British flag, indicating that they are as much members of the nation (and empire) as humans.

Mowat’s animals are for the most part allegorical representations of humans, such as in “Bird Law,” where various species of birds are accorded positions in the court system. However, the poem “My Garden Plot” represents a first-person exchange between the author and a variety of animals that wander through her garden. A hedgehog offers a quill for a pen, insisting that it “‘it would make your book sell,’” followed by a frog with “a voice that was just like a sneeze, / Said: ‘I want to be put in your book, if you please’” (47). After the insistences of a number of other animals, the author humorously exclaims:

‘I wish you’d be still, / ... I shall finish my story right here on the spot, / and depend on my garden to furnish the plot.’ / It might have been better, but then it is brief, / Besides there’s no moral and that’s a relief (48).

For Mowat's speaker, animals are her inspiration: rendering playful talk between human and animal subjects evokes the sense of a Canadian connection to nature centred in free and mutual exchange as well as explicitly representing the relationship between animals and the inspiration for textual production.

Despite depictions of fantastical animals, both Uren and Mowat's texts contain moments that participate in the discourses of environmentalism as discussed in the context of Roberts, Seton and Grey Owl. During their travels, Bob and Bill in Uren's work take a day in Canadian Parliament to argue the need for protecting animals: "We here complain about the way / Some hunters act – we ask fair play. / With traps and snares and such device / They really treat us more like mice; / Besides I want to make it clear / That you should help the birds and deer" (56). In a similar passage, Mowat represents a "Mrs. Deer" who is mourning the loss of her doe and the degradation of caribou herds "All shot and killed by cruel men" (35). However, "Dr. Moose" reassures her that a newly-formed nature reserve has been founded: "I have good news for you. / I hear there is a woodland tract that stretches far and wide, / And there no cruel men with guns will be allowed inside" (35). Though their works are not based in literary realism, Uren and Mowat nevertheless engage in real-world concerns.

### **Realism Revisited**

The two approaches to nature as surveyed might appear divergent at first glance: the anthropological, talking animals and mystic wilderness of the latter group seem to clash with the empirical realism of the previous section. However, both work in a similar fashion to create nature myths that support new Canadian identities. Regardless of their overt pretensions to scientific empiricism, the naturalist-realist authors cannot help but create their own romantic mythologies of the wilderness that match the direct approach of the second section. As Misao

Dean notes, Roberts' realism is largely a construction (3). After all, the other half of Roberts' definition of the animal story is "psychological romance" (Roberts 17). If animals comprise "central aspects of the Canadian myth," then the animal story actively participates in the act of myth-making (Fiamengo 6). This is particularly obvious in some of the romantic terms Roberts uses to describe nature. The "ancient wood" is personified with an "eternal breathing," just as it is equally "silent and mysterious" in another story (125, 29). Seton's Yan is drawn to the woods by an "ancient attraction," and Haig-Brown's wizened woodsman Jetson possesses a mystical and "strange deep knowledge of the woods and the animals" (235). Upon the return of the lost beavers to their homeland, Grey Owl's narrator notes that the trees rustled and "seemed to sigh... 'all is well'" (226). The naturalist-realist authors are not free of romanticizing nature any more than the mystic-mythological writers surveyed alongside them.

By the turn of the century, Canadian readers largely occupied urban spaces. As Robert Wright argues of the Group of Seven, their "wilderness myth" was largely articulated for "a modern, industrial and urban Canada in which the 'real' wilderness had largely ceased to exist" (6). And yet, as Albert Braz notes, figures such as Grey Owl considered identification with nature as the central aspect of Canadian identity (207). Though Canadian cities might rapidly advance, they are not unique in that they resemble others elsewhere. Rather, identity in visions of a realist, albeit romanticized nature and nature as myth is what "sets Canada apart from other nations" (Braz 214).

Both of the ostensibly divergent approaches towards nature detailed here function with the same rationale: to develop a coherent natural mythology applied to Canada past and present as a means of constructing a unique Canadian identity. Whether that identity be located in naturalism, woodcraft, environmentalism, folklore or anthropomorphic animals, the end result of

a nature with which the Canadian reader can identify is the same. As James Polk writes in the introduction to his volume Wilderness Writers (1972):

The wilderness to us is more than just an empty place out there; it is a part of every Canadian's idea of himself and his country. Even if he has never been out of downtown Montreal or suburban Vancouver, in his imagination he belongs to a place of thundering rivers, untrodden forests, spacious plains, sublime icefloes, and untamed animals.

Without the land, what would we be? (12-14).

## Chapter 2

### New Women, Old Boys and Empire: Constructions of Gender

The study of gender in Canada cannot be easily divorced from its imperial context, as Victorian social imperatives arising from British influence remained powerful determinants of gender roles long into the twentieth century. Despite prevailing norms, changes were occurring for women in the emerging feminisms of the Fin de Siècle embodied by the New Woman, the feisty harbinger of change in North America and Britain. Just as the New Woman progressed in her challenge of traditional norms, gender roles for men became further entrenched in traditions of masculinity in response. For boys, norms of masculinity in literature continued to be cited in terms of empire, inheriting the tradition of earlier authors such as R.M. Ballantyne, who wrote of the colonial terrain as a testing ground for imperial subjects' masculinity. The old conflation of masculinity and nature was qualified by the emerging turn-of-the-century belief that the British Empire was in decline thanks to the despondency of its urban male citizens, insecurities which led to the creation of Scouting and other outdoor movements to transform boys into men through encounters with a "traditional" colonial wilderness (MacDonald 16). Canadian texts for girls work both within and outside gender roles for women by negotiating between alternating discourses of emerging feminisms, imperial motherhood, and traditional domestic roles, while texts for boys maintain the strict gender divide of the previous century in the relationship between nature and the construction of masculinity.

The discussion of texts in this chapter is divided by gender as determined by the primary characters of the works in question, as it is difficult to determine the gendered audience for most of the works surveyed. Some, like Our Little Canadian Cousin (1904) by Elizabeth Roberts MacDonald, are for a mixed audience, while others such as Two Little Savages (1903) by Ernest

Thompson Seton are written with an audience of boys in mind. Therefore, those texts with clear primary characters serving as examples of gender roles being enacted for the child reader are grouped together, supplemented with information from texts featuring mixed primary characters. Finally, two texts from the 1940s, Mary Graham Bonner's Danger on the Coast (1941) and Roderick Haig-Brown's Starbuck Valley Winter (1943) will be discussed in tandem to demonstrate what has changed since the earlier part of the century. For clarity, the subject of First Nations and gender will be discussed in Chapter 3, as examining the topics at the same time better illuminates the subject of First Nations representation in children's literature as a whole.

### **Women**

Representations of women signify sites of conflict in early twentieth-century Canadian fiction. As critic J.S. Bratton writes, the tension between works that "still stressed the prime importance of refinement [and] home-centred feminine culture" and those that presented women engaging in "greater activity[,] independence and participation in some masculine activities" particular to the New Woman was definitive of imperial fiction during the early twentieth century (197). In terms of the participation of women in empire, the conflict between these two objectives led to fears of imperial decline. If women were to become more active in masculine colonial work, then they threatened to bring about the "disintegration of the value system," based on the unchallenged acceptance of gender division that defined aspects of British imperialism (Bratton 197). The solution was the emergence of an overriding discourse of "imperial motherhood" where women would become contributors to colonial success as "mothers of the race" (Bratton 197, Devereux 127). The concept of women as mothers was embraced by period feminists, as it "empowered women, giving them a vantage point of superiority from which to speak," though always maintaining an implicit stance of English racial superiority (Devereux



127). These varied approaches to twentieth-century manifestations of femininity are inherent to the structures of such novels as Our Little Canadian Cousin (1904) by Elizabeth Roberts MacDonald and Anne of Green Gables (1908) by L.M. Montgomery, whose models are followed into the 1930s by authors writing historical fiction: Emily Poynton Weaver in The Only Girl: A Tale of 1837 (1925) and Muriel Denison in Susannah of the Mounties: A Canadian Story of the Nineties<sup>1</sup> (1936). All of these novels place their girl characters within period paradigms of femininity, both as subversive New Women and burgeoning imperial mothers.

In any discussion of gender in early twentieth-century Canada it is impossible to ignore Anne of Green Gables. Anne, the now-iconic feisty, talkative, orphaned redhead, set a popular precedent for the representation of femininity in Canadian children's fiction. The divided character of Anne, both compelling and frustrating, has been a source of struggle for critics wishing to identify the novel's stance on gender. On one hand, Anne appears to be the ideal figure of the New Woman, questioning all around her, set on writing and an advanced education, and revelling in the joys of female companionship. On the other, her choice to embrace domesticity at the end of the novel following a series of family misfortunes, and her apparent newfound romance with the once-hated Gilbert Blythe, points to her previous character as a series of youthful indiscretions. As Laura Robinson concludes, the novel represents two conflicting "forces of agency and conformity" that make themselves difficult to reconcile (35). Rather, Robinson asserts that Anne "operates to teach a new generation of women about the powerful and active position of negotiator" (42). Indeed, Anne negotiates differing versions of femininity throughout the novel between the positions of subversive New Woman, imperial mother and Victorian domestic angel.

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<sup>1</sup> The title referred to is the 1938 British edition published by Dent. The American edition was titled Susannah: A Little Girl with the Mounties and was published by Dodd and Mead in 1936.

Despite its conclusion, there is no doubt that Anne is a subversive character throughout most of the novel. According to Mary Rubio, Anne of Green Gables “embed[s] a counter-text of rebellion” that she reasons had an important subconscious effect on the girl reader (8). Particular to Anne’s subversion is her direct and unforgiving speech and her unwillingness to bow to imposed standards of propriety. As she plainly states of Marilla and Matthew’s disappointment at her arrival after their having requested a boy to help around the farm, ““You don’t want me because I’m not a boy. I might have expected it”” (25). Later, when Rachel Lynde appraises her as ““terrible skinny and homely,”” commenting on her freckles and red hair, Anne responds with ““passionate indignation exhaling from her like an atmosphere,”” calling her a ““rude, impolite, unfeeling woman”” (57). She is critical of the world around her, disproving of the minister’s sermons as ““not a bit interesting”” and of Mr. Phillips, the first local schoolteacher, for always ““making eyes at Prissy Andrews,”” an older student, rather than teaching properly (72, 90). Among a number of various indiscretions, most of them due to her impetuous, emotionally-charged personality, Anne cracks a slate over the head for an insult delivered by her sworn enemy Gilbert Blythe, and falls off a roof while attempting a balancing act (93, 149).

The novel is particularly rebellious outside of Anne in its depiction of adult characters as fallible. In response to Rachel Lynde’s early insult towards Anne in the novel, Marilla confesses that ““I don’t say that I think Mrs. Lynde was exactly right in saying what she did to you,”” though she forces Anne to apologize (60). Anne finds her own way around the apology by ““revelling in the thoroughness of her abasement,”” turning ““it into a species of positive pleasure”” for the purpose of heightened drama (64). The narrator notes that Rachel was ““not ... overburdened with perception”” enough to detect Anne’s subversion, thus placing the moral ground in Anne’s territory rather than that of an adult (64-5). In response to her criticisms of the

minister's sermon, the narrator reveals that Marilla secretly agrees with her charge: "It almost seemed to her that those secret, unuttered, critical thoughts had suddenly taken visible and accusing shape and form" (72). In conversation concerning Mr. Phillips, Marilla and Rachel agree with Anne, concluding that he "isn't any good at all as a teacher" and only has the position because his uncle is a school trustee, though they note that Mr. Phillips' failings are not suitable to reveal to the children (100, 99). For the child reading Anne, the representation of adults as equally subject to error as children, and the assertion that children are frequently correct in evaluating this error, would be revelatory.

Anne positions herself in a variety of spaces that possess power in New Woman-esque femininity. Her passionate companionship with Diana in an intimate bond of friendship has been identified as the condition of a twentieth-century value system that found "romantic friendships" between women permissible (Gubar 360). Furthermore, with Diana, Anne founds a writing club to "cultivate" Diana's imagination (169). Anne's talent in composing romantic tales, however much they engage in period tropes of sensational fiction, nevertheless speaks to the power of the woman writer, especially when the Victorian Marilla finds that "Reading stories is bad enough but writing them is worse," despite Anne's sarcastic assertion that "we're so careful to put a moral into them all" (170). Anne's interest in naming is also important to her position, as she re-names various spaces in her vicinity in the woods and fields, commenting that "when I don't like the name of a place or a person I always imagine a new one" (22). Naming is an assertion of the self, demonstrating the ability to transform one's geography into personal space, and thereby claiming the landscape as one's own, an act traditionally associated with men. With Montgomery as female author who is both engaged in writing and naming in the production of her work, Anne seems to be moving towards a similar position. Within the various spaces of the

novel, women and female companionship are privileged: Anne of Green Gables is in many ways a novel concerned with mapping a new and radical geography of femininity in Canada.

Anne's subversion, criticism, interest in female companionship, writing, and naming, places the novel's position alongside the figure of the New Woman, though Carole Gerson has concluded that "many of the explicit material symbols of the New Woman's quest for independence failed to interest Montgomery" (24). Anne's increasing academic success, culminating in her winning a scholarship to university, is a particular indicator of New Womanhood (Gerson 27). As she heads towards university, it appears that Anne will become the New Woman encoded in her character all along: "all the Beyond was hers with its possibilities lurking rosily in the oncoming years" (228). However, her rapid movement towards such a position is stymied by forces that keep her home in the death of Marilla's brother Matthew, the family's loss of money as a result, and the oncoming blindness of Marilla. In response, Anne plays the role of the selfless woman, deciding to decline her scholarship to university, instead staying home, caring for Marilla, taking some correspondence courses, and teaching at the local school. It seems as if her future will be secured in old modes of domesticity as the narrator admonishes: "we pay a price for everything we get or take in this world; and though ambitions are well worth having, they are not to be cheaply won, but exact their dues of work and self-denial, anxiety and discouragement" (228-9). Her newfound romance with Gilbert Blythe at the end of the novel too points Anne in the direction of romantic domesticity.

It would be easy to conclude that Anne's final position in the novel is the result of her growth into an adult. Indeed, Anne comments that instead of speaking out as she had before, "It's nicer to think dear, pretty thoughts and keep them in one's heart," and that her old subversive self is "is just the same," but "pruned down and branched out," implying that she

has grown into maturity and has rejected her previous actions as the result of youth (205, 220). However, she comments in the same breath that ““The real *me* – back here – is just the same”” (220, italics in original). The apparent conflict between these statements point back to an earlier comment of hers: ““There’s such a lot of different Annes in me. I sometimes think that is why I’m such a troublesome person. If I was just the one Anne it would be ever so much more comfortable, but then it wouldn’t be half so interesting”” (133). Her divided identity is located between the various positions of femininity she fulfills, from subversive woman to domestic angel and mother. Contradictions to her subversions are present throughout the novel, as Anne is wholly invested in ideas of beauty and marriage, commenting at one point that ““I’d rather be pretty than clever”” (92). Her propensity towards motherhood is initiated in her care of the sick Minnie May Barrie, and Anne is attributed to saving the child’s life (119). When she converts to her task of caring for Marilla at the end of the novel it comes as no surprise. Anne is fitted to the task, for she is represented as a “natural” mother in an Anglo-Saxon context (Devereux 124). Thus, when Anne embraces domesticity at the end of the novel, she does so within the position of mother. Her courtship with Gilbert is itself a negotiation. Montgomery does “not let Anne succumb to all the stereotypes at once ... Anne does not instantly swap the old tortured, chivalric romance ideal for the equally prescriptive romance of love and marriage” (Epperly 358). Anne of Green Gables is therefore divided between forces pushing Anne towards New Womanhood while simultaneously pulling her into a position as mother and domestic angel. For the girl reader she is both a positive assertion of new possibility, asking them why they should not pursue education and question their surroundings, while also functioning as a reminder that a return to motherhood is equally desirable and ultimately necessary.

Some features of Anne of Green Gables are prefigured in Our Little Canadian Cousin (1904) by Elizabeth Roberts MacDonald, the lesser-known sister of Charles G.D. Roberts. Our Little Canadian Cousin is part of the “Little Cousin Series” published by L.C. Page in Boston, the same publisher who would find success with Anne four years later. The novel details the life of the upper-class Merrithew family of Fredericton and the surprise visit of a niece, the young Dora, from Montreal. MacDonald presents the picture of domestic bliss, centred in the figure of Mrs. Merrithew, who oversees the family’s activities with appropriate imperial-motherly zeal. However, like in Anne, Mrs. Merrithew is also a centre of power in the novel, albeit within the domestic sphere. When the family is in the process of deciding how to spend their day, the narrator comments that “as usual it was ‘mother’ who offered the most feasible plan” versus the frequently-absent Mr. Merrithew, who facetiously suggests hunting bears (20). Marjorie, the family’s daughter, and Dora form an immediate friendship similar to that of Diana and Anne, sealing a “compact which was never broken ... which lasted and grew in beauty and strength all through their lives” (19). Writing is also an interest of theirs, especially for Dora, who wishes “to write stories ‘something like Mrs. Ewing’s,’” the popular British author of children’s fiction who at one time had resided in Fredericton (22). While the centre of the novel is wholly conventional, it does participate in the discourse of imperial motherhood while also providing some promise of alternate positions for women.

Two novels of historical fiction, The Only Girl: A Tale of 1837 (1925) by Emily Poynton Weaver and Susannah of the Mounties: A Canadian Story of the Nineties (1936) by Muriel Denison, have been forgotten, as the formation of the canon between the world wars largely excluded women writers, and especially those writing historical novels (Gerson 47). While the latter novel was turned into a 1939 film of the same name starring Shirley Temple, it barely

resembled the original text (Berton 144). Each novel is particularly important for the child reader in terms of gender, as it posits young women at the centre of important events in Canadian history, the 1837 rebellions and the North West Mounted Police presence in the West, respectively. Furthermore, each novel inherits the feisty, often subversive character of Anne as their central girl characters while always emphasizing proper norms of motherhood, and continuing the same negotiations of gender discourses from earlier in the century.

The Only Girl follows the story of rambunctious Peggy Lydgate, living near the dusty road that will become Dundas Street in southern Ontario. Her father has been blinded in a house fire, leaving Peggy, her mother, and various brothers to care for the family homestead and affairs. Peggy is described by the narrator as a “tomboy,” “self-satisfied regarding her many boyish accomplishments” and “not more readily daunted by the difficulty of climbing any ordinary tree than was the best woodsman of her many brothers” (10, 4). Despite her “boyish” character, her femininity takes the form of a mother role, and though she eventually marries at the end of the novel, her negotiation of gender takes a particularly Canadian form adapted to the privations of settler life.

Among the near neighbours of Peggy’s family are the newly-arrived Cranes from Britain, one of whom, the unmarried sister Ellen, is poorly adapted to Canadian life. As a result, she takes a condescending tone to her environment, condemning the “the smell and the mess and the muddle and all the trees and the awful roads and this miserable country” (56). Peggy, “a kind, capable, meddlesome whirlwind” takes control of the Crane country kitchen for Ellen, who has no idea how to make use of local resources to cook or clean the house (58). Neither is Peggy unafraid of completing work traditionally meant for men, as Ellen exclaims, “you prefer men’s work! One of my quarrels with this country is that all of us, women as well as men, have to do

every kind of rough work. Really it seems to me there's no time for women to be womanly'" (59). Later, Miss Crane is engaged as a teacher to the Lydgates, whose cousins are soon to arrive from England. The Lydgates wish to appear more "civilized" to their family, and therefore seek training in "deportment" and literacy, among other skills associated with British upper and middle-class life. The teaching, however, is at heart a compromise between the two worlds of colonial "roughness" and English propriety: Ellen learns of colonial femininity through the influence of the Lydgates, whose mother is described as "experienc[ed] in pioneer farming and housekeeping" (7). Thus, she emerges at the end of the novel from past status as a "woe-begone creature" of English weakness to become a vision of imperial motherhood able to cope effectively with the Canadian landscape. She has transformed into a colonial mother through the early influence of Peggy, as the narrator comments that she "learned in these months what the word 'mother' really stands for" (143).

Though set during the 1837 rebellions, the historical context of the novel informs its plot sparingly until the conclusion, when Peggy becomes directly involved in the conflict. The stance of the novel is against William Lyon Mackenzie and immediate rebellion and for slow change enacted by peaceful means. Thus, when her siblings join the loyal forces, Peggy wishes to accompany them, stating "I wish I was a man. I would give anything to go" (213). Instead, she is forced to keep watch over the homestead during their absence. While fulfilling her task, she runs into Mackenzie on the run from pursuers. In the heat of the moment and despite the allegiances of her parents, she helps Mackenzie elude capture by hiding him in a nearby abandoned home. Peggy is the necessary component in the historical narrative, as "she had been familiar with these woods since she was a little child, and she led the way swiftly amongst the trees, that in the darkness, were so bewildering to a stranger" (255). Having played a pivotal role in events, she



returns to domestic life, though the story of her bravery is told and retold by Mackenzie to her children and others once Mackenzie had “lived long enough to see the dawn of a new era of liberty and fair government in the country” (289, 272). Peggy is therefore a role model both of a version of colonial motherhood that is particular to Canadian settler life and as a woman who has played an important role in the (fictionalized) history of the nation’s political maturation.

Susannah in Susannah of the Mounties is closer to the tradition of Anne than The Only Girl in her wilful subversion and playfulness. The only child of a couple from Montreal, Susannah is left in Canada while her artist father is sent to India with her mother to complete murals for a monarch. Since she cannot be cared for adequately in Montreal, Susannah is sent to a North West Mounted Police base outside of Regina to join her uncle Dennis, a captain there, for six months. Before her arrival, Dennis assures the Commissioner that ““No little girl of nine can do herself or any one else much harm in six months,”” to which he responds, ““you don’t know what little girls of nine can do!”” (4). The Commissioner’s comment is prescient: Susannah is a tornado, intent on “adventuring” and “always being called *bad* or a tomboy or a hoyden” though the narrator notes that for Susannah, “the word ‘bad’ seemed to be always associated with pleasant things” (22, italics in original). She is defiant and proud, consistently introducing herself to strangers using her full name, “Susannah Elizabeth Fairfield Winston,” and finds some pleasure in the less proper environment of the barracks, where “no one asked her ... why her hair wasn’t brushed; no one told her to stop talking or not to speak with her mouth full” (12, 41).

Above all Susannah wants a NWMP red coat “more than anything else in all the world,” a status symbol which is eventually achieved due to her stubborn persistence and willingness to complete any task necessary to receive it (30). In many ways, her character recasts the Anne trope as a subversive role model solely by the force of her character and the number of times she

gets into trouble with the Commissioner for her impetuous behaviour. However, the significant difference surrounds the coat. Following riding with the Mounties, which is one requirement to achieve it, she is involved in the arrest of a dangerous smuggler by singing and dancing to detain him while help arrives (220). The performative aspect of the fugitive's capture has its own implications: by capturing the male gaze, Susannah effectively uses it to her own advantage by capturing the prisoner and eventually the coveted coat. Later, she receives long-due respect from the Commissioner, who tells her "the Force is very proud of you," rewarding her with the red coat for "courage and resourcefulness" (225, 228). Susannah's coat is a symbol of a young woman achieving a masculine ideal: not only is she represented as playing an important role in history, but she is also now a capable and independent woman, deserving of male respect.

Susannah of the Mounties is not without imperial elements, to be discussed in further detail in Chapter 4. Susannah delights in the prospect of the Mounties being featured in the Queen's Jubilee, and when she travels to London to witness them in the parade, she emotionally responds to the colonial procession before her. Susannah, too, will make an ideal colonial mother, but her subversive character is most memorable.

In all the texts featuring girls surveyed, it is clear that they host particularly colourful and interesting young characters who occupy spaces of femininity both informed by imperial contexts of motherhood and domestic norms while wilfully testing the boundaries of these norms through the manifestation of new feminisms in their subversive and powerful features. If anything, the strong female characters of the works surveyed function as remarkable role models for young women moving forward into the twentieth century. Both in the texts' historical pasts and the contexts of their production, Canada provides an imperial space to negotiate dominant gender norms, if not wholly independent of them.

## Men

As was briefly discussed in the previous chapter on nature, of the texts surveyed for this study, those that feature characters interacting intimately with nature are almost exclusively gendered male. Nature is represented as the domain of men and would-be men. For the boy-protagonist, masculinity is achieved through trial and struggle with a merciless environment, a struggle always solved by an emphasis on self-education through woodcraft that teaches the child reader to survive in the natural world. The boy character who has become confident in nature with the requisite survival skills has become a man in the eyes of the boys' adventure novelist. The gendered site of nature is intimately entwined with the discourse of British imperialism. However, in contrast to novels of the nineteenth century, there is less concern with conquering nature to claim the Canadian landscape as property of the colonizer than with the status of the boy hero in question as imperial citizen, a change which represents a movement in the Canadian colonial mentality from forcing nature to submit for the sake of empire to becoming an active participant in the upkeep of empire (Hurley 12). As the previously-cited article by Misao Dean argues, the turn of the century witnessed a "perceived 'crisis of masculinity' in English, American and Canadian cultures [that] consisted [of] the belief that men were becoming 'soft,' physically weak and morally corrupt through sedentary or industrial work" (3-4). The colonies, with the benefit of vast physical spaces, became "appropriate fields for the exercise of British masculinity, preferably through a 'cleansing' encounter with the natural world in adventures which emphasized 'instinctive' reactions ... [to] overcome any conditions" (4). The rise of these insecurities surrounding the status of the previously-virile British male of nineteenth-century type is directly implicated in the growth of the Boy Scout Movement, founded in an effort to reshape the apparent decline in imperial masculinity

(Hannabuss 53, MacDonald 3). Ernest Thompson Seton himself cited woodcraft as “a man-making scheme with a blue sky background,” sentiments which are overtly apparent in his Two Little Savages (1903) as well as Charles G.D. Roberts’s The Kindred of the Wild (1902) (qtd. in Henderson 465).

Seton’s Two Little Savages follows the progress of masculinity in Yan, the novel’s central boy character. Yan begins the novel “shy and timid,” interested in experiencing nature but without the practical knowledge to do so (24). The novel functions in three movements: an introduction to Yan and his oppressive and therefore feminized urban life, a journey to an outlying settlement where he achieves an education in nature, and a final journey into nature to prove his strength against it. While still living in the town, Yan makes periodic pilgrimages to a patch of woods he names “Glenyan” after himself. Here he feels most at home. As the narrator notes, there he would “say and think and feel, ‘This is mine, my own, my very own’” (49). Yan builds a small shack on the property, resulting in an appropriate moral experience: “here for the first time in his life he began to realize something of the pleasure of single-handed achievement in the line of a great ambition” (55). Yan is on the road to the kind of masculinity implicit in the insecurities of the time: by leaving urban settlement, he is finally able to begin achieving a “proper” path to manhood.

Claiming the landscape as one’s own is central to creating an idea of masculinity: owning a home means establishing oneself in the world. Furthermore, in terms of Canadian identity, it means that nationalist “ownership” of Canada as home is associated as primarily a male activity at the turn of the century, though Anne provides a similar instance for women in her own naming activities. By the end of Two Little Savages, Yan and his boy-companions are “on terms of friendship with the woods that contrasted strongly with the feelings of that first night” spent in

the woods; “now they were truly at home” (344). The process of claiming the land as home is by educating oneself through woodcraft activities to live within it. “The Boy” in The Kindred of the Wild finds a similar movement towards masculinity by finding home in nature in his efforts to shed a quiet life in the settlements, where his mother is “too absorbed in household cares,” and instead is “impelled to try his skill” by learning woodcraft (11, 28). Roberts’ vision of nature is gendered as a male space, not only in the masculine activities of the Boy, but in the “male animals [who] achieve independence marked by love of adventure, superior mental skills, competitiveness, instinctive love of hunting and virility. In contrast, female animals are motivated primarily by mother-love” (Dean 10). The former list could apply with equal validity to the boys’ activities in Two Little Savages. Once living in the woods, they participate in a variety of games that ape adult masculine activities, such as a target practice whose “resemblance to real hunting was very marked” and an axe-wielding competition (295, 396). The final challenge is to rule the emotions in line with the traditional trope of men as rational in contrast to “emotional” women. The trapper Caleb challenges the boys to fetch a specific stone from the top of a reputedly haunted grave. Yan manages to complete the task, winning the man’s respect and achieving a measure of bravery. As Caleb reassures him, “bravery ain’t so much not being scairt as going ahead when you are scairt, showing that you kin boss your fears” (417).

Texts for boys are concerned with constructing the ideal imperial male, removing them from “feminized” urban environments and instilling proper woodcraft-centric values in them, primarily by teaching boys how to claim Canada as their own through an education in nature. The purpose is an upkeep of empire not dissimilar to imperial motherhood to ensure the continued propagation of imperial values into the twentieth century.

### **Conclusions: Mid-Century**

By the 1940s, the gender differences between Danger on the Coast (1941) by Mary Graham Bonner and Starbuck Valley Winter (1943) by Roderick Haig-Brown could not be more pronounced. While the latter novel continues to work in the tradition of naturalist-ownership and masculinity centred in a test with nature, the former novel features Cherry, the novel's girl-protagonist, who takes fierce pride over her own particular ownership of the Canadian landscape in tandem with her femininity. Both novels, however, are different from previous texts in one significant respect: they no longer engage in the old gendered discourse of empire.

Living in Nova Scotia, Cherry identifies with nature: "there was nothing she loved better than the sea and the wild rough coast" and she enjoys being in the woods, despite her brothers' insistence that girls only "wear fluffy clothes and thin shoes in the woods, and [trip] all over the place" (5, 9). Nova Scotia is her home, as she states, "'no one cares for Nova Scotia any more than I do,'" and the novel makes little reference to empire despite its setting during the Second World War (12). Cherry is very much her own self as she works outside of the difficult gender negotiations of her forebears, though her brothers persist in seeing her personality as divided by gender. Her brother Bruce comments,

'You're a funny kid. One part of you can be quite silly, having crushes and dreaming you're going to marry the admiral of a ship or the bravest of all the Mounties, while the other's not too bad. The other side of you is what makes us put up with you so we can take you along sailing or out in the woods when you behave more like a boy than a girl' (4).

Of her brothers' teasing, Cherry knows "that she [is] wiser and that in the future they each might care a great deal for some one" (112). As she confidently states of herself, "'I'm very sophisticated for my age'" (4).

Cherry's interest in the woods leads to the exciting conclusion of the novel. Throughout the plot there have been suspicious sightings by Cherry and her siblings of ships off the coast. While walking through the woods, she hears some odd sounds and reports the location to the police, who discover a hidden enemy message station used to relay information to Nazi submarines offshore. As a reward for "those who fight for their country, but those too, who do their best to protect it, who render valuable aid, and who show great bravery," Cherry has the area named after her by local officials (244). As the family housekeeper notes, "It's as though ye were a verra part of Nova Scotia" (244). If place names are traditionally associated with male exploits and courage, then Cherry's presence on the map indicates a movement forward: women too may claim ownership of the landscape just as men have in the past. Cherry's strong sense of self, coupled with her motivation to engage in a variety of activities regardless of their gendered implications, indicates a movement forward beyond the traditional difficulties of negotiating different roles of femininity. That the novel does not explicitly participate in empire, except indirectly through Cherry's support of the war effort, points to a departure from old modes of negotiating gender in these terms.

Don's ownership of the Canadian landscape in Starbuck Valley Winter matches the textual tradition that has preceded him. He is the result of an urban upbringing in the United States, and the death of his parents sends him north to British Columbia to live with his uncle and aunt. There he pines for a life spent in the woods, an activity which is permitted one winter as he learns the skills of trapping. Alongside his education in woodcraft, Don names his surroundings, both of which allow him to claim Canada as his own: "he had names of his own for most of the creeks and swamps he could see ... Standing there, looking out over it, he felt a sudden pride in the country, a sense of ownership through knowledge, through having set his feet

upon so much of it in the three years he had lived there” (34). However, as in the previous novel, there is no mention of empire in the novel. Don’s progress is that of the individual, a masculinity which is represented as wholly Canadian in its close engagement with the wilderness. Indeed, his path to acceptance is so typical so as not to merit more than a mention. After learning the skills of trapping from a local vagabond, Jetson, he succeeds in making enough money to buy a coveted boat, kills a number of cougars, and arrives home triumphant. Killing a cougar gives him a “feeling of confidence and security in his own ability that he had never known before” (220).

The conclusions by near mid-century indicate movement beyond a purely colonial conception of gender in Canada, and therefore a burgeoning Canadian identity in specifically gendered terms. Canadian men and women have managed to carve out their own spaces in the country, a space that owes much to their forebears who, as in many of the texts featuring girls, wrestled with the complex negotiations of colonial motherhood. Both men and women have learned to claim the landscape as their own, while women have struggled to find the opportunity to do so. Over the course of the texts studied here, the fight to claim the Canadian landscape and history from imperial dominance is one intrinsically intertwined with gender.



## Chapter 3

### “Bad and Cruel Left Out”: Representations of First Nations Peoples

In his introduction to the collection The Native in Literature, author Thomas King identifies the three most prominent representational tropes of First Nations peoples in Canadian literature: “the dissipated savage, the barbarous savage, and the heroic savage” (8). To King’s list we might add a fourth trope offered by Canadian children’s literature: the image of First Nations as a “vanishing” people and culture, a view characterized by the popular twentieth-century stance that First Nations were rapidly becoming a “doomed figure of the past” and therefore had no place in the construction of nation (Monkman 5). As William Douw Lighthall wrote in his introduction to the anthology Songs of the Great Dominion (1889), First Nations societies in Canada were considered to epitomize the “lament of vanishing races singing their death-song as they are swept on to the cataract of oblivion” (xxi). This persistent belief was not necessarily consistent or enduring across the twentieth century. According to Leslie Monkman, “the combination of fascination for the heroic past of the Indian with a belief that the red man would inevitably disappear becomes less prominent in twentieth-century English-Canadian literature as the red man’s cultural survival becomes obvious” (74). However, within the world of Canadian children’s literature, the myth endures until mid-century.

Paradoxically, First Nations are mentioned in nearly every text in this study, but their presence is registered by either a marked absence or an absence awaiting them in the future through gradual assimilation. Perhaps the reason for such consistent images of the “vanishing” Native is the nature of writing for children. For a white author of the period, the representation of Native peoples in literature for children poses a problem. First Nations are an exciting, exotic Other inexorably connected with the Canadian landscape, and a presence the child reader would

come to expect from consuming other media such as popular western films and radio programs, comic books and dime novels (Francis 144). However, the violent features of colonialism and cultural assimilation, especially the rise of various social problems manifest in First Nations communities during the twentieth century, are a problematic subject for the child reader to face. By writing First Nations out of children's literature while maintaining an acceptable, colonized non-presence, the literature reassures the child reader of the superiority of their apparently benign white culture. Early works such as The Kindred of the Wild and Our Little Canadian Cousin represent the "positive" direction of assimilation and white paternalism, while Two Little Savages and The Adventures of Sajo and Her Beaver People are perfect examples of the absence/presence problem. Elsewhere, First Nations are present only by an absence in other ways: through the white-mythologized versions of First Nations oral tales in Canadian Fairy Tales and historical assimilation and sacrificial death represented in Susannah of the Mounties. Only by Danger on the Coast do apparent shifts in perceptions of First Nations as inevitably doomed begin to change.

First Nations' bodies do not immediately disappear from the literature: two earlier works, Charles G.D. Roberts's The Kindred of the Wild and Elizabeth Roberts MacDonald's Our Little Canadian Cousin present brief sketches of First Nations as being immediately accessible to the reader rather than positioned in a historical past. In the story "The Lord of the Air," Roberts includes one Native man who is engaged in the difficult task of trapping a large male eagle "for a rich American ... [who] had promised him fifty dollars" (48). The eagle does not notice the man, as "long experience had learned to regard him as inoffensive," a sentiment trading on the traditional conception that First Nations represent the "possibility of nature in a human form," making them both intimately connected with nature and "primitive" (Roberts 47, Goldie 19, 20).

Roberts represents his First Nations character as “progressing” beyond the supposed limits of his culture. By engaging in commercial enterprise, he has “freed himself from the conservatism of his race” and is on the road to successful assimilation (51). In Our Little Canadian Cousin, MacDonald describes a First Nations reservation near Fredericton as a tourist destination for white visitors, representing its inhabitants as curiosities: for the celebration of Corpus Christi, “many drive to the Indian Village from Fredericton ... to see the Milicetes [Maliseet] in their holiday mood” (32). During the church service, the Natives are described as child-like: “The mild well-featured Milicete faces had lost their stolidity, and were lit up with an expression of half-mystic adoration” (34). The village priest later states that ““this evening, when they have their feast and their games ... I will keep my eye on them,”” causing the narrator to comment, “Evidently this priest held very parental relations towards his people” (36). These statements are in line with traditionally-held views of Native peoples as children, implying a “lack of evolutionary maturity” that requires assimilation to white society in order to progress to a determined standard of “adulthood” (Goldie 28, 166). The results of such views were paternalist and assimilative state policies that led to the establishment of residential schools beginning in the 1880s, numbering approximately 80 active institutions across Canada during their height in the 1930s (Miller). That these images are present in a book whose purpose is to provide a succinct image of Canada as a nation is telling of widespread conceptions of First Nations during the period that will endure in literature and other media throughout the remainder of the century.

Two Little Savages is conspicuously absent of actual First Nations characters. The book stages an “Indianess without Indians” that the boy subjects re-enact through white discourses that “[valorize] the colonized according to [their] own needs” (Henderson 473, Goldie 12). As Yan claims early in the novel, he wishes to live “the life of an Indian with all that is bad and cruel left

out” (56). This is the source of the “vanishing” Aboriginal in Canadian children’s literature discussed in the introduction. By removing those elements of First Nations society that were the result of white colonization (e.g. alcoholism, poverty), a homogenized and acceptable form of aboriginality is created to which the boy-reader can aspire. The boys in Two Little Savages enact what historian Daniel Francis terms the “Imaginary Indian” in their cross-cultural play (3). Yan stages a popular conception of aboriginality that becomes a jumble of signifiers culled from the public imaginary. Among a wide variety of activities, including a “sun-dance” that comically gives Yan terrible sunburn, he lets

... his hair grow as long as possible, employing various stratagems, even the unpalatable one of combing it to avoid the monthly trim of the maternal scissors. He lay for hours with the sun beating on his face to correct his color to standard ... He tried to do everything as an Indian would do it, striking Indian poses, walking carefully with his toes turned in ... grunting ‘Ugh’ or ‘Wagh’ when anything surprised him. Disparaging remarks about White-men, delivered in supposed Indian dialect, were an important part of his pastime (61).

The reasoning for “playing Indian” is twofold. First, the boys decide to be “Indians” because “this had the advantage of romance and picturesqueness,” even though Sam cites his father as saying ““there ain’t nothin’ an Injun can do that a White-man can’t do better”” (118, 117). Second, the knowledge of First Nations is central to the tenets of Seton’s woodcraft movement discussed in the first and second chapters. Seton saw First Nations knowledge as necessary to save an ailing North American society. Its gendered background aside, woodcraft serves the purpose of “promot[ing] the Indian as an appropriate role model for North American youth” as a means of returning white citizens to the landscape that once informed their daily lives as settlers

(Francis 146). First Nations life became an entry to a nostalgic past in which the wilderness becomes an Arcadian paradise for the urban-bound adult and child alike. The rise of summer camps appropriating Aboriginal cultural practices in the twentieth century is cited by Francis as the result of Seton's appraisal of First Nations culture as the "example and precept are what the world needs to-day above any other ethical teaching," as Seton wrote in his 1936 work on Indian society, The Gospel of the Redman (qtd. in Francis 149). Seton was a tireless promoter of First Nations' rights, describing their contemporary status as an "unbroken narrative of injustice, fraud and robbery" and arguing for the superiority of First Nations society and culture over that of whites by virtue of "the quality of spiritual life and the degree of harmony with nature" (qtd. in Francis 149, Francis 150). And yet, his woodcraft movement owes more to a romantic vision of First Nations positioned in a historical past than to any concern for First Nations in the present. Yan reflects this, working towards an "ideal that he hankered after" of "the pre-Columbian Indian, the one who had no White-man's help or tools" (180). Thus, Two Little Savages both subscribes to notions of a romanticized "noble savage" while using white subjects to replace First Nations in the present to "improve" a misguided North American civilization.

In light of Seton's glorified First Nations' past, it makes sense that First Nations themselves do not appear in Two Little Savages. The majority of knowledge concerning Native Peoples is conveyed through the character of Caleb, who apparently lived with a roaming band of unidentified "Injuns" for forty years, though he retired from that life due to tiredness of "forever shooting and killing, never at peace, never more than three meals ahead of starvation and just as often three meals behind" (304). Through his teaching, the boys engage in a wide variety of First Nations social customs, dress, mock-spirituality, hunting practices and other modes of living in the wilderness. The text itself supports Caleb's role as teacher by providing an

array of diagrams and illustrations for the child reader wishing to emulate Yan and his compatriots. Caleb is an important figure in maintaining the perceived romance of Indian life. He teaches the boys to chant and “they danced round to it as he drummed and sang, till their savage instincts seemed to revive. But above all it worked on Yan ... it thrilled him through and through and sent his blood exulting. He would gladly have given up all the White-man’s ‘glorious gains’ to live with the feeling called up by that Indian drum” (326). Yan’s reversion to “savage instincts” is exactly what Seton is advocating for the boy reader to follow in order to aid the direction of his society towards a return to nature. Only once does Caleb break the romance by admitting “that he once saw an Indian Chief in high hat and stand-up collar” (511). With so much attention paid to First Nations culture and society, when Yan finally encounters a group in person, it takes less than a paragraph of description: “The Indians proved shy, as usual, to white visitors ... The Chief Indian offered him a Deer-tongue, but did not take further interest” (520). What might have been a climax of the novel is rendered as a simple aside. Two Little Savages stages a North American culture that is both indebted to First Nations knowledge and yet relegates First Nations peoples to the background in favour of romanticized tropes and homogenous ideals played out by white children.

Cyrus MacMillan’s stories are worth a brief mention in this section in addition to the discussion in Chapter 1 for the absence of First Nations in oral form and content in the stories of Canadian Fairy Tales. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the gathering and recording of First Nations oral tales was the activity of “more than a few notable scholars” who “derived their literary reputations” from such work (Cornell 174). However, their informants were rarely credited nor were the particular cultural contexts outside of the homogenous term “Indian” applied to the tales collected (Cornell 175). MacMillan, himself a scholar at McGill, rewrites the

stories of Canadian Fairy Tales in modes palatable to white readers, in the process divorcing them from their original contexts and concerns. Furthermore, he fails to differentiate his First Nations sources from other stories, such as French Canadian or settler folktales. As George Cornell notes, such writing amounts to a “literary imperialism” that is a product of “another culture’s imagination” (176). In terms of content, the stories barely register First Nations’ presence except in terms of traditional characters such as Glooscap. Rather, MacMillan configures his stories using Western folk tropes of witches, dragons, giants and fairies to re-write First Nations oral works to suit his national-mythological purpose. First Nations absence in Canadian Fairy Tales serves the function of furthering national interests in the name of national identity. By removing First Nations works from their contexts and appropriating their voices under that of MacMillan, a white-centric, national-mythological project has been founded.

The Adventures of Sajo and Her Beaver People by Grey Owl presents a problem related to the issue of absence/presence by virtue of Grey Owl’s performance as a Native man, his active role of “playing Indian” for the majority of his public life. Evident in the novel is the particular tension between Grey Owl’s public presence as Aboriginal and his private absence from that identity as a white man, with many of the requisite period prejudices against Native peoples inscribed in the latter identity intact. According to Albert Braz, this contradiction occurs in many of Grey Owl’s works, despite a lifetime spent championing the better treatment of Native peoples in Canada and the value of First Nations knowledge, especially in regards to environmental conservation (64). Versus his public self, his Aboriginal identity has a “tentative nature” in his works, and his writings often reveal a character “not very confident that Aboriginal people have much of a future” (Braz 56, 64). While The Adventures of Sajo is one of the few Canadian novels for children of the period to represent First Nations children in a positive light,

to give them a voice and to portray First Nations family life as healthy, nurturing environments, these aspects of the novel are overshadowed by Grey Owl's true absence, a condition manifested in the various authorial slips and commentary conforming to white discourses present throughout the work.

The portrayal of First Nations life in the novel is unique in and of itself, and Grey Owl attempts to provide the benefit of an alternate perspective in order to work against prevailing stereotypes. "Indian life" is depicted as "so hard and toilsome that no one in [the] villages can be lazy very long," in a reversal of the typical trope of the "lazy Indian" (Belaney 6, King 7). Of white society, tales are told around the fire of a place "where there are no Indians and not many trees ... A country, they are told, where if you have no money you cannot sleep or eat," statements emphasizing the communitarian aspects of many First Nations cultures (7). Nature, of course, is depicted as having an intimate connection with the characters. The father of children Sajo and Shapian, the trapper Gitchie, saves the beavers he discovers in the woods by reasoning that "after all ... he had made his living killing beaver for their fur, and it seemed only fair that in return he should do something for these two lost waifs" (49). Furthermore, Grey Owl emphasizes the importance of oral culture to Aboriginal society. When Sajo and Shapian return from their successful quest to save their beaver pets from the cruel hands of the city zoo, they are the subject of "a song made about them" (225). The song, the narrator notes, is how "old-time Indians kept a record of the history of their people" (231).

The phrase "old-time" is indicative of Grey Owl's particular position as a white author, distanced from the culture he has appropriated. Marred by contradiction, The Adventures of Sajo, other than as an exciting epic quest emphasizing the importance of environmental conservation, nevertheless posits First Nations as "primitive" peoples. Early in the novel Grey



Owl makes reference to First Nations in comparison to “more civilized people” and later to the children as “just a couple of little Indians” (2, 62). When Sajo experiences a vivid dream from a waterfall in the voice of her late mother who prompts her to mount her quest to save the beavers, the narrator comments “who can say that the Great Spirit of the Wild Lands, who watches over all the little people, did *not* guide the waters while she slept, so they should seem to speak?,” while a note on the next page reminds the white reader that “It is customary among the more primitive Indians to decide on a course of action in accordance with a particularly vivid dream” (105, italics in original, 106). Thus, while Sajo’s mother-dream is remarkable for both its cultural significance and gendered contexts, it is qualified by attitudes that seek to categorize it as mere superstition. The depiction of gender roles between the children in the novel is also a source of suspicion: Sajo conforms to the Victorian role as “angel in the house,” always described in terms of domestic usefulness “like the good little housekeeper she was,” while Shapian is hunter-provider, a silent, “manly-looking boy” who “even if he were not really yet a man ... it would not be very long before he was one” (59, 137). That traditional, white domestic norms remain in place in the novel points to Grey Owl’s lack of complete knowledge of First Nations societies, many of which do not conform to the gender dichotomies of the dominant Europeans (Miller 9).

The Adventures of Sajo was a very successful novel in England. Released at the height of Grey Owl’s popularity there, it sold 1,000 copies per week there upon its release (Smith 12). For the child reader, despite its overt sympathy concerning First Nations and its uniqueness in their representation, Grey Owl’s absence is at the heart of the novel. The novel is just as empty of First Nations presence as previous works and signifies the eventual absence of First Nations from Canada.

When Lady Tweedsmuir, wife of Canadian Governor General and novelist John Buchan, makes reference to the “Mounties’ civilizing mission to the Indians” in the foreword to Susannah of the Mounties, the statement sets a pattern for the treatment of Native peoples for the duration of the novel (ix). Though First Nations are frequently present throughout the work, especially in Susannah’s burgeoning friendship with “Little Chief,” the son of a local Regina Chief, the novel contains two remarkable sections that portray the assimilated status of First Nations in Canada: residential schools and violence in the famous standoff of Almighty Voice. That the novel is a historical work points to the future absence of First Nations from the landscape and the nation.

Though Little Chief accompanies Susannah through the narrative, teaching her “how to drive” and telling her “tales of his Indian ancestors and of how to hunt bears, make pemmican, and even snare gophers,” it is revealed that he spends nine months of the year at the “mission school” located at Qu’Appelle (125). Despite his positive cultural exchange with Susannah, his future nevertheless is relegated to assimilation through the residential school system. The mission school is described in lengthy and positive terms by the narrator as a place where

Indian children [are] taken into the school at the age of six and ... besides learning to read and write the boys were taught to be good farmers, the girls to be nurses, maids, and cooks. ‘When they leave us,’ [Father Hugenard] explained, ‘it is to go into a household that we know about and where we are sure that they will be well taken care of’ (176).

Appropriate to dominant white conceptions of residential schools as positive institutions, the school is romantically depicted as a space where First Nations children can be properly looked after, unlike in the home of their parents who, as in the case of one boy, bring their children “full of bear grease” in their hair (177). This boy is the subject of an extended drama due to his “suspicious” parents who think the Mission staff “wash him too much” (177). The parents take

the boy away, and are pursued by a Mountie, who eventually convinces the father to return him to the Mission. It is revealed that Little Chief was taken by his father five times, but now apparently appreciates the school, as “[Indians] soon learn it is best to leave them with us,” according to the priest in charge (182). The violent removal of children to the Mission school is justified by the discourse of assimilation: because First Nations are believed to be nearly extinct, the only solution is reasoned to be white education, according to Father Hugenard,

‘These prairie lands are all right for Indians now, but in time they will be covered with wheat and great ranches. There will be no room for the Red Man to roam or deal in wild horses. We must educate the young Indian for the new life that lies ahead of him’ (178-9).

A final incident in the novel is the police standoff surrounding Almighty Voice, a narrative based on a historical event that occurred near Duck Lake, Saskatchewan in 1897, and later to be recounted in Rudy Wiebe’s 1974 short story “Where is the Voice Coming From?” Susannah of the Mounties characterizes Almighty Voice as “‘as bad an Indian as they’re made and there is more in this fight than you realize. If he should escape, we might have another rebellion on our hands,’” in reference to the previous rebellion led by Riel in 1885 (275). The novel differs from the historical narrative in certain details. According to the Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Almighty Voice was initially arrested for killing a government cow. After his being placed in jail, an officer apparently made a joke to the effect that the punishment for the crime would be a hanging, which the novel does not mention, though it adds the detail that the officer in charge of keeping him was asleep at his post (273, Hanson). Regardless, Almighty Voice escaped that evening, leading to a manhunt and the killing of an officer. Finally, when located again, a standoff between officers and Almighty Voice’s party ends in his death. The

novel is ambiguous concerning Almighty Voice's position. Susannah asks Dennis, an officer, if he was a "bad man." Dennis replies, "'Yes and no ... By the laws of the land he was a bad man. He killed four white men, wounded three others, and caused the death of his two friends and himself. Yet he was a good son, a fine husband, and a brave man'" (275-6). A speech is written for Spotted Calf, Almighty Voice's mother, who cries,

'Die, son of mine, die with your heart on fire. Die with the sweet wind in your nostrils and the blood of freedom in your veins. Not for you cramped spaces and the white man's toil. Here where the buffalo ran and sweet grass scented the summer breeze, here will the glory of the Red Man fade, the Indian be forgotten. But you, Almighty Voice, is [sic] given the death of a brave' (277).

Dennis interprets Almighty Voice's death as a sacrifice to assimilation: "'There had to be a final last stand against the white man. We are glad it has come and is over. There will be no more trouble with the Indian'" (278). Susannah of the Mounties depicts a nation in which both the state, through an idealized force of Mounties, and the church, through the mission school, contribute to the eventual assimilation and disappearance of First Nations, writing them out of the landscape and national narratives.

Danger on the Coast represents a small movement forward from the stance of previous novels by including a First Nations character, Pogwodiguna, in contrast to Cherry as an important part of Canadian society. As the narrator comments, "Pogwodiguna would never bubble over with words and enthusiasms the way Cherry did, but she had a sense that Pogwodiguna's feeling for the woods and sea was much the same" (148). Cherry has been raised with "an appreciation of the faiths and needs of others," and thus is "thankful that here, while Indians had their reservations, they hunted and fished and farmed a little, had their homes as they

pleased, and acted as guides” (148, 149). While these assertions carry their own stereotypes and limitations for First Nations, they nevertheless represent a newfound interest in Native peoples beyond cultural appropriation and the possibilities of positive cultural co-existence to be carried into the remainder of the century.

Inheriting centuries of colonialism, children’s literature of the early twentieth century overwhelmingly registers First Nations’ nearly ubiquitous literary presence as an absence, through a combination of forces that support assimilation, appropriation and eventual “extinction.” In its place is a national identity that assumes First Nations society and culture for its own purposes, creating a Canada that is both defined by its Native peoples, but absent of their actual contextualized cultural contributions. By writing First Nations out of national narratives, texts for children appropriate identity in First Nations traditions, taking cultural value from First Nations cultures while pushing actual Native peoples to the margins of the nation.

## Chapter 4

### “Too Much Sea”: Negotiating Nation and Empire

This new Dominion ... stands, like a youth, upon the threshold of his life, clear-eyed, clear-headed, muscular, and strong ... it has a history to make, a national sentiment to embody, and a national idea to carry out (Mair qtd. in Ballstadt 151).

As Charles Mair writes in the above quotation from an article titled “The New Canada” in Canadian Monthly, August 1875, nationalist feeling in late nineteenth-century English Canada was on the rise. Bolstered by optimism in the future potential of the newly-minted nation following rising economic fortunes and a doctrine of nationalist sentiment supported by political leaders and the media, Canadian nationalism by the turn of the century finally began to replace the “widespread disillusionment that had characterized the decades following Confederation” (Hastings 135). Wilfrid Laurier’s (often misquoted) 1904 assertion that “we can claim that it is Canada that shall fill the twentieth century” became the rallying cry of a nation ready to commence the construction of its national narrative (qtd. in Hillmer and Chapnick 3). Within the lengthy conversation on the status of Canadian nationhood, the context of Canada’s imperial connection always mitigated the subject of a unique national identity. The values, social customs, traditions and privileged Anglo-Saxon ethnic centrality of Canadian nationhood continued to be determined by the imperial centre. Even by the mid twentieth century, Canada had not reached the point where its nationalism could “[become] the platform for mobilizing against the occupying power in the name of a common culture, language or history,” as Elleke Boehmer writes of other colonial territories (101). Furthermore, the Canadian nation failed to live up to the standard of a “deep, horizontal comradeship” envisioned by Benedict Anderson in his famous definition of a nation as an “imagined political community” for the same reasons (Anderson 7).

And yet, Canada's colonial status and indeterminate character did not prevent newfound visions of national identity from emerging in children's literature. Rather, the strong nationalist tones and a cohesively-imagined national community present in many of the children's texts studied here, alongside the continued negotiation of imperial identities, indicate the literature attempting to construct a nation in which its youth could find citizenship and consequently, a unique identity.

That Mair posits his version of the nation personified as a youth is related to the production of Canadian children's literature. For Canadian authors, the child characters in their texts become models for the child reader as a "natural symbol to represent the land, or the nation" (Fee 46). "English Canada is far from the ideal of one people of one racial background speaking in one language," Margery Fee writes, and thus "the English-Canadian writer often uses the child as a device to move English Canada closer to ideal nationhood" (51). Canadian nationalism finds a strong expression in children's literature of the early twentieth century while aware of existing loyalties to empire. Such a stance is not necessarily contradictory: the strict dichotomy between identity positioned in nation and empire is largely a false one in twentieth century Canada. According to Phillip Buckner, "sentimental attachment to Britain and the imperial relationship did not preclude the evolution of distinct national identities" (3). Canada's status as a "dominion" of empire created a "distinctive blend of national status and imperial identity" (Thompson 97). Buckner argues that the Canadian embracement of multiple identities between region, nation and empire lasted into the 1930s and 40s, only weakening significantly post-WWII as Britain itself showed cracks in the façade of imperial grandeur (4-5). This historical stance maps well onto the literature to be discussed: in varying degrees, texts for children always pay due deference to empire, while the nation remains the stronger rallying cry

centred in the promise of Canadian youth. This chapter does not aim for an expansive survey of texts but seeks to discuss the nuances of a small selection of works that illustrate how the topics of nation and empire were negotiated over the course of the period.

### **National Feeling**

Our Little Canadian Cousin by Elizabeth Roberts MacDonald is a good example of the national project represented as the responsibility of its children. As befits the description of the “Little Cousin” series to present “the most delightful and interesting accounts possible of child-life in other lands, filled with quaint sayings, doings, and adventures,” MacDonald states in her preface that she wishes to “tell ... with a defined local setting, the story of Canadian home life” (v). “Home life” is depicted as the source of national identity, centred in the Merrithew family, an upper class, Protestant Anglo-Saxon family living in Fredericton. Identity is defined as constructed by family activity, especially by families that engage in healthful exercise together in “the great outdoor life – sleighing, skating, snow-shoeing, hunting, canoeing, and above all, ‘camping out,’” making Canadians “as hardy a race as can be found anywhere” (v, 101). Thus, identity in the novel, while participating in the Anglo-centricity and domestic norms imported from Britain, has at its heart a generalized national focus despite its local setting. In a moment of imperial sentiment, the family takes a trip to Government House in Fredericton, where the older members reminisce about times they “had danced here at many a stately ball, for in those days Government House had been kept up in the good old-fashioned way” and how Prince Edward had once stayed there (28). However, this imperial attachment is represented as the domain of adults: the Merrithew children are more engaged with the prospect of nation. After accompanying his “mother on the previous Sunday to the anniversary service of the Sons of England, a well-known patriotic society,” the youngest son Jack decides to found his own



society, “pure Canadian, of course,” the “Sons and Daughters of Canada” because “everybody is either a son *or* a daughter” (78-9, italics in original). His inclusive society involves family meetings with a “regular course of study in Canadian history and literature ... the works of Canadian poets and novelists began to fill their book-shelves, and pictures of these celebrities to adorn their walls” (80-81). The results of “Jackie’s bright idea” are “so much pleasure and profit, many happy evenings, and an ever deeper love for their country” (82). Taking the imperialist format of the Sons of England and transforming it into a nationalist club celebrating Canadian culture, Jackie represents the new face of the nation in moving from an exclusive Canadian identity located in empire to an inclusive identity wholly centred in the burgeoning possibilities of nation, though this identity remains wholly Anglo-centric in the novel.

Alfred E. Uren’s poem travelogue Bob and Bill See Canada is hardly apologetic for its overtly nationalist aims. As Uren writes in the foreword,

We cannot too forcibly impress upon the minds of our Canadian youth that they have a goodly heritage – a land of vast natural resources and wonderful opportunities. Our boys of to-day are the men of to-morrow; how imperative it is, therefore, that we begin early to plant the seeds that are to bear the fruits of good citizenship. In submitting this little book of rhymes to young Canada the writer has kept the patriotic as well as the educative in mind, hoping that the travel story of Bob and Bill will not only prove entertaining, but that boys and girls, and perhaps those of older years, who read it, will have a greater conception of Canada and things Canadian (7).

The narrative of Bob and Bill showcases the various positive elements of the country from East to West, emphasizing the advanced state of Canadian industry with the object of inducing a sense of deep pride in the productive capacity of the nation, for there is “no grander spot the whole

world round – / A better country can't be found," as the poem dictates (17). Ontario and Quebec, for example, "Have wealth of pulpwood, all they need / To place our Canada in the lead," while "The harbours too, are of the sort / Found only in a modern port" (63, 64). As Bob and Bill travel across the nation, participating in its industry, revelling in its natural and architectural beauty, and meeting its inhabitants, the child reader is to conceive of their nation as a land of possibility, ranking first among the nations of the world. The otherwise disparate geographical, cultural and linguistic spaces of the nation become unified by the theme of industry and perseverance, leading to a more cohesive vision of national identity. When the rabbits visit a classroom, they overhear a teacher telling of "How pioneers with one accord / When Canada was unexplored, / Worked hard to build each bridge and road / To make a place for their abode" and "how Canada had grown / To be a nation of her own, / With lands and riches still in store / For many million people more" (77). Only once does the poem sway from its national focus to Canada's imperial role in the context of World War I. Bob and Bill "To army camps ... journeyed then / Where Canada's brave fighting men / Are trained with bayonet, bomb and gun / To fight when fighting must be done" (51). The poem identifies the soldiers as "British to the core," fighting "With right and liberty at stake, / For happy homes and honor's sake" (77). Therefore, Canadian nationalism is still predominantly represented as ethnically based in Anglo-Saxon terms. Bob and Bill See Canada, much like Our Little Canadian Cousin, casts its new nationalism in the old form of imperial deference, though with the important feature of presenting a future nation in the hands of its youth. As Bob waves a Union Jack in a classroom, he states "'This flag is yours, it keeps you free / Respect it always boys'" (77). That girls are left out of Bob's vision of nation is unquestioned, though Uren does address both genders in his preface.

### **Imperial Negotiations**

Unlike Bob and Bill See Canada, the poems of Funny Fables of Fundy by Grace Helen Mowat are strongly rooted in the landscape, geography and culture of a single place, the Passamaquoddy Bay in New Brunswick. Poems such as “Coming Home to Quoddy” find beauty in the local, exclaiming “Oh, Quoddy of the Islands, / Oh, Quoddy of the sea! / Our white prow cuts the waters – / And I’m coming back to thee” (65). This approach is in line with Anne of Green Gables, a novel that too finds its inspiration in the significance of the landscape and society of Prince Edward Island. As Owen Dudley Edwards and Jennifer H. Lister comment, “Montgomery’s early novels seldom show avowed statements of cohesive Canadian identity: loyalty is more often given to home, to community and to the Island itself” (31). The localized focus of these authors does serve a nationalist purpose. While they may not posit unified identities in nation, the nation nevertheless is mapped and identified through local settings, adding colour to popular images of Canada, especially in terms of international recognition. In terms of empire, Anne seldom makes comment, except when Marilla, rejecting the notion of caring for an orphaned British “home child,” states that “‘I’ll feel easier in my mind and sleep sounder at nights if we get a born Canadian,’” a statement showing alienation from identity in empire and an implicit belief in the superiority of a Canadian ethnic type (12). The same local function occupies Funny Fables of Fundy, except for one curious poem titled “Too Much Sea.” Told from the perspective of a young child who wishes to travel to London to see the King, the poem presents a problem: there is “too much sea” that separates Canada from England, so the child cannot conceive of a visit (53). Nor is Canada a destination for the King: “Supposing it might happen (although it never could) / The king should come a-riding into our maple wood ... But this is just supposing, for it could never be: / No king could ride from London, because of too much sea” (54). Though “Our clearing is a splendid place for welcoming a king. / The

maples all are crimson, and gold the aspen tree,” the speaker feels a distance from empire as alienated from local concerns, musing “I wonder if by chance he knows (I don’t suppose he could) / That far across the sea a child plays in a maple wood” (55). This seeming estrangement from the British Empire is representative of the internal tensions and contradictions surrounding Canadian imperial identity. Mowat herself was fiercely proud of her United Empire Loyalist genealogy, and once defined her identity as composed of three parts in an interview: “I am, first, an enthusiastic New Brunswicker; then, a staunch and loyal Canadian, and finally, an ardent imperialist” (Rees 40, qtd in Rees 158-9). As “Too Much Sea” seems to indicate, by the late 1920s empire is no longer an unquestionable component of Canadian identity, even for a self-described imperialist. Canadian concerns seem unrelated to those of empire, just as the imperial centre seems too far away to be relevant to the daily lives of Canadian citizens. By privileging local discourse and landscape and questioning the relevance of empire, “Too Much Sea” negotiates a new identity positioning Canada as home.

Two historical novels, The Only Girl and Susannah of the Mounties, spend more time on Canada’s imperial relationship than other works do, as befits their settings, but nevertheless emphasize a modern vision of Canada as first within empire. The Only Girl takes a moderate stance on the subject of the imperial relationship during the 1837 rebellions, insisting that while William Lyon Mackenzie is right to “make this a country that will at least get fair play,” his violent methods are unjustified, insisting instead on “patient and persistent effort to make the statesmen of Britain understand their cause would win the day at last” (22, 92). While the novel’s narration tends to prefer this view, which is supported by the adults of the Lydgate family, the family becomes divided as several of its male members decide to fight for Mackenzie because “Canadians can’t put up with everything” (91). Alongside these tensions is the recently-

immigrated Crane family, described as “proud stuck-up English people” who do not engage in community activities and therefore are exiled and helpless in their new environment (42). As discussed in the second chapter, Peggy brings the family around to Canadian living, as “Ellen Crane wondered whether after all, there might not be something worth while in this wild life [sic],” and by the end, “hatred of the country was no longer her dominant thought” (65, 142). Without contradiction, Miss Crane’s work in teaching the uncouth Lydgates to interact according to British standards of propriety with their visiting British cousins serves to convert her to an identity in Canada: “In truth, though she hardly knew it herself, she was beginning to love Canada” (147). Thus, the novel finds a path between nation and empire: Canadian politics achieve the “dawn of a new era of liberty and fair government in the country” and thus move toward a distinct nationalism, while British discourses remain important but not above national interests (272). The marriages of Ellen and Peggy to local boys at the end of the novel signify the continuation of an identity born of compromise between the British and Canadian influences of the novel.

Susannah of the Mounties is a novel that places loyalty at the feet of empire, but in doing so posits a Canada foremost in imperial prowess, and therefore moving towards unique nationhood and international recognition. In addition to the main plot of Susannah joining the Mounted Police force, the Regina delegation is in preparation to “be the first Mounted Police to represent Canada in a royal procession” for Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee and “will be up against the picked regiments of the British Empire” (3). Though there is unity in empire, “as ... we are rejoicing that our good Queen has reigned so long and so well,” there is also the conviction that the Canadian contingent “must be better than any others there” (53). The Mounties are popular signifiers of Canadian nationhood, but also represent continued colonial

subservience as they uphold primarily British values of masculinity over the landscape, particularly in contrast to French Canadians and First Nations, both of whom are figured as enemies in the novel. In London, however, the Mounties are greeted with uproarious applause and admiration as representative of Canadian virility. An exchange between a London woman and Lady Charlotte, who had previously visited Regina in search of her lost Earl-nephew, the Mountie Monty, represents Canadian nationality as desirable:

‘The welcome the Canadian troops receive is astonishing,’ said a friend to Lady Charlotte. ‘It’s not astonishing if you’ve seen the Force,’ she replied tartly. ‘You sound as if you were a Canadian, Charlotte,’ smiled her friend. ‘I wish I were,’ said Lady Charlotte, ‘and I wish I were a strong young man and I’d go out and join the Force’ (281).

As historical novels, both The Only Girl and Susannah of the Mounties represent the future potential of Canada as necessarily distinct in identity from empire, while ensuring that empire remains upheld in their texts without contradiction, therefore avoiding conflict in an environment of “British symbols and discourse still prevalent, especially in the education system, of the 1930s” (Thompson 105).

By the 1940s with Danger on the Coast, little is said of Empire. Much like previous works, the novel engages in the particularities of a local setting, especially through Cherry’s fervent pride in the landscape and mythology of Nova Scotia. However, its national subject is the Second World War. The war is represented as being a real threat to the family’s safety in Nova Scotia when Cherry’s father warns them to be on the lookout as “Living along a coast such as this [creates] ... opportunities for being attacked, [with] its places for hiding, and its defences, too” (17). When Cherry’s discovery of a hidden telegraph station leads to the capture of a spy

planning ““for a wholesale sabotage job ... so that our boats would be useless, our wharves destroyed, our province shattered to an almost hopeless extent,”” the children are again warned that they should ““always show vigilance”” (239, 242). Other than the obvious wartime propagandistic purpose the novel serves by bringing the action of the war onto Canadian soil and therefore encouraging children to have a participatory role in the effort, the presence of war is described in terms of Canadian involvement on its own terms, rather than as duty to empire. Discussions include the province’s involvement in manufacturing arms for the war effort, the children singing patriotic songs such as “The Maple Leaf Forever,” and Cherry concluding that she and her brothers will work to ““protect their part of the world from any enemy”” (60, 197, 40). It has become accepted among recent historians that the First World War did not significantly shake Canadian identity in empire, as “even in the interwar years there is no evidence that the majority of Canadians wanted to end the imperial relationship,” according to Phillip Buckner (4). Though the First World War strengthened Canadian identity through pride as an ally to Britain for the cause of “democracy and civilization,” the Second World War was one in which Canada emphasized its free choice to enter and one that signalled a movement past empire as Britain’s power weakened (Thompson 96, 105). Danger on the Coast signals this new transition, firmly bringing the war home on Canadian terms, and privileging the national over imperial in doing so.

If postcolonial literatures write in resistance to “foreground the tension with the imperial power” and develop a concern with the “recovery of an effective identifying relationship between the self and place,” then Canadian children’s literature of the early twentieth century works towards such a goal (Ashcroft et. al 2, 8). However, as M. Daphne Kutzner notes, “Finding a critique of empire in a children’s text is rare” since “much imperialist discourse was

... directed at a specifically adolescent audience, the future rulers of the world” (xiii). That all of the texts examined here privilege national discourses over imperial subservience to an extended degree indicates a concentrated effort on the part of Canadian authors to develop national identities through their works to influence the citizenship of their child readers. While empire invariably wields its influence in texts, Canadian nationhood is finally en route to a position of fruition and positive promise during the early twentieth century.



## Chapter 5

### The Role of the Canadian Child

The decades between the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth witnessed a significant shift in conceptions of children, childhood, and how to raise and educate children as members of Canadian society. No longer was the child conceived of as “a resistive, refractory ... but nonetheless basically plastic raw material” out of which “parents and other adults could, if they were persistent enough, fashion moral, hard-working, productive adults,” as Neil Sutherland characterizes views held during the 1870s and 80s (11). Brought about by a large group of middle class reformers during the 1890s, the new child was now perceived as “intimately bound” with the “welfare of their society as a whole, both then and in the future” (Sutherland 17). “Take care of the children and the nation will take care of itself” Juvenile Court Commissioner Reverend J. Edward Starr commented in 1895 (qtd. in Sutherland 17).

Influenced by the work of the German pedagogue Friedrich Fröbel, Canadian educators emphasized the need for schools to provide “reverent love for the child, profound respect for his individuality as the element of divinity in him, and freedom and self-activity as the conditions of most perfect growth,” sentiments expressed by Toronto school inspector James L. Hughes in 1905 (qtd. in Sutherland 174). Versus the “nineteenth-century ideal of moral character, with its emphasis on work, discipline, self-mastery and conformity” in the raising of a child, “the emergent ideal of personality, organized around the development of individuality and the quest for a unique self” became the rallying cry of educational and social reformers (Henderson 478). It was hoped that by attending to the needs of children, they would “attain self-reliant and self-respecting citizenship,” therefore advancing the cause of the nation and a national “type” ready

to contribute productively to Canadian economic, political and social life (Ontario Sessional Papers qtd. in Sutherland 17, Henderson 464).

According to Jennifer Henderson, “the history of childhood is the history of ... ‘reconstructions’ of the child” organized around “the dynamics of capital ... national and imperial projects to foster the development of certain kinds of social actors” (464). Inherent in these constructions is the production of children’s literature to disseminate the values deemed proper by a society. Jacqueline Rose’s oft-quoted assertion that “children’s fiction builds an image of the child inside the book ... in order to secure the child who is outside the book” is particularly true of Canadian children’s fiction of the twentieth century, obsessed as it was with the “new, emancipatory view of the child as a creature with independent desires, interests, and imagination” (qtd. in Rudd 16, Henderson 461). All children’s books attempt to “teach [children] to behave ... in acceptable ways” to affect the immediate “social attitudes and moral behaviour” of their readers, therefore determining “not only ... the destinies of individuals but the destinies of nations” (Kutzer xv, Moyles 41). The subject of children’s representation in the literature is tied with Canadian self-perception and the roles it asks children to fulfill in order to ensure the positive direction of the nation’s future.

Canadian children’s literature registers the changing conceptions of childhood almost immediately into the twentieth century. Two Little Savages and Anne of Green Gables represent child characters “liberated from the repressions and constraints of nineteenth-century models of discipline” (Henderson 461). These children rebel against their parents or guardians, carving independent paths of their own volition, and begin a trope of such characters that will last into the 1930s. However, just as these children rebel, so is their childhood quick to pass: by their own actions they learn to internalize independently the values of their society, in doing so reaching

maturity and effective national citizenship. As Henderson notes of Seton's and Montgomery's works, "the double structure of the new pedagogy is enacted in a narrative in which the protagonist's seemingly irrepressible originality and imagination become the very basis for her training as a particular kind of social agent" (480). By the 1940s the trope of rebellion has disappeared, leaving the remnants of its pedagogy in child characters that experience adventures in search of positive selfhood, as the need to react against the outdated pedagogies of their parents has disappeared. In terms of the interests of nation, children's fiction of the early twentieth century serves two purposes: to educate the child reader to negotiate properly the various spaces of their nation and in doing so, to become active agents of national identity through learned character traits.

In Two Little Savages, Yan is represented by Seton as a divergent youth from early in the novel. Once he discovers his interest in the natural world, he contradicts his father's orders to "abstain forever from the woods" after he accidentally makes himself sick from chewing on a plant for the purposes of experimentation (70). Instead of obeying, Yan "merely became more cautious about it all, and enjoyed his shanty with the added zest of secret sin" (70). Yan's work in building his first lean-to in the woods is praised for the "pleasure of single-handed achievement in the line of a great ambition," whereas Yan's father is condemned by the narrator as "indolent – a failure in business, easy with the world and stern with his family," placing the moral centre of the novel in Yan's exploratory pursuits as central to the industrious future of the nation (55, 19). Yan also has a particularly difficult relationship with his mother. Condemned by the narrator as a "morbidly religious woman" who cannot understand his love of nature, she attempts to prevent his activity due to his disinterest in spiritual matters (95). Faced with the

choice between his imminent self-construction and the wishes of his mother, he argues that the Bible

‘... tells me nothing I want to know. It does not teach me to love God ... But I go out into the woods, and every bird and flower I see stirs me to the heart with something, I do not know what it is; only I love them: I love them with all my strength, and they make me feel like praying when your Bible does not. They are my Bible. This is my nature. God made me so’ (96-7).

In such a statement, Seton allows Yan to keep the necessary moral and spiritual qualities in place, albeit altered to suit his position as an emancipated child and rebellious naturalist, to demonstrate to the child reader that these two approaches are not mutually exclusive. Yan is similarly rebellious at school, where he has “strange, uncertain outbreaks of disrespect for his teachers” and is occasionally beaten by a principal who “forgot his manhood” (82). Clearly, Seton disagrees with the old pedagogy of moral instruction, spiritual dogmatism and punishment. During Yan’s long education in woodcraft outside of the strictures of home and school, amongst the “strong bond of sympathy between all Woodcrafters” and the activity-based woodcraft he practices under the demonstrative pedagogy of Caleb, Yan finds an identity in the role of naturalist (145). Once emancipated, Yan finds a crisis of faith at the end of the novel. Faced with returning back to family life, he decides to obey his father’s wish for him to take a position as an errand boy rather than go to college for zoology: “He felt it to be a binding duty. He could not rebel if he would. No, he would obey; and in that resolution new light came” (536). Still, he resolves that in “his hours of freedom ... he would strive and struggle as a naturalist. When he had won the insight he was seeking, the position he sought would follow” (536). Henderson argues that Yan “voluntarily assumes an adult perspective on the childhood pleasures of

discovery, observation and adventure in nature” through nostalgia to maintain his connections at a distance (479). The service done to the nation has been to create a masculine figure well-educated in the nature that forms such an integral part of Canadian identity, in order to maintain national mythologies, while constructing a child who has adopted an adult sense of duty and order to become a productive citizen.

Anne in Anne of Green Gables undergoes a similar transformation as Yan over the course of the narrative. As discussed in Chapter 2, her constant subversion of Marilla’s old form of pedagogy, always keen to “to inculcate a good and useful moral,” in combination with her famed “scope for imagination,” makes her an ideal emancipated child character (38, 15). Throughout the novel, her imagination is used as a form of resistance to fight “the restrictive walls of adult conformity” by transforming mundane, typically adult, situations in which she is expected to conform to old norms into landscapes of freedom, such as early in the novel when she opts to stay outside instead of waiting for Matthew in the “ladies’ waiting room” at the train station (Åhmansson 373, Montgomery 15). It is precisely her resistance, centred in Anne’s various escapades enacted over the course of the novel and her imaginative responses to her environment, which serve to bring her around to a position of maturity at the end of the novel, culminating in a final brush with death while enacting Tennyson’s “Lancelot and Elaine” on a floating raft. Anne herself attributes each “accident” to some moral lapse in her personality: ““Ever since I came to Green Gables I’ve been making mistakes, and each mistake has helped to cure me of some great shortcoming ... to-day’s mistake [on the raft] is going to cure me of being too romantic”” (184). Thereafter, the rate of Anne’s maturation takes a rapid pace. Her change is always self-conscious, as Anne comments after approving of the success of her rival, Josie Pye: ““it shows I’m improving, don’t you think?”” (188). Not long after, she concludes that her

fifteenth summer will be “the last summer I’ll be a little girl,” and she is later described as a “tall, serious-eyed girl of fifteen” far removed from her previous self (199, 204). As Anne speaks less, becomes more domestically useful, and when faced with Marilla’s plight, learns to “[look] at her duty courageously in the face,” she has progressed into an acceptable form of adulthood by her own volition (239). Much like Yan, Anne sacrifices her potential role as university graduate for a humbler position as teacher at the Avonlea school and nursemaid to Marilla. Though she insists she has successfully retained her romanticism and imagination when she contends that her real self is still present, just “pruned down and branched out,” the distance between her earlier character and the Anne at the end of the novel is pronounced (220). Having begun the slow rise into adulthood at the end of the novel, a position further signified by her potential future romance with Gilbert Blythe, Anne is poised to become a successful citizen by demonstrating “the joys of sincere work and worthy aspiration,” though her “horizons had closed,” as her old self is left behind her once the pedagogy of the new child has been achieved (245).

The trope of the rebellious child is repeated in The Only Girl and Susannah of the Mounties in their feisty girl characters as discussed in Chapter 2, and both inherit the progression of their emancipated child characters from Anne. Both Peggy and Susannah in their respective novels are rebellious in some form, especially so for Susannah, who treats her constant accidents and indiscretions as a natural part of her character. As Monty warns her in the tired mode of the old pedagogy, “‘Children should be seen,’ but is interrupted by Susannah subversively shouting “*Not heard!*” (85, italics in original). The progress of the novel focuses on tempering Susannah’s personality into service for the nation. During a tantrum Susannah is admonished for “[behaving] like a silly child” to which she replies “I’m not a child ... I’m a recruit” (101). Her poor behaviour is attributed to a flawed urban upbringing, as “she knew that if she made

enough fuss she would get her own way – at least, she always had in ... Montreal” (101). The rural Canadian landscape therefore provides the opportunity to construct a child in service of nation much in the same way as the woodcraft movement was founded to maintain modes of Canadian masculinity earlier in the century. The end of the novel shows Susannah having learned to temper herself by her capture of the wanted criminal, as she decides to “show a bold front” in the face of danger, an act that earns the respect she desires from the Force and her eventual status as a Mountie (219). Once she has achieved a certain measure of control over herself, she is permitted to travel to England to view the Mounties’ imperial procession, thus becoming an active agent of both empire and nation in her patriotism and ability as an accepted “member” of the Force.

The limits of the emancipated child are defined by the boundaries of race. Like their parents, First Nations children are not given the opportunity to become active participants in the nation, nor are they “emancipated” by any substantial means in the novels where they appear. Instead, they are positioned at the receiving end of state apparatus and with little agency of their own. The Adventures of Sajo and Her Beaver People, while representing the fortitude and courage of their child characters Shapian and Sajo, nevertheless places them as children of a paternalistic state. The beaver, the search for whom they undertake their epic quest, has been lost due to the economic failings of their father, who is forced to sell it to the local trader in order to finance his upcoming trapping expedition. After they find out it will cost a significant sum to retrieve the beaver, Shapian decides to try his hand as a wilderness guide, thereby entering into an exchange of his Otherness with tourists who “looked curiously at the Indian boy... the first real Indian that some of them had ever seen” (147). Just as his courage begins to fail him, he meets a white man who speaks Ojibwa and has “bright yellow hair and blue eyes” (147). In an

echo of Grey Owl himself, the man's "skin that showed was tanned by the sun, almost to the same colour as an Indian's" (147). The man turns out to be a missionary who describes his role as "working amongst [First Nations], teaching school, taking care of the sick, and trying to bring happiness wherever he could" (151). Presented as a suitable replacement for their absent father, as the narrator notes that Sajo saw in him "the kindest and merriest pair of eyes that, next to her father's, she had ever seen," the man draws upon the community of tourists to raise money for the children's expedition (149). Their actual parent is absent until the end of the novel, when he comments that "these people have done much – very much – for us, my children. Let us now thank them" (221). Though the children return to their home in the care of their father and community, it is the white parentage that is valorized by the novel as the only active agent able to aid them in times of distress. Susannah of the Mounties repeats the same pattern in Little Chief's eventual removal to the Mission school. Though he is free for a fixed period of time to live as an emancipated child, he spends the majority of his time at the school. Little Chief recognizes the inevitability of his future in the hands of a white-run state, as First Nations life is threatened by assimilation:

'Before the White Man came,' said Little Chief, 'Here ran the buffalo. Here was meat in plenty, robes for cover in the winter snows, hides for the making of tepees. But the White Man wanted all. ... Now there are no more buffalo' (130).

While it is significant that the novel recognizes the degradation effected by European settlers on the environment, the fact that it wholeheartedly accepts the residential school as a positive institution indicates that its native child characters are hardly free from the inevitable control of the state. Both novels invest in the Missionary-Priest as a replacement for the native child's actual parents, and both novels advocate the power these figures are to hold over First Nations



cultures, however benign or friendly they may appear to the reader. Though the girls at the Mission school in Susannah “laughed as if they were happy all the time,” the qualifier “as if” seems hardly out of place (178).

By mid-century, Danger on the Coast and Starbuck Valley Winter provide support for what Neil Sutherland terms a “culture of childhood” in Canada by the mid twentieth century, where the emancipated child was elevated further to become the central focus of a society whose “principal goal [was] the socializing of the young into the whole cluster of ways of living that characterized the larger cultures of which they were a part” (222-3). The central characters of both novels are less engaged in rebellion in order to reach maturity than in the process of finding a matured self within the individual contexts of nation. In the latter novel, the narrative focuses on Don’s gradual maturation through his experience in the woods for the winter, described as a place where ““a man’s free and he’s got only himself to worry about”” (112). Learning the value of fortitude in work, even when “things weren’t exactly the way you wanted them,” Don gains a measure of masculinity and self-confidence through his engagement with nature, eventually earning the approval of his Aunt, who is initially critical of his adventures (156). The disapproving Aunt is the last remnant of the domineering parent-figures present in previous novels. Since the Aunt has no say over the course of his actions, Don is an already-emancipated youth. While her approval is important to Don, he no longer needs to effect rebellion against her. More pressing is the need to find an identity outside of that of other local boys, who typically work in sawmills after school (5). Don does not want to live a life in which he serves another, as he narrates that “being your own boss made the difference making up your own mind about what work you’d do and how you’d go about it” (5). Instead, he finds his identity in nature, overcoming fears in a country that “seemed overwhelmingly big and uncaring” to the point

where he can describe his re-entry into the bush as a “homecoming” (186, 226). It is the moral fortitude that Don has gained in the woods that will serve him as a productive member of the nation, but more importantly, the discovery of a source of self-identity in relation to his environment is the central demonstrative element of the novel for the child reader. If Don is a character type symptomatic of the “culture of childhood,” the example he sets is that of the child who must also find positive selfhood through trial and error, thereby navigating the difficult environments of the nation to find a calling that will serve the country positively. In Danger on the Coast, Cherry finds her selfhood in a different manner through a connection to place, both in terms of its geography as her name is added to the map, and in terms of history, as she becomes an encyclopaedia of knowledge about Nova Scotian lore, myth and history. Her favourite thing to do is “finding out many odd stories which she believed existed everywhere if you bothered to seek them,” and she discovers her identity in the connections between “what had happened in the past” in tandem with the everyday landscape that surrounds her (106). Furthermore, the recognition that “I’m living in history now” leads to Cherry exercising an advanced level of personal citizenship by playing the role of active agent in the nation’s future through the capture of the wartime spy (91). Cherry thus has a focus for identity, the nation, and a means of carrying it out productively in the world around her as an agent of nation, making her character the model of an ideal national citizen for the child reader.

The transition of childhood from early to mid-century was a dramatic one considering previous ideas of children and childhood during the nineteenth century. The implications for nation were twofold: first, Canadian children would experience aspects of their nation through self-motivated experiences, whether by participating in nature, revelling in citizenship, or subverting and challenging the tropes of the previous generation. Second, as the direct result of

their experiences, the Canadian child would be socialized into an acceptable form of maturity to become effective reproducers of national life, both in terms of the individual identities they construct within the context of nation and as active agents of nation themselves. With the characters of the novels surveyed as models of an ideal, the Canadian child is poised to usher Canada into positive nationhood.

## Conclusion

So here, their journey at an end,  
 Immediately they planned to send  
 Letters to all the friends they'd made  
 To thank them for their kindly aid.  
 For eight full months from East to West  
 The climate they had put to test,  
 So wrote the Premier to advise  
 That Canada should advertise  
 And quickly let the whole world know  
 That this is not a land of snow (Uren 92).

These lines from Bob and Bill See Canada conclude the poem aside a small image of the rabbits, silhouetted against the setting sun, as they head off on further adventures in search of the vast geography and culture of Canada that “remained in store” for discovery (93). That their nation is “not a land of snow” stands as a refutation of Voltaire’s famous evaluation of Canada in Candide (1759) as just a “few acres of snow,” and the wars between France and Britain over the country as a “struggle more than Canada is worth” (55). By the early twentieth century, Canadian authors were defining the worth of their nation in far broader terms, both for children reading their texts and subsequent international audiences. Throughout the stories, novels and poetry surveyed from 1900 to 1945, there is an overwhelming and often ecstatic sense of the “new” in their renditions of the nation. The five themes of this study all represent interrelated facets of the active project of Canadian self-definition as they push the boundaries of Canadian identity towards substantive nationhood beyond colonial status. Canadians possess their own

unique forms and mythology centred in nature and landscape, just as gender norms slowly become negotiated beyond the reach of empire. First Nations peoples remain colonized while serving as literary and cultural tropes for the purposes of white national identities, while authors move towards literary decolonization by emphasizing a substantial nation over empire in texts. Finally, the literature as a whole emphasizes the role of the Canadian children as active agents in constructing their nation through citizenship, knowledge, and participation in Canadian life. In fulfilling these manifold purposes, the literature playfully lays the boundaries of nation, where “Canada is primarily a discovery” for the child reader (Blodgett 10). The discovery entailed is positioned in multiple national spaces, whether through the rich local settings of Our Little Canadian Cousin (1904), Anne of Green Gables (1908) and Funny Fables of Fundy (1928), gendered historical tales such as The Only Girl (1925) and Susannah of the Mounties (1936), nature-adventure and animal stories in The Kindred of the Wild (1902), Two Little Savages (1903) and The Adventures of Sajo and Her Beaver People (1935), the poetic travel narrative of Bob and Bill (1919), the stories of Canadian Fairy Tales (1922), and the wartime texts Danger on the Coast (1941) and Starbuck Valley Winter (1943). Each of the works encountered construct differing visions of Canada based on the ideologies of their individual authors, and more importantly, the historical contexts that lend them meaning within larger social and political narratives of national identity. Demonstrating a vibrant and active conversation surrounding the status of Canadian nationhood during the early twentieth century, the texts studied evidence a distinct sub-section of Canadian literature that played an active role in determining the identities of Canadian children.

Speaking broadly of the metaphorical child reader, positioned outside the texts discussed and theorized by critics who write of generalized “inscribed” subjects, it becomes difficult to

imagine the actual children reading these texts (Weinreich 128). A few inscriptions on the fly-leaves of personal copies of Bob and Bill See Canada to “Margaret J. Baker, Best wishes from Dot, Christmas 1926” and on Two Little Savages, by “Lester G. Hoar, Moncton NB, Dec./29” provide little evidence of how these children interacted, interpreted, and identified with these texts. But if the colourful stickers carefully pasted on the inside covers of these books and the various and sundry food stains and wear provide any clues, it is that these texts were cherished, read and re-read by the children who owned them. Doubtless these and other child readers became active citizens, fought wars, started businesses, read these and other texts to their own children. Just as Lou in Marian Engel’s novel Bear (1976) muses on the “many books about animals” she had read as a child, so did generations of Canadian children come to identify with the texts that shaped the daily realities (and imaginative escapes) of their childhood (59).

If children’s literature seeks to provide a means by which child readers can find a “home” in their nation, then literature for children produced in Canada during the early twentieth century fulfills the need by positioning the nation as a space of ample discovery and delight. By mapping the spaces of the nation, physically, socially, culturally and politically, Canadian children’s literature offers vibrant insight into the progression of Canadian nationhood as it took the tentative steps in its coming of age.

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